Impact of intercultural teaching induction training. A review of research

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Abstract: The theoretical and normative advance of multicultural education have stressed the need to adapt preservice teacher education to the plural nature of social and educational reality. This article focuses on the empirical research conducted between 2005 and 2012 and aimed to analyze the impact of preservice teacher education programs committed to cultural diversity on future education professionals. Findings provide information on key factors that influence the success or failure of teacher training proposals, as well as training actions that have the most impact and the methodological limitations most frequent in this research area.
Key words: teacher education, preservice teachers, cultural diversity, review of the literature, educational research.
Resumen: El avance teórico y normativo de la educación en y para la diversidad cultural ha subrayado la necesidad de adecuar la formación inicial del profesorado al carácter plural de la realidad social y educativa. Este artículo centra su atención en las investigaciones empíricas desarrolladas entre 2005 y 2012 y destinadas a analizar el impacto que tienen los programas de formación inicial docente comprometidos con la diversidad cultural en los futuros profesores. Los resultados proporcionan información sobre los factores clave que influyen en el éxito o fracaso de las propuestas de formación, así como de las acciones formativas que tienen más impacto y de las limitaciones metodológicas más frecuentes de esta línea de investigación.
Palabras clave: formación del profesorado, futuros docentes, diversidad cultural, revisión de la literatura, investigación educativa.

Introduction

There are numerous international declarations and speeches that bespeak the need to adapt the initial teacher training to social changes and increase their sensitivity and commitment to cultural diversity (Arnesen *et al.*, 2008; European Commission, 2010). According to UNESCO (2009), the biggest breakthrough in international educational thinking is, precisely, the recognition of multiple interpretations of reality and the various forms of teaching and learning.

However, the great educational challenge at the moment is not exclusively in the recognition of cultural diversity, but in how to build an inclusive society and education for all that promotes cultural exchange and common wellbeing (CIDE, 2005).

This growing interest in the inclusion of cultural diversity, enhanced in the declaration of principles, seems nevertheless to have a limited impact on the programs of initial teacher training (Sleeter, 2001; Zeichner, 2009), where the incidence is low and partial, even in those initiatives in which there is express commitment with cultural diversity (Morrier *et al.*, 2007). As Aguado *et al.* (2008) have pointed out, the incorporation of the multicultural component to teacher training programs is inexistent or is usually carried out through the introduction of sporadic initiatives and some subjects usually elective that are insufficient.

On the other hand, there are serious doubts about the theoretical approach adopted since, as Gorski (2006) highlighted, teacher training is typically articulated from the Eurocentric point of view, biased by theories of deficit that conceive cultural diversity as a problem. These conceptions are often accompanied by formative folkloric answers and assimilationist measures that do not contribute to equality and mutual enrichment.

Rigorous studies on this fact have highlighted the lack of comprehensive analysis covering the social and political dimensions of education and the problems associated with the inequality of students (Banks *et al.*, 2005; Matus and Infante, 2011). The adoption of this kind of approaches involves the incorporation of more reflective and complex prospects to help future teachers to critically assess the impact of social, economic and political conditions in the construction of identity as well as personal and group development. As mentioned by Gay (2013), it requires a long-term treatment in which cultural diversity permeates every element of the curriculum and the teaching staff as a whole.

Despite the difficulties it implies, there are more initiatives aimed at improving the initial teacher training in and for cultural diversity (Sales, 2006; He and Cooper, 2009; Waddell, 2011), mainly the research and scientific production that focuses on this theme (Grant and Secada, 1990; Cochran-Smith *et al.*, 2004; Grant and Gibson, 2011).

Thus a research line arises, strengthened in the framework of teacher training (OECD 2010), oriented to reveal the impact of programs of initial teacher training in and for cultural diversity in future teachers. This work collects the progress experienced in this field through the revision of empirical research work developed during the 2005-2012 period.

Procedure

It is a bibliographic research which, as Bisquerra (1989) pointed out, is oriented to search, collect, organize, value and criticize bibliographic information on specific topics. For Bisquerra (1989: 68), one of the greatest virtues of this type of research is that "it enables the dissemination of a panoramic vision of the problem to all those interested in the topic".

To review the scientific production the documentary analysis has been used, understood as a set of actions designed to analyze and represent the content and form of a document (Clauso, 1993). The procedure of analysis has referred to the double level described by Pinto (1989): analysis of formal elements and internal analysis or content analysis.

The first level is shown in the localization and bibliographic description of the documentation (during February 2013). This level is closer to cataloguing, in which documents have been located and classified according to their physical aspects (source, authorship, year and place of publication, bibliographic reference). To access the scientific production different databases and specialized manuals have been consulted.

In the international context the databases ERIC and SCOPUS have been considered, as well as the compiled manuals of Ball and Tyson (2011), OECD (2010) and Townsend and Bates (2007). The descriptors used for searching have been: teacher education, preservice, diversity and multicultural/intercultural. Scientific production at a national level has been revised from CSIC-ISOC, DIALNET and TESEO databases USING the following descriptors: formación, profesorado/docente, diversidad cultural and multicultural/intercultural. Using these parameters 320 files are obtained, 199 corresponding to the international context and 121 to the national one.

The second level of internal analysis, has been made out of two stages. The first one, developed between March and April 2013, has been the reading of the title, abstract and descriptions of the documents in order to identify and select studies matching the following criteria: a) empirical research, b) jobs whose object is to study

the impact that initiatives of initial teacher training related to cultural diversity have on future teachers. These criteria have made it possible to reduce to 55 the number of documents that have served as the basis for our revision. The journals in which reviewed articles can be found is in Table 1.[1]

The second stage was the most intensive (made between May and June 2013). This is a time of in-depth reading and content analysis of the studies regarding the following elements: research problem, methodological design, techniques and instruments for gathering information, sample/participants and results.

Once the documents were analyzed, they were organized in terms of the places where initial training was studied. As Biddle, Good and Goodson (2000) point out, the teaching contexts are determinant in the impact that initial training has on future teachers and the knowledge they gain. It is also a classification criterion utilized in previous revisions (Sleeter, 2001; Hollins and Torres, 2005), which make a difference between proposals developed in university centers only and initiatives that include field experiences or immersion in multicultural contexts. All in all, two types of research have been established:

- Studies focusing on the impact of the training developed in centers of initial teacher training.
- Research on the impact of proposals that include experiences of immersion in multicultural reality.

Results

The most outstanding results of the revision based on the types of research established are shown below.

Studies on the impact of training proposals developed in centers of initial teacher training.

This section contains 28 research works aimed to learn the impact of training in and for cultural diversity developed in centers of initial training on the future teachers.

Taking as a reference the international context, we highlight, Guidry and Sowa's work (2005) as well as Wasonga's (2005). The first authors focus their attention on the content analysis of the online dialogues between students and teachers with different cultural backgrounds. The study reveals that the experience has contributed to view the world from different points, to understand cultural diversity as inherent to human beings and to understand that the vision of reality is limited and linked to the own experience.

Wasonga (2005) studies, through surveys, the influence of a formative experience on the knowledge and attitudes of future teachers and the relation between both

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[1] This table is located in the Annex at the end of this text (editor's note).

variables. The research concluded that training for cultural diversity greatly influences knowledge and attitudes, however they are not interlinked, this way knowledge cannot be used as a predictor of attitude changes.

Paredes (2009), in a quantitative and qualitative study, finds equally positive results and stresses that this training is particularly significant in content, language and pedagogical knowledge. Cho and DeCastro (2006) are interested in finding, by means of questionnaires, the change in attitude of future teachers. The results, although positive, are taken cautiously because, together with attitudes in favor, there are students who deny the presence of racism and do not consider attention to cultural diversity beneficial.

Tsigilis *et al.* (2006) study the variation in attitudes and its relation with behavior based on 148 questionnaires applied to students. The results show an improvement in attitudes toward cultural diversity and what they can be predicted, partly, based on behavior. Szecsi *et al.* (2010), also interested in revealing the impact of training on the attitudes of students, found that it has had a positive influence in terms of greater culture awareness and the need to expand teacher training for cultural diversity.

Other investigations are concerned by the impact of training on the conceptions, beliefs and opinions of future teachers. Fox and Diaz-Greenberg's work (2006) belongs to this group, Moore (2009), Kinloch (2011), Laughter (2011) and Liggett (2011) who, through qualitative approaches, document analysis, interviews and class observations, claim that teacher training for cultural diversity has a major impact on the modification of pre-conceptions and beliefs, generates a deeper understanding of culture, broader meanings of education in multicultural contexts and incipient critical awareness. These authors consider that reflection, exchange with colleagues and collaborative work are key tools for the success of the training programs.

In the case studies developed by Milner (2006), Christensen (2007), McKnight *et al.* (2011) and Patchen (2012) the learnings and knowledge acquired during the training are discussed. Milner (2006), concludes that the activities aimed at fostering awareness, critical thinking and the link between theory and practice are those that have the greatest impact. Christensen (2007), claims that future teachers have improved their understanding of cognitive concepts of intercultural education and this increases their awareness and intercultural competence.

This study highlights the reflection of the ethnographic perspective adopted in teacher training as a relevant factor in the progress experienced. McKnight *et al.* (2011) note that the participants of their research also have increased and improved their knowledge and have gained greater awareness of cultural diversity. Patchen (2012), to improve learning and avoid the cognitive dissonance of future teachers, analyzes the impact that the use of cinema has, as a tool for reflection and learning the other in a subject of intercultural education.

The results confirm that the strategy used helps to better understand cultural diversity, especially students who have had little interaction with people of different cultural origins. This work also emphasizes the tendency of students to make binary and simplistic comparisons when describing aspects related to diversity and variation of responses on the basis of ethnicity.

Similar purposes had the studies by Lenski *et al.* (2005), Cain (2010) and Gunn (2011). The first author analyzes the impact of an ethnographic action-research project in future teachers. Through interviews and documents prepared by 22 students, the authors find that future teachers interact from perspectives different from their own and examine both the situations they observe and their own beliefs more critically.

A later follow-up study with six of these participants confirms that changes remain during their first year of professional exercise. Cain (2010) used the narrative of fiction online as a strategy to promote reflection on cultural diversity. Combining a qualitative and quantitative methodology, collected evidence of 10 students during a semester.

The findings allow him to affirm that the formative experience has facilitated reflection, awareness and understanding of multiculturality. Gunn (2011) examined the relevance of case studies as a training strategy for the diversity of future teachers. The results revealed that the strategy has a positive influence on the perceptions of the majority of students, increases their motivation and improves the depth of discussion and the transfer to practice.

Less conclusive results are found in the work of Espiritu (2006), Hill-Jackson *et al.* (2007) and Fernsten (2009). Espiritu (2006), based on the observation of 23 students and the work performed in the classroom, recognizes that training for cultural diversity has different impacts on the basis of the participants' social, cultural and economic position of privilege.

Those students of privileged groups minimize the social power of their position and their contribution to the preservation of inequalities and racist attitudes; while the disadvantaged students assume a more critical position toward society and the attention given to cultural diversity. Hill-Jackson *et al.* (2007), in a study with 200 pupils, reveal that the impact of initial training varies depending on the profile of each person.

The profiles found are two: defenders and resistant. Each profile presents different cognitive complexity, vision of the world, intercultural sensibility, ethics and perception of self-efficacy, which will affect the impact of formative experiences and positions that eventually are adopted with regard to cultural diversity. Fernsten (2009), from the administration of a questionnaire to 48 students, establishes that the incidence of the teacher preparation received varies depending on the contact with cultures other than their own and the prior knowledge that students have about cultural diversity.

Less encouraging results are shown by other studies, they conclude that the initial training of teachers not only produces no impact on students, but sometimes, reinforces stereotypes and/or knowledge scantly sensitive to cultural diversity. Locke (2005), for example, interviewed and observed 13 students and concluded that training designed to contest previous frames of reference has not had any impact on the responses of future teachers, achievements that the social environment or the media have.

De Courcy (2007) performs an action-research with 37 students during a course on multicultural education. The results reflect that unfavorable pre-conceptions have been reinforced and, even though there is evidence that students are susceptible to new ideas, tend to build them in terms of deficit.

Henkin and Steinmetz (2008) as well as Szabo and Anderson (2009) reached similar results. Henkin and Steinmetz (2008), after applying an open questionnaire to 56 students, indicate a low level of understanding and awareness. Szabo and Anderson (2009) find that the formative actions undertaken have not had the expected impact, as they reflect little impact on the conceptions, attitudes and prior knowledge of teachers in training.

Similar conclusions can be found in the work of Berta-Avila and William-White (2010) and Reiter and Davis (2011). The first work evinces, through narratives, that future teachers show politically correct conceptions of diversity, scarce knowledge about cultural diversity and need strong support to develop processes of reflection and criticism. In Reiter and Davis (2011), focused on the responses of 153 students to a questionnaire, it is verified that the training received has not had any impact on the attitudes and previous beliefs of those aspiring to become teachers.

In the national context we distinguish the ethnographic study of Herrada (2010), in which 40 students participated. Its purpose is to analyze the evolution of the term race in the course of a subject related to cultural diversity. After the analysis of data obtained through questionnaires, observations and tests, the author notes that students make a problem from the concept, realign their beliefs and attitudes, and in some cases, they extrapolate the knowledge obtained in the lessons to the classroom context.

Research on the impact of formative proposals that include experiences of immersion in reality

The number of studies located in this typology is 27. These works include experiences of different types: proposals that take place in schools (practicum), immersions in local community (learning-service) and experiences in communities different from the native or cross-cultural (immersion in families, exchanges, etc.). Among them, practices at schools are the most numerous (18 of 27).

In the international context we emphasize Almarza's work (2005), who analyzed the impact of practicum in 240 future teachers for two years. This is a qualitative study based on the realistic model of Korthagen that collects the process experienced by students in training from the initial frustration to the deconstruction of preconceptions and reconstruction based on the multicultural experience lived.

This research stresses the relevance of the practicum and the reflection on the practice of teacher training in and for cultural diversity. Czop's *et al.* study (2010), focused on the changing of attitudes and beliefs after practicum, also reaches similar conclusions. Zygmunt-Fillwalk's work (2005) and Zygmunt-Fillwalk and Leitze's study (2006), through a questionnaire, interviews and focal groups, the changing attitudes of two generations of students of a training program which includes immersion in a culturally heterogeneous college.

The findings reflect an improvement in knowledge, attitudes and prior beliefs that stays for several years. The authors claim that the cultural immersion, the relations established, the reflection and the professional support offered have been critical to the success of the change. Gayle-Evans and Michael (2006) applied a questionnaire to 32 students before and after practicum and obtained positive results in terms of level of awareness. Hsu (2009), who analyzes the impact of practicum relying on entries of a blog and the application of a rate before and after their completion, also points to an improvement in the reflection on the practice and attitudes toward cultural diversity.

Equally positive results show Cicchelli and Cho's work (2007), He and Cooper (2009), Bleicher (2011) and Bodur (2012). Cicchelli and Cho (2007) described the influence of practicum in 61 future teachers and conclude that the change in attitudes and beliefs is more obvious and significant in white students. This finding made the authors consider that the social or cultural aspects can influence the impact that training programs eventually have.

He and Cooper (2009) take the ABC model of Schmitd as a reference and analyze the impact of a training action that includes field experiences in schools. Using a quasi-experimental design and a Likert scale, they study the differences between the experimental and control groups. The results show that knowledge and multicultural understanding improve in the group that participates in the initiative.

Bleicher (2011) looks at the perceptions of 95 teachers in training through the analysis of reflections, interviews and a questionnaire applied before and after practicum. The findings reveal a significant change in perceptions and certain improvement in their confidence regarding their own abilities.

Bodur (2012) analyzes the evolution of two groups of students in terms of beliefs and attitudes through a questionnaire and interviews. One of these groups study a training program for cultural diversity that includes field experiences in educational

centers; while the other one is the control group. Results show that the experimental group ends its formative period with beliefs and more positive attitudes and deeper understanding of the multicultural reality.

Other studies focus their attention on the impact of guided practices. In Klug's *et al.* (2006), mentoring is exercised by a student who is tutor of other student from a different culture. In Zozakiewicz's (2010) study, on the other hand, the mentor is an experienced teacher with intercultural competence that supervises the future teacher during practicum. In both cases, even though with different methodologies, certain improvement in understanding the multicultural phenomenon and in practices with culturally heterogeneous students is noticed.

Other studies with less promising results are also contained. In this group belongs, among others, Prado's *et al.* (2007) work. It analyses field journals and interviews of 38 future teachers. Their findings indicate that students are reluctant to address issues related to cultural diversity, they do not have enough knowledge of other cultural groups and believe that the most correct and egalitarian is homogenous treatment, as homogenous as possible.

Kyles and Olafson (2008) studied the students' beliefs and attitudes before and after practical training through the implementation of various scales and the analysis of autobiographies. The scales do not reflect any changes, while the qualitative analysis of the autobiographies show some improvements that the authors linked to the type of experiences lived by the students. Those who have experiences of multicultural character develop more favorable beliefs.

Settllage *et al.* (2009) investigated, through a longitudinal design, changes in beliefs of 48 future teachers after studying the practicum. Their results confirm that there are not any clear changes. Similarly, Lockhart (2010) and Zippay (2010) describe ideas and beliefs that future teachers have at the beginning and at the end of the practical training. Both studies concluded that the formation process has not had any effect.

The research focused on analyzing the impact of immersion practices in the local community are, as it has been pointed out, less numerous. Bell *et al.* (2007) examined the concepts that are developed in an experience of community service through a questionnaire, the analysis of essays and autobiographies.

The authors point out that the experience has allowed developing more complex concepts of cultural diversity. Bollin (2007), in a qualitative study supported on the analysis of the diaries of learning practices-service to the community, underlines that this type of experiences contribute to develop attitudes and values of respect, responsibility and confidence, dismantle stereotypes and improve the understanding of the challenge that involves teaching in heterogeneous classrooms.

Davis and Moely (2007), through the application of a scale to 217 students, and Waddell (2011), through a case study with 33 future teachers, reach the same conclusions. Both authors confirm that these practices of immersion develop favorable attitudes regarding cultural diversity, improve knowledge on oneself and increase commitment to the community. Chang *et al.* (2011) studied the influence of contextual and personal variables in students who attend learning-service practices.

A sample of 212 candidates is selected to manage different qualitative and quantitative instruments. The results indicate that the discussion on practice is the variable that influences learning the most. The influence of other variables such as sex, age or sociocultural origin do not show univocal results, fluctuating depending on the type of the desired learning outcome. In this type of studies the close relationship established with people from other cultures, the climate of relations and the commitment of teachers are highlighted as major achievements.

To conclude, we present studies that analyze the impact of formative experiences of immersion in families from different cultures or in student-exchange initiatives. The studies reviewed correspond to training programs in the United States that have host families of Italian, English, Honduran and Dominican origin. All of them intend to analyze the incidence of the formative experience on the perception, beliefs, attitudes and knowledge of future teachers.

Ference and College (2006) indicate that these immersion experiences contribute to personal growth, improve the students' knowledge and understanding, and help them to develop positive attitudes toward cultural diversity. Nero's investigation (2009) ratified these findings and highlights an increase in conceptual complexity and critical reflection. Marx and Moss (2011), as well as Phillion *et al.* (2009), confirm these results by providing that this type of experiences also help to move the learning acquired in practice.

These research works, however, show that there is an alert for the need to carefully and thoroughly planning the formative experience, as well as the relevance acquired by the explicit commitment of the host family.

At national level we emphasize the study of Durán (2011), whose purpose is to analyze the replies offered by future teachers after performing the practicum in an exchange program between Spain and the United Kingdom. The information collected through the application of a questionnaire to 45 students has shown that the impact of the experience heavily depends on the participants' profile. In the case of Spanish teachers, improvement in knowledge, connection with previous experiences and confidence in themselves have been more significant. The author attributes it to the fact that it was the first time that the collective of Spanish teachers participated in a cross-cultural experience, while the English had already done so previously.

Discussion and conclusions

After reviewing, we can state that the efforts made in the national context for the consolidation of this line of research is substantially lower than the commitment at the international framework, as it is disclosed by the small number of studies carried out in our environment in recent years. This fact confirms that the field of initial teacher training in and for cultural diversity in Spain continues to be an incipient, residual field with poor visibility.

This can be linked to several factors: the scarcity of funding for educational research, stressed by the economic crisis that has beset the country; disregard of training in and for cultural diversity as a preferential area of research, and finally the difficulty of dissemination, that occasionally this type of investigations find, owing to its eminently local scope; confinement to unrepresentative samples or specific subjects; the methodological weakness in which, sometimes, they are based; and the low use of repositories and other means, outside the usual publishing circuits, which in other countries such as the USA, are common.

A greater commitment and institutional support to increase the training offer addressed to teachers in this aspect is required (Trent *et al.*, 2008; Aguado *et al.*, 2008; Ibañez, 2012; Gay, 2013) and the research aimed to analyze their impact on teachers in training and in their future professional practice (Sleeter, 2001; Rodríguez Izquierdo, 2009; Grant and Gibson, 2011). The fact that the analyzed investigations have focused their interest on teacher training, involves recognizing its key role in the improvement of formative process (Feiman-Nemser, 2001; Hammerness *et al.*, 2005).

From the methodological point of view, there is a predominance of studies that combine quantitative and qualitative approaches, and use interviews, focus groups, documentary analysis, questionnaires and classroom observations as their main information-gathering techniques. However, few are the researches that take a longitudinal design, and make it more difficult to access the real impact that the initiatives of initial training of teachers have in the future teaching practice or in other aspects that may take place in the long term.

This limitation joins other deficiencies detected in the studies analyzed and that have also been reported, among others, by Hollins and Torres (2005) or Grant and Gibson (2011). We refer, for example, to the fact that a large part of these jobs is supported on small samples, unrepresentative, which turn into a non-generalizable outcome; to the little attention paid to the rationale of the methodological framework or the techniques used; and especially, to the limited information provided in relation to the reliability and validity of the instruments used in collecting the information.

With regard to the results of this field of research, it should be noted that it is not conclusive, since, together to research that exhibit training experiences with positive impacts (Wasonga, 2005; Szecsi *et al.*, 2010; Kinloch, 2011), studies whose findings are less promising are presented (Reiter and Davis, 2011; Fernsten, 2009).

Among the factors that are highlighted as determinants of the success or failure of initiatives of initial teacher training in and for cultural diversity are: the experiences, knowledge and previous beliefs and their adaption to different learning opportunities; the methodologies employed in the initial teaching training; training programs; the social, cultural, and economic position that the aspiring teachers occupy in the social context; the relations of power between social classes that make up students' previous experiences; the environment and social relations; the means of communication and contact with other cultures.

Although, as we have said, the results of the researches reviewed in this article are not conclusive regarding the impact of the initial training of teachers on the teachers, if we can say that the formative proposals that are concerned in linking theory and practice and incorporating critical reflection, dialogue, exchange with colleagues, case studies and collaborative work tend to a more positive impact on attitudes and behaviors, beliefs and prospects for future teachers toward cultural diversity.

This finding contradicts the observations expressed by Pajares (1992) and Richardson and Placier (2001), among others, and challenges the incidence of teacher training in the modification of beliefs. However, among all the training proposals analyzed, the well-planned experiences of immersion in the multicultural reality, through the practicum or experiences associated with culturally diverse communities (learning-service, exchanges,...), are the ones that seem to have a more favorable impact.

These experiences help to become aware of the role played by stereotypes and overcome them; modify beliefs; develop attitudes and values of respect, responsibility and mutual trust; improve the knowledge of the self, as well as the understanding of the multicultural reality and the challenge that teaching in culturally heterogeneous classrooms involves, besides increasing the commitment to improve the practice and transfer of knowledge in the classroom (Bollin, 2007; Waddell, 2011; Nero, 2009).

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Annex

Table 1

Journals

AILACTE Journal
Asia-Pacific journal of Education
Australasian Journal of Educational Technology
Bilingual Research Journal
Childhood Education
Dissertation Abstracts International, A: The Humanities and Social Sciences
Education and Urban Society
Educational Horizons
Education & Teaching
Equity and Excellence in Education
European Journal of Teacher Education
International Journal of Educational Management
International Journal of Progressive Education
Issues in Teacher Education
Journal of Early Childhood Teacher Education
Journal of Latinos and Education
Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development
Journal of research in science teaching
Journal of Teacher Education
Journal of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning
Kappa Delta Pi Record
Language, Culture and Curriculum
Multicultural Education
Multicultural Education & Technology Journal
Multicultural Perspectives
Porta Linguarum
Teacher Education and Practice
Teacher Education Quarterly
Teacher Development
Teaching Education
Teaching and Teacher Education
The Educational Forum
The High School Journal
The Interdisciplinary journal of Study Abroad
The Teacher Educator
Urban Education

Source: own elaboration

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