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Editorial

Transnational Perspectives of Transformative Teacher Learning in an Emerging Europe

The purpose of the present focus issue is to provide insights on transformative teacher learning in an emerging European context, drawing on the work of researchers who participate in the European Doctorate in Teacher Education (EDiTE), which was developed by a consortium of five universities (University of Innsbruck, Eötvös Loránd University, University of Lisbon, Masaryk University, University of Lower Silesia), collaborating in the field of European higher education over the course of two projects. The first was through the Lifelong Learning Programme of the European Commission (2012–2014), and the second through the Horizon 2020 Innovative Training Networks (2015–2019).

The EDiTE project and the research related to it is a reaction and response to the current challenges in the complex process of the transformation of teachers' lifelong professional development. Research increasingly tells us that 'teachers matter' and that the quality of their work is the most critical factor influencing the quality of students' learning (Barber & Mourshed, 2007; OECD, 2005). Across Europe, several countries have been reforming their teacher education systems in an effort to raise teacher professionalism and improve student performance. On the one hand, teaching in European countries becomes increasingly assimilated through the backwash effect of global large-scale assessment activities, such as PISA, or through ground-breaking research, such as Hattie's *Visible Learning* (2009), which implies that teaching and learning should become more responsive processes across country borders. On the other hand, there are many national traits of what it means to teach in a particular country, making it difficult for teachers to move their employment to different countries, while little has changed nationally with a cultural perspective towards Europe (Seashore Louis & Van Velzen, 2012).

Within this puzzling context, the work presented in this journal issue focuses on different aspects of teacher learning and pays particular attention to the European situatedness of teachers and their profession. It also aims to raise awareness of what constitutes the 'Europeanness' of teacher education and what it means to be a 'European teacher' (Schratz, 2014) by analysing relevant phenomena in different European countries. The central theme of transformative teacher learning in Europe is important both professionally and institutionally, since present developments in European society are characterised by disruption and systemic disconnects, which tend to create a social division between

what is expected in short-term deliverables (e.g., student achievement in present comparative assessments) and what the long-term educational goals are (e.g., well-being in later life and society at large; Damon, 2009).

In times of social disruptions, schools can no longer merely be regarded as places that transmit knowledge of the past as a robust foundation for the future. Increasingly, they seem to be becoming laboratories of an unknown future, which are expected to prepare the next generation in what Senge (1990) calls 'personal mastery' of their own futures. Therefore, teachers can no longer merely be trained to be instructors conveying knowledge to their students but have to bring in their total human capacity into a dynamic process of responding to others – not only to learners but also to colleagues, superiors and stakeholders of all kinds.

If we only want to optimise teaching or teacher education, we keep in a mode of making it better, which is optimising the way from *good practice* to *best practice*. In the paradigm of optimisation, interventions are set to improve by enhancing processes and procedures. To do so, new instruments or methods are implemented to improve the status quo, yet all endeavours contribute to a kind of linear adjustment of what has been done so far. It can be referred to as working *in* the system. On the personal level, it poses very little threat to the people involved because it does not challenge what they have been doing so far.

Considering the challenges and the complexity of social change mentioned above, optimisation towards *best practice* is no longer the key to preparing teachers and students for an unknown future, which seems to project new labour conditions with job descriptions that do not exist yet and require new practices. Such projections mandate new ways of teaching and teacher learning which prepare for the *next practice* under different auspices and apply new approaches and procedures. Changing behaviour and, even more so, changing mental models cannot be imposed on human beings; therefore, we need approaches that allow teachers and students to become aware of the needs and expectations of living in tomorrow's world. Such awareness-raising processes have a transformative impact on people and on how they see their roles in it. Scharmer (2018) refers to letting the old go and letting the new emerge, a moment which he calls 'presencing' (p. 29). Dealing more with the emerging future than with the experiences of the past in teaching and teacher education is a challenge both on the personal and institutional levels. In its essence, transformative learning is a dynamic and ever-emerging process, which raises awareness for a future perspective.

For this issue, we asked participants of EDiTE to present their respective transnational perspectives on transformative teacher learning in an emerging

Europe, which they substantiate by the findings of their particular research in one or more European countries. In their work, they approach this topic from different angles by drawing on different aspects of teacher learning, including teacher education, school leadership, diversity, innovation, and others.

The focus issue starts with the paper *Revisiting the European Teacher Education Area: The Transformation of Teacher Education Policies and Practices in Europe* by Vasileios Symeonidis, who explores how and to what extent policy mechanisms and key agents of Europeanisation, internal or external to the European Union (EU), influence the transformation of teacher education in Europe. By analysing policy documents and expert interviews with European policy officials, the author provides a conceptual framework for mapping the European Teacher Education Area as a complex policy ecosystem that enables various processes of Europeanisation. It is argued that the EU plays an increasingly significant role in teacher education, involving other sectors such as employment in this process.

The second paper, entitled *Student Teachers as Future Researchers: How do Hungarian and Austrian Initial Teacher Education Systems Address the issue of Teachers as Researchers?* by Csilla Pesti, János Gordon Györi, and Erika Kopp conceptualises transformative teacher learning in the context of research-based teacher education. Employing a case study design, the authors explore how the concept of *teachers as researchers* is addressed in initial teacher education (ITE) programmes of two teacher education institutions, one Hungarian and one Austrian. Findings reveal that research components are integrated into ITE programmes of both institutions, but to different extents, while research activities tend to happen within the university walls, often detached from practice.

The third paper, entitled *Exploring the Personal Mastery of Educational Leaders: FieldTransformation³⁶⁰ and its Validation in the Austrian Leadership Academy* by Malte Gregorzewski, Michael Schratz, and Christian Wiesner, analyses the dynamics of transformation in the crucial field of school leadership. The authors introduce an innovative model to help educational leaders assess their personal mastery. By turning the model into a self-assessment instrument, the authors validated the instrument in the Austrian Leadership Academy, where educational leaders meet to further develop their leadership skills. It is argued that the instrument can help in the professional development of school leaders by providing a deeper understanding of their transformative power.

Transformative teacher learning is also essentially connected to diversity and calls for critical thinking and the need to raise students' voices. In their paper *The Missing Link: Teacher Learning for Diversity in an Area-based Initiative in Portugal*, Nikolett Szelei and Ines Alves explore opportunities for teacher learning for diversity by studying the programme *Territórios Educativos de*

Intervenção Prioritária in Portugal. Through analysis of school documents, the authors argue that some of the programme's interventions carry the possibility for teacher learning, but the aspect of diversity largely seems to be missing. Students' academic performance proved to be the main theme around which teacher professional development was organised, overshadowing the potential of teacher learning to transform education for diversity.

The next paper, entitled *Change, Challenge, Transformation: A Qualitative Inquiry into Transformative Teacher Learning* by Helena Kovacs explores teacher learning in the context of schools that have transformed their pedagogical practices and made a significant impact on how teaching and learning are delivered. Through a qualitative inquiry in two non-traditional schools, one in Hungary and one in Portugal, the author envisages better understanding the aspects contributing to teacher learning and what makes it transformative. It is argued that teacher learning can become transformative in a system that is comprehensively embracing change and consciously encouraging reflection, continuous learning and change of mindset.

The beliefs of teachers about their assessment practices can also contribute to transforming teaching for the purposes of better student learning. In the paper *Teacher Subjectivity Regarding Assessment: Exploring English as a Foreign Language Teachers' Conceptions of Assessment Theories that Influence Student Learning*, Kinley Seden examines the perceptions of English as a Foreign Language teachers in Czech schools about their assessment beliefs and the impact of those beliefs on their assessment practices. Teachers employed mostly traditional assessment practices of a summative nature and used assessment predominantly for managing behaviour and for certification purposes. In this context, professional development that fosters innovative assessment practices could contribute to transformative teacher learning.

The final paper in the focus issue, entitled *Information Communication Technologies in Teaching English as a Foreign Language: Analysing EFL Teachers' TPACK in Czech Elementary Schools* by Devraj Paneru, examines the transformative potential of information communication technology (ICT) in language teaching. Through the conceptual lenses of Technology Pedagogy and Content Knowledge (TPACK), the author disaggregates between the formal practice and the functional practice of ICT use in language teaching. Findings indicate that formal practice limits the transmission of knowledge, while functional practice helps to develop a collaborative context for learning that can increase students' creativity potential.

The Varia section covers two contributions. The first is *Introducing Global Citizenship Education into Classroom Practice: A Study on Italian 8th Grade*

Students by Valeria Damiani, who presents how a learning unit on global citizenship education (GCE) is implemented in an Italian 8th-grade class. Considering the key elements for students' effective learning and the limitations of the Italian educational system regarding GCE, the study explores the educational implications of translating GCE international models into the Italian classroom practice. The paper concludes with the need to plan and implement GCE jointly, within a whole-school approach, and highlights the relevance of the modalities in which GCE instructional contents are selected.

The second contribution in the Varia section is entitled *Teaching Strategies and the Holistic Acquisition of Knowledge of the Visual Arts* by Eda Birsa; it presents findings of experimental research related to cross-curricular integration strategies in the visual arts learning process. The research involved fifth-grade students and classroom teachers from seven Slovenian primary schools and concluded that teachers achieved better learning outcomes for students by adopting teaching strategies with cross-curricular integration in the implementation of art tasks in art education than in classes with no cross-curricular integration. Proposed guidelines can help teachers in planning activities for the visual arts, while student learning can be improved by connecting subjects and integrated knowledge of the visual arts.

The present issue also includes two book reviews. Niels Anderegg reviews the book *The Rediscovery of Teaching* (New York & London: Routledge, 2017) by Gert Biesta, and Josefine Wagner reviews the book *DisCrit: Disability Studies and Critical Race Theory in Education* (New York, NY: Teachers College Press, 2016), edited by David J. Connor, Beth A. Ferri and Subini A. Annamma.

MICHAEL SCHRATZ AND VASILEIOS SYMEONIDIS

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