

Defining a Global Educator

by Rob Tierney

The University of British Columbia's mission says: "The graduates of UBC will value diversity, work with and for their communities, and be agents of positive change. They will acknowledge their obligations as global citizens and strive to secure a sustainable and equitable future for all."

How does this principle translate within the Faculty of Education? What is a global educator? Simply put, global educators are participants, not spectators. They learn alongside of their students and keep one eye on context—their students' lives, their communities, culture, beliefs, social and economic status, ethnicity, and gender—and they use this information to design learning objectives that are relevant, appropriate, and thereby effective in that context.

In this Faculty, I am fortunate to see the concept of global education put into action every day by students, faculty members, alumni, and emeriti who are engaged in initiatives locally and in over fifty countries around the globe. The number of these international projects is impressive, but the creative, sustainable, and culturally appropriate results of these partnerships are more striking. Education faculty members facilitate conversations with youth in post-apartheid South Africa, talk with Portuguese immigrants to improve the medical treatment they receive, and establish international anti-bullying networks to improve the lives of school children everywhere.

They work in close association with the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement, Universitas 21, the European Economic Community, and UNESCO.

In his study of teachers, Mike Rose suggests that it is the sense of possibility that distinguishes successful teachers from others. "I've come to believe that a defining characteristic of good teaching is a tendency to push on the existing order of things. This is not simply rebelliousness... it's an ability to live one's working life with a consciousness of possibility, an ability to imagine a better state of things."

A global educator emerges not from theory alone, but from a mix of scholarship, cultural critique, support from colleagues, and practice. We cannot simply infuse our curriculum with cultural and global understandings; we need to facilitate learning, research, and teaching experiences. We need to act.

Our challenge is to become educators who work with and within global communities in a manner which is responsive and supportive. Only then may we become global citizens.

For a list of the Faculty's international engagements, visit: www.educ.ubc.ca/international/
For more of Dean Tierney's comments on global education and other subjects, visit: www.educ.ubc.ca/about/tierney/