Why do we have expat teachers? The effect of expatriate teachers on school culture.

Abstract

The presence of expatriate teachers in any school system has an effect on the culture of the organization and the active members, mainly the students and the teachers. The expatriate teacher brings his or her cultural norms to bear in the new working environment. These norms include views on the value of education, the value of the profession as a whole, social and societal perceptions and previous teaching experiences. The expatriate teacher will also have his or her preconceived notions about the current school situation. While this paper examines the effect of the expatriate teacher on school culture, it must be noted that any effect would be filtered through the prevailing culture operating in the school.

The migration of teachers has been an issue for years, especially for developing countries. For many developing countries that have continued to invest in the education of their populations, it becomes a major issue when these educated citizens find reasons to migrate. The resulting ramifications have both positive and negative repercussions for the home states. Teacher migration has been deemed of such importance to be covered in international documents such as the Commonwealth Teacher Recruitment Protocol, General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) and Caribbean Single Market and Economy (CSME). This paper concentrates mainly (but not exclusively) on the Caribbean expatriate teacher and focuses on the experiences and perspectives that he or she may bring to the new school.

No attempt is made to investigate teachers at international schools or those who deliver the curriculum in English as a Second Language.

Introduction

“Why do we have expat teachers?” This was the loud lament from a year 10 student at a senior secondary school on a small Caribbean island as he sat in a Mathematics class being taught by me. I had to take the time and explain the reason to him and his peers why this ‘expat’ was teaching him rather than a local teacher. He used the shorten form of the term expatriate and he made it sound derogatory – like the ‘expat’ was a second-class citizen on this tiny island. Sadly, this is also the way he and his peers feel that the expatriate worker should be treated – as less than or below the status of the native.

As a Caribbean expatriate teacher within the Caribbean, I am challenged often to examine the impact that I am having on my students beyond the delivery of the academic content. An expatriate is described by Merriam-Webster
dictionary as one who leaves one native country to live elsewhere. This may be for a limited amount of time, or for the rest of one’s life. It is almost an oxymoron to speak about Caribbean expatriate in the Caribbean, but I am constantly reminded of this distinction by the culture and society in which I now reside. The distinctions lie between locals and ‘expats’ and there are further distinctions between Caribbean and non-Caribbean expatriates (and even further distinctions that focus heavily on nationality and ethnicity). Teaching is a profession committed to the development of young minds by facilitating the learning of students. Inherent in this statement is the impact that the teacher has on the student and vice versa.

The effect that each teacher has on the development of the students in his or her care has been researched and documented at length (Stronge, 2007; Wong & Wong, 2005; Long & Hoy, 2006). The values, beliefs and assumptions that the teacher brings into the classroom are an expected and critical part of education. How are these values, beliefs and assumptions received when they are different from those of the students? In other words, how do the presence and culture of the expatriate teacher affect the culture and norms of the students? Expatriate teachers “provide different teaching approaches and experiences and bring with them international perspectives to issues of common interest and concern”, (Miller, 2008, p. 29). These experiences and perspectives can enhance the current culture of the school in which they are employed if there is willingness in this school culture to accept and respect diversity.

This paper seeks to examine this impact from the point of view of the teacher. While the overwhelming context will be Caribbean based, there are expatriate teachers found in almost every country. With this in mind, I will also include references to the literature that discuss other territories where expatriate teachers’ presence is too numerous to be ignored.

However, it is not the intention of this paper to delve into two other occurrences of expatriate teachers. The first is the situation that occurs at international schools. International schools, as described Lauder (2007) have predominately expatriate teachers but also predominately expatriate students. International schools follow a curriculum and qualifications different from the country in which they are established. Hence, the matter of cultural impact, though present, is outside the scope of this paper. The second is the issues around English as Second Language and expatriate teachers. The issues revolve around the culture and language of the instructors as well as the view of English as the predominant language and hence the perceived marginalization of native languages. Many researchers have documented these at length.

For the purpose of this discussion I intend to focus on the cultural background and training of the Caribbean expatriate teacher as well as the issues around migration, acculturation and the classroom dynamic. I will identify different models of school culture and look at how they are affected by the presence and interaction of expatriate teachers in the school systems.
The Caribbean Expatriate teacher

Cultural background and training

As regards the Caribbean expatriate, the historical legacy of colonial times cannot be ignored. The idea of foreign teachers has been a part of Caribbean education for centuries (Gordon, 1963; Williams, 1994). The British government had the responsibility for the education of slaves and the free men on their colonies in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. To achieve this, foreign teachers migrated to the Caribbean region, bringing with them the curriculum and culture of Britain. While this was accepted initially, over time as more locals were employed as teachers the tenor changed. However, what became firmly entrenched in Caribbean society was the view of education as a necessity for nation building and personal development. I am reminded of the words of “Education is a must” by the Mighty Sparrow (1967), expounding on this need:

Education, education, this is the foundation  
Our rising population needs sound education  
You’re recognized anywhere you go  
Have your certificates to show  
To enjoy any kind of happiness  
Knowledge is the key to success

This calypso continues to elaborate on personal and national recognition and the ability of a good education to ease financial hardships in the future – avoid the “ketching hell”. Consequently, throughout the different levels of the Caribbean society there is a premium placed on a quality education.

Many countries have teacher training facilities and the regional university, the University of the West Indies, has an education department in the Humanities faculty on each of its campuses. With the expansion of online and distance education models more and more Caribbean teachers are taking advantage of the training opportunities and specialising in different areas of the curriculum, teaching and learning. I believe the region is fortunate to have quality teaching professionals who make up a crucial sector of the labour force and who possess the skills necessary to increase the level of knowledge and learning among the populace. Sadly, there is also the situation that teachers are called upon to work in less than adequate conditions. Levitt (2005), using Jamaica as an example, questions the role of and respect for teachers in our regional societies:

Jamaica’s teachers have raised generations of children to take their place as productive citizens of the country. ... But where today is respect for the teachers whose salaries are so low that they cannot afford a car, who come to school on the bus and supplement their earnings by selling insurance or higgling? ...By what set of values are teachers paid so little? (p. 76).

What this has created is an exodus of qualified teachers to ‘greener pastures’. In 2001, it was stated that Barbados lost 151 teachers to foreign recruitment while
Migration

In this era of globalisation, the world has become ‘smaller’ – communication, technology, industry have all helped to open barriers that had previously been insurmountable due to geographical distance. Why have Caribbean teachers left? We left for better salaries, for better working conditions, for smaller student-teacher ratios, for more flexible opportunities for advanced qualifications, for better behaved students, for better student attitude to learning, for intrinsically motivated students, for an opportunity to see more of the world, for personal change….and the list can go on. No doubt the reasons are as varied as the teachers themselves. The situation of ‘teacher drain’, which develops when there is extensive migration, is a problem in many countries in the region that have invested in the training of these professionals (EI, 2005; Mishra, 2006; Appleton, Sives & Morgan, 2006). I believe this is a difficult charge to level at the Caribbean since there consistently seem to be more locals able to fill the posts of those who are leaving and tentative research finding on expatriate teachers in Southern Africa also seem to support the notion that “brain drain” or “teacher drain” is not a critical issue. However, Caribbean governments and minister of Education found it to be so critical an issue that they sought to develop a protocol through the Commonwealth Secretariat to address the recruitment of teachers. The aim of the protocol, which was adopted in 2004, is described as balancing “the rights of teachers to migrate internationally, on a temporary or permanent basis, against the need to protect the integrity of national education systems and to prevent the exploitation of the scarce human resources of poor countries,” (p. 7). The protocol also details rights and responsibilities of the recruiting country to the recruited teacher, especially in relation to their working conditions.

The monetary value of the remittance injected into the Caribbean economies from those who are teaching overseas cannot be ignored. In Jamaica, for example, the remittance in 2002 exceeded US $1 billion and was the single largest source of foreign exchange in the island’s economy exceeding tourism (JTA, 2009; Miller, Ochs and Mulvaney, 2008). What is clear, however, as the Commonwealth Secretariat (2003) noted “recruitment ... is now being done in a more organized way by governments, targeting more experienced teachers with special skills in return for ‘better compensation’”, (p. 11). This means that the veteran and master teachers – the exemplars in the system are being approached or selected for foreign postings. As Appleton, Sives & Morgan (2006) discuss in their study on migration in Southern Africa, the issues are less about the number of teachers who migrate and more about the quality of the teachers who move – they are deemed to be of “above average effectiveness”, (p. 139). This creates discord in the system since these were the teachers who would have been expected to model and mentor the new teachers. As an expatriate teaching professional, I feel it is important to interject that leaving one’s homeland to live
and work in another country does not indicate a lack of patriotism or appreciation for one’s country of birth, but rather is an act of self-determination and can often be an act of self-preservation. We, in fact, often act as ambassadors in our new countries of residence, exporting and sharing our culture when opportunities present themselves and therefore help to develop the cultural literacy of the students and other colleagues with whom we work (Miller, 2008; Appleton, Sives & Morgan, 2006).

CSME, Caribbean Single Market and Economy, is a policy agreement among Caribbean governments that allows for free movement of labour across the Caribbean region. What this means for teachers is that there can now be free movement from one jurisdiction to another when employment opportunities arise with no discrimination based on nationality (Symmonds, 2006). It would also mean that there is no preference in working conditions based on country of origin so there is no increased salary, settling in allowances or recruitment benefits as often occurs among expatriate teachers in other parts of the world. One major positive is that the common Caribbean goals should be further established and enforced in the culture in these schools. However, there has not been a massive flow of teachers via the CSME. I would suspect that a teacher is hesitant to leave his or her current situation for very little perceived benefit; the issues are the same in education throughout the Caribbean and the exchange rate among Caribbean economies is not enough to make it financially lucrative. That coupled with social issues in the various countries and lack of true vacancies had led to few teachers, at present, taking advantage of the opportunities available via the CSME. CSME follows a similar policy document, General Agreement on Trade and Services (GATS), designed by the World Trade Organisation to include the trade in services and people. Mode 4 of the GATS accord details the “presence of natural persons” and describes the allowed movement of persons from one member territory into another to supply a service. However, it allows the member territory autonomy to decide on issues of citizenship, residence or permanent employment, (WTO, 2009).

Bahamas, Cayman Islands, Turks and Caicos Islands - a different complexity

These countries in the region have a different experience from the others. The number of native teachers employed is too low to service the education needs of the country; therefore the only remedy is to import teachers. Often times, the attractions for locals into the teaching service are minimal and even of those who do enter the service, a large proportion leave after a few years. In many cases you can find a government school that has a majority of its teaching staff comprised of expatriate workers.

These countries have economies that are based on tourism and offshore banking and they are able to maintain high gross domestic product per capita and operate with national currencies that are equal to or higher than the US dollar. While the Bahamas is an independent state, Turks and Caicos Islands and Cayman Islands are both British Dependent Territories, which means they have a measure of self-governance but final decisions must have the approval of the UK. To the natives of these countries, other sectors such as finance or law may
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appear to be more attractive since they offer better remuneration than teaching, but to others in the Caribbean whose currency is less than the US dollar, these countries appear attractive indeed. Hence, many Caribbean teachers move to these countries to work on short-term renewable contracts. As the then Minister of Education for the Cayman Islands, Mr. Roy Bodden explained at a Caribbean conference in 2002, “Cayman is in a somewhat unusual position in the region. More than 70% of teaching staff at government schools is expatriate labour and last year some 50% of new recruits came from the Caribbean”, (GIS, 2002). American, Canadian and European teachers also migrate to these islands for various reasons. The current statistics, according to the Ministry of Education in the Cayman Islands, have the numbers as 59% expatriate teachers in the government school system.

What do we expatriate teachers take with us from our homelands? We leave with our culture as it pertains to teaching and education and our culture as it pertains to our native societies. Both are significant factors that will affect the adjustment in our new postings.

Acculturation

But do we fit in? Are our expectations of the ‘greener pastures’ realistic? Are these expectations met in the new environment? It will be impossible for me to generalise on these questions without adequate research – which may form the basis for further study. However, Caribbean culture had traditionally placed a high premium on quality education as a transformational force in a nation and teachers as the embodiment of this.

Recruiters, as is their job, try to sell an image of a teaching utopia, but sadly, the expectation that may develop among the expatriate teacher can be totally at variance with the reality in the classroom when they arrive. It is the moral responsibility of the recruiter to portray as accurately as possible the situations that currently exist. An article in the Independent, a British newspaper, comments on the fact that while many foreign teachers from developing countries are coming to work in the UK, many of them are not remaining in the profession and are in fact quitting in a matter of weeks in some cases. Reason given – “they leave because when they enter schools they find the combination of behaviour and working conditions aren’t what they expected or what they are used to”, (Garner, 2002, pp. 1). A quote in the Seattle Times from a foreign teacher whose contract was not being renewed also expresses this view: “I think I really maybe don’t know the culture of the students, how they think, how high school [is] like here, what they expect from teachers”, (Turnbill & Willmsen, 2009). Another area that is frequently obscured is the true ability level of the students. Teachers need to be cognisant of this and recruiters need to clearly state when the majority of the students are of lower ability and a challenge to teach. While fully acknowledging that all children can learn, the temperament needed to deal with difficult children needs to be acknowledged and not all educators have it. Often deliberate misrepresentation or lying by omission are the culprits among recruiters. This is a major fault since, in many
cases, the teachers are moving away from these same issues of lack of orderly
behaviour, indiscipline and poor attitudes to learning in their home countries.
Why leave that to come to the same situation in a foreign land where one also
has to take time to adjust to new living conditions and a new school culture?

These examples cited may seem depressing and defeatist and there may
even be the feelings of “culture shock” (Oberg in Yang, 2009; Richardson, von
Kirchenheim & Richardson, 2006). Oberg describes culture shock as “the
process whereby a new culture is rejected in favour of a very positive review of,
and desire for the familiar”, (Richardson et al, 2006, p. 884). A more common
definition from Webster’s dictionary is “the alienation, confusion, surprise, etc.
that may be experienced by someone encountering unfamiliar surroundings, a
strange city or community, a different culture, etc”. As usually happens over time
and as the situation becomes more familiar and comfortable, and the individual
becomes more proficient at understanding and navigating the cultural terrain,
one of the following events will occur in the acculturation process – integration,
asassimilation, separation/segregation or marginalization. The ideal mode, in my
opinion, would be integration, but there are preconditions to integration as Kalin
& Berry in Berry (1997) discuss at length. They summarise these into the four
main points – (i) recognition and acceptance of cultural diversity (ii) low levels
of prejudice (iii) positive attitudes among cultural groups (iv) all cultural groups
feeling some identification and attachment to the society in which the co-exist (p.
11). If these preconditions are not widely adopted by the main or dominant
group in the society, integration will not materialize, and in fact one of the other
modes of acculturation will ensue.

Classroom Interaction

A teacher’s style of content delivery and expectations from students are
affected by his or her personality but also by the cultural traditions of the
teacher. A simple illustration of this would be in the way students address the
teacher using formal titles such as ‘mister’ or ‘sir’ rather than in a more familiar
way. Kline and Fisher (2001) found in their research that the teacher’s cultural
background affects the learning environment. Further examination of their
research among Asian secondary school science students found that these
students felt that there was more student cohesiveness, teacher support, task
orientation, cooperation, equity and opportunity for student involvement in
science learning within the classes of the Western teachers (Australian, New
Zealander and British) than in the classes of other Asian teachers. Simply put,
they enjoyed the classes of the foreign teachers more than those of the local
teachers. Is the mere presence of the foreigner in the classroom enough to excite
the student and raise his or her expectations of the class and improve the
attitude to learning?

Using my experience in the Cayman Islands as an example, on any given
school day, a student can encounter a Math teacher from Trinidad, a Science
teacher from Ireland, a History teacher from Jamaica and a Support teacher from
Canada. They each bring their own beliefs, values, and goals into that learning
environment of the classroom. They also bring their own experiences and perspectives (Miller, 2008) that can provide an open door and exposure to a new region for the students, hence expanding the opportunity for learning in the classroom, thereby, improving the cultural literacy of both migrant and non-migrant pupils. This development of cultural literacy extends to teachers outside the cultural and ethnic grouping of the expatriate teacher (Miller, 2008, p. 31). It can also serve as a source of co-identity and validation for students of the same ethnic and national origin as the expatriate teacher (Miller, 2008; Wei, 2007). Students’ attitudes and ideals towards education are shaped by their interaction with teachers and administrators, (Wren, 1999) but how does the interaction in one day with people from different countries impact the student? Do they welcome the diversity? Do they respect and value the diversity? Are they confused about expectations? Do they vary the expectation to suit the diversity? Numerous times, in my own experience, I have had students try to ridicule my Caribbean accent – where students have failed to accept and appreciate something that was different. Is there consensus among the staff on the social norms, attitudes and ideals expected from the students? Is there consensus on what is expected from staff? Is uniformity and consensus what is expected/needed/sought in a pronouncedly multicultural school environment as demonstrated in these exceptional cases (Wren, 1999)?

School Culture

The school is an organization that is directly affected by the influences of the nation and society in which it resides. It is able to use these influences and its own dynamics (staffing, student ability, leadership styles) to craft its own unique characteristics and school culture. School culture shapes the operations of the school and the functions of teachers, students, parents, and administrators within that microcosm. A school's culture, in its simplest term, is “the way we do things around here”, (Coleman & Earley, 2005, p. 63) and it provides the basis around which the whole education system operates (Gruenert, 2000; Kruger, 2003). Barth (2002) discusses the components of the culture as “a complex pattern of norms, attitudes, beliefs, behaviours, values, ceremonies, traditions and myths”, (p. 6) and these together determine how the organization is identified and responds to situations as a unit. Many of these components may not be formalised or documented but they are easily recognised by newcomers or visitors to the school. Parish & Aquila (1996) offer the following description of school culture:

Like any organization, schools have “cultural ways” that operate on those who work in them and are usually created by those who founded the organization. Members of an organization learn its culture in a variety of “natural” ways, mostly through such hidden means as language, dress, tradition, covenants, history, structure, values and rewards. We acquire cultural ways without even knowing that we are doing so: they are like the air we breathe.
What is surprising about this description is the passivity of the recipients. The impression is given that culture is ‘something that is done to them’. It does not acknowledge the impact and change that can occur and in most cases is needed in the prevailing culture of our schools. In many schools, subcultures develop among subject departments, roles in the organization and even ethnicity. The subculture of ethnicity has a significant importance to the acculturation of expatriate teachers and will be discussed in more detail later in this paper.

Saphier & King, in Barth (2002), were able to identify the following components as crucial elements present in a school with a “healthy” culture: “collegiality, experimentation, high expectations, trust and confidence, tangible support, reaching out to the knowledge bases, appreciation and recognition, caring, celebration and humour, involvement in decision making, protection of what’s important, traditions, and honest and open communication.” When these twelve elements are found to be existing in a school, the climate or ethos – the feel of the school– will be positive, safe, inviting and the environment should promote learning at all levels. By this I mean both the learning and development of the students as well as the continuous professional development of the teachers as they feel respected and valued. In most schools, the ideal represented by these twelve elements does not exist in its entirety, but rather, the leadership and members of the organization, to varying degrees, strive to attain this ideal in the daily operations of the school.

I will now take a closer look at school culture using two models – traditional and collegial as described by Hargreaves (1995) and a third model that I have termed ‘transformational’ and which has been gleaned from Barth (2002); Fiore (2000); Gruenert (2000); Kruger (2003); and Parish & Aquila (1996).

Traditional Model of School Culture

Hargreaves (1995) describes the traditional school culture as a feudal system with “the principal and senior teachers (including head of subject departments in secondary schools) being like a monarch surrounded by barons”, (p. 32). Hence the sense of hierarchy and role distinction and accountability are deeply entrenched, as are the ways and means for the ‘barons’ to gain privilege and favours from the ‘monarch’. In the Caribbean as in many other former colonies, the traditional school culture still exists. Altbach (1971), in discussing the effect of neo-colonialism on education, expressed the view that “most developing countries have maintained the colonial patterns of school administration and many have altered the curriculum only slightly, thus retaining much of the orientation of colonial education”, (p. 381). He further notes that even in countries where there has been much radical nationalistic opposition to the colonial presence and there is now political independence, there has been minimal shift, if any, from the traditional school model and culture. Hence, as migrating Caribbean expatriates, we take our traditional mode of school culture with us, whether we conform to it or reject it. Due to this model of school culture, the strict adherence to roles and responsibilities can often give the impression that the Caribbean expatriate teacher is too strict, too rigid, too
unfeeling and unloving. This same impression of being too strict is what is welcomed in some systems as Caribbean expatriate teachers are expected to be able to manage the poor behaviour among students and be role models in schools where there is a high concentration of students with a Caribbean heritage, especially black boys, (Miller, 2008). Therefore, it is expected that the Caribbean expatriate will maintain his or her ingrained approach to classroom management and discipline even if it runs counter to the prevailing culture of the school. It has been recorded among Caribbean expatriates in the UK, that in some cases, they have been blamed for having too high expectations of students (Miller, 2008).

Collegial Model of School Culture

In the pure form, the collegial model establishes power sharing in all aspects of school organization and operation. In a practical sense, Education Departments and School Boards take responsibility for the appointments to positions in the school but a principal who wishes to perpetuate a collegial culture in his or her school can allow or “purport to allow – all teachers equal rights to be participative, always in discussion and sometimes in decision making”, (Hargreaves, 1995, p. 34). Harris (2005) supports this notion via distributed leadership which she describes as developing in a school culture through the “interactions between all those who contribute to the life of the school – the teachers, governors, classroom assistants, support staff, parents and students”, (p. 8). This model encourages collaboration and consensus on school policies and responsibilities as well as demonstrates a high level of trust and respect for the capabilities of others in the organization. An important component in the collegial model is the social aspect of the organization where if an individual or minority group does not support the mainstream view they can be “quietly excluded, being ignored or tolerated as eccentrics”, (Hargreaves, 1995, p. 35).

For the expatriate teacher coming from this culture into the traditional setting, there will be extreme discord since there is little that is similar about these two models. As an example, the new expatriate teacher may find that to be assertive and to volunteer for committees can be viewed negatively and run the ire of his or her peers that may manifest itself as alienation of the teacher. The converse is also true where coming into the collegial model from a more traditional setting would require the adjustment for the teacher, either adopting and assimilating the new culture or by refusing to, limiting his or her ability to be productive in the cultural environment.

The collegial model of school culture supports equality, and while is it is easy to accept that there will still be formal role differentiation such as principal, deputy principal, heads of department, etc, it is less easy to accept or condone significant differences in salaries among teachers who are deemed to be at the same level. Expatriate teachers, in some education systems, receive higher salaries than the locals (de Bres, 1974; van der Vienhart, 2005). In the eyes of many local teachers this salary difference cannot be justified. There is also the
opposing train of thinking that in order to attract quality expatriate teachers, the salaries and conditions must be more attractive (Vivian, 2005) hence providing a reason for paying expatriate teachers more than the locals. This can make a huge dent in the efforts to develop a collegial school culture and distrust and disharmony can fester in such an environment.

Transformational Model of School Culture

Changing school culture and challenging the existing ways that things are done are often met with resistance and negativity from both staff and students (Barth, 2002; Kruger, 2003; Parish & Aquila, 1996; Walker & Shuangye, 2007). Parish & Aquila (1996) further discuss the development of trust among the key participants and the need for collaboration and team building as important components in the transformative process but they also acknowledge the ‘transformative dilemma’, recognising that since “teachers and principals are the key to any successful transformation”, they also have the power to block it. All change in school culture must focus on the type of leadership that exists in the current culture or that may need to exist for the change to occur. Research on leadership for cultural change often talks about the visionary leader but as Parish & Aquila (1996) reminds us, “visionaries are useful only when they can get others to share their vision, and it is difficult to get people to share transformational visions that are outside their experiences. It is especially difficult to get people to share a vision that contradicts and challenges their ... culture”. This has profound implications for a new expatriate principal, hired to transform the school culture. While he or she comes with a fresh approach and a fresh injection of ideas, not having been tainted by or embedded in the prevailing school culture, how does he get the support of the teachers that he is expected to lead and to transform?

Fiore (2000) expounds on the principal as having the “means of access to creating and sustaining positive school cultures”, (p. 11) and further describes the need for principals to be visible around the school to students and teachers, observing lessons during the school day and actively maintaining discipline. This is purported to have positive effects on the school culture – encouraging a calm, cohesive learning environment. This view is supported by Kruger (2003), in research on principals in South African schools, where the teachers felt that the visibility of the principals demonstrated their interest and support for the teacher and reinforced good teaching behaviour in the classroom, (p. 210).

However both Fiore and Kruger fail to deal with the case where there is little trust for the principal and his role. Teachers can view this ‘visibility’ as a means of checking up on their performance and as a means of jeopardizing their jobs. In school systems with high levels of expatriate teachers with high turnover rates, job security is a serious consideration. Another factor for the expatriate principal is the reactions of native teachers who may resent the appointment of a foreigner over a local. This presents another block to the changing of the school culture. Much of the success of an impact that such a leader hopes to make in the establishing of the transformational model of school culture will stem from his or
her approach to the job and to the people in the organisation - the students, teachers and parents. Any overwhelming attitude of superiority, condescension, or any failure to recognise the expertise and experience of those already in the system by the school leader is a recipe for disappointment and will cause more friction in the current school culture. Friction in any organization reduces its productivity, and in schools, have a greater impact since it will affect the learning environment and hence academic success of a generation of future citizens.

Conclusion

The presence of foreign nationals in any education system has an impact on the learning of the students and the interaction of the organization. Miller (2008) in his research on expatriate teachers from the Caribbean employed in London’s secondary schools, recognised that “the ethnic and cultural background and experiences ... are tools for strengthening and deepening both school and community cohesion”. This impact on the culture of the school is so important that it has implications for recruitment as education boards and administrators seek to maintain the most appropriate ethnic mix for their goals. Richardson, von Kirchenheim & Richardson (2006) note that while there are numerous employment opportunities around the world for teachers, the limited research available does indicate a “relatively high failure rate among these expatriate assignments” (p. 884). More research is needed on this especially in the Caribbean context.

For Caribbean countries to retain their most experienced and effective teachers they will need to offer them more incentives to either stay at home or return to their home lands from their current international or regional postings. As Dr. Didacus Jules, speaking at a meeting of regional education officials in 2010 reiterates:

People do not migrate simply because they want to leave their country, but they leave to take up better opportunities abroad and it is very difficult for governments to think of competing with the kind of salaries that are being offered in these more developed destinations...... So it requires some creative thinking and rethinking of the kinds of policies that can be put in place to achieve a win-win situation on both sides, that will allow for teachers to go but come back to continue making a contribution to education in their respective countries.

References

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