

Teacher Education for the 21st Century:
Developing Teachers who are Thoughtful,
Reflecting and Inquiring

Progress Report (2012 – 2017)

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I. IRN PROPOSAL

The 21st century is characterized by a rapidly changing, technology-based economy and an increasingly diverse and complex world. In this landscape, education has to be structured to meet current needs while anticipating emerging trends and challenges for students. Successful teachers must be professional leaders who are thinkers and researchers, and not "technician, consumer, receiver, transmitter and implementer of other people's knowledge" (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999, p. 16).

Teacher education literature points us to inquiry-based approaches as a way of preparing teachers who are thoughtful, reflective and inquiring. Nonetheless, there is limited amount of theoretical and empirical work done in teacher education where the outcome is teacher learning (Cochran-Smith & Zeichner, 2005). Thus there is a need for more conversation internationally on inquiry in teacher education, and more high-level research, especially globally, that defines critical components of teacher education programs that prepare teachers to be inquiring thinkers and researchers.

The IRN was established for 3 years from 1 December 2012 to 31 December 2015. Professor Oon-Seng Tan and Prof Jane Conoley were appointed as Conveners with Associate Professor Woon-Chia Liu being co-Convener of the IRN.

The aims and objectives of this IRN included:

1. To create an international platform for teacher educators to share and learn about practices of teacher education programs with strong inquiry components.
2. To facilitate conversations amongst teacher educators and researchers from different cultures and continents on what it means to be a thoughtful, reflective, and inquiring teacher.
3. To establish a network of researchers who focus on inquiry-based approach in teacher education.
4. To facilitate collaboration among researchers internationally to examine key components of teacher education programs that impact teachers' learning, especially from the perspective of being thoughtful, reflective, and inquiring.
5. To collate documentary accounts of strong teacher education programs that aim to prepare teachers who are thoughtful, reflective, and inquiring.
6. To have a professional voice on teacher education to influence governments and policy makers by working through appropriate networks such as WERA and the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization Regional Centre for Higher Education and Development (SEAMEO RIHED).

The participants list is attached under Annex.

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II. IRN-INITIATED SYMPOSIUMS/MEETING

Three symposiums were initiated by the IRN to support the conversation among the participating countries in the IRN on critical components of teacher education programmes that prepare teachers to be inquiring thinkers and researchers. The symposiums were held across 3 countries, i.e., in Singapore in 2013, in Copenhagen, Denmark in 2015 and in Santa Barbara, United States in 2016.

WERA-IRN Teacher Education Symposium 2013

The inaugural symposium was held on 27 September 2013 at the National Institute of Education (NIE), Singapore. Nine prominent teacher educators from Singapore, Denmark, New Zealand, Japan, Switzerland, Taiwan and the United States were invited to share their views on what it means to be a thoughtful, reflective and an inquiring teacher, and what it takes to develop these teachers. The symposium attracted over 100 participants.

Summary

The approaches to initial teacher preparation across cultures and continents may vary but all good teacher education programmes put the learners at the heart of their educational goals, and place great emphasis on strengthening theory-practice nexus, crystallizing teacher identity and developing teaching competencies. The quality of teacher education affects the quality of education and efficiency and quality of pupil learning. Hence, teacher education should be informed by the latest trends in teacher education and backed by the evidences from research. The participating countries in the IRN thus take a critical look at the strengths and weaknesses of their programmes in order to learn from each other and develop teachers for the 21st century.

NIE is the sole teacher preparation and accreditation institute in Singapore. It has a university-based teacher education model that provides the theoretical foundation to produce ‘thinking teachers’, whilst concurrently having a strong clinical practice through robust partnerships with key stakeholders and schools. The design and delivery of its programmes are guided by the underpinning philosophy of Values³, Skills and Knowledge (V³SK). The positive values, the necessary skills such as inquiry, effective research and problem solving skills, etc. and the depth and breadth of content knowledge, are deemed necessary in developing a learner-centred teacher to meet the challenges of the 21st century classroom.

The V³SK model focuses on three value paradigms. The first paradigm is, ‘learner centeredness’, where the learner is at the centre of teachers’ work, requiring awareness of the learner development and diversity, believing that all students can learn and learn to design the best learning environment possible. The second paradigm is building a ‘strong sense of teacher identity’ by having high standards, a strong drive to learn and being responsive to students’ needs. The third paradigm is ‘service to the community and the profession’, focusing on teachers’ commitment to their profession through active involvement with the fraternity and striving to become better practitioners.

The strengths of teacher development programmes at NIE lie in a strong research, theory and practice nexus. This nexus allows teachers to bridge the gap between theory and practice through reflection, experiential learning, inquiry-based approach and pedagogical tools etc. These approaches help teachers to make an effective transition to school and enable them to adapt to changing school environment.

For the success of teacher education system in any nation, it is important to position teacher education programmes and teacher education research in a way that both are beneficial for the stakeholders and schools. In Singapore, NIE recognizes the importance of partnership with the Ministry of Education and schools in teacher education. It has formed a strong tripartite relationship with the Ministry and schools, which is marked as a key cornerstone for the success of teacher education programmes in Singapore.

Similarly, teacher education programmes at the University of Waikato in New Zealand seeks to have a strong coherence between theory and practice and focuses on developing teacher competencies and a strong knowledge base for effective practices. A Collaborative University School Partnership (CUSP) was developed to groom effective, thoughtful, reflective and inquiring teachers. Like NIE, its main impact was on the development of a strong sense of teacher identity in order to bridge the gap between theory and practice. This approach recognizes teachers as individuals who need to build their own professional identity that will ultimately influence their practices. Teacher education programmes in New Zealand put emphasis on strong relationship between students and teachers for effective teaching, and between school and home, to gain a better understanding of the students for improving teaching practices.

Teachers' thinking, reflection and practical knowledge together underline the philosophy of the teacher education programme of Taiwan, 'reflection by thinking and learning by doing'. The emphasis of this programme is on the development of the attributes and competencies in student teachers to work in a team and to create a stimulating working environment for the students. High standards of curriculum knowledge and subject matter pedagogy along with extensive field experiences are some of the components of teacher development programmes in Taiwan. Mentoring role is enhanced for preparing student teachers with learning models, observation and reflection. To help student teachers know their strengths and weaknesses, various assessments are used. This helps student teachers to overcome their weaknesses and improve their skills to deal with complex situations in the classrooms.

Teacher education programmes at the University of California Santa Barbara (UCSB) in the United States also include concurrent courses and fieldwork within an inquiry- based programme to bridge the gap between theory and practice. Their main focus is on the development of teacher competencies, knowledge and skills. Several states in the United States have also implemented the licensing of teachers as professionals by introducing a Professional Certification of Effective Practice and the National Performance Assessment (edTPA) to improve teacher quality. These programmes face challenges for accountability and improvement at Federal and State levels but despite challenges, these programmes have shown nation-wide positive impact on teacher preparation programmes. The impact of accreditation assessment of teachers has been found to increase the articulation of coherence across programme practices, structures and roles, content of courses and foci of fieldwork supervision.

Teacher education programmes at the VIA University College (Teacher Education) in Denmark puts emphasis on the development of effective teachers by developing teacher competencies. Teacher education is organized according to three progressively advanced competence objectives divided into didactics, classroom management, relations and cooperation to develop teacher competencies and skills. These programmes focus more on the relationships of teacher and students, on building mutual understanding, caring and recognition of good behaviour. The development of competencies takes a central place and the development of knowledge and skills becomes an essential part of teacher competency development in Denmark.

The Swiss teacher education programmes at The Zurich University of Teacher Education have research-oriented and practice-focused approach. The development of student teachers' research-oriented stance focuses on three areas, namely gaining a perspective regarding a phenomenon/problem, acquiring basic skills required for collecting and analysing data by using research methods and strategies on learning processes including transfer to their own teaching (Kamm & Bieri, 2008). Action research is one of the most powerful methods for supporting student teachers' research-oriented stance and reflective attitude. Another unique feature of these programmes is the development of the teacher educators' practical competencies/skills rather than research competencies alone, because teachers have to survive in the classroom. In this approach, teachers need to analyse their professional practice to reflect on their practice on the basis of theoretical knowledge (Schön, 1991) and to learn the principles of inquiry-based learning as part of teachers' professional development (Horn & Little, 2010).

The teacher education programme of Japan emphasizes the development of the teachers' empathy and socio-emotional aspect of teaching. Teacher education in Japan is an "open-system" based on an Occidental model, meaning that University faculties and departments other than College of Education provide initial teacher education. As a result, no nation-wide quantity or quality control is present for Initial Teacher Education programmes. The Ministry of Education provides approval to initial teacher education providers, but this form of approval system is based primarily on external factors such as school facilities, staff, curriculum and practicum plans. The screening of new teachers is based on prospective teachers' humanity, social- communicative skills and practical teaching skills. Thus, teachers' humanity and socio-emotional aspects of teaching are more emphasized than teachers' competencies in the Japan teacher education programme.

From reviewing the exemplary teacher education programmes shared at the symposium, several common characteristics have emerged. Firstly, there is the preoccupation with linking university-based teacher education courses to actual classroom practice in schools in an effort to constantly enhance the theory-practice nexus. This is usually done via the clinical field experience that takes place on-site in schools. However, beyond the clinical field experience, there is great emphasis of providing many opportunities for reflection, and for learning through practice. In doing so, these programmes also take an inquiry-based stance towards teacher education. The inquiry-based approach encourages student teachers to conduct action research on their practice, which then serves as a basis for reflective practice. The ultimate focus of all these programmes is the enhancement of teaching practice. Finally, the development of values and core competencies in terms of knowledge and skills is seen as key to preparing teachers with the baseline competencies to survive as beginning teachers. The sharing at the WERA-IRN Teacher Education Symposium has served to provide a platform for conducting a cross-country comparison of teacher education programmes offered internationally. The sharing provides an opportunity to tease out commonalities that exist across the different teacher education programmes even though each of these functions within very different cultural contexts. The end goal of such sharing is to learn from good international practices with the aim of adapting these innovations to suit the teacher education context of one's own country/ jurisdiction (National Institute of Education, 2013).

(The full report is available at <http://eras.org.sg/inaugural-wera-irn-teacher-education-symposium-2013/>.)

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WERA-IRN Teacher Education Symposium 2015

VIA University College, University College Capital (UCC) and Department of Education of Aarhus University, Denmark organised the 2nd symposium on 27 January 2015. The symposium was attended by teacher educators from Singapore, Switzerland and Denmark. Four papers were presented during the symposium. The abstracts of the papers can be found as follows:

Preparing thinking teachers: The Singapore's perspective

by Associate Professor Woon-Chia Liu and Dr Bee-Leng Chua

In order to develop teachers to meet the challenges of the 21st century classroom, the National Institute of Education, Singapore, initiated a new Teacher Education Model for the 21st century (TE²¹). The NIE TE²¹ is a transformative endeavour that aims to develop autonomous thinking teachers. NIE's 'thinking teacher' model is about thinking in context, and involves elements of skilful teaching, reflective teaching and innovative teaching. It aims to develop teachers who are able to reflect on their roles, think systematically about their practice, and are capable of drawing upon theories and research to deepen their understanding of learning, whilst constantly adapting their teaching to support their students' learning. In this address, we will share Singapore's experience in conceptualising and implementing of the TE²¹ blueprint, which includes values development that re-envision teacher professionalism and calling, pedagogical changes to emphasize real-world inquiry and technology-enabled learning, and introduction of professional practice and inquiry to help teachers aggregate and integrate their learning.

Swiss second career teachers' motivation to change to the field of teaching

by Professor Dr. Christine Bieri Buschor and Professor Dr. Esther Kamm

Over the past decades, a shortage of Swiss teachers has been observed. As a consequence, a strategy on the national level has been established to recruit second career teachers (COHEP, 2011). Since 2011, the Zurich University of Teacher Education (PHZH) offers training programs for candidates over 30 years of age with former experience in the labour market, as well as in pedagogical work, either within vocational or non-vocational settings. The candidates' knowledge and competences are supposed to be transferable to the teaching profession. However, there is only limited knowledge

about this process. The training program is being evaluated in a longitudinal study. One aim of the research is the optimisation between academic studies at university and workplace learning in school. Another theme is to gain general knowledge of students' biographies, their reasons for choosing teaching and their learning in the classroom. For this purpose, we focus on two theoretical perspectives: 1) the policy aspect related to alternative certification, pathways and life-long learning in the teaching profession (Cochran-Smith, 2014; Martin & Kragler, 2014; Weinert et al., 2011; Finsterwald et al., 2013), and 2) the learning aspect, including previous pedagogical experience, biography, (in)formal learning processes, professional motivation and supervision of workplace learning (Darling-Hammond, Chung & Frelow, 2002; Huberman, 1989; Ingersoll, 2001; Kappler, 2013; McNamara, 2014; Tigchelaar, Vermont & Brouwer, 2012; Zeichner & Schulte, 2001). In our presentation, we address the following research questions: What is the academic and professional background of the second career teachers? What are the reasons for their career change, and what motivated them to become teachers? How do they perceive their career change? How do they refer to their biography? The results are based on a sample of 174 participants of an alternative teaching program at the PHZH who completed a questionnaire at the beginning of their studies and a follow-up one year later. In addition, narrative interviews were conducted with 30 students from this sample. This data is being interpreted in light of the method of narrative analysis, developed by Rosenthal and Fischer-Rosenthal (2003). Finally, consequences for teacher education are discussed.

Teachers' social and relational competencies – theoretical understandings and practical implications. Can relations be taught?

by Mette Vedsgaard Christensen et al.

Research (Nordenbo et al., 2008, Mitchell, 2008; Hattie, 2009) and practitioners emphasize the importance of teachers' social and emotional competencies (Elias et al., 2003; Jennings and Greenberg, 2009) and abilities to establish and anchor relations to students (Juil & Jensen, 2002). However, little work has been done to further explore how and to what extent personal abilities such as empathy, tolerance and respect for and interest in the individual student can be understood and taught explicitly like other teacher competencies in the context of teacher education.

This presentation reports the insights and preliminary results from a development- and research project at the teacher education program at VIA University College in Aarhus, Denmark, where teacher students, teacher educators and teachers from municipality schools are trained with explicit focus on understanding and developing relational competencies. The project investigates how teachers' specific relational competencies can be developed and gain actual significance for pupils' well-being and learning at school. The project aims to answer the following research questions: How are relational competencies apparent in teacher's actual practice? How can a more focused and systematic work on the students' personal and relational competencies facilitate the personal and professional development of coming teachers? How can relational competencies be trained and become an integrated element in teacher education programs? The aim of this presentation is twofold: 1) the theoretical framework underpinning the project and 2) examples of how relations and social competencies are taught to teacher students and practitioners.

Teacher educator competencies and needs for further training in relation to reforms and the shift from content-based to competency-based teacher education – a survey study

by Elsebeth F. Pedersen, Vibe T. Stafseth, and Professor Jens Rasmussen

The main purpose of the study is to examine teacher educators' competencies and needs for further training in relation to the new requirements of the teacher education reform and the reform of the municipal primary and lower secondary school (Folkeskolen). The shift from content based to competency based education is a substantial part of both reforms and represents a challenge for the teacher educators. Other important new foci/elements of the teacher education reform are a greater emphasis on the relation between theory and practice, a stronger research based approach, a stronger focus on competencies in ICT, on social inclusion and on differentiated teaching. We will present results from a survey study on teacher educator competences and teacher educators demand for further education. The teacher educators are asked questions regarding their teaching practice and their own assessment of their needs for further training in predefined categories. In an open response category, the teacher educators are asked to note, if there are specific areas, in which they need further training.

WERA-IRN Meeting 2016

University of California, Santa Barbara, United States holded WERA-IRN Meeting on 4-6 April 2016. The meeting involved participants from Singapore, Denmark, Switzerland, Japan, and New Zealand. There were school visits on the first day of the meeting. Panel presentations and Q&A sessions were held on the second day and the last day was spent on a discussion to develop prospectus for a book and to establish future plans.

III. WERA FOCAL MEETINGS - SYMPOSIUMS

In 2015, WERA Focal Meeting took place during European Educational Research Association (ECER) 2015 "Education and Transition: Contributions from Educational Research" at Corvinus University in Budapest, Hungary.

American Educational Research Association (AERA) will be hosting 2016 WERA Focal Meeting as part of AERA Centennial Annual Meeting. It will be held on 9 April 2016 at Marriott Marquis Hotel in Washington, D. C., United States.

The summaries of both meetings (symposiums) are presented below:

WERA Focal Meeting - Symposium 2015

The 21st Century is characterized by a globalized, rapidly changing and technology-based economy. In this new landscape, education has to be structured to meet current needs while anticipating emerging trends for students in the 21st century. The key to developing 21st century educational opportunities is teacher education. The basis of this education must move from preparing teachers to be technicians, transmitters and implementers of knowledge (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999, p. 16), to teachers who are thoughtful, reflective and inquiring. Teachers need to recognize their role as active practitioners of education. Successful teachers must be professional leaders who assume personal responsibility for continuous learning, question their own assumptions, reflect and think critically about their profession and their practice, and inquire and make informed decisions about teaching and the learning needs of their students (e.g., Tan, 2003).

Teacher education literature points us to inquiry-based approaches as a way of preparing teachers who are thoughtful, reflective and inquiring. However, there is limited amount of theoretical and empirical work done in teacher education that focuses on teacher learning as the outcome (Cochran-Smith & Zeichner, 2005). Thus, there is a need for more conversation internationally on inquiry in teacher education, and more high-level research globally that defines critical components of teacher education programs that prepare teachers to be inquisitive thinkers and researchers. In essence, teacher preparation in the 21st century is not about teacher training, but about teacher education. Many teacher education institutions have programs that strive to prepare teachers to be thinkers and researchers, adaptive to the changing demands of the education environment. They achieve this through different approaches and with the use of different tools.

Many teacher education institutions are currently undergoing teacher education reforms which focus on strengthening the theory-practice nexus and applicability of content to that of practice. To facilitate the inquiry approach, several institutions bring clinical experience to university teaching to strengthen the theory-practice link. In order to fully understand inquiry in teacher education, it is also important to examine the concept of inquiry from different parts of the globe as the definition of the term has cultural, historical and political elements. As such, some institutions have incorporated a globalized experience for their preservice teachers to facilitate and increase their competence to be culturally responsive and adaptable in a globally connected world today. In addition, there are institutions which use professional conversations to deepen preservice teachers' reflections and analyses of their teaching experience. With some institutions implementing tools such as the learning portfolio, teachers are able to construct a map of their teaching and learning, which facilitates reflection upon their teaching practices and aids them to better understand themselves as teachers.

For this symposium, Associate Professor Woon-Chia Liu and Dr Bee-Leng Chua from the National Institute of Education, Singapore touched on how the e-Portfolio serves as a tool to develop thinking teacher. Dr Tine Sloan from the University of California presented on the internationalization of student teaching and how the international practicum experience has enhanced teacher education program. This was followed by Prof Jens Rasmussen and team from Aarhus University and VIA university college, Denmark who presented a paper that espouses teacher competences as being pivotal for quality teachers. He touched on how the reform in Danish teacher educational curricula that has shifted from content to competences. Last but not least, Professor Esther Kamm and Professor Christine Bieri Buschor shared the need for quality teacher education and training to have a strong theory-practice nexus with elements of guided reflection through mentoring and coaching.

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WERA Focal Meeting – Symposium 2016

In this transformative era of 21st century where the goals of education is changing as rapidly as the economy and technology we need to nurture the leaders of educational change. Teachers thus play a vital role in preparing the students for these changes and developing their abilities to meet the challenges of 21st century.

Teaching is a complex professional thinking activity (Calderhead, 1987) and it involves more than just a simple mastery of a set of technical skills. Schön (1987) highlights that clinical practice serves as a bridge between the real world and the world of the academy. It allows preservice teachers a gradual immersion into the real world of classroom teaching (cited in Yan & He, 2010). Clinical practice plays a major role in bridging the “theory and practice” but beyond that, it offers the context for the preservice teachers to develop their professional teaching competence (Smith & Lev-Ari, 2005) and to acquire and develop the knowledge of teaching and professional content knowledge of teachers (Shulman, 1987). Ramsden (1992) argues that clinical practices develop soft skills such as independent problem solving, working collegially with fellow staff teachers and developing professional values and attitudes. Professional knowledge like knowledge of the self and learner, self-control and interpersonal sensitivity are also developed from the clinical practices (Yan & He, 2009).

Based on prior literature, the clinical practice is the most prized aspect of teacher preparation (Hill & Brodin, 2004; High & Tuck, 2000, cited in Tuli & File, 2009). For this symposium, Associate Professor Woon-Chia Liu will touch on Singapore’s model of clinical practice. Her presentation elaborates on the importance of clinical practice in initial teacher preparation and preservice teachers’ understanding about what it means to be a teacher. NIE aims to develop autonomous thinking teachers for 21st century who takes responsibility of their learning and adapt and innovate in their teaching to effectively support student learning.

Presentation by Professor Iwata, Yasuyuki recognises the importance of practice in the teacher education in Japan and discusses how structural changes in the teacher education programs are required to enhance the 'practical' component. Although in Japan teachers are considered to be role models for the young students and emphasis is given more to the development of the socio-emotional aspect of teaching, the importance of clinical practice cannot be denied. Presentation by Professor Chritine Bieri and Professor Esther Kamm discuss the strong link of theory and practice in transforming learning of second career teacher professionals in their university. They will discuss on the importance of learning by doing model for people who take teaching as their second career choice and how the learning aspects like previous beliefs and experiences leads to transformational learning process.

These presentations will provide a worldwide perspective on how clinical practice acts as one of the most critical component in nurturing teachers to be leaders of educational change. The teachers today need to be autonomous thinking professionals who are thoughtful and reflective and assume strong ownership for their professional development.

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IV. WERA SYMPOSIUM 2016

In addition to the WERA Focal Meeting - Symposium 2016, a WERA symposium was also held on 9 April 2016 during the AERA Annual Meeting. The symposium titled “Teacher Education for the 21st Century: Fostering Growth in Teacher Professionalism and Practice” was chaired by the Co-Convenor of the IRN, Associate Professor Woon-Chia Liu.

The symposium started with a presentation of findings by Dr Tine Sloan from University of California, Santa Barbara, on a study regarding pre-service teachers international experience with teaching practicum exchange programs in Denmark, Singapore, and Switzerland, their understandings about teaching and learning from this exposure and ways to integrate and incorporate these new perspectives in classrooms.

Thereafter, Professor Kathy Sanford from the University of Victoria presented on the transformative practices of collaboration across professional communities to facilitate innovative improvements in teacher education programs.

Dr Bee-Leng Chua from the National Institute of Education presented on the effectiveness of the Professional Practice and Inquiry (PPI) course in facilitating pre-service teachers’ growth in teacher professionalism through the ability to link theory with practice, solidification and articulation of teaching identity drawing from Graduand Teacher Competences (GTCs) and their ability to effectively inquire as a teacher.

The symposium concluded with Dr Huang Jia-Li from National Taiwan Normal University, Taiwan with a paper on the use of digital interactive learning environment to develop and identify principles of



pre-service teachers’ ethical reasoning and the factors that may affect their reasons to be a teacher.

Image: WERA Focal Meeting- Symposium 2016. University of California, Santa Barbara

Future Plans

1. Book

WERA members are proposing to write a book about teacher education. The themes of the book include teachers' well being, teacher inquiry and teacher professionalism.

2. A comparative study on international practicum exchange

The WERA members plan to conduct a comparative study on student teachers' international practicum experience. The next meeting in 2017 will focus on firming up the research proposal.

3. Next Meeting

The next WERA Focal Meeting 2017 will be held in New Zealand at University of Waikato from 14th November 2017 to 16th November 2017.

ANNEX

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