DRAFT

Integrating Equity and Social Justice into Teacher Preparation

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Introduction
It is well-documented that faculties of education in many universities in Canada and the U.S. are working to address issues of equity and social justice in schools and universities (Dei & James, 2002; Lesage et al. 2002; Solomon, 2002; Solomon et al. 2005), yet much still needs to be done. According to Lund (1998) a focus on diversity in teacher education preparation “is not afforded a high priority in many Canadian universities and that where multicultural education is addressed it is often done through isolated course offerings.” This supplementation does little to address the systemic inequities in schools or universities, nor does it necessarily help usher in meaningful changes across the curriculum. Lund (1998) does find however that some U.S. scholars are working to integrate a critical multicultural framework into preservice programs (Banks & Banks, 1995; Cabello & Eckmier, 1995; Jordan, 1995). The situation in Canadian universities mirrors these observations, with few academic accounts of teacher education programs on issues of race, and ethnic diversity and equity, and no accounts of leadership programs addressing these issues. A recent survey of the literature reveals a small number of journal articles documenting modest modifications to faculties of education programs in Canadian universities to include courses on equity and social justice (Solomon, 1997). Most of the research in both Canada and the United States examines issues of “race”, ethnicity, and culture.

Normally, the integration of issues of equity and social justice into teacher education programs focuses on Banks’ five approaches to multicultural education (Banks & Banks, 1995; Key, 2000). Nevertheless, recently as part of the efforts to promote equity and social justice, attention has focused on recruiting and hiring diverse faculty members and teacher candidates, course offerings, and curriculum content (Hawk, et al. 1999). For example, the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE) provides a number of workshops on equity, social justice, diversity, and equality for its pre-service teacher candidates. OISE also offers courses such as Cross-Cultural Counseling (EDU5518) and Diversity and Social Justice in Physical Education, recreation and Sports (EDU 5116) for its pre-service teachers. Similarly, York University offers Urban Education (ED/EDUC3306), Inclusive Education (EDUC 3600), and a deaf education program for its pre-service teachers.

Research suggests that courses in multicultural education have not changed the instructional practices of preservice teachers (Lenski, et al, 2005; Gibson, 2004). For this reason, it has been suggested that alternative internship opportunities are a positive step toward the integration of equity and social justice in teacher preparation program. Lund


(1998) discusses the benefits of non-traditional field placements for pre-service teachers to interact with their students outside of formal settings and provide experiences with individuals and groups they may not have encountered during their own education.

**Problems with Integrating Equity and Social Justice**

The literature identifies several challenges with the integration of equity and social justice in teacher preparation programs, of which the following are salient.

*Most programs do not provide teacher candidates opportunities to question, recognize and understand their own worldviews and beliefs about race, culture, and ethnicity, so they are able to understand their diverse students* (Beardsley & Teitel, 2004; Conle et al., 2000; Gibson, 2004; Lund, 1998; Marx, 2004; Solomon et al. 2005; Zeichner, 1996).

If this examination is ignored in their professional preparation, educators may never be called upon to consider how their own backgrounds may influence their ability to truly understand the perspective and needs of their students. A transformative approach begins with pre-service teachers exploring and better understanding their own social identities.

“Teacher education must help candidates understand their own racial identity formation and provide the learning space to work with the range of emotions and feelings of indignation that evolve from an exposure to white privilege and the ‘myth of meritocracy’” (Solomon et al. 2005).

*Often times teacher education programs address issues of diversity and equity without addressing whiteness and white privilege* (Marx, 2002, 2004; McLaren, 1995; McIntyre, 1997; Sleeter, 1993, 1994, 1995, 2001; Solomon et al. 2005). Marx (2002) argues that multicultural teacher education does not go far enough to prepare white teachers to successfully teach diverse students in schools. She also argues “that attention must be placed on the cultural, racial, and linguistic positionalities of teachers; that is, White teachers and teacher education students must be guided in an exploration of their own whiteness” (Marx, 2004, p 32). Often times teacher education programs address issues of diversity and equity without addressing whiteness and “white racism” defined as the ways in which Whites benefit from racism (Marx, 2004). Many teacher educators and researchers, both in the U.S. and Canada, have begun working in this field with varying results. Some of the difficulties researchers have encountered include: resentment on the part of white teacher candidates to discuss white privilege; the invisibility of whiteness and the subsequent inability to critically analyze their identity and liberalist notions of meritocracy (Solomon, et al. 2005).

*A primary focus of teacher education is on the needs of individual children rather than on structural and contextual factors of schooling* (Elabor-Idemudia, 2001; Ginsburg, 1988; Levine-Rasky, 1998). As a result, most teacher candidates hold the belief that schools serve an open system of individual mobility, with individuals succeeding differentially based on their own characteristics such as talent, ability effort, and creativity. Most teacher-candidates persistently interpret social difference and inequality through the lens of meritocracy, in which success is directly related to individual achievement and talent irrespective of environmental or broader social factors such as racial discrimination, poverty and other patterns of oppression (Levine-Rasky, 1998).

*Many teacher education programs designed to address multicultural education use an additive approach instead of approaching their programming, policies and practices through a social justice framework* (Elabor-Idemudia, 2001; Key, 2000; Levine-Rasky,
1998; McNeal, 2005). The result is that pre-service teachers are unable to make the intended associations with students from cultures other than their own. As well, through this additive approach teacher candidates are less likely to incorporate the knowledges and cultural referents of different ethnic groups into the curriculum (Elabor-Idemudia, 2001). A teacher education program itself should demonstrate a real-life example of multicultural education in its programming, personnel and curriculum and instruction practices and policies (McNeal, 2005). However, a multicultural teacher education program is ineffective as a pedagogical tool unless it is regarded as an entry point and then structured around principles social justice (Hackman, 2005; Solomon, et al. 2005). Levine-Rasky (1998) discusses the need for teacher education programs to be framed around the principles of social justice, which calls for the critical examination of curriculum, hiring, and training of faculty.

**Exposure to new ideas is not enough to change teacher candidates’ beliefs and attitudes. Without due reflection, application and contextualization, internalization of values and knowledge about cultural diversity, teacher candidates may not experience any transformation** (Elabor-Idemudia, 2001; Levine-Rasky, 1998; Lund, 1998; Solomon et al. 2005). Practice teaching needs to be more integrated into preparation programs. Elabor-Idemudia (2001), who borrows from Paine’s (1990) framework, suggests that multicultural education should be a framework for preservice programs and that teacher candidates “learn to observe children from diverse racial/ethnic backgrounds carefully; to make explicit their interpretations of those children’s actions, behaviours, and ideas; and to develop more appropriate and meaningful interpretative frameworks for what they actually see in the classroom” (p.34). Further, it is suggested that teacher preparation programs should teach candidates how to engage in ethnographic research and how to use the data to assess their own progress in specific ways and prevent free-floating episodes that reinforce stereotypes based on culture, race, gender, and other aspects of diversity (Elabor-Idemudia, 2001; Lenski, et al. 2003; Nieto, 2000).

**Teacher-Candidates offer resistance to infusion of equity and social justice into preparation program**

Some faculties of education in Canadian and U.S. universities have incorporated issues of equity and social justice into teacher preparation programs. The result is that resistance and defensiveness sometimes occur. Solomon et al. (2005) identify three strategies - ideological incongruence, negating white capital, and liberalist notions of individualism and meritocracy - that teacher candidates use to resist critical reflection on issues of race, equity, and social justice. Ideological incongruence occurs when an individual supports a particular ideological stance but is unsupportive of any measures designed to address that ideology. Negating white capital has to do with negative reactions to systems of white privilege; whereas liberalist notions relate to the invocation of individual hard work and talent. Pohan and Mathison (1999) define as an act “defending or protecting; where as they refer to resistance as more an act of opposing, counteracting, withstand, or attempting to defeat” (p.1). To deal with defensiveness and resistance, the authors suggest that preservice teachers be provided with alternative beliefs that will eventually lead to dissatisfaction with their existing beliefs; providing psychologically safe classroom environment where teacher candidates can work through their discomfort, anger, fear, etc; and the availability of instructor support to help teacher candidates to process their experiences.
Faculty and teacher education instructors are not trained in integrative models of multicultural education and social justice

A study of teacher education program at the University of British Columbia reveals that the nature and substance of multicultural or antiracist curricular content depends more on the instructor than on the course (Stovel, 1996 cited in Lund, 1998). The experiences of both students and professors indicate that one instructor might deal specifically with equity pedagogy while another may choose to avoid it entirely. Similarly, at OISE/UT social justice and equity workshops teacher candidates are often not mandatory and often take the form of information sessions without adequate time allotted to interrogate issues such as white privilege, equity, and social justice.

Transforming teacher education programs and ultimately the teaching profession is difficult due to its depoliticized and uncritical framework (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1992; Lund, 1998). Lund suggests that the teaching profession by its nature is seen as a conservative pursuit naturally resistive to change. Those entering the profession are also seen as less likely to disrupt the status quo, because it can be assumed that many teacher candidates entering the profession have enjoyed their own schooling experiences.

Exemplary Models of social justice teacher education programs/initiatives. (Beardsley & Teitel, 2004)

Tufts University’s Master of Arts in Teaching, a traditional, predominantly white, teacher education degree program, has committed itself to preparing teachers to teach effectively in urban schools. They have engaged in a conscious strategy to weave issues of equity and social justice into teacher education. Special features of the program include a year-long internship with a master teacher; weekly on-site seminars on issues in urban education; university-school partnerships; curriculum that allows teacher candidates to become aware of their own racial identities; building relationship with students and their families; a compulsory course in race, class and gender history in U.S. education.


Cochran-Smith discusses ways to unlearn racism and to work towards a transformative teacher education program which begins by looking at teacher education as text, “a process that involves analyzing and altering the learning opportunities available in the program.” This model includes critical discussions of issues of culture, equity, and social justice; compulsory participation in Afrocentric curriculum and socialization patterns of African Americans, Hispanics, and Asian Americans; sharing personal narratives about racism; publication of an annual collection about race and class called “A sense of who we are”.

Conle et. al (2000).

Conle of OISE/UT works with her pre-service students in a cross-cultural course to try and understand how they encounter one another’s diverse attitudes and values, validating experiential interaction as moments of learning. Work with her students leads to a vision of pluralism where diversity is engaged, refined and expanded, to create interpretive competence through encounters of difference and self-study. She allows her curriculum decisions be guided by the need to confront how we see the world and to do this by starting with ourselves and then with an exploration of what cultural make-up we bring to
our encounters with students. Conle creates situations where candidates come to recognize experientially, through the narrative world of others – desirable and undesirable attitudes in themselves, as well as world views within which those attitudes are not only possible, but taken for granted. By listening to experiential stories of the classmates; a listener tends to respond with more of their own.

References

Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (New Orleans, LA, April 1-5).