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The two authors, Li and Hammer start the introduction of their book with an apparently general still everlasting statement about the role of teaching which according to them "provides us opportunities to learn from others including parents, friends, and of course our classroom teachers."

The book is structured in three main parts including 13 chapters: Part 1: Introduction and Perspectives (3 chapters), Part 2: Selected Approaches and Practices in Teaching and Teacher Preparation (9 chapters), and Part 3: Commentary.

The volume's 13 chapters written by 35 researchers in the United States, as a result of close collaboration of them working at the same department at Research Tier I University, mainly focus on innovative teaching practices and approaches as well as provide new insights into the different aspects of teacher training which may be interesting to teacher educators, researchers, and also graduate students who wish to learn about various teaching approaches and good practices for advancing their professional development.

The first chapter, Teaching at Work deals with not only the importance of effective teaching in K-12 classrooms but also how to advance teacher preparation and strengthen innovative ideas in pre-service training of student teachers.

As the main motto of the book is that an effective teacher is one of the most crucial factors that influence students' achievement and outcomes (Research-based Approaches for Identifying and Assessing Effective Teaching Practices)², the authors explain in what different ways the title may be interpreted related to the concept mentioned above:

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(1) good teaching makes a difference in students' learning, referring to different types of classroom activities;

(2) teaching can be taken as a platform to discuss what defines good teaching;

(3) teaching helps to prepare pre-service teachers through teacher preparation programs for different roles in the classroom (Teaching at Work).³

If we take a closer look at the book it becomes evident that the volume is a thematic collection of chapters on the important topic of teaching and teacher education. But there is another feature that makes the book even more exciting and unique at the same time, lending an overall central concept to the whole book which interweaves every single chapter, namely the fact that America is still like a melting pot where people come from different cultures bringing varied customs along with them and this results in a diverse society and teachers must be prepared to work in such an environment.

Several authors of the book highlight the importance of preparing student teachers to be able to find their voice and place in a global teaching environment and make use of the "melting pot feature" of American education, underpinning this thought by dealing with different aspects of teacher preparation.

Eslami et al (Changing Pre-service Teachers' Attitudes) emphasize the essence of enhancing the awareness of student teachers' linguistic diversity in the classroom⁴, whereas Boettcher et al point out that in today's teaching and learning activities the global perspective cannot be disregarded as the American classrooms are "growing increasingly diverse..." (Subtracting Stereotypes through Studying Abroad).⁵

When the authors deal with the issue of what content should be included in pre-service teacher education, related to the problem of preparing student teachers in a diverse teaching environment, Eslami et al (Changing Pre-service Teachers' Attitudes) among others conclude that it is absolutely crucial to develop such teacher training programs that prepare would-be teachers for a society that is facing a growing rate of immigrants and this produces a large variety of cultures, customs and languages.⁶

The authors also draw our attention to how much responsibility lies with the American education system to recognize the trend of increasing diversity, otherwise pre-service

³ p3

⁴ p95

⁵ p106

⁶ p85

teacher training will fail to meet the requirement of endowing pre-service teachers with the right skills to feel comfortable and being accepted in a culturally diverse classroom.⁷

Another aspect of the same issue that Williams & Carter highlight in Chapter 7 (Preparing Pre-service Teachers for Diverse Urban Classrooms) is the fact that both "White teachers and teachers of color have gaps of understanding...interracial discourse."⁸ It follows from this that teacher training programs must deal with showing anti-racist behaviour models to student teachers as well.⁹

Related to this, in the same chapter we get to learn about the Urban Student Teacher Education Preparation (USTEP) model, described by the two authors. The main difference between the traditional teacher training programs and the USTEP model is that in the previous one students tend to spend some hours classrooms which are mainly in White middle class settings¹⁰, while the new model gives prospective teachers the opportunity to fulfil their lesson observation in diverse urban classrooms.¹¹ The model aiming to prepare students to gain a high level of cultural sensitivity provides a strong collaboration among different actors of the training: university as teacher training institute, district support and urban specialist support.¹²

Since the two McKinsey reports¹³ all experts who are concerned about education have been well aware of the fact that effective teachers are key elements of the teaching-learning process. It is also considered as evidence in different literature that advancing teacher preparation and mentoring pre-service and novice teachers are crucial in creating a successful learning environment.

Not surprisingly, in this volume several chapters put these issues in focus. Binks-Cantrell and Malatesha, after pointing out the important role of teachers, sum up the main requirements that teacher preparation should meet to provide suitable and efficient training for student teachers, mentioning among others curricula or standards for students (Connecting Research and Practice through Teacher Knowledge).¹⁴

⁷ p100

⁸ p127

⁹ ibid

¹⁰ p128

¹¹ ibid

¹² 133

¹³ McKinsey Company (2007): How the World's Best Performing School Systems Have Come Out on Top. <http://www.smhc-cpre.org/wp-content/uploads/2008/07/how-the-worlds-best-performing-school-systems-come-out-on-top-sept-072.pdf> and Mourshed, Chijioke & Barber (2010): How The World's Most Improved School Systems Keep Getting Better.

¹⁴ p35

Similarly, in chapter 11 (The Examined Life:Using Digital Stories to Develop the Reflective Capabilities of Pre-service Teachers about Culture and Diversity) the authors dealing with the issue of teacher training highlight the role of reflection which has become a central concept in teacher preparation.¹⁵ The use of digital storytelling approach, as presented in this chapter by Walters et al., shows another promising method that can be used to develop pre-service teachers' global competence and consciousness related to culture and diversity through reflection and writing.

Once getting over pre-service training and entering the everyday teaching routine of schools, teacher assessment and evaluation may be a device for improving teachers' competences and skills and also providing continuous feedback on their work, and as the Watmen et.al refer to, several evaluation checklists have been worked out different universities(Research-based Approaches for Identifying and Assessing Effective Teaching Practices).¹⁶

One of these approaches of assessment mentioned by the authors is, classroom observation and the so called walkthrough instrument. According to the authors this aims to “ obtain multiple snapshots of classroom practices... that focus on specific teacher behaviours...”.¹⁷

The whole book and the chapters are centered around one main topic, that is what makes teaching successful. Several elements have been mentioned already but there is one more aspect that is gaining more and more ground in teacher training without which 21st century's education systems cannot really be efficient and this is mentoring student and novice teachers.

This explains that present volume deals with this issue in different chapters, pointing out the different benefits of the mentoring process: such as collaboration in a multi-tiered mentoring system (Minding the Gap: Mentoring Undergraduate Pre-service Teachers in Educational Research),¹⁸ the positive impact of mentors on mentees¹⁹ or how mentoring works in an open classroom program (Mentoring Viewed through an Open Classroom Experience).²⁰

Each author of these chapters listed above point out the beneficial elements of the mentoring process from which both mentors and mentees may gain a lot. They highlight the main factors that can possibly help develop effective and respectful relationship

¹⁵ p211

¹⁶ p12

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¹⁸ p173

¹⁹ p175

²⁰ p238

between the actors of the mentoring process. It is also noted by Wright et al (Minding the Gap) that not only pre-service teachers can learn from their mentors but this may work the other way around as well and the mentors or other faculty members of the school might benefit from the mentoring process as a way of collaborative working and get new ideas from the younger generations.²¹

As a conclusion we can say that the whole volume is a thought-provoking and extremely informative reading at the same time. Consequently, this book is a perfect reading not only for experienced researchers and those who are experts of the issues of education and teacher training but also for beginner researchers.

And why could this book be an instructive and useful reading for Hungarian researchers, teacher educators and graduate teachers? All the chapters succeed in dealing with the different issues of education and teacher training from a fresh aspect showing fairly new or less known potentials of teacher preparation. Moreover, those chapters dealing with the mentoring process may put the question in new perspective for Hungarian education experts since Hungarian Public Education has been undergoing several significant and so to say controversial changes recently: a completely new teachers' life career model came into force whose one key element is the qualifying and assessing procedure of teachers at each stage. Along with the new model a new mentoring system has been introduced as well in order to help new teachers get over their first praxis shock. However, the new system is full of question marks, good practices of already working mentoring systems are highly needed. If Hungarian public education really wants to transform their institutes into modern learning communities, then ideas of decreasing the research-practice gap between teacher training institutes and schools or applying collaborative, multi-level mentoring models described by Wright et al.²² should be worth of consideration.

²¹ p174

²² p173