

Cross-Cultural Interpretations of Curricular Contextual Crossings

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The North American teaching population continuously fails to reflect student populations, especially school populations located in global and non-dominant communities. Public school students are increasingly likely to be of non-hegemonic cultures, such as those defined by class, national backgrounds, and home languages (Statistics Canada, 2007; United States Census Bureau, 2003), while teachers continually come from White, middle class backgrounds (Cochran-Smith & Zeichner, 2005a). Consequently, teachers' backgrounds and experiences suggest that teachers are less familiar with the cultural diversities they experience in their classrooms. Therefore, it is crucial for teachers to undertake professional development endeavors aimed at the acquisition of knowledge about multiple cultures and culturally related models for teaching and learning. International teaching placements—as both pre-service professional education and in-service professional practice—present new cross-cultural possibilities for preparing educators when working in and with non-dominant

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culture learning communities (Cushner & Brennan, 2007a; Garii, 2009; Schlein, 2006).

Thus, it is understood that global opportunities allow teachers to expand their cultural repertoires and help their students in North America share their own lives and experiences. In other words, teachers—who are generally representatives of the cultural mainstream—are expected to use global experiences to become culturally enhanced and to bring these enhancements back to their classrooms. In this article, we discuss a cross-cultural exploration of investigations into the experiences of Canadian and U.S. educators with professional induction in foreign countries. As such, we display the impact of cross-cultural teaching practice for work with diverse learners. Moreover, we present here our inquiries through the lens of cross-cultural dialogue in order to bring to light experiential facets and effects of teaching abroad that interweave global and national curriculum boundaries. Making use of each other's field texts and inquiry puzzles, we highlight contextualized interpretations of the experiences and possible relevance of cross-cultural teacher education, induction, and development.

Research Questions and Objectives

We highlight here the international socialization of novice educators to the teaching profession and we discuss and explore the possibilities for contextualized interpretations of cross-cultural teaching and educator professional development. Our work is guided by two overarching research questions: How do teachers experience foreign professional placements? In what ways do teachers believe that practice in unfamiliar countries, cultures, and school communities impact their teaching in multicultural North American schools? These questions shaped our inquiries into the cross-cultural development of North American teachers.

We also consider here contextual interpretations of our inquiry findings in relation to these questions: In what ways might terms such as cross-cultural teaching, diversity, and multicultural education embed distinct notions in Canada and in the United States? How do Canadian and U.S. educators make sense of their cross-cultural experiences in meaningful ways? What might be some contextualized outcomes of international teaching with respect to Canadian and U.S. educational standards and expectations for national socialization? How might our interpretations be grounded in or transcend educational and societal settings?

Specifically, we set out to: analyze experiential stories of new teachers in foreign school contexts; examine the relationship between teaching abroad and teaching methods, teacher identity, and cultural identity;

explore the effects of international teacher induction for educating students in multicultural North American schools; and deliberate over contextualized understandings of cross-cultural teaching placements as situated among and between Canadian and U.S. teachers. Thus, we discuss central experiential stories that connect to these topics as a means of shedding light on the impact of context on international teacher development. Moreover, we highlight cross-cultural interpretive dialogue as a means of exploring the role of context within the recovery of meaning in research.

Theoretical Framework

This study follows the narrative inquiry research tradition of Clandinin and Connelly (2000). Our cross-cultural examination of pragmatic stories of international teacher induction was also guided by Schwab's (1969) theories of the practical in education and Dewey's (1938) notion of the link between experience and education. These concepts shaped our thinking in structuring an experiential and practical investigation of foreign teaching. They were also central to our discussions on contextualized interpretations of inquiries into teaching and learning across cultures.

We were further influenced by literature on culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1992) and multicultural education (Banks & McGee Banks, 2004; Cummins, 1996). Curricular research that concentrated on contextualized knowing of multicultural schools provided a foundation for our dialogic interactions about teacher development for teaching in diverse classrooms (Clandinin et al., 2006; Phillion, 2002). In turn, Yonemura's (1982) concept of "teacher conversations" served to bridge our work as researchers and teacher educators in connection with Conle's (1996) notion of "resonance."

Moreover, we consulted with research on teaching abroad (Cushner & Brennan, 2007b) and teacher education (Cochran-Smith & Zeichner, 2005b) in shaping our investigative framework. Experiential inquiries on cross-cultural teaching were fundamental for shedding light on globalized teaching experiences as political and structural (Mahon & Espinetti, 2007); and as raced, classed, and gendered (Malewski & Phillion, 2009). This work also builds on experiential curricular examinations of cross-cultural teacher education (Garii, 2009) and induction (Schlein, 2009, 2010).

Finally, our initial interest in this work was piqued by our own experiences as global educators early in our professional careers. Candace Schlein, a Caucasian, English-speaking Canadian, was born, raised, and educated in Montreal. Upon completion of her undergraduate education, she participated in the JET Programme, sponsored by the Japanese

government and spent two years in Japan teaching English in Japanese public junior and senior high schools. Upon her return to Canada, she pursued an inquiry into the impact of her foreign teaching experiences on her professional perspectives and practices.

Barbara Garii is a Caucasian, English-speaking American who was born, raised, and educated in the United States. After teaching middle school science in the U.S. for one year, she moved to Colombia, where she taught middle school mathematics for three years at a Colombian bilingual school. She then moved to Burkina Faso and taught middle and high school mathematics at an international school for an additional two years before returning to the U.S., where she taught middle school mathematics for another year.

While we represent *traditional* teachers in both of our home countries, we also recognize that our global experiences framed our subsequent classroom pedagogies and practices. Upon our return to our home countries, we began to question the ways in which our experiences encouraged us to re-examine our professional identities and recontextualize the impact of culture on the teaching-learning paradigm.

Methodology

Over the course of two years, we communicated with each other about our respective inquiry findings and investigative puzzles via e-mail, telephone communications, and in-person researcher dialogues. Building on our discussions, we also constructed reflective field notes and shared written constructive commentary and feedback as field texts. We reviewed our field texts to draw common narrative threads among our storied data. Moreover, we considered our experiential field texts within the three-dimensional narrative inquiry space (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) in order to delineate the temporal, interactional, and environmental connections among and between our field texts.

Simultaneously, we entered the inquiry process without a preconceived structure but, instead, drew meaning and understanding from the texts as the participants reiterated and illustrated themes related to cross-cultural experiences that, perhaps, had not been immediately apparent to them (Clandinin et al., 2006; He & Phillion, 2001; Phillion & He, 2008; Schlein & Chan, 2010). Finally, we framed our interpretations of this inquiry process through the lens suggested by Falk & Darling-Hammond (2010) who remind us that strong schools in democratic communities encourage the articulation of multiple perspectives to support students' breadth and depth of learning. More specifically, they suggest that "it is the continuing responsibility of schools" (p 73)

and, ultimately, teachers to help students recognize the contexts within which school learning occurs and document the ways in which we are part of a collective community of teachers and learners. As such, we deliberated over our wakefulness as researchers at the boundaries of countries and cultures in our interpretive analyses while attending to related storied tensions.

Data Analysis and Findings

We discuss in this section several field texts in order to examine some of the effects of cross-cultural teaching for the development of personal, social, and professional practices or perspectives. In addition, we highlight potential disparities across our field texts as a means of exploring cross-cultural interpretations of foreign teaching experiences, as well as opening up our interpretations to possible cross-cultural investigative paradigms. Throughout this section we explore the intersections of our work and uncover sites of tension across our narratives.

Multiculturalism and Cross-Cultural Teaching:

Field Text of Canadian Teacher-Returnees from Northeast Asia

We begin with a discussion of Schlein's inquiry into the cross-cultural experiences of Canadian teachers as they became socialized to their profession across the contexts of Japan, Hong Kong, and Canada and frame this discussion in relation to education, teaching, and multiculturalism. Specifically, we discuss the cross-cultural professional narratives of Anastasia, a Canadian educator who began and maintained her career in Hong Kong over five years. Anastasia's narratives are useful as an exemplar for situating the local, international, and cross-cultural practices of Canadian teachers within the social and educational context of Canada. In particular, Anastasia explores her perception of how teaching abroad helped to shape her personal and teacher identities. While we recognize that Anastasia's narrative may not be reflective of in-depth multicultural education values and practices, and we further underscore the potential for generalization with her experiential story, in turn, Anastasia highlights a pertinent articulation of her beliefs regarding the focus of Canadian teachers and schooling.

I think Canadian teachers are open. We are more able to communicate effectively with students than other teachers that I have seen from different cultural groups. Canadian schooling has a multicultural focus, and I think a good teacher will talk about every festival under the sun. It is all-encompassing.

In her story, Anastasia offers some observations on generalizations

for teaching in Canada that she has cultivated since returning from Hong Kong. Anastasia seemingly sees Canadian schools as uniquely Canadian in that they serve to promote multicultural educational ideals while working toward fostering a common national identity in students to merge cultural identity factors with educational endeavors promoting Canada's Multiculturalism Policy. Furthermore, Anastasia provides an argument in the following interview excerpt for the importance of employing intercultural teaching methods, such as those that she learned through her teaching experiences in Hong Kong,

I have incorporated more Eastern ideas into my teaching and my philosophy of teaching. I think that maybe it would make sense to have kids sit in a row once in a while instead of all this group work nonsense we hear about. . . . I don't think that teachers should say that they are Ontario teachers and so they must teach in a certain way. In the world, we are all the same. We might act a little bit differently, eat different things, look a little bit different from each other, but we are all the same and we have to keep that in mind, especially in a place like Canada that the world looks to as a peaceful, multicultural nation. That is our role as teachers and as learners and citizens.

Anastasia insists that although the teaching methods that she made use of with her students in Hong Kong may be different from those employed in Canada, she believes that some of the differences may be beneficial for fostering multicultural instruction via globalized teaching efforts. Schlein's participants expressed their belief that teaching in either Hong Kong or Japan aided them in relating to students from a variety of cultural backgrounds. Their narratives further explored how foreign teaching situations and interactions helped them to understand, if only on a superficial level, some of the challenges facing students who are recent immigrants and those who are second language speakers of English, while enabling an approach to teaching and learning from a collage of cultural viewpoints.

While Anastasia's stories point to perceived associations between foreign professional practice and educator preparation and development for work in local, culturally diverse schools, examination of these field texts from the vantage of cross-cultural dialogue further brings to the forefront potential personal, social, and environmental facets of cross-cultural teaching and learning. Engaging in dialogue with each other heightened our awareness of how Anastasia's experiences might be rooted in explicit and implicit cultural and educational norms and values for Canadian teachers, students, and citizens.

While we deliberated in-depth over the links between foreign teaching placements and multicultural education, we further wondered about

how we interpreted multicultural schooling, diversity, and cross-cultural teaching. In other words, we recognized that we had begun our exploration with assumptions regarding the similarity of our educational systems, our attitudes toward and experience with diversity, and the relevance of cross-cultural teaching for our respective contexts of Canada and the United States. In coming to terms with our inquiry terms, Schlein brought forward the distinct historical relationship between multiculturalism and education in Canada.

Canada was the first country to formally recognize the need to protect the rights and privileges of its diverse citizens in terms of their cultural, ethnic, religious, and linguistic backgrounds via the adoption of an official Multiculturalism Policy in 1971 and the creation of the Canadian Multiculturalism Act in 1988 (Minister of Public Works and Government Services Canada, 2005, p. 3). Simultaneously, the population of Canada is becoming increasingly diverse (Statistics Canada, 2008), and schools are acknowledging the growing need for cultural recognition within the curriculum in the form of multicultural education. However, Canada's Multiculturalism Policy and Multiculturalism Act are not easily interpreted into multicultural education, since these policies deal with citizenship rather than education.

Nevertheless, Anastasia's discussion of her experiences with teaching in Hong Kong seems to be reflective of prominent societal values regarding multiculturalism. She refers to her understanding that all schools in Canada must contain a multicultural focus throughout the curriculum. Anastasia's experiential stories also connect a vision of the roles and responsibilities of teachers with those of citizens. Additionally, she highlights an awareness of Canada's place in global interactions by stating that people look to Canada as a "peaceful, multicultural nation."

Working together on our field text interpretations raised questions regarding the contextual features of our inquiries. Specifically, Schlein wondered about the possibilities for applying cross-cultural teaching practices in schools within the United States as situated within an era of accountability, testing, and educational standards (Taubman, 2009). Moreover, in the narrative above, Anastasia relates her experience of teaching abroad and returning to her native country in terms of national and societal expectations and global positioning. Together, we puzzled over whether such a perspective was subjectively related to Anastasia's experiences, or whether they might have been reinforced in programs of teacher education or influenced by teaching abroad.

As an explication, we offer Schlein's reflections about her experiences as a Canadian-educated teacher who taught in Japan. Her experiences as a student and within teacher preparation were located in

the Canadian province of Quebec. Quebec is unofficially referred to as a distinct society in Canada due to linguistic and cultural differences. Officially, Canada is a bilingual country; nevertheless, most of the Canadian provinces comprise a majority of English speakers. The Quebec population constitutes a majority of Francophones, and education is directed by linguistic school boards. Due to such differences and political movements for national separation, we consider that the culture and climate of teaching and learning in Quebec might be unique within the Canadian context. Schlein's participants' narratives demonstrated a perceived link between national policies for multicultural education and their professional responsibilities.

Consequently, as Schlein reflected on her experiences as a student and a student teacher she recognized that her conception of teaching and learning was seemingly enveloped in bilingualism and issues related to cultural equity. These images of teaching might align with her participants' descriptions of Canadian teachers, but their statements did not necessarily resonate with her. She further recalled the first time that she entered a school in another Canadian province. She relates how she smiled at the photograph on the wall of Queen Elizabeth, and she was also surprised to hear the national anthem playing on the loudspeaker system in the morning. These were experiential aspects of schooling that might have reinforced citizenship ideals in schooling, yet these features were absent in her Quebec experiences of education in Canada.

Reflection on Schlein's terms for teaching and learning in Canada highlighted a potential discrepancy between Schlein's views of teachers and teaching and those of her participants. Her Quebec experiences and, more broadly, her Canadian experiences further shed light on some of the complexities involved in teasing apart national socialization via education in a culturally diverse society. Interacting in cross-cultural dialogue about our inquiries additionally pointed out potential alternate interpretations of Schlein's field texts. For example, we wondered about whether Schlein's participants left Canada for foreign teaching placements with multicultural identities and multicultural education ideals or whether they were formed within the tension at the boundaries of shifting and cross-cultural personal and professional landscapes. In the following, Garii illustrates this narrative thread from the vantage of the foreign professional development of a U.S. teacher.

***Diversity, Identity, and Cross-Cultural Teaching:
Field Text of a U.S. Returnee Teacher***

We address here the experiences of Deb, a bilingual African-American woman who taught for one year in the United States before mov-

ing to Mexico and teaching in a Mexican school for several years. She describes her early professional and personal experiences in the U.S. as “marginalized.” In her professional life, she was the only African-American teacher in her school, and her students were predominantly White. In her private life, aside from her immediate family, she felt that she was different in that she was well-educated, bilingual, and of the middle class. Deb describes her experience in Mexico as eye-opening in that her professional and personal lives seemed to reflect her own life. As an African American in Mexico, she was identified by others as part of the mainstream culture and not set apart from it. In retrospect, Deb recognized this as an unexpected experience:

The experience of teaching overseas for a Black American and a White American ... the impact on them is different...[In the US], a Black American from the middle class, you've already had to think about flexibility, you've had to think about, 'I don't own this.' You have to think about, 'Where do I fit in? How do I adjust?' . . . The experience of a Black American and White American, put on them in the same setting outside of the US, and what they see, the lenses and the experiences... will be different...I know how I was treated [in Mexico] was different [from my White colleagues]. I was very much accepted...No one was asking me, 'Why are you here?' I was just another person there.

The experience of this African-American teacher suggests that for her, a global opportunity provided a continuity of experience that placed her in the center of her profession rather than at the margins. Her professional impact was enhanced, because she no longer felt as though she was “different from” her Mexican colleagues and her friends. She remained the same, but the context of her “story to live by” (Clandinin et al., 2006) was seemingly shifted. In interpreting this field text, we wondered about whether her sense of self-efficacy might have become enhanced and more clearly defined because she believed that others perceived her differently as a professional.

As Deb herself suggested, upon her return to the U.S., she defined herself as a strong professional who better understood both the needs of her culturally marginalized students and her students of dominant culture. Her U.S. life reflected marginalization and she resonated with her marginalized students' experiences. Her Mexican life influenced her understanding of hegemonic students in that she now had the experience of being part of that hegemony. Moreover, she believed that her teaching was enhanced because of her unexpected de-marginalization that both strengthened her sense of professionalism and extended her capacity to understand the perspectives and world views of a greater proportion of her students.

Correspondingly, Anastasia's experiences maintained a narrative thread that joined cross-cultural teaching experiences, global awareness, and preparation for teaching in diverse classrooms. Deb's story further indicates a possible counter story of educational globalization, liberation, and power in relation to cross-cultural teaching. Reflecting on this inquiry puzzle, we questioned to what extent the experience of crossing cultures and engaging in educator professional practice shapes and is shaped by teachers' personal and professional identities. For example, we explored how issues of citizenship under the umbrella of multiculturalism might be connected with teaching and teacher development both within Canada and across various cultures. Deb's story was perplexing in that she seemingly gained a sense of self as a teacher and as an individual via her participation in teaching in Mexico. Thus, we questioned the place of culture, nation, and context within experiences of cross-cultural teaching. Deb's narrative of experience further led us to wonder about ways in which teaching in a novel country might bring about new ways of storying ourselves in multicultural and global societies.

Discussion

The narratives that we examined demonstrate possible linkages between experiences with teaching abroad and potential shifts in personal and professional identities. At the same time, explorations across our inquiries of cross-cultural teaching illuminate variations among such experiences. For example, we discuss how Anastasia highlighted that, upon returning from teaching in Hong Kong, she understood teaching and learning in relation to multicultural education. Moreover, Anastasia seemingly defined the responsibilities of teachers in connection with citizenry and federal multiculturalism policies.

Schlein acknowledged that her own experiences as a teacher in Japan enabled her to see her professional practice from multiple cultural perspectives. Nevertheless, she puzzled over her inability to link teaching with citizenship. Reflecting on her own experiences as a student and within a teacher education program in the Canadian province of Quebec, we uncovered a different story of teaching and learning that was reflective of the linguistic and cultural focus of her hometown. Schlein considers the preservation and enhancement of language and culture to be a primary responsibility of teachers, and this was supported in her teaching efforts with English language learners in Japan and in Canada.

In this way, we raise questions about the boundaries of citizenship, teachers and teaching, and educational national socialization. We further wonder about the causal relationship between cross-cultural

teaching and the shaping of teacher identities. Interpreting these field texts together added nuanced complexities to this narrative thread, as we wondered about some of the distinct qualities that may result from teaching in foreign school settings.

In turn, we analyzed the storied experience of cross-cultural teaching for Deb. Deb's story illuminates how her professional endeavors in a new country enabled her to re-orient her perceived identity as a teacher and as an individual. Although Deb considered herself to be outside of the mainstream culture in the United States, the cultural shift entailed in her position as a teacher in Mexico aided her to envision herself as a more firmly established professional upon her return to the United States. The interpretation of Deb's narrative further resonated with other stories that had been related to Schlein by her participants, who declared that they felt more Canadian by living and working in a foreign culture.

Examination of our field texts displays some differences in terms of the settings of our investigations and contextually embedded notions related to cultural diversity. Nevertheless, interpreting our field texts together through cross-cultural dialogue resulted in attending to narrative threads that highlight an integration of culture, identity, and teaching, particularly as situated in and across cross-cultural school settings. We also illuminate the need for further experiential inquiry to gain insight into the contextualized nuances of cross-cultural teaching.

Educational Significance

Globalization and cross-cultural movement are increasingly impacting school environments and classroom practice in a variety of ways, and this is reflected in national standards and educational recommendations related to diversity and globalization for teaching and teacher education (National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education, 2008; School Community Safety Advisory Panel, 2008). While teaching abroad provides teachers with possibilities for cultural and global professional development, there is a dearth of research dealing with long-term impacts of early foreign teaching experiences on teaching practices. Even fewer studies highlight the particularities of crossing cultures in terms of curriculum and instruction. There is a further need for investigations that connect teacher characteristics, teacher education, teacher learning, and teacher practice.

Significantly, we shed light here on some of the particular experiential features and effects of international professional practice for new teachers. We also highlight the application of foreign practice for developing educators professionally for work in North American mul-

ticultural curriculum settings. As a result, our research contributes to the literature on curriculum, educator professional preparation and development, and work dealing with programs for study abroad.

Moreover, we extend the dialogue on cross-cultural teaching and learning across Canadian and U.S. cultures and cultures of schooling. We explore the ways in which issues of national socialization and identity may interconnect with culture and context in interpretations of cross-cultural teaching experiences. As such, this work augments comparative and international understandings of and inquiries into curriculum, curricular contexts, and educational globalization. The contextualized interpretations explored throughout this piece further inform experiential inquiries into cross-cultural movement more broadly, especially in terms of shedding light into potential effects of curricular situations and interactions for newcomer students on culturally diverse school landscapes.

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