

## Book review

### **Initial English Language Teacher Education International Perspectives on Research, Curriculum and Practice**

Edited by Darío Luis Banegas, London/New York, Bloomsbury, 2017, Pp. v + 228, ISBN 9781474294409 (hbk): US\$85.20, ePDF 9781474294423: US\$56.69, ePub 9781474294416: US \$64.79 (Kindle edition)

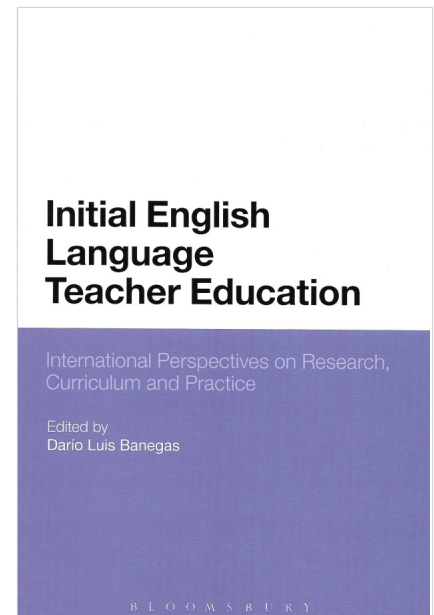
Johnson (2009, p. 17) points out that

[A]t its core, L2 teacher education is primarily concerned with teachers as learners of teaching”. Understanding and adhering to a conception of initial (English) language teacher education from a sociocultural perspective entails understanding and adhering to the view that teachers’ cognitions – that is their knowledge, thoughts, beliefs, assumptions – “are constructed through and by the normative ways of thinking, talking, and acting that have been historically and culturally embedded in the communities of practice in which they participate (as both learners and teachers).

This is the fundamental premise underpinning this book.

*Initial English Language Teacher Education* is an edited collection of must-read chapters for anyone involved or interested in the field of second language teacher education and professional development. The collection provides an authoritative review of IELTE by drawing upon experiences coming from very diverse contexts, some of which are seldom the focus of collected editions of this sort.

The volume is made up of an introductory and a concluding chapter by the editor, plus twelve chapters written by teachers of teachers (ToTs). In the introduction, Darío L. Banegas ponders on the motivations behind choosing teaching as a profession and conceives this latter as a journey of continual and continuous development, whose point of departure becomes the central character of this collection. The introduction presents a well-framed background concerning IELTE as both a context-situated and context-driven activity. This is at present seen as encompassing a shift from rigid *training* to ongoing *development*, and as



falling within the scope of three closely intertwined theoretical viewpoints: sociocultural theory (see, e.g. Johnson, 2009); cognitivism and the study of teacher cognitions (see, e.g. Borg, 2006), and the Freiran notion of criticality, as empowering (aspiring) teachers and their educators as agents of change by promoting pedagogies that respond to their local contexts and cultures (Banegas & Velázquez, 2014).

The twelve chapters in the volume provide readers with revealing insight into the work of teachers and ToTs around the world, stressing aspects such as student-teachers and novice teachers' beliefs and perceptions of the profession; teachers' cognitions and their alignment with curriculum implementation; IELTE pedagogies and classroom practices; the role of observation, critical reflection and feedback, and the need for teacher-initiated collaborative action research. Every chapter departs from a series of objectives that constitute the backbone of the different narratives, and concludes with questions aimed at appealing to the readers' consideration of and reflection upon their own practices and contexts. In this way, the volume not only provides a unique opportunity for readers to identify and empathise with the accounts presented in each chapter, but also makes a valuable contribution to disseminate the work of teachers that come from the periphery. Through pages 8 to 11, the editor provides a clear synthesis of the structure of the book. I will, therefore, attempt to contribute a succinct elaboration on the most salient aspects that each chapter tackles. A traveller myself, I would like to subscribe to the metaphor of teaching as a journey that the editor uses in the introduction and, thus, I depart.

My first stop takes me to remote places. Chapters 2 and 3 refer to teacher pedagogies in the Asian context. The main theme running across these chapters is bridging the gap between the theory-practice disconnect. Both chapters address the challenges novice teachers face when trying to align the theories they are introduced to in their IELTE programmes and the (harsh) reality of their school contexts. Whereas in Chapter 2 Yan aims at enhancing Chinese teachers' engagement and academic learning through action research, the authors of Chapter 3 explore the implementation of different strategies to help novice teachers get ready for teaching literacy practices in primary schools in Singapore. In a similar vein, Chapter 4, situated in the African context, looks at IELTE curriculum alignment with the mandates of the secondary education curriculum in Kenya. In this case, authors Kiai and Nduku Kioko address the topic by analysing teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of their teaching in the light of their initial preparation programmes. Chapter 5 brings up the question of teaching the ToTs. It focuses on the challenges faced by supervisors in an EFL programme in South Africa, and the relevance of developing suitable, consistent strategies for post-observation feedback so as to support aspiring teachers during their practicum.

The second stage in the journey takes me to more familiar landscapes. Chapter 9, situated in Spain, discusses the role of reflection and critical thinking for the development of a personal philosophy of teaching, and calls for divergence of views rather than consensus by means of the implementation of Kolb's experiential learning (1984) cycles in a foreign

language didactics course. In Chapter 11, another Spanish educator challenges traditional EFL textbook-driven lessons by resorting to identity texts as a pedagogical strategy to help teacher-learners “channel their cognitive, linguistic, experiential and affective wealth” in order to reflect upon themselves and consequently develop a personal pedagogy for their classrooms that more closely reveals and adjusts to their true selves as educators, and that emancipates them from the “oppressive forms of EFL teaching, which have become the standard” (p. 165). In the context of teacher education in the UK, Saraceni (Chapter 10) raises the issue of critical awareness and the role this plays in teacher development. Chapter 10 describes classroom contexts as unpredictable and ever-changing, thus calling for the systematic self-reflection and self-evaluation of teachers’ own classroom practices in order to develop confidence and insight in classroom dynamics, and as a means towards theorising practice.

The last stop in this round-the-world journey brings me back home, to South America. As personally and directly involved in IELTE at an Argentinean university, I have left the chapters involving my context for last. In the first chapter in this collection, educators Amez and Dobboletta inquire into pre-service and novice teachers’ beliefs and perceptions of their knowledge base and gauge how this might inform IELTE curriculum change in the teacher education programme in Rosario, Argentina. Chapters 6 and 7 look at the implementation IELTE programmes mediated by the technologies. In Chapter 6, Díaz Maggioli from Uruguay puts into question the traditional, somewhat behaviouristic use of learning management systems and suggests an alternative designer’s mindset template on the basis of a cultural historical activity theory, which might more adequately offer the possibility of effective learning. Similarly, Chapter 7 explores the case of an online language teacher education programme in Patagonia, Argentina, and how this teaching modality frames novice teachers’ identity. Chapter 8 explores self-regulated practices as an ignored component of teacher education programmes in Colombia, and highlights how teachers’ lack of self-regulated learning skills impinges on their capacity to educate their learners in such skills. This chapter suggests that underlying the development of self-regulation is self-efficacy, that is, teacher’s beliefs in their own capabilities, and that one possible way to help teachers develop both is through continual formative assessment and the provision of informative feedback that not only points out learners’ problems, but that provides adequate solutions.

Last but not least, there is the case of Brazil. I believe that Chapter 12 is possibly the best example of the theoretical framework underlying this volume in IELTE. The experience narrated in this chapter represents theory in action. Through her narrative, Fernanda Coelho Liberali provides readers with the opportunity to understand that it is actually possible to implement forms of language teaching that depart from the mandates of off-the-shelf, one-size-fits-all teaching methodologies. Her discussion of globalization, superdiversity, language learning and teacher education in Brazil and the implementation of a Multicultural

Education Project in a disadvantaged context are tangible proof that a change in ELT is possible.

In conclusion, *Initial English Language Teacher Education* is an insightful, inspiring collection of experiences that invite us to review and resignify our practices in the light of three very powerful theories. As a teacher educator I cannot but highly recommend this volume and hope readers enjoy it as much as I have.

## References

- Banegas, D. L., & Velázquez, A. (2014). Enacting a people-centered curriculum in ELT with teenage learners. *Profile*, 16(2), 199-205.
- Borg, S. (2006). *Teacher cognition and language education*. London: Continuum.
- Johnson, K. E. (2009). *Second language teacher education: A sociocultural perspective*. London/New York: Routledge.
- Kolb, D. A. (1984). *Experiential learning: Experience as the source of learning and development*. New Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

María Alejandra Soto  
FHAYCS, Universidad Autónoma de Entre Ríos, Argentina  
[prof.ing.masoto@gmail.com](mailto:prof.ing.masoto@gmail.com)