



Developing a Professional Identity in a Global Society

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For decades, teacher attrition continues as a global concern; more teachers leave the profession than enter, especially among beginning teachers (Dassa & Derose, 2017). Research targeting the development of teacher identity describes how it transacts with teacher retention, motivation, and learning in diverse cultural and social contexts. These findings provide insight regarding successful pedagogical practices (Schutz, Hong, & Cross-Frances, 2018; Anspal, Eisenchmide, & Lofstrom, 2011).

Developing a professional identity as a teacher is a dynamic, complex, and ongoing process (Chang-Kredl & Kingsley, 2014; Ivanova & Skara-Minecāne, 2016). In teacher preparation programs, preservice students facilitate the development of their professional identity by focusing on why they want to become a teacher, why they think they will be effective, and how they can cultivate a culturally responsive classroom for their students (Muhammad, 2017).

Pre-service teachers facilitate a social, cultural, and global identity as they prepare children of diverse backgrounds as well as native learners to explore their roles in the macro and global societies (Lerseth, 2013; Chong, Ling, & Chuan, 2011). Additionally, preservice teacher candidates develop a geographic identity as they learn about the homelands of their students. This is important because this history shapes the identities of children and their families. Thus, in developing a professional identity, because teachers take the time to know themselves and their motivations, they become better able to frame the learning of their diverse students to meet the challenges of the global community.

Background and Definitions

For the purposes of this discussion, *Teacher Professional Identity* refers to “the beliefs, values, and commitments an individual holds toward being a teacher (as distinct from another professional) and being a particular type of teacher (e.g. an urban teacher, a beginning teacher, a good teacher, an English teacher, etc.)” (Hsieh, 2010, p. 1).

Beijaard, Meijer, and Verloop (2004) reviewed research based on teachers’ professional identity. The authors organized their findings into three categories described as professional identity formation, characteristics of teachers’ professional identity, and professional identities represented through teachers’ stories. Other terms used in this discussion include the following:

Global identity is a “consciousness of an international society or global community transcending national boundaries, without necessarily negating the importance of state, nation, or domestic society” (Shinohara, 2004).

Global society “can be described as one which has overgrown the tendency to pull apart and has embraced a new culture of sharing and networking with people from all different backgrounds, mindsets, cultures, religions and other differences that in the past were used as excuses to keep us separated” (eNotes, 2011).

Geographic identity refers to “an individual or group’s sense of attachment to the country, region, city, or village in which they live” (Oxford Reference, 2019).

The term, “*Cultural identity*” describes “the identity or feeling of belonging to a group. It is a part of a person’s self-conception and self-perception and is related to nationality, ethnicity, religion, social class, generation, locality or any kind of social group that has its own distinct culture” (Wikipedia, 2019).

The goal to develop professional identity supports pre-service teachers’ capacity to connect with their personal attributes and further, to determine how they will transition into their future role as a teacher of diverse students (geographically, culturally, economically, socially). Ultimately, these future teachers facilitate their students as they become citizens of a global society. The following content describes the process as it interfaces with the opportunity to grow more informed socially and culturally sensitive teachers (Oestreich & Fite, 2019).

Texas Public Schools

As a result of the changing demographics in Texas, pre-service teachers, entering the field, work with students who represent demographics (culturally, ethnically, and economically), which are varied and often apart from their own experiences. Public school students in Texas represent a diverse population, culturally and ethnically, ranking second to California (Arguello, 2018). Maxwell (2014) reported findings from the National Center for Education Statistics, a 50.3% projected increase in varying degrees of Latino and Asian-Americans in public schools. These population shifts occurred in California, Florida, New York and Texas, and in many communities throughout the United States (Maxwell, 2014). To illustrate this demographic shift

in Texas, refer to the following table, which reflects 2018-2019 Student Enrollment in Texas Public Schools:

<i>Ethnicity</i>	<i>Student Count</i>
American Indian Or Alaska Nat	20,414
Asian	242,657
Black Or African American	685,775
Hispanic/Latino	2,854,590
Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific	8,271
Two Or More Races	129,904
White	1,490,299
State Total	5,431,910

Source: Texas Education Agency (2019, March 13)

Interestingly, additional data gleaned from the Texas Education Agency (2019, March 13) on 2018-2019 school enrollment data, reflect not only a growing student population, but also a change in numbers of diverse students. For example, data extracted from the 2008-2009 school year showed 4,749,571 students enrolled in Texas public schools (Texas Education Agency, 2019, July). Current data reveal student enrollment in 2018-2019 increased to 5,431,910 students. Additionally, within the student enrollment data, students identified as English language learners (ELL) grew 16.9% in 2008-2009 school year to 19.4% in the 2018-2019 school term (Texas Education Agency, 2019, July). These data evidence the shift in classroom communities in the state of Texas. Furthermore, changes in Texas classrooms demonstrate not only cultural shifts, but as well increases in servicing economically disadvantaged students, i.e. 25% increase from the 2008-2009 to 2018-2019 enrollment period (Texas Education Agency, 2019, July). Moreover, growth in Texas schools as compared nationally increased by 17.1 percent between 2005-2015, more than six times the increase in the United States (2.7%) beyond the same time period (Texas Education Agency, 2019).

Developing Professional Identity

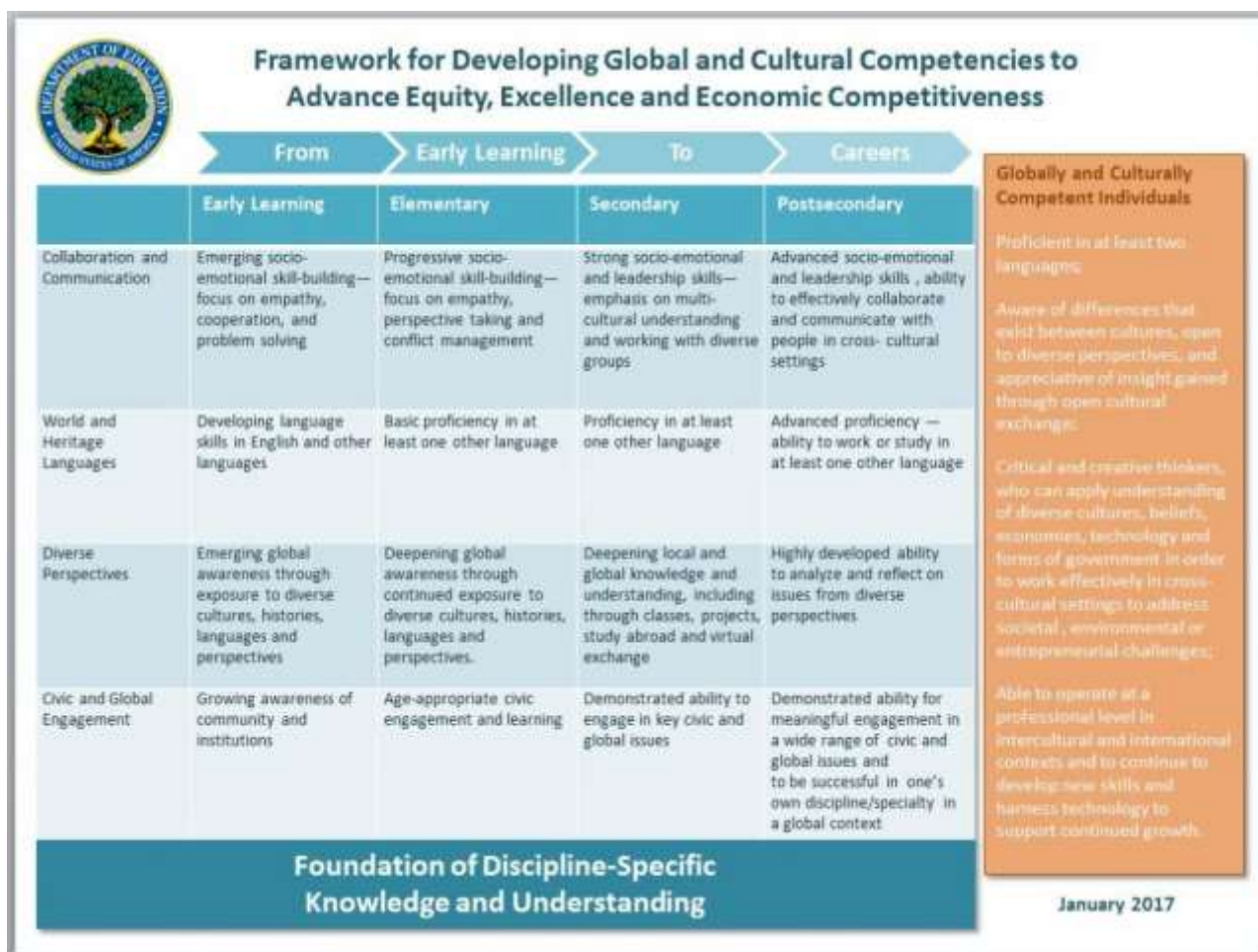
Using a multicultural curriculum frames teachers' understanding of the changes diverse students bring to the rich tapestry of the classroom community; strategic learning experiences intend to assist preservice teachers in their evolving professional identity. Multicultural programming is one of support; it provides both teachers and students support as they acknowledge the changing demographics, supports students developing more positive attitudes toward the broadening expanse of diversity in their surroundings, and supports students' ability to interact in a global arena (Sadker & Zittleman, 2018; Hanvey, 1982). Engaging in a multicultural curriculum can help teachers develop a broad, more global sensitivity, understanding, and identity with the community of learners they serve.

Today, it is common for teachers to work with students from ethnicities and cultures different from their own. Many parents of these students are first generation immigrants to the United States. Thus, the experiences brought to a classroom may represent intranational and international values and mores. Looking beyond the classrooms of yesterday, the contemporary teacher, through use of the Internet, other tools and media, integrate an expanse of different cultural, social, and ethnic values and practices.

In a seminal article, Hanvey (1982) states "...global perspective is not a quantum, something you either have or don't have" (p. 162). He references this perspective:

The recognition or awareness on the part of the individual that he or she has a view of the world that is not universally shared, that this view of the world has been and continues to be shaped by influences that often escape conscious detection, and that others have views of the world that are profoundly different from one's own. (p. 162)

Many individuals attempt to assume a global lens, for "most people in the world, direct experience beyond the local community is infrequent—or nonexistent" (Hanvey, 1982, p. 163). Hanvey (1982) also stated, "Direct experience is not the way that contemporary peoples learn about their world" (p. 163). Many people do not travel abroad and experience firsthand different world cultures; thus, teachers explore other ways to develop global competencies. Ark and Liebttag (2017) described global competencies as including opportunities to connect with one's ancestry and culture, demonstrate intercultural competence, and bridge global to the local. Ark and Liebttag's (2017) online piece included a table created by U.S. Department of Education entitled *Framework for Developing Global and Cultural Competencies to Advance Equity, Excellence and Economic Competitiveness*:



Source: International Affairs Office, U.S. Department of Education (2017).

<https://sites.ed.gov/international/global-and-cultural-competency/>

These competencies extend from the ancestry of the students in classrooms, be they first generation or later. Developing a perspective, of who “we” are, who “we” are in our environment, and who “we” are in a larger context by creating a cross-cultural perspective, helps students and teachers overcome the limitations of a more narrowed lens. In our evolving society, teachers become strategic in supporting students with a range of language needs. Combined with content knowledge, multicultural programming, and an ethos of caring and sensitivity, these attributes foster community building; thus, children require teachers with strong professional identities. It is time for “schools to address and infuse global awareness into curriculum and instruction” (Burnouf, 2004, p. 1).

Geography helps shape identity. Therefore, there is a direct relationship between geography and identity. People develop their identity according to the region and climate conditions in which they live. Geographic conditions shape people’s view of life, the values they share, and the

expectations they establish. Karasu, İbret, and Receptoğlu (2017) believe living in the same geographic conditions allows for the forming of human communities and the sharing of common social memories.

Reflective exercises can help pre-service teachers make the transition between their existing personal identity and their emerging professional identity, especially one with a “bigger than self” lens that encourages having an understanding of students with less common backgrounds and cultures. Bukor (2015) stated “analysis of teachers’ personal life experiences and their impact on teaching can lead to a holistic understanding of the dominant influences on the development of their teacher identity” (p. 305). Korthagen (2004) identified several examples of reflection exercises used in different pre-service programs. Examples included Pope and Denicolo’s (2001) personal biography exercise called “*River of Experience*” and Clandinin’s (1992) and McLean’s (1999) use of students exchanging stories. Korthagen’s (2004) examples include students reflecting on positive and negative role models encountered during their elementary and secondary school experiences; creating a *life path* (i.e. timeline of important events and influential people); and creating students’ *geo-bio footprint* (Oestreich & Fite. 2019). In another example, *All About Me*, preservice teachers provide a power point and/or oral introduction about themselves. A *Bio-Geo Blast* is a brief geo-biography describing preservice teachers’ global experiences (include domestic/international photographs) and describes how these travels led to understandings of their role as global educators. Essays describing, “*Why I Want to Teach*” also are important. This descriptive or visual representation provides a rationale for pre-service teachers deciding to become teachers. They share this insight with other preservice students. The information includes individuals (teachers, church congregants, family) who influenced their career path and also identifies those who claimed the candidate “had a gift to teach others.”

Preservice teachers can be encouraged to find out about the journeys of their own families by interviewing the oldest living member; preservice teachers can also learn about their students by visiting with first- and second- generation relatives of the children in their classroom. For example, one exercise that can be used is an autobiography wherein students present a notebook or digital storybook of their lives to share with a small group of peers in order to explore commonalities and differences. Students are encouraged to bring to class an artifact that represents their culture or a keepsake from their travels. These often have rich cultural roots such as mementos from a student’s *Quinceañera*, a Hispanic tradition which celebrates a girl’s fifteenth birthday and coming of age (Blum, 2005). Other examples might include photographs from a *Bat Mitzvah*, a religious ceremony for Jewish girls turning twelve years old and recognized as an adult, or a *Bar Mitzvah*, a religious celebration of Jewish boys turning thirteen years old (Pelaia, 2019). Additional examples include the sharing of souvenirs or pictures from a remote, impoverished area where students traveled to volunteer with a church or other group. The dialogue among the peer group is rich with opportunities for participants to ask questions and learn about and from one another. Presentations can be in the format of digital PowerPoints or traditional notebooks or scrapbooks. Later, artifacts can be added to these projects. The project may represent an individual’s continual growth or may serve as a collaborative work for all students to contribute as representative of the classroom community. Other stories can be told

and imaged about these travels including what they found or perceptions of what they think about the area or country. For example, students may include narratives and descriptions regarding the landscape, traditions, or challenges.

Another helpful activity is “*My Life in a Bag*,” wherein students fill a bag with a designated number of artifacts representing their culture or family history and tell about the item, its sentiment, value, or meaning. Pen pals are another option. Pre-service teachers may have pen pals themselves or encourage their students to adopt a pen pal so they can learn about life in areas quite different from their own (i.e. education, family structure, government, society, and landscape and environmental issues). Another activity is a matching game, whereby artifacts are secretly placed in a container and then positioned in front of a group of students whose charge is to “match” the item with whom they think brought it and the meaning they interpret. A *bio-museum* provides students an opportunity to identify five artifacts with a description reflective of their family history. As students visit the bio-museum, this provides students with an opportunity to critically determine what information is most important for them to share with others. This is an important exercise for students to reflect upon how museums determine what they exhibit.

There are numerous activities that build geographic identity. For example, a study of rice provides a range of learning opportunities to expand students’ understanding of the world and its people. Researching the origins of rice, the ways in which it is grown, cultivated, and shipped to different markets illustrate the global community at work. Students and their families feel comfortable to share culture-rich stories to others in the class.

Preservice candidates benefit from connecting with their personal and public lives, what they know, people they met, places they traveled, various foods they tasted, music they enjoyed, and artifacts they received or purchased as they learn to bridge their experiences with their students’ own experiences. Preservice teachers reflect on who they are, how their own experiences shaped their thinking, and how they interact and learn about their students; critical reflections help in creating a sense of class community.

Classrooms, filled with diverse individuals with unique experiences, prove to provide rich and meaningful learning experiences for both the teacher and the students. As pre-service teachers incorporate culturally responsive activities and cultivate and embrace their diverse student classrooms, they continue developing their professional personal, global, geographic, and cultural identity.

In order to create a culturally responsive community, it is imperative teachers know about their own personal history and culture as well as to learn about the varied cultural attributes their students bring to the classroom. Ark and Liebttag (2017) describe how cultures, once residing halfway around the globe, now live just down the block. Students meet the world first-hand in their classrooms. In order to prepare and reduce attrition rates of pre-service teachers, it is important to provide preservice teachers with a framework of global curricula, and training on multi-faceted cultural perspectives. Chuck Palahniuk (1999) suggests that nothing of a person is an original. He believes each of us is the combined experience of all past interactions.

Additionally, for the purpose of this current discussion, the classroom teacher remains a powerful influence for children as they move forward into an expanding world of difference. In order to promote and nurture diverse students' holistic learning and development, it is essential contemporary classroom teachers understand their sense of professional identity.

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