

Clarifying the relationship between teacher movement and culture: four teacher profiles

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The influence of globalization on teachers can be observed in the increasing numbers who seek jobs abroad. Globalization encourages teachers to seek better professional and living standards elsewhere. What attracts them to live and work beyond their own countries is dependent on their knowledge and skills and the value assigned to them in different places (Varghese, 2009).

The recent increase in the number of these teachers reveals that they have been successful in applying their expertise in new situations, possibly by recasting their instructional methods to fit the culture of their students in their new destination country. Yet teachers are faced with challenges of several kinds during a move from their own country to the host country, or from one host country to another.

Some of these challenges are associated with logistics, whereas others are embedded deep in cultural differences. For instance, initially, the job application and early initiation process can be expected to be challenging; and at later stages, language and communication differences, adaptation to a different culture and lifestyle, adaptation of one's pedagogical methods and materials to those used in the classroom in the host country, and management of the behavior of students are some of the challenges that can be expected to surface (Sharplin, 2009).

In short, teaching in another country is a challenging job in many ways. The main purpose of this study is to clarify mathematics and science teachers' understanding of teaching and culture, and the relationship between movement between cultures and teaching.

This study is a naturalistic inquiry. We worked with two high school science teachers and two high school mathematics teachers who had teaching experience in various countries and were accessible to us. We utilized face-to-face interviews, classroom observations during formal teaching hours, and several different types of artifact (lesson plans, worksheets, and other instructional materials) as the main data sources. The data were unitized and coded and the emergent patterns were identified and categorized intuitively.

Findings were organized under three themes: (a) profiles of the teachers; (b) teachers' different views of culture; (c) teacher movement: relocation or mobility?