Challenges of International Career for Teachers

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Abstract: People for different reasons need to travel abroad. They even travel to another country to work. However, people might experience culture schock due to new values and opinions they encounter in the new culture. It is not always easy to adapt a new environment for some people. Teachers, similarly might have the same problems once they enter in a new culture. Although teachers work abroad to develop their teaching experiences, different cultural values and a new education system they are exposed to in the new country might cause them some social problems. This paper focuses on what kind of problems those teachers who would like to work abroad encounter.

Keywords: Abroad, Culture, Adaptation, Social Exclusion

1. Cultural Problems and Adaptation to Other Cultures

It is possible to say that cultural adaptation to a new place is the beginning of the problems of living abroad. It is always difficult to adapt a new social structure for most people. Cultural interaction is inevitable in another country and it is important to note that it can have an impact on the individual experience (Black, 1987).

Culture is a common value and an opinion belonging to a specific group. For this reason, it can be difficult for some people to accept different cultural values. Hofstede (1994) defines culture as a collective consensus that separates one group from another. Gudykunst and Kim (1992) describe culture as systematic information shared by a large group of people. Everyone can experience adaptation problems when they enter a new culture. Since every nation has its own rules, thoughts and values, it may not be possible to adapt to the values of a new culture. People have to get used to language, values and beliefs of a new culture, if they become a member of that society (Gudykunst & Kim, 1992).

Entering a large cultural environment includes becoming familiar with language, religion, cultural norms and practices. Adaptation to a new culture that people are not accustomed to is a complicated process that they cannot easily get used to. This practice does not happen immediately. This is expressed by Brein and David (1971) as a way of finding a culture that is very different from the culture in which the individual is accustomed to. It is possible to say that the individual is experiencing cultural shock.

In the adaptation period to a new culture, people can experience feelings of uncertainty or anger. Similarly, when teachers go to a new country, they may experience cultural anomalies at the beginning; however, capable teachers know how to adapt to a new environment. It has been observed that a teacher who is capable of recognizing other cultures has the following abilities (Lynch, 1999, p.77):

- ➢ They are respectful to the other cultures,
- ➢ They show constantly effort to understand the views of people from other cultures,
- ➢ They are open to learn new things,
- ➢ They are flexible,
- ➢ They have healthy sense of wit,
- ➢ They have tolerance to misconceptions,
- ➢ They are sensitive to prejudice,
- ➢ They are willing to learn.

Although communication is one of the key factors to overcome adaptation problems, personality factors are important to ensure new cultural harmony as well. Individuals who are open-minded towards the new culture and able to comprehend the new cultural values quickly can cope with stressful environments and adapt the new culture and atmosphere (Kim, 1988). Chen and Starosta (2008) argue that four features are important to enable people communicate with others easily so that their adaptation will be quick:

- ➢ having own opinions (the individual being aware of their own opinions and ideas)
- ➢ open-minded (the individual accepts differences)
- ➢ unprejudiced attitudes (the individual does not have prejudices about others)
- ➢ being comfortable (the individual does not feel anxiety or insecurity)

These four factors will help the individual to overcome cultural differences and adapt to the new cultural conditions.

2. Social Exclusion and Adaptation

In the adaptation process, individuals try to adapt in two different areas. While psychological adaptation deals with the emotional state of the individual, sociocultural adaptation examines the individual's ability to adapt to a new environment (Selmer, 2002). The individual has to deal not only with external factors but also with his own emotional problems.

Schnell (1996) distinguishes four stages of culture: Honeymoon stage; it is usually the time when a new culture is first introduced. At this stage s/he likes the experience s/he encounters. S/he sees the differences between his own culture and the new culture. The second phase is the crisis period. The individual finds himself in different values and beliefs. Individuals can have difficulty to accept them. In the solution phase, the individual develops new ways to deal the new situations s/he faces. The last stage is the balance phase that the individual has successfully completed the new cultural adaptation problem in both work and daily life in the new environment.

The most important factor in the adaptation process is communication with the people of the country where the individual lives. A successful adaptation can be achieved by effective communication and

establishing good relationships with the people of the new country (Brein & David, 1971). Hall (1959) states that culture is communication and communication is culture in which he emphasizes the relationship between communication and adaptation to the new culture. Since culture and communication are tightly linked, successful adaptation of the individual to a new culture is achieved through effective exchange of information. In other words, the disagreements between the individual and the people of the country will be reduced through communication, so that the individual's adaptation will be faster.

3. Foreign Language Problems

In the 21st century, there are many benefits of knowing a foreign language. A person who speaks a foreign language can easily reach different people and resources, easily communicate with foreign people, s/he is more efficient when traveling to foreign countries, and easily adapt new cultures. Foreign language learning provides great opportunities in real sense. It leads to the opening of many horizons at the historical and socio-cultural level of the cultures, lives and worldviews of the nations of the world. It facilitates the opening of gates to different cultures. Language allows people to express their feelings, opinions, ideas, and thoughts about other people. Language is the easiest and most important social behavior given to people. Communication is a method of sending messages from one individual to another. Communication includes the following areas.

1) It is a process,

2) Occurs between two or more people,

3) There must be a message to be sent from one individual to another,

4) The posted message gives the appropriate behavior or response,

5) Communication is the basis of the social system.

Foregin language has been a need in the current century. In the global world, it helps people to a large extent to interact with each other. Likewise, Dogan (1996) lists the characterisctics people should have:

1. Educated properly,

2. Having a valid occupation,

3. Develop a character who look for a solution against the problems,

4. To reach the intellectual and emotional depth required in social relations,

5. A foreign language other than a native language (Dogan, 1996, s.100).

Language and culture cannot be separated from each other. Culture is the most important and meaningful context in its own and language is the mirror of culture.

4. Problems about Education

Sharplin (2009) in "bringing them in: The Experiences of imported and overseas-qualified teachers" writes about the problems of teachers who work abroad. Sharplin argues that teachers should be informed about curriculum, resources, student achievement, documentation and teacher skills development while working abroad. It is true that when teachers are provided more background information about the education system and the students, they will recongnize the priorities faster and become more useful to the students in the new country.

5. Parental Issues

Migration is the geographical displacement of people or communities in order to settle temporarily. One of the effects of migration is the conflict between the values given in family and school in the new country.

As it is known, individuals become a member of the society as a result of the socialization process. Individuals learn the rules, the way of living, the values, the cultures of the society in which s/he belongs. The process of socialization takes place within the family and the social environment. However, the new culture might negatively influence individuals such as culture schock, and assimilation. It has always been difficult for people with different cultural characteristics and different social relationships to adapt a new social structure and cultural heritage, and it has brought about many compliance issues. Adaptation is a broad issue and can be experienced in many different areas. Among the problems that people who live abroad often encounter are business life, everyday relations, relations with the citizens of the country they live in, cultural values, attitudes, behaviors, language and religion.

6. Inadequacy of Working Policy as an Immigrant

Despite the fact that there are a great number of international immigrant workers in the world, they still face many problems in terms of cultural, social and economic aspects during migration.First of all, immigrant workers do not benefit from the rights granted to them by international conventions such as ILO Conventions and Recommendations and UN Conventions.

Due to their visa requirements, teachers are unable to work in the countries where they wish. For this reason, teachers might need to work in an environment they do not know. In their new schools teachers have to apply a curriculum that they are not accustomed to, live in a culture that is very different from their own, and even endure the hostile attitudes of native teachers (Inglis & Philps, 1995). The lack of orientation programs is seen as another issue for teachers who would like to work abroad.

7. Life Standards

Many studies show that living standards and financial opportunities are important factors to go abroad. Broman (2000) states that the financial benefits of working abroad are taken into account by the teachers in deciding where to work. Likewise, Elliott (2002) writes that money plays an important role for teachers to work abroad because they prefer to work in a country where teachers earn more than their own countries. Chuan and Atputhasamy (2000) in a study they carried out on 680 teachers reached three reasons why teachers work abroad:

➢ More opportunities to earn more money,
➢ Develop their teaching experiences,
➢ Make difference in the young people's lives.

Conclusion

Though working abroad is considered as a great advantage for a great number of teachers in order to develop their teaching skills, it is not an easy process. Teachers benefit from the experience of working abroad to a large extent; learn foreign languages, recognize new cultures, develop teaching skills, and earn more. However, working in a new environment requires teachers to adapt to new circumstances. Teachers should accept the new cultural values, different opinions of people who live there, new curriculum, and students who are used to different learning methods.

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