

Introduction to this Special Issue: Intercultural Education in the Social Studies

Kenneth Cushner

Emeritus Professor Kent State University

kcushner@kent.edu

Addressing education from an international perspective, it seems, has finally come of age, and there are myriad ways in which this is being addressed throughout various educational circles. Similarly, educators at all levels and in all disciplines have seen increased attention being given to intercultural education and enhancing the intercultural competence of teachers and children alike. Intercultural competence as a construct, however, is more challenging and complex to achieve as it demands the integration and development of the cognitive, affective and behavioral domains, first of teachers who themselves may be on their own intercultural journey before we can consider how to transfer this through various curricular interventions to children.

The social studies, more than any other discipline, recognized long ago the critical role that education can play in addressing intercultural education. The roots of intercultural education can be found in the work of Hilda Taba who established the Center for Intergroup Education at the University of Chicago in the mid-1940s. Robert Hanvey's (1976) seminal publication, *An Attainable Global Perspective*, later set the stage for much of the subsequent thinking and development of the field of global education that included the work of such scholars as James Becker, Lee Anderson, Kenneth Tye, Willard Kniep and Merry Merryfield.

The recent surge of interest in international education in general and intercultural competence more specifically, can be seen in the publication of such documents as *Teacher Preparation for the Global Age: The Imperative for Change* (Longview Foundation, 2008), The Asia Society and EdSteps publication, *Educating for Global Competence: Preparing our Youth to Engage the World* (Boix-Mansilla & Jackson, 2011), and the Australian Government publication, *Global Perspectives: A Framework for Global Education in Australian Schools* (Global Education Project, 2008); the growth in schools and universities worldwide that are adopting the International Baccalaureate (IB); the establishment of the Alliance for International Education in 2002 designed to bring together educators, primarily from the international schools network, committed to advancing intercultural understanding (www.intedalliance.org); the focus since 2010 at NAFSA: Association of International Educators' Annual Colloquium on the Internationalization of Teacher Education; and the appearance of the comprehensive Global Teacher Education website (<http://www.globalteachereducation.org/>) in 2013. Elements of intercultural education and the importance of developing intercultural competence underlie many of the recommendations and aspirations of these various publications and initiatives.

Taba was in many ways ahead of her time, with many of her recommendations of what was necessary to achieve intercultural competence supported by considerable research today. Taba recognized that knowledge alone was insufficient in reducing prejudice, and that teachers (and presumably their students) had to be actively involved through firsthand experience, simulations or role play in intercultural experience and knowledge acquisition if significant change was to occur (Banks, 2012).

Corresponding author email: kcushner@kent.edu

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Similarly, she was a strong advocate that teachers should spend time in the communities in which their students lived in order to become more effective in the classroom

The articles included in this special section on "Intercultural Education and the Social Studies" in many ways reflect Taba's recommendations and what the field of intercultural relations has documented over the years—the important role that guided mindful and strategic curriculum planning, coupled with guided reflective experience, plays in enhancing intercultural sensitivity and competence. Mattix, Cunningham and Wrightsman's article, "Using Service-Learning as a Tool to Develop Intercultural Understanding", describes the role that integrating service learning in secondary education can play in developing intercultural competence. The program described here enabled 18 U.S. urban secondary students to participate in a 2 week service project in Costa Rica. The authors carefully describe the rationale, preparatory work prior to the experience, and the range of cultural, linguistic and community service activities in which students were engaged while in country. What is especially relevant here is reinforcement of the importance that interventions, activities and reflections are strategically planned and fulfilled.

Markus and Moss's article, "Enhancing Intercultural Understanding for Pre-service Teachers through Developing and Sustaining Education Abroad Experiences", emphasizes the role of experience in two semester long programs in England designed to develop a global perspective and intercultural competence of pre-service teachers. Their programs provide an urban focus in London while a program in Nottingham is specific to the preparation of social studies teachers. The authors describe the specific attention paid to purposefully facilitating intercultural learning through carefully constructed curricular experiences both prior to and throughout the program.

Kuo's article, "A Global Learning Wiki Project for Pre-service Teachers", studied the role technology can play in facilitating dialogue between U.S. pre-service teachers and students in other countries around topics of shared interests. Pre-service teachers and their overseas partners responded to one another's inquiries to determine the degree to which the project enhanced their knowledge of other cultures, their competence in working with those culturally different from themselves, and the degree to which their technology skills improved.

The final article by Marx and Moss, "Coming Home: Continuing Intercultural Learning During the Re-entry Semester Following a Study Abroad Experience", brings us full circle by emphasizing the critical role that re-entry plays in intercultural learning. It is one thing for students to participate in a well-structured and mindful intercultural learning experience. It is something else to understand the importance that reflection and integration must take *after* that initial experience. Intercultural learning, as empathized here, does not occur simply as a result of the initial experience, but must continue upon return when the student has time to reflect and consider how to integrate it into their personal learning. This is of special importance to understand as learning continues well beyond the initial experience, requiring educators to continue paying attention to intercultural learning upon the return home. This article documents how such an impactful experience can help participants learn to look at themselves, their role in schools when they return, and at domestic diversity through a critical cultural lens.

It is understood that not everyone will be able to participate in an international experience, and much work needs to be done to identify curricular strategies that can be implemented at home that do impact intercultural development. What is important to understand is that if enhancing intercultural

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competence is a priority of an international experience, as it should be, it is critical that we apply the essential elements that make it more likely that positive outcomes will occur. These articles not only support what intercultural researchers have learned vis-à-vis the essential elements that should be applied when developing experiences designed to enhance intercultural competence, they have demonstrated how they can be implemented in educational setting at secondary and tertiary contexts.

Kenneth Cushner

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