

## Education Review

Reseñas Educativas



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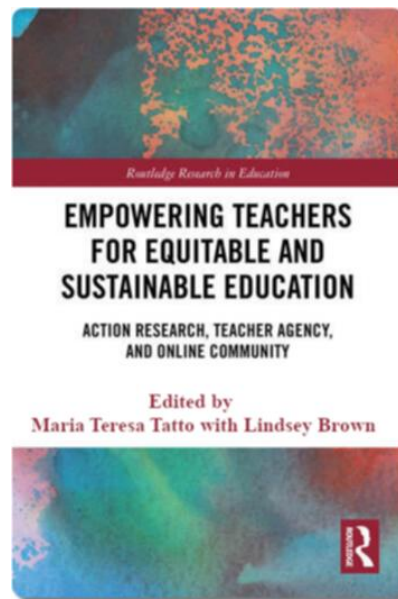
**Tatto, M. T., & Brown, L. (Eds). (2024). *Empowering teachers for equitable and sustainable education: Action research, teacher agency, and online community*. Routledge.**

290 pp.

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*Empowering Teachers for Equitable and Sustainable Education: Action Research, Teacher Agency, and Online Community* is a timely, ambitious, and—most importantly—*transparent* book. It sets itself a demanding task: to show how a fully online Master of Education can induct working teachers into rigorous, justice-oriented research that not only investigates inequity but helps to counter it in situated ways. It succeeds, and in doing so it makes a rare contribution to the teacher-education literature: an account of a theorised programme model including a granular account of pedagogy and assessment design, with an illustrative set of practitioner-research studies that embody the programme's commitments in diverse contexts. Across the volume, the argument is clear: teachers' learning is made possible when they are enabled to produce authoritative knowledge about their own practice and systems, not simply to consume it. Action research is shown to be a key driver for change for teaching professionals particularly when orientated to issues of equity.



Part I offers the kind of openness that many of us in teacher education call for but rarely see in print: an exposition of programme philosophy, curriculum, assessment, and outcomes that is detailed enough to be replicable. The online M.Ed. in Global Education (at Mary Lou Fulton College for Teaching and Learning Innovation, Arizona State University) is a 1.5-year programme that scaffolds teachers through comparative framing, social-science methods, literature review, proposal development, ethical review processes, fieldwork,

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analysis, and dissemination. Assignments are mapped to learning outcomes; rubrics, schedules, and the details of “progressive recursive feedback” are laid out. In addition, evidence of student performance is supplied at modular level. It is unusual to see the inner working of a programme laid bare for scrutiny and is a real testament to the quality of the programme and the candour of the authors to lay the programme out in this way so that it can be interrogated and replicated by others. A real act of transparency and generosity.

The programme is explicitly anchored in UNESCO’s SDG4, but with equity, teaching, and global citizenship discussed in relation to teacher education. The rationale draws upon transformative learning theory, comparative education, and inquiry-based pedagogy revealing a well-judged conceptual through-line. For example, the comparative framing unsettles the “naturalness” of local arrangements; transformative learning provides a theory of how professionals reframe assumptions; inquiry design gives teachers the tools to act, not merely to reflect.

This approach is also apparent in the emphasis given to ethics and public accountability, and the writing-development architecture. These become the very mechanisms by which research rigour becomes possible for busy practitioners.

Parts II and III, which are made up of nine action-research cases, perform two functions in the book. First, they reveal the details of what justice-oriented teacher inquiry can yield. The studies are distributed across primary, secondary, teacher education, and adult learning; they are methodologically disciplined; and they are explicit about context, instruments, data sources, and limitations. They showcase how teacher-research can be reported so that the reader can not only see what was achieved, but how it was achieved and what the implications of that are. Again, transparency is the key word. Through these cases, we can see a strong theme of equity as inquiry and that teacher research is a lever for future developments. I see these chapters as informative and inspirational for future teacher researchers.

Importantly, the volume does not over-claim. It explicitly acknowledges tensions: SDG4’s omission of teacher education as an explicit learning target; the political climates that render equity talk risky; the pandemic’s distortions; the struggle to align preservice coursework with school realities; and the unglamorous challenges of access, consent, sampling, and attrition that any practitioner-research will encounter. This honesty is part of the book’s unique contribution, offering a record of the nuances often experienced with attempting situated and practitioner-led improvement.

From a reviewer’s perspective, what most impressed me was the inspectability of rigour. Each empirical chapter sets out its questions, theoretical frames, sample, instruments, procedures, analysis, findings, significance, and limitations. The techniques are sensible and replicable: questionnaires with reported items and scales, thematic coding against named frameworks, document analysis protocols, descriptive statistics displayed intelligibly, and, often, member checking. Due attention is given to ethical (IRB) clearance and the papers are framed and written in the style of journal articles, showing disciplined

conventions that one would expect to see in for example dissertations. Taken together, these features achieve something important: they model research literacy as a practical, adoptable craft for teachers, rather than treating it as an intimidating specialist preserve.

I also appreciated the case made by the editors that teacher research equips professionals to contest deficit narratives. Several studies explicitly deploy self-efficacy theory or culturally sustaining pedagogy to name and challenge the mechanisms by which students—particularly those minoritised by language, race, gender, or disability—are mis-served. The accounts are not positioned as empathetic description, but as the analytical naming of structures (curricula, accountability systems, IT infrastructures, communication platforms) that can be altered. That is the work of justice in education: to move from “seeing” inequity to designing against it.

Of course, the book acknowledges the scepticism about online master’s degrees, and does not dodge this debate, but seeks to show through laying out the design of the programme, and the attainment data of the cohorts of students how they have sought to make it a viable and valuable learning experience. Details are provided of the programme design; the weekly formative tasks cumulating in capstones; the peer-review processes and how the learning is supported through synchronous engagement, and the use of support from a coach. Combined the case is presented and substantiated that community can be built at a distance, with deliberate attention to relational work. The experiences of teachers are recognisably similar across contexts and as the case studies illustrate can be productively held in a transnational community of inquiry.

Two commitments come through strongly in the text. First, a conviction that teacher-initiated and teacher-conducted research is not an optional embellishment: but should be seen as a professional right and a public good. When teachers can name their problems of practice, marshal theory, gather evidence, and argue for change, they place themselves—and the schools they work in—on stronger ground to develop equitable futures. This volume not only asserts that claim but illustrates it with details of the curriculum which it can be realised online and at scale.

Second, an equity and justice-oriented view of teacher education. The book’s equity agenda is woven through the programme architecture, the pedagogy, and the reported studies (which highlight representation, gender equity, linguistic justice, and the socio-material conditions of learning). In a period when “equity” is something of a controversial buzz word, *Empowering Teachers for Equitable and Sustainable Education* offers a research-based, practice-anchored account of what justice work in and through teacher education can look like.

So, the book makes a strong and transparent case and invites readers to engage and interrogate the course itself along with the presented outcomes. It feels like the start of a conversation not the end. As it presents as an invitation to talk more about the processes of learning online, engaging in research and to take part in that conversation with those that have shared the insights of their research. The editors argue that a planned retrospective and prospective

evaluation could track how graduates use their research capacity in schools, and this feels like a good way to extend this project and this conversation into the future.

Moreover, I am struck by the generosity of this book. It provides enough design detail for others to adapt or adopt. It opens up the work of the teacher-researchers, whose studies are presented with methodological seriousness. And it speaks to the field, offering a clear example of how to align teacher education with the demands of context sensitivity and equity. I am sure the book will be of great value and interest to leaders of teacher-education programmes looking to re-design curricula around inquiry, and for those that are interested in robust accounts of practitioner research. I would also hope that it would be of interest to policy-makers and policy-influencers who want to give agency back to teachers themselves and who are looking to support practitioners to strive for a more equitable education system.

### About the Reviewer

**Clare Brooks** is a professor of education at the University of Cambridge. Her career began as a teacher of geography in East London, and her interest in geography influences her recent research in spatial justice and the social role of teacher education, in particular towards access issues to teacher education for isolated communities. She has researched international high-quality initial teacher education at scale, the results of which have been published by Routledge. She has also worked to redefine quality as a keyword in initial teacher education (as part of the Keywords in Teacher Education series with Bloomsbury). She developed her interest in the quality and development of teacher education following her experience as Pro-Director for Education at the Institute of Education (IOE) University College London (UCL) as well as previous terms as Head of Department and Head of Initial Teacher Education, and as Director of the research Centre on Teacher and Early Years Education. She remains Honorary Professor at UCL's Institute of Education, and at the University of Cumbria, and is an Honorary Research Fellow at the University of Oxford. She takes up the role of Head of the Faculty of Education at the University of Cambridge in October 2026.



### About the Editors

**Maria Teresa Tatto** is the Southwest Borderlands Professor of Comparative Education at the Mary Lou Fulton College for Teaching and Learning Innovation, Arizona State University, where she also serves as the Director of the MEd in Global Education. She is a Fellow of the American Education Research Association and an Honorary Research Fellow at the University of Oxford Department of Education. She has a BS in psychology from the Universidad Nacional Autonoma de Mexico and master's and doctoral degrees in educational administration, planning and social policy from Harvard University.



**Lindsey Brown** has a PhD in education policy and evaluation from Arizona State University. He is a methodological pragmatist whose research focuses on the effects of language policies on emergent bilingual student populations. Before beginning his doctoral studies, he was an educator who taught social studies for two years in the Dominican Republic and four years at a public school in rural Indiana.



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