A Code to Live By: In Search of Principles for the Postcolonial Educator

Chris Whitney
Ibra College of Technology
Ibra, Sultanate of Oman
E-mail: onyeka22@hotmail.com

ABSTRACT

English language educators work in a context at home and abroad of both historic and contemporary cultural dominance. Awareness of this by host nationals and the expatriate educators themselves can lead to concerns about the cultural values such people display and, when in leadership positions, their eligibility and competence to make good leadership decisions. In spite of such misgivings, host cultures may display a variety of practices that the conscientious expatriate educator is justified in opposing, and such educators often possess a range of uniquely valuable skills, founded on durable professional principles that may be brought to the service of their host national employers.

1. INTRODUCTION

This paper draws from the experience of delivering educational services in a dozen countries over a period of thirty years and combines this with a reading of some of the standard literature on educational administration. It seeks to

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detail some of the professional contributions educators might make in a post-colonial context and in institutions run by host nation administrations. It will make the case that there are principles by which a successful educational institution may be run, regardless of cultural setting, national political realities or geographic and environmental factors. That many institutions and systems are not run by these principles accounts for chronic poor educational outcomes and a dependency on foreign expertise. The creation of strong institutions run by and providing future opportunities for an indigenous population must be seen as a critical development priority in many national contexts. The competent educator who understands these principles, regardless of nation of origin, has a multitude of specific contributions to make.

The discussion uses both the terms "values" and "principles." The former agrees with the source material in educational administration and is the basis for the rejection of certain cultural practices detailed below. In my understanding, it is a term that refers to our sense of right, wrong and morality, things we are both offended by and violate regularly as we travel from one cultural environment to another. The word, *principles*, a word preferred by Professor Senyo Adjibolosoo applies better to items in the list provided in the conclusion (personal communication). Principles ought to apply regardless of cultural context, however much outrage is incited in cultural contexts where these are not yet recognized, and so I offer, but do not insist on these.[1] I agree that the foundation upon which both professional conduct and institutional policy are built is best thought of as principle based.

The contexts in which we work give us opportunities to exercise both. At present, for example, I am employed in a college of technology in the Sultanate of Oman, where my attention has been preoccupied by a number of the issues that arise when large quantities of young adults, with little apparent preparation, aptitude or motivation, are herded into "college" classrooms. Here they take delivery of a college preparatory language program that terminates ten to twelve grade levels above their measurable skill levels,[2] but from which program they are nonetheless promoted into higher technical programs in engineering, IT and business.

The overseeing ministry provides the textbooks, sets the standards and rejects input that suggests there are flaws in the system. Large cohorts of nervous specialist instructors from poorer countries make an elaborate display of complying with ministry expectations under the name of a quality assurance

program that requires that endless forms be completed, documents compiled, and instructional staff held to administrative routines.

In the case of many such instructional staff members, the salaries earned here will set them up for life at home. There is, consequently, little appetite for rocking the boat. Instead of tackling the educational dysfunction, instructors quietly find ways to inflate the scores of even the most incompetent students. From time to time, exam questions are leaked to them and responses prepared by the instructors. While numerous questionnaires are issued which lead instructional staff to declarations of personal competence, engagement and accountability, no hard data is collected on student performance. Although supervisor observations are made, instructors perceive that they are retained or dismissed on the basis of their popularity with the students. Instructors who find they can no longer work within the college system are told that this is because there have been "too many student complaints" about their classroom performance.[3]

In short, there are a number of institutional issues that an expatriate educator might choose to address having to do with student learning outcomes, the institutional culture of learning, instructor professionalism, and administrative priorities.

2. ENGLISH LANGUAGE EDUCATION

In the profession of English language education a hierarchical relationship exists between native speakers of English and non-native speakers. For many years this relationship was primarily encountered between host nationals and expatriate contract staff, but today, as the demand for English language instruction spreads, expatriate instructional staff is increasingly non-native speaking as well. Here in Oman, for example, expatriate English language instructors in the college system may be native speakers of languages as diverse as Afrikaans, Arabic, Albanian, Bengali, French, Malayalam, Polish, Tagalog, Turkish, Urdu, and Yoruba. While this diversity makes for a more stimulating and globally representative college environment, sometimes an uneasy professional rivalry is also felt.

Many employers, however, still insist that applicants for these positions be native speakers holding passports from the US, UK, Canada, Australia or New Zealand. That is, English language education, internationally, continues to

be practiced by representatives of former colonial systems and carries their visible features. In national contexts where the colonial experience was avoided, non-invasive, or fleeting, the signs of residual hostility tend to be few and rare. (Here in Oman, for example, we are treated quite pleasantly.) In other contexts, our presence is openly discussed as problematic. (Iraq is an example from my recent experience, and Nigeria from in past.)

Educated native speakers do have a fuller and more accurate command of their language. This is of importance in maintaining a high level of accuracy in the language content of classroom instruction and in creating critical documents such as examinations and course handbooks that are relatively error free. Native speakers also have an advantage in their ability to access relevant professional research materials and, consequently, in being able to apply the best information available to their classroom and administrative practices and by being a conduit for new ideas to other teaching staff members. In addition, the English speaking nations have many of the world's best universities, and qualifications from these universities usually represent a higher standard of training. The large numbers of international students who flock to these countries for higher studies provide evidence of the broad recognition of this excellence.

Native speakers may be deficient in other respects, however. Attitudes toward work, readiness to follow established institutional disciplines and protocols (such as dress codes and time schedules), quality of collegial relationships, cooperativeness with administrative staff assigning duties, and cultural insight all vary considerably from one individual to the next. Moreover, many native speakers who work in English language education have backgrounds in unrelated fields (here, in engineering, geology, computer science and biochemistry, for example), and they are often lacking in the linguistic insights and classroom training that non-native speaking instructors may be in better possession of.

We are assembled together at the invitation of the host country to be agents to promote national development through education. We are there because the host country is not yet able to provide the quality of educators it needs to realize this national development objective on its own. In some post-colonial contexts, the challenge is acute. Friedman (2012) asserts, former colonies are not weak and poor because they were colonized. They were colonized because they were weak and poor. Many post colonial societies have had to face the immense challenge of building post-colonial institutions and systems (of

governance, law, education, health, transportation, communications and so on) without the necessary expertise, experience and established infrastructure. For this reason, and where the resources are available, expatriate expertise remains in high demand. This is true in a wide range of professions in addition to English education. Here in Oman, for example, medical doctors, dentists, university faculty members, college and high school instructors, highway contractors, oil engineers, IT specialists, construction workers, restaurant staff, shop clerks, and housemaids are predominantly, and exclusively in some cases, foreign. (A national population of about 2 million is serviced by more than 800,000 expatriate workers (Muscatdaily.com, 2011, quoting from the 2010 Oman national census).)

In some cases, where a leadership vacuum is evident and prevents work from being completed, expatriates are placed in leadership positions. Understandably however, and as soon as this becomes feasible, leadership responsibilities are commonly transferred to host nationals, a practise now well established in much of the Arab Middle East. Institutional leadership roles must be learned on the job, and there is no substitute for cultivating native expertise. The role that then sometimes falls to expatriate staff is to provide enabling support for that leadership.

Either in positions of authority or in support roles to this authority, in consideration of the now widely accepted injustices of the former imperial systems and of the condescending attitudes still seen in some representatives of the wealthy English speaking nations, can the use of expatriate staff from the developed nations still be defended? Following is an argument that it can.

3. CONTEXT AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Throughout my career as an international English educator, including the years I spent in Canadian classrooms, cultural difference has been the prevailing reality. I have never been employed to teach students from my own cultural and ethnic background. In the first years of such teaching, one might confidently imagine that one is a representative of the single best educational tradition in the country most successfully in practice of it, and that one is mandated to induct others into that culture of excellence.[4] Indeed, in the mid 1990s, when Canada was ranked first on the UNDP Human Development Index for several years running and the University of Victoria placed first in its class of universities

by McLean's magazine, those of us involved in this university's English programs were ready to make some pretty hubris fuelling assertions. A subsequent fall from such heights could not help but be to better effect, complacency being otherwise quick to settle in. Moreover, however proficient we may be at what we do, several great demonic beasts lurk beneath the surface, following us wherever our fortunes may take us: there is the fact of our dispossession of the owners of our land; our consumer civilization has produced unprecedented ecological and climate crises; we helplessly serve a pervasive "dehumanizing" bureaucratic culture that keeps our systems up and running.

The issue of cultural diversity can be viewed from the perspective of the dominant culture in search of a humane assimilation of its minorities (Blair, 2002). English language teachers in intensive English programs such as are provided at various Canadian universities are primarily concerned with the task of training language tourists and international students seeking university admission. While cultural conflict may be a feature of such classrooms, more often cultural differences are like the stock on the shelves of a delicatessen: exotic dainties to sample and enjoy but that can quickly be spat out if they prove indigestible. Public school and community college educators bear the task of providing new immigrants with necessary language skills; in the majority of cases such immigrants have chosen to come to this country and are in eager pursuit of integration into Canadian work culture. Canada has a long (and undoubtedly whitewashed) history of success in integrating immigrant communities into the mainstream without depriving them of the heritage languages, religious beliefs and celebrations that sustain their sense of membership in their ethnic community.[5] The categories of immigrants who fare less well have often come from conflict zones, natural disasters or extreme economic hardship, and they are more at risk of occupying categories of concern in the school system.[6] Blair (2002) places West Indian, Bangladeshi and Pakistani students in this group in England and recommends a process whereby teaching staff may be *re-skilled* to respond to the needs of such children (p. 185). Such multicultural classrooms, recognizable by *periphery* students in a *metropolitan* context, are the professional concern of many skilled and thoughtful public educators; it may be further observed that teachers who display egregiously inappropriate cultural skills, while sometimes difficult to curtail, do not receive endorsement of the system (and would most certainly be ejected from the profession by many of its members).

An additional issue has to do with the role minorities play in the educational hierarchy, as Dillard (1995) discusses with regard both to the obstacles faced by an African American woman in a potentially white male principal's role and how a tough love approach to children at risk starts to turn her school around. Having the profession itself reflect the diversity of the community is a necessary step toward giving voice to marginalized communities, reflecting the principles of social justice that it espouses and providing fair opportunity to all.

Language education internationally, however, has made of white native speakers an almost unassailable elite. While this is likely a passing phase, a relic of the old imperial order that the TESL (Teaching English as a Second Language) phenomenon is effectively disabusing other regions of, it remains a regrettable shortcoming of this trade.[7] (In many parts of the world, the preferred candidate is a younger, fair haired Western woman; older white men are excluded as much as any other category of applicant.)

The administrative challenge that conscientious expatriate educators (whether white or some other color) face is how to enter a weak institutional environment, and, under the conditions of a limited contractual assignment, have the maximum effect. How can an alien administrator, received sometimes with no better than polite hostility and at other times with an obsequious incomprehension, make a difference? Foreign experts must decide whether their higher duty is one of making friends with locals, or investigating, diagnosing and curing workplace ills. They may do this in full knowledge of the tradition of the cultural colonialism and the relativist notions that bring into question the authority and competence that they represent. In many cases, however, their competence and problem solving skills prove to be real and the need for their services substantial. Thus, where such educators can negotiate themselves into effective roles, the possibility of being that single voice that is heard, can lead to profound professional satisfactions and substantial good for the host institutions.

Both instructors and educational administrators who are employed abroad on expatriate contracts must work in a state of constant tension between the culture of their training, intellectual background and institutional experience and that of their host communities. Often overtly hired to establish Western classroom practices, achievement standards and institutional process, such professionals too often find incomprehension of and hostility to those when the encroachments are felt on personal freedoms that enforcement of an unfamiliar discipline entails.[8] The effective program administrator in such contexts must perform a careful

balancing act, often making decisions that compromise effectiveness, not because hosts necessarily have an alternate and equally valid "way of knowing," but rather because the disciplines and personal detachment of professional administration (Weber, 1952) require an acculturation process from infancy (such as when the child is placed in a separate room from its parents) that can only be imperfectly acquired, like an additional language, in adulthood (Bourdieu, 1974).

Not all societies should be considered *at risk*; in my work experience in Central China, Japan, South Korea and Saudi Arabia, I have not seen this. Rather, it has been the Africans, Pacific Islanders, Tibetans, and Kurds who have most perceived themselves to be victims of an overbearing world order or a specific hegemony (not always Western). Such societies, however, may also be guilty of some of the most unacceptable breeches of widely accepted standards of human rights, often placing the expatriate professional into a position of acute role conflict. Effective performance requires of the administrator that he or she "should be drawn from the ranks of those with greatest access to... the Form of the Good" (Evers and Lakomski, 1996, p. 392—referring to a Platonic mode of leadership). That is, effective leadership will draw from the administrator's strongest convictions about right and wrong.

While appointed to a station and endowed with powers, the school principal, or educational program administrator, foremost has the responsibility, while serving a system that, arguably, inherits its character from illegitimate seizures of power, to render that system humane to the untutored youth who must be inducted into it. Administrators who have only ever spent their lives in school are in danger of being unidimensional, however. If the school child emerges from the same background, is a product of the same culture, there may be little conflict, but it is in the treatment of the outsider that the measure of a good administrator can be taken. Bourdieu (1974) describes a status quo that every responsible public educator must strive to overthrow. When schools serve the purpose of making the masses readier to surrender to power, they are party to a system that thrives on conformity, regulation and control rather than opportunity, consensus and creative personal liberation (Anderson and Ginberg, 1998; Bates, 1987; Bourdieu, 1974; Whitney, 2008).

A recurring theme in the literature on educational leadership is that school administration is intrinsically "value" laden. Greenfield's distinction between "is" and "ought" (1992) is illustrative, but values are also central to the work of

Hodgkinson (1991), Sergiovanni (1992), and Campbell (1994) (to mention but a few). The assertion of the place of transformational leadership, reinforcing democratic principles through shared decision making, searching for a greater inclusiveness of women and racial minorities, and recognizing the special status and needs of indigenous populations reflects both the sense that the existing administrative culture is morally flawed (poorly accommodating of the hereditarily disempowered) and that administrations work in a pervasively changing and moral context. The omission in this body of work, in general, however, has been that specific values are not further identified. I shall attempt to counter this evasiveness in my conclusion.

4. THE INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE ARGUMENT

Further complicating the administrator's moral authority is the persistent, and possibly irremediable, reality that we are beneficiaries of a hegemony built on dispossession of indigenous peoples, and, in the case of much of the Americas, on the slavery or indentured labor of imported subject populations. Moreover, and at a time when we might be ready to believe these matters are safely lost in a distant past, we are inheritors of the world views that made these things acceptable. And, while the lens through which we view what must surely have been harsher times makes our judgment of the actions of our ancestors uncertain, no ameliorating insight into the sins of the past can be seen as sufficient to excuse the ignorance and neglect of the present.

Puamau (2005, p. 4), in accord with Tuhiwai-Smith's characterization of a "resistance struggle" for "survival" (1999, p. 107), articulates well an important Pacific perspective:

> With the exception of Tonga, the Pacific region has been colonized by various 'western' countries over the last three centuries. The primary instruments of control of colonized subjects were (and still are) written history (texts), education and language. Colonial practices—including the historical, imaginative, material, institutional and discursive—have significantly transformed Pacific ways of knowing, being and doing. The ideological, political, economic and social structures currently in place today are manifestations and hybrid versions

> of the colonial project. Colonial ways of knowing and doing, together with 'western' values, attitudes and cultural practices, permeate the lived experiences of the colonized to such an extent that they have become part of the postcolonial landscape. At the point of decolonization, if there is no deliberate effort to resist, overthrow, even transform these colonial legacies, then inherited structures and systems will become normative and hegemonic fixtures of national life.

Battiste (2002, p. 2) further amplifies Tuhiwai-Smith's reservations about research and indigenous peoples:

> Indigenous knowledge comprises the complex set of technologies developed and sustained by Indigenous civilizations. Often oral and symbolic, it is transmitted through the structure of Indigenous languages and passed on to the next generation through modeling, practice, and animation, rather than through the written word...[C]onducting a literature review on Indigenous knowledge implies that Eurocentric research can reveal an understanding of Indigenous knowledge. The problem with this approach is that Indigenous knowledge does not mirror classic Eurocentric orders of life.

My side in the culture debate, and consistent with the terms of my employment, however, has necessarily leaned toward what are widely, though not unanimously, regarded as universal values ("principles") and standards. So-called Western institutions and "values" of effective education, hard work and achievement have been embraced with considerable success in a host of non-Western societies and by successful migrants into Western societies from many more cultural backgrounds.[9] Contact provided amenities, services and institutions upon which post-colonial populations have come to depend and which have been enthusiastically embraced by them. The post-colonial experience has, with considerable justice, shifted the burden of maintaining these onto the shoulders of indigenous populations, which in many cases have not had the cultural resources to be able to handle the level of institutional and social complexity involved. The sort of knowledge, skills, and discipline that

are instilled by effective delivery of public education are at the heart of the successful transfer of authority and responsibility to post-colonial populations. Without this, the amenities, services and institutions upon which these populations now depend start to collapse, a consequence that few leaders are ready to endorse, even in cases where they share the general unease about their colonial experience and the erosion of positive cultural values that they see happening all around them.[10]

Alternately, there is presently a shared and growing awareness that the logic of growth of the "Eurocentric" paradigm has reached something close to its outward limit. Diamond's insight (2006) about the repeated tendency of civilizations to bring about their own downfall through mismanagement by over exploitation of the available resources has sounded another cautionary note. It may be surmised that these factors more than the healing power of remorse have created a better receptivity to indigenous ecological knowledge and the need to blend our understandings with those of aboriginal land husbandry. Fear of the possible collapse of our own civilization has perhaps opened us to alternatives that we had no time or patience for in our pioneer years. In such case, the solitary San, who "do not, in fact, require the validation of outsiders in order to perceive their own knowledge as legitimate," and who, having the option of staying outside the system, may in fact be those best fit to survive it (Hays, 2009).

5. ORIGINAL SIN

The West, of course, is not alone in its condition of sin. Primate studies would suggest that the tribal conflict from which the West emerged triumphant (so far) is an innate response to competition for resources (Mazur, 1985; Whitney, 2007). Genocidal conflicts between ethnic communities, paralleled in chimpanzee communities by kinship groups slaughtering members of other kinship groups (Boesch et. al., 2007; Wrangham et. al., 2006), persist to the present day: the Hausa and Yoruba against the Ibos 1967-70, Saddam against the Kurds in 1988, Bosnia, Rwanda, Cambodia, Sudan, Congo, and now Syria, to name but a few. Our own World Wars are not so far behind us, the peace between Western nations since the 1940s being a recent historical phenomenon.

Similarly, Patterson's study of slavery (1982; see also Gates, 2010) reveals that this too was widely practiced even by societies that became its most recognized victims. Freed African American slaves became slave holders in Liberia. African Americans who return to their roots in Ghana are offered a ritual of reconciliation with their host brothers who had sold them into that trans-Atlantic slave trade.[11] Ibos continued with a tradition of domestic slavery into the late 20th century (Emecheta, 1977). Islamic civilization routinely subjected captive non-Muslims to slavery, and it is in the Middle East still today that some of the largest scale human trafficking continues.[12]

The former practice by Ibos of abandoning twins to die in the "evil forest" was halted by the Scottish missionary Mary Slessor (Livingstone, 1918). Ibos continue to practise genital mutilation of girls (FGM).[13]

Northwest coast aboriginal communities were identified as practising ritual sacrifice of slaves and cannibalism in "potlatch" ceremonies (Patterson, 1982, citing the field studies of Franz Boaz). Ritual sacrifice and cannibalism have been practised to recent times in Western Nigeria at the Orisha shrines outside Oshogbo.[14]

My female Ethiopian friends are victims of, and future perpetrators of, FGM, and flatten ("iron") their breasts.[15]

My Kurdish hosts, in addition to FGM, also practice honor killing of wayward sisters and dissident young journalists. The death by stoning of a 17 year old Yazidi girl, Du'a Khalil Aswad, from the Mosul area of Iraq, for taking a Muslim husband came to the attention of the world because someone recorded the execution on a cell phone and subsequently downloaded the video to the internet.[16] This deed became no less unpalatable when a Kurdish colleague chose to defend the action because the Yazidis are an endangered community. The later assassination of Zardasht Osman, a student journalist, for writing facetious criticisms of the regional president was a further honor crime implicating top government officials (Dagher, 2010). I counseled a gay student after a prominent Iraqi religious leader called for the death of all homosexuals, and a gay instructor left his post after one month on the job because of merciless gay baiting by members of one of his classes.

A vice principal at the high school where I first taught in western Nigeria was widely known to promote borderline 4th form girls to 5th form in return for sexual favors. Teaching staff members who knew of this did nothing to stop the

practice (though one senior teacher alluded to the practice in a staff meeting, refusing to elaborate; presumably the vice principal had retaliatory powers).

In the Marshall Islands, I was placed in the position of having to protect an 11 year old girl from being raped by her drunken uncles. It was a custom, according to her mother, that young girls should be available to male members of the family. (The mother did not approve, and it was upon receiving a guarantee from the grandmother, with whom the girl was staying, that we agreed to allow her to return home.) The Marshalls also suffer from a disproportionately high rate of violent crimes.[17]

And, at times we have done no better: according to documents displayed in Victoria's Christ Church Cathedral in the late 1970s, white members of the Victoria community deliberately distributed smallpox infested blankets amongst the Songhees people in the late 19th century as a means of reducing their numbers to facilitate seizure of their lands.

The account could easily be extended, but this is a representative sample.

While I am ready to make room for quite a lot of personal choices in my Republic, and some of them either quite quirky or outrageous to the conservative morality of the community I grew up in,[18] I am no cultural relativist. Some traditions have no right to endure. As I have grown older, I have felt more confident about making this point from time to time in my travels, occasioning periods of conflict both with my hosts and with colleagues who preferred not to get involved. One individual's outrage does not change a cultural practice, and in too many cases defeat is the only possible outcome; however, the greater defeat would have been to say or do nothing (as I did in my more timorous earlier years).

While some of us have much to atone for as inheritors of the *master narrative*, then, we cannot wholly submit to our collective guilt. Not every dimension of the *Eurocentric* vision is evil, and not all indigenous practice has a place in the present. Weber's bloodless bureaucrat, so readily the agent of villainy, still has a place. It doesn't hurt to take rational administrative principles to the remoter regions of the world, even if they are doomed never to take root. Commonly, it must fall to the educational administrator to go beyond these, make the critical moral discriminations and then follow up with responsible decisions and action.

6. CONCLUSION

Absolutely critical to international educators is a bedrock set of principles upon which to make decisions and take action, then, whether or not such principles have much to do with those inculcated in their formative years. Persons invested with administrative authority in alien cultural contexts face all the challenges of administrative decision making combined with the burden of having to make value judgments about what are often sensitive cultural differences. Initially, ignorance will lead to error, and the incautious administrator may be defeated in the earliest stages of his or her tenure; however, knowledge, once gained, while it certainly informs the decision making process, does not remove the dilemma associated with having to decide when to respect host cultural tradition and when to rule against it. A responsible professional administrator must abide by a set of principles that is both flexible and adaptable, but that also includes an inviolable foundation. The unthinking, *value neutral*, bureaucrat may be professionally effective but is likely also to face an increasingly strained relationship with members of the host community or find him or herself having to make decisions that cannot be lived with.

Administrative authority is granted to aliens only in cases where decision makers of host societies perceive themselves to be in a state of administrative deficit, to be without the human resources needed to provide leadership for institutions regarded as critical to the society. While almost all of my overseas placements can be seen as feeding off the same dynamic of the dominance of Western civilization (or, worse yet, older white men; Western women can be every bit as imperialistic in the field, I must however observe), the reality on the ground in these postings has been, at least experientially, quite different.

On occasion, I am the only representative of my remote and little encountered civilization to be found from one horizon to the next. Moreover, in those locations where such white men get up to their usual mischief, my tendency has been to supply a dissenting voice, feebly protesting the cultural invaders and advocating for the rights of the natives to determine their own destinies. I've been fired for doing this. With those nasty chaps removed, I more often than not end up taking their place. I therefore also have a substantial accumulated record of conflict with my host culture contacts.

In cases where no other counsel was available, I had to fall back on such principles as I have had possession of, which include, but are not confined to, the following

- Education implies the promotion of healthy lifestyles that include appropriate nutrition, exercise and sleep;
Public educational institutions are to be inclusive, serving and celebrating its minorities and the disadvantaged no less than its majorities;
- Access to post secondary education is by academic merit, not social privilege, even in cases where economic status is a determining factor;
- Public education, whatever else it does, is mandated to instil the discipline, knowledge, skills and enthusiasm for life associated with success in adult life;
- Academic honesty is at the core of all our work;
- Public education must serve the needs of both sexes, favoring neither boys nor girls in the quality of preparation provided for success in life;
- Children of both sexes are to be protected from sexual exploitation, either by members of the community or by members of the institutional staff;
- An ethic of cooperative endeavor must balance off the competitive drive, and the celebration of excellence must not be antagonistic to values of community cohesiveness and good will;
- Harmony in the midst of diversity can best be promoted by favoring no religious tradition above others;
- Conflict must be resolved without violence; student discipline must also be instilled without violence;
- Disciplinary actions must be taken for stated causes, administered according to established process and applied equally to all members of the learning community;

- Educators must maintain professional relations with client students;
- While information controlled societies have difficulty adapting to data driven open administrations, data driven decision making leads to better outcomes;
- Good will and morale are maintained when administrative decisions are informed (though not necessarily driven) by staff feedback and communicated clearly following consultation.

Living by and acting upon such bedrock principles has major implications for the nature of the future society that public educators especially are entrusted with forming. Such principles are not acceptable to all peoples in all places, but they are broadly defensible, consistent with the developmental directions pursued in many parts of the world, and tend to train individuals to be productive, honest, respectful of differences and responsible toward the world around them.

Cultures do not suddenly change because someone comes along with a better way of doing things, however, and it will be up to those members of host nations who have understood the merits of better practices to turn these, by stages, into more widely understood principles, practised habits, and institutional policies. These are career objectives for those who will spend their working lives building their nations through the establishment of strong and effective institutions. Here in Oman, I have around me a number of talented and capable Omani colleagues who recognize the character of the struggle they face now and in the years ahead to build an education system that prepares young people to be competitively ready to enter the workforce and to become meaningful partners in the enterprise of nation building. These educators will be the ones to determine whether any of the values, principles, or practices of the expatriate educators they have met along the way are worthy of making their own.

For a number of important reasons, the whole world is not going to develop after the model of 20th century North America, but we should not see ourselves as purveyors of a defeated paradigm. After all, if we can't reason ourselves to a more balanced relationship with our living environment and human community, the emerging ecological crisis will force this upon us. Giving indigenous knowledge a secure place in public education challenges us to change the whole

paradigm, or *truth game* (Evers and Lakomski, 1996, p. 389, quoting McKinney and Garrison, 1994, p. 83), by which we live. Our homes, means of transportation, food on our table, clothing, family relations, gainful employment, creative outlets, access to travel, interpersonal relationships and social experience (to name but a few) are all on the block. Indeed, we will be better people and members of a more humane society once we have done so, and the planet upon which we live may at long last breathe a sigh of relief. Those of us who travel the world deserve to be criticized for many of our footloose excesses, but we do at least learn, however imperfectly, to tread light upon the earth, embracing it in all its manifest diversity. And, perhaps, we glean a few durable principles from our encounters with this diversity.

NOTES

1. The rejection of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by a number of Islamic states is an example of a statement of principles, and one of the most elevated in my estimation, that has nonetheless been condemned as a mere statement of alien values. We might also remember some of Moamar Qaddafi's last words to his captors: "Don't you know the difference between right and wrong?"
2. Reading diagnostic test results gave a mean reading level of lower than grade one for Level 4 (final Foundation level) students; the textbook upon which the exams are based concludes with readings at grade 10 to 12 level.
3. A Canadian of my acquaintance, employed at another university, had just this experience in late 2012.
4. Indeed, I have been informed, by a product of that tradition, that China has the better education. While I remain unconvinced, it will be instructive to see if China's growing international presence and investment wealth results in a favorable reassessment of the strengths of its educational culture.
5. I recently (2010) visited the Victoria Police Department Museum, where there is a display giving an account of African Americans who came to Victoria from San Francisco in 1858, hoping to find better treatment in the colony of British Columbia. They were quickly hired by the new city police department, but were so badly abused by both criminals and their victims (both of whom would sometimes turn against the intervening black officer) that the experiment

in racial diversification of the police force lasted for just two months before it had to be suspended.

6. I had a number of years' membership in the local (Victoria) African Association, and it was the an observation of the onetime president of that association (of Ghanaian origin) that it was Africans from conflict zones such as Mozambique and Somalia and who had therefore experienced disruption of their educations and cultural traditions at home who subsequently experienced the greatest difficulties in adjusting to the demands and disciplines of Canadian life. Africans from more peaceful parts of the continent and with relatively unviolated ethnic traditions (such as Ghana or Botswana), in contrast, managed to reach higher levels of educational achievement, to build stronger families, and to gain longer term and more secure employment. I hasten to note that the most visible misfits in this society, seen on many a downtown street corner, are white and locally born.

7. Where I have had such authority, and not been specifically ordered to the contrary, I have always sought to hire diversity, to ensure both a gender balance and the representation of non white races. The most professional of my colleagues have also been attuned to this issue.

8. My Iraqi students sometimes came into my office and shouted at me: "I thought you were here to teach us democracy, so that we could do whatever we wanted!" My response, about standards and discipline, usually disappointed them.

9. Marshallese, however, have a mixed record in their success as migrants (*The Marshall Islands Journal*, 21 November 2008, p. 12). Iwalani and Andrade (2007, p. 145) make the point that Pacific islanders in general show the characteristics of adaptation of indigenous populations rather than of immigrants, as seen, for example, in high suicide rates.

10. This section has been adapted from my 2009 report (unpublished) to the Ministry of Education of the Republic of the Marshall Islands: "Making Public Education Work in the Republic of the Marshall Islands: Results of a Reading Diagnostic Program and Implications for Reform."

11. I also met with community leaders in 1999 and 2001 in the Cape Coast and Elmina slave castle region who described this to me.

12. I have personal knowledge of Ethiopian victims of this traffic.

13. I was married to an Ibo woman for long enough to have had an inside track on such practices.

14. Personal communication from Suzanne Wenger (1989), a Western artist involved in the revival of the Orisha shrines, high priestess of Osun (God of Iron) and a long time resident of Oshogbo until her death at 94 in 2009.

15. Indeed, I argued the point with one of them, who insisted she would do the same to her own children.

16. See www.executedtoday.com/2008/04/07/2007-dua-khalil-aswad-yazidi-honor-killing/

17. I have just today (20 August 2010) received word of a murder of one native college staff member by another at the college where I once worked.

18. I have been regarded as personally immoral in more countries than I care to identify; this has been without compromise to the set of professional principles that I work by, I hasten to add.

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