

From the Editor

Global initiatives: Contributions of Social Studies educators to global learning

Welcome to Volume 3 Issue 2 of the International Assembly, *Journal of International Social Studies*. Once again we have a great selection of important research papers, and commentary, of interest to Social Studies educators' both in the U. S. and abroad. I am very pleased with the growth of this journal and the integrity of its processes and was able to join with a number of fellow editors at the National Council for the Social Studies conference in St Louis, Missouri in November to present our credentials to interested authors. The other journals represented included *The Social Studies*, *Theory and Research in Social Education*, *Social Studies Research and Practice*, and *Ohio Social Studies Review*. It was great to hear about what other journals are doing to advocate for social studies education and to meet such committed social educators. I was able to report that our journal has a 40% acceptance rate, has received approximately 35 submissions in 2013, had 105 visits on its website in the month of October 2013 of which 56% were new visitors. The majority came from 10 different countries and on average visited 6 pages. I have received most of this information from the Google Analytics I set up on the journal and which has only been operating for a few months now. It is useful for our editorial board who can use this information to grow the journal and its impact. I really felt that as a journal we are very clearly targeted to an international audience and those interested in international issues and that marks the difference between us and the other journals I mentioned above. We also have forum space for advocacy and opinion pieces in the Media, Social Justice and International Perspectives sections, also unusual in other Social Studies journals. These are strengths which we should build on. I hope you will help us do that by referring researchers to our journal and by submitting work to us.

The focus on innovative global perspectives is very strong in this edition and it is a clarion call for advocating for the leadership of Social Studies education in building sustainable futures and intercultural understanding. In fact we have decided to produce two special editions on these themes with at least one of them, Sustainability, appearing in later 2014. I will formally announce the editor, processes and submission dates to submit articles and opinion pieces on this theme shortly. We will still produce at least one general issues volume in 2014, particularly as we are receiving such a lot of good articles. Please keep sending them in. I must now turn to the offering in this edition and as currently 'the big cold' is sweeping the U.S. many of our readers will have time to read as they stay warm and safe out of the weather.

Professor Graham Pike from Vancouver Island University in Canada starts us out with an article he kindly agreed to write up from his wonderful International Assembly presentation at the Seattle national NCSS conference, *Global Education in Times of Discomfort*. He provides us with some useful backward looking lessons gleaned from his extensive international experience in teaching for a 'better world' and then some future visions for how to adapt our thinking to the new contexts, particularly neoliberal constraints on what counts as a good education. He points out that 'global educators believe that their vision for education is key to developing safer and more sustainable societies, but they are struggling to be heard amidst the strident neoliberal voices' and argues that there is a need for research that supports global education approaches. He expands upon themes that help may help future global educators and concludes with a counter to a focus on education for personal and social as one where 'I would suggest that a key role of public education at this critical stage in human development is to instil a much more sophisticated vision of personal and social well-being'.

It seems that at least in teacher education in elementary school there is a need for such new ideas. Russell and Poole in their article *Global Perspectives of American Elementary School Teachers: A Research Study*, argue that we are not making headway in developing a more sophisticated view of global education and a more globally aware teacher workforce despite lots of rhetoric about its importance. They point to the importance of the classroom teacher in establishing global perspectives for our future students and note that there is a disappointing lack of progress in elementary teachers' education and knowledge of global education as evidenced by their attitudes and participation in courses and activities that promote global awareness.

Perhaps some insights provided by studies of civic identity can assist teacher education and teacher practice in providing global perspectives. Obenchain, Bellows, Bernat and Smith in their article *Romanian Youths' Civic Identities: 20 Years After the Revolution*, reminds us of the complex nature of civic identity and the multiple impacts that influence it. In the world of formal education we do tend to take for granted the multiple informal influences on our civic engagement and civic identity. This study, which analysed interviews with 21 Romanian young people who have only known a democratic political system, identified the strong impact of family, teachers and the wider society, who have mostly experienced a communist system, on their civic identity. It was apparent from the youths' comments that their observations of democracy provided space for optimism but also for pessimism; 'They are developing a civic identity in which democracy is characterized by the extremes of wealth and poverty, neither of which they believe is achieved through justice or the rule of law'. Democracy in Romania is seen in a different way than we in different democracies may perceive it. This fact is in itself an important factor in global consciousness and could be a useful trigger for controversial discussion in our classrooms.

International standpoints on service learning is the focus of the article by O'Keefe and Feinberg, *Service-Learning: International Teachers' Perspectives*. O'Keefe and Feinberg turn our attention to the popular, and often disputed, notion of service learning and provide an international perspective on what is commonly seen as a U.S. based classroom and school initiative. In particular the international students they interviewed provide interesting insights into the notion of mandated controversy. They argued that 'service-learning design and implementation varies depending on the beliefs and goals of practitioners' and by giving voice to these international students who had little knowledge of service learning before they visited a program in the U.S. some of our pre suppositions of service learning can be clarified. In addition to the themes that the international students identified in the notion of service learning O'Keefe and Feinberg provided some useful directions for classroom teacher and teacher educator research by modelling their use of Dedoose qualitative software and how it assisted their understanding of the analysis.

Last but certainly not least of our articles in this issue is that of Dan, Wei and Zhao in *Evaluation of History Interest Inventory - Development and Evaluation of a History Interest Inventory for Chinese K-12 Students*. Dan, Wei and Zhao have compiled an 'interest inventory' to ascertain the level of interest in students' history studies with the possibility of clarifying the extent to which such interest correlates with actual results in tests. They developed the test items carefully using research literature and theory to guide the development of test items to assess three key factors associated with 'interest'. The factors they identified as being separate but related themes, were knowledge of history; assessment of value and importance of history; and positive feelings towards history. In the sample of year 7 students in an Eastern China school, value and importance of history correlated most strongly with achievement in history assessment tasks. The authors cautioned that culturally specific issues could influence these results but this research instrument appears to be useful in leaning about what factors specifically affect learning. Further uses of the 'interest inventory' in different contexts may help clarify the contextual constraints.

In the Media Review we have reviews of two outstanding and thought provoking books:

De Blij, H. J. (2008). *The power of place: Geography, destiny and globalization's rough landscape*. New York: Oxford University Press; and

Stitzlein, Sarah M. (2012). *Teaching for Dissent: Citizenship Education and Political Activism*. Boulder, CO; Paradigm Publishers. **ISBN-13:** 978-1612052281

The latter offers some solutions to key issues emerging from the articles in this issue – how to teach controversy and dissent in a democracy with global perspectives.

To add to this feast of innovative ideas and careful research we have commentary from Associate Professor Hilary Landorf from Florida International University in the Social Justice Issues column. Hilary has much experience in weighing in on some of the most controversial debates around definitions of key themes in international education. I really enjoyed her chapter on the philosophy of global education in Toni Fuss Kirkwood-Tucker's recent book, *Visions in Global Education*. In our column she attempts to build bridges between global education and multicultural education; 'Understanding and valuing difference is one of the overarching goals of both multicultural education and global education. It is by adopting the dialectic model of social justice, in which educators openly acknowledge, examine, and draw on differences, that both fields may be strengthened'. This is well worth a read.

I would also like to announce Carolyn OMahony as our new Assistant Editor replacing Deborah Hutton who could not continue due to her pressing workplace commitments. I would like to thank Deborah for her help to this point and her continuing ongoing support and great global intuition. Carolyn will need to be replaced as Media Editor but she will be able to offer us her international experience in the role of Assistant Editor as we expand our Editorial Board and review editors. Let me know if you have ideas on potential members of our Editorial Board or ideas for expanding our profile and our impact.

About the Editor

Associate Professor Ruth Reynolds is the leader of the Global Education Research and Teaching group at the University of Newcastle, Australia and currently teaches courses in teacher education in Social Studies (called Studies of Society and Environment until very recently in Australia and now is called Humanities and Social Sciences), Civics and Citizenship and Environmental Sustainability. Her research interests include curriculum history, geographic place knowledge, teaching global education in preservice courses, environmental education and teaching using historical fiction. Check her profile on: http://www.newcastle.edu.au/staff/research-profile/Ruth_Reynolds/Publications.html