

Editorial

The political dichotomy of teacher migration

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Introducing the subject

This Special Issue of *Perspectives in Education* on the subject of the transnational migration and recruitment of teachers could not come at a more critical moment in international relations. Yet the issue of teacher recruitment and migration and its impact on the loss of teaching personnel from the education systems of Commonwealth member countries was raised as far back as the 13th Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers held in Botswana in 1997.

There are clearly identifiable reasons why recruitment between Commonwealth member countries is at significant levels. First, as is the case with health workers such as doctors and nurses, teachers are classified among the highly skilled. Any worker speaking a global language such as English is an asset to recruiters in a market where that language is the medium of communication and instruction. In this respect the teacher from the English-speaking Commonwealth can be a particular asset to any of its 53 members who may be seeking to recruit teachers from overseas. Further, Commonwealth teachers have often been educated in a system influenced, if not based on the English Education system. Secondly, as the profession of teaching is sadly becoming in most of countries a profession of least or last choice, teachers who are nationals of their own countries are not staying in the profession, and in the case of the Commonwealth's large industrialised members, prefer to work outside of the inner-cities where the challenges of teaching may be the greatest. It is interesting that the converse appears to be the case in South Africa, where it appears that most teachers wish to remain in urban areas rather than move to rural schools.

There is a third reason for the popularity in recruiting teachers from Africa and the Caribbean, one which is also debatable. There is a theory which receives considerable support in the United States of America (USA) and United Kingdom (UK) that in schools where there is a high density of children from various ethnic and multi-cultural backgrounds, it is desirable to recruit teachers of that ethnicity to teach these children, as these children may identify more easily with teachers from their own ethnic backgrounds. This situation has led to Caribbean teachers in New York state teaching classes of East African children and Southern African teachers being recruited to teach in Caribbean communities in the United Kingdom. If this cross-cultural exchange is possible, why is it not also possible for the American-born or English-born teacher to be trained to teach the Caribbean or African child? But that might be a discussion for another time and place.

The situation of teachers migrating from their own countries, in response to recruitment efforts, is expected to continue in the future. A Commonwealth-Secretariat-commissioned study by Kimberly Ochs of Oxford University in 2003 showed that whilst considerable levels of "south-south" and regionally-based recruitment of teachers existed – between South Africa and countries such as Uganda, for example; between Guyana in the Caribbean and Botswana in Africa; between India and the Seychelles – large scale movement tends to be either "south-north" or between countries such as Canada and the UK. It is projected that 2.4 million new teachers will be required

in the United States by 2008/9, Australia has projected a national shortfall of 5 000 in 2005, and in the United Kingdom, by 2006, the demand for teachers may be as high as 40 000,¹. So in three industrialised countries a total of nearly 2.5 million teachers will be needed by 2009. Yet, Sir John Daniels of the Commonwealth of Learning stated at a recent Education Ministers meeting that some 10 million teachers are needed in Africa if it is even to attempt to meet the 2015 goals of Education for All (EFA).

To compound the situation, in a consultation on the Recruitment and Migration of the Highly Skilled hosted recently by the Secretariat, Van der Schaaf of the world-wide association of teachers organisations, Education International, said that in industrialised countries the demographic trends of ageing populations are coinciding with limited inflows of young teachers. Over the next decade, up to 40% of teachers in industrialised countries will retire. Van der Schaaf holds that the industrialised countries have the means to address this impending shortfall, but have planned poorly and are now buying their human resources from overseas.²

The Commonwealth Teacher Recruitment Protocol

For the Commonwealth Secretariat, action and ensuing work on the issues of Teacher Migration through recruitment, took centre stage in 2002 when the Jamaican Minister of Education made a formal call on the Secretariat to request assistance with addressing the loss of teachers to his education system through recruitment principally organised by overseas recruitment agencies and businesses. The Commonwealth-commissioned study "Teaching at Risk"³ would later reveal that in this Minister's country, Jamaica, a country of 2.5 million people, the UK alone in the period 2001-2003, had recruited more teachers than a country such as Canada with a population of 30 million.

The visit of the Jamaican Minister led to a meeting of Caribbean Ministers of Education in Barbados from which emerged the Savannah Accord. This document called upon Commonwealth Education Ministers in general, and the Ministers of Education of the Commonwealth's 32 Small states in particular, to

- determine the extent of teacher loss and its impact on education systems through the conduct of a Pan-Commonwealth study of the problem; and
- develop a Protocol for the recruitment of teachers.

A particular feature of the Savannah Accord was a request for regulatory guidelines and controls for recruiters which would address the standards and quality of the recruitment process. Despite some resistance from the larger recruiting countries, at the 15th Commonwealth Education Ministers meeting in Edinburgh, Scotland in 2003, a discussion on the critical issues of international teacher recruitment were addressed and Ministers called for the establishment of a Working Group on Teacher Recruitment under the chairmanship of Commonwealth Deputy Secretary, General Winston Cox.

Through two meetings of the Working Group, one in Lesotho in February 2004 and the other in the United Kingdom in August 2004, a draft Protocol was developed which was adopted by Ministers of Education on September 1, 2005 at Stoke Rochford Hall in the United Kingdom. Item 2.3.1 of the Protocol, the document aims to

¹ Ochs, Kimberly in *A summary of teaching at risk – teacher mobility and loss in Commonwealth member states*, Commonwealth Secretariat (September, 2003).

² Van der Schaaf, Wouter in report on the *Consultation on the recruitment and migration of the highly skilled (nurses and teachers)*," Commonwealth Secretariat, January 25, 2005.

³ Ochs, Kimberly in *A summary of teaching at risk – teacher mobility and loss in Commonwealth member states*, Commonwealth Secretariat (September, 2003).

balance 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 scarce human resources of poor countries.

This is consistent with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which provides for the right to education as well as the right to free movement of persons.

The Protocol outlines the rights and responsibilities of source and recruiting countries and the recruited teacher. The document also speaks to the monitoring, evaluation and future actions required of member countries and of the Secretariat. Commonwealth agreements of this nature do not have legal, but do have moral force.

There is a deeper significance in speaking to this International Labour Organisation (ILO) forum however, as Ministers of Education when adopting the Protocol specifically requested that

the Commonwealth shall in collaboration with international organisations such as the ILO and UNESCO seek to promote the Protocol as an international standard of best practice in organised teacher recruitment (CTRP para 7.4).

In a public lecture presented to a gathering of Ministers of Education of Africa and their senior officials at the third mid-term review of Commonwealth Education, the convenor of the Commonwealth Teachers Grouping, Steve Sinnott, who is also general secretary of the largest teachers union in the United Kingdom, told Ministers of this continent that teachers from Africa recruited by agencies to his country were:

in instances lied to by agencies, paid outside of the national pay and conditions framework of the United Kingdom, put into accommodation with homeless people and people with mental illnesses, made redundant, and had their confidence and dignity taken from them.

Mr Sinnott concluded that the Commonwealth Teacher Recruitment Protocol has protected many teachers and needed to extend that protection to more of them.

The International Labour Organisation (ILO) has a considerable track record in protecting the rights of workers and migrant workers in particular, the category in which recruited teachers would fall. A look at the last fifty years reveals that since 1949, the International Labour Organisation (ILO) in the Migration for Employment Convention (Revised) 1949⁴ has sought to guide and influence national policies, laws and regulations relating to emigration and immigration and "specifically migration for employment and the conditions of work and livelihood of migrants for employment".

The articles of this Convention and several which followed it, addressed the "regulation of recruitment, introduction and placing of migrant workers, adequate and free services to assist migrants for employment, accurate information to counter misleading propaganda, the right to fair and adequate remuneration, accommodation and membership of trade unions, and the adoption of an active employment policy and international collaboration" in these matters.

In the 1960's, recognising the impact of migration on "underdevelopment", the ILO noted that there was awareness of the "stress" that migration can create in developing countries and the need to "encourage the transfer of capital and technology rather than of workers" in the "reciprocal interest of the countries of origin and the countries of employment". It is interesting to note that so long ago the ILO was prepared to take a position which may have seemed contrary to the free movement of workers allowed in the International Declaration of Human Rights, in the interests of countering a trend which could lead to the depletion of human capital in developing countries. In the Employment Policy Convention and Recommendation 1964,⁵ the ILO emphasised the need to avoid "the excessive and uncontrolled or unassisted increase of

⁴ C97 Migration for Employment Convention (Revised) 1949 – International Labour Organisation.

⁵ Employment Policy Convention and Recommendation (1964) – International Labour Organisation.

migratory movements because of their negative and human consequences". Other relevant ILO Conventions include Convention 143 for Migrant Workers 1975 and the more recent and relevant Convention 181 on Private Employment Agencies 1997.

In these latter conventions, in an effort to "recall the need to protect workers against abuses"⁶ whilst "recognising the role which private employment agencies may play in a well-functioning labour market",⁷ the International Labour Organisation (ILO) at its 85th session in June 1997 adopted the Private Employment Agencies Convention C181, 1997.

In Article 4 of the Convention⁸, which was a revision of the ILO Fee-Charging Employment Agencies Convention (Revised) 1949, the right of workers recruited by private employment agencies to freedom of association and to collective bargaining is stressed as is Article 5, the right of the employment agency worker not to suffer discrimination on the basis of race, colour, sex, religion, political opinion, national extraction, social origin, age or disability. Articles 8.2 and 10 of the Convention state that:

Where workers are recruited in one country for work in another, the members concerned shall consider concluding bilateral agreements to prevent abuses and fraudulent practices in recruitment, placement and employment (Article 8.2).

and that

adequate machinery and procedures involving ... the most representative employers and workers organisations (shall) exist for the investigation of complaints, alleged abuses and fraudulent practices concerning the activities of private employment agencies (Article 10).

The Commonwealth Protocol has sought to bring together in one instrument a document which reminds member countries – both source and recruiting countries – that teachers who have been or wish to be recruited to jobs overseas, have rights and responsibilities consistent with the efforts of the ILO in protecting migrant workers over the last fifty years. There is however, an urgent need to disseminate the information in the Protocol to all to whom it applies: recruiting countries, source countries, recruiters and recruitment agencies, and recruited teachers.

Recruited teachers especially need to:

- give adequate notice to their ministries or departments of education if they are resigning or requesting long leave, so as not to disrupt the school year (5.2)
- be provided with full information regarding their contracts of appointment overseas, before giving up their jobs to migrate (5.1)
- enjoy employment conditions not less than those of nationals of similar status and occupying similar positions (3.10)
- be informed about the details, names and contact details of teachers unions and complaints mechanisms of the countries to which they are recruited by the country to which they are recruited).

⁶ Preamble to Private Employment Agencies Convention C181, 1997, Bureau for Worker's Activities, International Labour Organisation, Geneva.

⁷ Preamble to Private Employment Agencies Convention C181, 1997, Bureau for Worker's Activities, International Labour Organisation, Geneva.

⁸ Private Employment Agencies Convention C181, 1997, Bureau for Worker's Activities, International Labour Organisation, Geneva.

The Protocol and the International Labour Organisation

Examining the Education Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and EFA targets of "Achieving Universal Primary Education by 2015", it is clear that some industrialised members have been able to provide primary education to all their children since the 1800s (e.g. New Zealand). Others, it is projected, will certainly not achieve UPE by 2015 or for many years after that. Understandably, industrialised countries wish to sustain the quality of their education systems. By offering better salaries, the wealthy nations justify the recruitment of teachers from overseas by stating that the source countries from which they attract teaching personnel benefit from the remittances sent back to those countries, which in turn foster development.

There are also senior officials and heads of state in some developing countries who welcome the migration of teachers, especially among those who have just graduated with their teaching qualifications, as they perceive the experience of teaching abroad for a time to be value-added for their education systems. They also anticipate the return of the new graduate within a matter of years. Indeed, the Commonwealth Business Council in London has launched a programme called *AfricaRecruit* for the purpose of encouraging – not just teachers – but all professionals of African origin to return to work in Africa. Some government officials welcome the in-flow of remittances which the migrated teachers send back to their source countries.

On the other hand, it is also accepted that the loss of teachers – in particular the well qualified and experienced – from the classrooms of many of our developing countries through recruitment by developed countries, coupled with the impact of HIV&AIDS – which has seriously depleted the teaching force in many Southern African countries in particular – can seriously affect the attainment of Universal Primary Education in poor countries.

So, on the one hand industrialised countries state their commitment to supporting all poorer countries wishing to attain the MDGs. At the same time they are perceived as limiting the ability of these countries to attain the Education MDGs through recruiting teachers from poorer countries who may desperately need them.

Conclusion

It is within this context that we have solicited papers from colleagues in both developing and developed nations to submit manuscripts for inclusion in this Special Issue. The rich collection of articles chosen combine country-specific case studies with broader theoretical arguments about the place of teacher migration within the logics and politics of an interconnected, globalised economy.

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