

Failing Grade: Administrative and Procedural Blunder

This experience of Principals and teachers who were overnight transferred schools prior to the commencement of the start of the Michaelmas term, 2023-2024 in Barbados, is a classic example of what constitutes a fundamental breach of process and procedure. As required, notice of appointments, transfers, secondments and promotions is to be officially communicated to all public officers in writing. Following on this, the claim that the Ministry of Education, Technological and Vocational Training and the Ministry of the Public Service would have failed in the discharge of their obligation, is well founded.

It is accepted that Public Officers are subject to being transferred either on a **temporary or permanent** basis between Ministries and departments. The decision for a transfer may come on a request of the employee, on the recommendation of the Head of Department, or on a directive of the Ministry of the Public Service which assumes responsibility for recruitment, appointments, transfers, secondments and promotions. Hastily arranged transfers are generally enacted in cases where it is said to be in the public interest. It is nonetheless required that a good reason and acceptable reason could be offered for any hastily arranged transfer.

In the recent unceremonious transfers of Principals, both the Ministry of Education, Technological and Vocational Training and the Ministry of the Public Service, owes an explanation as to why those who were in acting position of principal or deputy principal, for two years or more, were overlooked for appointment and reverted to their substantive post. The need for an explanation is based on the fact that the action taken runs afoul of the provisions of the Public Service Act 2007-12. Part 111, (11) which stipulates that: "No established office in the Public Service shall be allowed to remain vacant for more than one year..."

Good human resources management practices would have dictated that if any of those acting in the post of Principal were found to wanting in the discharge of their managerial and administrative duties, that this would have been long drawn to their attention. It is therefore questionable whether these acting Principals were subject to an appraisal. One can only speculate on the impact this development has had on the psyche and confidence of those involved. Taking a look at the bigger picture, other teachers who are aspiring to be promoted as Principals or Deputy Principals, must now be worried that they could be mistreated in much the same way.

It must be a great source of worry when government as the largest employer, stands to be accused of breaching the administrative process and procedure. Moreover, it is terrifying when there is a sound of silence on this matter by the Head of the Public Service and the Cabinet of Barbados. Is this taken to mean that this action is condoned and supported? If it is, then this makes a mockery of the Education and Public Sector Reform. It raises questions over what is expected when it comes to accountability, transparency and efficiency, and to the exercise of good human resources management practices.

Failing Grade: Administrative and Procedural Blunder: Dennis de Peiza: Labour & Employee Relations Consultant: Regional Management Services Inc., 6 October 2023

In responding to this latest fiasco coming out of the Ministry of Education, Technological and Vocational Training, members of teachers' unions and staff associations, have an expectation that their interest would be stoutly represented. The Barbados Union of Teachers must be complimented in putting up its hand and representing those impacted, irrespective of the fact that some may not hold membership with the organization. It however begs the question as to why there has been a prolonged and deafening silence by the Barbados Secondary Teachers' Union (BSTU) on this travesty. It is equally appalling that there has been total silence on the part of the Barbados Association of Principals of Public Secondary Schools (BAPPSS) and the Association of Principals of Public Primary Schools (APPPS). Where a breach in process and procedure of such a magnitude has occurred, which is tantamount to be nothing short of a national disgrace, should be enough to cause all local trade unions, to openly condemn.

This unilateral and unprofessional nature in executing the transfer of teachers and principals must become a thing of the past. This behaviour is uncharacteristic of a first-class nation and must not be allowed to continue. It is important for our leaders at all levels, including of politicians, senior public and private sector managers, and trade unions leaders, to realize that the world is listening and watching.