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Teacher Education:  
**Research and Reflections**



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Teacher Education: Research and Reflections

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## **ABOUT THIS EDITION**

This open edition of JISTE features five articles from five countries (Botswana, Australia/Nauru, Norway, Denmark, & Canada) and four continents. The articles include research and reflective perspectives on a wide-range of teacher education topics, and they represent many global issues facing teacher education.

We hope that you will enjoy this edition of JISTE and encourage you to submit an article to our next open journal which will be published in December, 2015. Submission deadlines and themes for the next several JISTEs are at the end of this journal.

Karen Bjerg Petersen and Peggy J. Saunders, Editors

## PRIORITY DESIRES OF PRE-SERVICE MATHEMATICS STUDENT-TEACHERS IN METHODS COURSES AT THE UNIVERSITY OF BOTSWANA

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**Abstract:** *This study, a survey of University of Botswana mathematics pre-service student-teachers taking introductory methods courses, was conducted to find aspects of the courses they perceived to be their priority learning desires. It aimed at evaluating whether student-teachers perceived ideas could be tapped into towards improvement of the teacher preparation programme. The analysis compared and ranked identified possible learning desires to determine how student-teachers' views may be employed to develop a prudent programme. The identification of possible student-desires was informed by course aims, objectives, and learning materials. The study further identified aspects of the programme that student-teachers may need to subsequently develop flexible mind-sets ready to adapt to the dynamics inherent in their future career as teachers despite held pre-conceived ideas of what teaching entails. This study is of significance in informing the design and delivery of mathematics education programmes making them relevant and attractive.*

**Key words:** teacher preparation, pedagogical content knowledge, teacher knowledge, pre-conceived ideas, teaching philosophies

### Introduction

The task of preparing pre-service teachers is a complex process that involves a blend of several types of knowledge (Chappell & Thompson, 1994). Despite these complexities, it is essential that teacher educators continue to explore the impact of their teaching on student-teachers towards finding ways of improving teacher preparation (Kesianye, 2002). For teacher preparation to move in this direction educators need a window through which to understand how the recipients of their services, the student-teachers, consider of utmost importance in their learning process. Consequently, it is critical for teacher educators to have ways of learning what is expected of them by the recipients of teacher preparation. One way to learn about these expectations is to explore student-teachers' perceptions and beliefs about what is important for them to learn as future teachers. It is in methods courses that student-teachers are exposed to the demands of the art of teaching. Therefore, in such courses, they are expected to

display some sense of inclination towards certain aspects of teaching and that they hold beliefs about prior to and by the end of the preparation. Student-teachers, like other students at all levels of education, do not enter learning institutions as empty vessels according to the constructivist theories of learning. They have pre-existing knowledge and beliefs from past experiences. Student-teachers arrive into teacher education with certain conceptions of teaching, some of which may be vague and difficult to articulate and which appear resistant to substantial change (Haggarty, 1995). Regardless of the nature of these conceptions and beliefs, they are perceived to have an impact on teachers' instructional actions (Brown, Askew, Baker, Denvir, & Millet, 1998). Furthermore, student-teachers progress in their learning to become teachers and consequently their future actions as teachers would be impacted by these perceptions. In some cases these conceptions and beliefs are found to continue to exist throughout teacher preparation (Braiher, 2011) despite the fact that they may not be the most

desirable concepts for one's growth in the profession.

### Statement of the Problem

All teacher education programmes are intended to bring about desirable outcomes. However, quite often teacher preparation programmes are designed and implemented without input from student-teachers in their methods courses. This study regards such an omission as a missing link in reforms on teacher preparation and that ignoring it would ultimately render any efforts for improvement meaningless. It is from this perspective that this study is set out to address the research questions:

1. What are priority learning desires of pre-service mathematics student-teachers from methods courses?

2. Which fundamental aspects of methods courses require more emphasis for student-teachers to understand their criticalness in teacher development?

### Conceptual and Theoretical Underpinning

Teachers are believed to draw from several complex forms of knowledge in performing their instructional activities (Holton et al., 2009). These researchers presented a model of teachers' knowledge as shown below in Figure 1 in three dimensions: Sources of Knowledge, Types of Knowledge, and Conditions of Knowledge:

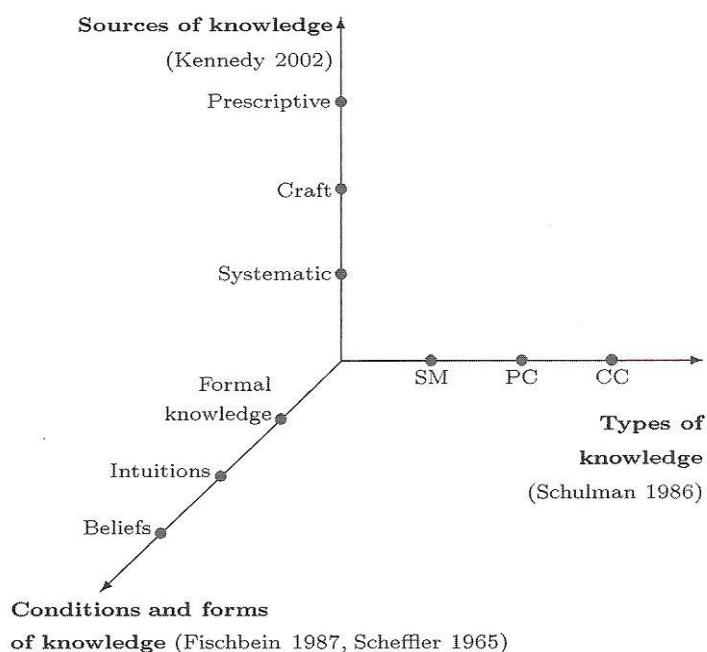


Figure 1. The three dimensions of teachers' knowledge (cited in Holton et al. adapted from Leikin, 2006)

The axis 'Sources of knowledge' represents teacher knowledge that is systematic, intuitive, and prescriptive. This type of knowledge would be acquired from reading related literature, classroom experiences, and institutional policies. Such a form of teacher knowledge would not necessarily be expected to be at the disposal of pre-

service student-teachers, not because it is found less important, but due to the fact that it is likely acquired on the job.

The axis 'Conditions and forms of knowledge' represents teacher knowledge connected to formal teaching experiences as in planned actions, intuitive or not

premeditated actions, and held beliefs about what teaching entails. Certain aspects of this dimension of teacher knowledge would be found in student-teachers, particularly that to do with beliefs which they would have formed while observing the way they were taught during their schooling.

The axis ‘Types of knowledge’ represents subject content being the mathematics pedagogical content knowledge or instructional know how and curricular content knowledge or that related to curricula understandings. Again, student-teachers would be expected to have some ideas of what it is they are intending to teach as such be found to be interested in this dimension of teacher knowledge.

Figure 1 above indicates that teachers draw knowledge from different sources and the synergy of these sources determines the instructional actions decided upon for classroom practice. These instructional actions are basically what Shulman (1987) wrote about in defining pedagogical content knowledge as “that special amalgam of content and pedagogy that is uniquely the province of teachers, their own special form of professional understanding” (p. 8). Pedagogical content knowledge is taken to be inclined to instructional actions for the simple reason that they are to do with how content is addressed as opposed

to other actions that teachers perform while teaching. Furthermore, Marks (1990) outlined components of pedagogical content knowledge, as:

- Subject matter for instructional purposes
- Students’ understanding of the subject
- Media for instruction in the subject matter
- Instructional processes for the subject

From these components it suffices that instructional actions may be taken to mean those actions that are informed by pedagogical content knowledge more than anything to do with teaching.

For the purpose of this study, the element of *instructional processes* for the subject is described in detail because of its immediate relevance to the study. However, the four elements are viewed as interrelated but separated for better understanding. The instructional processes for the subject component require educators and student-teachers to focus on three identified areas as shown in Table 1.

Table 1 *Instructional Processes Element of Pedagogical Content Knowledge*

Student Focus	Presentation Focus	Media Focus
Learning activities	Topic organisation	Instructional use of the text
Questions to students	Teaching strategies	Instructional use of materials
Assessment of students	Lesson organisation	
Remediation	Explanations	
Motivation		

These areas of focus are often used to form the basis of teacher preparation because they are closely related to teachers’ core business of teaching and are not usually acquired through other means. In other words, their inclusion in teacher

preparation is justifiable as it is the sole forum in which one can learn to be a teacher and get to understand the logistics behind good teaching. Based on this observation, it is not surprising to find institutions entrusted with teacher preparation



responsibilities such as the University of Botswana, Department of Mathematics and Science Education, design pre-service teacher education programme objectives correlating with these components.

### **Methodology**

#### **Setting**

The pre-service mathematics teacher education investigated in this study is a four year Bachelor of Education (Science) programme in which student-teachers are prepared to become mainly senior secondary school mathematics teachers. During their first year, these student-teachers study mathematics content courses only to acquire advanced mathematics concepts with the intention of making them to be better grounded in the subject they are being prepared to teach in future. These student-teachers are taught the same mathematics content with Bachelor of Science students and at this stage student-teachers do not study education courses. After a year of studying mathematics content courses only, student-teachers are introduced to mathematics education or enroll in methods courses and foundations of education courses. The methods courses are aimed at exposing student-teachers to pedagogical content knowledge in mathematics and science disciplines. The student-teachers proceed to study these education courses together with some mathematics content courses until they complete their study programme. This study is focused on student-teachers studying introductory methods courses called “Basic Teaching Methods in Secondary School Mathematics” coded ESM 261 and “Practicum in Secondary School Mathematics” coded ESM 262. The first course is a prerequisite of the second one. Both of these methods courses are offered during the first year of the Bachelor of Education (Science) programme.

During an orientation at the beginning of the academic year an overview of the two courses, ESM 261 and ESM 262, was provided by the researcher who has also been the lecturer for the two courses for the past eight academic years. The orientation exercise is always conducted with a purpose of getting student-teachers to have some sense of what to expect from both courses. Furthermore, it provides a platform in which student-teachers learn about their expectations from the lecturer and also aims at getting them settled in a new learning environment within the Faculty of Education after spending a year in the Faculty of Science. The orientation exercise also aims at collecting information on student-teachers’ cultures which obviously vary since they come from different ethnic groups with diverse cultures and traditions. This step is important because according to Vygotsky culture is perceived to determine what content to learn and how learning is conducted (Kozulin, Gindis, Ageyev, & Miller, 2003).

#### **Participants**

A total of 13 student-teachers registered for the introductory methods courses participated in the study. All the student-teachers were pre-service mathematics student-teachers. Although these student-teachers were being prepared to teach mathematics, some of them also study special education for purposes of teaching mathematics to secondary school students with special learning needs. It is necessary to point this out here because such student-teachers may have drawn ideas from special education perspective in prioritising their learning needs from the mathematics methods courses.

#### **Instrumentation**

The study employed a data collection instrument formulated from ideas borrowed from Brahier’s (2011) study, which was a comparative study on beliefs of

sophomores and those of their seniors about methods courses. A questionnaire designed from expected outcomes from the methods courses was employed to collect data for the study. The questionnaire comprised of 15 items derived from the course outlines of the methods courses offered as introductory methods courses (see Appendix A). These items are concerned with teacher knowledge and skills as explained above and in particular, mathematics pedagogical content knowledge. Student-teachers were asked to rank the questionnaire items according to their priority learning needs from the methods courses at entry in methods courses. The items were ranked from 1 to 15, where 1 represented the highest priority with 15 representing the least priority learning desire. The items were listed in a random manner after writing them on pieces of paper of the same size which were put in a box and then picked one at a time for recording on the questionnaire. This was done to ensure that student-teachers would not be guided in any way by the arrangement of items especially that they had not seen the course outline for ESM 262 which is offered during semester 2. The whole idea was to minimise the likelihood of student-teachers being guided by the fact that the learning outcomes would have been stated in the course outline of the semester 1 course. Furthermore, the questionnaire was administered ensuring that student-teachers did not have access to any other sources but just relied on their thoughts and beliefs.

Another data collection instrument for the study was student-teachers' teaching philosophy statements. Student-teachers were briefed about what a teaching philosophy aims to achieve and that it is likely to change as they progress within their teacher preparation programme. They were then requested to write their teaching philosophies and submit within a week. The teaching philosophies were collected from all student-teachers on the due date. Student-teachers' teaching philosophies

were also employed as a method of data collection with an aim of getting further ideas of the extent to which they understand the expectations of a teaching profession as potential teachers. This in a way would make them think seriously about the kind of teachers they would like to be and the mathematics education concepts that they believe would be essential to learn from methods courses.

### **Data Analysis Procedures**

The aim of the analysis was to identify the most highly ranked or priority areas in the methods courses and those that are not found as priority learning desires by student-teachers. This was done to address the first research question of 'What are priority learning desires of pre-service mathematics student-teachers from methods courses?' Student-teachers' rankings of the aims and objectives of methods courses, as captured in the statements in the questionnaire, were first numbered and compiled using tally marks, and the totals captured in a table that showed all the statements and the rankings. These were then subjected to simple computations of mean (average) scores in which the minimum score indicated the highest ranking or priority area while a maximum score indicated the lowest ranking or priority area. The mean scores were then arranged starting with the smallest in order to identify the items ranked as the top four (4) and those ranked as the bottom four (4). These were then cross-checked by another researcher. The structured section of the questionnaire that consisted of one item in which pre-service student-teachers were to freely indicate any teacher preparation aspects they wish to be exposed to in the methods courses was subjected to a qualitative analysis procedure. This involved reading and classifying the indicated aspects into categories informed by the conceptual and theoretical underpinnings of the study. Data from the teaching philosophies were

analysed using a qualitative procedure since these are more of anecdotes from student-teachers. The qualitative analysis procedure of the grounded theory by Strauss (1987) was applied loosely to identify emerging themes as guided by the teacher sources of knowledge referred to in Figure 1 above. This analysis approach involved reading and categorising the statements into themes that seemed to emerge from the data.

### Findings and Discussions

In this study pre-service mathematics student-teachers identified the top four highly ranked priority learning desires from methods courses from the list shown in the questionnaire (see Appendix A), and these are presented together with their mean scores in Table 2 below:

Table 2. *Top four priority learning desires*

Statement Number	Description	Mean Score
1	Acquire knowledge about the effective teaching and learning of mathematics	2.5
11	Recognize that each student has individual needs and illustrate how a variety of teaching approaches can be used to appeal to the learning style of each student	6.2
13	Use various teaching methods and assessment to inform and improve mathematics learning	6.2
7	Recognize the essential components of a lesson plan and prepare a mathematics lesson plan which includes an introductory motivating activity, development of concepts, a logical conclusion, and a plan for assessment	7.2

It is evident that student-teachers are more concerned with learning about ideas that would enable them to practically apply their knowledge in their daily practice of teaching rather than being interested in issues which do not have immediate application such as those related to policy matters. This does not imply that policy

issues are not important but rather that student-teachers are at a professional development stage in which they cannot think beyond the immediate classroom related issues. The bottom four priority learning desires are presented in Table 3 below.

Table 3. *Bottom four priority learning desires*

Statement Number	Description	Mean Score
2	Give examples of questioning strategies for the classroom that promote mathematical thinking and dialogue (discourse).	9.5
14	Identify and study problems in the teaching and learning of mathematics in schools	9.5
8	Acquire practical knowledge and develop practical skills of transfer from their own learning to a classroom teaching situation	10.1
4	Write instructional objectives at the knowledge/skill, conceptual, and application levels	10.2

The structured section of the questionnaire attracted a total of 24 responses, some of which were addressing the same or similar issues. These responses were grouped under the three different dimensions of teacher knowledge of Sources of Knowledge, Types of Knowledge, and Conditions of Knowledge as presented in Figure 1. There were some overlaps but for purposes of this study, the groupings are as follows:

### **Sources of Knowledge**

Sources of knowledge is basically systematic, intuitive, and prescriptive, and normally acquired from reading related literature, classroom experiences, and institutional policies:

- Unity in teachers
- Effective teaching
- Classroom conduct
- Helping students with disabilities.

It is not surprising that this dimension did not attract many responses because it is by nature about knowledge that is gained through experience once one has become a teacher. However, the fact that some pre-service mathematics student-teachers actually think about these issues is an encouraging step because the lack of knowledge in this dimension has the potential to result in a lot of friction between the teachers and relevant stakeholders that may lead to poor reforms implementation in schools. It is crucial that potential teachers are for instance exposed to policy studies during teacher preparation for them to be able to act in informed ways and to influence policy development effectively for such policies to have a positive impact in the overall education system. Nonetheless, further interrogation of how these issues may be included in teacher preparation programs without necessarily being seen to be diverging away from the mandate of the programme.

### **Conditions and Forms of Knowledge**

This knowledge represents teacher knowledge connected to formal teaching experiences as in planned actions, intuitive or not premeditated actions, and held beliefs about what teaching entails. Some aspects of this form of knowledge would have formed while observing how one was taught during their schooling and these would include:

- Good presentation of concepts to students
- Creating flexible environment that would be conducive for learning
- Letting learners to participate in class
- Allowing comments and being able to correct students' mistakes
- To be able to identify students who need help
- Skills of dealing with classroom settings
- Classroom management
- Teachers being friendly but in an acceptable manner
- To develop confidence to talk in public and have high self-esteem.

As stated in previous sections, student-teachers enroll in teacher education programmes with pre-conceived beliefs and knowledge which teacher educators need to be cognisant of for them to be able to decide how they may address the issues instead of being seen as not caring. It is well known that such beliefs are often difficult to abandon and as such require exerted effort from teacher educators to establish ways of dealing with them that would be beneficial to all.

### **Types of Knowledge**

This knowledge represents subject content being the mathematics pedagogical content knowledge or instructional know how, and curricular content knowledge or that related to curricula understandings. It is possible

for student-teachers to hold views on some aspects of this dimension of teacher knowledge because they are expected to have some thoughts about what their future practice entails as reflected by the following responses:

- Helping students with disabilities
- To be exposed to different groups of students to be able to teach
- Ability to tell the different kinds of students and use different teaching methods to teach them
- Learn different ways of teaching mathematics that will engage students
- Mathematics assessment
- Use of pictures for illustrations
- Use of various teaching methods and assessment of students
- Recognising strengths and weaknesses of students
- How students tend to adapt to different tasks concerning mathematics
- Student monitoring
- Theories of learning in order to make informed decisions in choosing teaching methods.

Categorising these responses in this manner should not be viewed in a rigid and exclusive fashion because there are various possibilities. However, they are done this way because they are related to the conceptual and theoretical ideas discussed in this paper.

### **Student-teachers' Philosophies**

The pre-service mathematics student-teachers wrote their teaching philosophies. The responses from the student-teachers' anecdotes was categorised according to the three focus groups of student focus, presentation focus, and media focus for the component of instructional process for the subject as advocated by Marks (1990) as follows:

**Student focus.** This represents pedagogical content knowledge that addresses learning activities, questions to students, assessment of students, remediation, and motivation. The student-teachers indicated these aspects in their teaching philosophy in statements such as:

- Diagnose students' abilities
- Be patient, loving, and caring; care about students' learning
- Motivate students so that they understand importance of learning mathematics; mathematics in our daily lives; mathematics knowledge makes us function better in the society
- Communicate well with colleagues and parents
- Professionalism: punctual, marking and submitting on time, thorough planning, punctual to class
- Remedial lessons to help struggling students
- Nurture students' talents even outside the classroom
- Advise students to play an active role in their learning; encourage students to like mathematics
- Allow students to ask questions; students feel free to ask questions
- Listen and respond positively to students
- Observe how students learn and track their progress; varied assessments
- Challenge all students so that they learn more than they thought can; help students achieve their maximum potential.

This category of student focus was the one that was most dominant in the student-teachers' philosophies. This dominance may be because it affected them directly as students and therefore reflecting on it was more natural for them. The student-teachers see the learner as being central to the teaching process. Thus, they indicated that

the learner must be taught effectively and nurtured irrespective of their ability level.

**Presentation focus.** This represents pedagogical content knowledge that addresses topic organization, teaching strategies, lesson preparations, and explanations. These elements focus on teacher preparedness for the lesson. The student-teachers reflected these elements in their teaching philosophy statements as:

- Ensure meaningful learning takes place
- Foster conducive learning environment
- Clarify concepts for better understanding, explain concepts well, show students how and why; students acquire problem solving skills (encounter problems in our lives daily)
- Good teacher student interaction; interact well with students
- Come up with better teaching strategies
- Teach each student according to their ability and pace; understand students capabilities;
- Group work, individual work, demonstrations, independent learning, cooperative learning; drill and practice, oral work
- Design activities that students will enjoy.

The views held by the student-teachers indicate that they see teacher preparedness as been very important for effective teaching. They put a great emphasize on usage of varied teaching methodologies that would cater for the different students as they have varying abilities. These views are consistent with constructivists theories of learning which are recommended in mathematics education.

**Media focus.** This represents pedagogical content knowledge that addresses instructional use of the text and/or

materials. These elements indicate the usage of instructional resources by teachers. The student teachers reflected these elements in their teaching philosophy statements as:

- Look for better teaching aids
- Use teaching aids
- Use relevant manipulatives
- Varied teaching aids to cater for different learning styles

The analysis indicates the student-teachers have an understanding of the importance of teaching aids. This is because they wrote that varied and relevant teaching aids must be used in the classroom.

All in all, analysis of student-teachers' philosophies indicates that student-teachers hold views that are important to the teaching process. They clearly come to the methods courses with positive elements of the teaching process. They were pronouncing a linkage in the three focus areas of student, presentation, and media. Thus, teacher educators can take advantage of these views held by the student-teachers and use them in the methods courses.

### **Limitations of the Study**

Because the population size was small, the results obtained may not necessarily be generalizable to the wider community of pre-service mathematics student-teachers. Although triangulation of the data was done through the written teaching philosophies by the respondents, there may have been some biasness in their responses because one of the authors was their methods course lecturer.

### **Conclusion**

The results of this research show that student-teachers come to school with pre-conceived ideas of what teaching entails. Participants in this study indicated an idea of teacher's expectations and would like to be taught more often in methods courses. It

should be the duty of the mathematics educator to gather their naive thoughts and put them into something tangible. Where there is need for correction, educators should do it more diligently, and where there is need for addition, it has to be done

as well. We recommend that a large scale research be conducted to find out if different contents influence student-teachers' views of their educational needs in the methods courses.

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### Appendix A

#### A questionnaire of student-teachers priority learning desires from mathematics methods courses upon entry

1. Please, rank the following aims and objectives of the methods courses of the Bachelor of Education programme according to your priority learning desires from the courses. Use the numbers 1 to 15 **once only** where 1 stands for the most priority learning desire and 15 stands for the least.

Methods courses aims and objectives for mathematics student-teachers as derived from ESM 261, ESM 262, ESM 561 and ESM 562 course materials	Priority learning desire number
Acquire knowledge about the effective teaching and learning of mathematics	
Give examples of questioning strategies for the classroom that promote mathematical thinking and dialogue (discourse).	
Develop an understanding of various strategies for presenting mathematics learning activities	
Write instructional objectives at the knowledge/skill, conceptual, and application levels	
Develop multiple views about mathematics teaching and learning in secondary schools	
Develop an understanding of assessment in mathematics	
Recognize the essential components of a lesson plan and prepare a mathematics lesson plan which includes an introductory motivating activity, development of concepts, a logical conclusion, and a plan for assessment	
Acquire practical knowledge and develop practical skills of transfer from their own learning to a classroom teaching situation	
Prepare schemes of work that illustrate connections between topics and what is required in teaching such topics	
Identify and study problems in the teaching and learning of mathematics in schools	
Recognize that each student has individual needs and illustrate how a variety of teaching approaches can be used to appeal to the learning style of each student	
Describe a variety of strategies that teachers can use to promote positive classroom management and the role that effective lesson planning has on classroom environment	
Use various teaching methods and assessment to inform and improve mathematics learning	
Describe popular learning theories that attempt to explain how students learn mathematics	
Develop skills of dealing with classroom management issues	

2. List any aspects that you desire to be exposed to through methods courses for the development of flexible mind-sets ready to adapt to the dynamics inherent in your future career as a teacher.

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## ONE SIZE DOESN'T FIT ALL: TEACHER EDUCATION IN DEVELOPING PACIFIC ISLAND COUNTRIES

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**Abstract:** *In global terms, the world is facing chronic teacher shortages “that will persist beyond 2015 for future decades to come if current trends continue” (UNESCO, 2013). UNESCO reports that the East Asia and Pacific Region need to fill an additional 57,000 teaching positions to achieve universal primary education standards. The closing of the global teacher gap requires development of new policies and strategies in hand with a financial commitment that has a long-term focus. In one developing Pacific Island country, a new model is being implemented where they have partnered with an Australian university to develop quality teacher education programs with a Pacific focus. This article will report on the needs analysis, the development of this strategy, the design hurdles, and the implementation phase of the project.*

**Key words:** Pacific Island countries, flexible or blended delivery teacher education

### Introduction

Developing Pacific Island countries, frequently in isolated locations, battle with a heightened lack of available local teachers and often call on expatriate teachers on fixed-term contracts to teach in their schools. Whilst this alleviates the immediate need of physically having a local teacher in front of a class of students, the financial commitment to this process does little for sustainable development of local teachers.

Another strategy implemented by aid agencies has centred upon the funding of local teacher training institutions that operate independently. Teacher training institutes in smaller developing nations have struggled to find suitably qualified and experienced academic staff and to develop quality teacher education programs that are internationally comparable (Serow, Tobias, & Taylor, 2013).

Quality education is generally considered to be a key determinant in building social capital and consequently improving

economic and social development. There is now general consensus that success and failure in achieving quality education lies primarily in the hands of classroom teachers (Lingam, 2012), and it is vital to recognise the centrality of the classroom teacher's role in this. In particular, it is the professional competence of teachers that is considered the most important contributing factor in improving the quality of education, as teachers are responsible for translating curriculum, resources, and educational policies into effective practice (Gamage & Walsh, 2003; Grodsky & Gamoran, 2003). The professional competence of teachers, however, depends to a large extent on the quality of their preparation and, in particular, the courses in the pre-service programme, which must be aligned with and relevant to the work and responsibilities teachers will meet inside and outside the classroom (Gendall, 2001).

Developing Pacific Island countries in the South and Central Pacific, many in extremely isolated locations, struggle with a lack of well-trained local teachers. This is often because of poor quality teacher

training institutes which lack suitably qualified and experienced academic staff and consequently fail to develop quality teacher programs that are internationally comparable (Serow et al., 2013). One such case is the Republic of Nauru; where until recently, all efforts to implement effective teacher education have had very poor outcomes, leaving the country with an acute shortage of properly trained teachers. To some extent employing expatriate teachers on fixed-term contracts has alleviated this problem. Whilst this meets the immediate need of physically having a teacher in front of a class of students, the financial commitment to this process does little for sustainable development of local teachers.

This paper presents a new model of teacher education recently implemented in the Republic of Nauru. In this model the Nauruan Government has partnered with the University of New England to develop quality teacher education programs with a Pacific focus. The initial program commences with an Associate Degree in Teaching (Pacific Focus) that is aligned to the Australian Quality Framework. This will feed into a further Bachelor of Education (Pacific Focus) qualification. The blended delivery model, as the model offers online teaching material with Aid-funded additional on-island support. As the students remain in the context of their community for their studies, the delivery and assessment for learning practices within the course are responsive and relate directly to the wider school community of their Pacific Island country. Building local educator capacity with a view to the provision of future mentoring of students completing international teaching qualifications is a key aspect of the programme.

### **Context**

The Republic of Nauru, formally known as Pleasant Island, is an island country located in Micronesia in the Central Pacific.

Nauru's population is approximately 10,000. For an island of 21 square kilometres, it is well known globally as one of the three great phosphate rock islands of the world. The mining of phosphate deposits provided substantial wealth to the island inhabitants in the late 1960s and into the 1980s. For some of this period, Nauru had the highest per-capita income of any sovereign state of the world. As a result of the extensive mining, Nauru has very little capacity for industry and the large area that has been mined is uninhabitable and requires the completion of a massive rehabilitation program. After exhaustion of the phosphate deposits in the 1980s, Nauru became well known in Australia for the opening of Australian Government Detention Centres for the assessment of asylum seekers for refugee status.

### **The Nauru Teacher Education Program**

The Nauru Teacher Education Program (NTEP) begins with an Associate Degree in Teaching (Pacific Focus) in accordance with the Australian Quality Framework with a pathway to be developed of a further two years equivalent to achieve a Bachelor of Education (Pacific Focus). The mixed-mode delivery model offers a combination of online teaching material with Aid-funded additional on-island support. An essential component of the process is the mentoring aspect aimed at building a local team of educators with the capacity to provide local academic support to complete international teaching qualifications and so gradually requiring less in-country support from the university. To meet this goal, the program relies on online delivery of most resources. Required textbooks and large electronic files are freighted to Nauru.

Selection of candidates to undertake the degree involved an English writing and comprehension test administered by the University of New England to all Nauruan candidates. Based on the results of this test and review of each candidate's work

experience and qualifications, 47 candidates were offered placement in the Associate Degree. Two additional students were offered candidature in the Masters of Education Program at the University of New England.

Prior to beginning the Associate Degree in Teaching (Pacific Focus) in Trimester 1 of 2014, all candidates (with the exception of candidates in Secondary Education specialising in science and mathematics) were required to complete 'literacy and numeracy enabling units' which targeted prerequisite content knowledge in these areas required for teacher education studies. This is particularly important as the majority of pre- and in-service teachers enrolled in the program from Nauru require extra support in the areas of literacy and numeracy to prepare them for tertiary study. Candidates in Secondary Education with a specialisation in science are required to complete pathway units in English, maths and science prior to beginning the degree, and candidates in maths are required to complete an enabling literacy unit and a pathway mathematics unit. In addition, the first cohort of students undertook an 'Introduction to Academic Culture' program to prepare them for the level of academic rigour expected in the degree. In total, 41 students successfully completed the Academic Culture program, delivered by the university's English Learning Centre staff. The group of 12 students who joined the group in Trimester 1 2014 completed a short introduction to academic study but did not complete the full academic culture programme. These students were additionally mentored and supported by their local peers.

Getting effective infrastructure and a high level of academic support in place has been key to the successful implementation of NTEP. This has involved the delivery and installation of state-of-the-art IT equipment and internet/networking capabilities providing students with the resources they

need to successfully complete their course work. To date, a suite of 20 MacBook Pro laptop computers, a lockable charging trolley, two data projectors, three iPad minis, and two printers have been installed. Macintosh computers were chosen specifically because of their superior security capabilities, which reduce the risk of viruses entering the systems and network. Furthermore, the computers have been customised to disable the saving of files to the computer desktop. Students must use dedicated SD cards (which have been provided) to store material rather than flash or thumb drives as this further reduces the chances of infection by viruses. On-line access has been provided through the installation of five modems. At this stage, the modems are on a residential mode of access. Students now have access to the University of New England online delivery platform, Moodle, and have been successfully enrolled in the enabling and pathway units via the online registration platform. All of the provided technology infrastructure will remain with the Nauru Ministry of Education for use beyond the specified project. As such, it is essential to the sustainability of the program that this equipment be effectively cared for and maintained.

On-island and online support from key personnel has also been crucial to the successful implementation and continuation of NTEP. This is particularly true given the geographical isolation, somewhat limited infrastructure and consequent logistical problems. Initial support was provided by an on-island expert who for the first 6 months of the project, helped to establish the physical infrastructure and oversaw the initial online enrolment of students. This individual also provided initial workshop sessions each afternoon during the week and an additional session on Saturday mornings, with further online support from the university-based unit coordinators of the Maths and English enabling units in Australia.

Beginning in January 2014, (when the students commenced their formal candidature in the Associate Degree), this support was significantly increased with the provision of two on-island lecturers and two Australian-based lecturers who are dedicated specifically to this cohort of students. The unit coordinators from the university periodically visiting Nauru to deliver face-to-face intensive schools for their particular units have and will provide further support.

However, level of external support will be difficult and costly to sustain over the long-term, it is envisioned that successful students who complete the Associate Degree will be able to fill these support roles if the Government of Nauru continues support for these Australian based teacher qualifications. To this end, an action item has been raised to identify Nauru Department of Education personnel who will be able provide mentoring to current and future cohorts as tertiary training and support staff.

### **Associated Research**

While the core business of NTEP is to provide Nauru with a cohort of well-trained early childhood education (ECE), primary and secondary teachers, it also has an associated research component. This is aimed at generating empirical evidence that will assist in refining and improving the teacher education, as well as disseminating the outcomes of the program to a wider audience.

### **Methodology**

One component of the research that is presented in this paper, involved inviting the participants in the program to complete an online reflective journal with the same six questions asked at the beginning, middle, and end of each trimester. The main aim was to provide a space for students to reflect upon their journey as a

teacher and to provide an avenue for the research team to view their own progression and what they felt they needed to progress further. The journal was created using Qualtrics software (<http://qualtrics.com>) where the students were provided with a link to five reflective questions via their student email. An introductory instruction asked the students to create an individual anonymous identifier to enable subsequent longitudinal analysis. The five reflective questions are:

Q1. Becoming a skilled teacher is a long journey. Right now, how would you describe where are in your development as a teacher?

Q2. Considering where you are on your journey to becoming a teacher. Where do you think you need to go next on your journey? What will help you get there?

Q3. What challenges have you experienced lately and how have you managed them?

Q4. Give examples about how you feel about the UNE course at present.

Q5. During the course you will focus on different aspects of teaching and learning. Write three words that best describes what you have been thinking about in terms of good teaching this week.

The analysis of the first set of 36 entries required a systematic content analysis to identify common themes. The timing of participants' response to this was at the beginning of first trimester (Feb 2014) of the Associate Degree in Teaching (Pacific Focus). In respect to the Nauruan cohort for 2014, approximately 75% of the students had completed two enabling units in literacy and numeracy in Trimester 3 (Oct 2013 to Jan 2014).

### **Results and Discussion**

#### **Question 1**

Responses to: "Becoming a skilled teacher is a long journey: Right now, how would you describe where you are in your

development as a teacher”, were categorised into five themes. The most common theme occurred in 50% of participants stating that they were at the beginning of their journey as a teacher. The responses indicated that they did not view themselves being developed in any way as a teacher at this early stage. They viewed themselves as ‘clean slates’ in terms of teacher development. Examples of this include:

I’m just at the beginning of a very long journey. This is the cornerstone of my future career.

I’m feeling nervous at the beginning of this long journey of teaching because I don’t have skills for teaching.

Six of the responses centred upon having experience as a teacher but not possessing the formal qualification required. They viewed this project as an opportunity to gain a teaching qualification, which they generally equated with being a professional teacher. One student stated:

I have experience but I need more training.

Nine of the students stated that they already possessed teaching skills, and they viewed this program as ‘value-adding’ to their existing skills. Examples include:

I am halfway there. Looking forward to more knowledge and skills adding to my teaching profession.

One of the responses in this theme described herself as currently developing as a professional teacher. She connected the course material to her own classroom experiences and stated:

I say I’m there. I’m professional enough to handle students especially the ones in the Kindergarten School. I’m able to manage them well with all the help from the teachings on how to

become a good and professional teacher, but I know that there is more to learn in order continue and survive my long journey, and one thing I noticed why I’m surviving and enjoying teaching right now is because I believe that I have skills and I’m always in the mood of seeing a child achieve because of all the effort that’s been put in.

Two of the students described themselves as being “lost”, “lonely”, and at an unstable stage in their journey. Both students described that they were currently challenged by the course material, and commented on the level of commitment required. It is interesting to note that social aspects of their lives were changing as a result of their studies.

I’m at the weird and funny place where I’m not qualified enough to be delivering quality learning yet due to the unfortunate circumstances here on Nauru, I am in the classroom everyday teaching. So I’m qualified enough to be IN the classroom but also not qualified enough to be delivery (effectively) quality outcomes. Like I said, weird and funny place I’m in. Funny, sad really.

The remaining student commented on her need to “improve in English” and that she felt a “bit pressured”. Whilst only one response indicated a need to develop her English language to communicate in writing, this was observed as a consistent factor amongst most participants in the program by the research team. It is interesting to note that instruction in Nauruan schools is both in Nauruan and English with written communication in English from Year 1 to Year 12 (Republic of Nauru Education Department, 2013). Despite this, developing skills associated with the English language is an important component of their studies.

## Question 2

The participants were asked to respond to the following question: ‘Considering where you are on your journey to being a teacher, where do you think you need to go next on your journey? What will help you get there?’

For three of the participants, this question came rather too early in the course for them to answer:

To be honest I really don't know, but I am willing to go wherever the education of Nauru is taking me. Because truly I cannot afford what they are offering me, which is a generous offer one had to accept.

However, ten of the participants, particularly those (Nauru Teacher Institute) NTI students who were not currently teaching, were concerned about their confidence to teach.

I also need to improve my class presentations (that is my confidence in myself) I need to have the courage to stand in front of the classroom when parents and communities are around.

This appeared to link to the lack of actual teaching experience of this particular group most of whom have yet to experience any actual teaching experience.

Next on my journey would actually being a teacher and having a class of my own. I think the only thing that would help me now is me motivating myself to work harder and never give up.

Some of the participants (7) viewed improving their pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) as key to moving forward as a teacher.

My next step is to teach children in an effective way, more hard work to be done and more help and support from coordinators, lecturers and colleague.

I need a diploma and content knowledge.

This desire to improve Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK) also links to confidence in teaching as research has revealed a link between effective PCK and teacher confidence (Friedrichsen et al., 2007).

Finally, eight participants interpreted this question in terms of their long-term goal for the course and thus completing the qualification.

Specifically, that is to move towards attaining quality qualifications such as the Associate Degree and Bachelor degree so as to build upon and continuously improve my skills, knowledge and attitudes that I am imparting in the school environment everyday.

While this may have represented a misinterpretation of the intentions of the question, it did reflect well on their overall enthusiasm to complete the degree.

## Question 3

The participants were also asked about the challenges they faced undertaking the Associate Degree, specifically, ‘What challenges have you experienced lately and how have you managed them?’ Perhaps not surprisingly ‘time management’ was the most significant challenge, particularly for those participants who are full-time teachers and coming to classes in the evenings and on Saturdays. The majority of responses (15) focused on the issue of meeting submission deadlines for assignments.

I have experienced number of challenges throughout this journey...and the common one is LATE SUBMISSION and I've learned my lesson that 'Time Management' is important! And as we all know the phrase – ‘Time and Tide waits for no-man’.

Even the practicalities of arriving at sessions on time required significant pre-planning as Nauru has no system of public transport and although the island is small this can make travel difficult.

Trying to arrive in class on time despite the lack of transport and rainy weather. I try to get ready earlier than expected so I can have time to plan ahead.

However, it was encouraging to note in many of the responses indicated, that the teachers were coming to terms with this despite the hard work and sacrifices involved and this suggested a significant commitment to complete the Associate Degree:

The biggest challenge thus far has been Time! Most days I find, I have so much to do and not enough time to do them all in! My first step towards managing this is to draw up and follow a very specific and strict timetable. Every waking moment is accounted for. There is no such thing as 'free time'.

Closely related to the issue of time management were challenges associated with work, study, and life balance with five participants highlighting this:

The challenges I have been facing right now is being three types of person at the same time, a mother, a teacher and a UNE student. It is quite a difficult experience because this is new to me. However I managed well by keeping up with the time management and making a lot of sacrifices.

Like I said before, juggling my career, my wifely and motherly duty is my greatest challenge as a UNE student. Following the schedule and attending everyday at the UNE class is the only manageable way I can afford to manage.

The majority of those undertaking the Associate Degree are females working full time and striking a balance between their family, work and study understandably poses a significant challenge. This is particularly true in Nauru where family size was 4.2 children per woman, according to the 2011 census (Government of Nauru, 2011). While the extended family still plays a significant role in easing the burden of childcare, some of these females are making a considerable sacrifice in order to study and this is highly commendable. One student, in particular is often in class in the evenings participating in tutorial activities with a young child asleep on her lap.

Outside of time management and associated family issues, coming to terms with the new technology was the next most significant challenge. This issue was raised by seven of the participants.

I was struggling from the new learning system ... how to do everything on computer because at my school we did everything using a pencil, pen and blackboard ...

I believe its online studies made it difficult for me due to ICT skills that I lack, but with the frequent use of technology through the UNE online study I've managed to get my way through with the support from my UNE colleagues.

Again this response was not unexpected as many of the participants began the Associate Degree with very low level computing skills. Some had never used a computer and none had used a learning platform such as Moodle. Consequently, the 'learning curve' in this respect was extremely steep. However, as the second quote suggests, the participants rose to the challenge of coming to terms with the new technology admirably.

Finally, two participants commented on the hot and humid classroom environment in which teaching occurs. This is a problem



for lecturers and students alike and is on-going concern.

**Question 4**

In response to the fourth online question: Give examples about how you feel about the UNE course at present. Figure 1 provides a visual representation of the

participants’ responses, using free online software called Wordle (Feinberg, 2013). This provides a comparison of the frequency of types of examples chosen by the 36 students to explain how they are feeling. The larger the font used in the diagram, the higher the frequency of that feeling.



Figure 1. Wordle. Question 4: Give examples about how you feel about the UNE course at present.

Predominantly, the students are feeling challenged and excited about the teacher education program. A key component of the delivery is on-island support and online support for the cohort of the students. It is promising to find that this is currently felt by many of the students. A range of other feelings was expressed, such as feelings of enjoyment, motivation, interest and moving-forward alongside scared, nervous, afraid and anxious. The willingness to express feelings and reflect upon emotions is an important area of teacher development that is targeted in this program.

**Question 5**

In response to the online question: During the course you will focus on different aspects of teaching and learning. Write three words that best describes what you have been thinking about in terms of good teaching this week. Figure 2 provides a visual representation, again using Wordle (Feinberg, 2013), which provides a comparison of the frequency of the three words chosen by the 36 students to describe their teaching/learning focus at present.



*Figure 2.* Wordle. Question 5: Write three words that best describe what you have been thinking about in terms of good teaching this week.

It is interesting to note that despite the question asking the students to focus on different aspects of teaching/learning, the highest frequency words were ‘confidence’, ‘punctual’, ‘prepared’, ‘passionate’, ‘organised’, ‘humility’ and ‘patience’. The majority of words chosen reflect recognition of the passion and development of personal responsibility to complete their teacher training qualifications. Words describing various principles and models of teaching practice were also provided, as evident in Figure 1, but not with the frequency of words related to personal motivation and preparedness for studies.

### Conclusion

With considerable investment provided by regional universities and local teacher training colleges, many of the recent efforts at teacher education in the small Pacific Island countries, have had varied outcomes. The current issues appear to involve keeping pace with rapid globalisation and harmonising the cultural slippage with which many Pacific Island countries struggle, coupled with political instability

and growing difficult social and economic conditions. The Nauru Teacher Education Program is a joint venture between the Nauru Ministry of Education and the University of New England and represents a new approach to the challenge of producing effectively trained local teachers.

The logistical problems in establishing the project have been significant and the initial costs have been high. However, the participant teachers have generally responded very well to the Associate Degree despite the challenges and sacrifices they have faced. With the ongoing support provided on-island and on-line, hopefully this will continue.

Ultimately, the challenge will be to identify local teachers who will be able to take on the role of on-island support thus reducing costs and providing ownership of the program to the people of Nauru. This later point is highly significant to all educational aid and consultancy in the Pacific region (Sanga, 2005).

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## PROFICIENCY FORMS AND VOCATIONAL PEDAGOGICAL PRINCIPLES

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**Abstract:** *This article is based on research on experiential learning and vocational teachers. The author describes his analysis of curricula for the vocational teacher education and explains the education's purpose, content, and methods. In 1975, education dramatically changed from an academic tradition with dissemination of many disciplines to a holistic education with focus on educating teachers who would function in practice, not only have theoretical knowledge of pedagogy. The author discusses important aspects of learning, as usability and relevance, distance in time and space between theory and practice, and the use of different proficiency forms. Furthermore, the author discusses three key, vocational educational principles (VEP): experiential learning, vocational adaptation of theory, and integration of theory and practice. These principles are important for all learning and especially for the education and training of vocational teachers and of vocational students.*

**Key words:** Proficiency forms, vocational educational principles, dropout from school, curriculum analysis

### Introduction

In this article, I present the vocational educational principles (VEP) as they were described in the formal curricula in vocational teacher education and training (VTET). I have analyzed the formal curriculum documents (Goodlad, 1979) and investigated by interviewing vocational teachers how they experienced the curriculum. I used a qualitative approach. This article is based on data from my doctoral dissertation (Inglar, 2009).

I also describe and discuss various proficiency forms that are central to education and particularly vocational education and training, and important vocational educational principles such as experiential learning, vocationally adapted theory, and the integration of theory with practice.

In recent years, there has been an increased focus on the flow of students in school, particularly in vocational education and training (VET). "Drop-out" is a term often used to refer to those who do not complete

their education. The concept drop-out indicates that the responsibility for not completing belongs to the vocational students. They "do not manage". It might just as well be that the current VET is not suited for the vocational students. From this opposite perspective, I would rather call it "push-out" or "ejection". It may be that vocational teachers do not focus sufficiently on the connections between the students' learning abilities and the vocational educational principles. Thus, there might be a link between content and methods in VET and the ejection mechanisms (Dahlback & Haaland, 2014; Hiim, 2013; Inglar, 2009). The main point of this article is to describe and enhance the importance of different and practical proficiency forms to prevent drop-out.

### Curriculum Analysis

In Norway we have two kinds of VTET. I have studied the one called Practical Pedagogical Education (PPU) through practical and inductive analyses of the substance, the meaning of the text, in the formal curricula in the period 1975-2003

(Inglar, 2011). Inductively, I tried to find and reconstruct what was contained in the curricula, their intentions and educational ideology, their description of the content, and their priorities of teaching and learning methods. A practical-inductive approach therefore provides a subjective description from the researcher's interpretations of data.

Since its establishment in 1947 until 1975, the analyses show that VTET was characterized by an academic, theoretical teaching tradition (Inglar, 1996a, 34-35) with disciplines such as psychology and pedagogy, Norwegian language, writing, physical education, arithmetic and mathematics, school management, and work organization. There were also practical teaching exercises, micro teaching. Since 1975 the curricula has been characterized by experiential learning and certain vocational educational principles (VEP), and this curriculum has had a dominant influence on all subsequent plans. The analyses of all the curricula since 1975 resulted in three categories: purpose, content, and working principles. I have densified the substance in selected curricula until 2003 and then extracted the essence of the densifications. The essence of the category "purposes" was experiential learning with a focus on the goals of the VET. Dissemination of educational theory was not important. The curriculum emphasized the need to adapt theory to practical tasks by stating: "It is not a fixed curriculum. The literature should be organized according to the ongoing learning work/training assignments" (Pedagogisk [curriculum], 1975, p. 9) The plan also emphasized that the study should build on the individual student teacher's own experiences.

The essence of the category "content" was that it should be based on key tasks for a vocational teacher in relation to the individual student teacher, the class/group,

the school/school community and the society. There was no established curriculum, and the students were co-responsible in selecting relevant topics. Most of the students had practiced as teachers two or more years, so they knew from experience what relevant knowledge in the occupation was.

The essence of "working principles" were key tasks for vocational teacher, such as planning, teaching, counseling and evaluation. The students should train in practical activities, analyze their experiences, and conduct self-assessment. This means that the learning methods should be both theoretical and practical but with practice as a fundamental part. The term "working principles" instead of teaching methods also points out a perspective aimed at practical rather than only a theoretical education.

### **Vocational Forms of Proficiency and Learning**

The term knowledge is often used in school subjects and academic disciplines when referring to laws, rules, and relationships. In a positivistic view of knowledge (Popper, 1972), one also tries to achieve similar predictable and controllable knowledge in the social sciences. With such a view of knowledge, one will try to understand vocational knowledge in the same way, by verbalizing explanations of what a vocation consists. Prior to 1975, the formal curriculum in the Norwegian VTET was characterized by this positivistic tradition, and it consisted of a number of separate disciplines (Inglar, 1996a) as said before. It was believed that one could extract professional knowledge by skimming off the vocational theory in the same way as the cream of non-homogenized milk is skimmed off (Einarsen, 1947). By vocational theory, I mean the knowledge that is necessary and relevant to the vocation like knowledge of materials,

Health, Safety, and Environment (HSE), regulations, pathology, and other necessary knowledge. If one can separate the theoretical part of vocational knowledge, the pupils may learn vocational theory in the classroom and practical techniques in the workshop. They may learn vocational theory in the school and later transform the theory into practical execution of a profession.

Research shows doubts about this positivistic view of knowledge. Mjelde (2002) detected that some of the students in vocational education do not see the purpose of theoretical knowledge in practical work. The same is detected with regard to VET and professional education (Dahlback & Haaland, 2014; Hiim, 2013; Inglar, 2009; Jordell, 1986; Schön 1983). When there is a distinction between vocational theory and practice, vocational theory may live "its own life" regardless of practice. When a mechanic leaves his overalls in the workshop and brings his Powerpoint presentations into a classroom, he gives the vocational theory a different structure. Then he is not carrying out a concrete and practical task but conveying a logical and understandable knowledge structure. There will be no "logic of action", but "logic of understanding" (Callewaert, 1999; Inglar 2009). It might be that those who do not see the meaning in verbalized theory will learn more easily and better when the teacher uses logic of action, when he demonstrates and explains simultaneously.

### **Usefulness and Relevance**

Hovdenak (2005) studied 149 pupils who attended the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grades in general and vocational study programs for a period of five years. These pupils articulated criticisms about the subjects in school and underscored that they had little relevance to their lives outside the school. Thus, students experience the content and the teaching approaches as neither meaningful

(Inglar, 2009) nor motivating. Another interesting finding in Hovdenak's research is that students used the term "theory" when they talked about the lack of relevance of school content for the practical everyday life. The students did not combine the learning of theoretical knowledge with forms of knowing or learning by experiences. Such approaches will function as "ejection" mechanisms.

### **Distance in Space and Time between Theory and Practice**

When students are taught the theory in a classroom and are supposed to apply it in the workshop later on, some of them will experience the theory as "empty" words, words without meaning and relevance. One factor is that a classroom is often associated with the teaching of theoretical matter without something to make it practical and concrete. In an interview with a teacher at a Florist Apprentices Learning Centre, she said that some apprentices "pulled down the blind" when they had mathematics in a classroom at the training office, while they did it perfectly well when they worked in a shop (Inglar, 2013).

Another factor is the time between the learning of theoretical material and its practical application. If the time gap is wide, many of the vocational students do not see any connection and will not experience the theory as relevant. Nilsson (1992) conducted research and developmental work in Sweden. From his data he divided students into three groups. Group 1 consisted of students to whom it was important that the theory would be useful there and then. Group 2 consisted of those who wanted to learn something that was useful, either for themselves or for others. Group 3 was those who wanted to learn something they could benefit from later. This means that some students, especially in Group 1, lose motivation when they do not see any immediate usefulness of

what they learn. Repeated experiences of meaninglessness and lack of relevance reduced the students' motivation.

Informants in a semi-structured interview survey that I conducted among vocational teachers believed their students were more practitioners than theorists (Inglar, 2009). *Meaningful learning* occurs when theory and practice are woven together, when the students can abstract the concrete experiences to more general reflections, and can apply theoretical principles in practical tasks. One of the informants put it this way:

That they (vocational students) can, based on the theory I've gone through, create a drawing, and connect a (electric) circuit after it. Then verify that it works and be able to tell me what they have done and why.

Therefore, it is not a question of doing everything practical; it is a question of combining theory and practice into meaningful learning. That was one of the intentions of the curriculum from 1975, as described earlier.

### **Proficiency Forms**

Practical knowing is the competence to perform intentional actions and corresponds to what Polanyi (1966) and Schön (1983) refer to as, respectively, "knowing" and "knowing-in-action". Practical knowing is an intertwining of several proficiency forms, both theoretical and practical. The informants in my empirical study said that for some of the students, and for themselves, it is necessary to employ several proficiency forms and especially practical. I consider "vocational knowing" as the proficiencies needed for the tasks to be handled. The practitioner must first define what the task involves (Schön, 1983) and then analyze how it can be handled. In the analysis phase, one seeks

the vocational theory that is relevant, and those actions that have given good results in the past. Some examples of proficiency forms are

- Theoretical knowledge, knowledge about regulations, materials, physics, calculation etc.
- Visual performances. A skilled artisan is able to visualize what he is going to make, instead of reading a description.
- Construction, embodying. A skilled mechanic feels the temperature of a machine by touching it, listens to the machine working and may correct what is wrong only using his senses – and thinking.
- Interpersonal relationships. Many craftsmen mingle and communicate with customers in a trustworthy manner without thinking about it, without being able to tell why, and how they achieve this effect. I have observed laboratory technicians who take blood samples. They change their social behavior in response to how they interpret the patient's verbal and nonverbal communication. A timid user is shown care and concern, while a tough and assertive is met in a challenging way.
- Values, attitudes, and actions will say that you do not cheat or do a bad job on purpose. You do not charge the customer more than you should.
- Ethical and aesthetic skills and assessments. A skilled craftsman recognizes the value in performing a good job, and he wants a product that looks pretty without being able to articulate which criteria guide the judgment.

### **Vocational Educational Principles (VEP)**

Through my analyzes of the curricula after 1975, I was able to categorize some



vocational educational principles regulating the education of vocational teachers. I will explain and discuss three of them that I find relevant to this article: experiential learning, vocationally adapted theory, and integration of practice and theory. The reason is that I consider these three principles particularly relevant in VTET and VET in terms of motivation and prevention of dropout.

### **The Principle of Experiential Learning**

#### **Experience Orientation**

VTET after 1975 has emphasized that student teachers should learn through their experiences both at the University College and in the practical part of their education and training. It represents a constructivist view on learning. In Dewey's (1916) theories of learning as experimental or exploratory processes (see the phrase "that attempts" in the quote below), the learners develop their own personal knowing. He describes experiential learning as a cyclical process consisting of three phases: activity, consequence of the activity, and meaningful change of knowledge:

When we experience something we act in relation to it, we do something about it, so we are prone to or suffer the consequences. Activity ... alone creates no experience. Experience ... as an attempt involves change, but change is a meaningless transition unless it is consciously connected with the wave of consequences which turn back from it ... when change happens ... (is) full of meaning. We learn something.

In Norway Dewey is associated with the slogan: "Learning by doing". This slogan I have not found in what I have read of what Dewey wrote. However, he has written: "Learn to do by knowing and to know by doing" (Vaage, 2000). To compare, I have defined "meaningful learning" by saying: "Meaningful learning occurs when one can

perform actions derived from theoretical knowledge, or reflect on one's practical experiences so that it can be abstracted and articulated" (Inglar, 2009). Dewey himself says quite the opposite of the slogan "learning by doing" when he in the above quote says that "activity alone creates no experience" and "change is meaningless transition unless it is consciously connected with ... the consequences ... We learn something." Therefore, learning is not either or, it is practice and theory interwoven to meaning. Teachers in the VTET had opinions that coincided with ideas that were in the core of Dewey's writings: reform pedagogy, emphasis on practical and utilitarian learning, experiential learning, democratic values, and cooperative learning.

The objectives of VTET (Pedagogisk, 1975) states: "The education ... aims at creating teachers who are proficient in action." The curriculum stressed practical competence rather than knowledge of educational theory. Furthermore, it was important that the students should acquire knowledge, experiences and attitudes and not "get" knowledge and skills from a book or a lecturer. The formal curriculum thus emphasized the vocational pedagogical principle of experiential learning.

The principle of experiential learning is well suited to VTET and VET since occupations are characterized by knowledge, *actions*, and *embodiment*. Knowledge alone is not enough. To show ability, the knowledge must result in actions. Some students in VTET need action and physicality, like sensing, feeling, and touching to turn the volatile and short-term experiences into lasting learning. When the students in VET do not experience such intertwining of theory and practice, it may lead to lack of motivation and they dropout or begin at another study program.

## Tasks Orientation

VTET resembles the master-apprentice tradition in that it is experience-oriented and task-oriented. The customer's needs defined the task to be done. In the plans for the VTET it has been, and it still is important to let the content of the education be based on the tasks a teacher encounters in his or her professional practice. Drevvatne (1976) stated the following about the experimental activities that started in 1972:

The aim was to facilitate learning situations that were based on professional teacher's various tasks. The essence of teaching was, first, observe in the classroom in order to identify and clarify major issues related to vocational teacher's functions and roles. In our opinion this could best be done through observations and experiences ... Then we would, through discussions, group work and literature studies try to elucidate, analyze, discuss and possibly resolve the issues that were raised. The literature study was thus selected by means of the experiences students had in the past and the new experiences they received through among others, work and training tasks.

In my opinion, Drevvatne describes a process of abstraction from the experiences to reflections. This inductive process of abstraction coincides with the reflection work Føli (2012) conducted with her students in VET. Her students wrote blogs about their professional knowledge. The blogs were electronic. They also put in pictures of what they worked with. She found that students were able to reflect on their professional knowledge through blog writing and that they considered others' blog entries as a source of knowledge. In particular, they appreciated the teacher's comments. Through writing the blogs, the vocational students reflected on

experiences and considered entries from others as theory. As Dewey might have said: making meaning of my activities and their consequences and comparing with the meanings of others.

## The Principle of Vocationally Adapted Theory

The statement above about experiential learning shows that the VTET since 1975 has been vocationally adapted. It has reduced the importance of the educational theory as a *structuring element* in the education. Before, they had theoretical topics like development psychology, learning psychology, sociology, and teaching techniques. From 1975 the structure was given by the tasks or the cases to be analyzed, discussed, and handled. It is important to note that the curricula do not say that one should avoid educational theory. One should reduce the theoretical dissemination and let the professional functions structure the selection of current and relevant educational theory. I will therefore argue that the education and training, was and is *task oriented and vocationally adapted*.

One may ask whether the VTET thus emphasizes fragmentary and situated "practical advices and tips". Strøm (1994) has investigated possible effects of differences in the cultural background of teacher educators and student teachers. He found that this is not so. He concludes: "[VTET's] reputation among students is not related to the amount of "tips and tricks", but more to the extent that [VTET] manages to maintain their strengths and challenge them as *teachers and people*."

The principles of experiential learning and vocational adaptation are also of great importance to VET. In a reform called "Reform 1994", 150 basic vocational courses were merged to 13, which meant a broader orientation of vocational training.

Broader orientation meant that students should become familiar with several, similar vocations. The idea was that, for example, a pupil studying carpentry might also need to learn about bricklaying and plumbing. A drawback was that some students experienced other vocations to be of little relevance for their primary career choice. They lost the motivation to fulfil a VET. Such broader orientation may provide a broader proficiency platform, but it may also become an ejection mechanism.

One result of this reform is that vocational teachers do not feel qualified to teach several vocations where they have little or no experience, and that the schools sometimes cannot offer qualified education and training by experienced teachers in the vocation each student wants. Dahlback and Haaland (2014) organized the VET in several schools so that the students could move from one school to another where there were qualified teachers. Their research showed that occupational adaptation is important in creating motivation for learning of the theoretical matter. Interest in learning increases when students can see the transfer value of what they are going to do as practitioners.

Borander and Loftås (2012) developed a teaching plan for the VET in “service and transport” consisting of assignments that the pupils should carry out, for example practical exercises where students had to justify their proposals and it was not sufficient just to read a book. They found, through their research, that the students perceived the assignments as engaging and practical.

## **The Principle of Integration of Practice and Theory: Holistic Proficiency Development**

### **Two Learning Contexts**

In the curricula for the general teacher education in Norway, it has been customary to distinguish between pedagogical theory and practice, as students experience respectively in the university college and in the practice arena. To denote the part of VET in the university college as theory arena, stigmatizes the two contexts in which education takes place and gives the impression that one is a theoretical arena while the other is a practical arena. The concepts “practice” and “theory” were not mentioned at all in the earliest curricula of VTET. They had a holistic perspective, as mentioned earlier. It is important that, in both arenas, the students in VTET are challenged to convert theoretical consideration into actions and to systematize experiences into reflections.

The same applies of course also for VET. Often theory lessons are held in old, large school buildings while the workshops, in Norway, are small “temporary” barracks that are often poorly equipped and maintained. It would be better if the “theoretical arena” were located in or adjacent to the workshop.

### **Narratives and Professional Language**

When I asked the informants in my empirical survey to evaluate their teacher education, group discussions scored highest. They said they learned a lot from hearing what other teachers did in their vocational work, what worked well, and what did not. They told narratives, stories that were chronological, detailed, and on specific events and materials. Narratives are packages of specific theoretical and practical forms of proficiency. They are a combination of practice and theory. Sharing

fragmented and situated experiences (Lave & Wenger, 1991) promotes reflection.

Through an analysis of the representational systems used by the informants, I found about 10 auditory expressions (I can hear what you are saying, to hear about their experiences), 20 visual (get insight, find new perspectives), and 40 kinesthetic/action (get rid of something, reach the goal). This indicates that vocational teachers often use narratives that contain knowledge about specific experiences and that they use words of action, “logic of action”.

All professions have a professional language, which may not be understood by the unskilled. In vocational education and training and in professional performance, the students and the professionals use a narrative language consisting of occupation-specific concepts and common words that bind it together. Vocational teachers have three such languages. A basic vocational used with other professionals and vocational students; another is the vocational teacher language used with colleagues with the same professional background, and the third with colleagues from other disciplines. The first contains many occupational terms, the next professional educational, and last general pedagogical without many vocational terms. The first communication forms are more precise than the general, reducing misunderstandings.

### **Situated Learning and Transfer**

In a situated view on learning, the importance of the *practice arena* is justified by the fact that it is the “real” context and that the practice mentor has vocational expertise (Lave & Wenger, 1991). The mentors are experienced vocational teachers who work as counselors for the student teachers when they are practicing as teachers as part of their education. They are

“the extended arms” of the VTET. The students actually see the importance of practice even though some mentors might not be particularly good (Fagdidaktikkutvalget ved universitetet i Tromsø, 1985). This evaluation is expected. It confirms the importance of the situated perspective on learning and the importance of not only learning “*about*” but also learning “*by*”. One learns through experiences in the real school context.

If there is a gap between the teacher education and the start of the career as a teacher, the students may experience a “practice shock”. Vocational teachers do not experience any practice shock (Hiim & Hippe, 1991; Inglar 1996b). They are well prepared for the everyday work as teachers. They do not perceive the transfer from student teacher to teacher as an unexpected situation. Part of the reason may be the use of the vocational educational principles in the VTET, but also the fact that vocational teachers have often already worked in the school for a few years before they begin their VTET. A reason for this positive assessment is thus the principles of experiential learning and vocational adaptation.

It is also important that the practice mentors (experienced teachers counselling the student teachers) have an education in counseling at the university college, they have learned and they use the same pedagogical concepts and models as the students. Then the student teachers develop their practice-theory through the experience that learning tasks at the university college and in the school are interlocked.

### **Practitioner or Theorist?**

The informants in the empirical part of my doctoral research believed their students were more practitioners than theorists (Inglar, 2009). They also said that both the students and they themselves learned well

by non-verbal learning methods, using practical proficiency forms. One of the informants puts it this way:

*The pupils learn well when they are handling tools and machines; they prefer that I show them instead of telling them, and when they can feel it. I believe that many of those who choose vocational courses are practitioners rather than theorists. It happens that pupils are very good in practical subjects and that they think it is fun to work in the kitchen. They have trouble with both reading and writing, they have literacy difficulties, are restless and, therefore, lose concentration.*

It will be motivating for students in VET that theory and practice are intertwined, and that theory and the learning situation are adapted to the practical work situation. It will be motivating and might prevent exclusion or change to another study program. Since all the vocational teachers have been students in VET, they also are practitioners.

### **Conclusions**

The curriculum analysis showed that the educational foundation of the VTET has been and still is based on experiential learning. The VTET should not be a theoretical, university study in miniature, with dissemination of theory and divided into separate disciplines. It should be based on experiential learning with focus on a teacher's functions, the practical problems he may encounter in his work.

The student teachers ought to acquire experiences, and through own reflections and discussions with others, abstract the experiences into meaningful knowing. In this learning process, the student teachers shall work with the literature related to the current problems one might encounter in a vocational teacher's workday. This means

that the literature studied should concern these problems, and thereby be adapted to the practical challenges.

I have accounted for three of the vocational educational principles: experiential learning, vocational adaptation of theory, and integration of practice and theory. These principles, I believe, are particularly important in VTET and VET, and data from my research (Inglar, 2009) support this when the informants in the empirical part of the research believe their pupils are more practitioners than they are theorists. They said that many vocational students preferred demonstration to verbal explanations.

I therefore suggest a stronger emphasis on the vocational pedagogical principles. This will enhance students' intrinsic motivation and reduce ejection from the vocational education and training. Another important challenge to be dealt with is the situation that not all students may learn the profession they want from a teacher who is competent in that vocation.

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## LEARNING THEORIES AND SKILLS IN ONLINE SECOND LANGUAGE TEACHING AND LEARNING: DILEMMAS AND CHALLENGES

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**Abstract:** *For decades foreign and second language teachers have taken advantage of the technology development and ensuing possibilities to use e-learning facilities for language training. Since the 1980s, the use of computer assisted language learning (CALL), Internet, web 2.0, and various kinds of e-learning technology has been developed and researched comprehensively to extend predominantly communicative language teaching approaches focusing on training language skills. While international, in the 2000s the use of web 2.0 technologies in particular has been introduced for developing reading and writing skills in Denmark with special attention towards the development of web-based materials for Danish pronunciation. This paper sets out to introduce differences between the international and Danish use of web-based language learning and teaching. Finally, dilemmas and challenges for the use of CALL, IT, and web 2.0 in L2 teaching and learning and in particular the teachers' key role in e-learning will be addressed.*

**Key words:** e-learning, education theory, language acquisition theory, behaviourist, cognitive and constructive approaches in e-learning, second language learning

### Introduction

Since the introduction of computers in the early 1960s, a particular focus in language teaching and language teacher education has centered on the fact that computers can assist language acquisition and learning. Over the years many computer-supported training programs for foreign and second language teaching have been developed. After the introduction of the Internet in the early 1980s, and IT-based language teaching in the 1990s, e-learning platforms, online language learning, and web 2.0 technologies developed quickly.

The fast development within information technology and the possibilities to inherently use online teaching and learning facilities including social media represent new challenges and demands facing researchers of language learning, teacher education and teachers (Chapelle, 2009; Thomas, 2009; Wang & Vásquez, 2012; Warschauer, 1996). Language education of Danish for adult Speakers of Other Languages (DSOL) and

teacher education is no exception. As outlined by a Danish researcher Meyer, “second and foreign language teaching and learning” is an area “strongly influenced by the processes of change within information technology” (Meyer, 2005, p. 155).

From the mid 1990s the first computer assisted training programmes and multi-media CD-ROMs were used in DSOL language teaching, and in the 2000s, the Internet has played an increasingly important role in second language teaching in Denmark. Most DSOL language providers in 2013 offer online based second language learning programmes to foreigners living in and outside Denmark (Ministeriet for Flygtninge, Indvandrere & Integration, 2004; Petersen, 2014; Rambøll, 2009).

Studies of some of the first online second language classrooms in Denmark from 2006 and 2007 indicate that on the one hand DSOL teachers in the transition phases from traditional classroom to online second language teaching were very much concerned



about establishing ‘virtual’ social communities in online language teaching. On the other hand, learners perceived online language teaching as merely individual (Petersen, 2006, 2007).

Studies of computer or Internet assisted learning furthermore show that students take advantage of virtual learning environments, but that the reason for this is not the medium, but the teaching and instructional strategies built into the learning materials. This is outlined by Ally (2004):

Meta-analysis studies on media research have shown that students gain significant learning benefits when learning from audio-visual or computer media, as opposed to conventional instruction; however, the same studies suggest that the reason for those benefits is not the medium of instruction, but the instructional strategies built into the learning materials. (p. 3)

Teacher educators and language teachers introducing online second language teaching are thus facing challenges with respect to design, tasks, and content.

This article sets out to introduce differences between the international and Danish use of web-based language learning and teaching and to address dilemmas and challenges for the use of CALL, IT, and web 2.0 in L2 teaching and learning.

### **Notions and Definitions**

In continuation of the terminology in international second language acquisition (SLA) research, I use the notion of first language (L1) to denote the language a person learns as his/her first language, usually referred to as mother tongue. In contrast, I use the term second language (L2) to describe the second, third, and other languages a person acquires after having learned his/her first language. Language students are usually referred to as learners. The language use of L2 by learners who are about to learn and develop their second language is often referred to as an

inter-language. The inter-language is, in continuation of SLA research, characterised by being limited but systematic and dynamic. Despite the fact that teaching and acquiring a second language has certain features in common with foreign language, I differentiate between second and foreign language teaching. Foreign language learning will usually take place in classroom environments where learners and teacher have the same first language (L1); this language is usually also spoken in the community/country in which learners and teacher live. In contrast, second language learning takes place in classroom environments where learners and teacher often speak different languages. While learners often speak many different languages beyond their mother tongue (L1) and furthermore are about to learn the language spoken in the community/country in which they live is defined as their second language (L2), the teacher’s first language (L1) often is the target language to be learned in the second language classroom. That is the learners’ second language (L2), and the language spoken in the community/country (e.g. Ellis, 1994; Gass & Selinker, 2008; Mitchell & Myles, 2002).

In DSOL adult language teaching for example, most teachers speak Danish as their first language, while the adult learners in the classrooms speak various other languages. In 1996 it was noted by a Danish linguist that about 100 languages were spoken in Denmark (Stensig, 1996). In second language classrooms, both online and face-to-face classrooms, learners and teachers may not have any common language. Not all foreigners in Denmark have learned English; accordingly, English cannot always be used as a so-called lingua franca, e.g. a common foreign language in the second language classroom (Gass & Selinker, 2008).

As mentioned in the introduction computers and Internet have been used in both foreign and second teaching for several decades. Computer assisted instruction was first used in the 1960s. Computer assisted language learning (CALL) has been disseminated to a wider audience in

the 1990s (Levy 1997; Warschauer 1996). CALL is defined as “the search for and study of applications of the computer in language teaching and learning” (Levy, 1997, p. 1). With the introduction of the Internet, the concept of blended learning rose. Elliot (2009) defined blended learning as “a form of learning which balances face-to-face contact between trainer and trainee with Internet-based input delivery and interaction” (p. 439). Many DSOL language schools in Denmark provide either blended or merely online language learning. Ally (2004) defined online learning as the use of the Internet to access learning materials; to interact with the content, instructor, and other learners; and to obtain support during the learning process, in order to acquire knowledge, to construct personal meaning, and to grow from the learning experience (p. 4).

In many online second language platforms a range of web 2.0 technologies are being used. In accordance with Thomas (2009), Wang and Vásquez (2012), and Warschauer (2009), I use the notions of Web 2.0 and Web 2.0 technologies as referring to a perceived second generation of web development and design that facilitates communication, secure information sharing, interoperability, and collaboration on the Internet (Wang & Vásquez, 2012, p. 413). Well known web 2.0 technologies are weblogs, video- and audio-blogs, wikis, second-life facilities as well as social media like Facebook, Twitter, and collaboration facilities like Google docs and others.

The possibilities to use various computer and Internet based facilities in second language teaching are thus comprehensive and to some degree may even be confusing. The question arising out of this is: how can teachers meeting the new so-called ‘digital natives’ generation who grew up with computers, Internet, mobiles, and other electronic devices, choose and design good and useful online or blended second language learning facilities (Pegrum, 2009).

### **Education Theory and Second Language Acquisition Theories in Computer Assisted and Online Teaching**

The historical development of education theories and the development of theories about second language acquisition evidence similarities. Ally (2004) introduced three approaches in education and learning theories: behaviorist, cognitivist, and constructivist. In comparison, Chapelle (2009), Gass and Selinker (2008), Wang and Vásquez (2013), and Warschauer (1996, 2009) and others outline how behaviorist, cognitivist, and sociocultural (constructivist) approaches have influenced theories and research with respect to second language acquisition and development. Education researchers, second language researchers, and educators agree upon the fact that various theoretical points of view influence approach, design, tasks, and content of particular online education programmes.

#### **Behaviorist Approaches**

The behaviorist approach or ‘school’ in education and second language acquisition emphasizes the importance of behavior, while understanding the “mind as a ‘black box’ in the sense that a response to a stimulus can be observed quantitatively” (Ally, 2004, p. 8). Behaviorist approaches often ignore cognitive aspects of learning or what Ally mentions as “the effect of thought processes occurring in the mind” (p. 8). Important in a behaviorist approach is what can be immediately “observed and measured as indicators of learning” (Ally, p. 8). In second language learning theories, the influence of behaviorist approaches, in particular Skinner’s work from 1957 on “verbal behavior” has been comprehensive (see Gass & Selinker, 2008). As pointed out by Warschauer (1996), the first computer programs to assist language learning were developed in continuation of behaviorist language learning approaches as drill and practice tasks. Warschauer, hence, named the first period of computer assisted language

learning “behaviorist CALL”. Essential in behaviorist CALL is the understanding that repeated exposure to the same material is beneficial or even essential to learning; the computer is ideal for carrying out repeated drills, since the machine does not get bored with presenting the same material and since it can provide immediate non-judgmental feedback (Warschauer, p. 1).

### **Cognitivist Approaches**

In contrast, cognitivist approaches in both education theory and second language acquisition theories emphasize the importance of thought processes in learning. Learning, including language learning, is seen as a process involving memory, thinking, reflection, abstraction, and metacognition. Important in cognitive language learning processes is that input is first transformed to intake and then may be transferred from the short-term memory to long-term memory. Learners’ possibilities to make their own hypotheses about language and individual learner strategies are seen to be essential in cognitivist approaches (Ally, 2004; Mitchell & Myles, 2002). In contrast to behaviorist approaches, computer or Internet based cognitive approaches do not judge and evaluate everything the students do nor reward them with congratulatory messages, lights, or bells (Warschauer, 1996). What is important is how learning content and tasks can be presented in various ways in the online environment in order to subsequently be stored in the learner’s long-term memory. As a consequence different online strategies and many various types of tasks enhancing input processing should be developed for online second language teaching based on cognitivist approaches.

### **Constructivist or Socio-cultural Approaches**

In constructivist and socio-cultural approaches in second language learning theories, firstly the possibility for learners to construct their

own knowledge is seen as essential. Secondly, social contexts of learning is regarded important and as a precondition for all kinds of learning. “Constructivists see learners as being active rather than passive. Knowledge is not received from the outside or from someone else; rather, it is the individual learner’s interpretation and processing of what is received through the senses that creates knowledge.... A major emphasis of constructivists is situated learning, which sees learning as contextual” (Ally, 2004, p. 18). Similarly socio-cultural second language acquisition theories emphasize both language knowledge construction and the importance of social contexts as preconditions for learning a language. As a consequence, learners in online second language learning environments should be allowed to construct knowledge rather than being given knowledge through instruction. Furthermore, learners should be given the possibilities to interact with both online teacher and other online learners (Ally, 2004; Chapelle, 2009; Thomas, 2009).

### **Developing the Four Language Skills**

Since the 1960s, international computer-assisted language learning (CALL) was developed under the influence of approaches in second and foreign language teaching: firstly based on behaviorist approaches and since the 1980s on cognitive communicative language teaching approaches. In the 1990s, the multimedia phase in international CALL mainly used communicative teaching approaches based primarily on cognitive learning theories and the intentions of developing the four language skills (Wang & Vásquez, 2012; Warschauer, 1996). Newby (2006) stated that the communicative approaches in language teaching are reflected in terms the four skills of reading, writing, speaking, and listening .... Seeing language in these terms ... has been largely uncontroversial throughout the thirty-year history of communicative language teaching (CLT), and it is this category that feeds into what is generally

described as communicative methodology. (p. 19)

In the beginning of the 2000s when Web 2.0 technologies were increasingly used in foreign and second language teaching, research reviews indicated that the new technologies have been primarily investigated and used for developing language skills such as reading, listening, and writing skills (Lui, Moore, Graham, & Lee, 2003; Stockwell 2007; Wang & Vásquez 2012). “The scope of inquiry on technology and language learning” was “historically focusing on the traditional four language skills” (Wang & Vásquez, p. 417), and “in the period after 2005, L2 writing represents the most investigated area” (p. 418). Wang & Vásquez outlined that the “paradigm shift in SLA research since the 1990s with second language learning and acquisition research moving from a cognitive orientation to a social orientation ... from an acquisition metaphor to a participation metaphor ... seem to be in alignment with many of the attributes of Web 2.0 technology (such as ease of participation, communication, information sharing, and collaboration)” (Wang & Vásquez, p. 413). Since 2005 most of the SLA research was framed along sociocultural and sociocognitive dimensions such as sociocultural theory, “activity theory, socio-constructivism, community of practice, social cognitive theory” (Wang & Vásquez, 2012, p. 420). With respect to the use of computer and online language teaching, this development implicates an increased focus on the social dimensions in communicative language teaching approaches, viewing online education, and “the computer as a tool that mediates interactions between language learners and other humans. ... Interaction-based learning is a cornerstone of many socially oriented approaches to L2 learning” (Wang & Vásquez, p. 420).

### **CALL and Online Teaching in Danish Second Language Teaching and Learning: Focus on Pronunciation**

In comparison with the international trend, the Danish development in relation to an extensive use of computers, Internet, and Web 2.0 technologies in second language teaching has occurred primarily in the education of adult language learners. Similarly to the international development, the use of computers and Internet in DSOL in both the 1990s and 2000s has followed predominantly communicative cognitive language teaching approaches focusing on the four language skills (Petersen, 2014). While in international L2 teaching and research, the use of computers and Internet technologies for developing reading and writing skills in L2 has been dominant, in DSOL education a particular attention on developing computer and Internet based programmes for Danish pronunciation has been evidenced (Petersen). In a review report from 2009 on selected computer and Internet based training materials for DSOL education financially supported by the Danish Ministry of Education in the period from 2006 to 2009, one third of the programmes were particularly developed for pronunciation training for adult learners (Rambøll, 2009, pp. 6-7). Since the beginning of the 2000s, various training programmes for pronunciation have been developed both by private enterprises, language schools and teachers.

Various reasons for the extensive use of computer and Internet technology for pronunciation training programmes could be mentioned. Danish researchers and linguists highlight that pronunciation and an extensive vowel system may create difficulties for adult learners of Danish (Jørgensen, 1999; Kirk & Jørgensen, 2006). Adult learning of pronunciation of a new language appears to occur differently than children's learning, and pronunciation differs from other aspects of language learning, by not only requiring cognitive but also physiological skills (Jørgensen, 1999, p. 107).

Another reason may be found in the governmental support. In 2006, on behalf of the Ministry of Refugee, Immigration and Integration Affairs, responsible for adult DSOL education in Denmark, a report named “Towards an effective pronunciation teaching” was published (Kirk & Jørgensen, 2006). In the report, it was evidenced that DSOL language teachers give lower priority to the teaching of pronunciation: a statement that was confirmed in a report by Rambøll (2009). Here it is outlined that “pronunciation in [DSOL] language teaching is often an Achilles heel for language teachers,” and many teachers “are uncertain about how to teach pronunciation” (Rambøll, p. 16). In 2008 a comprehensive training manual in Danish pronunciation for DSOL teachers was published by the ministry responsible for DSOL education in Denmark (Ministeriet for Flygtninge, Indvandrere og Integration, 2008). As a result, since 2006 governmental financial support has been given to the development of computer and Internet based pronunciation programmes for DSOL (Rambøll, 2009).

A further reason for focusing on the development of computer supported pronunciation programmes in the 2000s may however be found in what researchers have described as “a relative reluctance” among native speakers of Danish to tolerate different spoken Danish (Jørgensen, 1999). Jørgensen emphasized:

The most urgent task with respect to Danish pronunciation [ is ] not the teaching of adult DSOL learners, but the education of native speaking Danes. We must learn to understand Danish is pronounced with a much wider range of variation than the one we have so far been experiencing with primarily regional varieties (Jørgensen, p. 114: translation into English by Karen Bjerg Petersen).

Various reasons may therefore explain the particular emphasis and development of computer and Internet based pronunciation training programmes for DSOL education in

Denmark compared to the international focus on reading and writing.

### **Dilemmas and Challenges for the Use of CALL, IT, and Web 2.0 in L2 Teaching and Learning**

Richard & Rodgers (2001) suggested that L2 teaching has been influenced in part by three ideas: (a) linguistic theory and language learning theory (approach), (b) curriculum design and syllabus (design), and (c) language teaching itself (procedure). These ideas have inspired the understanding of both face-to-face second language teaching and created impetus for reflections about computer and online-based language teaching internationally and in Denmark (see e.g. Bo-Kristensen, 2005; Hampel, 2006; Lund, 1999). Hampel (2006) suggested to rethink task design for the digital age in continuation of Richard & Rodgers’ discussions about approach, design, and procedure in terms of “factors that depend on the specific materiality of the resources and on the affordances of the modes available also have to be factored in when designing and implementing tasks for an online classroom” (p. 119).

A number of studies point to the fact that a combination of media, including various kinds of Web 2.0 technologies, may enhance the possibilities of working with language skills such as reading and writing (Chapelle, 2009; Hampel, 2006; Wang & Vásquez, 2012). Clearly evidenced effects of computer and Internet assisted language teaching on learners’ language development compared with face-to-face second and foreign language teaching still need further research (Thomas, 2009; Wang & Vásquez, 2012).

An American report on the use of computers and internet in primary and secondary education emphasized that educators making decisions about online learning need rigorous research examining the effectiveness of online learning for different types of students and subject matter as well as studies of the relative

effectiveness of different online learning practices (U.S. Department of Education 2010, p. 54). A meta-analysis from the USA, further indicated that blended learning seemed to be an appropriate way for learners to develop their language and other skills (University of Colorado Boulder, 2012).

### **Other Factors Influencing the Design of Computer and Internet Supported L2 Learning**

Several second language researchers highlight the potential of incorporating a plurality of modalities and affordances that the Internet offers for second language teaching (Chapelle, 2009; Gruba & Hinkelman, 2012; Pegrum, 2009; Thomas, 2009; Wang & Vásquez, 2012). Hampel (2006) outlined that teachers have to ensure that tasks are appropriate to the medium used and that they develop tasks that take into account the affordances (i.e. the constraints and possibilities for making meaning) of the modes available (p. 111). Gruba and Hinkelman (2012) emphasized that the integration of technologies is best achieved “if it is purposeful, appropriate, multimodal and sustainable” (p. xv). Siragusa, Dixon and Dixon (2007) from Australia discussed how e-learning designers apart from considering learning also need to take into account external factors such as instructional design processes, formative and summative evaluations, the actual learner’s knowledge, and the teachers’ digital knowledge. Siragusa et al. further point to the important role the teacher or lecturer play in e-learning. They emphasised that although

in an ideal world, educators, instructional designers, e-learning media developers and graphic designers work together to create pedagogically effective learning environments that are grounded in sound learning theories, in most cases however, the teacher or lecturer often is left without his team support and resources (Siragusa et al., p. 924).

### **L2 Teachers' Vital Role in the Integration of IT in Teaching and Learning**

Most researchers have emphasized the key role of teachers and teachers’ instructions for efficient computer and Internet supported e-learning, second language teaching, and e-learning. Pegrum (2009) stressed that teachers should be trained in the use of Web 2.0 technologies, and teachers and developers must understand that online education and L2 based e-learning is not automatically behaviorist, cognitivist, or constructivist, or even pedagogically progressive. According to Pegrum, requirements for efficiency, speed, flexibility, and saving money as reasons for introducing computers and Internet in second language teaching and learning may easily lead to 'poor' content systems. The development of a good design for online education is time-consuming not only in the development process but also in the implementation of IT-based L2 teaching:

While learning about the advantages of Web 2.0, teachers must equally come to understand that e-learning is not, in and of itself, automatically constructivist or pedagogically progressive, and demands for speed, flexibility and cost saving can easily lead to impoverished content delivery systems. As suggested earlier, some creativity is needed to work within the constraints of rigid syllabi or assessments. As rewarding as IT may be, well designed online learning will normally require a heavy investment of time and energy by both staff and students. (Pegrum, p. 32)

Pegrum continues that there is also a danger that “technology users will lose the ability to focus clearly as well as the will to occasionally power down their multifarious communication channels and make time for reflection – a crucial part of education – may be downsized” (p. 32).

Siragusa et al. (2007) pointed to several issues of importance about the teachers’ role in e-learning. Factors that influence the online

environment are the teachers' availability in the online environment either as regularly scheduled meeting times or based on students' requests; the teachers' own perception of the importance of online learning; and the teachers' "knowledge and abilities of online technologies" which "may influence how they utilize the class website to enhance their students' learning" (p. 926). Also teachers' desires to further develop their own skills in teaching online classes is of importance to students' learning. According to Siragusa et al., teacher educators "need to be aware of the labour intensive nature of online learning and the resources available to assist with the development of effective online instruction" (p. 926). Teacher education should provide for "professional development for teachers' effective teaching and learning strategies for enhancing student online learning" (p. 926).

### Conclusion

In online second language education it is important to be aware of both education and second language acquisition theories, and the teacher's role in order to enhance students' learning. Ally (2004) stated

Behaviorist, cognitivist and constructivist theories have contributed in different ways to the design of online materials....

Behaviorist strategies can be used to teach the facts (what); cognitivist strategies to teach the principles and processes (how); and constructivist strategies to teach the real-life and personal applications and contextual learning. (p. 24)

In second language teaching and learning, ways of meeting the challenges of 'digital natives' is not only to educate technically skilled teachers, but rather to help teachers and learners understand that teaching a second language in online or computer assisted environments demands a comprehensive theoretical understanding of not only second language learning theories but also education theories. Teachers play a crucial role in designing effective online learning. Pegrum (2009) asserted "as has been widely argued in the literature about online learning, and in line with social constructivist pedagogical models, teachers must be prepared to play a central organizing, guiding and mentoring role" (p. 24). Researchers and teacher educators could be similarly aware of supporting teachers in their striving to be effective second language e-learning teachers.

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## COMPLICATING NOTIONS OF 'SCHOLAR-ACTIVIST' IN A GLOBAL CONTEXT: A DISCUSSION PAPER

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**Abstract:** *The language of 'scholar-activist' has made its way into academic discourse over the last few decades. Historically a divide has existed between academics situated in the university and activists working within and across communities. This discussion paper addresses challenges scholars face when doing activist work within their institutional and community settings and on an international level. We explore the ways in which 'scholar-activism' has been taken up in the academy and how it is shaped by local and global contexts. Specifically, we discuss the factors that influence the work of those claiming to be scholar-activists who are interested in working for social change. We suggest that if scholar-activists are to maintain respectful relationships across individual and community differences, we must first negotiate how we may be differently positioned in terms of privilege, power, resources, race, identity, history of colonialism, and personal and national identity. We hope that this discussion paper will generate dialogue among our international colleagues about the possibilities of shifting beyond our local contexts to work respectfully, cross-culturally and to create global partnerships. Ultimately, we question how we can work with our global partners to build a basic and productive foundation upon which we might engage scholar-activism and contribute to creating social and institutional change.*

**Key words:** Scholar-activism, social justice education, global partnerships, international education

### Introduction

In our work as academics in the Canadian context, we try to incorporate our social justice and equity goals. This is not always easy in a context that supports a neo-liberal agenda that emphasizes standardized processes and better "bang for the buck." With continued cutbacks to higher education and with decisions on how to spend resources often made based on neo-liberal ideology, less room exists to implement a social justice agenda either in a scholarly or an activist way. We are interested in exploring the possibilities of emphasizing social justice goals while positioned in institutions like universities. We are curious about what constitutes the work of a scholar-activist and the challenges scholar-activism creates for institutional contexts where the production and advancement of knowledge are often privileged over action. We would also like to understand better the challenges for scholar-

activists when connecting to communities where activism is understood as a particular kind of action connected to the everyday work of fighting for individual and community rights, action often very distanced from the knowledge producing priorities of universities.

In the context of growing interest in the global world, increasingly, Canadian academics are entering international spaces seeking to conduct collaborative research. Faculty members are competing for monies to advance their research agendas as well as to meet university criteria to be successful in their academic lives (e.g. receive tenure and promotion, move through the ranks). Currently, much of this funding is being directed towards global research initiatives that require North/South partnerships between individuals and institutions that have varying degrees of access to resources. Those of us in resource rich contexts striving to achieve social justice ends must raise questions about

our work globally as we seek to foster respectful international partnerships.

In the discussion paper that follows we consider the challenges academics, those who work for educational and social change, face when their work straddles what has been historically understood as “on-the-ground” work in the activist domain and what continues to be perceived as the intellectual work of universities. To begin our discussion, we outline how the “scholar,” “activist” and “scholar-activist” have been constructed and note the challenges university situated scholars face within their institutions and the communities with which they engage when doing activist work. Following a brief consideration of our locations within this discourse as social justice educators we distinguish global scholar-activism from local scholar-activism and ask: what does scholar-activism look like in a broader global/international context? Finally, we present five working principles for scholar-activists and others working in the field. We see these principles as useful for understanding and addressing how we might do this work when partners have unequal access to necessary life and educational resources. The principles also help us remain mindful of how we might build respectful relationships across difference when taking up activist work globally without continuing colonizing/imperialist practices or replicating the North/South divide that can translate into marginalization, injustice, and oppression. We hope that this paper will generate dialogue among our international colleagues about how we can work with our global partners to build a basic and productive foundation upon which we might engage scholar-activism and contribute to creating social and institutional change.

### **What Is in a Name?**

Labels such as scholar and academic are often interchanged. A scholar is a “learned person” (Merriam-Webster Inc., 2004, p. 1111), an

academic “a member of an institution of learning, “very learned but inexperienced in practical matters” (Merriam-Webster Inc., 2004, p. 6). A long history of a divide between the theoretical and the practical are at the root of what differentiates the scholar and activist. One characterization of a scholar Collins (2005) articulates is that of “... [a] knowledge expert who toils in archives, laboratories, or other isolated spaces. Usually a scholar engages in an exhaustive exercise of knowledge gathering by digging deeply into a nuance of a specific subject, to the point where he or she may be one of a handful of experts on it” (p. 27). These individuals, Collins reminds us, may be perceived among those outside academe as isolated “nerds” gathering “esoteric knowledge.” Many academics [us included] would argue this historical framing no longer holds true for what many of us do in universities where our work is divided among teaching, research, and service. The service component for some is maintained through their connections to communities outside university contexts. For others, this service component is shaped within the university with service to faculties, departments, and the larger institution. More often than not, scholarly activity is rewarded with tenure and promotion and research monies, while work connected to activist leanings, can be construed as taking time away from or interfering with scholarly endeavors.

In the case of activists, they are commonly thought of as people who fight against oppressions in multiple forms. A dictionary definition suggests that activists believe in a “doctrine or practice that emphasizes direct vigorous action in support of or opposition to one side of a controversial issue (Merriam-Webster Inc, 2004, p. 13). *Activist* practice is, as Conway (2004) explains, a “distinct and essential source of knowledge” that informs the work of those involved in social movements who “wish to change the world and believe that human agency is central to that possibility” (para. 16). *Activist* practice is generally understood as separate from the

scholarly work outlined above. This diametrically opposed positioning of activist and scholarly work seems stark and less representative of the work of university scholars in current times, especially those engaged in research and teaching with social justice goals in mind.

Given these differences, activists may hold distinct impressions about and be suspicious of scholars and their work. They often do not trust scholars whom they see as socially detached, overly specialized and privileged intellectuals with better access to resources, full salaries, and relative job security. This lack of trust may lead to suspicions that scholars, who work in an institution that privileges individualized rather than collective work, do not (or perhaps cannot) share the same political goals, practical methods or work ethic (see Chatterton, 2010).

### **Scholar-Activist: Somewhere-in-Between**

As a starting point, it is worth noting that scholar-activism, at least as a concept informing educational goals, is not new. Dewey has famously claimed that scholars should “shape reality toward positive social goals, not stand aside in self righteous isolation” (1969-91). Freire (1993) similarly held that educational policies and practices have social implications – they can move to socially transform, or they can perpetuate injustice and exclusion. Gramsci (1971) proposed that, “The mode of being of the new intellectual can no longer consist in eloquence but in active participation in practical life, as constructor, organizer [and] ‘permanent persuader’” (p. 68).

Dyson (2004) has challenged scholars to step out of and “look beyond a comfortable career, a safe niche behind academe’s protective walls, and a serene existence removed from cultural and political battles that shape the nation’s fate” (p. xxvii). Apple (2009) has made similar calls for scholars to take into account their subjective, institutional, and

political locations in their theory and practice so that they might make effective democratic change for community members, children and teachers alike. In this regard, the scholar has historically been seen as having a responsibility for connecting intellectualism and knowledge with practical ‘on the ground’ action. And yet, as a range of literature about scholar-activism admits, “Activist research in academic institutions is rare” (Greenwood, 2008, p. 319).

Conway (2004) makes an important distinction between a political scholar and the scholar-activist. She suggests that a politically committed scholar is “one with ‘progressive’ political values and ideas” (para. 8). Although scholar-activists are also politically committed, they differ from political scholars in that they also work *as* activists *with* activists in non-academic spaces in which “the scholar is not first and foremost (or ever!) recognized as a scholar” (para. 9) but as part of the broader community of thinkers, workers, sharing in a collective vision, goal, and idea of change. Being a scholar-activist, she suggests, means sharing in the everyday work, participating in “endless meetings” and valuing the range of contributions made to the cause. She adds:

In becoming an activist, the scholar activist becomes another kind of knower. S/he has access to another kind of knowledge than does the ‘politically progressive’ academic. The knowledge arising from activist practice is a perspectival/situated knowledge, one which is essential and privileged in formulating and addressing the problematics of social change in our time, and which is both enriching *and transformative* of the work of ‘politically progressive’ scholars. (Conway, 2004, para. 19)

Pulido (2008) argues that there are multiple ways one can be a scholar-activist and suggests that each interpretation has its own virtues. For example, scholar-activism may consist of viewing one’s theoretical and intellectual work

as “directly contributing to activism” while others might see it as “those who engage in advocacy research” or, from another perspective, “those who practice ‘militant ethnography’” (Pulido, 2008, p. 348-9). Pulido also draws attention to the importance of location and *where* one chooses to create change. For example, we see the contextual nature of scholar-activism when we ask: “Will you direct your energies toward transforming the campus, the local community, the country, or the world” (Pulido, 2008, p. 348). Regardless of one’s specific vision, how scholar-activists carry out their roles varies considerably (among scholar-activists as well as over time for individuals continuing to do this work) as some may choose to take on leadership positions while others adopt roles as “rank-and-file” members.

Gilmore (1993) refers to the work of scholar-activism, especially work that seeks to be oppositional and counter-hegemonic, as “organic Praxis” (p. 73). This, she explains is ‘talk-plus-walk: it is [the] organization and promotion of ideas and bargaining in the political arena (p. 71). The ‘walk’ refers to the ways that academics are able to politically advocate for others as they work to transform oppressive structures, support those in marginalized positions, and identify subjugated knowledge.

Where scholar-activists agree is in their regard for “creative, positive social change as their major goal” (Young, Battaglia, & Cloud, 2010, p. 431) and in their efforts to seek ways they can be “politically relevant in the ‘real world’” (Mendez, 2008, p. 140). Part of this agenda includes creating institutional change that supports activism in the university domain. Some argue that institutions have created an artificial divide between intellectualism and action (Hale, 2008). As Katz-Fishman & Scott (2005) put it, “theory and practice are two aspects of a powerful, dialectical unity born out of and continuously tested in our social struggle to end all forms of exploitation and

oppression. Neither can exist without the other” (p. 371). This means that social transformation must recognize that “the analytical and methodological tools of social analysis are not the ‘private property’ of academics and the academy” (Katz-Fishman & Scott 2005, p. 373). Thus, scholar-activists need to appreciate that part of their responsibility includes upholding the links between ‘scholar’ and ‘activist’, recognizing that change and liberation cannot occur if there is a divide between theory and activism (see Hewitt, 2005). This means challenging the false binary that has arisen between the academy and activist social justice movement work.

### **Locating Ourselves within the Discourse**

We consider our work in the academy against the backdrop of the literature on what constitutes scholar activism. Although we both practice a critical pedagogy and we keep social justice and equity goals in mind, we spend little time on the front lines with individuals working actively within community structures. In one sense, we see our work reflecting what Pulido (2008) points to as activism within the academy for the purposes of changing the academy. We support those within our institutions who are marginalized in ways we understand as helpful, and we encourage our colleagues and students to do the same. We point to and remind people of the equity policies in place in our institutions making explicit the ways in which racism and other inequities are infused in everyday institutional practices that are, more often than not, taken-for-granted.

Our research is aimed at understanding educational and cultural practices that support the continuation of oppressions and the inequitable treatment of some bodies over others. Leanne inquires into the realities for mixed-race and other racialized bodies whose experiences point to material effects and the privileging of particular kinds of knowledge, while Susan continues to examine the

meanings of institutional whiteness in relation to privilege and power. Our teaching and research intersect and inform our critical praxis that contributes to the students in our classes, who are practicing teachers and teacher candidates, exploring their identities and multiple positionings while theorizing the processes of marginalization and the privileging of particular kinds of knowledge and experience. Although we hesitate to use the language of scholar-activist because of our lack of direct physical connection to community contexts and concerns, the discourse provides space for academics working as we do to adopt the language of scholar-activist if we so choose.

As we observe the push within Canadian universities to advance more global perspectives and to tie access to funding to international initiatives and partnerships, we wonder how those of us working within critical perspectives with social justice and equity goals in mind can respectfully contribute to and support global initiatives and research. In our local institutional and community contexts, we struggle to understand the ways in which multiple socio-cultural divides influence our work and often position us in places of privilege. Even when the connections to social justice and equity goals appear to be embedded in the international research perspective and holds interest for us, we hesitate and question the possibilities of transitioning from the local to the global in ways that benefit ourselves more than our international partners, research participants and contexts.

### **Moving from Local to Global**

Much of the scholar-activist literature addresses scholar-activism from a point of view of local activism, and much of the emphasis is on the North American context. Building on this literature, we distinguish global scholar-activism from local scholar-activism and situate this work within the international context. To do scholar-activist work internationally means making new connections and sharing ideas with different

institutions and organizations across national, cultural, and political boundaries. This means not only considering the impact of globalizing processes on each of our local contexts (which is certainly important), but also considering how one might effectively apply their social justice goals in a global context. At the local level challenges can arise due to individuals' and communities' differences including access to resources. However, complications multiply when tensions and contradictions emerge working within the context of a North/South divide.

Scholar-activists must consider their vision of social change in relation to the global communities in which they seek to do work. International colleagues working in southern locations, particularly those located in small, remote areas and who are fairly isolated in their work, may hold very different (and perhaps more immediate and practical) social justice goals related to their "on the ground" experiences and critique of the effects of globalization. Mendez (2008) notes that many communities may have "much more invested in concrete, short-term goals than in more lofty goals of changing society" (p. 153). Crossing international boundaries, scholar-activists must be aware that globally based institutions and organizations are likely to be no more homogenous or free of conflict and contradiction than their local counterparts are. Moreover, as 'outsiders', scholar-activists who may choose to position themselves as neutral observers of these conflicts need to be aware that "sooner or later one has to choose sides or risk taking on the role of the disinterested expert who cannot stoop to the level of taking a stand on issues" (Mendez, 2008, p. 153). Given that scholar-activism on a global level often occurs in regions that are experiencing challenges in infrastructure and access to resources, northern partners who come from resource rich contexts need to understand the differences that influence their work in the "foreign" context. Damaging practices can be in place even when people work with the best intentions.



## **Toward a More Respectful Global Scholar-Activism: Some Working Principles**

As scholars who have been invited to conduct international research, we understand that many complications that arise when working at the local level can be magnified and unpredictable in global contexts. In order to ensure that we adhere to our social justice goals and continue to foster respectful and ethical international partnerships, we have developed several working principles. We see these principles as useful guidelines that help us decide when and whether or not we should conduct international work, what our process should be once we have begun, and how we might sustain ongoing relationships with partners and organizations beyond a single project.

### **1. Think Before You Say ‘Yes’**

The opportunity to participate in international research and collaborate with international organizations can be tempting for academics whose universities are increasingly applying pressure to secure international funding and foster global partnerships. When presented with an international research opportunity, scholars may agree without fully exploring whether their involvement is productive or even necessary. We believe that before scholar-activists forge ahead in any global work they must first carefully consider the value of their participation. A central part of this principle involves saying “no” if we feel the work cannot be done respectfully because the international agenda supports questionable policy and practices.

Other questions we suggest as important to be asked when deciding whether to accept an invitation to do international work, or whether to initiate that work ourselves include: Why are we interested in doing this work? Are we appropriately prepared to do this work? Do we understand as fully as possible our responsibilities? This is not to suggest that scholar-activists should not be engaging in or creating important international partnerships,

but that we should always reflect on our motivations. As academics, we are deeply influenced by institutional expectations and demands including pressures to publish, present our work, and build our scholarly careers. We need to keep in check the ways that these goals may overshadow our intentions and actions in international research partnerships.

### **2. Create Early Conversations**

We suggest that scholars who have decided to work in international contexts and who are interested in creating social change must be clear from the start about our partners’ expectations for our involvement. What expertise, knowledge, and interests are we expected to bring and what expertise already exists ‘on the ground’? How is our role envisioned? This also means clarifying whether our involvement is long term or short term or somewhere in-between. What other partners (e.g. global activists) are involved and how might we also work with them productively? We may also need to consider how we might connect with other activists internationally and not just our international partners working in universities or other institutional settings. As part of our conversations we need to focus on understanding our partners’ positioning and their understandings of scholarly and activist work. Do they work in tandem with activists in their communities? In such conversations we should be actively listening to the internal dynamics that may be at play and learning more about our partners’ connections to activists and their communities and the institutional resources available for our colleagues to do their research. We must ask what kind of impact can they/we realistically have?

Engaging in early conversations and creating an open dialogue also means getting to know the context in which you plan to work. Although this may seem obvious, even well meaning scholar-activists may not appreciate the ways their politics, use of terminology, and



application of concepts may carry different meaning in a global context. Pierre (2008) explains how, as a Black American anthropologist, she experienced very different understandings of blackness in Africa, where she had sought to explore race and racializing processes. Through her work in urban Ghana, she understood better how racialization was not always conceptualized or addressed in the same way she understood the process. She explains how her research topic in urban Ghana was “often met with blank stares or agitated questioning of either my use and definitions of ‘race’ (as opposed to ‘ethnicity’ or ‘culture’) or my research methodology” (Pierre, 2008, p. 124). Similarly, our views on cultural concepts, methodology and research processes will often differ from those of the people with whom we enter international partnerships.

### **3. Confront Our Identities and Privileges**

Scholar-activists must continually situate and understand their identities in relation to the international contexts in which they work. Our identities, and the privileges we carry as a result of those identities, may be magnified in global contexts. We each carry various racial, class, and cultural privileges, as well as institutional power (conferred through our academic positions and associations). Recognizing our privileges and power allows us to ask what might happen when white, foreign scholar-activists from Northern privileged universities enter research contexts in a predominantly non-white developing South. These contexts carry long histories of colonialism where white and light-skinned bodies may more overtly and differently represent forms of historical violence. As scholars teaching and researching with social justice goals in mind, we take seriously Hale’s (2008) caution that “...there is serious reason to question the extent to which activist scholarship, carried out by predominantly white scholars in Third World settings, or among communities of color in the North, is

capable of countering the structured hierarchies of racial privilege” (p. 20).

We see how our biases and locations operate in the local context and so must similarly consider how our biases will impact our global work. For example, given the dominance of English, and the reality that this may be the first and/or only language spoken among scholar-activists in the North, how do we expect to participate in a context in which our partners may not have English as their first, second, or third language? While we realize we can and wish to be positive allies in support of our global partners, recognizing our racial, social, and cultural privileges (and how they operate in different historical and geographical contexts) may mean that we talk less, work hard to ensure that space is available for differently positioned people to speak, contribute to different types of work when needed, and act as advocates when possible.

### **4. Be Willing to Take a Back-Seat and Consider Alternative Roles**

Conducting respectful research also means recognizing that our best contribution may be ‘behind the scenes’. Although we may seek to ‘help’ or ‘support’ our international partners, we must keep in mind the ways in which our involvement may be perceived by those with whom we work. This means recognizing that some may hold resentment toward our personal involvement specifically or more generally toward international Northern involvement in local affairs. Others may be suspicious that we will arrive with plans to tell them what to do or suggest fundamental ‘outsider’ changes. A willingness to adopt alternative roles may be essential if we wish to create a positive working environment and navigate potentially tenuous political structures (e.g. doing ‘the grunt work’ and taking off our scholar ‘hat’ at times).

At other times, taking a backseat may mean understanding that our most effective role is not “in the field.” We may work more

effectively providing support for our colleagues who engage in scholar-activism in our institutions and who are forging strong global partnerships, but may be facing local institutional barriers that reflect the institutions' concerns about whether the work is scholarly or rigorous enough to fit the university criteria.

### **5. Who Benefits? Being Accountable and Reciprocal**

As Pulido asserts (2008) "The whole point of being a scholar activist is that you are embedded in a web of relationships" (p. 351). As part of a broader community, scholar-activists must also be held to a high level of accountability. Being held accountable means, Pulido suggests "seeing yourself as *part* of a community of struggle, rather than as the academic who occasionally drops in" (p. 351).

Being reciprocal signifies "a mutual give and take and is something that scholar activists must always be attentive to" (Pulido, 2008, p. 351). Pulido raises questions about those who "swoop in", extract information, data, and whatever else they need from a community while leaving very little behind for the community itself. This practice is often justified by arguments that scholars are sharing the untold stories of marginalized groups. However, "writing about a community's plight or struggle should *not* be confused with reciprocity" (p. 352). Where are the benefits for the community? Who actually gets to hear these stories? It makes sense then that many international community organizations are cautious about how much they want to share their experiences. Certainly, the effects of global capitalism have also meant, as Mendez (2008) states, "It is easy to imagine a transnational corporate jet-setter, off to broker the latest privatization deal or international corporate merger, sharing an airplane armrest with a 'transnational' scholar en route to the latest international conference in a five-star hotel in which his or her sheets will be changed by Third World immigrant workers (most likely brown or black women)" (p. 148). Doing

this work means constantly reminding ourselves (and demonstrating this among the communities with whom we are working) that we respect this work as a collective process and not privileged independent work.

As part of our efforts to be accountable and reciprocal, we encourage scholar-activists to ask whether their collaborative research will lead to positive action and change. What effects will it have and whom will it ultimately benefit? How far does that collectivity take us? Does it mean we stay longer or get involved more fully when faced with crises such as political conflicts or civil war? As scholar-activists, we must recognize that we enter global research contexts as learners as well. In so doing, we must continually strive to ensure that we are not the ones benefitting more than our partners or research participants. This challenge is heightened further when we consider that in North/South collaborations the funding is often in the hands of the Northerners. How, then, does the money get distributed and who assumes responsibility for the research? We stress the importance of ensuring that the research (whether data, models, tools or strategies) belongs to the communities with which we are working. Any knowledge acquired through our research collaborations must also return to those communities so that they can make desired change.

### **Conclusion**

Are we scholar-activists? In terms of the discourse our work fits within the definitions articulated in the literature describing scholar-activism. We do see ourselves as having a role in creating positive social change. We understand theory/practice as in relation, both informing our scholarly and activist perspectives. However, we think a more important question is: why choose such a label? What is in a name? A number of people collect together under the umbrella of scholar-activist. There is strength in numbers. When we identify in such a collective way we can find and connect with our allies. We can stand

together and work to make visible the limitations of our institutions for promoting social justice and equity goals. We can also support each other as we advance our research and teaching in ways that question the status quo whether in our local contexts or abroad. We can support each other in the face of those who may question the usefulness of our work, particularly when at times it seems more ‘activist’ than ‘scholarly’. Within scholar-activist communities we can ask difficult questions about the connections we make in

global contexts including whether or not our work abroad makes a contribution to social justice or contributes to continuing colonization and oppression.

Together we can find ways to support and work with individuals who are situated in the communities outside of academe. Part of our goal may be to help dispel the caricature of the university scholar that so quickly comes to mind for those individuals who appear more often than not on the front lines.

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### Book Review

Hargreaves, A., & Fullan, M. (2012). *Professional capital: Transforming teaching in every school*. New York: Teachers College Press. ISBN: 978-0-8077-5332-3, 220 pages.

Andy Hargreaves and Michael Fullan have captured the “collective transformation of public education” (p. xi) through their newest collaboration: *Professional Capital*. Their original goal was to revise and update their seminal work *What’s Worth Fighting For in Your School*; however, those plans changed when they discovered they needed to “equip teachers and those who work with them with insights, ideas, and actions that will dramatically improve their effectiveness, which in turn will improve societies and generations to come” (p. xi).

They lay out their plan for this transformation through the use of professional capital, which they define as the intersection of human capital, social capital, and decisional capital. Human capital is defined as the skills, credentials, and experiences that individual teachers bring to the profession. Social capital is the conversations and collegiality of those teachers in the effort to improve student learning and the profession. Decisional capital is the ability to have the judgment and competence to make the decisions necessary to guide and improve the complex arenas of schools, student learning, and education. Focusing on teachers’ human, social, and decisional capital, Hargreaves and Fullan examine the ways schools can be transformed.

Professional capital is a very different model from the current business capital model that is currently being used in many countries around the world. Hargreaves and Fullan suggest, “when education is organized to get quick returns on business investment, and to increase immediate returns by lowering that investment, it favors a teaching force that is young, flexible, temporary, inexpensive to train at the beginning, un-pentioned at the end, ... and replaceable whenever possible by technology” (p. 10). These types of teachers are not what our children and our societies need or deserve.

This book is easy to read, but its concepts and ideas might be hard to follow in this era of politicians dictating a business capital model of education. It is imperative for teachers, administrators, and teacher-educators to find ways to implement professional capital in their schools. As Sir Ken Robinson states, “*Professional Capital* is an incisive critique of the failing reform movements in many countries and a powerful manifesto for the only strategy that can and does work. Hargreaves and Fullan set out exactly and undeniably why the only way to move forward is to honor and improve the profession of teaching. This book should revolutionize how policymakers and practitioners alike think and act in education” (back cover).

Since its publication in 2012, it has garnered awards including the prestigious 2015 University of Louisville Grawemeyer Award in Education and American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education 2014 Outstanding Book Award.

#### Reviewed by

**Peggy J. Saunders**, Ph.D. She is an associate professor and director of the Master of Education program at Weber State University, Utah, USA. She is an active member of ISfTE and currently serves as the associate editor of JISTE.

### Publication Guidelines

The journal (*JISTE*) publishes articles by members of the International Society for Teacher Education (ISfTE). Exceptions are made for a non-member who is a co-author with a member, or who is invited to write for a special issue of the journal, or for other special reasons.

Articles submitted to *JISTE* must be written in English, following manuscript guidelines (see below) and will be anonymously reviewed by referees. Each article must pass the review process to be accepted for publication. The editors will notify the senior author of the manuscript if it does not meet submission requirements.

Articles are judged for (a) significance to the field of teacher education from a global perspective, (b) comprehensiveness of the literature review, (c) clarity of presentation, and (d) adequacy of evidence for conclusions. Research manuscripts are also evaluated for adequacy of the rationale and appropriateness of the design and analysis. Scholarly relevance is crucial. Be sure to evaluate your information. Articles should move beyond description to present inquiry, critical analysis, and provoke discussion.

Articles pertaining to a particular country or world area should be authored by a teacher educator from that country or world area.

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- All text should be double-spaced, with margins 1 inch (2.5 cm) all around and left justified only.
- Paragraphs should be indented using the “tab” key on the keyboard. No extra spacing should be between paragraphs.
- Tables, Figures, and Charts should be kept to a minimum (no more than 4 per article) and sized to fit between 5.5 x 8.5 inches or 14 x 20 cm.
- Abstract should be limited to 100-150 words.
- Include four or five keywords for database referencing; place immediately after the abstract.
- Cover page shall include the following information: Title of the manuscript; name(s) of author, institution(s), complete mailing address, email address, business and home (mobile) phone numbers, and fax number. Also on the cover page, please include a brief biographical sketch, background, and areas of specialisation for each author. Please do not exceed 30 words per author.
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### Future Issues and Submission Deadlines

2015 (Volume 19, Number 1) (We are no longer accepting submissions for this issue.)

**Theme** – Teacher Education in a Volatile, Uncertain, Complex and Ambiguous (VUCA) World. This seminar, organized by Hacettepe University, Turkey, was held in Belek-Antalya, Turkey on 22-24 April 2014. Participants (including those from the Distance Paper Group) are invited to revise their seminar papers, attending carefully to the manuscript and publication guidelines, and submit them to the journal for consideration. Book reviews on the theme are also invited.

Deadline for submission: August 1, 2014: Publication by March, 2015

2015 (Volume 19, Number 2)

**Currently an open submission with no specific theme** – Members of ISfTE are invited to contribute manuscripts related to any important topic in teacher education. Members are encouraged to co-author articles with their students or colleagues who may not be members of ISfTE. Articles that explore teacher education issues such as the practicum, mentoring in other disciplines (e.g. nursing, adult education, social work education) are particularly invited. Such articles should explore the discourse in relationship to teaching at the elementary, secondary, or tertiary (college/university) level.

Deadline for Submission: April 1, 2015: Publication by December, 2015

2016 (Volume 20, Number 1)

**Theme** – Critical Issues for Tomorrow's Teachers

This is the theme for the 35<sup>th</sup> annual ISfTE seminar sponsored by Montclair State University in New Jersey, USA. It will be held June 21-26, 2015, and abstracts should be submitted in the next couple of months. For JISTE publication, participants (including those from the Distance Paper Group) are invited to revise their seminar papers, attending carefully to the manuscript and publication guidelines, and submit them to the journal for consideration. Book reviews on the theme are also invited.

Deadline for submission: September 1, 2015: Publication by March, 2016

2016 (Volume 20, Number 2)

**Currently an open submission with no specific theme** – Members of ISfTE are invited to contribute manuscripts related to any important topic in teacher education. Members are encouraged to co-author articles with their students or colleagues who may not be members of ISfTE. Articles that explore teacher education issues such as the practicum, mentoring in other disciplines (e.g. nursing, adult education, social work education) are particularly invited. Such articles should explore the discourse in relationship to teaching at the elementary, secondary, or tertiary (college/university) level.

Deadline for Submission: April 1, 2016: Publication by December, 2016

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**Front cover:** These institutions' logos appear on the front cover of this issue:

**Aarhus University** is the second oldest university in Denmark. It is also the largest university in the country with over 43,000 students. It offers programmes in both undergraduate and graduate studies. Although the main campus is in the city of Aarhus, Denmark, the university has small campuses in Copenhagen and Herning.

**Hong Kong Baptist University** was founded by the Baptist Convention of Hong Kong in 1956 as a post-secondary college and became a fully-fledged university in 1994. It now boasts eight faculties and schools and an academy offering a wide range of undergraduate and postgraduate programmes to around 8,400 students.

**Weber State University** in Ogden, Utah, United States, was founded in 1889. It is a coeducational, publicly supported university offering professional, liberal arts, and technical certificates, as well as associate, bachelor's, and master's degrees. Currently, over 25,000 students attend the university.

