

A Modest Proposal for the Improvement of Scholarship in Internationalizing Teacher Education

By Paula A. Cordeiro

We will not try to summarize the articles presented in this thematic issue since each author has already done so. Instead, we think it may be useful to revisit some of the recommendations and how those of us, in higher education, might begin to address these issues in educator preparation programs. Notice we said ‘educator,’ because although this issue is focused on the preparation of teacher educators, comparisons can and should be made with counselor and administrator preparation. We also want to extend the discussion by offering areas that we believe are necessary to explore, and may prove fruitful for further research.

This thematic issue begins with Amy Roberts’ observation that “. . . few prospective teachers are exposed to international content either in university-required courses or professional development tracks of teacher education.” Although she maintains that international education and multicultural education overlap she states that they are distinct as well. Roberts concludes by stating, “Faculties of teacher education have barely begun to tap the potential for the preparation of prospective teachers as globally competent individuals and educators.”

The second article is one of two in this issue that

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focuses on international student teaching. Kenneth Cushner maintains that overseas student teaching can afford students opportunities to learn more about themselves and others, develop empathy, and increase their self-confidence and efficacy. He believes that “overseas student teaching can be a catalyst that starts teachers on a path of learning from others: their students, their colleagues, their community, and their world.”

Hilary Landorf, Tonette Rocco, and Ann Nevin explore another aspect of ‘global’ by asserting that “teaching for social justice is where global education, special education and disability studies converge.” Their focus is on the importance of teaching tolerance and they believe that “. . . an inclusive global education helps students to negotiate the borderlands towards a more respectful and tolerant acceptance of those who are different from themselves. . . .”

Learning from others is a key issue in the fourth article in this issue. Francisco Rios, Carmen Montecinos, and Marcela van Olphen discuss the lessons they learned from a collaboration involving the professor’s reflections on teaching abroad, with one American author teaching in Chile and dialoguing with a Chilean colleague, and an Argentinean colleague working in the U.S. This article highlights the complexities involved when the professor self-reflects on his or her experience of teaching a course in a university in another country with colleagues who are from that nation.

Maria Luiza Dantas’ research based article examines a graduate course offered abroad in Brazil. She maintains that we must go beyond taking a group of teachers to an international context, “This particular international experience offers a framework, grounded in an ethnographic perspective and funds-of-knowledge approach that builds teacher education students’ cultural competence through experiential learning and understanding self, cultural identities, unexamined deficit views, and culture and literacy practices in the context of cross-national and intercultural experiences.”

Reyes L. Quezada and Cristina Alfaro describe a study that examined the experiences of four U.S. student teachers that completed part of their student teaching in Mexico. They found that international student teaching had a positive effect on the student teachers’ cultural understanding of the host country and influenced their teaching upon return to the U.S.

Laura L. Stachowski and Tyler Sparks describe one thirty-year old initiative called the Overseas Student Teacher Project at Indiana University at Bloomington in which over two thousand students have completed their student teaching abroad. Several research studies have been generated from this program and this article includes data collected from 66 participants in the Overseas Project during 2004-2005. The authors maintain that the Overseas Project provides future teachers with “a more well rounded and larger scope of the world in which they live—and all of their future pupils—live.”

In the final article in this thematic issue, Jennifer Mahon examines the many considerations necessary to bear in mind when establishing an overseas student

teaching program. She argues that the bigger issue is not creating a program, but that “We are seeking to transform institutions.” Thus, we can “. . . bring internationalization from the margins to the center.”

Little research and minimal attention has been given to international issues in teacher education. Since a comprehensive body of literature does not currently exist in the areas of international education and teacher education, this volume presented a broad brushstroke of the key issues. The areas covered in this issue include: internationalizing the teacher education curriculum, student teaching abroad, faculty teaching in another nation, inclusive education and teaching for social justice, and creating and implementing international/study abroad programs and individual courses. Thus, this collection of eight articles touches upon many key aspects of internationalization within a school or college of education. It is our hope that future issues of teacher education journals will more thoroughly examine each of these specific areas, among others.

The authors in this issue maintain that because we live in a global society the preparation of future teachers needs to reflect the changes taking place in the world. The curriculum of the teacher education programs must not only explore the diversity of our nation, and its changing demographics but also the many global issues that impact our daily lives. There are many questions that need to be addressed to fully prepare teacher candidates, to prepare their students to be global citizens. We, the teacher educators, must ask questions such as: What knowledge should be required of our graduates in order to be productive teachers in a global age? How is that knowledge best transmitted? How can we assess that that knowledge has indeed been learned? How can colleges of education ensure that future teachers not only have this knowledge, but they can teach it to children and youth?

Colleges must commit themselves to providing students with powerful, deep-rooted understanding of diverse cultures, other languages, basic human rights, discrimination and other global issues. The curriculum cannot be internationalized and opportunities provided for all students unless there is agreement about what knowledge students must have and what experiences they should be offered. We hope this issue of *Teacher Education Quarterly* has raised questions that will assist faculty who have interest in exploring topics in the teacher education curriculum.

Recommendations

We end this issue with three major recommendations that call for improving the scholarship of internationalizing pre-service education.

First, we believe that it is crucial to look at the research on international education coming from the fields of counselor education and school administration preparation as well as teacher education. Teachers, counselors and administrators all work within the same school; thus, their preparation, the research in their respective areas, and the topics discussed in this issue, need to be carefully

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scrutinized for commonalities, differences and implications for further training and future research.

Second, we point out that this issue only highlighted some of the issues that need attention; clearly, much more research needs to be done. A thorough and comprehensive analysis of the existing research on teacher education and international education with particular attention to the intersections of research in multicultural and international education must be conducted. Currently there are a limited number of scholars examining issues of social justice, such as poverty and equity, and the connections with a global or international approach to teacher education.

Finally, we are convinced that in order to improve teacher education programs, the topics discussed in this issue require much further research that is grounded in comprehensive, longitudinal analyses. The general literature in teacher education has a tendency to move from one concept or idea to another without accumulating a serious amount of research; this is particularly true with regard to preparing teachers with the incorporation of a more global worldview. For example, although quite a few articles can be found on the merits of student teaching abroad (one of the more 'researched' topics) few are actual empirical studies. In addition, many studies are qualitative and most have been conducted on one program.

Thus, it is incumbent on the leaders and professional organizations in our field to seek funding for the much needed comprehensive and longitudinal analyses. We urge readers to seek external funding through foundations, and federal and state grants. We also recommend that professional organizations such as the American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education (AACTE), the International Council for the Education of Teachers (ICET), the Association of Teacher Educators (ATE), and the University Council for the Education of Teachers (UCET is based in the UK), among others, support this research so that the field can accumulate depth in discrete and overlapping areas of internationalizing teacher education.