

**Introduction to the CJEAP Special Issue on Educational Policy
and Internationally Educated Teachers**

MOVING FROM THE PERSONAL TO THE POLITICAL IN IET SCHOLARSHIP

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Guest Editor

Internationally educated or immigrant teachers (IETs) trying to resume their careers in their new contexts face numerous challenges, among them meeting certification requirements, completing teacher education programming, and securing teaching employment. Their task is made more complex when the very education systems these teachers are trying to access fail to value the contributions of educators with languages, cultures, and backgrounds different from those of the mainstream teaching force. Likewise, academics working in the area of IET advocacy and scholarship face challenges in establishing IET research as a significant agenda amongst government and education stakeholders. In Canada, for example, where teacher shortages are not evident for the most part except in remote geographical regions and certain subject specializations, initiatives related to IETs tend to be underrepresented in integration funding and policy agendas. Such circumstances set teachers apart from other groups of immigrant professionals such as health care professionals who are in high demand in many settings and therefore accrue greater political and financial priority.

This approach to immigrant integration is problematic for two reasons: 1) immigrant teachers are still encouraged to establish themselves in Canada and other newcomer-receiving contexts whether labour shortages exist or not, and 2) immigrant teachers have the potential to

make crucial contributions to their new societies by representing and responding to the growing cultural and linguistic diversity evident amongst students in newcomer-receiving school systems. Research conducted across educational contexts clearly demonstrates that students from diverse ethnocultural groups often feel marginalized within the Canadian school system (Trifonas, 2003). An important strategy for responding more effectively to the needs of diverse learners and combating racism in school systems involves diversifying the teaching force to better reflect the backgrounds, worldviews, cultures, and languages of the students (Ryan, Pollock, & Antonelli, 2009).

This special issue of the *Canadian Journal of Educational Administration and Policy* has as its main objective situating immigrant or internationally educated teacher (IET) research within the domain of educational policy. The rationale for doing so stems from the fact that much of the IET research to date has focused primarily on the perspectives of immigrant teachers. While such work contributes important insights about the lived experiences of some of the many immigrant professionals who navigate certification requirements and attempt to resume their careers in Canada and elsewhere, it seems unlikely that significant changes will occur to facilitate the integration of IETs in education systems until the scholarship speaks more deliberately to the interests of education and immigration policymakers.

Authors in this issue explore a variety of IET-related themes pertaining to certification (Cho; Kelly & Cui), teacher education (Chassels; Faez), workplace issues (Pollock), and employment and ethnocultural equity policies (Schmidt & Block), drawing on a variety of methodologies including oral history, narrative, and policy analysis. While the research is predominantly situated in various regions of Canada, including Alberta, Manitoba, and Ontario, a relevant international perspective is offered through research findings from Iceland

(Ragnarsdottir), demonstrating that the challenges of IET integration are echoed in immigrant-receiving contexts internationally. Findings from these studies/analyses underscore the need to recruit and support a more diverse teaching force than currently exists in many newcomer-receiving school systems and to challenge the discriminatory policies and practices that keep IETs out of the teaching profession or underemployed within it. It is the hope that by focusing attention here on current empirical and conceptual debates surrounding educational policy and IETs, more meaningful connections can be established between IETs' lived experiences and contemporary educational agendas, such as the need to better serve culturally and linguistically diverse student populations in K-12 schools.

References

Ryan, J., Pollock, K., & Antonelli, F. (2009). Teacher diversity in Canada: Leaky pipelines, bottlenecks, and glass ceilings. *Canadian Journal of Education*, 32, 591-617.

Trifonas, P.P. (Ed.). (2003). *Pedagogies of difference: Rethinking education for social change*. New York/London: RoutledgeFalmer.