

A Consortium Model for Internationalizing Teacher Education

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Abstract

A reformation in the process of training teachers is needed. This reforming of the long kept principles and practices for the education of pre-service teachers could be addressed through the framework of internationalizing teacher education. This paper offers a model that challenges teacher educators, schools of education, licensing policy makers, and philanthropic entities to pick up the gauntlet toward the purpose of redefining teacher education programs and elicit the corroboration and collaboration of transcontinental academies of teaching and learning. The proposed four-pronged framework can be adapted or extended. In theory, it should only require the re-commissioning of current policies or fiscal and human resources to reflect a more globally sentient approach to teaching and learning and the training of teachers for the primary through secondary age learner. While the proposal does not indicate a need to transition from the current framework for teacher education through on-site and field based training, it does offer a framework for expanding the process to include a greater collaboration between intercontinental groups in an expanded global social context. The proposal offers a possible organizational extension to traditional programs for teacher education and includes a challenge for teacher educators to examine and expand current philosophy for teacher education programming.

Key words: teacher education, internationalize, cross-culturalism, teacher training, intercontinental, model, consortium

Internationalizing teacher education: a shift in philosophy and action

A reformation in the process of training teachers is needed to move teacher education toward a more global approach. This reforming of the long kept principles and practices for the education of pre-service teachers could be addressed through the framework of internationalizing teacher education. This paper offers a model that challenges teacher educators, schools of education, licensing policy makers, and philanthropic entities to pick up the gauntlet and charge forward for the purpose of redefining teacher education programs which will elicit the corroboration and collaboration of transcontinental academies of teaching and learning. Within this four pronged proposal is a framework that can be adapted and extended and may only require the re-commissioning of current policies, or fiscal and human resources to reflect a more globally sentient approach to teaching and learning and the training of teachers for the primary through secondary age learner.

Globalization is having a dramatic effect on higher education worldwide (Bassett, 2006). Changing student populations, curriculum design decisions and programmatic funding are being impacted by the notion of the world being at our fingertips.

This notion is validated by the ever increasing availability of communication technology. Shifting toward a more technological approach for teaching and learning in higher education will alter the relationship between student and instructor and will have long-term implications regarding the pursuit of an academic degree and expectations concerning the current concept of the university.

Changing relationships between nations and the move of consumer expectancy toward high quality service, coupled with instant access to all products via the internet, are beginning to alter how higher education organizations define themselves (Bassett, 2006). Along with those technological shifts, there are social aspects and transformations that need to occur. There is an increased need to explore positive and necessary global information. A careful examination of information, skill sets and 'universal' tenets, dispositions, and ethical practices amongst people and around the globe is a necessity. We must continuously seek humaneness, civility and understanding, while educating for global competitiveness, and sharing best practices in professional and pedagogical arenas from around the world.

Needful Changes

As time moves forward, mankind seeks to change current society and civilization. Often these changes are focused on how people live and exist together on this planet. John F. Kennedy once said, "There is an old saying that the course of civilization is a race between catastrophe and education..." and the words of peace activist, Helen Caldecott, helps us focus on the purpose of strong, skillful teachers when she stated that "Teachers are the most responsible and important members of society because their professional efforts affect the fate of the earth" (NEA.org, 2012). Therefore, if there is a need to change our current state of civilization then needful changes in civilization start at the school level and the training of teachers for those purposes.

There is a critical need to prepare teachers to effectively work with diverse students due to the influx of global citizens in all types of schools worldwide. Teachers must take the lead in preparing young learners to work collaboratively, communicate civilly and meaningfully, and exchange wisdom via cultural traditions with international peers. An engagement of this sort will set the stage for future leaders to increase discourse of heretofore 'undiscussable' and strongly held precepts regarding governance, human rights, economics and even religious practices and beliefs from around the globe. This change and paradigm shift is quickly gaining ground in the field of education. The process of training teachers must also be addressed regarding the concept of globalization. Future teachers need to understand the world by experience not from prior assumptions and archaic methods of acquiring information. In order to teach the concept of global awareness, our teachers must be able to 'know' and not just assume from the experience of other practitioners. While advocating for teaching from a global perspective, Merryfield (1995) stated that classroom teachers must prepare students to participate effectively in a world characterized by human diversity, cross-cultural interaction and global interdependence. Since that time two decades ago, the impact of globalization is no longer a vision for the future, but a function of our daily lives.

Knight (1994) suggested that "internationalization of higher education is the process of integrating an international/intercultural dimension into the teaching, research, and service functions of the institution." The following remarks were presented in a panel discussion by Dr. Madeline F. Green of the American Council on Education; "International education is an umbrella term for the various institutional programs and activities that are international in nature, such as student and faculty exchange, study abroad, international development activities, foreign language studies, international studies, area studies, joint-degree programs, and comparative studies, among others. This way of thinking about the international dimensions of education has been called an 'activity approach.'" Similarly, Knight (1999) purports four basic approaches to internationalization: 1) the activity approach, just described; 2) the competency approach, a learner-centered approach emphasizing the development of skills, knowledge, attitudes, and values; 3) the ethos approach, which stresses a campus culture that fosters internationalization; and the process approach, which is the assimilation of an international component to include the elements of teaching, research and service. This seems to be an appropriate beginning synopsis to the concept that a multi-continental consortium approach to teacher education could be a viable means for building a cadre of professional educators who truly understand cross-culturalism and who, in fact, demonstrate a global sentience that could be carried into the individual schools and classrooms internationally.

According to Clapham (2003), the idea of innovation means to make new, therefore the idea of internationalizing teacher education is a renovation of an ideation utilized and practiced for many years. This proposed innovation for teacher education programs channels creative rethinking of the familiar idea of teacher education to produce a program (Sternberg, Pretz, & Kaufman 2003) which meets the needs of a highly mobilized society and offers educational opportunities no longer dictated by student geography, age or background experience (Malian & Nevin, 2005).

Rationale and Purpose

Influence of teachers and the shaping of a future society

Teachers play a pivotal role in shaping the future of our society. This applies to the idea that as increased mobility and more expeditious communication occurs, due to technological advances; our society will become less separated and more inclusive. Future generations will need strong leadership and engaged open-minded citizenship. Teachers will pave the way for this new journey into a society where diversity and humanity are explored without the bias of the former disconnected separatist ideology. Teachers will be influential in helping debunk myths that fuel most xenophobic sentiments and actions. The influence of teachers extends from the most humble and dependent citizen of any civilization – the child – then forward through the ranks to influence community and political leaders of all peoples and nations.

It is imperative that our teachers be able to prepare the next generation to live in a virtual and interconnected world, and we, as teacher educators, must prepare pre-service teachers to understand the educational systems, structures and cultural implications of our fellow educators world-wide. We should seek to glean, as well as give, with regard to theory, knowledge, skills, and attitudes; all of which are the foundation for decision making in program development and curriculum design. Engaging with university faculty members from other institutions as equal partners in the design, implementation and initiation of an international teacher education program would set a needed precedent. This precedent would lay down a standard and open opportunities for participation while building a framework for the concept of ‘learning to learn together’ in a “world characterized by cultural pluralism, interconnectedness, and international competition” (Merryfield, 1995). Partnering with universities or other post-secondary learning institutions through an international teacher education consortium would develop deep understanding, broader skill sets, and high quality experiences drawn from a comprehensive scholarship and collaboration via intercontinental practitioners, scholars, and students.

While many practitioners within the university at large resist the idea that teacher education programs can be offered via a more ‘virtual approach’ and remote experiences, teacher educators should begin to consider the options from a pioneering frame of mind. It is the purpose of this writing to present a framework that could be used as a model to provide teacher education through a consortium approach. This model proposes to partner with other multi-continental universities to offer teacher education as a shared enterprise. Developing a shared vision for global and international programs for teacher education will also provide opportunities for on-going research and staff development in the field of education regarding cultural and international perspectives for teaching and learning theory, impact of poverty, social justice and educational opportunity. A concerted effort of this magnitude could also help clarify ongoing questions regarding national student achievement rank and status, as well as exploration of economic, social, and political issues concerning teacher education and teacher professional standards. Developing long-term collaborative, international relationships; a residual boon to this effort, would increase collegiality, visionary leadership, and strengthen stalemated educational research and scholarly efforts.

During his comments for the last discussion of the *International Summit for the Teaching Profession* (March 29, 2012) Ford Foundation Professor of International Education and Director of Global Education and International Education Policy at Harvard University, Fernando M. Reimers, EdD stated that there is an urgency and commitment to strengthening teacher education worldwide in order to support teachers in helping children reach their full potential. Reimers also stated there is an evolving of thinking concerning the development of dispositions, a broader range of skills and the “development of imagination, of critical thinking, of compassion and empathy, of civic and political engagement and efficacy, of creativity, ingenuity and inventiveness”. These skills and dispositions will not be developed if teacher candidates remain secluded within their own culture or nation as in previous years. While technological advances had not even allowed us to envision such an idea as international teacher education programs, we are fully able to move forward in this capacity.

Reimers comments that many of these changes will require coalitions and partnerships to support and attract the best and brightest undergraduate scholars that will, in turn, become masterful and effective teachers. Furthermore, Reimers recounted the summit discussions about a pluralistic approach to designing programs and policies that lead to a greater sense of teacher as well as institutional efficacy. He also remarked that this now is the time to stimulate thinking and innovation. He proposed the redressing of teacher education worldwide as a moral vision for the sake of future teachers and school age learners. He spoke to summit discussions that included a call for the kind of society that “educates for sustainability in human interaction with the environment, for prosperity, jobs, for human rights and for peace”. Reimers concluded by identifying five steps to attaining the goals of the summit:

1. Be bold and make congruent that which we measure and value in education; then teach and assess what matters.
2. Promote innovations and experimentation; thus affording the ability to invent the future.
3. Revamp teacher education so that teachers know and understand what is valuable to teach and schooling will be comprehensively reformed
4. Imagine and take steps to build the multi-stakeholder coalitions for sustainable and systemic reforms in schools (ie West Virginia).
5. Give voice to teachers and principals in articulating and defining standards of professional practice.

These ideals are notable; however, educators must reach past the traditional practices of the university and move toward the innovative in order to set the pace toward reaching those ideals. To expedite the attainment of those ideals, future teachers themselves would benefit by experiencing schooling in a nontraditional format. While the current model of teacher education has served us well and is, in essence, still the foundation of our proposal; now is the time to renovate the process.

Expediency in faculty cross-cultural opportunities.

There is expediency in expanding the experiences of higher education faculty in cross-cultural opportunities. The proposal for a consortium approach to teacher education offers an innovative element whereby faculties participate in exchange/travel and transcontinental evaluation of students. Faculty also should experience a substantial engagement in a more diverse, multicultural work environment. It would seem the scholarship and research at a post-secondary learning institution would foster that diversity and collaborative environment; however, previous constraints due to lack of funds, binding legislation and policies with outside accrediting agencies, undiscovered technological tools and the deep seated traditions of the academy approach to learning may have stalemated the exploration of other means of offering teacher education programs. In arguing for a more inclusive higher educational environment, Kirwin (in Hale 2004:p.xxi) states: “. . . higher education must do . . . significantly better in our efforts to create more inclusive environments: (1) the correction of past and present inequities; (2) the development of the high quality workforce our nation will need in the coming decades; and (3) the value added to the education of all students when they learn within a diverse community.” Much has been written about the remuneration for students from a diverse learning environment; nevertheless, there has been much reluctance to devote significant concern to the benefits derived by university faculty from working within environments that embrace, cherish and encourage diversity and even experience diversity outside their own culture. Caryn McTighe Musil used a metaphor of hermit crabs shedding their shells. According to Musil, faculty and academic policy makers must be like hermit crabs, and not ‘stay confined inside traditional frameworks’ but should shed the ‘too small’ ideas and policies, embrace growth and climb toward new structures of participation (Campbell, K.P., 2007).

It is the purpose of this writing to present a framework and model to provide teacher education through a consortium approach. It will provide an overview of the framework and provide practitioners with possible examples for internationalizing teacher education curriculum, implementation processes, and practicum experiences. This schema can be used or adapted to suit specific sites, institutions and circumstances and lay out a path for the reformation of a transcontinental, multicultural teacher training experience. The model proposes to develop a multi-continental partnership and offer a teacher education program that is cross-cultural, cross-academy and collaborative and incorporates the practical logistics of technology with simple access as used within the everyday function for communication and scholarly activity.

The differentiating factor is that the program shall be multi-continental and multi-faceted with a singular focus – to train highly qualified, professional educators whose scholarship will allow them to obtain credentials from any learning organization or system to which they choose to be employed – worldwide.

The Model

What could an internationalized teacher education program look like – ‘revised’, ‘redefined’ and ‘recaptured’? The model proposed (Figure 1) in this writing uses a four-pronged approach that includes: 1) adoption of an instructional approach that is conducive to virtual, asynchronous, and multi-faceted learner-participation; 2) a need for a universal curriculum or set of standards; 3) design of a ‘virtual think-tank’ where: a. research ideas and propositions can be discussed, b. initiatives will be born from the conjugation of creative ideas to the logistical application, and c. relationships and alliances can be forged at international levels; and 4) the consortium a. articulation agreements between universities and oversight groups such as Departments or Ministries of Education; and b. commissioning of an administrative team that includes leadership, curriculum designers, technical professionals, finance and policy-makers from participating learning organizations.

Instructional Approach

Constructivism and distance vs. distributive learning

The concept of constructivism as an instructional approach stems from the work of John Dewey, Vygotsky, Lave, Wenger and others. The basis for the constructivist approach to learning, simply put, is that learning occurs as we build constructs or create schemas; whereby we are making meaning of the world around us. In the early 20th century, John Dewey built an interactive learning laboratory school on this premise (Kielbard, 1992). Recent advances in technology and research regarding the human brain support this idea. Constructivism purports the notion that knowledge is built in the head and the best way for that to happen is to build something that is personally meaningful outside of your head. Consistent with this understanding is that knowledge is best constructed in a social context where the ideas and products are shared with other learners (Canning & Strager, 2003). Lavever (2008) stated that constructivism seeks to understand human cognitive activity through social and society forms of meaning making. The Wallace and Adams TASC: *Thinking Actively in a Social Context* Model (Wallace, B., 2009) could be used by consortium members as a working tool to expedited curriculum design for the internationalized teacher education program. The model uses problem based learning across the curriculum approach that could serve as a unifying process for all entities in the planning process. Furthermore, the DeBono (1999) lateral thinking process known as “The Six Thinking Hats” could be used to ensure the identification of the strengths and weaknesses of the envisaged program, thereby laying the ground work for the philosophy and approach for the program as a whole. However, one question arises: can all of this planning and implementation be addressed with global partners and in a virtual setting?

According to Papert (1999), constructivism can be applied to virtual learning formats because the very essence of learning via computer is schema-based. Building ideas using documents, graphics, charts, graphs etc. is actually constructing the knowledge by doing. *“Knowledge that is more or less explicit can be embedded in procedures or represented in documents and databases and transferred with reasonable accuracy. Tacit knowledge transfer generally requires extensive personal contact. The “transfer relationship” may be a partnership, mentoring, or an apprenticeship, but some kind of working relationship is usually essential.”* (Davenport and Prusak, 2000).

The idea of seeking a degree via a combination of site-based and virtual formats is now more than two decades in the making. Teacher education programs have not moved toward this process except to offer online courses sporadically throughout the program design. There is a strong reluctance to trust moving the traditional ‘methods’ courses to an online or virtual framework. Methods courses and field based practicum have not been ‘visioned’ as suitable for online/virtual offerings. The role of ‘e-learning’ and its future in the training of teachers is still in debate. However, creating online learning environments through new, but inexpensive, technology tools is more than a possible futuristic form of facilitating teaching experiences for teacher candidates. Educational training and evaluation practices can be shifted from just the physical classroom to a combination of pre-service teacher and cooperating master teacher and university supervisors engaging from differing sites. This can be facilitated via videography, instant messaging or face-to-face conferencing by free universal online internet processes, by class structuring and open-mindedness of faculty, leadership and policy makers. There are numerous programs and fiscally feasible technological tools available and growing daily.

Learning can occur anywhere, anytime, synchronously or asynchronously. Cannings and Stager (2003) suggested early in the educational e-learning evolution process that the platform for online learning be shifted from a distance learning approach to a distributive learning approach. They postulated that the differences are not semantic but technical in nature.

According to Cannings and Stager (2003), distance education was a means to address teacher shortages and other fiscal issues when schools were too small, or funding was too scarce to afford space or faculty salaries. They stated that distance learning was a 'reaction to immediate problems' but that distributed learning was 'about responding to potential'. Cannings and Stager (2003) also determined that distance learning was about teaching (presenting) and distributive learning was about the learning process. According to these authors, distance learning is prescribed by a person away from the learner – both in two different settings in a synchronous presentation with expensive technical equipment on both ends of the transmission. There is also the added expense of an onsite technology expert in case of equipment failure. While many schools of education are still participating in this mode of instructional presentation, the expansion to a distributive format that incorporates a predominately virtual approach to instructional presentation would provide access to a more global approach to learning.

Cannings and Stager (2003) further clarify that distributive learning is shaped by the 'community of learners' - the student, the instructor and the practitioners. They propose that schools of education focus on expanding the modes of learning and constructing learning communities. They specifically state that "distributed learning is the future, distance education is the past". That idea is truer today, a decade later. These authors also explained that distributive learning offers better opportunities to flex the pace and synchronicity for learning and "it increases social interaction between learners, experts and teachers; and enables learners to study subjects of their choice based on need and interest level". Age and geographic incidence is no longer a driving factor regarding when and where learning occurs. Distributive learning is the technical side of the constructivist approach to learning. It provides the tool while constructivism provides the framework. Distributive learning makes the process of constructing concepts regarding the process of teaching and learning possible in a global or transcontinental sense. Time, distance, procedures and human resources are no longer impossible barriers to a teacher education program offered in a virtual and global learning structure. The process becomes more about the learner and the learning and less about funding, time, and place.

A 1990 study by APEID suggested that one of the key issues regarding the use of audiovisuals (videos, cinema etc.) in teacher education was the scarcity of quality or culturally acceptable programs, resulting in some countries being obliged to rely upon imported films and other audio materials from other countries and cultures. While this can create specific issues with regard to clashes between value systems and cultures, it is also indicative of the move toward global understanding and cross-culturalism within the last two decades since this study. The study also called for a need for appropriate balance within the idea of cultural venues and the models and theories of teaching and learning.

The digital revolution has created an explosion of network-based courses, learning modules and other knowledge acquiring opportunities. Communication, community and performance are no longer afterthoughts as in the distance learning or correspondence course approach. They are now the driving factors in developing deep meaningful learning experiences in a multicultural, multifaceted manner. According to Cannings and Stager (2003), up until this time, regardless of assertions of interactivity in online learning, the exchanges have primarily been based on a predetermined set of tasks prescribed by an instructor providing canned feedback to the learner on a sporadic basis. This has been an isolated means of learning, and probably the cause of the short-sighted vision for teacher education programs. Modeling and demonstration can now easily be done via web-based communication tools like 'Skype' and 'Facetime' at virtually no cost to either the learning organization or the learner. These tools provide the much needed human interaction and 'face-time' with colleagues, students, and teachers. It is at this added level of interaction and communication that provides opportunities for deep learning to occur and helps pre-service teachers visually and practically construct knowledge.

Universal Curriculum and International Professional Teaching Standards.

In order for a teacher education program to be effective, there must be a unified and harmonious determination of content standards intended for core subject matter used by pre-collegiate learning organizations.

Currently, there are a number of organizations that work to define those standards and use them to provide international data on student achievement. While there are many commendable efforts to develop education standards for pre-collegiate learning, questions continue to surface. The *American Forum for Global Education* (2012) poses such questions as:

- “What should all pre-collegiate students be expected to know and understand about the world?”
- What skills and attitudes will students need to confront future problems, which most assuredly will be global in scope?
- How are the global and international dimensions of learning being addressed by the new academic standards?
- What do scholars from the international relations disciplines and experienced practitioners of global education believe students should know, and how can these insights best be incorporated into the existing standards?
- What global and inter-national education guidelines are appropriate for pre-collegiate education?
- How will schools implement these guidelines when confronted with so many other problems?
- What should students know about their homeland and its connections to the world?”

Defining the answers to these questions and bringing together a coalition of thinkers for that purpose could be the work of a “virtual think-tank” group. However, there are several groups that have made strides toward defining international standards for quality education and student achievement criteria in core subject areas. The *United Nations International and Cultural Organization* (2012) has an agenda for universal education and development. The work of this organization includes research and standard setting for educational and human rights, as well as crucial educational competencies for all developing countries. The *International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA)* (2012) an independent, international cooperative of research organizations and transglobal governmental research agencies, provides data through extensive comparative studies of educational achievement and other facets of international education. PISA, TIMSS, PIRLS are all part of the assessments used to define the achievement levels and national status of more than seventy-five countries worldwide.

PISA, the *Program for International Student Assessment* (PISA, 2012) is a series of international assessments focusing on the performance capacity of fifteen year old students in reading, mathematics, and science literacy. The assessments include measures of cross-curricular competencies and emphasizes functional skills acquired through compulsory schooling. PISA is coordinated by the *Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development* (OECD, 2012). It is administered on a three year cycle. Another assessment program, PIRLS, the *Progress in International Reading and Literacy Study* (2012), is also an international comparative study of literacy. This assessment focuses on literacy of young students, particularly the reading achievement and reading behaviors of students in the US fourth grade and their equivalent grade in other countries.

The fifth assessment in the IEA series of international assessments, the *Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study* (TIMSS, 2012), is dedicated to the improvement of teaching and learning in mathematics and science. This cooperative endeavor is reported every four years in students in grades four and eight comparably. This assessment also provides data about school and classroom learning environments within participating countries. The proposed model for teacher education programming could help promulgate the IEA vision of a natural laboratory where participating countries can learn from the diversity of educational philosophy, models and approaches to education. These comparative studies offer a plethora of data, but also a rich storehouse in terms of organization, instructional practices and curricula.

These ideas could be gleaned to design or compile a universal curricula as a foundation for content knowledge and content pedagogy in the teacher education program. A further look at universal educational standards leads us to examine the standards used to accredit or endorse pre-collegiate learning organizations. One such organization is AdvancED (2012), based out of Atlanta Ga, USA. This independent organization provides peer reviews of learning organizations world wide. The organization boasts 30,000 schools and learning institutions in 70 countries. AdvancEd provides oversight and quality assurance for learning organizations based on evidence driven continuous improvement efforts. The use of the educational standards for effective schools could be used to help define ideas for the consortia program standards for training teachers, while some form of articulation or partnership with a similar higher education agency (i.e. SACS in the US) as needed by consortium partnering universities (USDOE, 2012.)

While an understanding of pre-collegiate curricular content is imperative, so is the need to clarify a set of professional standards which are universally acceptable within the field of education. There are some examples that could be drawn from or adopted for the proposed consortium model for teacher education. The United States has defined six *Interstate Professional Teaching Standards* that have been adopted and endorsed by prominent national education associations. The *European Council of International Schools* offers an international teaching certificate based on five identified standards (ECIS, 2012). The program offered by Cambridge University is a program designed to equip teachers to work in a multi-cultural environment. It is intercultural in context and emphasizes a critical thinking and problem solving approach to teaching. The delineation of international professional teaching standards and a universal curriculum or learner outcomes would help define the courses and experiences prescribed for the program of study.

Shared Opportunities

The consortium members would benefit through an array of shared opportunities. These opportunities would include required study abroad or intern exchange and would include visiting faculty as part of the shared experience. By placing participating faculty on a rotating cycle, work-embedded staff development could also be addressed. Faculty would follow a plan of study based on cultural studies and educational research agendas paired with an on-site faculty member. This agenda would also afford collaborative efforts for research or grant opportunities. These activities could be used to generate credit toward promotion and tenure processes. Students would also share the research and cultural studies using a plan of study for college credit. The consortium members would share courses and instructors since classes would follow a virtual or internet based format. Program courses would be the same across the consortium and the course offerings would be accepted by all member institutions for degree. Articulation agreements with participating countries would include acceptance and endorsement by extra - consortia entities such as National (State) Departments or Ministries of Public Instruction or Education. Training for faculty regarding work with the consortium could be completed using a webinar format.

The Virtual ‘Think-Tank’

An essential component of the model would be an assemblage of experts in the field of teaching and learning, research and educational theory, and curriculum planning and design. This venerable group of experts would have the responsibility to procure the most current and applicable information available regarding how humans learn. They would also be tasked to determine the techniques and means by which teacher education functions to disseminate and sustain societal value systems. Furthermore, this group would become a type of analytical clearinghouse about current research regarding methods and resources for teaching in this technological age.

Recently, a ‘Blue Ribbon’ panel convened by the *National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education* (NCATE) stated that teacher preparation [in the United States] should be “turned upside down” (USDOE, 2011). What better way for this to occur than to partner with a variety of transcontinental teacher education institutions and create a dynamic team of researchers and curriculum design specialists to design a strong, viable curriculum for teacher education programs which could meet the learning needs of children worldwide?

"Today...internationalization of the university means far more than inter-personal or even inter-institutional cooperation across borders. It is a necessary, vital, and deliberate transformation of how we teach and learn and it is essential... to the future. In a world characterized by challenges and opportunities of global proportions, universities are key agents of change." (University of British Columbia, 2006)

The “think-tank” approach would incorporate the use of the same types of technologies as the student courses – including opportunities for group thinking and planning via available distance learning classrooms and “Facetime” or “Skype” appointments or some combination of these types of e-communication tools. During round-table sessions, team members could present new materials, possible models for study and implementation and discussion of new research that could be repeated globally to increase study reliability or validity across multiple cultures and demographics. Discourse would consist of the development of new theories based on connectivity of ideas and the commonality of peoples despite cultural, political, ethnic or other societal boundaries.

Current models of discussion and academic inquiry likened to the Oxford Roundtable from Oxford University in the United Kingdom (<http://www.oxfordroundtable.com>) would provide a time of face to face and on-site dialogue and study amongst scholars in the field of teaching and learning. The on-site sessions would allow members to engage and experience, in real-time, the culture and way of life within the homelands of consortium members. On-site sessions could rotate between each participating university within the consortium within a given time frame. Fellowships for study could be offered to graduate students and junior faculty members similar in format to the Fulbright Scholars Programs (<http://www.cies.org/>). Allowing upcoming scholars to present their work increases the sustainability of the program, maintains the focus on teaching and learning and increases the affective values promulgated by the consortium for transcontinental teacher education programs and the ensuing research for greater levels of scholarship among teacher candidates.

The Administrative Component

As with all organizational proposals, some thought must be given to the administrative aspect of such an endeavor. Adopting a virtual consortium approach would permit the forging of transcontinental and multi-university alliances. It would also promote the building of relationships between national or state departments of public education. Determining consortium membership would, at first, be invitational and at the discretion of the university initially willing to take up this challenge. After the first foray into the process of changing the teacher education paradigm, membership and governance would depend on the intense and resourceful work of the initiating consortium university teams. Policies would need to be addressed to meet the needs of the Consortium and be in alignment with all member university policies. An oversight committee with members from each of the participating university boards of trustees could help provide oversight. Budgetary responsibilities would be clearly defined through articulation agreements between all participating universities and oversight groups such as the aforementioned national or state Department/Ministries of Education. Possible grant or foundational sponsorships could be sought to help with start-up and commissioning phases.

Commissioning an administrative team to include experts in the field of educational leadership, curriculum design, technology, finance and policy from each of the participating learning organizations would be the second phase of execution toward the implementation of this international and highly virtual teacher education program. Careful determination of present and future needs regarding societal values, teacher quality, and curriculum needs must be the sole agenda during the planning stage. The team of experts should be allowed relief from other duties during this process if they choose or compensation provided for the extra time/work. While the time frame should be limited, it should not be so short that the team is inordinately rushed to a deadline and careful consideration is not given to all aspects of the program on a long-term basis. Hopefully, this endeavor would not be seen as an experiment to come and go with the vision of the initiators, but would be the measure of the new paradigm for teacher education.

Conclusions

This writing has provided a model for the internationalization of teacher education. The model is offered as a response to the call for teacher education programs to move forward with solutions to the current static and non-flexible approach to training teachers. It is intended to help teacher education planning move forward using processes that lead a new generation of professional educators to teach with higher levels of global sentience. The model is designed to increase pre-service and beginning teacher understanding, experience and practices toward a new norm of social, cultural and global mindfulness with learners of the 21st century. Pre-service teachers and the organizations that prepare teachers are afforded opportunities to rethinking long kept principles and practices that have previously prepared professional educators.

This reforming of the long kept principles and practices for the education of pre-service teachers has been offered through the framework of internationalizing teacher education. This model challenges teacher educators, schools of education, licensing policy makers, and philanthropic entities to pick up the gauntlet and charge forward for the purpose of redefining teacher education programs which will elicit the corroboration and collaboration of transcontinental academies of teaching and learning. This four-pronged proposal has introduced a framework that can be adapted and extended and may only require the re-commissioning of current policies, fiscal and human resources to reflect a more globally sentient approach to teaching and learning and the training of teachers for the primary – secondary age learner.

While several institutions offer online programs and degrees obtained via a combination of experiences; this model is unique in that it requires collaboration between independent, transcontinental institutions to engage in the very same practices we expect of teachers – increase the level of research in teaching and learning, collaborative planning, professional trust and validation between entities and the expansion of cross-cultural sentence all for the sake of young learners world wide. These learners are our future and hope – but they continue to learn observing the practices and manifestations of the beliefs and values we say we esteem. Now is the time to bring our philosophical ruminations to fruition. A transcontinental, multiple-organizational consortium approach to teacher education could be the answer and will provide a passport to the globe, thus empowering future teachers and education faculty to impact global educational systems that bring-forth tomorrow’s artisans, inventors, world leaders and scholars.

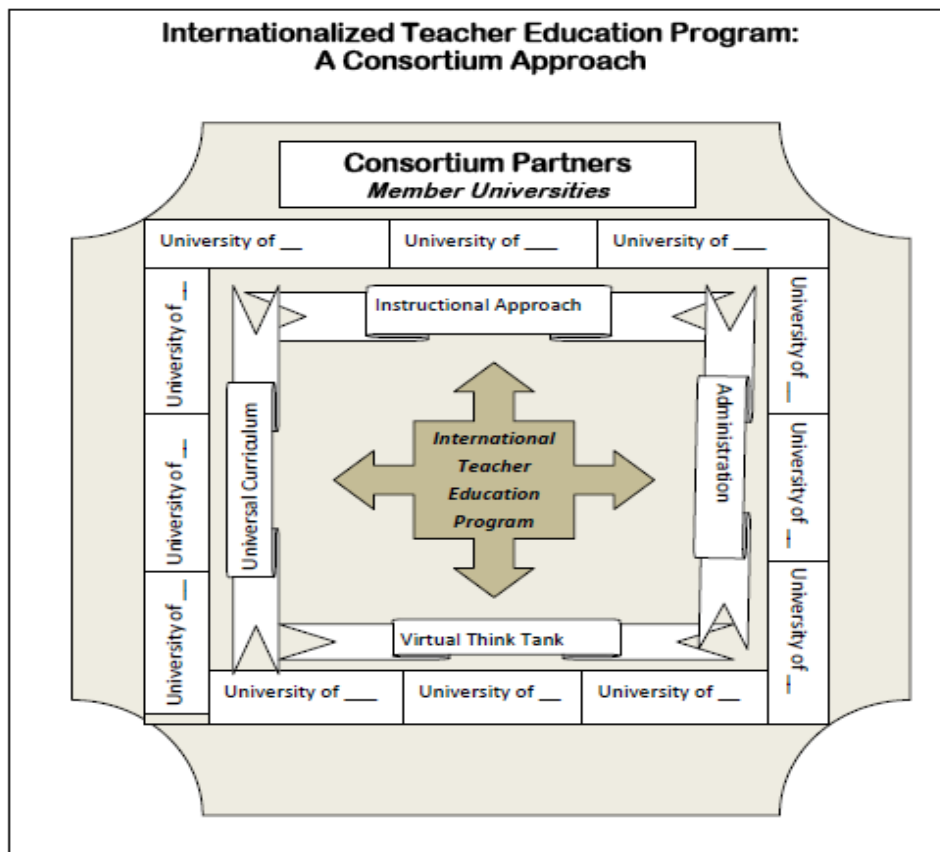


Figure 1 Proposed Teacher Education Model

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