

The Preparation of Globally Competent Teachers: A Comparison of American and Australian Education Policies and Perspectives

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Abstract

This study entailed a comparative analysis of the teacher preparation standards in the state of North Carolina, USA, and the new National Professional Standards for Teachers in Australia as related to the global competencies of licensed teachers. Specifically, the authors conducted a content analysis of the policies that govern teacher education and licensure relative to global competence. University faculty members in both regions were also interviewed to determine teacher educators' perceptions of these policies. Results indicate that much remains to align policy with practice, particularly as applied to the role of teacher educators in preparing their students per governmental requirements, as well as how states evaluate new teachers by professional standards. Additionally, operationally defined, shared language regarding K-12 teachers' global competence must be developed for use by all stakeholders.

Introduction

In 2010, U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan asserted:

We must improve language learning and international education at all levels if our nation is to continue to lead in the global economy; to help bring security and stability to the world; and to build stronger and more productive ties with our neighbors. (para. 40)

Secretary Duncan's statement underscores the importance of American students' global awareness and related skills needed for the workforce. Because teachers are largely responsible for such preparation, there is an urgent need to ensure that teachers, too, are globally competent. Despite this, some assert that schools (faculties) of education have been slow to incorporate teacher education competencies reflective of contemporary global issues and perspectives, as well as requisite 21st century literacy skills, within teacher preparation programs (e.g., Agnello, White, & Fryer, 2006).

This study entailed a comparative analysis of the teacher preparation standards in the state of North Carolina (NC), USA, and in the state of New South Wales (NSW) in Australia, as related to the global competencies of licensed teachers. The authors also analyzed how teacher educators in NC and NSW interpret global competence in preservice teachers, including their role perception in facilitating the development of this competence (Crawford & Kirby, 2011). Research questions guiding this study included: (1) What do state policies in North Carolina, USA and in New South Wales, Australia require in teacher preparation as related to the global competence of K-12 teachers? (2) How do teacher educators define global competence? (3) What do teacher educators perceive to be their roles in preparing teachers for global society? This paper specifically highlights research query one, what state and national policies require in teacher preparation as related to the dimensions of global competence of K-12 teachers. A sub-question included: How do teacher educators interpret state and national policies and standards relating to the global competence of licensed teachers? A review of the literature on global competence resulted in predetermined knowledge- and skill-based competencies, as well as dispositional attributes, by which the authors analyzed the respective policy documents and teacher educators' perceptions as elucidated through face-to-face interviews.

Literature Review

The preparation of teachers with a global perspective is considered an "absolute priority" (Burch, 1997, p. vii). This priority is reflected in numerous state and national standards in the U.S. and other nations. For example, in the U.S., the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) 2008 Standards mandate teacher preparation programs to infuse global perspectives in their programs, courses, field experiences, and other related areas. Specifically, Standard 4 pertaining to teachers' abilities to work with diverse students states that "candidates must develop knowledge of diversity in the United States and the world, professional dispositions that respect and value differences, and skills for working with diverse populations..." as well as "reflect multicultural and global perspectives that draw on the histories, experiences, and representations of students and families from diverse populations" (NCATE, 2008, p. 36). A few years earlier in their March 2005 Position Statement "Integrating a Global Perspective into Teacher Education," the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE) also underscored the importance of preparing teachers for a global society in which they can teach successfully in multicultural settings and as they prepare young people for global citizenship (AACTE, 2005). There is, therefore, a common emphasis in U.S. policy statements on developing global perspectives and cross-cultural understandings in preservice teachers. Despite this emphasis, American teacher preparation programs continue to lack focus on the impact of internationalization on practice (Agnello et al., 2006).

A similar emphasis on developing globally competent teachers is evident in Australia. In 2008, Education Ministers across Australia, including the current Prime Minister Julia

Gillard (who was then Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Education) crafted the *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians* with explicit guidance for the nation's education system to enable young people to remain competitive in our rapidly shrinking world. While acknowledging challenges in educating all youngsters, this declaration centered around improving educational outcomes as a means to improve the lives of the younger Australian generation through equitable and excellent schools that nurture "successful learners, confident and creative individuals, and active and informed citizens ... [who] are responsible global and local citizens" (Ministerial Council of Education, Employment, Training, and Youth Affairs, 2008, p. 7).

To ensure success and competitiveness on a global level, Australian policymakers seek to improve student experiences by improving teacher quality. The Melbourne Declaration and National Partnership on Improving Teacher Quality provided the impetus for the *National Professional Standards for Teachers*, which were released in February, 2011 from the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL, 2011). Prior to the release of these standards, the similar New South Wales' Institute of Teacher (NSWIT) standards were the policy document of concern to the teacher educators in the Australian study.

Measuring the impacts of a globally focused university education on future practice is considered challenging both conceptually and operationally (e.g., Stearns, 2009), largely due to the absence of standardized terminology. Nonetheless, the emphasis on global competencies in American and Australian teacher preparation programs merits examination. Through a review of the literature, the authors developed a framework from which to analyze educational standards and teacher educators' perceptions of global competence. Dimensions of global competence were categorized by knowledge, skills, and dispositions, or competency domain (see Table 1).

Table 1

Dimensions of Global Competence by Knowledge, Skill, and Disposition

Competency Domain	Dimensions
Knowledge	global interdependence global issues and problems human diversity perspective consciousness technology knowledge understanding of interdisciplinary, global connections to curriculum world regions

Skill	creative thinking skills critical thinking skills communication skills with subcategories cross-cultural skills digital literacy skills second language skills social and political action skills
Disposition	comfort with ambiguity and unfamiliar situations concern for environment and sustainability curiosity empathy justice and fairness open-mindedness to new ideas and experiences self-awareness self and others as change agent value and respect for diversity

Sources: Agnello, White, & Fryer (2006); Ambe (2006); Andrews (1999); Arida (2007); Asia Society (2009); Burch (1997); Campbell-Patton & Mortenson (2011); Dyer (2006); Hanvey (1982); Hunter (2004); Kagan & Stewart (2004); Kirkwood (2001); Marginson (1999); Merryfield (1995); Oxfam (2006); Pike & Selby (1988); Suárez-Orozco (2005)

Methods

In order to understand the policies that education agencies establish to support preservice teacher preparation in the area of global competence, the authors conducted a preliminary analysis of the NC standards, NSW standards, and the Australian national standards (AITSL). First, Leximancer, a software analytical tool that focuses on language processing, highlighted broad themes in the texts by identifying the context and providing the user with graphics on the relationships and meanings of the documents' words. Second, NVivo 8, a qualitative data analysis tool, was used to analyze both the NC policy document, as well as the Australian policy documents to determine how the standards fit into the competency areas that emerged from the review of the literature.

The authors also studied NC and NSW teacher educators' perceptions of their regions' respective policy documents as pertaining to the global competence of licensed teachers. A convenience sample of eight teacher educators, four from an NC university and four from a university located in the Australian Capital Territory (which utilized NSWIT as its accreditation body) participated in this study. They included teacher educators who prepare teachers across the K-12 spectrum.

Approval for this study was obtained from the University of North Carolina, Wilmington, USA and the University of Canberra, Australia. The Human Subjects Committee in the U.S. determined that this study was in compliance with the appropriate ethical standards and was exempted from formal review. In Australia, the Committee approved the work to gather this research through formal review. Participation in this study was optional and participants could withdraw at any time without penalty.

Data Collection and Analysis

Primary policy documents were used to examine the requirements in teacher preparation as related to global competence. Standardized, open-ended, face-to-face interviews afforded additional data. The policy documents and interview data were analyzed through content analysis. The program Leximancer was utilized to analyze the text across each of the two policy documents: the *NC Professional Teaching Standards*, and the Graduate Teaching Standards, which is the entry level accreditation for teachers meeting the *Professional Teaching Standards* through NSWIT. After the *National Professional Standards for Teachers* was released, this document, too, was analyzed using Leximancer. The analysis was performed to determine concepts and themes regarding the mandated preparation of preservice teachers in the area of global competence. Finally, both *NC Professional Teaching Standards* and the *National Professional Standards for Teachers* (Australia) were further analyzed using NVivo 8 in order to determine connectivity and relevancy to the various global competencies as defined and refined in this study.

Results

What do state policies in North Carolina, USA and in New South Wales, Australia require in teacher preparation as related to the global competence of K-12 teachers?

Global competence in the context of this study is based on a review of the literature and includes specific knowledge, skills, and dispositions. In the U.S., growing emphasis on the global competencies of K-12 teachers is evident in the professional standards at the state and institutional levels. In June 2007, for example, NC revised its *NC Professional Teacher Standards* (NCPTS), creating a “new vision of teaching” (NCPTSC, 2007, section A New Vision of Teaching). These standards highlight the ability of classroom teachers to be explicit about embedding global awareness in the core content areas and to ensure that their students are “globally competitive for work and postsecondary education and are prepared for life in the 21st century” (NCPTSC, 2007, section Standard 1). Although Standard 1 is skill-focused, none of these skills are explicitly related to global competence as defined in this study. Further, NC teachers must demonstrate cultural awareness and understanding of the role of human cultures in shaping global issues (NCPTSC, 2007, section Standard 2), as well as participate in professional development that “reflects a global view of educational practices” (NCPTSC, 2007, section Standard 5). The language of the NCPTSC reflects elements

of 21st century teaching and learning as outlined by the Partnership for 21st Century Skills of which NC is a partner state (p21, 2010). The *North Carolina Standards for Elementary Grades Teacher Candidates* reflect this expectation for the global competence of preservice teachers (NCPDI, 2009).

Across the globe, Australia is well known for its global education initiatives. Spurred on by federal and local money for innovative teaching, schools have taken the charge seriously to prepare their students so they may contribute to society on a global level (ACTDET, 2007; MCEECDYA, 1999; MCEETYA, 2008). The Global Education Project (2008) introduced a framework for global education in schools. This work built on a statement from the Australia Government's foreign-aid program (AusAID) based on the input of more than 100 organizations and individuals entitled *Global Perspectives: A Statement on Global Education for Australian Schools*. The AITSL National Standards aim to demonstrate Australia's commitment to teacher-quality improvement grounded on the principle that teachers have a "direct impact upon student achievement" (AITSL, 2011, p. 1).

In NC, there is a clear focus on students, teachers, and instruction throughout the *NC Professional Teaching Standards*. Teachers are expected to:

Relate content to other disciplines, promote global awareness and its relevance to the subjects they teach...demonstrate their knowledge of the history of diverse cultures and their role in shaping global issues...facilitate instruction encouraging all students to use 21st Century skills [global awareness is in the content]...and participate in continued, high quality professional development that reflects a global view of educational practices. (NCPTS, 2007, pp. 1-4)

Students (as connected with the key terms *teachers* and *instruction*) emerged as the strongest connecting theme across the standards document, with students being referred to 59 times in connection with teachers and instruction, establishing the importance of the student-teacher relationship in the role of instruction. Learning emerged as the second strongest theme as it related to the student, data, and needs. This theme is logical in light of learning being student-focused and data-driven, as is required with federal mandates through the *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB) Act of 2001. NCLB (2002) proposed that every child can learn and schools would be held accountable for that learning as measured by state-sponsored examinations. One of the goals of NCLB is to increase student achievement so that students become more productive citizens and are able to compete in today's global environment. Importantly, there is a balance between what teachers need to know (knowledge), what they are able to do (skills) and the attitudes they should bring to the classroom (dispositions).

The term *global* is cited seven times throughout the five standards in the NC document (NCPTS, 2007), where the term mostly relates to the content taught and developing awareness in students that is cross disciplinary in nature. Standard 3 uses the term

global four of the seven times and directs teachers to “recognize the interconnectedness of content areas/disciplines” as part of the mandate that “teachers know the content they teach” (p. 3). Further, teachers are to “promote global awareness and its relevance to the subjects they teach” (p. 3). Finally, teachers are expected to understand the overall standard course of study and be able to work with students in connecting that content to the 21st century content, “which includes global awareness; financial, economic, business and entrepreneurial literacy; civic literacy; and health awareness” (p. 3).

Regarding knowledge-based competencies, NC teachers are expected to have an awareness of human diversity, perspective consciousness (or recognition of different perspectives or points of view; see Hanvey, 1982), technology knowledge, understanding of interdisciplinary, global connections to the curriculum, as well as knowledge of world regions. Additionally, teachers are expected to “recognize the interconnectedness of content areas/disciplines” (p.3), which arguably requires both creative and critical thinking on the teachers’ part, as well as the ability to communicate effectively (digitally and non-digitally) with those of different cultures. Teachers must “help students develop critical thinking and problem solving skills” (p. 4), “establish a respectful environment for a diverse population of students” (p. 3), as well as “integrate and utilize technology in their instruction” (p. 4). The dispositional competencies, those most difficult to measure, are not explicitly required, although open-mindedness, self-awareness and value and respect for diversity can be inferred through one of its standards. Standard 2 requires that “teachers establish a respectful environment for a diverse population of students” (p. 2) and advocates that “teachers embrace diversity in the school community and the world” (p. 2).

In contrast, the AITSL *National Professional Standards for Teachers* do not explicitly address global competence throughout its seven standards at the Graduate Teacher Stage. The clear focus in this document is on knowledge and skill. Interestingly, neither the word *global* nor the notion captured by this term appear in the Graduate Teacher Stage standards or focus areas (AITSL, 2011).

Referring to knowledge-based competencies, Australian graduate teachers are expected to display competence in human diversity and, arguably, perspective consciousness and world regions. Teachers will “demonstrate knowledge of teaching strategies that are responsive to the learning strengths and needs of students from diverse linguistic, cultural, religious and socioeconomic backgrounds” (AITSL, 2011, p. 8), as well as “demonstrate broad knowledge and understanding of the impact of culture, cultural identity and linguistic background on the education of students from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds” (p. 9). Importantly, teachers also will focus on understanding and respecting “Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to promote reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians” (p. 11) through a demonstration of a “broad knowledge of, understanding of and respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, cultures and languages” (p. 11). It can be argued that in order to demonstrate this focus area, a teacher must be able to have

both perspective consciousness and knowledge of world regions, which the authors deduced from the literature as additional knowledge-based competencies.

Australia's Graduate Teachers must "implement teaching strategies using ICT to expand curriculum learning opportunities for students" (AITSL, 2011, p. 11), so technology knowledge is assumed as teachers are required to demonstrate skill in fitting technology into their content and pedagogical knowledge. Skill-based competencies are more included as teachers are required to have cross-cultural skills in order to fulfill a focus area of Standard 2, "Know the content and how to teach it" (p. 10). Like their NC counterparts, graduate teachers in Australia must demonstrate cross-cultural skills in order to "understand and respect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to promote reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians" (p. 11). Interestingly, under the old NSWIT standards, students from non-English speaking backgrounds were included, but this aspect did not make it to the national document. Graduate teachers in Australia are directed to value and respect diversity as they are in NC.

How do teacher educators interpret state and national policies relating to the global competence of licensed teachers?

Like classroom teachers, teacher educators are inclined to interpret policies as the policies align with their existing beliefs and practices (Merryfield, 1997). How teacher educators perceive the policies and standards that govern their preparation of teachers was determined by interviewing four teacher educators in each region. Participants were asked, "What are your perceptions of [your respective] education policies and standards in terms of preparing teachers to be globally competent?"

One American teacher educator observed that state policies had not yet trickled "down to the university level" and that even if they do, "thoughtful, insightful professors" may not adhere to the state mandates. Regarding the state's policy, this teacher educator declared, "I don't know how much it really impacts us." Another American teacher educator declared that the teacher standards were "kind of pie-in-the-sky, put together by committee, and I just haven't found them very helpful." A third American teacher educator supported this idea: "We, the state in general, have no clue what we're doing. We have this amorphous, 'We're going to prepare teachers to prepare students for the international world' and we have no clue what that means." Further, a fourth teacher educator spoke of his concern regarding the mismatch between curriculum and assessment, although he did acknowledge that the curriculum in NC was currently undergoing alignment to the standards. He, too, expressed a concern over the resources provided in schools to help teachers meet these new standards, "the resources behind that [the mandate]...at the district level may be iffy or scattered...but we really don't have a choice. It's now what we're supposed to be doing and being evaluated by."

Australian teacher educators also expressed concern over how the policies and standards of governing bodies in education are implemented and evaluated. One Australian teacher educator commented:

While I understand the need to have graduate teacher standards and to have people who are making sure that there's a kind of broad spectrum of skills and knowledge and attributes the teachers are required to embed in their courses, I can't stand the way it actually comes out in practice and the way it gets translated into checklists and dot points which just encourage compliance more than honoring it in the spirit so I've got nothing to say ...[about explicitly addressing NSWIT requirements] apart from I know that I do it in the spirit of compliance.

This checklist mentality was voiced by another Australian teacher educator who expressed concern that some of the dispositions of global competence are often overlooked because of the difficult issue of how to assess these qualities in teacher candidates:

they [NSWIT] weren't looking for that as a tick...they just were looking at the key learning areas, in other words maths, science, literature, SOSE (studies of society and environment), science, tech ed, etc., and as long as you've got those then that's fine – and behavior management.

In contrast, another Australian teacher educator asserted that policy set by state standards are valuable in that they:

helped to refocus...and to put some accountability into teacher education courses; that we're not just a law unto ourselves – we just teach our units according to what we want but that there is a set of broader goals and outcomes out there that we need to make sure we're achieving.

Discussion

Teacher preparation program standards outline the knowledge, skills, and dispositions required of licensed teachers. It is evident following a review of the American and Australian documents that the foci differ. Reflecting the impact of globalization on education policy, contemporary teacher program standards in NC address explicitly the importance of global competencies of K-12 teachers, whereas teacher program standards to date in Australia are not explicit regarding the ways in which new teachers must be trained in order help their own students “compete in the global economy on knowledge and innovation” (MCEETYA, 2008, p. 4).

Although the NCPTS have been quite explicit regarding the necessity of K12 teachers' abilities to build global competency in their own students, teacher educators are struggling with what that means for them, owing, perhaps, to little explicit guidance on

meaningful ways to nurture global competency in their classes and degree programs, as well as instruments to measure the knowledge, skills, and dispositions required when preservice teachers are applying for certification to meet the Professional Standards.

In contrast, NSWIT and AITSL standards tend to focus on demonstrable behaviors rather than knowledge and dispositions that are less tangible. Here, there appears to be disagreement among faculty members regarding what is the most appropriate way to help train the next generation of teachers. How will this perception change as the National Standards document becomes fully implemented? Moreover, what types of instruments are appropriate to use in order to assess the knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed to earn accreditation and advance as a teacher? These questions and more are yet to be explored.

While teacher educators in both countries acknowledge benefits and drawbacks of their respective government standards, they seem to value very little the attempt to standardize pre-service teacher education. Perhaps more involvement of the governing body's part to draw a wider swath of stakeholders when creating policy documents would aid in better communication. Since the locations under study have existing policies in place, the governments and schools of education may wish to provide workshops discussing the implementation of the policies in an effort to refine and clarify areas of confusion. Further study of the relationships between government and schools (faculties) of education could provide a snapshot of the nature in which these two institutions collaborate.

Conclusion

In this study, teacher educators in NC, USA and NSW, Australia highlighted the disconnect between what governments and accrediting bodies are seeking in beginning teachers and the work that goes on in teacher training in these institutions. Based on this research, the authors conclude that stakeholders and policy makers have much work ahead of them in conceptualizing, codifying, and evaluating teacher preparation as related to global competence. The participants in this research study, and the extant body of literature presented, demonstrated a need to develop a consistent, shared language regarding global competence, both in literature and in policy. Finally, working with teacher educators may be of benefit in order for these teachers to be involved, be heard, and add value and authenticity to the process in an effort to be explicit about their role in preparing teachers for a global society. It is hoped that the findings of this study illuminate gaps where more discussion and action are needed regarding alignment between policy and practice for teacher educators and preservice teachers.

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