Teacher candidates' transformative thinking on issues of social justice

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ABSTRACT

This article examined how teacher candidates' thoughts shifted regarding social inequity in a sophomore-level Foundations of Education course located in the mid-Atlantic region of the United States. First, we described in detail the teacher education program and course, as well as class simulations, school observations, course readings and class discussions. Then, we examined the narratives of our teacher candidates' transformation. We found that the afore-mentioned experiences successfully supported transformative thinking regarding social justice. By the end of the course, many teacher candidates began to take ownership over their learning and started viewing themselves as responsible change agents. They began to examine education as embedded in larger social contexts, scrutinized their own schooling experiences and stepped outside of their own conceptions of education to initiate discussions of social justice.

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1. Introduction

The final days of a sophomore-level Foundations of Education course had arrived. In class, 33 predominantly White middle class teacher candidates sat intently listening to one another share their philosophies of education. Finally, it was Carrie's turn to speak. She stated,

> My teaching philosophy has changed drastically over the course of the semester. In the beginning of the semester, I believed that the most effective form of education was a strict environment where core courses should be taught. …now my philosophy has changed to being more about social reform as a means to shape society. Instead of just teaching them [children] the basics, I believe a switch in my philosophy has changed to being more about taking those basics …along with more recent works…and studying how to keep improving our country and the world.

As the class politely applauded, we recalled Carrie's initial philosophy statement in which she wrote,

> The role of education is to prepare the youth of today to be successful in the future and to prepare them for a world which they will one day be independent in. This is not only teaching them about science and math, but also teaching them about life. The role of the teacher is to be an authority to his/her students, but also to connect with them. School should be a safe and welcoming environment for students and with a kind hearted teacher who can also be a disciplinarian. This would make the perfect teacher.

We wondered what had changed. What experiences led Carrie to rethink her position to include issues of social justice and social change? More importantly, what can we learn about Carrie's experiences in this class that led her to rethink her beliefs about schools and the roles teachers play in them? Additionally, when teacher candidates are predominately White and middle class and have limited experiences with diverse cultures and social inequities, what kind of experiences are needed to transform ideas about teaching and learning as they relate to diverse populations?

The purpose of this article is to explore how teacher candidates shift their understandings of issues related to social inequity in a Foundations of Education course. More importantly, we examine what teacher candidates tell us about what led to transformation of their thoughts and beliefs. "Voice," grounded in Paulo Freire's notion of dialogical communication, became an analytical tool used to uncover teacher candidates' experiences in the classroom. In other words, we attempted to foster a space in which active, dialogical, critical and stimulating methods (Freire, 2001) encouraged candidates to perceive themselves in the world differently and, in turn, develop the capacities to make positive change. To this end, we shed light on the thoughts and experiences of teacher candidates as they shared their experiences through direct exposure to social inequities that exist within the school context. This article describes what we learned from our candidates as we laid the groundwork for the development of culturally responsive competencies during the beginning stages of a teacher education program.

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2. Literature review

Multicultural education has become a major theme in the field of teacher education in the United States (U.S.). As an extension of the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s, multicultural education "frames inequality in terms of institutionalised oppression and reconfigures the families and communities of oppressed groups as sources of strength" (Sleeter & McLaren, 1995). According to Banks (2004) a major goal of multicultural education is to reform the schools and other educational institutions so that students from diverse racial, ethnic and social-class groups will experience educational equity. Thus, more and more we find teacher education programs striving to address issues of structural inequality, stereotypes and bias as well as explicit cultural assumptions that teacher candidates may bring with them into the classroom.

Although there are other frames that extend our larger understandings of multicultural education to address issues of power such as critical pedagogy (Giroux, 1983; Mclaren, 1991), critical multiculturalism (May, 1999) and a critical analysis of race such as critical race theory (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Lynn, 1999; Solorzano & Yosso, 2000) and antiracist education (Lee, 1995; Lee, Menkart, & Okazawa-Rey, 1998), of import to this study is culturally responsive teaching, which provides a lens for helping teachers and teacher educators understand the larger socio-cultural context from which the teacher education candidates come. Culturally responsive teaching also serves as a meaningful goal in the profession of teacher education. In what follows, we explore the literature on culturally responsive teaching.

2.1. Culturally responsive teaching

Culturally responsive teaching in the U.S. is a result from the outpouring of literature in the 1960s on teaching the "disadvantaged" and the "culturally deprived." This literature was then followed by the introduction of "effective" teaching models for minority students in the 1970s. The resulting impact of ethnic revitalization movements (Ladson-Billings, 1999) led researchers to conduct qualitative studies that drew on the "wisdom of practice" of Black educators teaching Black children (Hale-Benson, 1986; Irvine, 2001; King, 1991; Ladson-Billings, 1994). These models, interchangeably termed culturally relevant, culturally congruent or cultural, served to counter the deficit models, which purported that Black children and other children of colour were deprived, deficient and in need of intervention programs (Ladson-Billings, 1994).

Foster (1995) systematically combed through all studies that pertained to culturally relevant teaching from 1960 to 1993. Her research revealed prevalent themes that define culturally relevant teachers. She found that culturally relevant teaching could be characterized by cultural solidarity, affiliation and kinship as well as connectedness. In other words, these teachers considered themselves part of the community where they taught. As a result, they "drew on the community patterns and norms in structuring the classroom, they linked classroom activities to students' out-of-school experiences and [they] incorporated familiar cultural communicative patterns into their classroom practices, routines and activities" (p. 578). Moreover, these teachers saw themselves, their students and the community as part of a larger family who protected and advised one another on how to survive in a racist society. These findings are also supported by more historical research that reveals that caring and high expectations displayed by teachers pervaded Black, segregated schools. In those settings, teachers served as a crucial link between the parents and the school administration (Siddle-Walker, 1993).

More recently other scholars in the U.S., building on Foster's themes, have operationalized other culturally responsive practices in urban settings (Howard, 2001; Ladson-Billings, 1994). They have

discussed the debates around Black Ebonics (Perry & Delpit, 1998) and have observed emancipatory teaching practice (Ball, 2000; Henry, 1998; Lynn, 1999). In 1988, Ladson-Billings began what would become a seminal study of a group of eight teachers – all female, five Black and three White whom she refers to as the "dreamkeepers" in a small predominately African-American, low income school district in Northern California.

Ladson-Billings (1994) found that the *Dreamkeepers* were well aware of systematic injustices that worked to create low expectations for African-American children; thus, these teachers viewed their role as helping their students identify the contradictions and inequities in their local neighbourhoods as well as the nation and the world. In addition, these teachers capitalized on their students' home and community culture. They saw themselves as part of the community—in turn, the classroom context became a site in which students came to be considered as part of an extended family. Thus, *Dreamkeepers* built on the lives and experiences of their Black students by nurturing the cultural capital that children, individually and collectively, bring to the classroom.

To this end, culturally relevant teaching not only embraces the history and experiences that students bring into the classroom but also propels these students to understand the political and social contexts in which they live. Culturally relevant teachers foster spaces of care and high expectation and fundamentally believe that their students are competent both academically and socially. As Ryan (2007) argues, this form of teaching requires that teacher candidates "posses in-depth knowledge of students, subject matter and the social implications of education" (p.136).

2.2. Laying the groundwork for culturally responsive teacher candidates

Today, more than ever, there is a critical need for teacher candidates in the U.S. to be prepared for racially, culturally, economically and religiously diverse students and to think about the socio-cultural aspects of teaching and learning (Darling-Hammond, 1995; King, 1991; Ladson-Billings, 1994). Overwhelming evidence points to the historic and current practices that continue to lay the groundwork across racial, cultural and class lines referred to as the achievement gap. Research also indicates that children of colour are placed in special education classes at higher rates than their White counterparts. In U.S. schools, 41% of students of colour are located in special education classes and comprise 35% of those students labeled mentally retarded (Shockley, 2002). Furthermore, students of colour represent 36% of those suspended and they represent 32% of those who are expelled from school even though they compose less than 41% of the school age population (KewalRamani, Gilbertson, Fox, & Provasnik, 2007).

Researchers offer numerous explanations for disparities in academic achievement for poor students and students of colour attending U.S. public schools. Some argue that there is a widespread problem of low expectations held by many White, female teachers with regards to the academic achievement of children of colour (Ladson-Billings, 1999; Zeichner, 1993; Zeichner, Melnick, & Gomez, 1995). Others believe that there is a lack of cultural congruency among teachers and students (Irvine, 2000) while others explain that the existence of low student achievement is due to structural inequalities that reinforce racism, classism and sexism in educational institutions that are beyond a teacher's control. Darling-Hammond (1995) believes that students from racial and ethnic minority groups in the United States face persistent and profound barriers to educational opportunities, access to knowledge and resources as a consequence of structural inequalities (p.465). In addition, Ladson-Billings, in her 2006 AERA presidential address (2006) argued that the much discussed achievement gap is, in fact, an "education debt" created by historical, economical, sociopolitical

and moral decisions and policies. She continues to add that the cumulative damage of this debt reminds us that the U.S. educational system remains divided and continues to leave children behind.

We contend, along with others, that one of many responses to this multifaceted crisis could be spending sustained time to build understandings of diverse communities during the initial stages of a pre-service teaching program (Haberman, 1995; Irvine, 2000). More importantly, we believe that an exposure to and understanding of the history of schooling, the varied participation of distinct cultures as well as the ways that schools perpetuate inequalities can lead to a transformation in teacher candidates' thinking by providing them with multiple opportunities to critically analyse U.S. education, examine the implications and come to their own conclusions. By 2020, approximately 40 percent of the school-aged children living in the U.S. will be students of colour, bringing with them diverse experiences into the classroom. Moreover, many of our teacher candidates, who are largely White and middle class, come to teacher education programs with limited or no exposure to communities unlike their own.

In addition to the lack of exposure, Lortie's (1977) argument about the power of the "apprenticeship of observation" suggests that the continued and sustained time that students spend observing and interacting with their teachers while matriculating through school has a profound influence on the way teacher candidates view their own teaching practice. He continues to add that, "what students [teacher education candidates] learn about teaching, then, is intuitive and imitative rather than explicit and analytical; it is based on individual personalities rather than pedagogical principles." He argued that teacher education candidates must be provided with experiences that systematically offset their own personal experiences in order to move towards change in beliefs (Lortie, 1977). In fact the question still remains, "What experiences should teacher educators provide and in what format in order to help teacher candidates move beyond their own experiences?" We contend that formal education in a college classroom should include a systematic approach to exposing teacher candidates to issues of equity in conjunction with field experiences, which can work against the "apprenticeship of observation" by allowing teacher candidates to transform their understandings of education, teaching and learning. Transformation, in this case, refers to the replacement of past assumptions with the development of new understandings.

Culturally responsive practice forces teacher candidates to move beyond discipline knowledge, pedagogical strategies, and individual needs to acknowledge not only socio-cultural history and experiences but also the assumptions and stereotypes that they bring into the classroom. As many teacher candidates began their teacher preparation programs with limited knowledge of, background in and exposure to diverse cultures, it is the authors' desire to provide multiple experiences that would move them towards more culturally responsive competencies.

3. Methodology

We utilized an interpretive case study method framed by culturally responsive theory to examine the responses of 33 sophomore-level teacher candidates, typically between 19 and 20 years of age in their second year of college, enrolled in a semester long course. Specifically, we examined what reading materials, activities and experiences led our teacher candidates to having shifts in their thinking.

We distributed and analysed three open-ended questionnaires and selected course assignments including initial and final teaching philosophies and a culminating observation project using a start list of codes and open and axial coding. Sample questions in the questionnaire included: "How do you view social, racial and economic inequalities in U.S. schools? What are your thoughts about the use of multicultural literature and censorship?" In combing through the data, each teacher candidate was considered a case; however, data were reported thematically. This methodology was used in order to capture each individual's experiences and to present "in their own words" how they "changed" or "rethought" past teaching and learning experiences. All except one participant was White, middle class and about l9 years old. Two participants were male and one teacher candidate was of Korean descent. The majority of the candidates were raised in upper middle socio-economic families living in the suburbs of Pennsylvania, New York or New Jersey and shared that they had limited experiences with diverse populations.

In what follows we describe, in detail, the teacher education program, the Foundations of Education course and teacher candidates. Then we present and analyse how teacher candidates responded to the varied activities experienced throughout the course of the semester. This article concludes with results and implications for teacher educators.

3.1. University context

This study was conducted at a small, private, university located in the Mid-Atlantic region. The student population at the University's Department of Education is over 91% White and middle class with limited exposure to diverse cultures upon entering the teacher preparation program. The University has a strong Christian orientation and prides itself on a commitment to social justice. As the mission states,

> Since its founding in 1908, the School of Education, and currently the Department of Education, sees it mission to contribute to the local, regional and national educational environment. Our reflective practitioner model, rooted in … social justice teaching and contemporary cognitive science, prepares all teacher candidates for their role as leader-practitioner. A tradition of service to urban [settings]… provides teacher candidates with numerous experiences to further their development as educational professionals.

Unlike many higher education learning institutions, the University is located in the heart of a major urban city. As a result, many of the professors and clinical staff take advantage of the opportunity to expose teacher candidates to real life inner public urban schooling contexts, charter schools and parochial schools the student populations of which mirror the demographics of many major urban centres. The urban school district, in which the University is located, is attended by multi-lingual and multiethnic students speaking over 100 languages and dialects. Currently, the district supports over 70,000 students in 146 schools and 81% of those students are eligible for free and/or reduced lunch program. Like most urban school districts, many of the African-American students are segregated into all-Black school institutions especially those located in the southern part of the city.

3.2. Teacher education program

The undergraduate teacher education program is designed as a 4-year program. Candidates' knowledge, skills, and dispositions are developed in the unit through general education or so called *distribution requirements*, pedagogical and professional courses (including foundation courses and methods courses), and several field experiences (including practica and student teaching or "capstone experiences").

The undergraduate teacher education programs include performance-based assignments integrated with meaningful field experiences. The freshmen write an observation paper, the sophomores complete observations and tutoring experiences, the junior methods candidates complete lesson plans, microteaching, integrated thematic units, webquests, and a mini action research paper,

and the student teachers write an action research paper and prepare an electronic portfolio. In many of the courses, a multicultural content is directly infused.

3.3. Foundations of education course

One of the courses offered as part of the sophomore-level sequence alongside Psychology of Learning and Human Growth and Development is Foundations of Education. This course introduces teacher candidates to the aims, goals and functions of schooling utilizing a post-modern perspective that emphasizes the philosophical, historical and sociopolitical context of American education. This course emphasizes and fosters insight into the relationships between theory and practice through interaction with resource persons and observations in schools. The course covers current educational issues in a cross-disciplinary context that shapes curriculum, instruction and the problems of schools in a changing society.

The course is designed to support teacher candidates to:

1. Develop a reflective stance on the distinction between education and schooling. This includes exploring, understanding and critically assessing the historical, cultural and philosophical Foundations of Education and current significant educational issues.
2. Develop and demonstrate skill in observation, application, analysis and evaluation of the teaching-learning process.
3. Understand the relationship between subject content knowledge, principles of curriculum, school ethos, ethic and politics that underlie education and the societal context of the classroom. Particular emphasis is placed on issues related to equity and equality of educational opportunity.
4. Comprehend and connect the theoretical knowledge of the college classroom and the specific, practical situation in schools.
5. Express knowledge, attitudes and opinions about education issues clearly, succinctly and adequately both verbally (class participation) and in writing (assignments and examinations).

Thus, this course offers multiple opportunities for teacher candidates to confront their racialized and classed positionality as well as the lens that they bring into the classroom. Several structured activities and experiences are designed to help teacher candidates re-examine their own experiences while creating new understandings of teaching and learning. Among these experiences are course readings, school observations, simulations, in-depth practice using the department's reflective framework and focused time spent on developing their own teaching philosophy. The course is comprised of the following activities/experiences:

Class readings	Teacher candidates are expected to read and discuss the text entitled American Schools written by Joel Spring (2005). The text offers a historio-graphical view of schooling between 1642 and 2004 from the perspective of diverse and highly marginalised communities such as African, Native, Latino and Chinese Americans.
Philosophy statements	Teacher candidates write their teaching philosophy statements twice throughout the semester, at the beginning and end.
School observation paper	Teacher candidates observe school and community contexts and converse with the principals of three distinct schools, two of which have professional partnerships with the Department of Education. The schools include 1) a higher socio-economic, majority White, elementary school located in the northern section of the city; 2) a lower socio-economic, racially and linguistically diverse, dual language immersion charter school located in the northern section of the city; and 3) a lower socio-economic, all-Black public, junior high school located in the southern section of the city. The teacher candidates complete an observation paper in which they reflect on a societal or curricular dilemma (Berlak & Berlak, 1981) that exists in the school.

The observation paper provides teacher candidates with the opportunity to describe, analyse and reflect on their observations in schools. Teacher candidates provide rich descriptions of what they have observed using the elements of the learning environment (such as diversity of student needs, instructional strategies, assessment, stakeholders, etc.) from the department's conceptual framework. Teacher candidates are also asked to identify, describe and analyse one societal or curricular dilemma (from each school) they visited. Examples of dilemmas (based on work done by Berlak & Berlak, 1981) include question such as:

- Should schools encourage the development of a shared culture or develop the cultures of subgroups? (societal dilemma)
- Should there be equal and uniform sanctions for transgressions from the rules or should sanctions be determined individually? (societal dilemma)
- Should the student's personal knowledge be ruled out as irrelevant or included in the teacher's definition of the school's curriculum? (curriculum dilemma)
- To what degree should the teacher allow or even encourage the children's interest, background and experiences and so on to contribute to the school curriculum? (curriculum dilemma)
- Does mastery of the content take priority over mastery of skills or thinking or reasoning? (curriculum dilemma)

After identifying a *dilemma* (one of the components of the department's reflective framework), teacher candidates begin by asking themselves descriptive questions like, "What is going on?" "What actions and behaviours are involved?" and "What external pressures are shaping the classroom actions?" The intention is to use these "data" for further analysis as candidates apply various modes of deliberation (another component of the framework). Next, teacher candidates interpret the dilemma by asking "What message was sent by this decision?" and "How are the events being experienced by individuals and groups?" Finally, the *philosophical mode* of reflection builds from a philosophical tradition that involves a constant critique of the often overwhelming impact of institutions and repressive forms of authority. The key questions that need to be addressed in this form of inquiry include: "Is this the most worthwhile solution and for whom?" (the teacher? the learner?) "Why is it 'good' or 'not good'? Is it ethical? Is it just? Does it have merit, value? By whose criteria or philosophy? Does it recognize each learner as a unique, spiritual being?"

Finally, teacher candidates are asked to connect observations in the schools with content discussed in class. Time is allowed in class for teacher candidates to ask questions and raise comments so that they do not leave observation experiences with stereotypes or unquestioned assumptions.

Simulations	The goal of the simulations experience is two fold. First, simulations are designed to introduce teacher candidates to one of the following: inclusion, multicultural literature, English language learners or academic tracking. Second, teacher candidates are required to further articulate their teaching philosophy before and after exposure to the topic via movie, readings and role play.

3.4. Teacher candidates

At the beginning of the semester, the teacher candidates expressed that they had limited experiences with issues related to diversity or social justice. Many noted that in their own education experiences there was limited racial or socio-economic diversity. There seemed to be two overarching perspectives: teacher

candidates either never thought about social, racial or economic inequity or they believed that racism and economic disparity were societal issues rarely found in U.S. schools. For example, in the beginning of the semester only two teacher candidates mentioned issues of diversity, equity and personal accountability in their initial philosophy statements. Katie's response exemplifies a typical philosophy statement submitted, upon entering this entry-level course, to the question of what is the role of education and teachers in U.S. schools. Katie, like Carrie, posited,

> The role of education for a student is a huge part of their lives it is not only teaching them for fact and numbers, but also helping them figure out who they are as a person. It means putting the student in a safe environment where they feel comfortable…The role of the teacher is to teach to each individual student, not a group as a whole.

Katie, like many teacher candidates, recognized the goal of education to produce a productive system and saw the role of the teacher as guiding the student to that end. Academic rigor, safety and structure became the indicators of excellent teaching. Not mentioned in the initial discussion are issues of diversity, social justice or meeting the distinct social or cultural needs of students.

When given a questionnaire that asked direct questions about issues of diversity and social justice teacher candidates responded in the following ways.

Lacy commented that,

> I have always known they [inequalities] were present but in my own experiences it had never been too pronounced. I thought inequalities were more of a social issue than an educational one and that they were pretty well monitored and maintained.

Jennifer concurred,

> I didn't think they [social, racial and economic inequities] were relevant today. I figured all races and social classes etc. all went to the same public school.

Katie shared that,

> I didn't really think of these issues as "real" or relevant today. If anything, I thought that these issues only existed in a few places.

Only three of the thirty-three teacher candidates mentioned having some understanding of economic disparities. For example Jamie stated,

> I only knew that students in certain situations (i.e. neighbourhoods) often did not receive the best resources or education.

Given this information, it was clear that we were not only contending with prior conceptions of good teaching based on their past experiences with and observations of past teachers but also a socialization and socio-cultural context that did not include any racial, ethnic or economic diversity. This was confirmed when teacher candidates were given a short questionnaire that asked direct questions about their thoughts about issues of race, racism and inequity at the beginning of the semester. The vast majority of them admitted to never thinking about issues of race and inequality upon entering the class. Nor had the majority of our teacher candidates attended schools with students who were other than White and middle class. Thus, exposing teacher candidates to ways in which they could question their own assumptions, understand their own positions in society and comprehend how schools perpetuate socio-economic inequities seemed like necessary goals.

Throughout the semester, teacher candidates discussed three defining experiences, activities or observations that caused shifts in their previous ways of considering issues of social justice: 1) analysis and reflection about visits to local public and charter schools, 2) learning the educational history of diverse cultures from their perspectives, and 3) simulation activities. In what follows, we discuss our teacher candidates' shifts in thinking.

4. Data analysis

4.1. Observations in local schools

Many teacher candidates seemed to leave school observations questioning their own past assumptions about teaching and learning or with shifts in their initial teaching philosophies. Teacher candidates also questioned their own "apprenticeship of observation" by making distinctions between their past schooling experiences and the kind of teacher they desired to be. They found the school visits helpful in creating these distinctions. For example, one female teacher candidate shared after a visit to the upper middle class predominately White public school,

> I realized why I did not like my own first grade experience. The teaching philosophy was seeing the class as a whole. While each student is an individual, it is the compilation of the students and how they function as a class that is important. Another thing I noticed was …the teacher's method…was a strict formal relationship with her students. This way the relationship was strictly professional which would allow the student to focus on learning.

> Contrary to this belief, I believe we must focus on the individual qualities and differences of each student. Each student is unique; they learn differently, find different things interesting and have different strengths and weaknesses…

In this case, this teacher candidate was trying to make sense of the reasons she did not like her own schooling experiences. The observation gave her a heightened awareness of her discomfort with being treated as one in the same. The school visit, in conjunction with the observation, brought to the fore the latent memories of feeling as though her individual person did not matter. She continued to add,

> I think a student and teacher need to have a more personal relationship in order for the student to feel comfortable and willing to step beyond their comfort zone.

Another teacher candidate, Tim, observed the economic disparity and differential access to resources when visiting three different schools. After questioning each principal, he seemed to notice the challenges associated with implementation of No Child Left Behind, a U.S. federal policy built on principles of parental choice plans, accountability, research-based instruction and local control. He found that the parental choice plans seemed to be unable to meet the needs of all students given the lack of high performing schools. In his final observation project he developed a remedy to the lack of access to quality education for students located in certain sections of the school district. He stated,

> If students seek to switch schools in the hope that higher test scores reflect better opportunity for their futures, then…we should ensure that all schools are equally high performing. If we do not abandon these schools, students would not abandon them either by crossing the city every day to get a good education that they ought to find in their own neighbourhoods.

Here, we see this teacher candidate beginning to understand the larger social economic context that drives education and schooling. By stating "we," the researchers are seeing the beginnings of this teacher candidates' taking personal ownership in his chosen profession to ensure that all students receive quality education.

4.2. "His/Her" story matters

As mentioned previously, Joel Spring's text, *American Schools*, was the foundational text used as a springboard to examine Asian, African, European, Latina and Native cultures and their historical experiences in US schooling. Using a historiography method, the author examines the plight of these cultural groups from 1642 to 2004.

Although a few teacher candidates found the book tedious, uncomfortable and difficult to comprehend at times, several of them expressed the importance of having a comprehensive historical foundation such as the one presented in the text. More specifically, some teacher candidates used the information to help them better understand the current context like Lisa, who shared, "the knowledge about the history of education in America is important because educators can link current problems to what we are experiencing in education and have a better understanding of why these [occurrences] are happening in our society," Another teacher candidate expressed,

Before entering the class, I had a general view of educational inequities. I knew that some children who had rich parents went to better schools than me and that poor children went to schools that were unable to meet all of their needs. I was accepting of the stereotypical views and never tried to expand my own growth…I thought of myself as a very open-minded person, but upon taking this class the realization that I truly knew nothing about inequities quickly put me in my place.

Later she stated that she valued the readings that laid the historical foundation for the U.S. schooling,

I realize the extent to which educational equalities reach and have major influence on the present educational system. I think the lack of common knowledge about the history of our educational system helps to perpetuate educational inequality.

Other teacher candidates seemed to express dismay in not having a complete understanding of the oppressive history of Native, African, Latina, Catholic and Asian Americans before entering the course. For example, one female teacher candidate expressed,

It has taken me to my sophomore year to really understand what the Native Americans, African-Americans and Asian people had to go through. Not being able to learn, read or write or advance themselves in anyway. It is so unfair and hard for people of diverse cultures.

Thus, teacher candidates began to make connections between the history of diverse communities and inequity that exists in today's schools illuminating why schooling experiences for diverse youth present such stark contrasts even three miles apart in the same city.

In addition, teacher candidates seemed to realize how their own educational experience seemed to be lacking. Conversations about the historical experiences of diverse races, cultures and religions left some teacher candidates frustrated because they learned only selected parts of U.S. history.

4.3. Simulations

The use of simulations seemed to provide teacher candidates with opportunities to be introduced to new concepts, deepen understandings or re-examine old conceptions. The simulations also provide the teacher educator with opportunities to help teacher candidates grow in areas of need. Teacher candidate data revealed that the simulations helped candidates develop their educational philosophy by allowing them to look deeply at and carefully analyse one controversial educational topic. Teacher candidates began simulations by responding to a question about how much they knew about the topic. They then were given reading materials or were asked to watch a movie or engage in a role play. Subsequently, the teacher candidates were asked to further articulate their views about the topic. For example, Laura shared her initial thoughts about academic tracking, a common practice of students in different classes or tracks based on perceived differences in ability in ways that could potentially limit their academic growth (Oakes, 2005). She wrote, "I don't know too much about tracking….it is beneficial because kids can be with those who are on the same level as themselves." After viewing the video on tracking and reading a packet on the pros and cons from *Taking Sides* (Noll, 2007), Laura stated in her written comments:

Now that I know more about tracking, I definitely disagree with it. …I personally was not one of the smartest kids in my school yet having classes with these students really set my expectations high and made me work harder to measure up.

Here we see the teacher candidate making a distinction in expectations and understanding that academically integrated settings makes a difference in student achievement.
Another teacher candidate concurred,

After viewing the movie, I don't feel as though academic tracking is the best idea. I don't believe that it allows students to reach their highest capability. Academic tracking is a way of short-changing the students who get placed in the lower tracks and gives advantage to the students in higher tracks.

We see that teacher candidates identify privilege and the way in which access to certain forms of information provides more opportunity for some and less opportunity for others.

Tammy, upon entering a simulation on inclusion was in strong opposition to students with disabilities being integrated into the classroom. However, after viewing Goodwin's movie, *Educating Peter* (1993) and having a discussion around issues of inclusion, Tammy stated,

At first I strongly disagreed with what I said about having "different people" in the same class, but by the end of the movie, I believed that if the school is willing to work through the differences and learn how to deal with them appropriately, the benefits for everyone are countless. People are different, and it is important for people to understand that the world is filled with many kinds of humans that we should welcome into our lives as much as possible.

We find that she is beginning to recognize that it is the school's responsibility to ensure that all students' needs are met. She is also beginning to see the benefits of learning from students who may be academically different. She further adds,

It would be a larger challenge if I was the teacher. I could not promise I would be able to [meet the needs of students with disabilities], unfortunately, but I do believe that the student should have the opportunity [to be in an inclusive classroom].

Here, Tammy said that although integration of diverse learners is a good idea for students with disabilities, she does not view this responsibility as one she would embrace. Another way to interpret this statement is to assume that this sophomore-level teacher candidate does not yet have the skill set to differentiate instruction for all diverse learners and questions her ability to do so. In the final analysis there has been a vast shift in the way in which she views inclusion and the importance it has in the lives of students with disabilities.

5. Summary

By the end of the semester, teacher candidates completed a final observation paper in which they had to identify a societal and curricular dilemma and explain how they philosophically view the dilemma. The fact that 15 out of 33 teacher candidates chose to analyse and reflect on issues of economic equity/inequity in public schools or the value of multicultural education demonstrates that many desired to address issues of inequality with respect to social justice. See Table 1 below.

Throughout the semester, we began to observe some of our teacher candidates move beyond superficial understandings of multicultural education to acknowledging the socio-cultural history and experiences of a diverse community. Thus, we believe that using texts that provide a more holistic history of diverse cultures was helpful in enabling our teacher candidates to understand that U.S. education has been a constant struggle and resistance for many communities.

Although the intention of the class was to help teacher candidates think about their own positions and to move them towards culturally responsive competencies, some sophomore teacher candidates began to question their own assumptions and the stereotypes that they bring into the classroom. Some teacher candidates began to take ownership of schooling and education and talk about how they can make a difference in their schooling context.

Second, we believe that teacher candidates began to examine educational structures embedded in larger U.S. societal contexts (Bronfenbrenner, 1989) and the historical context that created the schooling system that we see today. At this juncture, teacher candidates also began to think about some educational dilemmas that exist in today's schools, e.g., whether teachers should exclusively foster mainstream culture in the classroom or cultivate the consciousness of subcultures. They began to question why some schools had more funding than others across racial and class lines. Finally, teacher candidates began to scrutinize their own schooling experiences and step outside of their own conceptions of education to include conversations about learning of all children across race, class and gender lines.

The following section outlines various strategies that teacher education programs can use to nurture culturally responsive teaching.

6. Implications for developing culturally responsive teacher education programs

6.1. Collaboration and the development of individualized plans

Teacher educators should identify early, in the teacher candidates' program, areas in which candidates need further development. For example, Tammy would need more work holding herself accountable to meeting the needs of all students in an inclusive classroom, or she should be required to take additional courses that would provide the skill sets needed to build her confidence in teaching students with varied abilities. In this case, horizontal teaming with junior and senior level faculty members who examine philosophy statements and other projects could be helpful in developing future experiences that could push teacher candidates towards culturally responsive competencies. Although this process is time consuming, especially for teaching institutions in the U.S. with large populations, we believe that it is critical to identify areas of needs early in the teacher candidates' career. Building on what teacher candidates know and providing ongoing opportunities for them to re-examine their assumption, teacher educators could design a more systematic plan for developing culturally responsive teachers.

6.2. Pull out or pull in

The foundation for culturally responsive teaching must be built early in teacher candidates' programs. The development must be ongoing and sustained. Although classes like Foundations of Education and Diversity of Student Needs courses offer explicit opportunities to examine issues of race and equity, it is critical for teacher candidates to continue to develop the competencies in these areas throughout all of their coursework. Thus, having additional coursework that explicitly addresses issues of social justice while integrating these concepts into general education courses is needed given the current teaching population in the U.S.

Given that there is an ongoing tension to have members of marginalised groups evaluated by culturally appropriate standards rather than by the standards of the dominant culture (Black, Spence, & Omari, 2004), teacher educators in the U.S. have a moral and intellectual responsibility to spend time understanding the history, lives and cultures of diverse communities across discipline areas, such as educational psychology, human growth and development, philosophical and historical foundations, and so on in order for teacher candidates to have a better understanding of the role that education has played in their own and their students' lives. For example, in the discipline of psychology, *The Journal of Black Psychology* focuses specifically on psychological phenomena relevant to people of African descent. The journal covers such topics as cognition, social psychology, and personality, just to name a few. In the same vein, LatCrit theorists examine how social injustices impact Latinas/os in a larger cultural framework both domestically and internationally with the purpose of promoting social justice awareness and activism. Teacher educators would be remiss not to acknowledge and explore these diverse frameworks, which would, in turn, lead to a better understanding of diverse cultures.

6.3. Professional development

Teacher educators must hold themselves accountable for ongoing professional development around the issues of culturally responsive teaching and professional development. Professional organizations and non-profits, such as Teaching for Change, EdChange, National Association for Multicultural Education (NAME) are excellent resources for providing practical experiences in issues related to teaching and social justice for all age groups.

7. Conclusion

The Foundations of Education class designed for sophomore education majors allowed for discussions and educational experiences to foster candidates' reconceptualization of their thoughts and worldviews regarding social justice. Candidates, whose educational and familial backgrounds were more homogeneous, were confronted with issues that forced them to rethink how they view diversity and the social context in which many people are still disadvantaged. Hands-on and meaningful exposure to diverse communities coupled with formal and informal conversations helped deconstruct the 'apprenticeship of observation,' which many teacher education candidates in the U.S. bring with them to

Table 1
Observation paper topics.

Paper topics	Inequality/ multicultural education	Constructivist teaching	Fair or equal treatment of students	Other (master of content of critical thinking; service learning)
Number of Teacher Candidates ($n = 33$)	15	6	2	10

education classes. Further research needs to be conducted to identify and implement additional effective modes of instruction to create culturally sensitive and reflective practitioners.

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