

International Career Development in Education: What Teachers Bring Home

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Abstract: Working abroad helps teachers have a global perspective and enable them to become aware of global affairs. Teachers with international experience stands a better chance for professional and personal development. They not only enhance their teaching skills but also become more social. The skills they develop while working abroad make a difference in the lives of their students. Through transferring what they have learnt abroad to their home country, they can enhance the success of their students. This article presents the reasons why teachers need international experience and what changes they bring home.

Keywords: International Experience, Personal Development, Professional Development

1. International Career Development

The boundaries of career development, along with globalization, seem to be at the forefront of global career development. The factors that influence this development are:

- ❖ Global competition and knowledge transfer,
- ❖ The growth of global leaders,
- ❖ Different career actors (Thomas, Lazarova, & Inkson, 2005, s. 342-344)

Globalization has increased competition not only between organizations in developed countries but also between organizations in developing countries due to economic transparency between countries. Against global competition, organizations are establishing overseas strategic alliances with other organizations. They provide access and information flow to the networks that are required to achieve competitive advantage. In this case, great importance is attached to the benefit of the organization from the workers about career mobility and international experience (Thomas, Lazarova, & Inkson, 2005). Although the international career experience has previously been seen as an extremely attractive and prestigious position, it can now be seen as a job position that can be resisted by some employees. In a survey conducted by Tharenou in 2003 with the participation of 213 full-time young employees, it was revealed that a great number of individuals are willing to face international career opportunities.

In a survey of 494 German executives' international career and personal development in 59 countries, despite problems in career management, most managers consider international career experience as an

opportunity for professional development, personal development and career advancement (Stahl, Miller & Tung, 2002). It has been determined that volunteers who work in other countries want to experience their international career because of the following reasons (Tharenou, 2003, p. 508):

- ❖ Experiencing new cultural experiences (65%),
- ❖ Contributing to career development (41%),
- ❖ Higher income (38%),
- ❖ Better job opportunities and job description (35%),
- ❖ Travel opportunity (33%),
- ❖ Personal development (23%),
- ❖ Experiencing excitement and challenge (22%),
- ❖ Use and improve skills (20%),
- ❖ Recognize new and different people (16%),
- ❖ Changes (13%),
- ❖ Country / position adjustment (11%),
- ❖ Use and improve language skills (7%),
- ❖ Better policies to work as immigrants in other countries (5%)
- ❖ Living or working in overseas countries (5%)

In his research Tharenou (2003) interviewed participants and he found the following reasons why they do not prefer working in another country (p. 508):

- ❖ Missing family and friends (62%),
- ❖ Danger and political imbalance (29%),
- ❖ The unwillingness / living standards (29%),
- ❖ Relationship (24%),
- ❖ Loneliness (20%),
- ❖ cultural differences and culture shock (15%),
- ❖ financial expenses (13%),
- ❖ Concern / uncertainty (13%)
- ❖ Love and work in one's own country (10%),
- ❖ Language barriers (11%),
- ❖ Failure to achieve a useful career development (9%)
- ❖ Life problems / family (7%),
- ❖ Low income (7%),
- ❖ Inadequate working policies as immigrants in another country (7%).
- ❖ Missing job opportunities in home country (6%),
- ❖ Being pleased with one's current job (6%),
- ❖ The duration of the task (6%),

- ❖ Spouse's career is affected (4%).

In addition to the factors mentioned above, the development of information technology such as television and the internet, which is another dimension of globalization, the increase of international tourism and the increased use of international experience in educational programs and the increase of international exchange programs are inevitable for global careers to develop gradually every day (Thomas, Lazarova, & Inkson, 2005). Career development and career planning are all about taking global factors into consideration more and more every day.

2. International Career in Education

For a good international experience, individuals should ask themselves the following questions (Matherly, 2005):

- ❖ About what am I trying to communicate with a potential employer for international experience and what is its relationship with my academic field?
- ❖ What skills did I acquire abroad? What kind of cultural skills did I develop?
- ❖ What details should I include in my career so that the experience I have is meaningful to a potential employer?

In a quantitative study conducted on teachers sent from the United Kingdom to the United States, the contributions of abroad experiences on teaching skills were collected under seven main headings. The main themes that emerged in the research are; learning community, time to think deeply, personal development, culture, observation of different educational systems and approaches, use of new technologies and inspiration (Purves, Jaekson & Shaughnessy, 2005). These dimensions are defined as follows:

- ❖ **Learning Community:** Most of the teachers who participated in the research stated that being in a new learning community is very useful. Listening to experiences of their colleagues and learning new knowledge and applications from them helped them to a large extent in their professional career. At the same time, this experience has enabled the teachers to test their knowledge and approaches. 47% of the teachers have emphasized the importance of this factor in their international career experience.
- ❖ **Time to think deeply:** 29% of respondents stated that working abroad provided the time and space to think deeply about their teaching practices. Normally they have explained their inability to think deeply for three reasons. The first reason is the effort to catch up with the intensity of the school life and the needs of the job, and the second reason is not to have enough time for innovations in school. Finally, there is a need to regain individual renewal and energies to improve professional knowledge and skills.
- ❖ **Personal Development:** The opportunity for creative thinking in terms of personal development, which can also be defined as professional development is a significant result of working abroad. It has been observed that experiences such as sharing new ideas, perspectives and practices have

increased the confidence of teachers. 23% of teachers reported that personal development is a gain that can be made through international teaching experience.

- ❖ Culture: 12 % of teachers stated that they have found the opportunity to examine the main cultural and philosophical differences regarding learning and teaching.
- ❖ Observing Different Educational Systems and Approaches: Most of the teachers talked about the benefits of observing alternative pedagogies and practices. Different educational systems allowed teachers to observe the limitations of their own work conditions and to evaluate their own systems.
- ❖ Using New Technologies: Relatively few participants have expressed the importance of seeing the practical effects of new technologies and their potential application areas. On the other hand, some teachers have stated that the ability to use technological devices in the calssroom effectively enhances their professional knowledge and increases their confidence.
- ❖ Inspiration: For some teachers this experience has caused them to re-watch not only their own experiences but also school-wide practices.

As a result of a qualitative study on 21 teachers in Mexico, the impacts of international experiences on their teaching skills have been grouped under five main headings (Alfaro & Quezadab, 2010):

1. Teachers with a global perspective,
2. A curriculum adapted to linguistics and culture,
3. Passionate pedagogy,
4. Participation in community affairs
5. Political and ideological clarity.

The results of studies on international teaching experience (Alfaro & Quezadab, 2010; Purves, Jackson & Shaughnessy, 2005) show that this experience is not only about the professional development of teachers, but also about their personal development. This experience develops teachers in all aspects as a whole; increases their efficiency and effectiveness thus increases the quality of education.

It has been seen that international experience has effects on character development, in addition to its impact on cultural and pedagogical development. Teachers working abroad often face new problems which are not always easy to deal with. Handling these problems helps teachers with emotional and mentality development. Besides, the teachers have to make their own decisions while working in another country which can help them to develop more strategic ways of thinking (Casale-Giannola, 2000).

Teachers who work in other countries have more knowledge of the curriculum. They have the advantage of seeing different curricula in different countries which allows them to transfer to their own country. Moreover, they learn new teaching methods in other countries and apply them in their countries.

Through examining their colleagues in other countries, teachers can contribute to the learning and teaching in their own country. Teachers who have international experiences have more advantageous because:

- ❖ They can encourage pupils to have global perspective by emphasizing the importance of global vision.
- ❖ They have the opportunity to compare their international experience with their own country's education. Often they can share their experiences with their colleagues and students; thus, they can increase the quality of the education by applying new teaching strategies.
- ❖ They improve their ability to comment on global issues through comparing differences and similarities between their own country and the other country where they have worked.
- ❖ They can motivate their students by implementing new teaching strategies they have learnt abroad.
- ❖ They can compare the education system of his/her own country with others and enrich the content
- ❖ They can develop their teaching skills
- ❖ They can develop strategies for critical situations

Rahikainen and Hakkarainen (2012) found that teachers who have international experience stand a better chance of developing themselves in the following areas.

- ❖ Self-confidence and courage; teachers with international experience have developed considerable courage and self-esteem while participating in the struggle to adapt to the new environment.
- ❖ Independence; teachers with international experience have expressed their freedom and free decision-making skills.
- ❖ Motivation; teachers become more willing to learn a foreign language and they are more motivated to learn about new teaching strategies from their colleagues in the new environment.
- ❖ Social skills; teachers have expressed that their social skills have improved.

Clinebell and Kvedaravičienė (2013) stated that teachers working abroad are more experienced and can renew themselves more in terms of professional development. Killian and Wilkins (2013) argue that the influence of the well-communicated learners on student success is indisputable because they are very successful in motivating and engaging learners and providing the students with a comfortable learning

environment, and teachers with international experience can understand and communicate with their students better.

Conclusion

Teachers need to be aware of the global needs of education. They should prepare effective course materials and lesson plans, and learn how to use the technology in a useful way to create a learning environment. Examining different educational systems to enrich the curriculum and to develop teaching skills has become a need for teachers. Teachers should meet the demands of students and without being aware of the changes and innovations in education, it is not easy to provide for the students with their needs. International experience help teachers develop themselves in all aspects. They find a good opportunity to see new education systems, curricula, teaching strategies, lesson plans, course materials. They can adapt these changes in their home country and contribute to the achievement of the students. Moreover, teachers develop their social skills while working abroad. They can understand their students better and can easily communicate with them.

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