

Global Encounters

Global Encounters:
Pedagogical Paradigms
and Educational Practices

Edited by

Bruce C. Swaffield and Iris Guske

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P U B L I S H I N G

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Foreword	ix
The Virtuous Cycle of Cultural Diversity and Intercultural Dialogue: A New Pedagogical Paradigm from UNESCO's Perspective Dr. Katérina Stenou	

Preface	xvii
Bruce C. Swaffield and Iris Guske	

Acknowledgements	xix
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Chapter One: From the 3Rs to iScience

Improving the Teaching of Reading through Teacher Leadership and Professional Learning in ELL Middle School Classrooms	2
Lauren Stephenson, Barbara Harold, and Robin Dada	

Writing Skills: A Case Study on the Writing Process, Skills, and Experience of Mechanical Engineering Students at N. Mandela Metropolitan University	20
Hilda Israel	

iScience And General Education: Science Literacy for All Students	34
Stasinios Stavrianeas and Mark Stewart	

Implementing Innovative, Interactive Technologies among Teacher Candidates to Enhance Understanding of the Impact of Cultural Diversity on Learning	48
Inez A. Heath and Diane L. Judd	

Their Voices, Our Ears: Looking for Ways to Encourage Student Success	63
Joanne Bakker, Jocelyne Briggs, and Donna Putman	

Chapter Two: Mint not as in “Pepper” and Other Cross-cultural Linguistic Foci

Globalization, the English Language, and International Universities: The Case of Japan.....	80
Al Lehner	

Language Learning through Content: What Can Help University Students Develop Their Communicative Competence in a Professional Field?	93
Inna Atamanova and Sergey Bogomaz	

The Relationship between Communication Apprehension and the Willingness to Communicate in Polish Adolescents Learning English	106
Ewa Piechurska-Kuciel	

Learner Autonomy and its Indispensability in Second Language Acquisition in Albania.....	127
Bledar Toska	

Italian-Canadian, Italian-Australian, and Italian Adolescent Speech: A Contemporary Analysis	144
Biagio Aulino and Roberto Bergami	

Spanish in the United States: Demographic Changes, Language Attitudes, and Pedagogical Implications	160
Lucia Buttarò	

Chapter Three: Empowering Teachers and Students at Home and Abroad

A Political Analysis of Teacher Professional Development: Insights from a Teacher Institute in Hong Kong	176
Mingyue Gu	

Intellectual and Leadership Development of McNair Scholars	194
Kim Sanborn, Jade Stanley, and Angela Vidal-Rodriguez	

Great Teachers Go with the Flow: Nurturing Self-Determined Behavior, Motivation, and Optimal Performance.....	211
Penelope Ann-Scott Murdock	

Transforming Our Worldview into a Universalview	234
Bruce C. Swaffield	

Assessment of Intercultural Competency Development of Employees of Multinational Corporations through Company-Sponsored Programs and Business Schools.....	248
Christian Wolf	

Building Bridges through Industry Placements: Perceptions from Malaysian Academics.....	258
Roberto Bergami, Annamarie Schüller, and Jason Cheok	

Student Mobility as a Way of Uniting Cultures: A Case Study of an ERASMUS Student	275
Danuta Gabrys-Barker	

International Student Parliaments – Empowerment through Engagement	290
Niklas Guske and Iris Guske	

Chapter Four: Cultural and Cultured Learning— Circling the Square for a Change

Analyzing Design to Understand Culture: A Methodology into Practice ..	306
Sheila Alves Gies and Tracy Cassidy	

Learning to Read a Painting—The Artist as Ethnographer	325
Lorie A. Annarella	

Deliberate Cultural Curriculum: A Case Study in Online Discourse for Race and Gender Issues in Media	338
Lorene Wales	

Invisible Enclosures: Cultural Discourses at a Modern American Zoo— The Emergence of an Environmental Hyperreality	350
Howard D. Walters	

On Oppositism: A Rhetorical Approach to Teaching Innovation and Critical Thinking to Scientists and Engineers	368
Robert Danisch and Jessica Mudry	

Lines, Angles, and Squares: Some Consequences of Linear Epistemology in American English Idiom.....	386
Beth Jorgensen	
Contributors	407

FOREWORD

THE VIRTUOUS CYCLE OF CULTURAL DIVERSITY AND INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE: A NEW PEDAGOGICAL PARADIGM FROM UNESCO'S PERSPECTIVE

DR. KATÉRINA STENO¹

UNESCO has been created “for the purpose of advancing, through the educational and scientific and cultural relations of the peoples of the world, the objectives of international peace and of the common welfare of mankind”. In this regard, the Organization’s Constitution (1945) affirms that “ignorance of each other’s ways and lives has been a common cause, throughout the history of mankind, of that suspicion and mistrust between the peoples of the world through which their differences have all too often broken into war”. Thus, the main task for the international community is to turn that process around in order “to build peace in the minds of men” founded “upon the intellectual and moral solidarity of mankind”.

To fulfill this mandate, the Organization’s vision, policy, strategies, and operational frameworks as well as the vocabulary used to instill the

¹ Dr. Katérina Stenou is the Director of the Division of Cultural Policies and Intercultural Dialogue at the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. Her long exposure to the challenges of multilateral cultural cooperation, such as high-level negotiations at an international scale, notably the elaboration and the adoption of the *UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity* (2001), has given Dr. Stenou extensive experience in developing strategic planning and effective implementation of policies. Her academic background in the relevant fields of philosophy and human and social sciences has helped her to carry out her various responsibilities, dealing with cultural diversity, intercultural dialogue, and sustainable development in order to foster global mutual understanding—in line with UNESCO’s mandate. Dr. Stenou has been published widely on policy responses to the challenges of today’s multicultural societies.

values of mutual understanding, respect, and appreciation have evolved alongside the challenges and the concrete requirements of the political agenda that appeared in the changing international landscape. Several phases can be identified to highlight this commitment in the service of peace thanks to a strengthened cooperation in the fields of education, the sciences, culture, and communication. Each of these phases has used different notions to describe humanity's aspiration to seek unity while nurturing diversity, an enduring and central cause for the whole United Nations system. This is particularly true for UNESCO, entrusted with the mandate to ensure the preservation and promotion of the "fruitful diversity of cultures", which implies the quest for dialogue among civilizations, cultures, and peoples as one of the best guarantees of global peace.

Today, new global challenges and threats are multiplying and undermining humankind's cohesion. The constant question remains as to how we may best approach the unity-in-diversity, or to learn how to "live together" by fully participating in the infinite wealth of the cultures of the world and by averting the fear reflex when confronted with "otherness". Since words are the natural support to our thoughts, which ones should we choose to build, appropriate, and extend this common aspiration of humankind, which draws upon its rich cultural diversity? Not to dwell on semantics, it should nevertheless be recalled that the United Nations, and UNESCO in particular, have always used the terms "tolerance", "culture of peace", "dialogue among civilizations", "dialogue among cultures", and, more recently, "rapprochement of cultures", to describe this conceptual, political, and programmatic approach in suitable and convincing language.

In this new, turbulent international landscape, greater account must be taken of the close links between cultural diversity, dialogue, development, security, and peace. These five interdependent notions should be rethought to inform a new approach for sustained peace.

Two questions persist: firstly, in the age of globalization, what are the new arguments in favor of a strong commitment by states and civil society to development and mutual understanding from the standpoint of cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue? Secondly, what are the new choices and strategies needed in terms of public policies encouraging citizens to rethink the new plural reality of our societies linked to the scale of the fast-moving, far-reaching changes the world is currently experiencing?

From the very beginning, UNESCO's mandate has been based on the conviction that education is one of the most powerful tools for eliminating ignorance and prejudice and building peace in order to create a knowledge-based, enabling environment for harmonious interaction and free exchange of ideas among peoples from diverse cultural backgrounds. This is a

lifelong exercise, encompassing all sections of society: schools, faith-based and secular civil-society organizations, the media, governments, and NGOs—all of which can nurture the fundamental values of pluralism, peace, justice, and human solidarity.

According to its mission statement, UNESCO contributes to the building of peace, the alleviation of poverty, sustainable development, and intercultural dialogue through its five fields of competence: education, the sciences (natural sciences as well as social and human sciences), culture, communication, and information. Hence, intercultural dialogue, more than mere dialogue, involves not only our cognitive capacities but also all senses and our imagination which allows us to develop the ability to understand various and complex milieus. Intercultural dialogue is becoming a challenging enterprise which can help to shed misconceptions, dispel misunderstandings, ignorance, and stereotypes, as well as reveal differences and diversity, and generate confidence and trust. Nevertheless, attention has to be paid to the fact that dialogue can be efficient only if basic prerequisites are ensured: equality, justice, poverty alleviation, respect for dignity, and human rights.

UNESCO considers interfaith dialogue an essential component of intercultural dialogue and defends the view that all faiths convey a message of peace, justice, and human solidarity. It follows that all religious and spiritual leaders have the potential to exercise moral and positive influence over the manner in which people understand each other and interact. They must avoid by all available means the danger that culture and religion are exploited to mask deeper causes of political, economic or social malaise, and disrupt social cohesion.

The main goals and challenges would be to provide more accurate frameworks, practical orientations, and tools to overcome the “crisis of coexistence” experienced by human cultures in the era of globalization:

- to make an appropriate, inventive, and innovative response to the hardening of inward-looking attitudes that lead to incomprehension and possible future confrontations;
- to combat the flawed “clash of civilizations” theory that generally encouraged that which it purportedly merely described;
- to highlight the new questions raised by key concepts linked to issues relating to the intercultural dialogue in order to clarify ambiguities and dispel misconceptions;
- to address the question of collective representations of others and oneself by measuring the role of emotions and the irrational in such cultural imagination;

- to reflect on new fundamentals/basics for humanity in order to meet the challenges of diversity in a concomitantly globalized and fragmented world;
- to comprehend the interactions between those differing levels in order to propose concrete actions to mainstream cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue in sustainable development policies.

Let me illustrate how UNESCO addresses this. The EFA Global Monitoring Report 2010 emphasizes that failure to reach the marginalized has denied many people their right to education. While much has been achieved since the international community adopted the six Dakar goals in 2000, many of the world's poorest countries are not on track to meet the 2015 Millennium Development Goals targets. Education is at risk and countries must develop more inclusive approaches, linked to wider strategies for protecting vulnerable populations and overcoming inequality.

The growing recognition that education is never a culturally neutral process also calls for renewed investment in inclusive and equitable education systems that foster peace, non-violence, and respect for human rights, including gender equality, along with efforts to develop related capacities in Member States. Quality education must also be pursued and improved as education infused with the values of peace, tolerance, and reconciliation contributes to the elimination of cultural stereotypes and building understanding and mutual respect for all religions and cultures. Curriculum reform is another essential action line in which UNESCO has been successfully engaged for years. To be effective, such reform must be combined with national book policies that provide equitable access to textbooks and reading materials as well as international leadership in orchestrating the bi- and multilateral revision of such materials.

Quality education for all is a pre-requisite for dialogue. It can eliminate stereotypes and build understanding and respect, and develop a capacity for critical judgement. Achieving the international development goal of education for all by 2015 will take us a long way towards that objective, but this needs to be supported by curricula, teacher training, and teaching materials designed to enable students from all cultures, faiths, and traditions to learn to live together. For example, UNESCO works with its Member States to develop educational materials based, *inter alia*, on the UNESCO General and Regional Histories series.

In this regard, close cooperation between European countries and Arab States is established for a revision of history and social studies textbooks which should not only ensure more accurate representation of their respective cultures and beliefs, but also provide a platform for discussing

sensitive points of common history openly and constructively—including through local as well as national languages.

The building of “intercultural competencies” also lies at the core of the matter at hand. The success or failure of dialogue depends to a large extent on such competencies. They consist of a complex of abilities needed to perform effectively and appropriately when interacting with people who are linguistically and culturally different from oneself. They also involve the “reconfiguring” of our perspectives and understandings of the world. These competencies are at the core of a needed shift towards human qualities like humility and receptiveness, and towards dialogue which requires cognitive flexibility, empathy, anxiety reduction, and—perhaps most of all—the capacity to shift between different frames of reference. The ability to express one’s aspirations for a better future of humankind and the planet is particularly important because it aims at promoting sustainability of all forms of life.

Acquiring intercultural competence is a thrilling challenge since we are not, naturally, required to understand the values of others as we do the values encountered in our family context, circle of friends, school, religion, or society. Intercultural competence aims at abandoning one’s own logic and cultural systems in order to engage towards others and listen to their cultural idioms. These idioms include the desire of belonging to one or more social groups, particularly if those are not valued or recognized in a given cultural context.

Intercultural dialogue could be considered as a means to acquire “intercultural competence”. However, success of such an acquisition depends on the aptitude of different partners in rediscovering the past and the present, starting from a different cultural perspective. It also results from the ability to critically analyze values and knowledge systems to correct erroneous collective representations.

More precisely, with respect to the culture of peace, UNESCO’s efforts comprise actions relating to intercultural dialogue and education for peace, human rights, and citizenship; the contribution of both social and human sciences and natural sciences to peace; the mobilization of researchers through the organization of debates in, and between, civil societies on the new human and societal challenges of peace-building; and the contribution of the communication and information media in the furtherance of peace. The culture of peace is above all a culture of peace-building, conflict prevention and resolution, education for non-violence, tolerance, mutual respect, and dialogue. It helps people to cope with social, ethical, cultural, political, environmental, and other societal transformations, and is closely

linked to a new humanism that puts human beings at the core of all development processes.

In fact, contemporary multicultural societies benefit from the sharing of knowledge and values, and in some respects are a challenge of today's increasingly globalized world. Formal and non-formal education, exchange, and dialogue are important means to counteract ethnic, cultural, and religious prejudices, to foster tolerance and respect, especially in multi-ethnic and multi-religious contexts, and to fight against all forms of discrimination, racism, and xenophobia. New educational, cultural, and scientific contents should foster the acceptance and recognition of cultural diversity and the capacity to engage in dialogue.

Exchanges between youth constitute one of the most effective ways to overcome cultural barriers and to emphasize the value of intercultural awareness in order to achieve a more satisfactory intellectual, emotional, moral, and spiritual existence. Programs promoting student exchanges, sports, cultural, and artistic activities, as well as civic commitment are conducive to the promotion of intercultural understanding and respect for diversity. Creation of discussion forums for intercultural dialogue among youth that use the media and Internet in particular, with a view to achieving a better understanding of diverse cultural expressions. The active participation of public authorities, non-governmental organizations, religious communities, and other opinion makers, as well as civil society, is indispensable and should be boosted nationally and internationally.

At this stage, it is worthwhile recalling Dewey's definition of education, according to which its intercultural character prevails as it is in constant redefinition, provided it is centered on the learner: "Education is that reconstruction or reorganization of experience which increases ability to direct the course of subsequent experience". Thus, the concept of development in educational terms means "that the educational process has no end beyond itself. It is its own end; and that the educational process is one continual reorganizing, reconstructing, transforming". "Educare": nourishing and raising, and "educere": drag out of ..., lead to ...—two concepts, which should be complementary, but often become contradictory as answering the following questions requires their contextualization: Who knows and where from? What and how does one know? What do we know about and what for?

An undertaking as ambitious as the one of formal and non-formal education can never be considered completed. It continuously brings new challenges, prompting us to reconsider the fundamental principles of humanity by highlighting "that which binds" cultures and societies to each other and from within. In the process, a true ethic of rapprochement is

taking shape. It is to be hoped that a common language—the language of intercultural dialogue—will be spoken more fluently by all.

Some of UNESCO's fields of intervention:

- (i) Revision of school textbooks and production of educational materials with a view to preventing school violence, promoting peace, understanding, and learning to live together, based, *inter alia*, on the UNESCO General and Regional Histories series. Dissemination of UNESCO Guidelines on Intercultural Education, including through the effective use of ICTs. Establishment of inter-regional observatories on textbook policies, practices, and research activities;
- (ii) Development of teacher training on intercultural capacities to address challenges raised by the diversity of cultures, religions, faiths, and traditions;
- (iii) Establishment of “centers of excellence”, including the expansion of UNESCO Chairs on human rights education, intercultural peace education, intercultural and interreligious dialogue, as well as the development of exchange programmes between universities and research institutions, involving students, professors, and scientists from different cultural backgrounds;
- (iv) Promotion of a collaborative advancement of global scientific knowledge, through, *inter alia*, the development of pedagogical materials and exhibitions that demonstrate that contemporary knowledge is constructed through a cross-cultural exchange of ideas and experiences;
- (v) Elaboration of culturally-sensitive pedagogical materials that introduce local/traditional knowledge and vernacular languages into curricula;
- (vi) Development of awareness-raising material based on UNESCO's “Routes” programs (e.g., the Slave Route) in cooperation with the appropriate networks and partners established in the framework of these programs. This may include best practices collected through clearing houses, databases, and specific regional mappings related to intercultural and/or interfaith dialogue;
- (vii) Development of clearing houses on best practices in the above-mentioned areas;
- (viii) Expansion of youth networks to mobilize new participants and audiences in order to supplement existing knowledge and practice in promoting intercultural and interfaith dialogue; and,
- (ix) Expansion of education networks, development of student exchanges at all levels, and sharing of best practices that foster inter-personal understanding.

Some examples promoting education for human rights, tolerance, and non discrimination (UNESCO—Education Sector):

- **Stopping violence in schools:** A guide for teachers—with a particular focus on stereotyping and discrimination. This guide (in English, French, Spanish, and Arabic) proposes 10 action areas followed by corresponding practical examples that teachers can adapt to address and prevent violence in classrooms and schools. The Action No.10 deals with violence and discrimination against students with disabilities and those from indigenous, minority, and other marginalized communities. The publication has been widely diffused among Member States, ASPnet schools, etc.
- **Short film on “Education for human rights ... Young People Talking”:** In cooperation with the National Commissions and national coordinators of the ASPnet of 10 countries (Albania, Azerbaijan, Brazil, Burkina Faso, Canada, Dominican Republic, France, Indonesia, Lebanon, Uganda), a short film was developed to deal with the key concerns for schools today and how to cope with the challenges from the human rights education perspective. Schoolchildren/youth (11-13 years old) express their views on the issues related to gender, violence, peace, diversity, participation of children, etc.
- **Development of guidelines for educators on combating intolerance and discrimination against Muslims:** In 2010, under the initiative of OSCE/ODIHR, OSCE, UNESCO, and the Council of Europe have jointly developed guidelines for educators for combating intolerance and discrimination against Muslims. The guidelines will be launched in May 2011 on the occasion of the 121st Meeting of the Committee of Ministers of the COE.
- **UNESCO Associated Schools Project Network (ASPnet):** Founded in 1953, this project is a global network of more than 9,000 educational institutions in 180 countries. Member institutions—ranging from pre-schools, primary, secondary, and vocational schools to teacher training institutions—work, among other things, to promote international understanding, peace, intercultural dialogue, sustainable development, and quality education in practice.
- **The UNITWIN/UNESCO Chairs Programme:** Established in 1992, it seeks to advance research, training, and program development in higher education by building university networks and encouraging inter-university cooperation through transfer of knowledge across borders. Today, 695 UNESCO Chairs and 68 UNITWIN Networks exist within the Programme, involving over 812 institutions in 128 countries, and covering 70 disciplines, most of which directly or indirectly address the issue of living together harmoniously.

PREFACE

BRUCE C. SWAFFIELD AND IRIS GUSKE

When the *Worldwide Forum on Education and Culture* began at the start of the new millennium and hosted its first conference at John Cabot University in Rome, Italy, little did anyone realize that before long an enthusiastic academic community of some 100 scholars from all over the world would meet annually to discuss the results of relevant educational research and hands-on projects, and would produce a progressive collection of articles as the ones presented in this book.

With contributions from professors and practitioners in the combined disciplines of education, language, and (inter-) cultural studies from all five continents, this volume reflects current academic debates and discourse and introduces a wide range of teaching and learning environments to the reader, be it reading or writing classes for EFL learners or mechanical engineering students in the United Arab Emirates or South Africa, respectively; industry placements as evaluated by Malaysian business students; or American zoos as locations for cultural learning.

By reflecting engaged experiences from pre-school to postgraduate levels, these articles examine a multitude of approaches to, and applications of, cutting-edge theories in the fields of language-learning, such as learner autonomy, communication apprehension, or communicative competence; technology-based instruction; and worldview philosophy to name but a few.

Since pedagogical paradigms often are anchored in, and constrained by, national policies and international politics alike, our aim is to enable teachers and students to cross borders and traverse boundaries—and become richer for it. All that is required is the interest to ponder and discover the importance of *flow* in the classroom, the renaissance of rhetorical theory in the sciences, or consequences of linear epistemology in American English idiom.

Firmly grounded on a concrete educational foundation, most of the papers are characterized by their applicability across a variety of educational settings throughout the world. Reading how Brazilian design reflects the country's culture, how Italian youth slang differs in Italian and migrant

communities in Canada and Australia, or how international, English-speaking universities work in Japan will, hopefully, invite similarly stimulating multidisciplinary and intercultural debates as those that have attracted several hundred scholars and practitioners from more than three dozen nations—as well as a variety of academic, professional, ethnic, religious, socio-economic, and cultural backgrounds—to the *Worldwide Forum's* annual congress in Rome, where the organization was founded in 2002.

These renowned conferences and the present book are meant to highlight the need for culturally sensitive education that combines face-to-face teaching methods, when imparting knowledge of how to read a painting, for example, with online forms of instruction, when administering i-science projects or designing an online course on race and gender in the movies. Added to this is a further dimension that takes the form of educational practices meant to enable students to find and assert their place in a world where neither geographical distance nor socio-economic or political barriers impede the exchange of information and meaningful dialogue. Student empowerment through inclusion in the “McNair Program” in the U.S., in the European university exchange program “Erasmus”, or in international youth parliaments is thus at the heart of a number of papers in this topical compilation, as it facilitates active participation in the discourse that will shape the next few decades of our young millennium.

In today's global community, technology is taking us new places at the speed of light. Nothing is farther away than the nearest computer. Yet, for all the advances in networking, engineering, and connecting, the basic exchange of ideas remains a purely human capacity. As we move ahead, let us not leave ourselves behind. May we remember that the future depends on us—on what we teach and train the next generation of explorers. The many *Global Encounters: Pedagogical Paradigms and Educational Practices* that are contained here will enable practitioners and professors alike to navigate the new and changing universe of education well into the future.

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We would like to thank the hundreds of people who have helped through the years to script this book—those who attended the annual congress of the *Worldwide Forum on Education and Culture* since 2002, the keynote speakers who came from several NGOs and government agencies; the authors of the diverse presentations on these pages; and the editors at Cambridge Scholars Press who graciously agreed to publish a second volume of our work.

There are several individuals we would like to acknowledge personally as well: Holly Combs for copyediting; Peter Ganslmayr for special editorial assistance; President Franco Pavoncello and John Cabot University for their continued support; Silvia Ammary for acting as our official liaison in Rome; Director Katérina Stenou of the Division of Cultural Policies and Intercultural Dialogue, UNESCO, for her participation in 2009; Regent University in Virginia, USA, and Kempten School of Translation & Interpreting Studies in Germany for endorsing our scholarship; Roberto Bergami, Annamarie Schuller, and Sandra Liliana Pucci for heading the journal editorial committee; Gian Carlo D’Ascenzi for his artistic contributions to our official program each year; and Rose Lee Hayden for her encouragement more than a decade ago to start a new organization focused specifically on global education and culture.

CHAPTER ONE:
FROM THE 3RS TO iSCIENCE

IMPROVING THE TEACHING OF READING THROUGH TEACHER LEADERSHIP AND PROFESSIONAL LEARNING IN ELL MIDDLE SCHOOL CLASSROOMS

LAUREN STEPHENSON, BARBARA HAROLD,
AND ROBIN DADA

Abstract

For several years now the College of Education at Zayed University has been involved in teacher professional development and research into teaching practice in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Our teacher education students are introduced to a variety of ways to teach reading within the language curriculum. However, evidence from the practicum indicates that the teaching of reading is problematic in UAE schools. Not only the students, but also many classroom teachers struggle with the implementation and assessment of effective reading strategies. Reasons for this appear to include teacher insecurity about the teaching of reading, structural constraints within the classroom program, and lack of understanding about the nature of reading resulting in an inability to teach reading as effectively as they could. With this in mind, this paper reports on an ongoing longitudinal case study which aims to systematically evaluate current reading techniques used in middle school (grades 6 and 7) in two government schools. The study identifies local issues in the teaching of reading including reading and assessment methods, variation in student motivation, teacher resistance to student-centered practice, and teacher professional learning needs. A professional learning program that is site-based, co-constructed, collaborative in nature, and that emphasizes action research is proposed. Relatively little evidence exists, particularly in the Middle East, of the actual processes involved in a sustained program based on such a model, or on collaborative research between educational researchers and teachers using such approaches.

Introduction

The UAE are embarking on a wide-ranging reform of their education system that aims to move classroom practice from a predominantly teacher-directed and exam-driven system to a more learner-centered one based on varied methodologies, forms of assessment, and integrated with modern technology. Many teachers in government schools in the UAE struggle with the implementation and assessment of effective reading strategies. Evidence from internships suggests that the teaching of reading is particularly problematic among older students who are not confident readers by grade 6. The following questions guided the study:

1. What reading approaches are currently in practice?
2. What are the outcomes of these approaches in the context of students' development of fluency and confidence in reading comprehension?
3. What are the teachers' perceptions of their professional development needs for the teaching of reading?
4. What are the implications of the above three items for professional development programs?

Background to the program

The Madares al Ghad (MAG) 'Schools of the Future' program emerged as a joint project between the UAE's Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research in response to the numbers of students (over 80%) who leave grade 12 in need of remediation in English language, Arabic language, quantitative reasoning, and technology prior to entry into the country's universities and technical colleges. There are 50 single gender government schools (some of which are multilevel) in the MAG program (18 elementary, 13 middle, and 22 secondary schools).

The purpose of MAG is to support systemic change through use of research on effective schools and educational change, identification, and adaptation of the most promising curriculum resources that facilitate student development of knowledge, skills, and habits of mind in alignment with the newly adopted Ministry of Education (MOE) standards, and development of teacher leadership capacity at the school level. Professional development of teachers is a major component of the MAG program and the building of capacity to support sustainability. One or two experienced master teachers are placed in a school and may mentor six to 10 teachers

each to develop professional practices, learning strategies, and sound assessment. The underlying approach to professional learning was a mentoring/coaching approach with a focus on action inquiry and collaborative problem solving to promote student learning.

Literature review

Reading instruction in the UAE has largely focused on the early years. However, as the International Reading Association and the U.S. National Middle School Association (IRANMSA, 2001) remind us, “a good start is critical, but not sufficient”. Given that reading is a part of the way we use language in daily life for enjoyment, to gather information and communicate with others (Tompkins, 2005), continued and systematic reading instruction is essential in the middle school years because it is in these years that the ground work is laid for lifelong reading habits and preferences.

In becoming readers, we are socialized into different kinds of literacy practices within our cultural, social, and educational communities depending on the role that literacy plays in those communities. In the UAE, apart from the emphasis on the Holy Qu’ran, oral communication has historically assumed a more important role than written communication and, as such, less emphasis may have been placed on the use of written text, especially in the home. Current research tells us that reading is a complex cognitive process dependent on an interaction between information- processing/decoding skills (bottom-up skills) and background knowledge (top-down skills) combined with social experiences. Thus, the reading process involves much more than decoding from print to sound. It also involves cultural, social, and personal knowledge, and the ability to map this knowledge to our understanding of a text.

Bottom-up approaches to the teaching of reading take the view that readers learn to read by decoding. Taking this view then, difficulties can be remedied through development of phonic skills and skills development at the level of word recognition, with little connection to context or readers’ background knowledge. Top-down approaches place less emphasis on decoding. Reading is viewed as a process of guessing meaning from context with background knowledge support. Teachers supporting this view believe reading difficulties can be remedied by focusing on better reading strategies. Interactive approaches view reading as a process of interaction between top-down and bottom-up skills. Taking this view then, difficulties can be remedied through a combination of language development, decoding and strategy development. More recent literacy approaches emphasize situating reading within a broader social

and cultural context. In this view reading difficulties stem from a person's inability to access meaning of texts and can be remedied by focusing on a combination of decoding skills, cognitive processes, and social experiences. Recent research findings (Coltheart, 2005; Krashen, 2004; Lahoud, 2000) indicate that the foundations of literacy are laid in the early years and that reading programs should be student-centered and individually appropriate for all adolescents with ample opportunities to read and discuss texts. Reading for meaning is paramount and reading should be rewarding for the reader. Students learn to read by reading meaningful and motivating texts, and the best approach to teaching reading is a systematic and integrated approach (Ivey & Broadus, 2001). The International Reading Association and the U.S. National Middle School Association's position paper (2001) advocates continuous reading instruction that is individually appropriate for all young adolescents; ample opportunities to read and discuss reading with others and assessment that informs instruction.

The Australian Government's Teaching Reading Report (2005) also advocates early, systematic, integrated, and explicit teaching of reading as the most effective way of teaching all children to read, including phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, text comprehension, and fluency. An integrated approach to teaching reading is a process that should involve collaboration with school communities and parents and should teach the following:

- Phonemic awareness: the ability to hear and manipulate sounds in oral language;
- Phonics: the relationships between letters and sounds;
- Vocabulary: new words and what they mean;
- Text comprehension: understanding what is being read and developing higher-order thinking skills; and,
- Fluency: the ability to read quickly and naturally, recognize words automatically, and group words quickly (Teaching Reading, 2005; Nagy, Berninger & Abbott, 2006).

Burns and de Silva's (2000, xi) four related roles of a reader provide a useful typology for middle school reading teachers. They suggest that throughout the reading process effective readers are code breakers (How can I make meaning of this?), text participants (What does this text mean?), text users (What do I do within this text?), and text analysts (What does all this do to me?) (See Appendix A).

The related roles of reading suggest that teachers need to help their students develop strategies for approaching the reading process. This

involves helping students to understand that reading is an active process involving comprehension of meaning, appreciate that reading involves evaluating and confirming predictions using our social knowledge, and recognize that we use different reading strategies depending on the text type and our purpose for reading, identify different text structures, sections of text and the kinds of language used (Hood, Solomon & Burns, 2002).

Effective support for teaching reading requires collaboration between the whole school and the wider community. Recent research suggests that important support features include coordinated efforts and systematic procedures for identification, planning, teaching, and monitoring progress for improved literacy learning that is integrative and interdisciplinary. The interpretation of assessment data needs to be made available to other teachers and school-based educators. Experienced and qualified staff need to be available to coordinate whole school support and community involvement that includes parent-family programs, parent-classroom helpers, and peer tutoring or buddy systems accessible to create a school culture of cooperation and acceptance. Creative use of resources in terms of flexible use of staff to provide a range of regular classroom and withdrawal teaching contexts that are appropriate for individual student needs is important. Ongoing professional development for teachers in the form of on-site professional learning programs include classroom-based inquiry, modeling, and coaching to introduce new instructional strategies for integrating reading instruction across all subjects and the development of professional learning communities support implementation of newly developed strategies. Teacher education programs must prepare student teachers to teach reading and that the content of course work in literacy education needs to focus on best practice understandings of evidence-based findings and an integrated approach to the teaching of reading, as well as child and adolescent development, and inclusive approaches to literacy teaching.

Teaching quality has strong positive effects on students' experiences of language learning and schooling. Students want teachers who care and encourage them; know and understand their subject; treat each student as an individual; make learning the core of what happens in the classroom; and manage distractions that disrupt and prevent learning (Ramsey, 2000; Slade, 2002). Teachers who believe that all students can learn to read and write well and who engage in collaborative professional learning are already well placed to teach students to read.

Methodology

The project was an ongoing longitudinal study of grade 6 and 7 reading instruction in English in two government grade 6-9 schools in the second year of the MAG educational reform program. The girls' school (with approximately 600 students and 50 teachers) serviced grades 6-9 in an established upper middle class neighborhood and the boys' school (with similar student and teacher numbers) was situated in a newly developing middle class home neighborhood. Teachers in both schools came from the UAE, Egypt, Jordan, Palestine, and Syria. The two principals were very supportive of the MAG program and the girls' school had an excellent and well established professional development program of workshops for teachers.

Using case study techniques, in-depth analysis of the process of ongoing teacher professional learning was carried out. Data were collected through observations of teachers providing reading instruction, document analysis of curriculum and teaching materials, and focus group interviews with teachers and instructional leaders in the two schools and the MAG program about their reading program. We also conducted further interviews with key leaders from the research sample to build upon data collected.

Data analysis was based on the identification of relevant categories using an inductive process in order to determine the categories. Referring to Miles and Huberman's (1994, p. 9) set of "analytic moves", we used a cyclical process to analyze the data comprising of reading and rereading the data and highlighting significant categories; identifying commonalities and differences in the data; developing concepts; categorizing for interpreting the data and reviewing literature in the areas of teaching reading; and collaborative professional learning. The following categories emerged:

1. Reading and assessment methods used
2. Motivation
3. Curriculum and resources
4. Professional learning
5. Professional development needs

Findings

Current reading and assessment methods used in two MAG schools

Participants reported that reading is taught from once a week to every lesson in both schools. Student's preferences for texts were stated unanimously as short story with the boys' school adding "pictures to support the text". A range of strategies, either psychological or pedagogical in nature, were suggested to develop students' reading skills. Psychological support mechanisms included reducing pressure on students, encouraging, and providing a safe environment for them to read.

Teachers at the boys' school claimed to use strategies such as modeling, echo reading, practice reading of sentences and paragraphs, developing micro-skills, and the use of organizers. Teachers at the girls' school also used these strategies plus additional, more specific strategies such as comprehension questions, guided reading prediction, brainstorming, and retelling. However, during observation the researchers saw a much narrower range of strategies which emphasized pre-reading, during-reading, and post-reading techniques. The researchers only observed one instance of a teacher reading aloud. Instead, the stronger students were frequently asked to read aloud.

For the most part the observed lessons were teacher-centered. Active participation and discussion about the texts being read was limited to a more traditional approach where the teacher asked comprehension questions and children responded individually. Group and pair work involved silently scanning for answers and sharing individual answers rather than meaningful discussion about the new information in the text. When asked to comment on the main reading challenges students faced, the boys' teachers focused on the influence of Arabic and the lack of knowledge of the English alphabet, whereas in the girls' school the focus was on weak grammar and pronunciation.

The challenges faced by teachers at the boys' school were related to proficiency level, lack of suitable resources, and behavior management. Proficiency level also was mentioned as a significant challenge at the girls' school, along with lack of participation. In dealing with these challenges, teachers at the boys' school focused more on the feelings, emotions, and support for the boys than teachers at the girls' school and in both cases they mentioned the creation of different questions and activities, simplifying the content. Teachers at the girls' school claimed to use group work; however, observations indicated that this was in the form

of seating arrangements rather than collaborative discussion and negotiation around text.

Teachers at both schools claimed to differentiate their instruction through different types of questions, different reading texts, grading material, and calling on better readers to model text. However, apart from calling on the better readers, we did not see evidence of this. Comments from the boys' teachers tended to relate to the typical pre-text, text, and post-text reading stages of assessment within a lesson. One stated that he identified expectations and tried to raise students' willingness "to have a go" and to believe in themselves as readers. Teachers at the girls' school claimed to use a wider range of more specific assessment strategies approaches than at the boys' school (e.g., quizzes, peer evaluation, group assessment, and 'ongoing' assessment). Again these strategies were not observed by the researchers.

Motivation

At the boys' school teachers reported that a small number were motivated, a larger group were reluctant but able to be encouraged as their confidence grew, and a majority feared reading and lacked skills and confidence. The girls' school reported that the majority of students liked reading. Observations indicated that at both schools the children were lively and that many had an air of purpose during the lesson. In one class at the boys' school, there were some children who appeared disengaged and disinterested in the topic, texts, and tasks, and who either ignored the teacher or engaged in inappropriate behavior. In this and some other cases language proficiency impacted the level of engagement in the class. Although behavioral issues were apparent in the boys' classrooms, the teachers were using some effective strategies to contain these. There were also some managerial issues around the kind of tasks that were being chosen. In one case group activities seemed to have fewer instances of children off task.

Motivation strategies were largely extrinsic, such as praise, encouragement, and rewards/gifts. The boys' teachers commented that some of the boys feared speaking and reading in English and two commented that parents should be more involved. Most teachers acknowledged that exposure to a greater range of text types would foster a greater love of reading, but we did not see evidence of this in the classroom. There did not seem to be much encouragement for students to read for pleasure. We were told of one teacher who had scanned an appropriate text and introduced it to the boys in his class, but such

instances were uncommon. Teachers not only maintained control of text choice but also task design and interaction, and there seemed few opportunities for students to take initiative in text choice. The classrooms observed had some charts, vocabulary lists, and rules on the walls, but were not print rich and had no areas to promote reading for pleasure.

Curriculum and resources

The researchers observed a perceived helplessness on the part of some teachers who felt that they could not have any impact on the relentless external expectations and drive of the curriculum and assessment. There was a tension between the amount of material to be covered in the syllabus and the speed at which the boys, in particular, could process this, raising the frustration level of teachers and students.

Teachers at the girls' school commented that the primary curriculum needed to provide a better foundation for the teaching and learning of reading because, by the time many of the students reached preparatory level, they had developed negative attitudes about reading in English. As a counter some teachers commented on the importance of parental involvement, but this was also problematic because some of the parents do not use English themselves.

Teachers were well aware of the limitations of the current resources. While teachers at both schools commented on the use of texts, PowerPoint, and the Web and supplementary reading materials (as provided by MAG), the researchers only observed material taken directly from the limited text range of the Harcourt course book and, in some cases, from student made texts within the classroom. Teachers in both schools had mixed perceptions about the effectiveness of course book material ranging from concerns about the vocabulary level to cultural applicability. Both groups also commented on the need for opportunities for reading for pleasure where students are not being "tested".

Professional learning

Schools in the MAG program were asked to schedule time for teacher professional learning. Interestingly, teachers did not explicitly recognize the underlying philosophy of professional learning in the MAG structure and most thought time for professional learning meant workshops "done to you" by outside "experts". To counter this, the teacher mentor in the girls' school began by encouraging weekly English department and grade level meetings for teachers to share together ways of improving student reading