A Teacher Training Experience Based on Work with Communities in California

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Abstract

This article describes the results of a teacher training model that involves contact with local communities and action-research practices. The study included students enrolled in the education program at a university in southern California during the 2007-08 school year. They were interviewed during the course of their 16-week projects in which they analyzed the global culture of students and parents from various ethnic groups as subsequent input for classroom work and, ultimately, the design of lessons and the development of educational plans pursuant to the requirements of the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CCTC).

Among other conclusions, it was found that transforming teachers acquire a variety of useful skills for their work as educators in the global village by learning about the community from the inside out.

Key words

Teacher training, action research on education, teaching practice, educational research, California, USA (Source: Unesco Thesaurus).

Recepción: 2010-10-14 | Aceptación: 2011-03-18

ISSN 0123–1294 | **Educ.Educ. Vol. 14, No. 1** | Enero-abril de 2011 | pp. 105-118

ISSN 0123–1294 | **Educ.Educ. Vol. 14, No. 1** | Enero-abril de 2011 | pp. 105-118
Universidad de La Sabana | Facultad de Educación

Una experiencia de formación de profesores a partir del trabajo con comunidades en California

Resumen

El artículo presenta los resultados de un modelo de formación de profesores en contacto con comunidades locales, según el esquema de investigación-acción.
En el estudio participaron los estudiantes del programa de educación en una universidad ubicada en el sur de California, durante el año escolar 2007-08, a quienes se entrevistó durante el desarrollo de sus proyectos, de 16 semanas, en los que analizaron la cultura global desde los estudiantes y padres procedentes de varios grupos étnicos, mediante lo cual se aportó luego al trabajo de aula y, posteriormente, al diseño de lecciones y al desarrollo de planes educativos, siguiendo las normas establecidas por la Comisión de Maestros de California (CCTC).
Entre las conclusiones se encontró que al aprender acerca de la comunidad desde adentro hacia afuera, los educadores de la transformación adquirieron diversas competencias, útiles para su trabajo como educadores en la aldea global.

Palabras clave

Formación de profesores; investigación-acción pedagógica; práctica pedagógica; investigación pedagógica; California, USA (Fuente: Tesauro de la Unesco).

Uma experiência de formação de professores que trabalham em comunidades de Califórnia

Resumo

O artigo apresenta os resultados de um modelo de formação de professores que trabalham em comunidades locais, de acordo com o esquema de pesquisa-ação.
Foram incluídos os estudantes do programa de educação em uma universidade localizada no sul da Califórnia durante o ano lectivo de 2007-2008, entrevistados durante o desenvolvimento de seus projetos (de 16 semanas), nos que analisaram a cultura global de estudantes e pais de diferentes grupos étnicos. Esta informação foi usada para fornecer o trabalho de sala de aula, o plano de aula e o desenvolvimento de planos de ensino, seguindo as normas estabelecidas pela Comissão de Professores da Califórnia (CMC).
Entre os resultados verificou-se que, aprendendo sobre a comunidade de dentro para fora, os educadores da transformando adquiriram várias competencias importantes para seu trabalho como educador na aldeia global.

Palavras-chave

Formação de professores, pesquisa-ação pedagógica, prática pedagógica, pesquisa em pedagogia, Califórnia, EUA (Fonte: Tesauro da Unesco).

Introduction

In the last three decades, the audience in education (parents and students) has completely changed its demographics in terms of socio-economic status, ethnicity, race and gender. Once homogeneous populations, cultures, and languages have now become heterogeneous concepts due to the constant movement of humans across geographical borders. Thus, transforming educators who are looking for effective ways to meet the academic needs of culturally diverse students enrolled in compulsory educational settings must embrace the students' cultural and linguistic richness and utilize the latter as an asset to create global education, which will ensure equal access to education. As Spring (2004) avers, "Events that are happening on a global scale affect national school systems... Today, nations choose to adopt policies from [a] global superstructure in order to compete in the global economy" (p. 2). Hence, educating future teachers would appear to require assignments and/or courses where teacher candidates can analyze education from a global perspective and how this impacts local educational systems.

At present, students in teaching credential programs not only need to be prepared to embrace the diversity they will encounter at their future school sites, they also have to be able to design lessons that include the cultural richness students and their families provide to the learning process. Irvine et al. (2000), on their research of diversity in educational settings, explain the importance of emphasizing the idea of culturally responsive teaching from a global perspective. They underline the idea of teaching teachers how to design projects/lessons where k-12 students will gain deep understanding of a concept by explicitly teaching these students to analyze how the knowledge gained through the project/lesson transforms students' daily life experiences and the experiences of other students from around the world who have been exposed to similar practices.

This idea of **transformation** and the application of **critical theory** have guided the construction of a community-based fieldwork model, which continuously searches for a global pedagogy that provides communities of learners with a multidimensional methodology of teaching designed to make sure students are gaining academic knowledge to maintain their cultural and linguistic roots, as well as to contextualize them within the global village. Without an understanding of different identities, linguistic roots and social experiences, learning processes lack the cultural references indispensable to construct a model of comprehensive education that supports the individualities of the participants within the globalization process of our planet (Bove *et al.,* 2001). If utilized as a homogenization process, globalization becomes a monochromatic umbrella that obscures the energy generated by communities and their barriohoods (Yehoshúa, 2006). In light of this trend, globalization has been reconstructed when presented to candidates, the idea being that it is a synergetic movement that encapsulates local knowledge, rather than a tool that standardizes multicultural settings within 'the basics of basic education' (Ryan, 2006).

Pedagogical practices fomented by this model in the *aula* challenge the monochromatic view of poly chromatic enclaves, which are contextualized typically on the basis of needs, deficiencies and problems (Goldstein, 2005). Constructive global educators, who see themselves as educational artists rather than instructional technicians, reconstruct the colorless perceptions of community-based knowledge by generating action-research assignments, originating with "the assumption that a theory can be rather directly expressed in action" (Gustavsen, 2005, p. 17). These assignments trigger a genuine commitment to the discovery and appreciation of vernacular voices and their assets.

As Anderson & Irvine (1993) stated, "Educators are increasingly arguing that action-research and ethnographic methods should be part of teacher training programs" (p. 87), thus utilizing the latter as a methodological framework. The acquisition of success in this project is measured by candidates becoming global agents of social change. According to Bennet (2006), social agency is encouraged in the *aula* by creating action plans that promote the use of critical thinking and

global pedagogy. The latter is defined as a method that establishes partnerships between schools and the community, unlocks individualization, and aims to achieve universal high standards (Zajda, 2005).

The process of carrying out (Figure 1) action-research initiatives to accomplish the aforementioned goals includes a journey through four quadrants. Action research was selected due to the need to find responses and to improve practices along the way, without waiting for a final resolution (Elliott, 1991). Generating immediate responses to all the questions that emerged throughout the process originated a process of knowledge construction, which was the key to increasing student achievement.

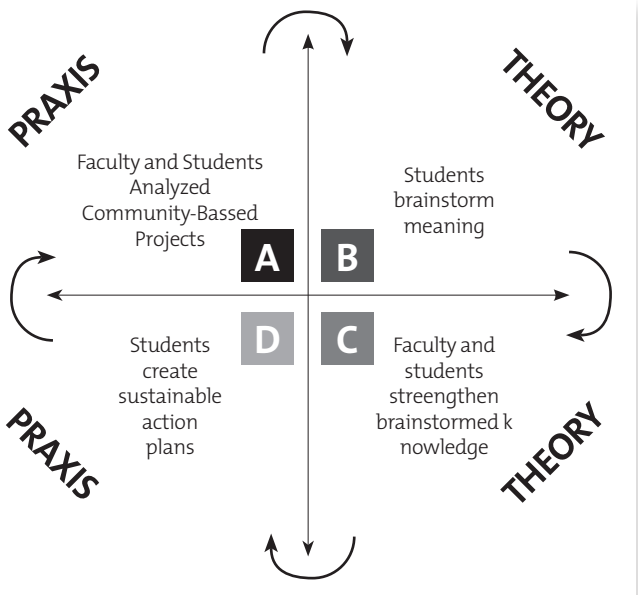

Figure 1. Sequence of Quadrants for Action Research

In this journey, the faculty and candidates begin their building process in Quadrant A: a space where the faculty facilitates and guides an analysis of differences between community-based projects from around the world, with the idea of creating knowledge based on interaction among the candidates. Projects are analyzed with the common understanding that difference is, as defined by Deleuze (1995), "... the fourfold of identity, opposition, analogy and resemblance" (p. 29). With these four elements, the candidates begin to develop the 'practical framework' of their action plans. At this stage, students and the faculty work cooperatively to create a community of educational bricoleurs that searches for the preliminary weaves of a global knowledge expressed with the strategies, methods or empirical materials at hand (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). Following this first phase, the students move to Quadrant B, an independent scenario, where they create meaning by comparing and contrasting with peers their thoughts constructed during the preliminary discussions.

Once meaning has been brainstormed, the faculty, in collaboration with the candidates, strengthens the knowledge candidates have gained by reading and analyzing theory that supports their findings. Lastly, supported by grants (i.e., NEA Foundation for educational funding), the future educators construct, during their field work hours, sustainable action plans (Capra, 2006) that have an impact on their work and on society.

At this point, the new generation of transforming educators is required to share the outcome and impact of their projects with other educators and associations (i.e., PTA-Parent Teachers Association) that are creating or have created similar projects around the world. This is done via websites and/or blogs. Throughout these four stages, the participants complete the circle around the four quadrants, beginning with the cooperative analysis (faculty-candidates and candidates-candidates) of outside projects and how they can be duplicated in their communities. Later, they encase their practical framework in a 'dynamic theory of real community work' (Nowak, 1991), to finally return to praxis by implementing their own projects in local communities, in addition to as developing networks for meaningful globalization.

In the next section, we explain how teacher candidates and the faculty analyzed community-based projects from Argentina and Brazil, while designing their local community projects. Understanding the former – international projects – contextualized the latter – local projects

– by nurturing teacher candidates' ideas with a global perspective. As Banks (2006) explains, understanding global perspectives helps teachers when designing comprehensive projects that promote equality in education.

Local Constructing Global

As Gregorio Luri explains in his book *"L'escola contra el món: L'optimisme és possible [Schools against the world: Optimism is possible]"* (2008), France and Germany, among other European countries, are changing their educational system by adapting their structures to the new needs of the crescent immigrant populations (i.e., Muslims, Iranians, Russian, Ukrainians, etc). Thus, education in those countries now is being framed pursuant to three main concepts: to 'ennoble' students by valuing the effort and time utilized to complete classroom activities and homework, to empower students with the acquisition of social competency as a key factor for success, and to acknowledge the importance of all the tasks implemented at school. Analyzing and applying the latter has helped educators to hoist a sense of social identification, which enables students and their families to cultivate bonds with the new country, as well as to reinforce their vernacular identities (Worthman, 2005).

The teacher candidates faced challenges similar to those confronting French and German educators. The university is located three blocks away from the U.S-Mexico border, which creates a unique international environment. Every day, hundreds of students cross the border from Mexico to the U.S.A to attend public schools in one of the nearby school districts. The Aldea School District (a pseudonym), with a student population of 9,283,[1] of whom 64.4% are ELL (English Language Learners), is located in Imperial County, where close to 50% of the students are English Language Learners. This phenomenon and the fact that school districts in the Imperial Valley hire more than 90% of the candidates once they complete their teaching credential program, called for a new approach to the design of student-teaching: specifically, a 16-week assignment that requires candidates to observe and teach at schools in Imperial County.

1 The 2007-08 school year - www.ed-data.k-12.ca.us.

With this information, the faculty at the beginning of the 2007-08 school year began to redesign student-teaching fieldwork by asking candidates not only to fulfill the Teaching Performance Expectations[2] (TPE) established by the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CCTC), but also to develop their own action plans at their assigned schools, the idea being that, out of the mix of 'American culture' and the heritage and experiences students from the southern part of the border bring to school, a global education that eliminates cultural and linguistic borders can be created. Due to the high number of ELL students in the Imperial Valley, literacy became the focus of this new student-teaching experience.

In the first eight weeks of their student-teaching, the candidates read and analyze the epistemology and implementation of two projects from South America. This is done with the support of their professor. These two projects, based on an awareness of the new social, economic and technological scenarios, have incorporated deeper content into the acquisition and development of global literacy, which promotes culturally responsive practices based on inclusive education (Roy, 2002; Ebbesmeyer, 2005).

Culturally responsive pedagogy allows candidates to engage in an active transformational process that enables them to develop the educational and sociocultural capital needed to become more effective practitioners. The heterogeneous backgrounds of students occupying 21st century classrooms require identifying instructional methodologies that match the learning needs of diverse students. This, however, cannot be done from a far; to meet this challenge, candidates must take part in the learning process,

2 The Teaching Performance Expectations (TPEs) were developed on the basis of the California Standards for the Teaching Profession (CSTP) through rigorous research and consultation conducted with California educators by the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CCTC) to describe the set of knowledge, skills and abilities beginning teachers should be able to demonstrate.

giving themselves the opportunity not only to appreciate, but also to value the rich experiences of diverse students. Once all stakeholders – students and teachers – engage in the learning process, a new classroom culture will be created, one where all students, regardless of their cultural and linguistic background, are welcomed, supported and provided with the best opportunity to learn. The following educational initiative, facilitated in Argentina, echoes the importance of bridging the relationship between home and school experiences as a means to develop best culturally-relevant practices.

1. Argentina

The first action plan selected for discussion was a project developed by Mariana Fernández, an educator from La Fundación Girasol. The faculty selected this model out of all the programs constructed by that NGO (non-governmental organization), due to its dual international and local nature. La Fundación is part of a global network created by the United Nations. Hence, one of its goals is to share its results with other associations. Based on the premise of global literacy, Mariana and her team conceptualized local action plans for low-income families living in Argentinean urban sprawls (i.e., Buenos Aires, Avellaneda). Reading the dynamism of Mariana's idea taught students to construe meaning from Appadurai's (2001) idea that "globalization is about a world of things in motion" (p. 5). In Argentina, students from Avellaneda, a small port city once known as Barracas del Sur, attend school in the big metropolis of Buenos Aires. In the Imperial Valley, students from another big metropolis, Mexicali, cross the border to attend school in a small, nearby border town located in the United States. Both scenarios confirm that education is a transient process where students search for global educational opportunities and practices.

Universal literacy was constructed in Argentina with the understanding that students can come to comprehend the value and place of their vernacular wisdom in the global village, through the global teaching of local storytales (Burbules, 2000). Its philosophy was constructed with the idea that communities (students, parents and educators) perceived culture as "the shared way of life of a group of people" (Berry *et al.,* 2002, p.9). Thus, Mariana's project concentrated on the depth of this communal experience to build literacy that surpasses basic levels of functionality and reeducates the participants.

First, Mariana and her group worked four weeks on the same story, reflecting and analyzing it from different perspectives. The students and parents participating in the project drew, performed, added music to the story, created mini books and/or designed their own projects. Pursuant to this trans-disciplinary approach to literature, the candidates began to sketch their projects with the understanding that a global project "seeks a deeper *immersion* ... to grasp what they experience as meaningful and important... In this way, *immersion* gives ... access to the fluidity of others' lives and enhances sensitivity to interaction and process" (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995, p. 2).

Concerned about functional literacy, Mariana's team focused on those readers who, despite be able to read and write, did not understand what they read. They reinforced the idea of a 'cognitive dive' [*buceamos adentro*] as a way to gain knowledge by understanding where the individual is placed and her/his role in that environment. The candidates utilized this concept to create, throughout their projects, a channel whereby students and their parents learned how to become critical thinkers who analyze the meaning of their cultures at all levels: community, city, country and continent. Finally, the team worked on reinventing their ideas on literacy by listening to and talking with the other members of the team. As Paulo Freire (1990) explained it when conversing with Myles Horton, "A dialogue is the life that comes from the earth's springs. It is as if the books were doing that and being transformed into words, written words through our speaking, and afterward the speech comes into written speech" (p. 8). By following this path and analyzing the project in question, the candidates unlearned and learned about their own prejudices and cultural stereotypes, educating each other and being informed by the community of learners: parents and students, through ideas that are constantly changing com-

munities based on experiences, thus transforming their cultural patterns and knowledge (Benedict, 2006).

The growing needs of newly founded multicultural global communities call for assignments involving action-research practices designed to ignite active conversations and interaction among all participants (teachers, students, parents and community members). In action-research pedagogy, candidates, students and parents become the foundation of a learning process whereby all participants collectively generate new knowledge that considers and honors the value of their culturally existential trajectories. The following project, carried-out in Brazil, reflects the significance of incorporating action-based pedagogy to broaden candidates' cultural perspectives on diverse populations.

2. Brazil

Parallel to the analysis of the project in Argentina, an initiative known as Escolas de Valor [Value Schools] was discussed and examined by the candidates to find more support for their heuristic action plans (Creswell, 2006). The Imperial Valley is a predominantly rural area where agriculture and stockbreeding are the two main pillars of the local economy. Thus, selecting an action plan developed in Brazil and applied in an area with similar economic traits showed the candidates the possibility of globalizing local scenarios with a macro-analysis of educational challenges. As indicated by Skidmore (1999), "the Amazon Basin is by far the largest region, accounting for 42 percent of the national territory... [and has] nourished illusions through the years about the agricultural potential" (pp. 3). Escolas de Valor was a project developed in 2006 by Editora Moderna, a Brazilian publisher, and by Fundación Santillana, a Spanish foundation. The idea was to search for the key traits that differentiate schools in Brazil that are successful, despite high rates of student desertion and violence, from others with similar demographics and no signs of improvement in the student population.

On this journey and by identifying special features, researchers found that each of the successful schools; namely, Escola Estadual Pedro dos Santos in Purpuru (Amazonas), Colégio Estadual Érico Veríssimo in Alvorada (Rio Grande do Soul), Colégio Estadual Maria Anita in Periperi (Bahia), Escola Professora Jandira de Andrade Lima in Limoeiro (Pernambuco), Escola Municipal Ordem e Progresso in Rio de Janeiro (RJ), and a group of indigenous schools in Tocantins, had personal traits that guided their success. It should be noted that although each of these schools operated in unique circumstances, all of them had created environments where culture was a shared value.

After analyzing and discussing the six aforementioned schools and how their success distinguished them from other schools, the candidates deconstructed their personal identities. In this process, they analyzed whether or not working with perseverance and strong resistance against the odds would allow them to construct harmonic action plans where self-esteem and solidarity come across to create sustainable success for the students and their families (Marshall, Swift, & Roberts, 1997).

Subsequent to reviewing the most relevant conclusions ignited by the analysis of the two aforementioned projects, the faculty and the candidates began to strengthen the ideas they had brainstormed for the candidates' action plans. At this point, the faculty mentored the candidates with a reform-minded viewpoint, which Hoppey & Fichtman Dana (2007) say is the "progressive stance toward teaching that acknowledges the importance of research-based practices, problematizing teaching and learning, and embracing change with the aim of educating all the children" (p. 6). With the knowledge being channeled towards the construction and implementation of action plans, the next step was to find financial support.

The challenge for candidates in implementing culturally-responsive action plans is to effectively explore and understand the sociocultural assets of diverse students and families, and how they may be utilized to successfully attain the goals of their action plans. Funding, however, becomes an important means by which action-plan projects come to fruition. In this instance, the candidates found a viable source of funding, which will be described below.

3. Constructing Global Education

Funding is often a barrier when educators consider ideas to improve their classroom practices. Thus, during the first eight weeks of student teaching, the faculty and the candidates explored different options to find the resources needed for their projects. One of the alternatives two candidates used for their project involved the grants offered by the NEA (National Education Association) for *'learning and leadership'*. These two candidates, Raimon and Sara (pseudonyms), wrote a proposal, with the support of a professor, to finance their idea of creating literacy circles with 100 families whose children were enrolled in the first grade at one the local schools in the Aldea School District. Their goals were: first, to promote dialogic reading, defined by Bellas (2006) as *'why'* reading', in the community of learners utilizing bilingual books; and, secondly, to create blogs where the participants (parents, students and teachers) could communicate on the outcome of their project with other social activists from other countries. This supported what Manuel Castells (2002) calls "a network society; a social structure built on networks, but not any kind of networks... information networks powered by micro-electronics-based information technology" (p. xxix).

Once their proposal was awarded a NEA Foundation grant, the first goal was accomplished by creating after-school meetings with parents, students and teachers. In those meetings, they read three bilingual books that negotiate with critical literacies from around the world (Vazquez, 2004). In 'reading the word and the world' from local to global, the participants talked about themselves when reading *"Hairs/Pelitos"* (Cisneros, 1994), a book that analyzes the different types of hair in a Latino family. They analyzed how members of the community communicate with each other when discovering the colorful world of *"Grandma Fina and Her Wonderful Umbrellas/La Abuelita Fina y sus sombrillas maravillosas"* (Saenz & García, 2001). They concocted the idea of a global village with transcultural food and knowledge by 'picture-walking' though *"Grandma and Me at the Flea/Los meros meros remateros"* (Herrera, 2002).

The next step in their project was to create a space to explain the philosophy of their action plan, and to open up a dialogue with other activists by posting the meaningful thoughts shared by parents and students during the dialogic readings. After one of the readings, Jacinta, the mother of one of the first graders, said, *"Muy interesante, nunca me habia retirado de una junta tan satisfecha como el dia de hoy ojala lo hubieran hecho antes* [How interesting! I had never left a meeting as pleased as I am today. I wish this had been done before]. Paola, another mother, explained, *"La Universidad y la escuela pueden ayudarnos a reforzar la lectura ofreciendo este tipo de reuniones para los niños* [Schools and universities can help us to reinforce reading by offering these kinds of meetings].

At this stage, the objectives were twofold: first, to show the community that activism is a worldwide reality; and, secondly, to create access to the Internet because, as argued by Caspulla, De Cindio & Piamonti (2001), "sharing experiences and knowledge has been, and still is, the major reason for Internet news groups... [thus] people who are not familiar [parents and students participating in this action plan] with such communication must be introduced to the kind of co-cooperation [it] makes possible... they should also learn to read the FAQ file before asking a question" (pp. 93-94).

Thus, Raimon, Sara and their professor crafted a blog at *Ode Magazine*. With a worldwide circulation of more than 100,000 copies, *Ode* is one of the most well-known magazines concerning matters of global action. It has built a community of readers who are engaged in the issues for which it stands: positive social, environmental and economic change. These readers have a great deal to say for themselves and to each other. Thus, *Ode* created a new website, averaging around 30,000 visitors per month. These are some of the entries posted by *Ode* readers, from countries like Uganda, Sri Lanka, India, Brazil, Japan and United Kingdom, among others, after reading the thoughts shared by parents, students and candidates:

> **Reader 1.** That's great! I'm excited to hear how your program helps the community. You are right. It is sad to see that we have

lost touch with storytelling. I remember growing up as a kid and having story-time at the end of the day, just before bed. My sister and I would gather around, as my parents would read to us. It first started out with small books. But, as we got older and learned how to read, we would each take our turn and read bigger books. There is something to be said about active participation in storytelling and letting your imagination free. Just as kids do, we always were asking questions. Why did the main character do that? What's going to happen next? This is something that a television or video games cannot provide.

After reading this entry, parents and candidates felt their work had gained recognition from communities at the international level. This, in turn, empowered the idea that borders are everything but barriers to stop communities from personal growth.

Reader 2. Growing up in a single-parent home with four other siblings, it was almost impossible for my mother to read to me as a child. As others have stated, when my mother came home from work, her unwinding time was for her to watch television. The only reading time I was ever exposed to was reading at school. I became so enthusiastic about reading that I would borrow books from my teachers in order to read at home. I don't remember how I acquired this one book, *Tales of a Fourth Grade Nothing,* but I can remember reading it over and over again. Now, as an adult, I do not read for enjoyment anymore. I have not had the opportunity to read to my own children, as I do not have any children just yet. I think that it's very important to take that time with them and to take them away from television and video games... I look forward to sharing that experience with my children one day!

Listening to the echo of their enthusiasm, families believed their commitment to global literacy was a project beyond their community; it was a mission of international solidarity.

Reader 3. Where is this place by the border? I think reading opens the doors to our minds and brings us to a place we can all travel to together. As a little girl, my parents were too busy to read to us, or so it seemed. Now, looking back, I think it was because my parents were uncomfortable with reading. Reading to my children was the one time during the day that we could all relax together, laughing and exploring the pages of the book.

Reader 4. For the person asking where this place is, it is in California, but the most southern part touching the border of Mexico. It is a rural town [and] its border city is the capital of Baja California, Mexico (Mexicali). The population is almost 100% Hispanic, and the English Language Learners who are enrolled in the schools amount to over 50%. The town is unique, especially when it comes to literacy, since most students are bilingual or becoming [so]. Hope that helps!

The dialogue between these two readers confirmed, among participants, that if Calexico was once a forgotten city in California, at that moment, it was identified and described by those who called it their educational home.

Reader 5. I had an opportunity to teach the "forgotten" students who most teachers fail to give proper attention to, due to their lack of knowledge of the English vocabulary and the behavior problems that follow. I found the most success occurred with these students when their culture was brought to light and held on an equal ground with all others. In this instance, I live and work in a predominantly white middle-class suburb that holds certain values higher than others. One of the most significant examples that I found detrimental to students' growth was their inability to articulate their thoughts in English. But, if they spoke in Spanish, they were supposed to be warned or punished.

This last comment summarized the core of Raimon and Sara's action plan. As with the *Escolas de Valor* project, the participants exchanged information via Internet to analyze their local identities, realizing there is a place beyond their Zone of Cultural Comfort (author, 2008) where

the adjectives "international" and "global" convey, creating "the history of transformational phenomena: the Internet, for example, or a paradigm in sciences, or the spread of new religion". Such perceptions, according to Stone Zander & Zander (2002), "happen less by arguing cogently for something new than by generating active and ongoing practices [action plan implemented in this project] that shift a culture's experience of the basis for reality" (p. 4).

Action research leads candidates to immerse themselves in the worldview of the students they are serving. We recognize that understanding grows from experience, and action plans develop from the knowledge that comes from understanding another's nature. This benefits school communities, particularly when it comes to students' academic, career and personal and social success.

Conclusions

The community-based model described in this article has taught teacher candidates that international education is a phenomenon that can be observed and implemented in local communities. It is the teacher's responsibility to utilize the imbedded universal (De Wit, 2002) knowledge students and parents bring to diverse classrooms the world over. To match this knowledge with local standards, the candidates navigated through four stages. First, they analyzed their identities and discussed action plans from other countries. Secondly, they worked collaboratively with their peers to begin to outline the main traits of their own action plans. Following that, they searched for scholarly literature to support their ideas. Finally, the candidates looked for grants to fund their action plans, the goal being to 'mine' the international nature of communities to settle across their communities.

Among these candidates, Raimon and Sara constructed an action plan that exemplifies Savater's (2001) idea, as explained in the *UNESCO Courier;* specifically, that universalism and internationalism are imbedded in our nature. "The whole history of humanity is a constant process of mixing. The greatness of the human species is precisely that we're all a mixture of something. When the human races started in Africa, we were probably all black and identical, but bit-by-bit we became different, taking on various ethnicities, colors and sizes." Thus, when Raimon, Sara and the 100 families eliminated linguistic and cultural barriers, they nurtured an inclusive education where participants "not only mastered credentialing knowledge, but also acquired a new form of conscientization for all the persons and ideas that cross borders, generating a "subsequent influence on ... culture" (Torres & Roahds, 2006, pp.8), which is the prelude to acquiring 'emancipatory knowledge' (Abu el-Haj, 2006). Acquiring the latter it is extremely important, particularly in current times, when citizens from different countries (i.e., Tunisia, Egypt) are assembling forces to ensure their local identities are valued within their nations and states.

Hence, to recognize the nature of knowledge, teacher candidates in credential programs must be called upon to investigate the dependency between global knowledge and local wisdom. Action plans generated in this context proved, as stated by Barbaras (2004), that individuals have to identify their role within worldview webs in order "to confirm and to deepen by means of perceptual experience just as it is lived" (p. 4). This, in turn, strengthens the vernacular knowledge-trade made in their communities. The common denominator among the candidates was to embrace the relevance of the cultural assets existing in local communities and to channel this knowledge in multiple educational settings throughout educational institutions.

In doing so, the research projects helped the candidates to divest themselves of one dimensional, individualistic practice and encouraged them to look at the richness of local cultures from a collectivistic standpoint. It is the contextualization of knowledge found to be valuable in the construction and deconstruction of effective globally-cultural teaching practices. Rothstein (2004) shows the construction and acquisition of new knowledge is based on the willingness of prospective educators to create new pedagogy by focusing on different ways of learning. Thus, the gaining of culturally rich funds of knowledge is the result of one's personal experiences, specifically experien-

ces that embrace the global cultural assets of students and parents in order to develop and implement effective cross-cultural teaching (Díaz-Rico & Weed, 2006).

Through this project, we have seen teachers who experienced this type of community-based fieldwork become activists. Their educational practices also were empowered by creating a spiral that starts at the core of the community and spins all the way to the global village. In both fields, the idea of the internalization of education was defined in a framework where participants experienced the community without leaving it; they constructed networks of knowledge with other communities by contextualizing their local standards and views in the global community (Pratt & Poole, 2000). Lacking the opportunity to go beyond geographical boundaries, the candidates learned about other cultures from within the communities. This led them to gain knowledge by using the cultural voices of diverse communities. Hence, the idiographic trajectories of culturally-rich candidates, students and parents are involved a process where teachers seek to understand the individual's role within their community, to understand their interpersonal networks within their barriohoods, and to understand their immediate cultural associations within global cultures.

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