

# Internationalizing Teachers' Preparedness: The Missing Link in Ontario's Strategy for K–12 International Education?

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## Abstract

While the need to internationalize teacher education is recognized by scholars and practitioners, little attention is paid to the role of policies and policy makers in supporting this endeavour. This study focuses on the enactment of Ontario's K–12 international education strategy by examining four key policy actors—the Ontario Ministry of Education, the Ontario College of Teachers, school boards, and Faculties of Education—and their role in realizing (or not) the internationalization of teachers' preparedness. A siloed approach, conflict in policy messaging, overlooked policy alignments, and weak policy

framing result in weakening the relevance and importance of the internationalization of teachers' preparedness to meet Ontario's objectives of inclusivity, diversity, and equity in its public education.

*Keywords:* internationalization, teacher education, K–12 international education, policy enactment

## Résumé

Si l'internationalisation de la formation des enseignants est une nécessité reconnue par les universitaires et les praticiens, le rôle des politiques et des décideurs politiques dans le soutien de cette entreprise n'est guère pris en compte. Cette étude se concentre sur la mise en œuvre de la stratégie ontarienne en matière d'éducation internationale de la maternelle à la 12e année par quatre acteurs clés : le ministère de l'Éducation de l'Ontario, l'Ordre des enseignants de l'Ontario, les conseils scolaires et les facultés d'éducation, dans la réalisation (ou non) de l'internationalisation de la formation des enseignants. Une approche cloisonnée, des contradictions dans l'interprétation des politiques, des désalignements stratégiques et un manque d'encadrement des politiques ont pour conséquence d'affaiblir la pertinence et l'importance de la préparation des enseignants aux stratégies d'internationalisation pour atteindre les objectifs d'inclusion, de diversité et d'équité ciblés par l'éducation publique ontarienne.

*Mots-clés :* internationalisation, formation des enseignants, éducation internationale de la maternelle à la 12e année, mise en œuvre de politiques

## Introduction

The need to internationalize teacher education has been identified by educational practitioners and scholars; however, there has been little, if any, attention paid to the role of policy and policy makers in supporting this endeavour. Internationalization of education has increasingly become a policy priority, with policy makers targeting the preparation of students with global, international, and intercultural competencies (Chapuis & Fortier, 2016; Egron-Polak & Hudson, 2014). Aligning with this global trend, the Ontario Ministry of Education (MoE) released *Ontario's Strategy for K–12 International Education* in 2015. The strategy identifies as its goals: (1) substantially increasing the number of international students in Ontario public schools; (2) internationalizing the curriculum, particularly international languages and global curriculum; (3) enhancing international experiential learning opportunities such as mobility programs; and (4) building international partnerships with international schools and schools in other countries (Ontario MoE, 2015). Surprisingly, in spite of the extant literature on the internationalization of teacher education, there is almost no mention of how critical the role of teachers is in achieving any or all of these strategic goals.

This research seeks to understand *Ontario's Strategy for K–12 International Education* from the subjective positions of four policy actors: the Ontario Ministry of Education (MoE), the Ontario College of Teachers (OCT), select school boards (boards), and Faculties of Education (FoE). Through a thorough review of policy documents and in-depth interviews, we examine (1) how the *Ontario's Strategy for K–12 International Education* is understood and interpreted by different policy actors, and (2) how these actors read the strategy in terms of its implications for the internationalization of teachers' preparedness.

## Literature Review

The internationalization of teacher education has been gaining momentum. This may be attributed to an increased awareness of what Marx and Moss (2011) referred to as the widening culture gap between teachers and their students, where teachers increasingly do not share common cultural backgrounds or similar life experiences with their students (see also Guo et al., 2009; Merryfield, 2000; Rego & Nieto, 2000; Zhao, 2010). With

increased ethnocultural and racial diversity in North American classrooms, there have been concerns as to how “teachers who have had little personal and direct experience with ethnic and other differences learn to value and affirm the diversity of their students” (Rego & Nieto, 2000, p. 413) and “challenge inequities or even recognize the effects of globalization in the lives of their students and communities” (Merryfield, 2000, p. 430).

A flurry of research speaks to the relevance and importance of international experiences, such as study abroad, overseas student teaching, and other immersion programs for teachers' preparedness (Cushner & Mahon, 2002; Merryfield, 2000; Pence & Macgillivray, 2008). Merryfield (2000) argues that teachers who are most successful at building global perspectives have experienced life outside of the mainstream societal categories of race, ethnicity, social class, language, or national belonging. Studies document the value of cross-cultural experiences for a wide range of teachers' personal and professional benefits (Cushner & Mahon, 2002; Pence & Macgillivray, 2008; Quezada & Alfaro, 2007; Sieber & Mantel, 2012).

While the importance of international experiential learning has been established, scholars are increasingly asking critical questions such as: Do “[international] experiences alone...make a person a multicultural or global educator?” (Merryfield, 2000, p. 440). Decolonization of teacher education curriculum is considered critical to provide an opportunity for teacher candidates to dialogue with non-Western and non-dominant cultures and forms of knowledge (Martin et al., 2017). Pedagogy that encourages teachers to reflect critically on their identities, perspectives, and belief systems and engages in the politics of difference has been endorsed by several teacher education scholars (Martin et al., 2017; Tarc et al., 2012; Trilokekar & Kukar, 2011). Similarly, the importance of continuous professional development programs for teachers practising in multiple international contexts has been well acknowledged in the literature (Kizilbash, 2016; Sharma & Phillion, 2014).

Yet, according to Schneider (2007), “teacher training programs are often among the least internationalized” of all academic professional programs (p. 23). Siczek and Engel (2017) suggest that the framing of educational policy, its interpretation, resource allocation, and coordinated or contradictory approaches ultimately affect teachers' preparedness by either constraining or enabling teachers' engagement with internationalization perspectives. Policy messages, they suggest, are often abstract and do not lay out a clear roadmap of rationales, goals, and strategies for internationalization. Policy contexts

can often inadvertently support “institutional inertia” in educational systems, with organizations and educators paradoxically reinforcing “dominant cultures and practices” (Reid & O’Donoghue, 2004, p. 505). In this context, we explore how the different policy actors understand, interpret, and enact *Ontario’s Strategy for K–12 International Education* in regard to the internationalization of teachers’ preparedness.

## The Ontario Context

Ontario, Canada’s most populous province, has been shaped over time by its Indigenous populations as well as old and new immigrant groups. There are 374,395 Indigenous people, making up to 2.8% of the province’s population (Statistics Canada, 2017). While they represent the smallest visible minority group within the school systems, they are significantly younger and have a growth rate of more than four times that of their non-Indigenous counterparts (Statistics Canada, 2017). Foreign-born Ontarians come from about 250 ethnic origins. In 2016, 29.3% of Ontario’s total population was identified as members of visible minorities (Ontario Ministry of Finance, 2017). This diversity is augmented by an increase in Ontario schools’ international student body. Between 2003 and 2012, international student numbers grew by 92% in Ontario (Affiliation of Multicultural Societies and Service Agencies [AMSSA], 2013). In 2013, Ontario hosted over 126,000 international students, the largest number in Canada. Approximately 19,000 of these international students were in the K–12 school system (Ontario MoE, 2015).

This diversity within its wider population makes national, linguistic, cultural, and racial diversity a salient feature of Ontario’s school environment (Ryan et al., 2007; Turner Consulting Group, 2014). However, this diversity is not reflected equally among Ontario’s teachers. Turner Consulting Group (2014) reported that while racial minorities in Ontario represented 26% of the population (in some areas as high as 47%), they made up only 10% of secondary school teachers and 9% of elementary school and kindergarten teachers, a finding consistent with Ryan and colleagues (2007). This highlights a significant difference between the ethnoracial and cultural backgrounds of teachers and students within the Ontario system.

***Educational system governance.*** Lessard and Brassard (n.d.) identify a three-level structure for responsibilities and power in the K–12 governance system: the central authority (i.e., Ministry of Education/MoE), the intermediate authority (i.e., school board/

district<sup>1</sup>), and the school. This study focuses on the first two levels. The MoE is responsible for government policy, funding, curriculum planning, and direction in all levels of public education.<sup>2</sup> While the Private Schools and International Education Unit in the MoE initially focused on private schools, its role was expanded to involve international education (IE) in 2014. Ontario has two publicly funded school systems, the Catholic and the public.<sup>3</sup> As per the data of the 2015–16 academic year, Ontario has a total of 76 boards, divided almost equally between Catholic and public, with a total of 4,891 elementary and secondary schools; 63 boards serve English-speaking<sup>4</sup> students and 12 serve French-speaking students (Ontario MoE, 2017). Another important policy actor in this sector in terms of teacher certification is the Ontario College of Teachers, which licenses, governs, and regulates the Ontario teaching profession.<sup>5</sup> All teachers in publicly funded schools should be certified and be members of the College.

***Internationalization in Ontario.*** The Ontario MoE published its first-ever international education strategy in 2015 and took a “leading role in championing international education as essential for twenty-first century learning” (Ontario MoE, 2015, p. 27). Internationalization is “seen as an ongoing process of change in the school program and environment, with opportunities to enhance learning through the integration of international, intercultural, and/or global perspectives, cultures, and experiences” (p. 12). The strategy highlights the provision of high-quality curriculum and an enhanced learning environment that integrates international perspectives and awareness. It also stresses the importance of facilitating study abroad opportunities for Ontario students to gain exposure to different cultures and languages. It emphasizes the need to develop students’ second- and third-language skills. As for international students, the strategy highlights the

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1 The school board/district is responsible for ensuring that all students in its jurisdiction receive the services to which they have the right as per the MoE frameworks (Lessard & Brassard, n.d.).

2 Private schools operate as businesses or non-profit organizations independently of the MoE and in accordance with the legal requirements established by the Education Act.

3 Ontario schools are home to around 2 million students from junior kindergarten to Grade 12 in almost 5,000 publicly funded schools (Ontario MoE, 2018).

4 English-speaking schools include 4,436 schools hosting around 1.8 million students, and French-speaking schools include 455 schools hosting around 103,467 students (Ontario MoE, 2017).

5 The Ontario College of Teachers is governed by 23 elected members and 14 appointed members by the provincial government (Ontario College of Teachers, 2018).

need to integrate international students both academically and socially. The promotion of Ontario's education system at home and abroad and the increasing awareness of and sensitivity to Canadian values of inclusivity, diversity, and equity are also emphasized. Ultimately, the strategy aims to provide "the knowledge, skills, awareness, and experiences its students need to succeed and to become responsible global citizens" (p. 7).

When it comes to teacher education, the strategy states that international programs and partnerships will assist both Ontario and international educators to "learn a great deal from one another" (Ontario MoE, 2015, p. 12). It notes that "experiential learning is not limited to students; Ontario educators benefit from opportunities to travel and work abroad, and return with valuable new perspectives and strategies and a wider understanding of global issues to share with students and staff. Educators also gain insights into the lives of their international students in their home countries, and the kinds of social and cultural challenges they may face as they adjust to life and school in Ontario" (p. 12). While the strategy references educators in these two contexts, it does not speak directly to the preparation, knowledge, skills, and competencies that would be required for teachers to support its main policy objectives.

## **Theoretical Framework**

Lingard and Ozga (2007) define education policy as dealing "with all texts, apart from curricula, which seek to frame, constitute and change educational practices" (p. 2). Ozga (2000) reminds us that educational policies may be produced by government elites, legislators, and influential stakeholders; however, policy making always involves "negotiation, contestation or struggle between different groups who may lie outside the formal machinery of official policy-making" (p. 113). Spillane (2004) reminds us of the importance of studying "enactment zones" (Siczek & Engel, 2017, p. 7) where one observes different policy actors and their interpretation of policies. Spillane et al. (2002) call this the "spaces where the world of policy meets the world of practice" (p. 407). That is how enactment ultimately influences the potential of policy to change practice.

We are interested in these "enactment zones" (Siczek & Engel, 2017, p. 7). According to Braun et al. (2010), "enactment" refers to an understanding that "policies are interpreted and 'translated' by diverse policy actors, rather than simply implemented" (p.

547). Maguire et al. (2015) suggest that “depending on the type/ level of policy, depending on the social actors who are centrally involved, [and] depending on how policy translations are ‘practised,’ different forms of enactments take place” (p. 491). This illustrates Colebatch’s (2006) claim that “where you stand depends on where you sit” (as quoted in Maguire et al., 2015, p. 491). We are interested in understanding how different policy actors “read” *Ontario’s Strategy for K–12 International Education*, how they interpret it, and what they perceive as their role in enacting policy (or not) for the internationalization of teachers’ preparedness. Broadly, we are interested in the contextual and situated nature of the enactment of *Ontario’s Strategy for K–12 International Education*.

## Methodology

This study adopted a qualitative case study approach as an “in-depth examination” (Lichtman, 2012, p. 90) to help understand a complex social phenomenon, namely how different policy actors interpret and enact *Ontario’s Strategy for K–12 International Education* (Yin, 2006). Adopting a case study approach helped recognize the complex and elusive social truths offering support to “alternative interpretations” (Cohen et al., 2000, p. 184) and helped us focus on the “process” rather than outcomes, and “discovery” rather than “confirmation” (Yin, 2006).

The study was conducted in two stages. The first involved a review and analysis of Ontario’s IE and other relevant policy documents for an in-depth understanding of the research issue, as well as augmenting evidence from different sources (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). The second stage involved conducting interviews with appropriate representatives of the professional bodies and deans and/or associate deans of education. A total of seven semi-structured one-hour interviews were conducted (two face-to-face and five via video-conferencing). A snowball sampling method was employed in identifying the participants (Lichtman, 2012). Participants represented officials from the MoE, the OCT, two Ontario school boards (which were also representatives of the Ontario Association of School Districts International [OASDI]),<sup>6</sup> and deans and/or associate deans of Faculties of Education at two Ontario universities.

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6 OASDI is a not-for-profit association established in 2009 representing 30 public boards. It is “committed to advocacy and promotion of international education programs in Ontario public schools” (OASDI, 2016)

The two selected boards, one public and the other Catholic, were identified by participants as leading the K–12 international education initiatives in the province. Hence, they provided a rich account of the history of IE policy making and initiatives.<sup>7</sup> The two universities were strategically chosen from different geographic locations. Participants were asked to respond to a set of 14 open-ended questions (Maxwell, 2005) that probed their awareness, interpretation, and enactment of the strategy and its perceived implications for teachers' education and professional development.

Transcribed and analyzed qualitatively, the interview data transcriptions were read separately by the two authors and independently marked and coded in an effort to discover conceptual categories and themes. The researchers then met to compare their individual coding efforts. Thematic analysis (Miles & Huberman, 1994) assisted in identifying commonalities and differences among and between policy actors in their awareness, interpretation, and enactment of the strategy and in identifying the contextual and situated nature of policy enactment, both generally and specifically in the context of the internationalization of teacher preparation.

## Findings: Policy Enactment

We first report our findings related to the policy actors' awareness and engagement with the strategy. Next, we report on the perspective these findings provide relative to the implications of this strategy for teachers' preparedness. We have summarized both findings in a chart to compare the subjective positions of the four policy actors.

### **Policy Actors' Awareness and Engagement with *Ontario's Strategy for K–12 International Education***

Each of the four policy actors had different levels of awareness and engagement with the strategy. While the MoE was officially the originator of the strategy, OASDI and select boards could be considered the unofficial initiators of this strategy. The MoE effectively responded to their lobbying efforts for a strategy. These three actors are, therefore, heavily invested in its enactment; albeit OASDI and select boards are cautious of

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7 Further details on the boards and FoE are not given to maintain participants' anonymity.

overregulation and interference by the MoE in an arena where they see themselves as leaders and experts. The OCT, while marginally aware of the strategy, actively disengages in its enactment. The FoE, while variably engaged more broadly in IE, were the least aware of the strategy and, therefore, delinked directly with its enactment.

**(Select) school boards and OASDI: The champions.** The boards that were interviewed, which were also active OASDI members, clearly see themselves as leaders in the steering and enactment of *Ontario's Strategy for K–12 International Education*. One respondent stated,

The Ontario Association of School Districts...has an inordinate influence [on the strategy]...because we are pretty much driving that more than the ministry itself is. I mean the ministry is very limited with staffing and resources... I would say that we have an exceptionally strong voice in that sector because we are the ones who are the experts.

IE, from the boards' perspective, first translates into recruiting and hosting international students in the public school system, because of the attractiveness of the revenue. However, as the interviewee explained, boards that have engaged with international student recruitment for longer periods and accumulated revenue from this activity then "turned back [this revenue] into...program development." These boards started to ask different kinds of questions and engage more broadly in initiatives such as study abroad and immersion experiences for Canadian students, entering into international exchanges and partnerships with other nations and boards, developing and offering international certificate programs, supporting international languages in their curriculum, and working towards achieving global competencies, "and not just of their students but [also their] teachers."

There is a wide variation among all 76 boards, each representing a different level of awareness and understanding of the strategy. As one respondent stated, "not all of the boards...are very aware of this provincial strategy...I can tell you that most of the teachers that I meet have no clue." Geographies of boards matter. Boards located in large urban metropolitan areas with wider diversity in their population (for example, southwestern regions and the Greater Toronto Area cities), which tend to be more successful at attracting international students, are more likely to be engaged in promoting IE.

French-language boards were specifically identified as being important for the strategy as they “are very, very keen on the strategy and what it will do for their school boards and their schools.” However, as another participant stated, “it is frustrating for them because...international students want to come to Ontario to learn English and not French.”

***The Ministry of Education (MoE): The regulator and curator.*** While the MoE recognizes the leadership of OASDI and its reliance on key boards to enact the IE strategy, the MoE official stated that the ministry’s interest in announcing a strategy was mainly to mitigate risks that emanate from IE. The official stated,

The private schools are also bringing international students into the province in a big way. And they don’t have rules to follow and...no one is watching the residences or the homestay.

Another official explained, through the strategy, we are “making sure that there are supports in place and this is not just school districts bringing in revenue without fulfilling the obligations...required to support...those students.” However, the MoE highly values its strategy because according to an interviewee, it has “a certain sparkle to it.” Another interviewee stated that the uniqueness of this strategy is its “emphasis...on internationalization of the curriculum and...on student mobility.” A focus on sending Canadian students abroad is highlighted as its strength and one that ties in with “the student achievement initiative [for a] highly skilled workforce” as a major commitment of “the ministries and the government.”

***The Ontario College of Teachers (OCT): The unsympathetic.*** Contradicting the policy positions of the boards, OASDI, and the MoE, is the OCT. An interviewee simply stated, “So, a lot of this is old news... I’ve lost track of it or didn’t hear much action in that regards.” The interviewee explained that the primary weaknesses of the strategy are “that it is not very high on the list of priorities to the ministry...that lot of this policy

might have been overshadowed by the Truth and Reconciliation document”<sup>8</sup> given that the “focus on Indigenous studies is very, very important” as well as other MoE priorities such as special education, technology education, and math education. In short, the OCT perspective is that “there is no room in regulation right now for international[ization].”

***Faculties of Education: The peripherals.*** While Larsen (2016) reports that almost three-quarters of Faculties of Education in Ontario<sup>9</sup> offer students the opportunity to engage in international teaching and/or international service practicum placements, interestingly, the FoE in this study had very cursory awareness of the strategy. The interviewees had to revisit or review the strategy document in preparation for the interview. As one of the interviewees stated, “There has been a whole lot of fanfare about it... But I wasn’t aware of the strategy in detail.” Given the wide variation among the FoE themselves on the integration of IE in their teacher education programs, one interviewee stated that the strategy has little impact because “I would argue, and I would suggest that internationalization is not at all a priority that has penetrated our teacher education classes.” On the other hand, the other interviewee stated, “I thought that was great, that supports one of the directions in which we are moving.”

## Internationalizing Teachers' Preparedness

There was also a great variation in responses by the policy actors in terms of the influence of the strategy on internationalizing teacher education, professional development, and hiring. The OASDI, the boards, and the FoE are the policy actors most engaged with the internationalization of teachers' preparedness; however, the Faculties' of Education approaches to internationalization are completely disconnected with the ministry's

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8 Ontario's Indigenous Education Strategy is based on the Truth and Reconciliation document. It sets the foundation for improving achievement among Indigenous students in provincially funded schools. As part of the strategy, the MoE continues to focus on achieving two primary objectives: improving student achievement and well-being among First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students; and closing the achievement gap between Indigenous students and all students.

9 As education is a provincial jurisdiction, there are different teacher education programs for each province/territory. Preparation for a career in teaching in Ontario involves the successful completion of a three- or four-year bachelor's degree in arts, fine arts, science or commerce, followed by a two-year (four semesters) Bachelor of Education, leading to a teaching certificate known as the Certificate of Qualification. Of the 24 universities in Ontario, 13 offer Bachelor of Education/Diploma of Education programs.

strategy, the efforts of OASDI, and the reality of school boards. Four themes emerged from the data.

***Lack of international teachers' preparedness.*** Interestingly, all policy actors identified teachers in the Ontario system as lacking international, intercultural, and global competencies. Their perception of teachers is that they “just don't...have much of a global perspective. I mean they really don't. It is as simple as that.” Another interviewee stated,

I mean most teachers...I have found that in our school district is not unique, it is reflective across Ontario. Most teachers, their international experience is going to Florida and to Cuba and maybe doing a backpacking trip for two weeks in Europe... So, you end up with teachers who have gone from university back to elementary or secondary school and have never left this institutional environment.

Even within the FoE, an interviewee stated, “I honestly don't see that teachers coming out of the faculty now have a different perspective [than] teachers with five or 10 years' experience.”

***What does internationalizing teachers' preparedness look like?*** Despite the gaps in teacher international and intercultural knowledge, competencies, and skill sets that are recognized by all policy actors, it is mainly the OASDI and select active boards that are committed to capacity building. As one interviewee said, “Just knowing that strategy document isn't enough to really promote engagement at the level that we want, so again we know that part of building teachers' capacity and awareness of what it is all about... [to ] give more support and awareness for international education and give it more of a profile.”

The school boards and OASDI members identified several initiatives to support teachers' professional development. They support the attendance of administrators and teachers at IE conferences and provide a small amount of funding support for them to participate in international exchanges.<sup>10</sup> Connected to these exchanges and mobility pro-

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<sup>10</sup> International partnerships and exchanges established mainly through their own networks with international school boards and other MoE initiatives.

grams, a few boards offer pre- and post-preparation and orientation programs for teachers to benefit professionally from these experiences.

The MoE is concerned with teachers' preparedness when it comes to understanding the different needs of new immigrants and international students. A participant noted, while "all international students and new immigrants' populations may share many similar issues, there are differences. So just getting educators a little bit more aware of that," as well as "spreading the word to get all teachers thinking internationally." The MoE invests through the OASDI and boards in resource documents for teachers to assist with the internationalization of the curriculum. It sees itself supporting school partnerships with boards and offering small bursaries for teachers to engage in teacher exchanges.

Ironically, the OCT, which is responsible for teacher education and credentials, does not emphasize the international preparedness of teacher candidates. The OCT, as stated above, is concerned with conflicting priorities which, according to a participant, results in "professional fatigue and...a huge pushback from teachers." The official went on to state, "School systems have so much coming down from the ministry that they have very little tolerance and you know that cultural mindset in schools is 'this too shall pass. You keep your head down and it will go away until there is a new flavour coming in.'" Perhaps most importantly, the OCT is concerned first and foremost with the maintenance of Ontario curriculum standards. The participant stated, "If you are standing in front of a class that is...multiculturally rich, then I think as a teacher...it doesn't matter who [you are], you would have to have lessons and prepare...[them] using the Ontario curriculum." The participant further stated, "There are 15 requirements [for teacher certification/education programs] and there is no multiculturalism...associated with any of the requirements. What I can say though is that the focus is on the Ontario curriculum," and the certification of Ontario teachers is based on practicums in Ontario-certified schools.

The FoE were extremely diverse in their approaches to the internationalization of teacher education. Acting outside the strategy purview, one of the FoE was actively invested in an internationalization strategy and, as part of this strategy, established a specialization in IE. The IE specialization enables teacher candidates to take related courses on IE, globalization, and international teaching from a global perspective. It also enables candidates to teach abroad and pursue international experiences. However, the interviewee went on to say:

What we don't have yet is an opportunity for every teacher candidate to learn something about international education...because of the need for...international competency or the cross-cultural competency...for everybody. So that is certainly on our radar.

An interviewee at the other FoE noted "Most of those opportunities are associated with an...individual professor and when that professor tires of it or retires or whatever then the program tends to...come to an end." This FoE has, however, invested in offering a separate graduate program strictly for international students, and, according to the interviewee, "it is definitely a cash cow and it is definitely not even a back door. It is a front door to immigration." According to the interviewee, with a new dean coming in with a strong international orientation, there are plans for a faculty-wide strategic plan of internationalization.

Thus, the two approaches of the FoE were distinct: one more strategic to internationalizing its teacher candidates' education, and the other currently more dependent on faculty champions.

***Commitment to internationalizing teachers' preparedness is not the first step.***

OASDI and select boards recognize and support various initiatives for teachers' preparedness; however, it is important to note that they do so only once they have been in a position to recruit a substantial number of international students, earn revenue from this recruitment stream, and then invest in professional development endeavours. The impact of these supports on the system at large is relatively miniscule because the number of teachers who are supported through these initiatives is relatively small in comparison to the total pool of teachers. The internationalization of teachers' preparedness is most definitely not considered a first step towards meeting the overall goals of the strategy.

The FoE investment in the internationalization of teachers' education is highly dependent on the investment of individual leaders, deans in particular, in IE. With invested leadership, there is a strategy, purpose, and coordination as well as resource allocation for policy enactment. It is also interesting to note that international student recruitment has not been seen as a driver for the teacher certification or Bachelor of Education programs within the FoEs (unlike the push for international student recruitment in the K-12 sector); however, offering graduate-level studies for a cohort of international students seems to be

a revenue-generating project increasingly undertaken by FoEs. If and how these initiatives will lead to more investment in the internationalization of teacher education, as has been done in the school sector, remains to be seen. Overall, internationalization of teacher education within the Ontario system seems to be an afterthought that follows prioritization of the recruitment of international students.

***Hiring practices and the relevance of international teachers' preparedness.***

When asked about hiring practices within boards, there is a general acknowledgment of the extremely difficult time teacher candidates have in getting hired directly into a publicly funded school board. There is, therefore, recognition from OASDI of the importance of young teachers accepting overseas jobs "in China, Korea or Japan, Vietnam for a couple of years." One of the challenges that was identified in an interview included the "rules around hiring," which makes it "difficult to do any hiring at all. You had to hire from the LTO<sup>11</sup> list and if you don't have anyone on the LTO list...that has [international/intercultural]...experience then you don't even have the option to make the choice."

Teaching experiences abroad are not recognized, as "there is no credit given to those teachers when they return...I know because I went and taught in Japan a long time ago for five years and you come back, and nobody cares, you are behind...there is no real recognition." Another interviewee stated that "students who applied for positions who had teaching experience outside of Ontario...were probably not top of the list for interviewing." This has been substantiated by research conducted on hiring practices and the lack of value placed on international experiences in Ontario public and Catholic boards (Crane, 2015).

While international experience may not be emphasized, there is certainly recognition of the need for increasing diversity among teachers, whether it be in the FoE or in hiring practices of boards. In general, it is understood that boards will look for teachers of diversity or teachers who are comfortable with diversity. As one participant stated, "I can see...[diversity] affecting the hiring, absolutely." One FoE spoke about their concern that their

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11 The Long-Term Occasional (LTO) teacher list includes successful applicants listed by seniority according to his/her date of hire.

intake of teacher candidates is pretty, not totally homogeneous...we don't see very many faces of colour... So...one of the things I did when we were selecting [is to ask for]...evidence of experience [of] diversity...so, they could indicate that they speak another language, that they grew up in another country or that they lived for an extended period of time in another country or that they have travelled extensively or if they show any indications...that they haven't spent their whole life in southwestern Ontario.

Table 1 summarizes the four policy actors' engagement with the K–12 International Education policy enactment and teachers' preparedness.

**Table 1.** Policy actors' engagement with the K–12 IE policy

	Policy Enactment	Teachers' Preparedness
<b>Ontario Association of School Districts International &amp; Select School Boards: <i>The champions</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Champions and “experts” of internationalization</li> <li>• Lobbied and initiated the strategy</li> <li>• Developed national and international networks</li> <li>• Promoted investment of revenue into educational initiatives</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognized the importance of capacity building (leadership and teachers)</li> <li>• Offered multiple professional development opportunities               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Professional conferences</li> <li>• Exchange/mobility opportunities</li> <li>• Bursaries</li> <li>• Cultural competency training and IDI testing</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>School Boards (in general): <i>The followers</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• At different stages and focus: select boards have led internationalization initiatives, others have just started</li> <li>• Increased awareness and interest in IS recruitment</li> <li>• Motivated by an interest in revenue generation and meeting the French education agenda</li> </ul>	Some have introduced professional development programs (e.g., teacher exchanges and mobility programs)
<b>Ministry of Education: <i>The regulator and curator</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Delayed entry</li> <li>• Focus on managing risks</li> <li>• IS recruitment, promotion of international experiential opportunities, internationalizing curriculum</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Curriculum: developing resource documents to support teachers</li> <li>• Funding: support to interested boards for IE initiatives</li> </ul>

	Policy Enactment	Teachers' Preparedness
<b>Ontario College of Teachers: <i>The unsympathetic</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Internationalization not a priority; it is overshadowed by other policies</li> <li>• Never been proactive on this front</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Internationalizing teachers' preparation is not a priority</li> <li>• Focus on the Ontario curriculum</li> <li>• Teachers' "professional fatigue;" the IE strategy as another initiative downloaded onto their plate</li> </ul>
<b>Faculties of Education: <i>The peripherals</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cursory awareness of the strategy</li> <li>• Disengaged with strategy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Great variation between faculties               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• IE Specialization</li> <li>• International experiential opportunities</li> <li>• ESL/language training</li> <li>• Enhancing diversity, global, cross-cultural perspectives</li> <li>• Diversifying teacher candidate intake</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

## Discussion

Our data suggest that internationalization of teachers' preparedness is a missing link in *Ontario's Strategy for K–12 International Education*. We come to this conclusion based on three context-specific policy enactments of the strategy, which we elaborate below.

### A Siloed Policy Approach

Communication and collaboration channels between the MoE, OASDI, and school boards on the one hand and FoEs on the other, seem to be nonexistent, or at least underutilized. Perhaps the Faculties of Education lie outside the policy enactment framework because of how they are positioned. Ontario has two entities that oversee the education sector. The MoE, which oversees the K–12 sector, and the Ministry of Training, Colleges, and Universities (MTCU), which oversees the post-secondary education sector. Universities, which FoEs are part of, are under the jurisdiction of the MTCU.

While the Faculties of Education meet with the MoE representatives through ministry– faculty liaison meetings, internationalization has not been a focus as a topic of discussion at meetings that tend to be “mainly information sharing.” Thus, there seems to be a lack of direct reporting channels between the MoE and the FoE who are responsible for educating the future workforce for Ontario schools. FoEs ensure that they meet the

teacher certification requirements as outlined by the OCT. However, since IE is not a certification requirement, and the OCT does not consider it as a key MoE priority, the FoE's engagement in IE is hugely dependent on each university and on each university's own faculties' leadership, strategic plans, and investments in IE.

This siloed approach to IE across the two ministries raises concerns on what seems to be, as participants described it, a "hit and miss approach" to both future and in-service teachers' IE preparedness. Also, the boards' interest and ability to offer professional development programs varies tremendously. While OASDI offers different professional development opportunities to teachers, the pool of beneficiaries is too small compared to the number of Ontario teachers. The MoE's strategy and supporting resources, while beneficial, are ineffective as long as internationalizing teachers' education is neither a priority for the OCT nor a component of its certification program. The lack of coordination and partnership between the MoE, OASDI, and boards and the FoEs is a missed opportunity.

**Conflicting policy messages.** The MoE and the OASDI members speak of the IE strategy's approach as one that both recognizes the importance of recruiting international students but also sending Canadian students abroad (i.e., a more balanced approach to mobility as well as a broader strategic approach for curriculum and language enhancement). Nonetheless, there is no doubt that *Ontario's Strategy for K–12 International Education* and its enactment by several policy actors has embedded within it a purely economic, instrumental, and almost imperialistic quality (Kabir, 2011, p. 47). The strategy is seen as an avenue for revenue generation for Ontario schools through recruitment of international students, marketing of the Ontario curriculum abroad, and placing Ontario pre-service and credentialed teacher candidates in schools abroad. The underlying assumption is that working in these international schools acts as a place holder for Ontario graduates until the local labour market improves and they can return home. This results in conflicting policy messages that deter from a broader concern for the internationalization of teachers' preparedness (i.e., building Ontario teachers' broader knowledge, mindsets, and commitment towards issues of local and global diversity, equity, and social justice).

Ontario-centrism, in our view, is another major deterrent for the internationalization of teachers' preparedness. The OCT focuses almost exclusively on teaching an "Ontario" curriculum, with little clarification as to how it sees an Ontario curriculum as

distinct in light of the wide global diversity of the Ontario school population. What is imagined as Ontario-specific precludes the OCT from accepting international practicum experiences for teacher credentialism. As a result, this puts the FoEs in a situation of conflict with their own IE strategies and the internationalization of their teacher education initiatives.

***Missed opportunities for policy alignment.*** The strategy's emphasis on curriculum, global education, and international and cross-cultural competencies can be better aligned with several MoE strategies. We provide three such examples. In 2009, the MoE launched the *Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy* that aims to help the education community identify and address discriminatory biases and systemic barriers in order to support the achievement and well-being of all students (Ontario, MoE, 2009). In this strategy, reference is made to Canada's multiculturalism in accepting a wide diversity of immigrant populations. The strategy speaks directly to issues of racism, and religious and language discrimination faced by visible minorities. Another strategy regarding English-language learners, ESL, and ELD programs and services (Ontario, MoE, 2007), also addresses issues of diversity as related to new immigrants and international students within the public school system. The third strategy, on Indigenous Education, titled *First Nations, Métis and Inuit Connections* (Ontario, MoE, 2016) speaks to the importance of teachers' knowledge of Indigenous history and culture and the provision of resources, perspective development, and professional development opportunities to embed Indigenous perspectives into the classroom.

We argue that the goals, purpose, and approaches of the internationalization of teachers' education and preparedness are in sync with all three of these strategies. Promoters of the internationalization of teacher education are invested in ensuring equity and inclusion among the growing diversity of students; in honing teachers' knowledge and perspectives on the relevance of local and/or global history, culture, and language; and in supporting curriculum and pedagogy that essentially challenges the hegemony of westernized and colonized ways of thinking and confronting discourses of marginalization and othering (Martin et al., 2017). Internationalization of teacher education is fundamentally based on the notion that student achievement will improve when barriers to inclusion are identified and removed and when all students are respected and see themselves reflected in their learning and their environment. Clearly, there is a missed opportunity in

policy alignment and coordination among policies that can enhance teachers' preparedness in the face of growing local and global diversity, the agenda for inclusion and equity, and the decolonization of teacher education.

**Framing of policy.** MoE policy initiatives are communicated across Ontario's 76 school boards, with each board left to interpret, enact, and implement these initiatives. Wallace (1991) observed that the form and extent of policy enactment depends on whether a policy is mandated, strongly recommended, or merely suggested. It is also important to consider how policies are presented to boards. Given that policies are downloaded onto boards and teachers, it is essential that they do not add to feelings of being overloaded, while minimizing additional work and still enacting what the school and staff consider to be the desirable aspects of the policy.

Most respondents did not consider the *Ontario's Strategy for K–12 International Education* as being mandated. They perceived it as being optional. Ontario's K–12 strategy outlines policy context, overall goals, and identifies a few anticipated outcomes; however, it is thin on implementation mechanisms, policy coordination strategies, and specific rationales and supports for engaged boards and teachers. The messaging teachers receive about support for IE, including leadership, resourcing, and opportunities for professional development, as well as clarity in expectations and policies, further shapes their sense-making process. If effective implementation is to take place, teachers' understanding of the push to internationalize their teaching must happen at both pre-service and in-service stages and be accompanied by supportive tools and instruments that will enable them to change their teaching practices.

## Conclusion

*Ontario's Strategy for K–12 International Education* does not engage with the concept of the internationalization of teachers' preparedness. This is ironic because all policy actors suggested that Ontario teachers lack international, global, and intercultural skills. The strategy bypasses all the scholarship and research conducted to date on the internationalization of teacher education and its relevance for student success in contexts of student diversity, global education, and intercultural competency.

In spite of this oversight, the internationalization of teachers' preparedness is enacted by a few of the policy actors, with most investing in promoting teacher mobility/exchange and international experiential learning experiences (i.e., recognizing the importance of experience in honing teacher knowledge, perspectives, and skills). The importance of language for teachers' preparedness is confined to an emphasis on ESL and FSL training with little attention on Indigenous and/or international language education. In the Ontario/Canadian policy context, internationalization and immigration are intertwined agendas. Therefore, it is interesting to note that while there is an overall emphasis on diversity, equity, and social justice agendas, they are more associated with immigration, while largely delinked with IE. Approaches to cross-cultural, international, and intercultural curriculum and pedagogy are hit and miss. Ontario-centric credentialism and hiring practices further weaken the relevance and importance of the internationalization of teachers' preparedness.

Our study on Ontario's Strategy for K–12 International Education policy illustrated that the “three dimensions of policy, practice and positioning...are connected and dependent on each other” (Braun et al., 2010, p. 558). This substantiates Colebatch's (2006) claim that “where you stand depends on where you sit” (p. 10). Policy enactment of the strategy is illustrated by, and emerges from, the “micro-politics of policy practices” of different policy actors (Forester, 2012, p. 23). The OASDI and select boards take the lead, with the MoE heavily constrained by its own policy as well as resource and role limitations in supporting the school boards, leaving unattended key policy actors, namely OCT and the FoEs. Therefore, a key step in meeting the policy's overall goals is missed as these two key actors, if engaged, could positively influence and shape the internationalization preparedness of teachers. Instead, OCT performs the role of the disruptor when it comes to policy enactment and practice, sending messages to the FoEs that contradict and resist the strategy's directives. As Maguire and colleagues (2015) remind us, policies may rarely tell you exactly what to do; they may “rarely dictate or determine practice” (p. 486). However, a focus on policy enactment is key because “policy enactment is ultimately about policy realisation” (p. 497).

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