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Editorial: Strengthening the quality of teacher education programs

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Editorial on the Research Topic
[Strengthening the quality of teacher education programs](#)

Introduction

Teacher education programs play a crucial role in promoting the quality of future teacher education by equipping teachers with the competencies and skills necessary to foster innovative teaching in diverse classroom settings. They are also considered as the cornerstone of preparing future teachers to meet the complex and diverse needs of 21st-century learners. Over the last decade, there has been a growing effort to sustainably strengthen the quality of teacher education programs to meet the evolving demands of contemporary education (Megawati et al., 2021). This growing effort has led to increased attention from educational researchers to identify innovative strategies that enhance the quality of teacher education programs (Mulyadi et al., 2020; Arifani et al., 2022). The articles published in this Research Topic explore the current understanding on the subject of strengthening the quality of teacher education programs, emphasizing key themes and research areas that have been raised as critical precursors for enhancing these programs.

Review of pedagogical reform

Conceptual outlook

The articles in this volume document three types of pedagogical innovations for strengthening the quality of teacher education programs. The article by Ling et al. highlights the need to meet a contemporary model of teacher education for middle school classrooms through optimizing the role of teacher distributive leadership to stimulate interaction, engagement, motivation, autonomy, and critical thinking. Moreover, Jang introduces his book review on Singapore's approach to teacher education. Teacher education program policy in Singapore is quite unique compared to other major countries such as the United States and China because Singapore prioritizes unilateral collaborative systems, like other countries, through the equal tripartite partnership between the Ministry of Education (MOE), National Institute of Education (NIE), and schools to equip their students with 21st-century skills, critical thinking, and creativity. Next, Dahl et al. introduce an innovative approach to teacher professional development using the ECHO model,

which presents the best practices for sharing (e.g., case presentations, problem-solving, mentorship) using teleconferencing technology. This adapted model intentionally focuses on creating a community of practice (CoP) or professional learning networks with the overarching objective of promoting ongoing relationships and dialogue across geographical and cultural boundaries to improve teacher professional development.

Research findings

As part of the effort to enhance the quality of teacher education programs, two articles give positive contributions toward the body of knowledge through pedagogical reforms in the context of Chinese and Korean teacher education programs. First, in the Chinese pre-service teacher education program setting, [Cheng and Zhao](#) express the findings of the impact of the workshop for English teaching competition (WETC) as a professional learning community (PLC) on pre-service teachers' professional commitment. The findings reveal that the WETC program had significant and positive effects on pre-service teachers' professional commitment and collaboration, shared vision, and reflective dialogue, which effected their professional commitment by heightening their interest in professional development, commitment to teaching as a career, and personal time investment.

In addition, [Kim et al.](#) report the importance of international teaching practicum (ITP) experience for South Korean pre-service teachers' teaching attitudes, ways of thinking, and perceptions of classroom teaching. The study explains in what ways the participants' TPACK has been promoted and optimized. The findings illustrate that the ITP could trigger pre-service teachers' experience in terms of their teaching achievement and teacher agency, and among the elements of TPACK, the categories of CK, PK, PCK, and TK are very dominant during ITP activities.

The next two articles explore the psychological factors of teacher education during the COVID-19 pandemic, in addition to the pedagogical and technological barriers ([Megawati et al., 2021](#)). These articles examine the challenges faced by teachers during the COVID-19 situation, in which they did not have sufficient mental and physical preparation to teach. The first article, by [Moosa and Ramnarin](#), identifies teachers' beliefs and attitudes and measures the impact of their beliefs and attitudes on their behavioral intentions to integrate ICTs into their science classes during the pandemic situation in South Africa. The findings from this case study indicate that the empowerment evaluation approach positively impacted the teacher's beliefs and attitudes.

Furthermore, [Adams et al.](#) attempt to explore whether field experience becomes one of the key predictors of PST's instructional knowledge and community engagement. In their case study involving eight pre-service teachers and 33 pupils from culturally and socioeconomically marginalized communities, the researchers discover that training in the clinical experience of PST education plays a crucial role in the development of pre-service teaching, specifically for teaching students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. These two articles suggest further research to provide more TPACK training for pre-service teachers so that

they are ready to face unpredictable situations, such as that of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The last article by [Meutstege et al.](#) uses differentiated instruction (DI), which is a part of TPD. Providing differentiated instruction (DI) in secondary education requires teachers to engage in four phases: preparing a lesson series, preparing a lesson, teaching during the lesson, and evaluating the lesson. The significance of psychological factors in teacher education programs is also promoted in a study by [Spittle et al.](#). The study explores the confidence and motivation of pre-service teachers specializing in primary school physical education in Australia. The findings reveal that pre-service teachers generally have higher confidence in implementation and higher motivation in practice and performance.

Conclusion

From the conceptual dimension, the articles explore different models of teacher education programs, from the tripartite model of Singapore to the ECHO community of practices model of the United States and the teachers' distributive leadership of Australia. These three conceptual articles agree that synergy among policymakers, teacher education institutions, and practitioners is the key to the success of teacher education programs in their countries. Finally, the empirical evidence demonstrates that a unique community of practices, such as the international teaching practicum (ITP), differentiated instruction (DI), workshop for English teaching competition (WETC), and training in physical education, can significantly enhance teacher attitudes, performance, and TPACK.

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