

# Literacy in a Global Context: Educational Policy, Pedagogy, and Teacher Education

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This issue of the *Global Education Review* focuses on how to reimagine, define, and conceptualize literacy practices within an educational setting for a global society. In the call for this issue, we encouraged the authors to define literacy as social and cultural practices that drew upon a range of issues relating to social justice, equity, identity, ideologies, power, and the imagination. Through this perspective literacy is more than the sum of reading and writing events; it is a process that employs diverse symbolic tools (i.e. reading, writing, and drawing, etc.) for social and global transformation.

The collection of articles in this issue illustrate that social and global transformation includes breaking down global boundaries, both physical and metaphorical, that can separate groups of people as “us” and “them.” In doing so, these articles challenge global standardization. We define global standardization has an ideological endeavor which privileges Western knowledge and cultural practices, and ignores the local, cultural, and social needs of groups of people teaching and living in particular contexts. Global standardization, in combination with the spread of big corporations and their roles in education (Cody, 2014), perpetuates the idea that progress is made by imposing a one-model or a global standard towards teacher education and student learning. The articles in this issue

illustrate how no one standard or model of teacher education and pedagogy to support literacy can meet the diverse needs of both teachers and students living locally and globally, or displaced by political factors resulting in migration across nation states.

The articles presented in this themed edition of *Global Education Review* were written by a team of international researchers coming together to create a shared space for inquiry and learning. The collection of articles represents what Ernest Morrell (2017) described as the “literacy education imperative” that challenges the “growing material inequities between rich and poor, global divisions, and massive manifestations of hatred and intolerance amid rising tides of global populism” (p. 455). To open this issue, Denny Taylor, in “Family Literacy Provides an Effective Response to the U.N. SDGs and Peacebuilding Architecture,” discusses how family literacy initiatives across UN Member States support peacebuilding and the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Through an analysis of global family literacy initiatives, Taylor suggests that family literacy is a conduit for challenging economic inequalities, by providing access to literacy and academic opportunities, and intolerance, by constructing “peace efforts in family settings working alongside children’s caregivers to ameliorate the often-violent circumstances in which they live

their everyday lives” (p. 5). Taylor illuminates how literacy, situated within a global context through the lens of family literacy initiatives, can have impacts on reducing gender inequality and family violence, and the results of physical, psychological, and emotional traumas from armed conflict and disease.

In “Reimagining Primary Teacher Preparation in Moçambique: Literacy Mentoring in Hybrid Spaces as a Transformative Practice,” Goia et al. exemplify how a team of international scholars and education professionals from Moçambique, the United States, and Canada came together to create a shared space of inquiry and learning. In combination with Albers, Flint, and Matthews’ article, “Professional Development, Aesthetic Experiences, and the Possibilities for Transformed Practices in International Spaces,” these articles illustrate how teacher educators can break down linguistic, cultural, and institutional barriers in order to create a community for professional literacy learning. Goia et al. provide a framework for rethinking pre-service teacher education as adaptive and practice-based that includes hybrid spaces built around the current structure of the teacher education program in Moçambique. They argue that hybrid spaces provide opportunities for innovation in participatory practices in supporting learning to teach.

Integrating a framework on aesthetic education, Albers et al. takes the reader through their experiences in developing professional development with eight kindergarten to third grade teachers in South Africa. The authors argue for a critical professional development stance, one in which professional development must be contextualized and respond to the everyday needs of the learners. They suggest that “to approach professional development as a democratic endeavor in international spaces is to introduce materials (e.g., songs, picture books, stories, poems) that speak to teachers’

experiences” (p. 50). These two articles demonstrate the discursive processes that guide teacher education based on the cultural and institutional structures that define the local context of the teachers and students within which teacher preparation occurs.

While Goia et al. and Albers et al. reimagine the preparation of pre- and in-service teachers within an international context, Karsgaard in “Reading Humanitarian Heroes for Global Citizenship Education?: Curriculum Critique of a Novel Study on Kielburger’s *Free the Children*” and Taira in “(In)Visible Literacies of Transnational Newcomer Youth in a Secondary English Classroom” take a critical lens to the global standardization of curriculum. A standardized global curriculum affects, what Cambourne (2016) describes, as “not only how people subconsciously think about language learning, but also how they think about teaching language and/or literacy” (p. 21). Through standardization, teachers and administrators perceive teaching as a “delivery system” that fills an empty space within the learner’s knowledge (Cambourne, 2016, p. 21). Cambourne uses the term a *discourse of acquisition* to describe how teachers and learning are framed through “carefully sequenced-lock-step-teacher-directed” transmission of not only curricular content (p. 21). We expand this notion to suggest that curricular content is never neutral as it also transmits ideologies and beliefs of what it means to be a global citizen.

Through a close reading of the curriculum unit around *Free the Children* (1999), a memoir by Craig Kielburger, Karsgaard illustrates how the standardization of curriculum represents a discourse of acquisition that is a promotion of Western ideas, rather than globally and critically expansive. Karsgaard poses challenging questions about the nature of global citizenship, social action, and what it means to “raise awareness” about issues of global citizenship

through a curricular unit that is supported by global citizenship education (GCE) within the Canadian context.

In “(In)Visible Literacies of Transnational Newcomer Youth in a Secondary English Classroom,” Taira presents a case study of what happens when teachers challenge a discourse of acquisition to support a discourse of meaning making within curricular content. Cambourne (2017) describes the teaching and learning through a discourse of meaning making as striving “to create multiple opportunities for their students to engage in continuous cycles of constructing and communicating meanings as they collaboratively address and (try to) resolve real-world problems” (p. 23). Studying newcomer transnational youth, many of them refugees, settling in the United States, Taira illustrates how curriculum can be re-envisioned to support students in making sense of their experiences of displacement and relocation. Focusing on a case study of a “transnational teacher and her students engaged in literacy practices that were potentially informed by their own histories of transnational migration” (p. 77), Taira describes how meaningful literacy practices engaged at home and out of school disappeared when “attention to culture and incorporation of diverse texts and perspectives were seen as peripheral to a standardized curriculum” (p. 86). Both Karsgaard and Taira encourage the reader to consider how standardized curriculum can deny students opportunities to both engage in interrogating the notion of global citizenship and to bring their own literate lives as global citizens into the classroom.

Together, the articles in this issue remind us of the words of Maxine Greene (1995), who wrote, “We should think of education as opening public spaces in which students, speaking their own voices and acting on their own initiatives, can identify themselves and choose themselves

in relation to such principles as freedom, equality, justice, and concern for others” (p. 68). We see this issue as one of those public spaces for reimagining literacy education for a global society.

## References

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