Paradigm Shift: Equipping Suburban Teacher Candidates for Urban Challenges—A Focus on the Issue of Diversity in the Classroom

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Abstract

This article advocates a shift from the traditional pedagogy of a sometimes confused multicultural/diversity education to a more progressive one that gives due attention and credence to the subject of diversity in teacher training. It also locates its definition of diversity within a broad and progressive paradigm. Using their experiences in a teacher training program, the authors argue that a university that prepares teacher candidates for urban or suburban practices must equip them with adequate knowledge on issues relevant to diversity. The paper concludes with recommendations for the field.

Thus in the beginning all the World was *America*, and more so than that is now; for no such thing as *Money* was anywhere known. . . . (Locke 1690)

The lack of meaningful multicultural preparation and the fact that most teachers come from isolated ethnic groups, and possess professional preparation that usually excludes direct meaningful interaction with different cultures create[s] problems for proper multicultural understanding . . . . Meaningful interaction entails sufficient exposure to *other types* of students, so that teacher trainees gain an understanding that there are cultural differences and commonalties between themselves and *other students* in terms of general worldviews, how lives are lived and families are disciplined and organized. . . . (Gibson 2004, 2)

From a contemporary point of view, the sentiment expressed in the first quote above, which is credited to John Locke, the English philosopher, is a parody that lampoons the limited worldview of a segment of the seventeenth century capitalist American society. Writing some three centuries after Locke, Gibson, in the second quote, laments a lack of cultural and multicultural knowledge among twenty-first century teachers. We argue in this essay that this problem needs be addressed. Teacher education institutions ought to give more attention to diversity—inclusive teacher preparation.

We pause here to define our notion of "paradigm shift." In partial alignment with Brown's (1981) definition, it is a challenge to a continuous maintenance of the *status*

quo. Thus, we argue in this essay that teacher education should desist from the traditional pedagogy to a more diversity-friendly one. Our notion of diversity is horizontally defined and functionally inclusive, for more often what we have found in practice is that the concept of diversity lacks the essence of "diverseness." In content and context many adherents of diversity narrowly focus on race at the exclusion of a plethora of other essential components including socio-economic status, culture, gender, gender orientation, ethnicity, nationality, religion, cognitive ability, disability, and other socially delineable human characteristics. Simple as it may sound, we believe that understanding the social construct of diversity can neither be assumed nor presumed. It must be taught in a formal educational setting. Indeed, we would like to argue that this knowledge should be antecedent to adequate teacher training that aims at preparing teacher candidates for urban and/or suburban practices.

Literature shows that teacher candidates often express an incredible amount of enthusiasm for why they want to become teachers (Parkay and Stanford 2004). Their reasons frequently range from the laudable sheer altruism to the laughable expression of ignorance of the challenges inherent in the teaching field, a false impression that often leads to an early burnout for those who are ill-prepared for the teaching career (Aldridge and Goldman 2007). In their seminal work, *Becoming A Teacher*, Parkay and Stanford provide a laundry list of why people want to become teachers. It is interesting that none of the candidates expressed learning from the rainbow of cultures that children would bring to their classrooms as his or her reason for wanting to become a teacher. Even more interestingly, when practicing teachers were polled on what they considered the biggest challenges to teaching, the number one problem identified was the lack of support or interest of the parents (Parkay and Stanford 2004). Apparently, even practicing teachers do not consider the issue of diversity to be a potential challenge that they face in practice, and therein lies the meta-problem.

The lack of recognition of the issue of diversity as a problem is itself a problem. If this survey is scientific, and we have no reason to doubt its scientific process, we know that teachers in our classrooms have a serious lapse in professional preparedness because the issue of diversity has not been addressed seriously enough or completely enough in teacher education training in the past. However, now the issue of diversity is taken seriously enough that it mandates the attention and training of practicing and future teachers. There is an abundance of challenges in the offing when an individual enters the classroom with little or no preparation for the matter of diversity. There are many reasons why as many as 50 percent of novice teachers leave the profession after just a few years of service. We argue here that if novice teachers are not trained to teach in diverse classrooms or are not challenged to examine their own beliefs and perceptions regarding cultures, races, ethnicities, genders and belief systems that differ from their own, the jarring impact on their psyches can easily tarnish their once burnished idealism and the reasons for choosing to leave the profession become increasingly validated. It is in light of these and other problems that this team of authors decided to provide its perspectives, through this essay, on the need to make knowledge of diversity a critical and integral part of teacher training.

Contemporary Reality

Studies have proved the intrinsic superiority of constructivist pedagogy over traditional practices (Brooks and Brooks 1999). One of the most noticeable attributes of constructivism, when compared to the traditional, procedural method, is its tendency to enhance students' cognitive awareness and teach to the "whole" person (Manus 1996). For the teacher to be able to implement successful constructivist pedagogy, it is critical for him/her to be sensitive to the background that the individual student brings into the classroom (Hauser 1995) because it is a proven fact that culture does affect learning (Pang 1994; Obiakor and Beachum 2005; Sandhu, Fong, and Rigney 1996). For instance, within the confines of our nation (which implies within the confines of our classrooms) are children from almost all 194 recognized nations of the world. Therefore, for educators charged with the responsibility of presiding over the running of a typical classroom, the American horizon is far broader than what sits on its geo-political maps. Thus, in circles of sociological discourse, the more progressive "salad bowl" metaphor has replaced the traditional notion of the "melting pot." One of the implications of our ever evolving, complex and complicated world is the fact that teacher education programs must ensure that candidates have acquired knowledge of, and developed sensitivity to, the imminent cultural mosaic and multicultural explosion that they are prone to encounter in today's classrooms. We believe that anything less is a betrayal of trust, akin to professional malpractice, on the part of those who are charged with the duty to prepare teachers for twenty-first century schools.

We could not agree more with the second opening quote, reprinted here from Gibson's (2004) essay. It underscores the need for a shift in the paradigm of discourse and practices of teacher training programs in American universities. Finegan and Helms (2002), however, point to the lack of awareness in the general population of the diverse communities that constitute the America in which we live today. They concur with Hirsch (1988) that by all accounts, we are a society that consistently fails the test of cultural literacy. Though we do not wholly share the ideological or intellectual position of Hirsch, we find use in his notion of cultural literacy as the ability ". . .to possess the basic information needed to thrive in the modern world…"(xiii). To be culturally literate, children need teachers who are themselves culturally literate (Pang 1994). Thus, those words of Finegan and Helms (2002) underscored the urgency for a more multiculturally-literate and diversity-conscious teacher-educator community when they wrote:

> Each new technological advance, teletype, the telephone and television, cross-continental jets, simulcasting, teleconferencing, and now, the Internet, has brought us closer to our neighbors in Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America and elsewhere around the globe. Yet . . . many twelfth grade students can't locate the capital city of (their states). Most Europeans can speak multiple languages, while many citizens of the United States may have a difficult time with their native language, English. It seems likely that the average person in the United States does not have a global view of the world . . . .Through no fault of their own, many adults of today were deprived of "multicultural experiences" during their elementary and secondary school years. As such, many adults did

not have the opportunity to encounter individuals different from themselves until they were in college, the military or out in the work world. . . .So that history is not repeated for the future citizens of the world, many international, national, state and local organizations feel strongly that multicultural experiences be a part of everyday life for young people of the twenty-first century. . . . It is felt by many that in order to survive in this increasingly interdependent world, we must provide our youth with the skills and opportunities to interact with people from other cultures . . . . (43-44)

The above statement underscores why teacher candidates must be adequately trained in knowledge of diversity issues. Concerned about the abysmal failure in preparing future teachers for the challenges inherent in multicultural school environments, Gibson (2002) advocates that teacher trainers must reinforce cultural and multicultural knowledge of their candidates not just as mere professional responsibility but also as a social justice issue. In what follows, we take a look at empirical literature, including the relevant and related ones, which addresses the issue of diversity in teacher education. Through this literature, we conclude that the teacher candidate attitude to the issue of diversity will determine his or her success in classroom practice. We then look at the positive side of impacting knowledge of the diversity issues on our teacher candidates, examine the problems associated with equipping teacher candidates with knowledge of diversity issues, provide what we at our campus have and/or have not been doing in the area of training our students in preparing them for the issue of diversity, and finally, offer strategies for integrating diversity issues into the curricula.

Review of Empirical Studies

Teacher education programs must recognize the importance of the attitudes of pre-service teachers toward cultural diversity; after all it has been predicted that culturally diverse students will be in the majority or near-majority by 2020 (Banks 2005; Nieto 2004). Research shows that attitude can be an important predictor of behavioral intention and, therefore, it is important to understand the beliefs that underlie attitude (Pryor and Pryor 2005). In part, understanding pre-service teachers' beliefs about cultural diversity might help program designers construct effective teacher education programs. The review of literature below contains three major sections: (a) an overview of program designs, (b) instruments to measure program outcomes, and (c) suggestions for program implementation.

Attitudes Toward Cultural Diversity

Literature suggests that among educators today there appears to be a relatively positive attitude toward implementing strategies that address diversity issues in the classroom (Dee and Henkin 2004). In fact, in the last few years, a good number of textbooks targeting teacher training in American colleges are beginning to have diversity in their title and/or as their main theme (for example, Nieto [2004]). Texts such as these suggest that equity beliefs, as well as belief in social values of diversity are important

in the field. Although many are not certain how to integrate diversity into their curricula and assessment, most educators now believe that cultural inclusion and respect for diversity are very important (Milner et al. 2003).

To acknowledge these values, pre-service teachers are often asked to reflect on their own experiences and are willing to explore beyond the familiar comfort zone of the majority cultural status quo (Dee and Henkin 2004). Their experiences with diverse cultures vary and they are aware that the students they will teach may have histories that are culturally different from their own (Milner et al. 2003). To remedy this concern, universities are beginning to develop seminars and courses on themes of cultural diversity.

Studies indicate mixed results among the programs designed to foster understanding cultural diversity. One reason for these results might be that the definition of what constitutes diversity is first perceived from the deviations of White, middle-class monolingual backgrounds (Dee and Henkin 2004). Another reason for mixed results might be the limited coordination among reports that describe program outcomes (Brown 2004). As beliefs and knowledge of diversity vary, so are instruments used in empirical studies of the subject. No one report provides a meta-analysis of commonly used instruments usable in in-depth program evaluation. Among the many instruments used in these studies are Pluralism and Diversity Attitude Assessment (Stanley 1996); Input Characteristics and Experiences on Likert-type scale to explain Pluralism and Diversity Attitude Assessment (Dee and Henkin 2004); Multicultural Attitude Questionnaire (MAC), measure of social interaction attitudes (Dee and Henkin 2004); Teacher Multicultural Attitude Survey (TMAS), measure of awareness and sensitivity (Ponterotto et al. 1998); and Cultural Diversity Awareness Inventory (CDAI) (Milner et al. 2003). Program evaluation tools to measure programs' efficacy in multicultural competency include Cultural Diversity Awareness Inventory (CDAI) (Brown 2004) and Quick Discrimination Index (Arizaga et al. 2005).

Brown (2004) suggests that a relationship exists between self-concept and cultural diversity awareness. Self-concept can be a predictor of teacher behavior toward students and nurturance of their academic achievement (Brown 2004). Other measures also parallel this finding. Older respondents (over twenty-seven years of age) had higher post-test scores on the CDAI after a stand-alone multicultural course (Brown 2004). Much older respondents had lower scores on MAC (Dee and Henkin 2004). Similarly, PE majors had lower MCDAI scores (Dee and Henkin 2004). Class rank (freshman, sophomore, junior. senior), which usually correlates with age, also correlates with sensitivity on the CDAI particularly on two variables, multicultural diversity and parent/student/teacher interaction (Brown 2004). According to Brown, changes in diversity awareness after a stand-alone multicultural course can be attributed to gender and the cross-cultural communication of student and parent/teacher/student.

What Experiences Can Help to Promote Positive Beliefs?

Empirical literature provides insight into perceptions about diversity. For example, Dee and Henkin (2004) suggest that experiences that provide interactive opportunities are beneficial when students from different concentrations/majors interact, as this interaction appears to broaden perspectives on diversity. Collaborative learning, in which "joint production of knowledge through interaction among students" occurs, helps to enhance positive attitudes toward cultural diversity (Dee and Henkin 2004). Field experiences can support positive attitudes (Bollin and Finkel 1995).Tutoring students supports positive attitudes (Bollin and Finkel 1995). Sustained experience or events outside of university experience also supports positive attitudes (Bollin and Finkel 1995). Skills training affects communication ability when teaching in schools. It affects multicultural awareness and reduces prejudice (Arizaga et al. 2005).

What Are the Barriers to Positive Beliefs?

A variety of barriers appear to affect positive attitudes in understanding issues of diversity. These barriers include preconceived expectations before arrival on campus (Bollin and Finkel 1995), cursory rather than in-depth training (Bollin and Finkel 1995), and inadequate multicultural preparation (Gibson 2004). Coursework deliberately designed to train students in multicultural education might mediate these barriers (Bollin and Finkel 1995). There are, however, differing opinions about how to implement these. Some believe, contrary to others, that a single, stand-alone course in multicultural education might backfire if the course is designed to lower resistance to multicultural education rather than raise level the of commitment to equity and social justice. Other barriers to positive belief may be due to a lack of preparation before fieldwork (Bollin and Finkel 1995), as well as professors' expectations of conformity (Gibson 2004), or classroom teachers' low expectation of students. On the other hand, studies also suggest the tendency for a high rate of success of students' field experience when student teachers in diverse settings show positive attitude toward diverse learners (Proctor, Rentz,. and Jackson 2001). Importantly, field experience literature has noted the positive effect of expectations on beliefs (Walker-Dalhouse and Dalhouse 2006).

Implications for Program Design

Dee and Henkin (2004) address the attitude of pre-service teachers to diversity in teacher education. The authors suggest that pre-service teacher candidates should be disqualified if they show evidence of unsettled attitudes to diversity issues. Thus, teacher education programs should use rubrics to define and measure candidates' attitudes. To do this, various interview models should be used to measure attitude (Bollin and Finkel 1995).

It seems that evoking the cliché that "attitude, not aptitude, will determine the altitude" is in order here. We should be able to reasonably predict the success or a lack thereof of a teacher candidate by his or her attitude to diversity. In what follows, we explore tangible reasons why we strongly believe that equipping teacher education candidates with the knowledge of diversity is pertinent to healthy classroom practices in today's American classroom.

Why Prepare Teacher Candidates for the Knowledge of Diversity in the Classroom?

We open this segment with a story that underscores the urgent need for adequately preparing pre-service teachers for urban school experience. A young pre-service student came to our department with a problem. She had been placed at a school in a large, predominantly African American community. Her father, a truck driver who regularly made deliveries in the community, demanded that she seek another placement. He did not want his child in that community. She was informed by her advisor that while the wish of her father should be respected, her placement was not going to be changed. If she planned to be an effective teacher she would need to understand that her career choice of teaching does not exclude a possible work experience with children from diverse backgrounds. She left in tears. Two days later, she returned and told her advisor she would accept the placement. Her father remained concerned, but she told him that since she had chosen teaching as her profession, going to the school was a wise option for her. This student has graduated. She now teaches in a large, culturally diverse school. She told her advisor that her student teaching experience had been wonderful, having learned as much as her students and that she actually hated to leave at the end of the term.

The question is, should we take the time and effort to provide pre-service education candidates with knowledge and experiences that focus on the reality of today's diverse classrooms in light of the fact that curricula are overcrowded, the pressure to move students through their programs of study in four years is constantly mounting, state and professional standards mandate that students undergo a rigorous program that equips them with subject matter knowledge sufficient to pass tests designed by committees of experts whose areas of research compel them to create test items designed to assess students' knowledge of the most arcane nooks and crannies of their disciplines, and America needs teachers in quantity because the profession is aging? In light of all this, can teacher education programs afford to spend considerable resources to help their candidates become knowledgeable of and sensitive to diverse learners? Our answer is a resounding, "Yes!" Indeed, we believe that we must do so or run the risk of becoming irrelevant.

Some half a century ago, Kenneth Clark's seminal work, *Prejudice and Your Child* (1955) was published which showcased the evil of intolerance in our society. Since then, America has slowly inched forward toward a more equitable society. The Civil Rights Movement created a national forum wherein Americans, fresh from what was

framed as a righteous war against fascism, found themselves confronted with their own moral dilemma: Though our country was founded on the ideals of democracy only the privileged enjoyed the basic freedoms so eloquently expressed in our founding documents. Although we have come a long way, we still have a longer way to go. Certainly, much has changed since then. Federal and state laws designed to assure equality for all citizens eventually were enacted, although it took the better part of two decades, countless court cases, demonstrations, and bloody acts of violence to move the nation forward. While much has indeed changed, America remains a country divided into enclaves. In a nation, arguably the most powerful and affluent in human history, where communication takes place almost instantaneously, where we have witnessed segregation and desegregation, most people have reverted to "resegregation." In a general sense, teacher education candidates must develop the knowledge, sensitivity and judgment to balance these conflicts. This awareness folds back on itself as we consider that many communities within this diverse society have schools that are almost all white or all black. The young teacher must understand much of this in order to work well with children emerging from such complex cultural orientation.

The irony facing America in the twenty-first century is that while the predilection to exclude the "other" continues, the society is becoming increasingly diverse as never before. Indeed, by 2020 one in two school children will come from economically marginalized families. Even more, in the twenty-five largest school districts in the nation minority students comprised well over 72 percent of the population (National Center of Education Statistics 1997). To further exacerbate this problem, the majority of faculty in colleges and schools of education and their students come from privileged backgrounds and most have only nominal experience or preparation in diverse contexts. Although his study might arguably be somewhat dated, Zimpher (1989) found that most pre-service candidates expressed a desire to teach in schools and communities similar to their own. From our observation it is possible that many aspiring teacher candidates harbor similar desires. We have realized, however, that many of them discover, almost too late, that their small communities cannot accommodate every qualified candidate and so they often have to take employment in urban and inner-city situations.

The need for a deeper embrace of issues of diversity is apparent. Indeed, most institutions of higher learning recognize this fact and consequently include in their mission statements some language referring to the fostering of diversity. For example, our university's mission statement includes, among others, an inclusion of the rich diversity of humankind in all aspects of university life, respect for individual differences, intellectual freedom, diversity of thought, and access for all who can benefit from our programs. These declarations read well on papers. Implementation poses a challenge. We are not alone in this idealism. The conceptual frameworks of most colleges and schools of education espouse the complementary goals of developing knowledge of, and sensitivity to, cultures, races, ethnicities, genders and beliefs in their students. How these goals are to be accomplished is dicey at best. However, Zeichner (1993) outlined twelve elements that provide an organizational framework for effective diversity teacher education. He argues that each element is

essential and should be considered as part of a holistic plan of action. The twelve tier plan focuses on a focused instrumentation of teacher education curricula.

If one accepts Zeichner's "road map," it must logically follow, then, that pre-service education students need more than surface help in assigned readings and scholarly lectures to equip them for what they will soon be expected to practice. Sitting in a dorm or apartment and reading about diversity or copiously taking detailed notes from a lecture are what conscientious students do, and we have no problem with that. However, it takes more than book knowledge and classroom lectures to produce diversity-ready teacher candidates. A predisposed attitude in concomitance with positive belief systems, emotional, psychological, philosophical and sociological readiness to embrace diversity would go a long way.

There are several important advantages in preparing education students to function effectively in diverse schools. By providing pre-service education students with rich experiences and knowledge regarding the types of young people they will be teaching, teacher educators enhance the likelihood that their candidates will be more effective and, therefore, less likely to suffer despair when their best efforts do not engage students in meaningful learning. Even the best novice teachers in the most pristine schools experience days when nothing seems to go right. If the teacher is not prepared to teach in a richly diverse classroom, the resulting despondency can be warped by the teacher's ignorance, thereby unleashing a tangled web of negativity that may ultimately prove harmful to the teacher and students. By guiding pre-service education students through their own perceptions and beliefs, teacher educators can better assure they are sending novice teachers into the fray with greater self-awareness of how their interactions with students can be compromised by their own biases.

Novice teachers who are adequately prepared to meet the challenges of today's diverse classroom and who remain in the profession become veteran teachers. When they assume formal and informal leadership roles in schools and communities, their skills, knowledge and experiences will sustain them to teach in diverse classrooms. They are those with the potential to become change agents, whose skills and successes will resonate in the cultures and climates of their schools. They also become ambassadors for the universities from which they received their preparation, thereby increasing the potential for stronger university-public school partnerships that enhance the opportunities for numerous positive outcomes. Most importantly, teachers who have strong knowledge of and sensitivity to diverse ethnicities, races, cultures, belief systems, genders and economic statuses will be better prepared to teach young people who will inherit the richly ornamented fabric of America that is part of the nescient global community. If America is to sustain a place of competitive equity with emerging powers in the world, we can do no less than to prepare the next generation of teachers to provide our children with the skills, knowledge, and sensitivity that allows them to teach those who will inherit a very complex, ambiguous, challenging, yet promising future.

Problems of Equipping Teacher Candidates with Knowledge of Diversity Issues

Teacher educators are increasingly expected to consider a variety of standards established for the profession (Clinchy 1998). In the case of our own program, we deal with some two dozen standards relating to areas such as subject knowledge, learning theory, lesson planning, language arts, technology, and many more (Gallagher 2005). Among these is the standard on diversity, which points up an initial problem: Attempts to develop a sophisticated understanding of the many aspects of diversity can get buried amidst the avalanche of topics teacher educators must cover. The focus in this segment of the essay is on three areas: (1) the conceptual confusion which often surrounds discussions of diversity; (2) the individual personalities of candidates, cooperating teachers in the schools, and university personnel; and (3) contextual situations relating to the nature of public schooling in the United States. We also look at the specifics of our own situation which flow from the three issues.

Conceptual confusion. The ambiguity in the definition (semantic and operational) of diversity poses an impasse to teacher candidates and teacher trainers (their professors). This is an area that needs to be worked on, not only for teacher candidates but also for their professors. As trainers of teachers, we need to examine and sometimes challenge the sources of the production of knowledge which we disseminate to our students because what we hand to them is what they will give out.

In some circles the term is defined quite narrowly to include only issues centering on race. More encompassing discussions get into concerns about gender and sexual orientation. Still others include the foregoing while also including topics related to various sub-cultures, customs and etiquette. Some conceive the term quite broadly, including race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, customs and etiquette as well as learning styles and interests. While narrow conceptions of diversity issues may be too restrictive, problems can also arise when the term is used so broadly as to include even trivial human differences. Part of the job of the teacher educator is to suggest useful parameters for discussion (Nieto 2004). One thing is clear: It is becoming increasingly evident even in anthropological circles that the shading of skin colors is no longer delineated by the colors of Black or White but of mosaic, multiple configurations. Indeed, we now know that the concept of race as informed by phenotypical features is an arbitrary definition at best and a punitive one at worst and is gradually falling away just as we begin to realize that racism for the most part is more of a mental misapprehension, political (dis)orientation, economic stance, and cultural mystification than anything else. It is a phenomenon informed by an individual's scope of understanding of the complexity of human nature, biology and social dynamics.

When issues of diversity are broadly defined, we can see that awareness must go beyond the ability to understand, tolerate, or even respect diversity. Too often we begin with the issues that potentially divide people, so we look for understanding at a basic level and then a begrudging tolerance. Even developing respect for differences is not

enough. Rather, we must recognize that broader realm where it is only through diversity that humans prosper. Teacher education candidates must therefore come to see diversity as a necessary condition for human development, a phenomenon to be celebrated rather than merely tolerated.

It is indeed the case, however, that beneath this broad umbrella of diversity lurk issues of controversy and disagreement. Diversity is essential, but so too is unity. The conceptual difficulty might best be pinpointed with the idea that we explore the issue of diversity—the acceptance of the many—within the confines of a university which seeks truth, or the best explanation: The "di" versus "uni" dichotomy indeed demands that we develop a tolerance for different ideas while still holding to basic values. Even so, the questions are, "How far should tolerance go?" "Should we be tolerant of the intolerant?" The conundrum of tolerance gets to the heart of many borderline cases involving diversity. On the one hand, it is not difficult to tolerate some forms of diversity, but we have difficulty tolerating some others.

While we find a broad definition for diversity helpful in promoting a workable sensitivity in our candidates, we recognize at the heart of the matter the need for a more focused concern for cultural issues that prove divisive. Future teachers, at a baseline level, must understand how these differences come about (Banks 2005). Based on this ongoing and developing understanding, we can all better figure out what we ought and ought not tolerate.

Individual personalities. In many ways our candidates are a diverse group. Some come from small rural communities, others from large suburban centers. A few pointedly state that they like dogs better than cats. Many are active in sports, some in music, and still others in both. Reading is an important pastime for quite a few, while others turn to a sudoku for entertainment. Such differences among individuals are almost infinite and for the most part are areas for celebration of our many approaches to life on the planet. Celebrating these many differences, however, can be a way of skirting more central issues. In other uses of the term, our students are not diverse. A vast majority of them are white; at the elementary level, a vast majority of them are women. Most come from that broad socio-economic category that encompasses the middle class. Chances are that many of these mostly white candidates will end up in schools that are mostly white. This points to challenges that, while not insurmountable, require a great deal of time, effort and sensitivity.

University faculty and public school personnel exhibit these same characteristics: We are a diverse bunch when one gives broad consideration to our backgrounds, but much less so given the possible range of cultural possibilities in this country. A good chunk of our population has limited knowledge of theoretical as well as intuitive knowledge of diversity. We must thus grow along with our students. We must continue to develop more than just a passive understanding of diversity—we must seek out and wrestle with difference, for our own good as well as for that of our teacher candidates, and ipso facto, those of the students our student teachers are going to teach eventually.

Contextual issues. Diversity is a reality in our nation as a whole. As teacher educators, we must look at this in two ways: On the one hand, some candidates will find employment in diverse schools, and we must prepare them for that; but conversely, we must also prepare candidates with the knowledge and the disposition to promote awareness of diversity in school settings that are not diverse. The development of multicultural awareness cuts many directions (Weiner 1993). For instance, the issue of gender in the profession is a contextual issue that remains the elephant in the room. To confront the situation directly, what we have in this country at the elementary school level is a cadre of men, mainly legislators and business leaders, telling a profession dominated by women what to do. The fact that such an oversimplification is riddled with holes does not, in the end, take away from the essential truth of such a bald generalization. This is indeed a problem, but it is one we can treat as an opportunity for inquiry (Apple 1988; Sadker and Sadker 2005).

An even more overarching concern is the nature of schooling itself. Schools can and do promote inquiry into issues of celebration, respect, tolerance and understanding for diversity. Schools remain, however, authoritarian institutions that must implement rules for codes of conduct, dress, and attendance. While most of these school-based rules are consistent with general rules of law, some rules must be more restrictive as society tries to keep young people and teenagers in line. As adults we see these rules as reasonable and necessary, but many young people see them as restricting their own freedom of expression and, ultimately, as an unwillingness to accept diverse aspects of youth culture. Discussions of diversity can seem hollow in an environment that in itself can be quite limiting.

Diversity in Our Teacher Education Program

In our program, we believe treating issues of diversity broadly offers the best possibilities for growth. Issues revolving around tolerance and its limits can be the most difficult to address. Broad societal concerns with affirmative action, gay marriage, gun control, and many other issues will continue to be controversial. Even so, these cultural, social and interpersonal issues do lend themselves to discussions of tolerance and understanding. By placing them in the even larger context of diverse learning styles and by giving consideration to ideas such as Howard Gardner's multiple intelligences, we can see the potential of education as a mediating influence (Gardner 2000). Framing these issues within a larger context where diversity is recognized as an overall good might provide fertile grounds for greater growth in the area of tolerance and acceptance.

Schooling is situated in the midst of the often contradictory contextual issues: non-diverse schools in a diverse society; a profession with a substantial gender imbalance at the elementary level; and authoritarian schools recommending levels of tolerance not practiced in the schools themselves. Here, we must see these as opportunities for both discussion and action rather than as intractable problems. Candidates can enter into contradictory situations equipped to deal with the present and yet be agents of change for the future. Diversity thus becomes not just a topic to be covered, but rather

a way of thinking about the entire educational project. Almost any discussion can invite a consideration of alternative ways of looking at the world, though not necessarily that all alternative views are equal. In other words, accepting diversity is very much a process rather than an end-point to be reached. Thus, our notion of paradigm shift in the implementation of a diversity-sensitive curriculum is presented in the recommendation grid at the end of this article.

In the paragraphs that follow we provide a brief history of our School of Education's encounter with various efforts in diversity and the consequent problems that ensued as a result. These problems range from the definitional aspect to the politics of implementation to our understanding of the concept of diversity. Our hope is that other teacher training institutions who aspire to prepare teacher candidates for urban and/or suburban schools would learn from our efforts, especially in areas where we fell short of expectations.

History of Diversity at Our Campus

Our institution is a fast-growing suburban university, adjacent to a cosmopolitan community east of the Mississippi. Like many other campuses we have given credence to matters of diversity in our grant writing, inter-campus initiatives, and curriculum development projects. Through the assistance of our retired colleague Rudolph Wilson, Emeritus Professor of Education, we recall that in the decades of the 1960s, 1970s, 1980s, and as recently as the 1990s, we were funded by external and internal grants, many of which specifically tied to the issue of diversity. These include, among others, Project Caring, which was modeled after the Citizen Education Project (CEP) in Detroit after the riots of 1943 (Hertzberg 1981); America Reads, which we still continue to enjoy due to the resiliency of its director who has long retired from our department; Project ELI, an academy designed and developed for an inner-city school; and a few others. The problem with many of these projects was that much of their parameters for defining diversity fell on the narrow paradigm of race and ethnicity. This prevented us from working with numerous school districts because they did not fit this narrow definition of diversity. Needless to say that this, understandably, did not play well with those school districts and it tarnished our relationship with them.

Our experience has taught us some lessons, and we hope others can learn from them. We are still working on positioning diversity at the center of our pedagogical discourses and institutional practices. Our hope is that our faculty would reflect our "canon" of diversity. We continue to work on placing and instructing our candidates in diverse settings. We have a good plan of action; we just have to come up with the strategies for effective implementation. We have learned that teacher training institutions must do more than place diversity requirements in syllabi or merely talk about it; they must make it a quantifiable activity for students to implement. That way, student candidates can be assessed on the basis of their ability to implement diversity strategies, among several other requirements.

Recommendations

Though recommendations are inexhaustible on how to implement a diversity-sensitive teacher education program, we have found certain efforts most useful in our teacher education program. We have also included in our package a few that we hope to utilize in our future efforts. In the last few years, some writers in the field of education have also started to critically look at the connection between teacher education and multicultural education, arguing for the need to make multiculturalism an integral part of educational training (Delpit 1995; Sandhu, Fong, and Rigney 1996; Ladson-Billings 2001; Hunsberger 2005; Bollin and Finkel 1995; Gibson 2004; Milner et al. 2003; Proctor, Rentz and Jackson 2001). Thus, based on our collective experience as well as on current discourse in teacher education literature, we recommend that teacher trainers in universities give serious consideration to the following suggestions as we juxtapose the old paradigm with the new and preferred one.

OLD PARADIGM	NEW PARADIGM
Traditional teacher training void of diversity integration	Diversity-sensitive teacher training
Diversity as one topic to be covered among many	Diversity as a way of thinking that permeates through a variety of topics
Diversity as something we must tolerate in order to get along	Diversity as something to be celebrated as key to the development of humankind
Prepare candidates to teach in diverse situations.	Prepare candidates to promote diversity in all situations.
Diversity mainly concerned with race and ethnicity	Diversity considered in all its dimensions, including social and cognitive
When in doubt, the "universal" becomes the default position.	When in doubt, the "multi" becomes the default position.
Expect people to tend to be the same—the "melting pot" theory.	Expect people to be different—the "salad bowl," mosaic perspective.
One size fits all standardized testing—regardless of (dis)ability.	Many types of assessments across different areas cognizant of various abilities
We seek "best practices" based on student achievement.	Recognition of a multitude of practices depending on context and goals

Standards and testing are predominant in planning.	Learning experiences are predominant in planning.
Use textbooks and lectures to learn all you need to learn about diversity.	Use case studies and discussions in class as a major part of pedagogical tools.
Teachers work with colleagues and teach the subject to the student.	Promote high teacher-student interaction. Instruct teacher candidates that teaching is not about subjects, but about the whole person.
Teaching has nothing to do with matters of diversity or knowledge of where the child is coming from.	Provide cultural knowledge and inform teacher candidates of connections between their beliefs/attitudes and diversity issues and their chances of being effective practitioners.
Listening to student needs and communicating solutions to them are works of the counselors and psychologists.	Developing communication skills so they will be particularly empathetic listeners and expressive speakers when in conflicting multicultural situations.
It is the role of politicians, not of teachers, to change society.	Inform teacher candidates on the need and how to be change agents.
Observing at a racially different environment is enough to understand diversity.	Include opportunities to work with students at a variety of multicultural settings as a requirement for completing the program.
Consult only written documents when dealing with issues of diversity.	Constantly dialogue with peers and mentor teachers on matters of diversity.
Teacher candidates are the ones who need training on diversity, not their professors.	Teacher trainers have background training to teach teacher candidates about diversity.

Conclusion

Let's face it. From the challenges posed by the launching of Sputnik to the cataclysmic jolt of September 11, 2001 (aka "9/11"), it has become crystal clear that the American world is a large one, even larger than what is expressed in the nostalgic lyrics of Lee Greenwood's "God Bless the USA." We have once and for all discovered that inside the social and natural geography of America—"From the lakes of Minnesota, to the hills of Tennessee, across the plains of Texas . . . from Detroit down to Houston, and New York to LA"—is housed almost all the cultures and subcultures of today's known

world. Of course, we are not oblivious of the natural synergy that occurs when in some cases new cultures blend with and influence (even sometimes supplant) the host cultures. Yet, it goes without saying that the need for deeper understanding of people and cultures in and around our immediate communities is more real now than at any other time in our nation's history.

From time immemorial, educating children has always been in the hearts of those running human society. Even the Nazis of the 1930s who exploited humankind thought first of using the education of children as an entry point to gaining the power to oppress, repress and suppress the people (Keller 1953). In essence, education is a paramount institution in all human societies. It is an efficacious tool that can be used to make or ruin a society. This is even more so in our society where literacy, for the most part, is what determines the extent of people's achievements, occupational mobility and social advancement. This gives credence to the statement credited to Malcolm X that "education is our passport to the future." If this assertion is true—and of course, we do believe it is, otherwise, we would not be part of this profession—then serious attention needs to be paid to quality teacher training. The corollary is that teacher training institutions that are preparing their teacher candidates for the reality of today's growing metropolitan and cosmopolitan communities should pay adequate attention to knowledge of diversity issues. Even in rural communities, diversity is as real as one wants to see it. It is no gainsay that in contemporary times, quality teacher training as well as knowledge of and sensitivity to issues of diversity are interrelated— we cannot have one without the other.

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