



*Book Review:*

## **Transforming Teacher Education for Social Justice**

by By Eva Zygmunt and Patricia Clark, with Jon Clausen, Wilfridah Mucherah, and Susan Tancock

New York, NY: Teachers College Press, 2016, 138 pages

ISBN: 978-0-8077-5708-6 (Paperback)

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The uncertainties in the current dichotomized social and political climate necessitate a new way of thinking about quality teacher improvement. Crafting this dynamic way of thinking has become the central focus of teacher education with a focus on improving instructional competencies of future teachers in handling hot-point issues such as diversity in lived experience, religion, culture, and race to mention a few. Teacher education programs increasingly focus on how future teachers can create equitable and democratic approaches, and incorporate the lived experiences of historically marginalized students and create an opportunity for all students to become participatory global citizens. Zygmunt, Clark, Clausen, Mucherah, and Tancock's (2016) book *Transforming Teacher Education for Social Justice*, draws on research to examine the relationship among the nature of teacher education, quality of teachers, and the dimension of experience provided for marginalized students.

The book proffers an alternative to the ideological inconsistencies inherent in traditional teacher education while simultaneously addressing the perpetuated inequity and social injustice in public school classrooms. The book advocates for a social justice-based immersive teacher residency model tagged "schools within the context of community" (p. 9). Teacher candidates are educated within and immersed in the lived experiences of the community settings where young learners live and learn, an approach that is beyond the traditional teacher preparation. This social justice-oriented teacher education provides a framework for restructuring and actualizing the need for change in teacher education programs' focus on strategies for addressing disadvantaged public schools from seemingly difficult structural change to improving teacher quality (Takayama, Jones, & Amazan, 2017). Unlike the current traditional teacher education practice of strictly sending

teacher candidates to various cultural communities without prior negotiation and mediation, the book elucidates intentional engagement of community expertise and wisdom in the training of future educators for effective practice.

The book has six chapters. The first chapter examines an inclusive collaborative approach to situated learning in the community of practice. It discusses in detail the theoretical and structural frameworks for schools within the context of community. The immersion program provides teacher candidates the concrete experience of understanding the contextual complexities of the environment beyond the classroom. Notably, the book speaks to the heart of the needed mediation between huge classroom diversities and teaching practices. The book provokes readers to contemplate questions such as, how can teacher preparation programs develop in future teachers the pedagogical competencies and dispositions to address differential personal experiences of marginalized students through a socially just model? This approach to teacher education provides reciprocal ways out from intense navigation of agency for both teacher and students (Bamberg, De Fina, & Schiffrin, 2011; Sunal & Haas, 2008).

Chapter two focuses on a community-based interdisciplinary approach that current traditional teacher education programs can leverage to connect their formal and structural perspectives to community conceptual perspectives of teacher education that integrate content, pedagogy, and practice. Pivotal to social justice, teacher education is the promotion of multidimensional meanings, active engagement, and partnership among teacher preparation colleges, schools, and communities. Supported by groundbreaking research, chapter three explicitly describes how community teachers can be developed in line with the schools within the context of community framework. Remarkably, this chapter establishes a deviation from the common practice of textbooks presenting only the theory and aggregated view of how teacher preparation works (Odebiyi & Mansouri, 2017). The book provides details from actual practice on developing teachers that are conscious of the community and promote social justice. Explicating the sustainability, the model is ongoing and implemented intentionally to train teachers who connect formal curriculum, instruction, and assessment to young learners' lived experience. Arguably, these capacity building experiences helped the teacher candidates to better serve diverse students and meet each community on their own terms.

Chapters four and five jointly describe the effects of the social justice residency model on the teacher education program, teacher educators, teacher candidates, the students and the host community. The description of the teacher candidates' pedagogical and dispositional successes is compelling. Various data speak to the achievement of educating teachers for social justice. Achievements include the ability of program graduates to identify and respond to critical incidences, as well as a highlighting of how future teacher would be able to synthesize learning, develop strong self-efficacy, and transition from the teacher education program to practice without difficulties. As per students' learning and behavior, the evidence provided in this book convincingly explains how the university-school-community partnerships help improve school culture and students' behavior and learning.

Finally, chapter six is a form of appeal to teacher education programs to adopt or adapt the social justice approach to teacher preparation. Given the current climate of uncertainties, the

authors advance that social justice-based teacher education represents a paradigm for a great teacher education program because moral and ethical codes guide teachers and inform their daily decisions. Teacher educators and teacher candidates are challenged to contribute to the community and students' learning by developing an understanding of the community conditions and addressing the learning needs of their students while working alongside members of the community. This way, teacher educators and teacher candidates get acquainted with the contextual and systematic structures that inhibit the work of social change in marginalized communities.

The framework for developing and implementing social justice teacher education in this book is research-based, however, the authors did not provide enough caution that its implementation does not guarantee in all cases the preparation of future teachers whose practice would exemplify social justice. In addition, the book does not draw a clear line between social justice, culturally relevant pedagogy, and culturally responsive pedagogy. The book assumes equivalence in meanings for these constructs. Scholars in these areas may not necessarily agree with such equivalence, hence understanding the book's framework may become controversial and mislead readers—especially those who are not conversant with the specified fields.

Educating teacher candidates for social justice is more important now than ever before because of the conflict between the growing diversities among learners and the failure of nations to educate children equitably. *Transforming Teacher Education for Social Justice* would be a beneficial resource for educators, researchers, policymakers, and readers who believe in social justice. It would be a good starting point for educators and practitioners who want to learn about a practical way of incorporating social justice into teacher education programs and practices to further the course of social justice in classrooms. Practitioners and researchers can learn from the practical explanation offered by the book on how teacher educators and teacher candidates can align theoretical knowledge with, and be more actively engaged in, the knowledge construction and meaning-making experiences of students and communities. Researchers in teacher education would find the framework useful to adapt because of its flexibilities to suit different programs and communities. The authors demonstrate the adequate ethical value of openness by offering the required level of commitment for successful implementation of the social justice model. If properly adopted, the perspective advanced in the book would deliver the promise of an equitable and socially just learning opportunity that is the hallmark of public education, one which everyone in educational studies is pursuing.

## References

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