



# Teacher education for World English speaking pre-service teachers: Making transnational knowledge exchange for mutual learning

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## ABSTRACT

Pre-service teachers are taught that the funds of knowledge their students bring to school provide intellectual resources to be engaged through productive pedagogies. Teacher education may assist and/or hinder World English Speaking (WES) pre-service teachers in gaining access to the teaching profession by doing likewise. The interpretative case study presented in this paper involves exploring possibilities for teacher education programs to make transnational knowledge connections through WES pre-service teachers. Evidence from interviews with WES pre-service teachers and their Anglophone teacher educators are analysed to elaborate issues confronting teacher education programs involving World English Speakers. The findings indicate that teamwork which is constructed to privilege the knowledge of Anglophone pre-service teachers over their WES peers is questionable. Further, WES pre-service teachers are not only structurally disadvantaged by teamwork practices that privilege local knowledge, they are also challenged by teacher educators' assessment procedures. The pressures created on teacher educators' workloads, may lead to 'lean and mean' assessment procedures which serve to contain excessive demands on their labour, but do not necessarily resolve the dilemma of how to use assessment practices that minimise WES pre-service teachers' learning.

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## 1. Introduction

The presence of World English Speaking (WES) pre-service teachers (i.e. students enrolled in university-based teacher education programs) and school teachers of minority immigrant backgrounds in countries such as Australia, Britain, Canada, New Zealand and the USA may be understood as an expression of, and response to, the contemporary transition in the latest phases of cultural globalisation. We define WES as migrants to these Anglophone nations who use one or other variety of English as one of their languages. Thus, the concept WES indicates both the presence of linguistic diversity within these countries that now include a plurality of Englishes (plus other languages) as well as the array of knowledge these immigrants possess. This knowledge may be either what they have acquired by way of personal or educational experiences, or the knowledge they are able to access through transnational, multilingual knowledge networks. Through an exploration of the university experiences of WES pre-service teachers this paper reports on some of the challenging opportunities transnational knowledge exchange pose for Australian teacher education.

### 1.1. Transnational knowledge exchange and WES pre-service teachers

Knowledge is a key focus of teacher education. One dimension of this focus is that pre-service teachers are taught that the knowledge their students bring to school provides intellectual resources to be engaged through productive pedagogies. For instance, McNeal (2005, p. 407) argues that teacher education programs in the USA foster the understanding among pre-service teachers "that all students at the primary and secondary levels bring knowledge, skills and experiences to the classroom that should be used as resources in teaching and learning." Pre-service teachers are encouraged to draw on the knowledge of children to stimulate their interest in learning and to enrich their schooling. They learn to make connections between what they teach in school and their students' "funds of knowledge" (Gonzalez, Moll, & Amanti, 2005). In the USA, Moss (2008) uses "diversity study circles" to promote the understanding of racism by white pre-service teachers. The dialogues with pre-service teachers of colour serve to challenge white pre-service teachers' assumptions about minority, immigrant and refugee communities, revealing they have knowledge to contribute to school students' learning. However, the idea of capitalising upon, critically validating and extending the knowledge of WES pre-service teachers themselves, whether personal or part of their intellectual heritage is not considered.

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Despite the increasing interconnections stimulated by contemporary globalisation, Romo and Chavez (2006, p. 143) note the national chauvinism and parochialism of teacher education, with the “curriculum and language used [focusing] on European–American students from middle-class families.” Immigration patterns in the USA have changed; fewer immigrants are arriving from Europe relative to increased immigration from Asia, Africa and Latin America. In the USA, 40 percent of all school children come from World English Speaking homes, and with 30 million Latino/as, the USA is the fifth largest Hispanic country in the world. However, the funds of knowledge of these minority and immigrant students are generally overlooked and undervalued. In part, this is because the majority of school teachers in the USA are of European descent who have not learned that “it is the teacher’s job to make these far-off realities attainable for the student by relating them to existing dynamics that are more accessible to the cultural groups present in the classrooms” (Romo & Chavez, 2006, p. 147). However, even bilingual pre-service teachers who are not educated to work with culturally and linguistically diverse school students may insist on English-only interactions, unaware of the value of students’ first language in learning their second, and for accessing really useful knowledge.

While teaching and learning operate within bounded, nation-centred cultural scripts, pre-service teachers may benefit from the transnational knowledge immigrants have or can access. Blömeke and Paine (2008, p. 2030) argue that because of the embedded character of “teacher education in any one country [this] makes looking beyond that country’s experience crucial for recognising the taken for granted assumptions which drive it.” Teacher education programs having such a cosmopolitan dimension open up investigations into different conceptualisations of pedagogy, school teachers’ knowledge, learning and teaching. Because teacher education is a nation-centred project, problems of decoding the local/national language and making meaning of it have to be negotiated when WES pre-service teachers create possibilities for transnational knowledge exchange. Blömeke and Paine (2008, p. 2035) note that these language questions “are not simply literal but instead relate to deeper and often tacit assumptions about schooling, teaching and teacher learning.” Teacher education is challenged by international comparative tests such as PISA and TIMSS, but this has not persuaded teacher educators “to understand the development of mathematics teachers’ knowledge cross-nationally” (Blömeke & Paine, 2008, p. 2035). No connection is made to the presence of WES pre-service teachers from abroad as providing a means for deepening and extending locally bounded theories and practices of teacher education.

To go beyond the proposal of “inclusive curriculum along with a range of support programs” (Cruikshank, 2004) for WES pre-service teachers students, Han and Singh (2007a, 2007b) report on teacher educators’ negative responses to engaging official knowledge with the possible knowledge of their WES pre-service teachers. Any claims to knowledge these pre-service teachers might make on the intellectual heritage of their former homeland tend to be erased by presumptions about their ignorance of Australian education. Teacher education’s refusal to relate the knowledge of education WES pre-service teachers have previously acquired with their new learning means that there is little chance of using their funds of knowledge to inform our collective understanding of what teaching might become. There is little apparent engagement with what they already know and therefore no means of using this to inform their understanding of the new generation school teachers they are becoming. The knowledge practices of the teacher educators who conduct the teacher education programs for these WES pre-service teachers did not show any student-centeredness in terms of engaging with the knowledge and knowledge networks the

WES pre-service teachers had with regards to quality teaching, productive pedagogies, positive learning behaviours or multi-literacies. There was no deep engagement with the multiple sources of knowledge that their language resources and/or transnational connections provided. Little, if any of the WES pre-service teachers’ experiential or scholastic knowledge was described, situated, analysed, interpreted, critiqued or subjected to validation processes through their teacher education programs.

A second dimension of this focus on knowledge in teacher education is the knowledge required by pre-service teachers to create programs that pedagogically engage the knowledge their students bring to school. Jennings’ (2007) study of diversity priorities in US teacher education programs reports a lack of knowledge and resistance by university staff who involved in educating pre-service teachers and the school teachers who supervise their practicum. This neglect of issues of diversity correlated with the disinterest and discomfort of their school students. The way diversity issues were, or were not addressed in teacher education programs, their design, prioritisation and pre-service teachers’ learning outcomes reflected the values and beliefs of teacher educators.

To move the field of teacher education in the USA beyond the superficial treatment of diversity, Villegas and Lucas (2002) propose the infusion of multicultural knowledge throughout teacher education programs. This involves developing pre-service teachers’ consciousness of socio-cultural knowledge; their awareness of the diverse educational cultures and linguistic knowledge of school students; and capabilities for working to verify the presupposition that all students are equally intelligent. The focus is on having pre-service teachers understand how learners construct knowledge; how to improve their capabilities for knowledge construction; how to build on what they already know, and how to stretch their knowledge beyond the familiar. Villegas and Lucas (2002, p. 23) argue that pre-service teachers who speak languages other than English “know a great deal and ... have experiences, concepts, and languages that can be built on and expanded to help them learn even more.” They contend that pre-service teachers should be taught to have school students “use their prior knowledge” and that they “need to know about students’ experiences outside school” (Villegas & Lucas, 2002, p. 26), especially their families’ intellectual resources so as to use these to contextualise and enhance student learning. However, despite their focus on the knowledge children bring to school, they overlook the intellectual resources WES pre-service teachers have, thereby denying them access to processes for deconstructing or otherwise reconstituting their existing knowledge.

Teacher education programs are built on models that privilege the knowledge of middle-class Anglo-ethnic school students — and pre-service teachers. Freebody and Luke’s (1990) intellectual resources model frames knowledge practices across four interdependent dimensions: *code breaking*, *meaning making*, *text using*, and *text analysing*. This model provides a framework for discussing WES pre-service teachers’ different approaches to making meaning of education that takes into account differences in the intellectual heritage they can bring to bear in their teacher education programs. *Code breaking practices* refer to pre-service teachers’ uses of the knowledge of the five semiotic systems (audio, visual, spatial, gestural and print) needed to understand and make texts work. The pre-service teachers’ experiential knowledge of literacy, culture and technology provides key resources for the *meaning making practices* needed to generate literal and inferential interpretations of texts. Knowing how to adapt or recombine them are important strategies for using resources already acquired. Real-life situations make for *text using practices* that develop and demonstrate the pre-service teacher’s contextual knowledge about, and ability to act on the different cultural and social functions. *Text analysing practices* involve the critical analysis required to understand how texts

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