

# Foreword

This collective book is the first to describe the origins, foundations, and early projects of the international exchange program entitled “Projets d’enseignants-chercheurs et d’étudiants en réseaux sociaux” (PEERS) [the Student and Teacher-Researchers Social Networks Project]. This program was created in 2011 by the University of Teacher Education, State of Vaud in Switzerland, in collaboration with its network of partner institutions in North America, South America, Europe, and Singapore.

The PEERS program was conceived with a view to meeting the needs of teacher training institutions seeking a new form of internationalization that combines research and training and develops students and professors mobility. The formula is relatively simple, consisting of bringing together small international groups of students and professors from two partner institutions to work on research projects investigating educational theory and practices over the course of an academic year. These international groups are generally composed of six students from the two institutions and the two professors training them. They work together on an R&I (Research and Innovation) focused project whose results are published in a report, and this is generally followed by one or more academic communications such as publications in academic journals or professional periodicals. As part of this project, the students and professors begin by communicating online with the help of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and social networks supported by the tools of Web 2.0. A one-week visit to the partner institution then takes place during the first term of the academic year. The international group generally benefits from this moment in order to finalize the objectives of their project and to formalize the work schedule and the division of labor over the following months. After this first visit, collaboration continues via remote communication over the second term, until a return visit where the partners who first went abroad host their counterparts in turn. This second exchange visit enables the structure of the report to be formalized

before it is then finalized during the closing weeks of the project. An average of six students and two teacher-researchers form an eight-person team that is highly engaged in a project whose shape they have themselves defined. For trainee teachers, these visits to partner institutions are also an opportunity to visit school establishments with their hosts, allowing them to gain an understanding of educational realities that are often very different from their own. Sociocultural activities are also organized between project work, and these constitute further opportunities for intercultural exchange and discovery at group level. Online collaborative work also provides real-life experience of ICT use in the context of international cooperation. This brief description indicates the innovative character of the PEERS program in comparison with traditional mobility programs, which most often consist of spending one or two terms abroad.

In the first, introductory section of the work, *“Issues, Opportunities and Challenges for the Internationalization of Teacher Training in a Globalized, Multicultural and Connected World,”* three authors describe the foundations and characteristics of the PEERS program. The contextual and transversal aspects of the different projects are put into perspective with the issues and objectives of internationalizing teacher education. In the second section, *“Case Studies and Lessons Learned from the PEERS Project in Southern Countries,”* the authors present the first case studies of projects from the PEERS program in Africa and South America. The cases presented derive from partnerships with institutions in Bolivia, Burkina Faso, Madagascar, and Mozambique. In the third section, *“Results of Research-Oriented PEERS Projects,”* the authors present the results of a series of projects with a more particular focus on R&I. These R&I projects, led in partnership with institutions in Europe, the USA, and Singapore, cover various topics including physical and sports education, special needs education, education for sustainable development, language learning, and the teaching of marginalized pupils. Finally, in the concluding section, *“The PEERS Program: A New Way to Internationalize Teacher Training,”* we return to the characteristics of the PEERS program in the light of the projects previously presented.

Each chapter of this collective book has undergone a systematic peer review process involving two experts – one internal, and one external –

who completed evaluation forms that were then shared with the authors. This review process thus enabled the quality of the text to be improved through the notes and suggestions of the experts. This work therefore constitutes the first collection of quality texts illustrating different types of PEERS projects while putting them into perspective with the issues posed by a globalized, intercultural, and increasingly connected world – a world of transformation in which the teachers of today are being trained to educate the citizens of tomorrow. We hope that this book inspires its readers to improve the practices and tools of internationalizing teacher education, to the benefit of future generations.

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