

Book Review

**European Values and Cultural Heritage—
A New Challenge for Primary and Secondary School Education**
By Tomáš Jablonský, Daniela Kolibová, & Silvia Matúšová
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In the United States, teachers and teacher educators are being challenged to both internationalize their curricula (Walters, Garii, & Walters, 2009) and differentiate instruction for increasingly multi-culturally diverse populations (Landorf, Rocco, and Nevin, 2007). Students in pre-K-12 classrooms reflect increasing diversity along multiple dimensions (e.g., race, culture, ethnicity, heritages that reflect multiple cultures, gender preferences, sexual orientations, and religious practices). According to Davis (2008), of the approximately 79.9 million students in grades pre-K through 12, the majority of students were non-Hispanic White, followed by Hispanic students, Black students, and Asian students. In contrast, the majority of K-12 teachers are monolingual (English) and White (Hollins & Guzman, 2005). Walters et al. (2009) describe how novice teachers' cultural understanding and professional identity are challenged through international field experiences. Landorf and colleagues (Landorf, et al,

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2007) further argue that teacher educators in the United States should begin to integrate the principles of global education, special education, and disability studies in an increasingly multicultural American population so as to generate a new kind of teacher—an inclusive global educator who “can help students negotiate the borderlands towards a more respectful and tolerant acceptance of those who are different from themselves, thus creating larger more inclusive circles with permeable boundaries which students can thus enjoy (Landorf et al, 2007, p. 34).

Because of increasingly diverse student populations and because contemporary authors in the United States are recommending curricular reform towards more global understanding, *Issues in Teacher Education* readers would find value in Jablonský, Kolibová, and Matúšová’s (2012) monograph, *European Values and Cultural Heritage—a New Challenge for Primary and Secondary School Education*. These Eastern European authors bring scholarly traditions and knowledge from their areas of expertise (educational policy, teacher preparation, pedagogy and psychology) and their shared interests in understanding European values to address issues of values, culture, and cultural heritage in the educational process. In this review of their work, we first describe the authors’ qualifications and then summarize four themes derived from our reading of the book. For each theme, we discuss and suggest implications for preparing teachers in the United States.

Who Are the Researchers?

Jablonský, Kolibová, and Matúšová are three scholars from the Center for Higher Education Research and Development based at the University of Debrecen in Hungary with appointments at the Faculty of Education of Catholic University in Ružomberok in Slovakia. Jablonský, a professor and the Dean of the Faculty of Education, has publications in the areas of theory of education and didactics, collaborative learning, research methodology, and educational policy and European values in education. Kolibová, a university lecturer and head of the Centre of Lifelong Education, conducts research in the psychology of child, social and communication competences in teaching professions and the impact of continuing education impact on the professional development of teachers. Matúšová, a university lecturer in educational and social psychology at the Centre of Lifelong Education and the Chair of Pedagogy and Psychology, studies topics related to psychology in education, human resource development, intercultural psychology, educational policy, and European values in education. Together, these authors’ areas of scholarly expertise in human and intercultural psychology, educational theory and practice, and educational

policy offer a broad and rich lens through which to examine values and cultural in education and teacher education.

Monograph Themes

Guided by the motto, “talking about culture without mentioning values is absolutely impossible” (p. *ix*). Jablonský and colleagues (2012) organize the research gathered for their monograph into twelve chapters across four themes. The themes may be categorized as follows: contemporary mobility of people and influx of immigrants (Chapters 1-3); development of European values and cultural identity (Chapters 4-6); European community perception of cultural values and support and protection of cultural heritage (Chapters 7 and 8), and curricular and pedagogic contexts (Chapters 9-12).

Theme 1:

Contemporary Mobility and Influx of Immigrants

The first theme establishes the rationale for examining the potentially unifying aspects of a European culture. The authors argue that European nations (including Slovakia, the authors’ homeland) and Hungary (the location of their research center) have become highly mobile societies in which influxes of immigrants and shifts in values and cultural identity have occurred. These changes are documented through research and demographic reports establishing the overall change from a nationalistic-centered approach to European culture and values, or a more global and internationalistic-centered approach. The authors argue that teacher educators must make themselves aware of these shifts and incorporate into their pedagogy and curricula an awareness of the national and international perspectives, because it is through our curriculum and educational processes that children become acculturated locally, nationally, and internationally.

Jablonský et al. argue that awareness or recognition of one’s culture and the expectations of what is culturally appropriate are the signs of having a cultural identity. The shift to a global cultural perspective has the potential for engendering a new enculturation process in which citizens need to and can acquire new competencies related to intercultural communication and other skills that allow them mobility in employment and travel outside of their national borders for work as well as leisure. This first organizing theme suggests that even though teacher preparation programs may not emphasize the development of students’ intercultural skills, teachers *can* incorporate into their pedagogy and curricula understandings of the differences between state and regional, regional and

national, and national and global issues. It is noteworthy, here, that, in the United States, although National Board Certification (www.nbpts.org/national-board-certification) is increasingly supported on a national level, teacher candidates still must meet state teaching performance expectations set forth by the respective State Board of Education in order to be credentialed (see, for example, the state certification requirements listed by VESI—Virtual Education Software Inc. at <http://www.virtualeduc.com/US-state-teacher-certification-requirements.php>). Similarly, in Europe, each nation (and within a nation, a respective territory) sets its own standards. As yet, there are no universally-recognized teacher credentialing standards or performance expectations. This theme of contemporary mobility and immigration prompts the notion of exploration of internationally-relevant and common teacher competencies for preparing youth for a global life experience.

Theme 2:

Development of European Values and Cultural Identity

Within the second theme, the authors traced the evolution of a social justice orientation within the European Union policies and treaties. For example, in 2009, the Lisbon Treaty established “human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, rule of law, and respect of human rights” (Jablonský, et al, 2012, p. 126). as main values of the European Union. The authors’ detailed deconstruction and text analysis of international organization documents convincingly show that “Europe is perceived primarily as a community of values, based on the idea of democracy and human rights” (p. 169). U.S. policies and standards for accreditation of teacher education programs have a similar evolution, with the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (2008) requiring demonstration of democratic practice of social justice. Namely, as stated in the accrediting organizations’ professional standards document, teachers are to be prepared “to fulfill these [social justice] promises by assuring high quality education for all children” (p. 6) and “... commitment to social justice in schooling for all children by demanding well prepared educators for all children” (p. 8).

Theme 3:

Perception of Cultural Values and Protection of Cultural Heritage

By acknowledging commonly held values, an interesting dynamic occurs between the drive to preserve national cultural artifacts and the aspiration to affiliate with a more global European cultural identity. Within the third theme, the authors’ offer values to be included in pedagogy and curriculum; namely, accepting pluralistic democracy,

understanding and removing prejudice by respecting common values and European diversity, accepting other European nations and cultures while keeping one's own cultural identity, promoting freedom, justice, and social security.

In light of the increasingly diverse student demographics in U.S. schools, U.S. teacher educators and primary/secondary school teachers may find value in enfolded the search for commonly held values amongst the diverse groups of students in our classrooms. Overcoming culturally-insular perspectives can be an important cross-cultural competency that influences our ability to work, communicate and live across cultures and cultural boundaries. See, as an example, Eberly, Joshi, and Konzal's 2007 study of early childhood and elementary teachers' use of culturally sensitive home-school communication.

***Theme 4:
Curricular and Pedagogic Contexts***

In the chapters related to this theme, the authors trace various ideological contexts for curricular reform through an analysis of pedagogical documents. Jablonský et al. (2012) delve into underlying ideologies of conservatism (i.e., the role of education in cultural transmission), liberalism (freedom as a fundamental value, educational pluralism), and critical pedagogy critiques of education (e.g., reproduction of power structures in school, schooling as indoctrination). We learn of the Slovakian educational systems' curriculum gap in preparing citizens for the reality of multicultural mobile society as well as pilot curriculum development projects aimed at infusing European values and cultural heritage into Slovakia's schools. Textbooks upon which teachers in Slovakia rely have yet to include a European dimension in the national traditions and the global responsibility. So, project schools are infusing values such as human rights and antidiscrimination in secondary curricula and, for elementary curricula, moving from examining only local (national) identity to European identity.

Why is this Monograph Useful to Teacher Educators?

Contemporary authors in the United States are recommending curricular reform towards a global understanding (Stewart, 2012). Reflected in demographics in Slovakia (Jablonský et al., 2012) and the increasing diversity in US classrooms, Stewart (2012) observes that the "pace of change in our world is increasing exponentially. Economies have changed, societies have changed, and technology has changed. Only our schools remain recognizably similar to those of another era" (p. 156). Although

Jablonský et al. (2012) attempted to show that the value patterns in Slovakia *are* changing from a predominantly nationalistic orientation to a reflection of the values shared by others in the European Union, the curriculum of Slovakia's school children does not yet reflect those values. Stewart (2012) poses a similar argument by arguing that American students need preparation to enter a rapidly changing and increasingly borderless and innovation-based world.

Readers of this review, of course, must judge for themselves the relevance and value to their professional work of the alternative views of European culture offered by Jablonský, et al. (2012) might provide. For example, an economist might find valuable an observation that the wealthier and less wealthy EU countries are at odds as to how European culture should be manifest. Like many children of immigrants hailing from European nations, the authors of this review (of Irish, German, and Norwegian heritage) share a common history where their grandparents learned the culture and mores of the American culture, setting aside their languages and cultures of origin. In what ways might the historical observations of the evolution of "European culture" traced in this monograph help U.S., Canadian, or Australian teachers examine similar acculturation phenomenon for their student of European origin and generalize this acculturation phenomenon to more recent immigrant populations from across world. In what ways might the cultural globalization trends and needs discussed in this monograph assist educators to prompt conversations about global cultural perspectives, issues, and appreciations?

We suggest that Jablonsky et al. (2012) have made a convincing argument that shifts conversations about curriculum from those based in nationalism to a larger, more global (albeit, regional) level. Shahjahan and Kezar (2013) have argued for higher education researchers to become "aware of methodological nationalism" so that they can "take steps to reframe their scholarship" (p. 20) has the potential of informing higher education researchers in all professions. This issue of shifts in cultural perspective is an important one for teacher education researchers, in particular, because, unless consciously addressed, researchers may continue to be influenced by national boundaries alone. Reframing one's scholarship might uncover new areas to research.

In summary, to gain the most benefits from this work, we recommend that educators read this book with a self-critical lens given that the ability to question the assumptions underlying one's own professional teaching practices can uncover ways in which these assumptions might interfere with providing the best education possible for our students. We agree that Jablonsky et al. (2012) contribute to an awareness of

what a richer cultural understanding might mean for school children in Slovakia specifically. Such a stance echoes a sentiment expressed by Margaret Mead (1963) who wrote, “If we are to achieve a richer culture, we must weave one in which each diverse human gift will find a fitting place” (p. 322). Meaningful action often reflects a broader understanding of cultural diversity, including European culture.

We can pose a question similar to that raised by Jablonský et al: in what ways might school children in the U.S. benefit from gaining a richer cultural understanding, especially with respect to the cultural diversity of US school populations? Jablonský et al. (2012) echo John Dewey’s caution that, “If we teach today’s children what we taught yesterday’s, then we rob them of tomorrow” (Dewey, 1944, p. 167). By making changes in the curriculum we ensure that today’s children can be better prepared for tomorrow’s culturally diverse world. We reviewers argue that, in the United States, this means looking toward a futures orientation that broadens and deepens children’s understanding of their historical, cultural, and sociological contexts. Teachers and education professors can benefit from the depth and breadth of the “look back” and “look forward” scholarship shown by Jablonský, Kolibová, and Matúšová.

Reviewed Book

Jablonský, T., Kolibová, D., & Matúšová, S. (2012). *European values and cultural heritage—a new challenge for primary and secondary school education*. Debrecen, Hungary: Center for Higher Education Research and Development, University of Debrecen. 221 pp. ISBN 978-963-08-4634-9

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