

# Developing Effective International Education Experiences

Preparing Pre-Service Teachers  
for the Classroom

Editors

**Sara Tours**

*Slippery Rock University*

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Series in Education



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# Foreword

Tingting Xu

*Stephen F. Austin State University*

I am very pleased to see that this book will be shared with those who are strong advocates for the international education experience among our future teachers. Given the impact of globalization, teachers are now facing increased challenges when teaching children and young adults from different cultures. Based on the literature and my own experience, I strongly believe that an international education experience can prepare our teachers to be interculturally aware and more competent when working with today's diverse student populations.

It was in 2016 when I led my first study abroad trip to China with a group of students who were enrolled in our teacher education program. None of them had ever traveled abroad; most had never been outside Texas. This international experience was transformative and eye-opening for them, not only because of the environment, the culture, and the people they experienced but also the new perspectives they developed. These pre-service students revealed that most of the information they had learned from social media about China was misleading. This international learning experience provided them with opportunities to fully immerse themselves in Chinese culture; they discovered how hospitable the local people were, how clean the environment was, how beautiful the architecture was, and even the extent to which education was truly valued in China. Most importantly, they began to recognize a broader meaning of diversity with an increased awareness and appreciation of people different from themselves. Even after they returned from this trip, many were still immersed in reflection on their learning journey and could not stop sharing what they had discovered with their students, family members, and friends. Providing pre-service teachers with organized international education experiences can definitely make an impact; one of my pre-service students actually went to China to teach following graduation.

I truly believe in the extraordinary influence of the international education experience, and I highly recommend that every teacher education program in the United States include this opportunity for undergraduate students. Exposure to different cultures clearly benefits pre-service teachers and thus the students they teach; it gives them new perspectives from a broader experience, increased

intercultural awareness, and global competence, improving their ability to work with the increasingly diverse populations in today's classrooms.

If you are passionate about students' success in this globalized society and would like to prepare pre-service teachers with competencies and professional dispositions to support classroom effectiveness, you will enjoy learning about the meaningful experiences teacher educators share in this book. For example, Simmons and Moss describe the life-changing experience of education abroad on pre-service teachers' personal and professional life. Vanmali and Krogstad provide a great example of how study abroad experiences increased cultural competence among pre-service teachers by comparing the educational systems of Finland, Sweden, and the United States. Bhattacharya presents another innovative way to enhance multicultural/global competencies of preservice teachers by observing and reflecting on virtual video-based international field experience. Sino-foreign programs shared by Hogue and Ramsey are yet another way to promote competence among pre-service and in-service teachers. You will be fascinated reading these inspiring stories, one after another. You will also be motivated to start to plan similar types of international learning journeys with your own pre-service teachers and to become an advocate for international education experience.

# Introduction

Joshua Middleton

*Howard University*

Amy Orville

*Slippery Rock University*

Over the last several decades, the cultural landscape of the United States Education has been steadily diversifying. In fact, current estimates suggest by 2029 (NCES, 2020), non-white students will outnumber white students in classrooms. The swift increase in Black students, Hispanic students, and Asian/Pacific Islander students is consistently a trend across the country. Our current teacher preparation programs, classroom management models, and curriculums are not designed to meet the needs of the growing multicultural classroom. For example, more than 5 million English Language Learners (ELLs) have entered U.S. public schools bringing with them over 460 different languages (Kindler, 2002; Rios-Aguilar & Gandara, 2012).

The current United States educational system must face the challenge of ensuring equitable access, opportunity, and equal achievement (Darling-Hammond, 2015). Even a casual look through recent research indicates that low-income families in the U.S. and children of color, such as African and Latino American students, perform far below their peers on standardized tests, and that servicing these students has been far from ideal (Barton & Coley, 2010; Chubb & Loveless, 2002; Jencks & Phillips, 1998; Pino & Smith, 2004). The uncomfortable truth is that teachers are often not adequately prepared to teach culturally, linguistically, and ethnically diverse students within the parameters of the school building (Bonner et al., 2018; Hadjioannou et al., 2016).

However, there is hope through engagement with global partners in education and the use of technology that connects educators, administrators, and pre-service teachers, we can adapt the United States education system to create a more inclusive institution. By incorporating multicultural practices, teachers who are entering the classrooms will be better prepared to alter the academic outcomes of their students, as educators are the single greatest influence on them within schools (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Milner, 2010).

If we seek to re-shape the U.S. education to reflect equitable and inclusive values, we must first modernize our college and university teacher preparation

programs. If we do not adequately prepare new teachers for diverse classrooms, we are setting our students and teachers up to fail. Teachers must be knowledgeable and aware of the racial and cultural backgrounds of their student populations in order to address the immediate needs within the classroom setting. Pre-service teacher training programs must prioritize preparing culturally responsive teachers who have the necessary knowledge, skills, and dispositions. New teachers must appreciate, value, and celebrate similarities and differences within, between, and among culturally and linguistically diverse groups of students.

Higher education can not only promote multiculturalism and inclusion through classroom instruction, but through the development and support of global partnership with educators across the world. For example, Joshua Middleton's first presentation was as an undergraduate student and pre-service educator. The opportunity to attend and present at the European Early Childhood Research Association's (EECERA) annual conference in Italy stays with him to this day. EECERA's Annual Conference is one of the largest early childhood research conferences in the world. One of their goals is to provide a forum and network for scholars, policymakers, researchers, and practitioners. He was mentored by Dr. Sara Tours and developed more confidence and expertise. She impressed upon him the value of conferences and contributing practical strategies, techniques, experiences, and data that he could take home and use to inform his practices and future research. International conferences like EECERA are pathways to learn more about one's field of study not only in a diverse, professional environment but also a multicultural one. Opportunities to meet new scholars and professionals can be inspirational and empowering to pre-service teachers.

While the importance and joy of in-person collaboration cannot be overlooked, teachers can also benefit from the use of technology. There is no greater evidence for the invaluable role of technology in education than the global response to the COVID-19 Pandemic beginning in 2020. Experienced educators quickly forwent their traditional teaching practices in order to continue educating from home while the health crisis surged. Through this challenging experience, educators not only met the needs of their students through distance learning, but they began collaborating and sharing their experiences through the world wide web. Instead of conversing with teachers down the brick-and-mortar hallways, educators were engaging with professionals from across the world who were all trying to adjust to similar challenges. By using technology during this critical time, educators magnified the need to evaluate our traditional educational system and teaching preparation programs. Creating initiatives for future teachers to prepare within culturally diverse curriculums, world view contexts, and gain experience with diverse learners,

challenges transformative measures of worldview perspectives within the U.S. educational system.

Through Amy Orville's personal experiences as a public-school teacher for more than 10 years within the U.S. public educational system, classrooms can quickly change and evolve throughout a simple five-day week. Having seen international crises and war, immigrants and undocumented students are flooding our educational system at exponential rates. As these children enroll in the U.S. schools, my experience has shown little communication, supplies, family support, educational background, and medical documentation are present. Being in an elementary classroom while scrambling to quickly assimilate students and meet their basic needs is overwhelming while focusing on the students' current academic levels so learning can occur quickly. With limited interpreters and language support systems, I've relied on technology apps and devices to become a new voice within my classroom in order to communicate quickly and effectively. District-issued research-based curriculums have limited resources to my colleagues and I with strategies to promote success for the many different English Language Learners within the classroom. This has brought about frustration and overwhelming anxiety as my colleagues, and I are left creating resources that will help differentiate and assimilate these students into the learning environment. Little funding and educational laws have been created to help school districts across the U.S. provide continuous support to our diverse learner populations. Instead, our local community has continued to rally around these students by providing basic food, clothing, and medical needs to meet the needs of immigrant and undocumented children in order to help them be successful in school. Many of these new immigrant families continue to fear for their lives and have overwhelming social and emotional trauma due to the situations they fled. With little to no health care, limited income, and learned distrust, building a strong rapport with these families can be difficult for our district in order to help support the child outside of the school setting. Through these recent experiences, several educators, including myself, are asking state and federal officials to support all students in the classroom by providing funding, professional development, curriculums, and support systems so the U.S. schools can successfully change to promote education for all young learners within our borders.

The words in the following chapters encourage educators to create opportunities for international educational experiences within teacher preparation programs. Allowing complete immersion and interactive engagement with cultural pedagogies is critical for pre-service teachers. It has been well documented (Cunningham, 2015; Lupi & Turner, 2013) that international education experiences, or international field experiences, have a positive effect on both the professional development and cultural competencies of pre-service

teachers. Notably, these programs have often been used as a way to increase empathy and awareness as well as a conduit for intelligent and informed discourse that builds genuine connections across borders and cultures.

Interpersonal experiences serve to broaden one's worldview and encourage solving problems collaboratively. Across a wide range of performance outcomes, pre-service teachers with international field experiences are better equipped to enter the field (Byker & Xu, 2019, Villegas & Lucas, 2002) and may even persist longer in the profession (Lupi & Turner, 2013). By providing multicultural experiences early and often within teacher preparation programs, instills a timeline of repetitive immersion, diversity, and pedagogy needed to be successful in the future classrooms of the U.S. With such preparation, teacher candidates will not only appreciate differentiated cultures, but be thoroughly equipped with critical global strategies, interventions, and strive for cultural inclusion. This book explores the topics of cultural competencies in the classroom, the research that supports the benefits of international education experiences, and how to develop effective international education experiences that will prepare pre-service teachers for the classrooms of tomorrow. The importance of these topics comes at no greater time of change within the U.S. educational system.

Editors Dr. Sara Tours and Dr. Jeremy Lynch, are eager to share in the exploration of diverse cultural lenses presented within the coming chapters. Through careful sequence and guidance, their knowledge and cultivation of international teacher preparation programs entices detailed research of the needed changes within the educational classroom. By examining productive components of successful global pedagogies and experiences allows for diverse dialogue and collaboration amongst the educational community on teacher preparedness and student achievement. We encourage you to carefully examine the new critical global lens through the discourse in these chapters, be an advocate for global educational experiences and teacher preparation programs, and be a present reformer for global equality, inclusion, and acceptance within schools.

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## About the Contributors

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Dieter's research focuses on second-language pedagogy, Latin American literature, and Cultural Studies. She is currently working on a study of *Spanglish* as the preferred language among emerging leaders in the Hispanic communities of the United States. Before that, she had just wrapped up the work on her latest book, *Puentes de solidaridad: agencia femenina en las religiones reveladas*. This is a Cultural Studies volume Co-authored with Natalia Ramírez López and Diego Agudelo both Professors at Universidad Pontificia Javeriana, Cali, Colombia. This book is scheduled to come out in 2023. A recent article focused on second language pedagogy, called "#SpanishRocks: L2 Learning in the Times of Pandemic" was published in the edited volume, *Pandemic University Teaching and Learning in a Global Crisis*. Edited by Danette DiMarco, Jason T. Hilton, and Timothy Ruppert. SRU Press. 2020. Dieter received her Doctor of Philosophy degree from the University of Pittsburgh in PA where she studied Hispanic Languages and Cultures. She also received a master's at the same university. Dieter also has a Master of Arts in History with an emphasis on Latin America from Youngstown State University in Ohio. While at YSU, she did extensive research on United States-Panama political relations focusing on how those have shaped the identity and worldview of the people of Panama, where she is originally from. Prior to coming to Slippery Rock University, Dieter was a Lecturer in the Foreign Language department at Youngstown State University, OH, and at the Modern Languages department at Westminster College, PA.

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**Rachel Schiera** is currently a professor in the Department of Education at Lander University in South Carolina, where she teaches courses on science and STEAM pedagogies as well as literacy courses. In addition, she leads annual study abroad experiences for pre-service teachers. Her teaching career has spanned five countries, including Mexico and South Korea, and she has taught a wide range of learners from elementary to university levels. More recent professional experiences have involved acting in a consultative capacity for teachers participating in the Fulbright Distinguished Awards in Teaching Program and designing and delivering trainings to promising teenagers in the Takatuf Young Scholar Programme in Muscat, Oman. Her research agenda broadly focuses on methods and approaches to support transformative learning experiences in and outside of classrooms. As coordinator of The Call Me MISTER Program at Lander University, this research includes investigations of storytelling to support transformative experiences in male pre-service teachers. In her role as co-coordinator of the Digital Storygame Project in Indiana, Pennsylvania, her research examines the potential of digital platforms, including Twine, and decision education to improve decision-making skills in adolescent learners. When not teaching, Rachel enjoys spending time with family or can be found wandering with friends in the woods of South Carolina.

**Dr. Molly Mistretta**, Ph.D. is an Assistant Professor/Department Chair for the Department of Counseling and Development at Slippery Rock University in Pennsylvania. She teaches courses across the curriculum in the Student Affairs and Higher Education and Clinical Mental Health Counseling programs. Dr. Mistretta's career path includes experience in residence life & housing, leadership development, student conduct, and student retention. Her research interests include the effects of compassion fatigue and burnout among professionals in higher education and the scholarship of teaching and learning. She is a co-author of the books *Overcoming Burnout and Compassion Fatigue in Schools: A Guide for Counselors, Administrators, and Educators* (2019) and *Complex Cases in Student Affairs: Preparing Early Career Professionals for Practice* (2017).

**Ms. Jen Gentzel** has always enjoyed learning other languages. After earning her bachelor's degree with majors in French and Japanese, during which she completed two separate study-abroad semesters, she spent several years teaching English in Japan and France. When she returned to the United States in 2015, she obtained her master's degree in Student Affairs in Higher Education and gained experience working in international education. Since then, she has worked as an advisor for outgoing study abroad and incoming international students, overseeing their experiences through all aspects of their program. She now works as an Undergraduate Academic Advisor in the School of Computing and Information at the University of Pittsburgh.

**Dr. Jess Hall-Wirth.** Her passion for special education came far before her understanding of education policies and pedagogy. As a sibling to a child with a disability, she firsthand saw how the world was difficult and inaccessible. This has ultimately led her on a deliberate path to promote change in our homes, classrooms, and world. Dr. Jessica Hall-Wirth graduated from Slippery Rock University (SRU) in 2014, 2015 and 2018 with a B.S. in Education, Master of Special Education and a Doctorate specializing in Special Education. Dr. Jessica Hall-Wirth is a quiet activist and currently an Associate Professor of Special Education at SRU. She has been teaching for five years at SRU, but for almost 9 in field of education. Alongside her work at SRU, she is the Director of a non-profit that assists students with disabilities in the areas of academics, social and transition skills. She enjoys collaborating with colleagues and finding new interests in the evolving world of education.

**Jon Simmons** is a doctoral candidate in the Neag School of Education at the University of Connecticut. His research interests include internationalization of teacher education and the development of intercultural competence, human rights education in elementary schools, and discussion and dialogue in the classroom. He has worked as an elementary school teacher both in the United States and abroad and brings his extensive international experience to his instruction and research.

**Dr. David M. Moss, Ph.D.,** is an Associate Professor on the faculty of the Neag School of Education at the University of Connecticut. Specializing in curriculum studies and internationalizing US teacher education, his current research interests are in the areas of education abroad program design & assessment and culturally sustaining pedagogies. As a scholar, he has published numerous articles and reform-minded books, including *Preparing Classroom Teachers to Succeed with Second Language Learners* (Routledge, 2014); *Reforming Legal Education: Law Schools at the Crossroads* (IAP, 2012); *Critical Essays on Resistance in Education* (Peter Lang, 2010); *Interdisciplinary Education in an Age of Assessment* (Routledge, 2008); *Portrait of a Profession: Teachers and Teaching in the 21st Century* (Praeger, 2005, 2008); and *Beyond the Boundaries: A Transdisciplinary Approach to Learning and Teaching* (Praeger, 2003). He was named a Teaching Fellow at the university, the highest honor awarded for instructional excellence and leadership. Dr. Moss has served as a keynote and featured speaker at scholarly societies, universities, and national/international conferences. He has extensive curriculum development and assessment experience and directs the Neag School of Education London Study Abroad program.

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