Recruitment into Initial Teacher Education and Training in the Cayman Islands

A Synergy of Local and International Research

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Abstract

The aim of this paper is to generate potential ideas for encouraging the recruitment of teachers into initial teacher education and training (ITET) in the Cayman Islands. This is accomplished through the analysis of the results of two regional research reports, the 2006 Organisation of American States Caribbean Sub-Region Consultant Study Report and the 2001 report of the committee set up to examine the conditions relating to the recruitment of Caymanians into the teaching profession. Specific suggestions for enhancing the recruitment process are offered.

Key words: teacher education, Cayman Islands, policy, Caribbean, reflective teaching, teachers, initial teacher education training

Introduction

To generate potential ideas for encouraging the recruitment of teachers into initial teacher education and training (ITET) in the Cayman Islands, I carried out an analysis of the results of two current regional research reports. The

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reports used in the analysis were the Organisation of American States Caribbean Sub-Region Consultant Study Report, chaired by Dr Paula Mark (Mark 2006), and the 2001 report of the committee set up to examine the conditions relating to the recruitment of Caymanians into the teaching profession, chaired by Mr Gilbert McLean (McLean 2001).

In the following pages I both display the analysis process I employed and highlight and discuss the ideas that emerged. I begin with a succinct review of literature on teacher recruitment and use this to support and interrogate, where possible, the ideas which emerge from the analysis. This leads to the identification of potential ways of encouraging the recruitment of teachers into ITET in the Islands.

**TEACHER RECRUITMENT: LITERATURE REVIEW**

For the Caribbean region, the challenge of recruiting teachers into ITET and subsequently retaining them in the profession is brought into sharper focus, and is further exacerbated, when looked at in light of the fact that trained Caribbean teachers are being recruited to serve in other countries and regions. According to Feistritzer (1998), by the next decade, the United States of America will need 2 million teachers to adequately staff its schools. Morris and Williamson (1998) indicate that there is also a serious shortage of teachers in the People's Republic of China, owing to a rapid increase in school enrolment. There are major differences between urban and rural employment for Chinese teachers. The opportunity cost of a job as a teacher is perceived as high, and there is a high rate of teacher attrition. Teacher shortages exist in Australia and Singapore for a variety of reasons, from teachers' opting for early retirement to the attraction of alternative sources of employment (Morris and Williamson 1998).

To address the challenge of teacher shortages, these countries have sought to attract and retain the services of overseas teachers, including those from the Caribbean. During 2002, Jamaica reported that they "lost" 600 teachers, mainly to the United States and the United Kingdom (Baker 2002). Baker pointed out that during 2002 the British government issued 6,000 work permits to foreign teachers. South Africa, India, and Caribbean islands such as
Barbados and Trinidad are concerned about the wide-scale recruitment of their teachers by economically buoyant countries.

These circumstances seem to suggest that the need to recruit teachers into ITET is a global issue, and one cannot rule out even a tenuous relationship between the global wholesale recruitment exercise and the challenge of recruitment into ITET. Could it be that because, globally, teaching as a profession is unattractive, not many people are entering ITET programmes? This seems to be the case, as highlighted by the statistics of the European Commission 1996, cited by Buchberger (2000). Buchberger makes the point that teaching is indeed an unprofitable and unattractive job option, and according to the statistics, teachers' income has decreased relative to the income of other professionals in most member states of the European Union.

The global demand for teachers, including those from the Caribbean, offers the region both a challenge and an opportunity – a challenge in that new teachers need to be attracted, recruited, educated, and trained; and an opportunity in that trained teachers who seek economic independence can achieve it by practising their profession in an economically buoyant community.

The global demand has clarified the problems in the Cayman Islands: both recruiting teachers into initial teacher education and training, and recruiting trained teachers from other countries to serve locally. The challenge is that larger recruiters such as the United Kingdom and the United States are now tapping the Islands' usual catchment areas. Given the global demand for teachers, the need to increase and retain the number of trained native teachers is critical. One obstacle to attracting and retaining Caymanians into the teaching profession is that they are tempted by more lucrative and apparently attractive jobs – just as in China (Morris and Williamson 1998).

There are many reasons underlying this situation, and one seems to be a strong link between a country's general economic condition and teacher recruitment into ITET, both from other countries and within the country. Furlong et al. (2000) noted that when the economy of England and Wales was "buoyant", teacher recruitment was lower because of the availability of more lucrative and attractive job options. Buchberger (2000) also highlighted this occurrence in the member states of the European Union. The Cayman Islands' economy is "buoyant", and recruitment of local teachers into ITET is low.
Other obstacles involve incentives, including teachers' salaries, and lifestyle issues including societal expectations of teachers, student behaviour, and the quality of teachers recruited (Morris and Williamson 1998). The solutions are not easily discerned but require systematic research into policy and practice locally. Further research could aid in solving problems faced by the Cayman Islands as well as in making the teaching profession more attractive.

A few writers have provided some potential solutions. The National Teacher Recruitment Clearinghouse (2003) suggests that both salary and status of teachers should be improved and that new, effective marketing strategies are needed. Morris and Williamson (1998) and Fine (1995) suggest the need to

- Shrink class size,
- Prepare teachers to teach more than just one subject, and
- Encourage untrained teachers to pursue initial teacher training on an in-service basis.

Morris and Williamson (1998) argue that in Japan and Taiwan, where teaching is a relatively well-paying job and where the career structure places a premium on lifetime employment, the supply of new teachers is high and there is a low level of attrition. If this is the case, then questions need to be raised regarding career structure and its underlying values, not only in the Cayman Islands but also in other Caribbean countries grappling with the issue of teacher recruitment into ITET. I will say more about this later in this paper.

Buchberger (2000) states that many European countries have tackled the shortage of teachers by

- Providing special incentives to prospective teachers,
- Opening up alternatives routes into ITET, and
- Employing measures to retain qualified teachers in schools, such as special incentives, different career structures, or part-time employment.

Furlong et.al. (2000) also discussed the use of training teachers in schools, or what they refer to as using non-conventional courses in the training of teachers as a means of addressing teacher shortages.

The foregoing discussion elicited interesting suggestions; however, given the social, cultural, political, and educational context of each Caribbean state
and, in particular, the Cayman Islands, it is not easy to discern what will and will not work, and systematic research is required. This paper's contribution is an analysis of relevant recommendations resulting from research which sought to address the problems of teacher recruitment not only in the Cayman Islands but also in the Caribbean region.

**OAS Report: Background, Methods, and Purpose**

The research and the subsequent report resulted from the concern of the Organisation of American States with the challenge of improving the quality of teacher education – recruitment and selection, initial education and training, professional development, and evaluation of teachers – in countries of the Caribbean. The first task was to develop policies to guide teacher education, including policies to regulate the recruitment and selection process.

An online survey facilitated the gathering of information on the status of teacher education in individual countries. Workshops were held in the Caribbean sub-region and were attended by Ministry of Education officers with responsibility for teacher education and by educators of teachers. The aim of these workshops was to identify best practices and to develop competencies and professional standards that would form the basis of a harmonized policy for teacher education in the sub-region. Follow-up workshops were held to complete the validation of the outputs.

**Cayman Islands Study Report: Background, Methods, and Purpose**

On 25 January 2001 the Hon. Roy Bodden, then Minister of Education, Human Resources, and Culture, appointed a committee and gave it four terms of reference. Among them was to determine ways and means of attracting Caymanians into the teaching profession, giving particular attention to male Caymanians. In determining who was a Caymanian teacher, the committee was to treat holders of Caymanian status and born Caymanians as one and the same.
The methods employed by the committee to gather data included personal and telephone interviews, questionnaires, staff profile surveys, and staff organizational charts. The scope of the information gathered incorporated Grand Cayman and Cayman Brac and both public and private schools, ranging from preschool through tertiary and including special education institutions.

**ANALYSIS OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS**

Table 1 outlines the recommendations of both studies with regard to the recruitment of teachers into ITET.

**Policies for ITET**

These studies reveal that the formulation, implementation, and evaluation of overall policies which guide the process of ITET are a challenge for most, if not all, Caribbean countries. It seems that this area is either overlooked or under-studied or both. In the Cayman Islands, there are apparently no written policies governing ITET.

A study carried out by Bullock, Mountford, and Stanley (2001) is a response to the UK government's recognition of the role of policies in giving direction to and enhancing efficient and effective public service. The study highlights the fact that developing relevant and responsive policies is challenging but achievable. For example, effective policies are developed around the needs of the customers (and in our case this would mean the needs of student teachers and the people we wish to attract to the teaching profession). These policies must be based on best practices that are verifiable and supported by research. The process of arriving at effective policies should involve techniques such as brainstorming, scenario planning, and risk management and should also include, at key stages, help from those with technical expertise relevant to the area for which policies are being developed.

Some obstacles to the development of effective policies include (but are not limited to) inadequate time to engage with policy formulation; demands on resources, such as information technology; and inflexible organizational
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Table 1. List of recommendations of both studies

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<tr>
<th>Organisation of American States (OAS) Study</th>
<th>Cayman Islands Study</th>
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<td><strong>Recruitment into initial teacher education and training (ITET)</strong></td>
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<td>Criteria for selection into a programme of initial preparation should include the matriculation requirements for entry into the institution delivering the programme, an interview, and evidence of a commitment to teaching as a career and to working with children.</td>
<td>Initiate preliminary teacher training studies in the community college up to associate degree level with a long-term plan to complete teacher training if found realistic.</td>
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<td>There should be an aggressive recruitment mechanism that targets desirable persons from across the range of secondary- and tertiary-level institutions. Mature persons wishing to enter the teaching service as a career change should also be accommodated within the programme of initial preparation. Career guidance programmes targeting secondary school students and students in tertiary-level institutions can serve to shape thinking re teaching as a lifelong career by providing accurate information about its various aspects.</td>
<td>Start a major national advertising campaign to promote teaching as a viable, respected, and satisfying profession.</td>
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<td>The selection process for entry into initial preparation should be the responsibility of the teacher education institution, and should include an interview by a panel that comprises teacher educators and Ministry of Education officers.</td>
<td>Initiate action to attract ex-teachers and professionals in the private sector to teach.</td>
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<td>... a programme of initial preparation, the academic level of this programme must be pitched at the undergraduate baccalaureate level. The program should aim at providing a liberal education, with knowledge and skill acquisition in content areas, professional studies, and practical teaching, and which is grounded in the real world of the school and classroom.</td>
<td>Create written educational policies to cover all areas, ensuring circulation to schools and every employee within the education system.</td>
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<td>A policy framework for recruitment into the teaching service must form part of a wider comprehensive rationalized teacher education system.</td>
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*The Caribbean: Issues, Challenges, Perspectives*
structure, especially if a number of people or departments are involved and if, within departments or within the organization as a whole, there is a culture of risk avoidance. The last phrase emphasizes an important fact: the development and implementation of new policies does involve taking risks.

What, then, are best practices in the area of policy development? This question needs to be answered because the answer will aid in fulfilling a secondary, yet important, aim of this paper by acting as a catalyst for discussions regarding policy formulation for ITET in the Cayman Islands. For the answer, I will look again at the study by Bullock, Mountford, and Stanley (2001), which the writers claim is the most comprehensive survey that has ever been undertaken on modern policy making.

The study suggests that best practices in policy formulation might include assessing the risk to the department or institution involved, finding out if the appropriate skills and understanding exist in the institution, and, if necessary, employing the services of another organization to engage with the formulation process. Another best practice might involve building innovation into the policy formulation process, using a "think outside the box" approach where participants are encouraged to conceive ideas, articulate them, and have them scrutinized by others. This might require setting aside established ways of operating or thinking and creating an environment that supports creative thinking. For example, it might suggest the need to support policy makers by seeking extensive advice from experts in education and other relevant areas; perform a strategic review of institutions and departments; and adopt and implement innovative techniques from business and elsewhere.

Bullock and colleagues emphasize the need to adopt a strategic, or forward-looking, approach to policy formulation. This requires the establishment of flexible and non-hierarchical teamwork, inclusion of the widest possible range of stakeholders, and recruitment of people from different disciplines with the appropriate skills and experience to undertake particular projects. The need might also arise to carry out research and analysis – for example, analysing statistical trends and informed forecasting based on the experiences of other countries in the region, and recognizing variations which exist in the country in which the policy is to be implemented.

I conclude that not only the opportunity but the need exists locally to
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encourage recruitment into ITET by developing policies for it, policies that would direct actions and guide innovations, thus boosting people's trust in the process and product of ITET. These policies should be developed using a strategic and innovative approach.

Policies should be formulated to address the nature and kinds of academic qualifications and standards offered by local teacher education and training institutions. This in turn would aid in determining the kind of academic qualifications and standards required for entering the teaching service.

Policies are also needed on the process of recruitment into ITET, specifically on the promotion of teaching as a career and on the appropriate targets for this promotion, including mature people wishing to enter the teaching service, professionals in the private sector, and students from both secondary- and tertiary-level institutions. Further examination of the findings of the OAS and Cayman Islands studies reveals that there is no uniformity among ITET programmes in the region. This observation is relevant to the Cayman Islands, for there are no known national policy documents governing these areas.

Academic qualification and standard

Both reports point to the need for academic qualifications, such as an associate or bachelor's degree, to be a standard part of ITET. This requirement is common practice around the world; one just needs to access the Web sites of universities and colleges offering teacher education. This has not generally been the case in the Caribbean, however, where the practice (at least in Jamaica) until a decade ago was that colleges initially offered only teacher training certificates and later teacher training diplomas. Those who were awarded teacher training certificates were encouraged to participate in a year or two of in-service education and training to be awarded the teacher training diploma. It is only over the past 10 years that teacher education and training colleges in Jamaica began offering a bachelor's degree in ITET.

The Cayman Islands Government stipulates that expatriate teachers should have a first degree, that is, a bachelor's degree, and at least five years' teaching experience prior to practising in the local education system. With
the introduction of this policy, private schools encouraged their teachers who had previously been employed with undergraduate teacher training certificates and diplomas to upgrade to a bachelor's degree by undertaking additional education and training in their particular field.

The Cayman Islands report under discussion recommends that the acceptable academic qualification should be an associate degree; this, however, would be contrary to the already established government policy, and therefore a bachelor's degree should be the qualification of choice for ITET locally.

The question of whether to offer a Bachelor of Arts in Education or a Bachelor in Education is immaterial at this time. The opportunity exists, however, to encourage recruitment into ITET by offering not just a course of study to upgrade all teachers to bachelor's status but a competitive, internationally recognized BA in Education or BEd. This could be achieved through collaborative enterprises with international and regional universities with reputations for excellence in teacher education and training. With the acquisition of appropriate infrastructure and human resources and the implementation of certain legislation, it would be possible for the Cayman Islands, through its various institutions, to offer degrees in teacher education and training, including those at the doctoral level.

Recruitment mechanism process

Both studies agree on the need for an aggressive recruitment mechanism or advertising campaign to promote teaching as a career. Included in the development of such a campaign should be the identification of appropriate target populations.

These ideas are not original, for the National Teacher Recruitment Clearinghouse (2003) suggested that, while there is a need to make teaching more attractive, there is also a need to employ appropriate marketing strategies geared to recruiting teachers. However, a careful reading of the argument of Morris and Williamson (1998) reveals that in Japan and Taiwan, among other countries, where teaching is a relatively well-paying job and where the career structure places a premium on lifetime employment, the supply of new teachers is high and there is a low level of attrition. It appears that what is
required, in addition to marketing strategies and advertising campaigns, is a paradigm shift, not just for the Cayman Islands but for the Caribbean region.

Guba and Lincoln (1998) refer to a paradigm as a worldview that defines for its holder the nature of the world, the individual's place in it, and the range of possible relationships to that world and its parts, and that binds a community together. Ferrante (1995) states that paradigms are dominant and widely accepted theories and concepts linked to a particular field of study; however, they extend beyond the boundaries of a field of study and offer the best way of looking at the world for the time being. The phrase "for the time being" hints at the fact that paradigms undergo changes or shifts. Ferrante (1995) elaborates by making the point that anomalies, or the out of the ordinary, or the unexpected, threaten paradigms. An anomaly alone will not cause a change or a shift in a paradigm; someone must articulate an alternative paradigm and then the change will occur. So a paradigm can be changed or altered but must be replaced by another that can account convincingly for the anomalies experienced.

The opportunity exists to encourage teacher recruitment into ITET by developing a clearly articulated alternative paradigm regarding career structure and its underlying values in the Cayman Islands. This should be coupled with efforts to improve the economic status of teachers, for, according to Morris and Williamson (1998), this needed paradigm shift is inextricably linked to economics. Unfortunately, an examination of how this could be achieved falls outside the scope of this paper.

Content of the programme of study for ITET

The OAS study highlighted the need to offer ITET that embraces the concept of "a liberal education, with knowledge and skill acquisition in content areas, professional studies, and practical teaching, and which is grounded in the real world of the school and classroom". While this recommendation vividly spells out the facets of an acceptable programme for ITET, it falls short of articulating a model of teaching in which these facets could be framed and which will educate and train teachers to address issues in the "real world" school and classroom.
As I stated in another forum (Minott 2006), what really are required in the ever changing, demanding, and sometimes difficult context of schools are teachers who employ a model of teaching which incorporates an understanding of their personal contexts and beliefs, practical knowledge, and particular content knowledge. This model should enable them to survive the many constraints and irritations and to draw on their own knowledge to solve problems that are unique to their particular teaching situation. This model should also enable creative and innovative approaches to classroom and school situations and problems, which should result in improved learning opportunities for students. The reflective model of teaching provides an excellent opportunity to achieve these.

The advantages of teaching reflectively are many, for individual teachers, the teaching profession, and schools that are willing to employ and encourage its use. For example, Farrell (2001) and Coyle (2002) suggest that reflective teaching demands that teachers employ and develop their cognitive skills as a means of improving their practice. It also demands that teachers develop and use their affective skills to improve their practice. According to Markham (1999), they would use their intuition, initiative, values, and experience during teaching, and exercise judgement about the use of various teaching and research skills. If teachers hone their cognitive and affective skills via reflective teaching, they can improve their ability to react and respond – as they are teaching – to assess, revise, and implement approaches and activities on the spot.

The opportunity exists to encourage teacher recruitment into ITET by framing ITET programmes in a reflective model of teaching which encourages the development of skills and knowledge in content areas, professional studies, and practical teaching, grounded in the real world of the school and classroom.

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CONCLUSION

What are specific ways of encouraging the recruitment of teachers into ITET in the Cayman Islands? Some thoughts follow.

1. Undertake innovative and strategic approaches to policy development in the area of ITET. Policies are needed that would direct actions and guide innovations, thus boosting people's trust in the process and product of ITET.

2. Formulate policies to address the nature and kinds of academic qualifications offered and the standards at which local teacher education and training institutions operate.

3. Develop policies on the process of recruitment into ITET and on the promotion of teaching and the identification of appropriate target populations for recruitment.

4. Offer a competitive and internationally recognized bachelor's programme in education.

5. Develop a clearly articulated alternative paradigm for career structure and its underlying values in the Cayman Islands, coupled with efforts to improve the economic status of teachers.

6. Enable ITET programmes to be framed in a reflective model of teaching which encourages the development of skills and knowledge in content areas, professional studies, and practical teaching, grounded in the real world of the school and classroom.

REFERENCES


