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Global/Cultural Teachers Creating Possibilities: Reading Worlds, Reading Selves, and Learning to Teach

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In this article I explore the notion of a global/cultural educator, especially how we as teacher educators prepare future educators for the global communities that they might serve. I argue that our challenge is to prepare educators to work on behalf of, from, alongside, and within communities. To work globally requires educators to bridge the gap between the privileged and the marginalised, between uniformity and diversity, between local and global, across gender and races, and between indigenous and immigrant. To achieve these goals, I posit that we need to go beyond an infusion of the knowledge of various cultures in our curriculum. I suggest that we need to find spaces where the global/cultural educator can have an identity that emerges not from theory alone but from a mix of scholarship, practice, global development, and cultural critique and proceeds in a manner that is responsive, supportive, diverse, and nonoppressive. It is a journey for which we lack a map and indeed may be blinded by our own vision.

In this article I respond in part to Allan Luke's call (2004) for a conversation around the notion of a world teacher:

> This is the conversation we need to have—not a parochial or national one about teacher testing, licensing, or local needs of systems for curriculum implementers or school-based managers but a whole scale re-envisioning of teachers and teaching across time and space, beyond narrow regional parochialism, state regulation and ethno/national epistemologies. (p. 1429)

My goal is to participate in such a conversation by exploring some of the attributes that teachers working within and across cultures should have and by examining

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what faculties of education might do to prepare teachers with these attributes. I am mindful that I am suggesting that all educators view themselves as world teachers whether they are working globally or not. I agree with McCarthey, Giardina, Harewood, and Park's (2003) assertion that globalisation has foregrounded a dynamic view of culture and its multiplicities in a world interconnected by an "intensification and accelerated movement of people, images, ideas, technologies and economic and cultural capital across national boundaries" (p. 454). But I want to extend the discussion of diversity and teaching in a worldly fashion to consider how they are approached locally. The handling of differences within and across borders may be influenced by international developments but also local dynamics. These global and local dynamics involve forces that are social, political, educational, and economic, including issues of privilege and human rights (see Roman, 2004).

SOME ATTRIBUTES OF GLOBAL/CULTURE EDUCATORS

The educator that I am imagining is a cultural pedagogue with the ability to support the development of "culturally relevant schools that … provide educational self-determination, honor and respect the student's home culture" (Ladson-Billings, 1994, pp. 135–137). Furthermore, the teacher is "cultured" in a fashion similar to what the Québec Charter (Ministère de l'Éducation, 2001) for teacher education suggested:

> The teachers of tomorrow must have a sense of origin and understand where the modern world comes from. They must make links between the various types of knowledge that circumscribe the world. They must understand how an interpretation of the world is constructed, and must have penetrated the epistemology of the subjects they teach. They must understand what is essential in a human being, despite the differences existing among individuals. … They must also know that knowledge is a construct and that, as a construct, it is limited, transitory and replaceable, but nevertheless essential for establishing continuity and positioning themselves in the world. (pp. 39–37)

As Pare (2004) suggested, "the cultured teacher is not a mere technician—capable of delivery—or an academic—immersed in knowledge—but a broker who establishes links between students and the world" (p. 3). It is someone who develops an understanding of the cultural worlds of students and their communities and who also has the ability to help improvise within and across these spaces for the betterment of individuals and groups.

In a study of successful teachers in the Southwest region of the United States, Mike Rose (1995) suggested that it was the sense of possibilities that distinguished

these teachers from others. As he stated, "I've come to believe that a defining characteristic of good teaching is a tendency to push on the existing order of things. This is not simply rebelliousness. … It's an ability to live one's working life with a *consciousness of possibility,* an ability to imagine a better state of things" (p. 276).

And as Rose (1995) explained, this ability grew out of the cultural recognition and community development that the teachers pursued:

> As one teaches, one's knowledge plays out in social space, and this is one of the things that make teaching such a complex activity. As studies of teaching cognition have shown, and as we saw in the classrooms that we visited, teaching well means knowing one's students well and being able to read them quickly and, in turn, making decisions to slow down or speed up, to stay with a point or return to it later, to underscore certain connections, to use or forgo a particular illustration. This decision-making operates as much by feel as by reason; it involves hunch, intuition, at best, quick guess.
>
> There is another dimension to the ability to make judgments about instruction. The teachers we observed operate with knowledge of individual student's lives, of local history and economy, and of sociocultural traditions and practices. They gain this knowledge in any number of ways: living in the communities in which they work, getting involved in local institutions and projects, drawing on personal and cultural histories that resemble the histories of the children they teach, educating themselves about the communities and cultures of the students before them, connecting with parents and involving parents in schooling, and seeing students as resources and learning from them. (p. 419)

Successful teaching involves learning about the worlds of students outside of school and within communities and using these understandings to inform teaching and learning goals that aim to achieve possibilities for individuals and communities. A global educator must be sensitive and responsive to cultural differences, with an eye towards engaging in activities that connect with and support local development rather than displace them. In the area of literacy, educators have been quick to impose literacy practices deemed successful in one setting but potentially ineffectual and/or rejected in another. The work in early and community-based literacy initiatives has highlighted the importance of literacy development proceeding from the literacy practices valued by those communities rather than those imposed by outsiders.

The spaces across which global/cultural educators must shunt are quite complex. Indeed, as Luke (2004) has argued, it requires an approach to one's preparation that views an educator as being akin to a cosmopolitan:

> A teacher with the capacity to shunt between the local and global, to explicate and engage with the broad flows of knowledge and information, technologies and populations, artifacts and practices that characterize the present historical moment. … What is needed is a teacher whose stock and trade is to deal educationally with cultural

"others," with the kinds of transnational and local diversity that are now a matter of course). …

The task of self-redefinition of teaching needs to be part of a transnational strategy for democracy and education, which directly takes up challenges of globalization, geopolitical instability, and multinational capitalism. We would have to begin exploring the conditions for intercultural and global intersubjectivity by both teachers and students, an engagement in globalized analyses that continually situate and resituate learners and teachers, their local conditions, social relations and communities, in critical analyses of the directions, impacts and consequences of global flows of capital, bodies, and discourse. (pp. 1438–1439, 1441)

To such ends, we may need to approach the preparation of educators in a manner more problem based than standardised—preparing educators to use ethnographic tools as participants rather than spectators. In the health profession, interns engage with resident doctors during ward rounds to discuss a range of health situations. In law, students discuss case precedents and apprentice with experienced others as they develop their own briefs. In education, it might be akin to doing the rounds in different settings while working with teams of educators, various stakeholder groups, and others who might contribute to shared understandings and complementary pursuits. It would include opportunities to work in urban, rural, and suburban areas, including locations struggling with famine, war, disease, poverty, and natural disasters. It would require learning with and from others across a range of circumstances defined by geography, economics, history, health, and beliefs. It would entail developing the ability to support individuals and communities simultaneously (Willie, 2000).

It can be troubling to navigate across such global and cultural spaces. Tensions may arise if one disregards the heritage, values, and cultural practices of the groups that one is hoping to support;[1] other tensions may arise as international developments collide with local issues, such as native languages, cultural practices, and so on. Within the larger context of global forces, there may cultural, social, economic, and linguistic oppression. As Leslie Roman (2004) argued, some of the developments that have arisen to serve diverse populations have been liberating and profitable for some but inhumane and inequitable for many. She maintained that global pursuits need to be linked to human rights issues. As she stated, the pursuit of education should be viewed as "an opportunity to claim democratic praxis through a decolonized curricular, pedagogy and educational policy" (p. 231), and to do so requires educators who can read cultures with various lenses and engagements that "focus on human rights that is not abstract and universalizing" (p. 252).

MOVING FORWARD

In his book *Learning to Divide the World: Education at Empire's End* (1998), John Willinsky ended his unmasking of the imperialistic underpinnings of educational

developments worldwide with retorts to examine our identity in the context of this legacy with a view to ourselves as foreigners. At the same time, he warned us not to become cathartic about identity and not to shy away from operating across cultures or globally.[2]

I have been working globally/culturally as an educator for 30 years, teaching with a lens that dissents from the hegemonic traditions of British imperialism, with its model of assimilation and/or acceptance of power of the well-entrenched incumbent.

In hindsight, my teachings during the 1960s as a young educator in Sydney, Australia, lacked a culturally responsive perspective. Although any success that I experienced as a teacher was tied to my interrogating my understanding of my students' lives, I did not have the vision, understanding, and practices necessary to fully comprehend their experiences and languages. I was not "exceptional" in this regard. In my opinion, Australia was dominated by a form of cultural diversity that was tied to an assimilation philosophy and by forms of national isolationism and cultural imperialism. There was little focus on how teachers might address the diversity in their classrooms despite the growing immigrant population. Our view of our Southeast Asian and Pacific neighbours was based on a construction of "other" that was quite racist, isolationist, and exclusionary. Meanwhile, Australia tended to be critical of racism in the United States and South Africa while overlooking its own racism, including the treatment of its indigenous peoples.

During the 1960s in Australia, it was commonplace for young people to venture overseas to broaden their horizons or supplement their economic resources. Many of my friends backpacked for 6 months through Europe; others assumed teaching positions in countries such as Canada. I do not recall there was a curriculum to prepare us for these overseas experiences. These countries had similar academic curriculums, especially in core subject areas such as English, history, math, and science. Australians tended to travel through rather than to the non-Western world. We were a mix of tourists, imperialists, British subjects from the colonies, and curiosities. Australia has now caught up with the momentum of globalisation, and its cultural diversity has moved to the foreground of political, economic, social, and educational agendas. Rich discussions about global education have emerged, and global marketing of education has become the pinnacle of its national identity, multicultural image, and economical sustainability. Locally, language schools are commonplace, and discussions around culturally relevant pedagogy abound as Australia has begun to challenge its British-centric cultural leanings and the moral shortcomings of its approach towards its own indigenous groups. At the same time, Australia has begun to unpack racism as it wrestles with the dual and contradictory tensions of internal colonialism (i.e., of being a colonial settler state) with its nationalist ideologies of isolationism and the lure of global marketing and economic imperialism, especially with its new and perhaps overwhelming Asian neighbours rather than traditional European trading partners.

I have become a global/cultural hybrid after working in one country and another and another. I continue to work with diverse populations, be it indigenous or multigenerational groups, world travellers or recent transplants from various locations. A highlight of my career has and continues to be my work for multinational agencies such as the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and as a member of international partnership groups. Most recently, my interest in global education has been fuelled by an interest in matters of cultural literacies, teacher mobility (e.g., Tierney, 2004; Tierney et al., 2003), redefining teacher professionalism and concomitant developments in global health,[3] as well as global deliberations around the notion of a world teacher in support of human rights, self-realisation, community development, and cultural improvisation (e.g., Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, & Cain, 1998).

Currently, I am working at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver, where I consider my colleagues and myself global/cultural educators who are engaged in a range of initiatives locally and in over 50 countries—from curriculum development to course delivery, programme review, and joint initiatives. However, if we turn the global lens upon our teacher education programmes, we find some disconnections. Although we are quick to critique any global initiative through a postcolonial lens, we have failed to apply such a lens to our own teacher education programmes. Our graduates are credentialed only to teach in the province, and the curriculum for which they are prepared is rooted in the European tradition of those who colonised and uprooted First Nation territories. It is a curriculum that privileges certain histories, literatures, languages, and literacies. The disconnection is brought into sharper focus against the global character of the schools themselves: 165 language groups are in existence within the provincial schools, and all but a few are succeeding as they struggle within new and strange cultural spaces (Gunderson, 2004).

The mismatch is due in part to the history of local government jurisdictions over education. But it is also due to our own failure to unpack and perhaps reimagine ourselves as educators who are cultural workers locally and abroad. Alternatively, it may be tied to a tendency to support diversity and multiplicities but within the context of acquiescence or subordination to an overriding tradition that is primarily imperialistic or historically determined by others to be "other." For example, throughout most Commonwealth countries, curriculum and structures remain loyal to the British model for core curriculum, examination system, and certain privileging.

Perhaps the first step might be to read ourselves in the context of serving others—including our paradoxes. For example, we as educators have responded in a restricted fashion to the pedagogical challenges and complexities of this changing nature of culture and, as a result, may be contributing to a form of cultural impotence. Indeed, within the United States and various Commonwealth countries, most considerations of cultural issues have been relegated to a segment of

the curriculum rather than taught through the day-to-day dynamic negotiations across cultural spaces. For teacher preparation, our infusion of global education seems tied to globalisation as an area of study rather than practice. Our tendency to pursue exchange relationships, scholarly engagements, or overseas practicum experiences for our teachers falls short of ensuring the development of an understanding of culture and preparing teachers to work within and across cultural worlds as agents for personal and community development. Our silences suggest an acceptance of a kind of *fait accompli* or obliviousness to the needs of different groups.

Paradoxically, we as educators may simultaneously be advocates for preparing educators to work with others while remaining quite passive about human rights. We also may be advocates for building upon the diversity of students' backgrounds as we tolerate approaches that homogenise cultures. We may suggest support for cultural self-determination but yet remain inherently acultural in our approaches to teaching and learning. The mismatch between our aspirations and our realities may also arise (despite our intentions) due to our inability to get out of our own way. While we pursue practices that are culturally responsive, we may inadvertently perpetuate our own models of culture. As Barbara Hernstein Smith (1998) suggested,

> Self-privileging operates not merely as a self-sustaining mechanism but as a productive one, generating new perceptual and conceptual articulations—even from "evidence" and "arguments" to the contrary. Since the self, even as it is transformed by interactions with the world, also transforms how the world seems to itself, its system of self-securing is not hereby unhinged, nor is it corrected by cosmopolitanism. Rather, in enlarging its view "from China to Peru," it may become all the more imperialistic, seeing every horizon of difference new peripheries of its own centrality, new pathologies through which its own normality may be defined and must be asserted. (p. 54)

But it is perhaps even more of a paradox when we are agents for culturally relevant educational approaches internationally but are silent or not active locally. Perhaps it is more difficult to read others when others seem so close to ourselves or are located alongside our own children. Or perhaps it is tied to advantages that we do not want to forfeit or yield.[4]

In reading ourselves in the context of others, we also need to contemplate change and explore ways of working across borders—perhaps building a coalition with the communities that we serve and with whom we might collaborate around the concept of a global/cultural teacher cohort.[5] Building a coalition might require some foundational steps, such as adopting appropriate protocols and building relationships and understandings with our global/cultural partners. Notwithstanding our educational goals, we would need to address logistical issues that we might face internationally and locally due to differences in time, distance, spaces, and historical practices. Internationally, this would include negotiating the complexi-

ties around different bureaucracies and jurisdictions, ranging from matters of access and liability to supervision and security.

The concept of a global/cultural teacher may challenge jurisdictional issues around accreditation and bring to the fore historical predispositions to local control over education. Indeed, there may be a hesitancy to proceed if the notion of a global teacher is seen as a threat (to institutional traditions and their historical cache) rather than as an advantage or a necessary development in a globalised world. We should not slight the status quo and what it represents. The investment of educators and the public in the present traditions may contribute to various forms of belligerence. Many may not see the advantage in a move beyond the familiar—a shift away from preexisting curriculums, assessment systems that privilege certain types of cultural capital. It might also involve a fuller consideration of the cultural backgrounds and understandings of those who are being accepted into teacher preparation programmes. It would be important to trouble the tendency in decision making to consider an individual's gender or culture after and not before other factors.

Some may envision any new form of global/cultural education to be the precursor to another wave of imperialism and a further commodification of education for profit such that economic motives overshadow the need for a broader commitment to education by local providers. We would need to avoid perpetuating Westernised or any other forms of imperialism that would undermine local developments or cultural self-determination or the multiplicities of culture in a changing world. Indeed, I hope that we prepare educators to support developments other than those that colonise, marginalise, and subordinate.

Perhaps the most challenging task may be to prepare teachers to work in a fashion that supports a dynamic view of cultures. We should question whether teachers can push back against previously existing cultural constructs and develop the tools necessary to reimagine teaching and learning. We lack evidence that our teacher preparation programmes adequately prepare teachers to be culturally responsive (see Rogers, Marshall, & Tyson, 2006).

I find myself struck by a set of competing forces: (a) an interest in outside expertise but the need for change to be derivative rather than imposed externally and/or (b) the pursuit of practices that are culturally responsive but may later create cultural mutations. Mostly, I find myself with more questions about practice and a concern that we have more talk and speculation about cultural practices than research, reflection, and invention. Let's not shy away from exploring new cultural spaces as we navigate the paradoxes and debates.

CLOSING REMARKS

The notion of a global/cultural educator affords us an opportunity to rethink approaches to education, especially how we prepare educators for the dynamic com-

munities. Our challenge is to prepare educators to work on behalf of, from, alongside, and within global and local communities and in so doing mentor and support one another so that they may develop the attitudes, skills, and understandings necessary to serve and support their communities. It would require educators to work within and stay constantly aware of the dynamics of cultures and to imagine ways to bridge the gap between the privileged and the marginalised, between uniformity and diversity, between local and global, across genders and races, and between the indigenous and immigrant. To achieve these goals, we need to go beyond an infusion of the knowledge of various cultures in our curriculum or a single practicum elsewhere.[6] We need research, theory, and practice to learn what practices might be enlisted and what impacts emerge with various cultural spaces and with different groups and individuals—including how practices and their impacts might change over time.

Some may see global/cultural education as a field of study rather than a place of work. It would be troubling if the notion of a global/cultural educator becomes the subject of scholarship without practice. We need to find spaces where the global/cultural educator can have an identity that emerges not from theory alone but from a mix of scholarship, practice, global development, and cultural critique and proceeds in a manner that is responsive, supportive, diverse, and nonoppressive. With reference to confronting our racism, Cochran-Smith (2000) suggested that the journey may inevitably involve "stumbling and along the way difficulty, pain, self-exposure and disappointment" (p. 186). It is a journey for which we lack a map and indeed may be blinded by our own vision.

ENDNOTES

[1]Understanding indigenous space and position in a respectful, contextual manner avoids the displacement of native ways of knowing, as in the case of Orientalism (Said, 1978).

[2]Willinsky (1998) suggested that our engagements should have less the appearance of imperialist and more the form of critical culturalists working across borders with a view of themselves as foreigners in support of others (see Kristeva, 1991; West, 1990). Similarly, in discussing our own racism, Marilyn Cochran-Smith (2000) suggested, "To teach lessons about race and racism is to struggle to unlearn racism itself—to interrogate the assumptions that are deeply embedded in the curriculum, to own our own complicity in maintaining existing systems of privilege and oppression and to grapple with our own failure" (p. 186).

[3]Health is the other major public sector where similar discussions have taken place and proposals entertained. Indeed, there are many parallels to what Mike Goldberg, Brandi Bell, Zena Sharman, and Niv Patil (in press) have developed in their paper *U21 White Paper Professional Portability* on health professionals and the portability of credentials and other developments.

[4]Kohn (1998) discussed how parents may balk at certain changes in educational practices if their children's advantages are diminished and, indeed, how parents will go to lengths to en-

sure that their children have every advantage whether or not such practices are problematic or culturally biased.

[5]Allan Luke made this suggestion as we discussed plans to form an Asia-Pacific network of university-based educators.

[6]I posit that the discussion by the Carnegie Commission on global education in 2000 has stayed relatively close to shore in its approach to global education, although it did further one recommendation that went beyond studying the world. The Carnegie Corporation of New York brought together representatives of associations, organisations, agencies, and foundations interested in strengthening American understanding of the world through education. Underlying discussions at the meeting were these fundamental questions: • Are schools, colleges, and universities preparing their students to function effectively in a global society in which time and space no longer insulate the nations, peoples and markets of the world? • Do U.S. citizens understand enough of the world beyond our national borders to evaluate information about international and global issues and make sound judgments about them? • Is education in the United States preparing Americans for sustained involvement in an interdependent world? The result was a set of recommendations for preparing U.S. educators to integrate the development of global understandings into the curriculum and to enhance a knowledge of others through various programmes, including exchanges (Barker, 2000).

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