

Working Overseas: An Ideal Way to Improve Teaching Profession

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Abstract: Working abroad as a teacher is a great opportunity to develop teaching skills. Teachers develop new teaching strategies and transfer them to their own countries, learn how to use technological devices effectively in the classroom, learn about other people and other cultures and share their experiences with their students to create a stress free learning environment. These notions help teachers facilitate learning and make difference in teaching. Moreover, teachers with international experience can understand their students better. They can discern the needs and difficulties the students have and develop teaching strategies to help students with them. This paper explains the benefits of working abroad and writes about experiences of some teachers who worked overseas.

Keywords: Teaching Abroad, Strategies, Stories, Experiences, Transfer

The widespread assumption is that working abroad as a teacher provides teachers positive experiences which will bring benefits to them in terms of teaching methods and principles. Although teachers have to overcome some difficult barriers, working abroad provides a great many advantageous to teachers for personal and professional development.

Wilson (1984) has made four different studies on teachers who worked abroad. In one of these studies, Wilson studied the experiences of 12 Americans who went to Nigeria. These teachers stated that their lives were greatly changed and the international experience had great impact on their teaching practice. They also pointed out that working abroad helped them develop their self-confidence and increased their interest towards teaching profession. American teachers saw that international experience shaped their teaching practice, allowed them to use more materials in the classroom, enabled them to provide more options to the students, helped them use different teaching strategies rather than traditional methods the students are used to, and enriched their teaching by presenting examples from the countries they worked in. Wilson (1983) argues that international experience has impact on the development of teachers' teaching techniques.

In addition to this, using real materials in their lessons, taking the interest of the students by comparing their countries with the country they worked in, giving real examples for better understanding of the topics are some advantages of international experience. Teachers with international experience can also

absorb students' interest and make difference in teaching through explaining how they taught the same topic abroad and what questions they received by the students there.

Wilson (1984) studied the experiences of teachers who went to Tanzania and Zimbabwe in America and found that this experience had a very positive effect on the teachers. Returning to their country teachers expressed that international experience enabled them to become very enthusiastic about teaching profession. These teachers stated that they always sought for different ways of teaching to help their students understand better. One of the biggest benefits of teaching abroad the teachers voiced that they understood their students much better. Moreover, they became more helpful to the students as they comprehended the needs and the difficulties the students experienced in the learning process. The teachers realized that it was of primary importance to encourage the students for more achievement. Promoting self-confidence of students, creating group work to increase students' responsibility, involving them in classroom discussions to enable them produce new ideas are some useful strategies the American teachers developed while teaching abroad.

The use of activities in the classroom holds an important place in the learning process. It is likely that students will understand more easily when activities are employed. Teachers who work abroad are at advantage because they see how teachers in other countries teach, and what kind of materials they utilize in the classroom. Teachers while working abroad benefit from these ideas and transfer them to their home countries (Serin, 2017).

International experience is great opportunity for professional development for teachers. Teachers can motivate their students by means of sharing their experiences they had in the countries where they taught. Also students like to listen to real stories from other countries (Casale-Giannola, 2000). Listening to stories of people belonging to an unknown culture can be interesting for students. For this reason, teachers can change the learning process into fun by telling stories belonging to other countries to motivate their students. In other words, the use of real stories in the classroom can facilitate the learning process for students. It is likely that students will show interest in the topic they are studying in the classroom when a real story related to it is told in the classroom by someone who experienced it.

Casale-Giannola (2000) in a study conducted on teachers who taught abroad stated that the teachers increased their abilities in areas such as field knowledge, new methods, and different curriculum applications. Subject matter knowledge is a primary need for effective teaching. Furthermore, the ability to present the knowledge is another significant issue in pedagogy. Teachers who work abroad develop different teaching strategies to facilitate the comprehension of topics. Casale-Giannola (2000), for example, mentions an American teacher, Maria, who worked in London. She always tried to create a stress free learning environment in which all students in the classroom asked questions related to the topic without any anxiety and fear. This learning environment Casale-Giannola (2000) argues is an ideal setting for students in which they can understand far better. International experience can help teachers to create an ideal learning setting.

If technology is integrated in the classroom, learning is conducted with ease. Casale-Giannola (2000) argues that teachers who work abroad become eager to use technological devices in the classroom. While working abroad they understand the necessity of using technology in teaching to enable students learn with ease. The implementation of technology while teaching, motivates students and promotes

their interest in learning. Teachers while working abroad see their colleagues using technological tools in the classroom and they will be stimulated to use them as well in their own classes.

Traditional methods are no longer effective in the classroom. Teachers are seeking for new ways of teaching to break monotony. Telling a story about a subject while teaching will both raise the attention of students and remove monotony from the classroom. At the same time, telling about other people and places to students will help them increase their knowledge of a new culture and keep the newly acquired knowledge for a long time. Casale-Giannola (2000), for example, writes about an American teacher, Laura, who works in Europe and states that there is a good relationship between Laura and her students as the students enjoy the real stories Laura tells them in the classroom.

Rapoport (2008) found that teachers can influence the learning process of the students by employing different methods that they have learnt while working abroad. Rapoport (2008) writes about Helga, a teacher who works in Canada. Helga is experienced in playing games in lessons. Rapoport states that Helga has developed new teaching strategies while working abroad and has started using games. The use of games Helga says is a motivating factor to get involved in the learning.

Rapoport (2008) writes about Irene's experiences and states that Irene has benefited from working abroad as a teacher and has developed new teaching methods to be employed in her classes. Irene says she uses cultural aspects of countries and nations very often in her classes and tells stories to her students in the classroom which allows students to increase their attention. Irene points out that she tells about daily events to her students so that the students can keep their motivation for a long time. She says she also creates a learning setting in the classroom in which the students are allowed to discuss the daily events. Through discussions she argues, the students pay more attention to the classes and make more contributions.

Rapoport (2008) while describing the impressions of a Russian teacher named Angela, states that she is pursuing a teaching technique based on reading. Angela has learned this technique from her colleagues in the United States and is also using it in her own classes after going back to her own country. Angela thinks the reading of texts related to the subject being taught in the classroom is interesting to the students and it not only removes monotony from the classroom but also makes the learning process easier.

Rapoport (2008) writes about Sara another teacher who worked in the UK and learned how to use drama techniques in the classroom. Another teacher Lori employs communication-based method in the learning environment. Lori says she learnt this method from her colleagues in America and concludes that her students would like to participate in the discussions more after she started to use it in the classroom.

Teacher-centered teaching has been found tedious by students. As long as students are not involved in the classroom actively learning does not occur. For that reason, classroom discussions, the use of stories about other people and nations, and games are useful strategies to employ which can better the learning in the classroom. The use of such activities helps students to accomplish better as they lead to an enjoyable learning setting.

Traditional methods are no longer favored by students and create monotony. The use of different lesson materials and strategies can affect students' learning. International experience is useful for teachers in that it enables them to develop their teaching skills. Teachers improve their teaching practice and implement them in their own classes. At the same time, the use of strategies that the students are not used to is another advantage of international experience.

Casale-Giannola (2000) in a study writes about Nicole who worked abroad as a teacher. The study states that Nicole uses materials very often in her classes. Nicole who says she has developed her teaching skills while working abroad, argues that the use of materials in the classroom positively influences the achievement of students. She uses pictures of the places she has been earlier and tells stories about them, posters and maps to increase motivation of her students. Nicole points out that students like seeing pictures about other countries and learning about them. Pictures Nicole argues allow students to make comparisons and learning in the classroom turns into fun.

Casale-Giannola (2000) writes about an American teacher, Sandra, who taught abroad. Sandra states that after her international experience her teaching practice has completely changed. She says she has developed new teaching strategies from her colleagues in the countries where she worked. After going back to America, she employed the same strategies in her classes. She noticed that the new strategies increased the effectiveness and students learnt better.

While writing about the international experiences of a teacher, Mark, who worked in China, Casale-Giannola (2000) states that he largely benefited from working abroad. Similarly, Casale-Giannola (2000) says that Alison who taught abroad also improved her teaching techniques. Alison points out that international experience has changed the ways she thinks, she can comment on things from different perspectives. Alison says she does not ask her students to learn theoretical information anymore; rather she pays attention to practice. One of the greatest benefits of international experience she expresses is the use of different teaching methods she taught while working abroad in the classroom.

Conclusion

Although it has some barriers, working abroad provides some useful advantageous for teachers. Teachers need to develop their teaching methods to meet the needs of their students. Insisting on traditional methods might not lead to achievement; for that reason, it is a primary responsibility for teachers to develop their teaching skills. Working abroad is an ideal way for teachers to develop their teaching practice. International experience can help teachers develop new teaching strategies which they can use in the classroom after going back to their own countries. Teachers can enrich their teaching by means of making use of experiences of their colleagues in the countries where they work.

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