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UNDERGRADUATE ELEMENTARY TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAM AND
CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE PEDAGOGY

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CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE PEDAGOGY

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ABSTRACT

This study examined an undergraduate elementary teacher education program that had been redesigned based on outcomes of a Teacher Quality Education grant and research on culturally responsive pedagogy. This research study was a program evaluation based on data gathered from the alumni of the program using classroom observations, surveys, and focus groups as data collection methods. Focusing on the concepts of equity, inquiry, and culturally responsive pedagogy, this study indicates program graduates did practice these concepts in their classrooms well, but with superficial understanding of the theory. The study suggests that in order for teachers to be agents of change and teach for social justice, a deeper understanding of the theory should be infused into the program.

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Pursuing a doctorate and writing a dissertation are not journeys that can be completed alone. Writing this particular dissertation was a process that necessitated collaboration and support. The help and support of my family, friends, and colleagues was crucial to the completion of my dissertation.

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Introduction

Your work is to discover your work and to give your heart to it"
--The Buddha

As I reflect back on my life's journey in preparation for this dissertation, the decisive situations I recall revolve around me seeking equity in my personal and professional life. My search for the true conviction about the work I do—preparing future teachers—required I reflect on my life experiences and the journey that has brought me to being a teacher-educator for social justice. The resulting and overriding theme of this reflective process is *inequity*. I have come to realize that coping with the inequities associated with being a woman and divorced has made me more aware of social justice issues in our society. I have not only contemplated deeply throughout my career the fact that everyone does not have the same opportunities and resources, but also personally faced inequity as an educator and a woman. These experiences have shaped and molded me as a person and an educator.

This introspective process revealed that my conviction to sensitize teachers to equity was set in motion long ago. As a young girl, I always admired my paternal grandmother. She was a "strong woman" who raised her family of nine children during the Depression. My family revered her as the head of the household. I realize now that her model significantly influenced and prepared me for the challenges I would later face. As a young woman, I continued to admire my grandmother. At the time, I did not realize how much strength it took for her to live in a male-dominated society.

Even though my grandmother served as a strong female figure for me, my father also influenced me. He was the dominant traditional figurehead of the family. My father supported the family financially and emotionally, and my mother was the stay-at- home-mother who took care of all our basic needs. In a caring and supportive way, my father wanted his three daughters to be educated, independent, and successful. His model as a father and husband had a great impact on choices I made in my life, especially in the realm of finding a husband.

Another person who influenced my life, personally and professionally, was my eighth-grade teacher who arrived mid-year after just returning from the Vietnam War. The greatest gift this teacher gave me and my classmates was examining situations from multiple perspectives. By showing his personal slides of Vietnam he provided opportunities for us to decide for ourselves what was true about the Vietnam War. He did not show gruesome images of the war like we saw on the nightly news. Instead, his pictures portrayed a beautiful country with very friendly people. In addition, this teacher took the time to build positive relationships with his students and knew each of us in terms of our academic abilities. He immediately recognized my mathematical abilities and his encouragement strongly influenced my decision to become a high school mathematics teacher. His simple acts of valuing different perspectives and taking the time to get to know students had a lasting impact on who I am as a person and how I teach in the teacher education program.

When I was a young woman in the 1970s, I hoped to attend college and raise a family. Although pursuit of these both would cause internal conflict, it also set a course for my journey in dealing with the issues of gender and equity. When I began searching

for colleges, my high school guidance counselor informed me that as a woman I was not smart enough to go to college. Thankfully the support of my father enabled me to attend college and graduate. My father, the strong and caring male figure in my life, modeled a form of masculinity which supported me to become my own person. When I later married I presumed that my husband, like my father, would be caring and supportive. Instead, I found myself struggling in a male-dominated marriage with a husband who wanted to control me. I soon realized I was losing my identity as an individual and as a woman in the relationship. As a result of my determination to regain my identity and voice, I found myself divorced, raising three children alone, and trying to revitalize a career that had been put on the back burner.

Becoming a divorced woman in the U.S. was an eye-opening experience. Going through the divorce process and dealing with numerous court battles made the patriarchal values and gender inequities that are so prevalent in U.S. society especially apparent to me. In fact, these inequities have a particularly damaging effect on divorced women in the United States. According to Holden and Smock (1991), numerous longitudinal studies concur that separation and divorce have detrimental economic consequences for women. They note that divorce is not merely associated with economic decline for women, but that unless women remarry the economic deterioration they experience is likely to be prolonged. In fact, poverty rates among women in the year following separation or divorce are uniformly higher than during the marriage. One of the major contributors to the financial disparity between divorced men and women can be explained merely by gender inequities in salary structures. Carbone (1994) found that just one year after divorce, men experience a 42% improvement in their standard of living while women

experience a 73% decline (p. 188). Holden and Smock (1991) state "all studies agree that remarriage is the most likely route to economic recovery for a woman" (p. 53). As long as the male is the head of the household, economic stability is more likely. Divorce as it is practiced today perpetuates the gender inequities and the continuation of a male dominant society. Changing salary inequities in the United States may be the most difficult to accomplish. Currently women earn about 70% of what men make (Teachman & Paasch, 1994, p. 66).

Additionally many women who enter the workforce after a divorce have either not worked for a period of time, have worked part-time, or have worked in areas unrelated to previous education or training. This is another reason there is such a large economic gap between men and women. Carbone (1994) states that "apart from the earning gap between men and women generally, there is substantial evidence that married women's family responsibilities cause them to experience a drop in earning capacity with life-long consequences" (p. 201). After my divorce, I entered the full-time workforce after 15 years of being a mother, homemaker, and part-time university supervisor. I felt as if I was at the bottom of the ladder and it was going to be an uphill climb. One of the biggest adjustments was that while I was still the mother and homemaker, I was also a full-time employee and the head of the household.

My first full-time job after the divorce was teaching undergraduate students in a teacher education program. As a teacher educator, I was afforded the opportunity to guide pre-service teachers in the deconstruction of their own meanings about inequities in the world and our society, especially with regard to the U.S. public school system. In deciding the best way to discuss sensitive topics such as racism, sexism and all the other

'isms,' I modeled my approach after my high school math teacher. In particular, I worked to build positive relationships with and among my students to help them value perspective-taking. I knew this required forging a trust that would help students feel comfortable and safe enough to raise hard questions.

One way of dealing with sensitive topics is to affirm that everyone struggles with inequities at some level. In order to get the pre-service teachers to share their stories, I always began with my experiences and struggles with sexism and racism, as well as societal and academic inequalities. I told them some of my personal and academic experiences of being marginalized and shared how I had struggled with my own biases. By sharing my personal stories, I began to build trust with my students which, in turn, allowed the pre-service teachers to feel comfortable sharing their own prejudices and encounters with inequities. I continue to use this approach in my work with pre-service teachers and these discussions offer great promise for helping us all to become better teachers. Still, I often wondered whether these students really took anything with them beyond the university walls.

As a result of the relationships I build with my students, I felt comfortable pushing the envelope in my courses when it comes to the topic of inequality. The goals for these discussions were to model the importance of teachers taking on multiple perspectives and for teachers to both recognize their own prejudices and understand how their prejudices might affect children in their classrooms. Of course, not all of the students I encountered were open to discussing inequalities that stem from racism, sexism, and classism. The students I teach are predominantly White, middle-class women and most have lived their entire lives in suburban communities. Most do not understand

or recognize the inequalities in their own community schools. I have had students roll their eyes and some comfortable enough to dissent in discussions about inequalities. Yet, I know these opposing opinions are a healthy sign of the trust I created in that particular community of learners. I value such moments because they become rich discussions that help each of us grow. While it would be easy to ignore or shut out those who did not believe inequities exist as a result of such 'isms,' I find it important to affirm that we all have room to grow and that often the growth process is not easy.

Teacher Education for Social Justice

I believe the purpose of teacher education is to prepare competent teachers. To do so I must raise the consciousness of future teachers about their own biases and the impact these will have on their teaching. According to Darling-Hammond (2007), in order to improve student achievement, "school reformers must ensure access to highly-qualified teaching within the context of a rich and challenging curriculum supported by personalized schools and classes" (p. 329).

Historically, academic research linking teacher certification with student achievement has been minimal. Recently politically-funded groups with specific political aims have attempted to minimize the importance of teacher education programs in the country. Organizations such as the Fordham Foundation, Pioneer Institute, Hoover Institute, Heritage Foundation and Abell Foundation "advocate for alternative routes into teaching that bypass crucial preparation at higher education institutions, as well as state level teacher tests of content area knowledge, as the primary gatekeepers into the profession" (Cochran-Smith & Fries, 2005, p. 91). Their research portrays teacher certification programs as ineffective in producing highly-qualified teachers who can

improve student achievement. The organizations often contend that traditional teacher certification is not necessary and that alternative routes and/or fast-track emergency certificates are adequate. For example, a study conducted by the Abell Foundation (Goldhaber & Brewer, 2000) concluded that the impact of teachers with strong verbal ability and content knowledge student achievement was similar, regardless of the type of training they received.

While general student achievement is critical, the above research neglects to emphasize the achievement of all students, including those who come from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. In their research, Gay (2000, 2002) and Stoicovy (2002) focused on the achievement of students with culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. They found that these students' academic achievement improved substantially when educators conducted classroom instruction in a manner responsive to the students' home culture. And yet, the fast-track and alternative routes to certification do not always expose future teachers to this approach or emphasize this critical aspect of teaching in today's classroom. My research attempts to support the argument that CRP teacher education programs can produce teachers to meet the needs of all students, regardless of their cultural backgrounds.

Teacher education programs need to address issues related to a changing public school population and the role their curriculum plays in preparing teachers for a diverse classroom setting. With a student population that is becoming more diverse and a teaching force whose demographics are not changing, this is no easy task. In 2003, the number of minority students in public schools had grown to 41% while the teaching force still consisted of mainly White, middle-class women (National Center for Education

Statistics, 2005, p. 5). The simultaneous change in school population and unchanging

population of the teaching force is the overarching issue when addressing the inequalities

in schools. According to Darling-Hammond (2007), many young people in the United

States, especially those who are low-income students of color, do not receive even the

minimum education needed to become literate and to join the labor market. Grant and

Gillette (2006) contend most pre-service teachers lack the knowledge, skills, dispositions,

and experiences needed to teach ethnically- and linguistically-diverse students. In an era

of teacher accountability, a major concern of public schools—and by extension, schools

of education—is the extent to which their teachers are able to raise student achievement.

Therefore, teacher education programs have to embrace a CRP and produce

teachers who are culturally responsive and believe that culture deeply influences the way

children learn and achieve in schools. Instruction such as rote learning, memorization of

facts, preparation for high-stakes testing and practical curriculum, do not promote

components of inquiry and is described as the pedagogy of poverty (Haberman, 1991).

Improving student achievement is not solely about the academic level of the teacher, but

also about how classroom instruction meets the needs of all students. The elimination of

teacher education programs is not the solution to improving student achievement. The

future lies in restructuring teacher education programs to embrace the preparation of

academically sound teachers whose pedagogies are grounded in a critical approach to

teaching and learning. In short, teachers who strive for equity and inquiry and are

culturally responsive to all their students are needed.

I began this chapter by acknowledging and briefly describing my personal interest

in issues of equity and how my experiences propelled me toward a pedagogy that seeks

this. Personally and professionally, I am strongly committed to modeling equity and inquiry and being culturally responsive in my professional and personal relationships. In the university classroom I encourage my students to take a similar journey as they work toward learning how to incorporate CRP into their own teaching style.

For the last 13 years I have worked with the National College of Education's (NCE) elementary teacher education program. I have remained with this program primarily because it shares my commitments to the ideals of equity, inquiry, and CRP. While I have never questioned our program's commitment to these ideals, I have wondered how effectively we fulfill our mission to prepare pre-service teachers to meet the needs of all of their students. For this reason, my research uses a reflective lens to look at the work that we do in our teacher education program by asking: In what ways, if any, has NCE's teacher education program influenced its teacher candidates' understanding and implementation of culturally responsive pedagogy? In conducting this research, one of the major factors examined is what was actually done during NCE's elementary teacher education program to influence teachers' promotion of these ideals in their own classrooms. The insights and findings gained from this study will provide information to further guide development of teacher education program at the university level and useful information to school administrators seeking to support teachers in their buildings.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

At a time when we should be opening doors to the future, we are fossilizing a curriculum and a kind of teaching that seemed to make sense in the 1950's
--Thomas Sobol

Foundations for Culturally Responsive Pedagogy

The purpose of this chapter is to establish an understanding of the research base for the philosophical, social, and educational context in which teacher education programs that embrace equity and culturally responsive pedagogy (CRP) exist. This literature review is a springboard for my research exploring the ways an undergraduate teacher education program influences its teacher candidates' understanding and implementation of CRP. In order to address the impact of the teacher education program, issues of equity and multicultural education from a critical pedagogical perspective must first be considered.

Public education is viewed as the one factor in American society most responsible for helping all citizens improve their social and economic standing. Yet, as Ladson-Billings (1995) asserts, there is clear and alarming evidence that various segments of the U.S. public school population experiences negative and inequitable treatment on a daily basis. Moreover, such treatment warrants a critical look at issues of access, power, and privilege. Kozol (1991) refers to funding in American schools as a "savage inequality" saying "The reliance of our public schools on property taxes and the localization of the uses of those taxes have combined to make the public schools into an educator of the educated rich and a keeper for the uneducated poor" (pp. 206-207). CRP provides a critical lens through which to examine the preparation of teachers for America's public

schools. CRP, which is used interchangeably with *culturally responsible*, *culturally appropriate*, *culturally congruent*, *culturally relevant* and *multiculturalism,* describes a variety of teaching approaches shown to be effective in culturally diverse classrooms (Irvine & Armento, 2001). The philosophical and pedagogical foundations of CRP are rooted in multicultural education, which grew out of the Civil Rights movement. The major goal of the Civil Rights movement was to eliminate discriminatory practices in housing, employment, and education. The limited response at the collegiate level was developing and offering elective ethnic study courses and which typically enrolled only members of the ethnic group under study in the course.

Banks (1993), a prominent figure in the multicultural education movement, talks about multicultural education as an idea, an educational reform movement, and a process. Multicultural education's primary goal is to change the structure of educational institutions so that male and female students, exceptional students, and students who are members of diverse, racial, ethnic and cultural groups have an equal chance to achieve academically in schools. This educational reform not only addresses the cultural aspects of the student population in schools, but the issue of equity as the foundation of multicultural education. Equity ensures educational institutions recognize the value of different ways of learning and provides everyone with opportunities to achieve. According to Banks and Banks (1995), equity also requires demonstrating appreciation for all students through attitudes and behaviors that establish classroom learning environments that are not only emotionally and physically safe, but communicate high expectations for academic achievement and quality interpersonal relationships. In order for teacher education programs to produce future teachers who teach equitably,

multicultural education must be grounded in their curriculum. Banks (1993), when describing multicultural education, states that "equitable pedagogy exists when teachers modify their teaching in ways that will facilitate the academic achievement of students from diverse, racial, cultural, gender, and social class groups" (p. 21).

Gay (2000), who refers to CRP as *culturally responsive teaching*, claims it involves teachers creating a classroom environment that welcomes diverse learners, cultivates relationships with all parents, incorporates high learning expectations, and establishes a community of learners. Furthermore, a culturally responsive teacher is sensitive to the needs, interests, learning preferences, and abilities of his or her students. Responsive teachers neither employ one teaching method uncritically nor use the same teaching methods and materials for all students. Instead, culturally responsive teachers modify their approaches and teaching by paying attention to classroom context and to individual students' needs and experiences (Irvine & Armento, 2001).

Currently in many American schools, such pedagogy is not evident and the achievement gap still exists for minority students, especially African Americans. One major reason for this achievement gap is American society's low expectations for these students in regards to becoming critical thinkers and productive citizens. At a time when U.S. public school classrooms are becoming increasingly culturally, linguistically, and, in some cases, economically diverse, curriculum for poor and minority children often combines low-level material with tedious, rote-oriented teaching (Darling Hammond, 2006).

Research has been conducted that indicates how to eradicate the achievement gap. The research conducted by Gay (2003) and Ladson-Billings (2006) suggests that teachers

need to activate students' prior knowledge, encourage inquiry and critical thinking, and have an embedded and evident pedagogical and actualized framing for equity and culture. Students need to engage critically in classroom content from the standpoint of their own knowledge and the events and experiences that comprise their living history (Freire, 1971). Gay (2000) states that a culturally responsive pedagogy is "based on the assumption that when academic knowledge and skills are situated within students' lived experience and frames of references, students learn more easily and thoroughly because they are more personally meaningful and have a higher interest appeal" (p. 48). In other words, academic achievement of ethnically diverse students improves when classroom instruction is delivered through the students' own cultural and experiential filters (Au & Kawakami, 1994; Gay, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1990).

If American society truly believes that education is the doorway to providing opportunities to be successful in this country, why does our educational system remain so resistant to the ideals of equity and being culturally responsive to its student population? Why have citizenship education and assimilation often supplanted multicultural education and culturally responsive pedagogy? While society and schools routinely espouse the need for all children who attend American schools to have citizenship education, it often translates into assimilation into American culture. Too often this includes the expectation that students will give up their home and community's culture and language for a broader, generic American identity. Both in the past and currently, citizenship education imbeds itself within the public school curriculum to promote assimilation into mainstream American culture.

Schools have assumed that assimilation into mainstream culture is required for citizenship and national belonging and that students should and must surrender their commitment to other communities, culture, and nations (Banks 2008). While cultural assimilation works well for most White ethnic groups (Alba & Nee, 2003) it has not for communities of color who continue to experience structural exclusion after they become culturally assimilated. When people are forced to denounce their identities, Ladson-Billings (2004) describes what happens: "People move back and forth across many identities, and the way society responds to these identities either binds people or alienates them from the civic culture" (p.112). Multicultural societies are faced with the problem of constructing a nation that reflects and incorporates the diversity of different cultures while creating a common set of shared values, ideals, and goals to which all citizens are committed.

Critics of culturally responsive pedagogy often argue that it is unnecessary because all students, even those from diverse backgrounds, share the same learning styles and that equity requires all children be taught the same. However, this approach has not worked for our public school system. It is clear that public schools across the country have failed ethnic minority and impoverished children and youth (Children's Defense Fund 1999; Gay, 2000; Hale, 2001; Hillard, 2001). The U.S. population is becoming more diverse due to the rapid influx of immigrants from non-European countries. Because the current immigration pattern flows from vastly different cultures from around the world, it is not surprising that contemporary immigrants find it difficult to assimilate into American society. According to Banks (2008), the rapid growth of racial and ethnic minorities coupled with the largest immigration waves ever, have made U.S. public

schools a mosaic of racial, ethnic, and linguistic groups of children. However, even though the public schools are becoming more diverse every day, the teacher candidate population remains primarily White, middle-class females who grew up in culturally homogeneous, suburban environments.

The culture of standards-based, high-stakes testing also challenges CRP. High-stakes testing assumes that all students in the American public school system receive equal opportunities in terms of funding, resources, and highly-qualified teachers. Obviously the inequitable funding within the American public school system does not provide equal education for all students. The pressure of high-stakes testing results in many educators using rote memorization over an inquiry approach even when their own pedagogy and professional judgment indicates otherwise. An inquiry approach to learning involves exploring, asking questions, and making discoveries in the search for new understandings and is the best strategy to use to produce citizens for a democratic society. Teaching strategies that reinforce equity, promote inquiry, and are culturally responsive are rarely seen in inner-city schools; instead they are better known as the pedagogy of privilege.

Conversely, inner-city schools and schools with a large percent of impoverished students, tend to incorporate "a pedagogy of poverty." Haberman (1995) describes a pedagogy of poverty as instruction, school, and classroom environments where students learn by rote and memorization techniques, and where the promotion of inquiry, discovery or cooperative learning are absent. Inner-city schools, and those in low-income communities, are more susceptible to "reforms" in the form of mandates and sanctions. Such reforms include a hidden curriculum that favors and perpetuates the

disenfranchisement of low-income students from the pedagogy of privilege. Reform

efforts also bring the high price of monitoring schools' adherence to a regulated and

scripted curriculum, standardized evaluations, and other requirements for high-stakes

testing preparation and performance (Lalas, 2007). Thus, even though students in

America's public schools do not receive the same education, and even though students of

color and those whose native language is not English are marginalized are subverted from

the time they enter schools until they leave, they are still held to the same standardized

measures.

If public education is one means (and by far the most revered) of educating

children in America, then schools should seek to educate all students without privileging

one group over another. Educators readily admit the existing disparity students' access to

human and material resources and the lasting negative impact of the disparity on the

academic achievement of students in the margin. Still, socioeconomic justice and

promoting every student's human dignity has not yet been the focus of widespread school

reform efforts or efforts to improve the academic success of minority students. Michelli

(2005) adds that the purpose of schooling has been narrowed to something technical and

is based on and rooted in a meritocracy that is grounded in and validated by high-stakes

testing. So long as schools maintain the current singular emphasis on standardized,

mechanized curriculum, then the marginalized will continue to be told what is best for

them. Certainly disrupting the status quo has not been easy and continues to challenge

multicultural educators. Equal funding for America's schools will not likely occur in the

near future, however teachers who embrace equity and incorporate it into their practice

understand that children need not only a firm grounding in academics but also how to

practically use those academics to promote a democratic society in which all can participate fully.

Practice of Culturally Responsive Pedagogy in Teacher Education

Given the above-referenced challenges to closing the achievement gap through implementation of CRP, the task of teacher education programs might seem daunting. A particular challenge is the public perception that teacher education programs are not needed. Such a perception has been reinforced by recent studies claiming a lack of direct correlation between these programs and student achievement. For example, conservative political groups including the Fordham Foundation, the Pioneer Institute, Hoover Institute, Heritage Foundation and the Abell Foundation "advocate for alternative routes into teaching that bypass crucial preparation at higher education institutions, as well as state level teacher tests of content area knowledge, as the primary gatekeepers into the profession" (Cochran-Smith & Fries, 2005, p. 91). However, Darling-Hammond (2001), in a report published by the National Commission on Teaching for America's Future, found the contrary. Using both qualitative and quantitative analysis, Darling-Hammond concluded that teacher preparation and certification provided the strongest correlation for student achievement.

Nevertheless, the greatest obstacle of all to bridging the achievement gap may well be schools of education charged with preparing the nation's teachers. "While teacher education has always been embedded in the politics and debates of its time and is influenced by the same pendulum swing as other educational developments" (Cochran-Smith & Fries, 2005, p. 83), teacher preparation writ large has yet to undergo major transformation in the preparation of its teachers. In order to improve student achievement,

school reformers must ensure access to highly-qualified teachers for all students within a setting that encompasses rich and challenging curriculum supported by a school culture that respects the academic and cultural needs of all students. Teacher education programs in the United States need to address the issue of a school population becoming more diverse despite an unchanging teaching force. Yet, many schools of education continue to implement conservative ideologies and/or programs that are monocultural and Eurocentric. This is not surprising because, like public school faculty, most university education faculty are White, middle-class. Nieto (2000) writes about the "sluggish pace" which teacher education programs approach diversity in spite of the rapidly changing demographics of the student population in the public schools (p. 181).

Teacher education programs must depart from a behaviorist way of thinking that socializes teacher candidates to a culture of conformity. Irvine (2003) reported that most teachers exhibit instructional practices similar to those taught and modeled to them during their teacher preparation training. In order for CRP to be implemented in U.S. public schools, teacher education programs need to embed ideologies of equity and inquiry into all coursework and provide field experiences that model effective teaching in high-needs schools.

Gay (2000) identifies the following eight attributes of a culturally responsive teacher and classroom:

- expectations (teacher has high academic and personal expectations for each child);

- adaptations (teacher facilitates the maximum growth of each learner by making informed academic adaptations that match and build upon the learner's prior knowledge experience, skills and beliefs);

- learning environment (classroom is positive and supportive demonstrating mutual and genuine respect for cultural diversity);

- curriculum (teacher embeds diverse topics into course of study);

- assessment (teacher utilizes multiple ways to measure the diverse learners' accomplishments);

- parent involvement (teachers nurture learning-support communities for child, including families, peers, homework hot-lines, and community centers);

- student voice (teachers empower students to develop and contribute their own voice); and

- inquiry (learning environment encourages students to experiment and learn by using their own personal experiences and culture).

In order to make CRP a reality in America's schools, pre-service teachers must begin to understand and embody these eight attributes. In addition, teacher education program coursework and field experiences will need to develop and foster an understanding of differences between the dominant and minority cultures and how such differences impact student achievement.

Fortunately, even though such a task seems daunting, some teacher preparation programs are responding to the pressing need and have implemented pedagogical reforms. Currently most of the research on CRP in teacher education examines the pre-service teacher pedagogical content knowledge as evidenced in a single multicultural

education courses. An overview of the work of Obidah (2001), Ukpokodu (2003); Reed and Black (2006), and Jennings and Smith (2002) establish an understanding of the philosophical, social, and educational context in which teacher education programs embracing equity and culturally responsive pedagogy currently operate.

Obidah (2001), in her first year at the University of California at Los Angeles, conducted a reflective self-study as a teacher educator facing challenges in developing and teaching a multicultural education course. The study involved a course which had development of a critical pedagogy as a main objective and in which 29 undergraduate students, aged 20-21, were enrolled. Obidah defined the development of a critical pedagogy as a

> systematic interrogation of schools and the schooling process, that enables
> educators to see these terrains, not simply as sites of instruction, or as arenas of
> indoctrination and socialization, but also as a cultural terrain that promotes and/or
> negates students' empowerment and teachers' self-transformation. (p. 1040)

Achieving this goal required students mediate interactions and notions of race, class, and power within a safe space that would allow for student voice to address difficult issues related to students' growing critical pedagogical awareness. Obidah collected final course assignments, end of the quarter evaluations, class assignments and notes, emails and other records of personal conversations, and end-of-course student-completed profiles from five of the 29 students.

Rather than wait until the completion of the course to analyze the data, Obidah used an ongoing assessment of the data to change her instructional practices mid-stream. Acknowledging that she needed to reexamine her own pedagogical practices and that

both teacher and student must constantly challenge their own beliefs about teaching and learning, she intentionally avoided what she calls "academic rigidity." Obidah's reorganization of her course demonstrates how she incorporates culturally responsive pedagogy in the areas of curriculum, student voice, and learning environment. Using parallel practices, Obidah ultimately realized that she had to use her students' lived experiences in her course to systematically interrogate her own practices in order to help transform her students' understanding of critical pedagogy.

Ukpokodu (2003), who teaches in the Division of Curriculum and Instructional Leadership at The University of Missouri-Kansas City, used a reflective essay to analyze the transformation of her own social studies methods courses. Methods courses in pre-service programs provide foundational content and pedagogy in specific disciplines. However, Ukpokodu's goal was to document the infusion of multiple perspectives and critical pedagogy into her social studies methods course. During her course she engaged students in learning experiences such as identifying the curricular and instructional implications of multicultural perspectives, balancing trade- and textbook perspectives in the area of social studies, and engaging a wide range of movies and books to better understand the contributions of marginalized citizens in major historical and social events.

Ukpokodu (2003) discusses the challenge and necessity of helping students gain a critical and global perspective when many lack even basic knowledge of multicultural perspectives in America. Realizing the importance of critical pedagogy in teacher education, she restructured her course using an inquiry based and interactive approach that emphasized "a dialogue in which teachers and students explore issues and reflect on

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them" (p. 78). By incorporating the above ideologies into her pre-service coursework, Ukpokodu addressed CRP by incorporating the attributes of inquiry, student voice, curriculum, teacher expectations, and learning environment.

Reed and Black (2006), from Keene State College, also looked at university coursework. Their World Educational Links (WEL) program tries to move teacher candidates toward a transformative pedagogy that rethinks student voice, teacher expectations, curriculum, and the learning environment in classrooms. WEL is an immersion model that prepares future educators for anti-oppressive teaching and is grounded in critical pedagogy and social activism. WEL facilitates conversations that help pre-service teachers deconstruct essential questions designed to interrogate traditional notions of school and its impact on teaching and learning. It helps undergraduates gain a "wide lens for viewing the historical and political context of the educational system in which they find themselves" (p. 35). The program emphasizes far more than writing a good lesson. Instead it emphasizes the need to look at the larger context and gain a greater theoretical understanding of lessons as vehicles for social change. In addition to course discussions about stereotypes, expectations, norms, and rethinking and rewriting curriculum, the program examines specific curricular units of study to help students act as agents of social change.

While the previous three studies exemplify embedding Gay's attributes into university coursework, only Jennings and Smith (2002) expanded their study to include the impact of university coursework on a teacher's elementary classroom teaching. Jennings and Smith focus on the Freirean notion of critical inquiry in a multicultural education course. Louise Jennings, a teacher educator at the University of South

Carolina, used her doctoral course titled Education for Diversity, to examine how critical pedagogy impacts students' understanding of multiculturalism and its classroom application. As part of the course, students designed and implemented an action plan in their own classroom using tenets of teaching for social justice. When teaching for social justice, teachers seek to understand themselves in relationship to others, acknowledge how society constructs privilege and inequality, and learn to recognize how the above affects one's own opportunities and attempts to promote equity in the learning environment (Darling-Hammond, French, & Garcia-Lopez, 2002).

In analyzing the data, Jennings found students' shifted their understanding of multicultural education and their potential for applying it. Many of the teacher candidates created comprehensive goals in their action plans and incorporated strategies related to diversity, equity, social action, and critical thinking. However, Jennings observed that they typically lacked sufficient specificity to demonstrate a deep understanding of social reconstruction. As a result, she revised her course to address these concerns, thus confirming Ellsworth's (1989) assertion that "educators cannot expect a once-only shift in students' attitudes, for our understandings, beliefs and best practices are situated and context-bound" (qtd. in Jennings & Smith, p. 318).

In the second case study, Smith describes and analyzes her two-year evolution and transformation as a result of Jennings' course. Using the action plan developed during the course, Smith implemented a unit on South Carolina history in her third grade classroom. Smith developed the following question to be answered during the study: "Can using critical pedagogical materials and inquiry increase interest, participation, and performance of students in a diverse cultural group?" (Jennings & Smith, 2002, p. 462).

Smith changed her previously teacher-directed unit to an inquiry-based, experiential unit. Based on what she learned in Jennings' course, Smith enabled students to explore South Carolina history through their own personal and cultural lenses.

After teaching the revised unit once, Smith expanded her study to include two other teachers teaching the same unit in two other third grade classrooms in schools whose demographics differed from her own school. After analyzing videotapes, field notes, audio tapes, and observations, Smith and the other teachers concluded that the amount of student engagement time increased compared to traditional teaching methods. Smith also relied on follow up interviews and journal entries with teachers who taught the unit. She concluded that students who did not engage in the traditionally taught units were more engaged, and had acquired greater knowledge compared to those students taught in the original unit. Nevertheless, despite the increased engagement and knowledge gains, they still lacked an understanding of multiple perspectives of marginalized cultures in South Carolina's history.

Smith then revised the unit again by requiring students to focus on a cultural group different from their own and recruited six additional teachers to implement the new curriculum. She attributes her own understanding of critical pedagogy and its impact on her instruction to what she learned in Jennings' course. However, Smith took her learning to another level by fully embracing critical pedagogy and implementing it in a meaningful way to impact student learning in a K-8 classroom by focusing on curriculum, assessment, inquiry, adaptations, student voice, teacher expectations, and learning environment.

Conclusion

Even though proponents of CRP have identified key attributes of teaching and learning that positively impact student achievement, these components are not broadly evident in America's classrooms. Teacher education programs, however, still provide hope that American schools can still be transformed. The studies referenced here are indications that teacher education continues to research and document effective means to implement CRP.

The five studies documented here narrate multiple attempts by teacher educators to engage their students in critical thinking as a result of CRP. The first four signal that although small, the research base for multicultural education and CRP is growing. However, these research studies focus primarily on the coursework in which students engage while in teacher education programs. Despite the value of each study, together they indicate how little research has been conducted on post-graduation teachers in their own classrooms.

To date, the work of Jennings and Smith (2002) provide the best look at the important connection between teacher preparation and in-service teaching. In addition to documenting important work done in both the university courses and the actual classroom setting, their study infuses seven of the eight attributes of CRP (Gay 2000). Taken together, this indicates the need for more research in the classrooms of in-service teachers to better understand what a culturally responsive classroom really looks like.

My study adds to the existing limited research that documents and analyzes teachers' ability to use a culturally responsive pedagogy in their own classrooms by examining their practice after graduation from a teacher education program. By

reconnecting with alumni in the NCE teacher education program and observing them in

their classrooms, my work examines the ways, if any, NCE's teacher education program

has influenced its teacher candidates' understanding and implementation of CRP.

CHAPTER THREE

Methodology

*"Millennium schools are in danger of becoming a hybrid of a nineteenth-century factory,
a twentieth-century minimum security penal colony, and a twenty-first-century
Educational Testing Service.*
--Roland S. Barth

Currently, the U.S. educational system fails to properly educate minority students.

Education researchers (Banks & Banks 2002; Gay 2004; Nieto 2000) indicate the most

minority students are failing both academically and emotionally. According to Gay

(2004), as disparities in educational opportunities and outcomes among ethnic groups

continue to grow, the resulting achievement gap has reached crisis proportions. As a

result, Gay concludes, the challenge to better educate underachieving students intensifies

and diversity among student populations expands, the need for multicultural education

grows exponentially. Likewise, Ladson-Billings (1995) and Darling-Hammond (2000)

conclude that in order for minority students to be successful in school, teachers need to

embrace equity, inquiry, and culturally responsive pedagogy (CRP). While the data from

these researchers has not definitively shown that such an approach will work for every

child, the growing body of research (Darling-Hammond, 2007; Gay, 2004; Ladson-

Billings, 2006) does indicate that embracing CRP will improve the American school

system which in turn would decrease the achievement gap.

Hollins and Guzman (2005) identified a growing body of research on preparing

teachers for diversity conducted by teacher educators themselves. However, many such

studies have been conducted in the area of preparing teachers for diverse populations

while the teacher candidates are taking diversity or multicultural education courses. Most

of the data collected from these studies is based on an assignment from the course or

reflection about the field experiences. Hollins and Guzman (2005) state "the results of these studies raise the concern of sustainability of this preparation" (p. 480). Few of these studies focus on whether or not graduates are actually teaching for equity in their own classroom.

In order to fill this research gap, this study focused on both the preparation and implementation of CRP by studying teachers in their own classrooms after graduation from National Louis University (NLU). Rather than studying the impact of a specific course or assignment, this study examined the impact of the undergraduate teacher education program at NLU's National College of Education (NCE) after they graduated from the program and were teaching. The overall vision of NCE supports teaching for change and social justice and its cohort program was specifically designed to advance the college's vision for teacher education. In particular, NCE used the current research describing effective teaching in high-needs schools in its coursework design and field placements. NCE's program purposefully embeds those topics that provide the knowledge and understanding pre-service teachers need to teach social justice into all coursework. Because teacher candidates are expected to create learning opportunities which enables students' voices to emerge and to develop knowledge and meaning from the students' perspectives, NCE's program also helps teacher candidates decipher what is necessary for them to become culturally responsive teachers. This study thus sought to determine the ways, if any, in which NCE's teacher education program influenced its teacher candidates' understanding and implementation of culturally responsive pedagogy in their own classroom.

Research Design

Setting

  This study took place in the northwest suburbs of Chicago whose school systems were experiencing significant student demographic change. While minority students had increased dramatically, the teacher demographics remained relatively static. Analysis of Illinois School Report Cards indicated that two of the largest school systems in northern Illinois from 2005-2009 consistently experienced a drop in the White student population as minority populations either remained constant or increased (Illinois State Board of Education, 2009). During this same time period, the teaching force remained overwhelming White and female.

  Two major initiatives affected teacher education program design in the last few years. First, state- and federally-funded initiatives for communities to "grow their own" teachers has meant that new teachers are being encouraged to obtain and complete their teaching degrees in their own communities and then remain in those communities to teach. Second, No Child Left Behind (NCLB) has set new standards to ensure that teachers are highly qualified. In 2001, National Louis University (NLU) received a federal Teacher Quality Education (TQE) grant to partner with local community colleges and school districts to "grow their own" teachers who would be highly-qualified to teach in high-needs schools. (High-needs, or Title I, schools are defined as schools in which 50% or more of the student population lives at or below the poverty line).

  The TQE grant greatly affected NLU's undergraduate teacher education program serving students at the NLU Elgin Campus and McHenry County College (MCC) in the northwest suburbs. In particular, the traditional teacher education program was

redesigned to insure students were highly-qualified to teach in high-needs schools. In addition to incorporating and enhancing already existing topics into the coursework, all field placements were in high-needs schools and included additional support.

Program Description

The program redesign involved four major areas. First, the courses were laid out into a cohort model to provide both integrated coursework and a supportive learning environment. Second, the topics of equity, inquiry, and cultural diversity were embedded throughout the coursework and seminars. Third, the field placements were all in diverse/high-needs partner schools. Fourth, during their field placements students received additional mentoring and supervision. The overarching expectation of this teacher education program was to prepare highly-qualified teachers to teach in high-needs schools.

Cohorts consisted of 12-18 students with junior class standing who had completed their general education coursework at the local community college. Each cohort had a Cohort Instructional Leader responsible for both advising students and instructing initial courses including their student teaching seminar. NLU faculty and partner school district faculty committed to the NCE program philosophy taught the remaining courses and seminars (See Appendix A).

The program integrated theory and practice by placing students into classrooms during their first education course. Prior to the culminating full-day student teaching experience, students completed three practicum courses that were integrated with a theory-based university course. Each field experience was coordinated with the partner school districts to ensure students were placed in high-needs, diverse settings.

Unfortunately, as is so often the case, the quality of the placements varied in terms of best practices being modeled by the cooperating teacher. We know that the quality of the cooperating teacher is one of the most important educational predictors of student achievement, "What teachers know and do is one of the most important influences on what students learn" (Darling-Hammond, 2006, p. 193). Darling-Hammond and Falk (1997) argued that until schools address the enormous inequalities in students' access to qualified teachers, other reforms would have little effect on student achievement. The expectations of the TQE grant and the undergraduate faculty was that the NCE undergraduate teacher education program would prepare highly qualified teachers who would be effective teachers in high-needs schools for all students.

I participated in this TQE grant as a university faculty who taught the education courses and as a faculty liaison to the school districts regarding the field placements of participating teacher candidates. Conducting this study allowed me to examine and collect data on the effects of the grant and more importantly study my own teaching practices in a teacher education program and TQE grant. As the faculty liaison for the grant, I was involved in all the decision making processes including choosing the specific topics to be embedded in the coursework, textbook selection, presenter selection and scheduling, and field placements.

Participants

The population for this study was program alumni who graduated between 2003-2008 and participated in the TQE Grant Curriculum at NLU's Elgin Campus and extension program at McHenry County College. Although the number of students who graduated during this time totaled 137, a lack of contact information limited in

distribution to 123 invitation letters and initial data forms (see Appendix B). One of the processes used to acquire current information on the teachers who graduated between 2003 and 2005 was to investigate school sites on the internet and locate the teachers' names on the staff lists. Additional teachers were located by using the state of Illinois database warehouse which has information on teachers hired in the past three years.

Due to incorrect information, six of the 123 invitations were returned. A total of 53 teachers returned the initial data form and expressed an interest in participating in this study, which included two males, two Latina, and one African American. Of the 53 surveys sent to those expressing initial interest; 32 were returned. The 53 teachers were contacted again for classroom observations and yielded, due to time-constraints and teacher availability, 37 classroom observations. After completing the observations, all 37 teachers were invited to participate in a follow-up focus group interview on the specific topic of social justice issues in the classroom. Of these 37, 14 participated in the focus groups.

The self-selected sample for this research study, therefore, includes all teachers who returned the initial information form and indicated their willingness to be observed, completed a survey and participated in a focus group, resulting in a final n=14. This group was analyzed in detail and represents a subset of the larger data set collected in the course of this research study. The group consisted of data collected from these three sources (classroom observations, surveys, and focus group interviews) and was analyzed by collectively searching for emerging themes regarding participant understanding and application of equity, inquiry, and CRP and indications of how their NLU teacher education program prepared them in these areas.

Data Collection

Multiple sources of data were used to the question, "In what ways, if any, did the NCE teacher education program influence its teacher candidates' understanding and implementation of culturally responsive pedagogy in their own classrooms?" The first source of data came from the initial data form (see Appendix B) which asked basic personal demographic information such as name, address, grade level, school, and their interest in participating in different aspects of the study (observation, surveys, focus group). This data was used primarily to inform the direction of my next steps and to contact participants for further information.

The second source of data was classroom observations in which I identified evidence of the eight attributes of a culturally responsive classroom (Gay 2000; see Appendix C). To minimize data corruption, observations were done before teachers saw the surveys or answered any questions related to CRP. In particular, research participants were not aware of the topic of the research study or the purpose of the observations until after they had been observed.

After the observations were completed, survey data—the third source—were collected (See Appendix D) from all who had initially indicated a willingness to complete one. The survey asked participants to describe their understanding of CRP and whether or not their teacher education program prepared them to implement this in their classrooms. Participants who answered 'yes' were asked to give specific examples and those who responded 'no' were asked to identify what the program could have done differently.

The fourth, and final, source of data was collected during the focus groups. Each participant was asked to write individual responses to the focus group questions (see

Appendix E), followed by a group discussion about issues revolving around teaching for social justice. In addition, the focus groups placed special emphasis on how the program prepared them to design and implement culturally responsive pedagogy in their classrooms.

The research question had several components that needed to be answered. Multiple ways of collecting data was necessary to address the different levels within the research question. Patton (2001) suggests that "multiple sources of information are sought and used because no single source of information can be trusted to provide a comprehensive perspective" (p. 306). Accordingly, I elected to use observations, surveys, and focus groups. The survey and focus group methods collected information about the teachers' understanding and knowledge of equity, inquiry, and culturally responsive pedagogy. The observations provided data regarding whether teacher's knowledge and understanding of equity, inquiry, and culturally responsive pedagogy was integrated into classroom practice. The observation portion of the data collection also provided a snapshot of the participants' practice in their own classrooms.

According to McEwan and McEwan (2003) utilizing multiple data collection methods is termed triangulation. Triangulation increases validity as a strength of an approach and can compensate for the weakness of another approach (Marshall & Rossman, 1989). The data gathered from all three sources can provide important data for whether teachers are or are not teaching for equity, inquiry, and culturally responsive pedagogy. The data drawn from those who are not teaching in this manner also provides important information about the teacher education program and the grant's effectiveness.

Observation

My research explores the many sides of multicultural education by using three forms of information gathering: observation, surveys, and focus groups. The observation was the first piece of data collected so that data focused on a teacher's typical lesson rather than one which was specifically geared toward study's specific focus. Observations were scheduled and conducted according to participants' willingness to be observed and the participant's and researcher's availability. Each teacher was observed for one half-day along with either a either a pre or post-observation conference.

A form measuring attributes of a culturally responsive classroom was used for data observation (See Appendix B). The form used Gay's (2000) eight attributes as a framework and helped not only maintain my focus but also ensured continuity in data collection. The eight attributes on the form that I developed included:

- expectations (teacher has high academic and personal expectations for each child);

- adaptations (teacher facilitates the maximum growth of each learner by making informed academic adaptations that match and build upon the learner's prior knowledge experience, skills and beliefs);

- learning environment (classroom is positive and supportive demonstrating mutual and genuine respect for cultural diversity);

- curriculum (teacher embeds diverse topics into course of study);

- assessment (teacher utilizes multiple ways to measure the diverse learners' accomplishments);

- parent involvement (teachers nurture learning-support communities for child, including families, peers, homework hot-lines and community centers);

- student voice (teachers empower students to develop and contribute their own voice); and

- inquiry (learning environment encourages students to experiment and learn by using their own personal experiences and culture).

Use of the form enabled observation not only of what was present and occurred, but also what was not present. The forms thus enabled a systematic data collection of elements that identified which attributes were and were not evident. The conferences, meanwhile, provided opportunities to verify and clarify observations.

When conducting these observations, it was very important to remain focused on Gay's (2000) eight attributes of culturally responsive classroom. My experience of being a university supervisor of pre-service teacher candidates for 18 years was especially helpful in the observation process. Nevertheless, when conducting the observations I had to be careful not to revert back to the criteria I used when evaluating pre-service teachers and instead remain focused on the eight attributes.

Other limitations of this method also included its focus on external behaviors and that my presence as an observer likely affected in unknown ways what occurred in the classroom (Patton, 2001). This study overcomes the limitation of focusing on external behaviors by using the information from the survey and focus group to provide more insight about the knowledge and beliefs of the participating teachers. Direct observation

is the chance to learn things that people would be unwilling to talk about in a focus group or interview (Patton, 2001).

The effect of the observer presence was reduced in two ways. First, because teachers did not know the topic of the research study until after they had been observed, their performance and lesson plan selection was not consciously influenced. Having an observer in a classroom can affect the environment and the teacher's actions. Establishing a good relationship with the teacher prior to the observation can diminish these effects (Patton, 2001). Making the teachers feel that they are an important part of the study and allowing them to make the choice if they want to be observed reduces the effect of observer's presence in the classroom. Not only did the teachers invite me into their classrooms, we had a prior relationship when they were undergraduates in the teacher education program. Because, when I served as their teacher, I observed their teaching in an evaluative role I explicitly stated my role had changed. I explained that my only purpose was to gather information to critique *my* teaching and *my* program and that I was not present to critique their teaching. The establishment of a trusting relationship with these teachers was an important aspect of the observation portion of the data collection.

Survey

The survey (see appendix D) had three sections: a) demographic information, such as years of teaching, grade levels and subjects taught and additional education; b) recollection questions about the teacher education program regarding coursework and field placements; and c) open-ended questions about participants' knowledge and understanding of equity, inquiry, and culturally responsive pedagogy. Age, education, occupation, and the like are standard background questions that identify the

characteristics of the persons being interviewed (Patton, 2001). The demographic

information was used to sort the participants by years of teaching experience, grade level,

and additional education. The questions that refer to the terms equity, inquiry, and

culturally responsive pedagogy provide information about the teachers' current

knowledge and how they saw it incorporated in their classroom. Participants were asked

to recall their coursework and field experiences during their teacher education program

and reflect the impact these had on their current teaching. Current research has concluded

that the quality of the field experiences have a long-term impact on the teaching quality

of candidates (Darling–Hammond, 2006). Therefore, a critical component of this study

was examining the relationship between the teacher's field experiences and the way they

are teaching currently.

Focus Groups

The focus groups were conducted on the same Saturday with a total of fourteen

participants attending. After being divided into three groups but prior to beginning the

discussions, facilitators gave participants the questions that would be discussed and asked

them to write down their answers. This particular process was included to allow teachers

to think about the questions and formulate their ideas before the facilitator of the group

began. Each focus group had a facilitator who was an undergraduate faculty member.

One of the facilitators had had very limited contact with the teachers while they were in

the program. At the end of the focus group all the sheets that the participants completed

and the facilitator's notes were collected.

In dividing the groups, members of the cohort groups and campuses were

dispersed as evenly as possible because "focus groups work best when people in the

groups, though sharing similar backgrounds, are strangers to each other" (Patton, 2001, p. 387). The formation of the focus groups was a very important component because all the participants in this study belonged to a two-year full-time undergraduate cohort program.

The focus groups were convened according to participant willingness and availability. Questions posed during the discussions (See Appendix E) were open-ended, rather than dichotomous and enabled in-depth responses unlike those of interrogatory interview (Patton, 2001). The focus groups provided more in-depth information about the teachers' understanding of equity, inquiry, and culturally responsive pedagogy and how they put this knowledge into practice. During the focus groups, teachers reflected on the topic of teaching for social justice and how that was evidenced in their classroom. The opportunity for discussion also offered the possibility for some teachers to discover that as well as share their reasons for not teaching and/or the barriers they encountered for teaching for social justice.

Data Analysis

The data gained from the observations, surveys, and focus groups provided multiple pieces of information in regards to each participant's incorporation of equity, inquiry, and culturally responsive pedagogy into their classroom. Using triangulation of data sources and analytical perspectives increased the accuracy and credibility of the findings (Patton, 2001). After all the data was collected, the analytic process of looking for themes was conducted. Because participants had different lengths of teaching experience, the emerging themes were placed on a continuum (See Appendix F). Patton (2001) states "when analyzing qualitative data it is important to use multiple coders to establish the validity and reliability of pattern and theme analysis" (p. 78).

Using this information could determine how and if this particular undergraduate teacher program influenced alumni to become teachers of equity, inquiry, and culturally responsive pedagogy or not. More specifically, the analysis could identify the particular program aspects and components which influenced the teachers' knowledge and implementation of teaching CRP directly. In analyzing the data, following program components were considered as having a potential impact: a) the common curriculum and instructional strategies taught at the university (epistemology), b) the field experiences provided by the undergraduate teacher education program (pragmatism), c) teacher's knowledge and understanding of equity, inquiry, and culturally responsive pedagogy; and d) the teaching style which teacher's developed since graduation. In conducting the analysis a variety of conclusions were deemed possible. For example, the study could have identified a single component as having greater influence than others. Alternatively, the study might conclude that multiple components influenced the teachers. Analysis also considered the possibility that a determination could not be made based on these three components. Finally, the analysis acknowledges that other factors not included in this study also impacted the extent to which teachers might teach for equity, inquiry, and social justice.

The self-selected sample for the research study includes all teacher candidates who returned the initial information form and indicated their willingness to be observed, completed a survey and participated in a focus group, resulting in a final n=14. Table 1 provides an overview of three data collection methods and the key components of each method that were the most significant to answering individual components of the complex research question. Table 1 thus illustrates how the study's used of triangulated

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data can also be used determine if the knowledge alone, the practical experiences alone, or the combination of both provided by undergraduate teacher education program in the scope of the TQE grant influenced teacher candidates to become teachers of equity, inquiry, and CRP.

Table 1: Data Collection and Question Components

	Equity	Inquiry	Culturally Responsive Pedagogy
Observation Notes (Practical)	Observation Notes #1 *Examples of how the teacher had high expectations academically and personally for each student* Observation Notes #7 *Examples of how student voice is heard or suppressed in the classroom*	Observation Notes #8 *Examples of how students inquire, experiment and use their own experiences and culture to learn in the classroom*	The eight attributes on the observation notes
Survey (Knowledge)	Explain what equity means to you and describe if you include this into your classroom practice. Did the National College of Education program prepare you to be a teacher of equity, inquiry, and culturally responsive? If yes please give specifics.	Explain what inquiry means to you and discuss how you include this into your classroom practice. Did the National College of Education program prepare you to be a teacher of equity, inquiry, and culturally responsive? If yes please give specifics.	Explain what culturally responsive pedagogy means to you and discuss how you include this into your classroom practice. Did the National College of Education program prepare you to be a teacher of equity, inquiry, and culturally responsive? If yes please give specifics.
Focus Group (Knowledge)	Focus Group Q #1 *Explain what "social justice" means to you.*	Focus Group Q#3 *How do you teach for social justice?*	Focus Group Q #4 *What instructional strategies and materials do you*

	Equity	Inquiry	Culturally Responsive Pedagogy
	Focus GroupQ#2 *What does it mean to teach for social justice?* Focus Group Q #6 *How did the coursework and field experiences in the undergraduate program at NLU prepare you to teach for equity, inquiry, and culturally responsive pedagogy?*	Focus Group Q #6 *How did the coursework and field experiences in the undergraduate program at NLU prepare you to teach for equity, inquiry, and culturally responsive pedagogy?*	*embed in the curriculum to teach for social justice?* Focus Group Q #6 *How did the coursework and field experiences in the undergraduate program at NLU prepare you to teach for equity, inquiry, and culturally responsive pedagogy?*

CHAPTER FOUR

Results

The purpose of teacher education is to create caring, reflective professionals who are committed to building a democratic, multicultural society that enhances economic equity and cultural pluralism.

--Earl Bradford Smith

This research study focused on the ways in which a teacher education program influenced its teacher candidates' understanding and implementation of culturally responsive pedagogy (CRP) in their own classrooms. The undergraduate program studied purposefully embedded topics of equity, inquiry, and CRP into all elementary education courses and required pre-service teachers to have field experiences in diverse/high-needs schools. The redesigned components of this program were chosen based on education research, the TQE grant requirements, and the philosophical beliefs of the undergraduate faculty. These components addressed how teacher education programs need to educate highly-qualified teachers for culturally diverse populations. Cochran-Smith, Davis and Fries (2003) found a common theme among theorists and researchers is the call to integrate multicultural education within the entire program rather than in stand-alone courses. The recommendations of Gay (2002), Ladson-Billings (1999), and Sleeter (1996) for preparing teachers for cultural diversity are that teacher education programs need to infuse strategies on how to view and analyze multiple perspectives and inquiry-based approaches. When NLU's undergraduate teacher education program was redesigned, faculty took into account the findings of current research on preparing teachers to be culturally responsive. What has remained unanswered, however, has been how effective this purposefully-designed a program has been at preparing teachers to be

culturally responsive. More specifically, this study attempts to determine in what ways, if any, the NCE teacher education program influenced its teacher candidates' understanding and implementation of culturally responsive pedagogy in their own classroom.

This study reconnected with the alumni of cohorts under the 2001 Teacher Quality Education Grant redesigned program in order to determine if these purposeful changes in the curriculum and field placements influenced them to be teachers for social justice by using culturally responsive pedagogy with their students. If the program redesign did not have the desired outcome, the data could be used to recommend changes in the current undergraduate program.

After the data collection and analysis, the complex nature of the question necessitated splitting split the results into two separate but related pieces: understanding and implementation. While the first (what do the participants understand in regards to equity, inquiry, and culturally responsive pedagogy?) focuses on theory, the second (how was participants' understanding implemented and enacted in their classrooms) relates to practice. The relationship of the two pieces was be further explored through an analysis of how the undergraduate elementary teacher education program theory and practice were influenced.

Understanding

A number of important themes emerged from the data with regards to the teachers' conceptual understanding of teaching for social justice, culturally responsive pedagogy, and equity, and the strategies of implementing these concepts in the classrooms. These themes include an emphasis on differentiation and meeting the needs

of all students; student voice and choice; the need to create a safe, supportive, caring, and nurturing learning environment.

Information gathered from the survey and focus groups reported great confusion about the proper definition of equity, social justice and CRP. For many teachers, these terms were interchangeable, meaning essentially "treat students fairly." A few differentiated between the concepts of fair and equal, with one stating, "Fair does not equal the same." However, as the teachers described how equity, culturally responsive pedagogy, and social justice were enacted in their classrooms, they cited instances of, "making accommodations, meeting the students level, increase [sic] motivation and interest and help [sic] students succeed," and, "allowing students to share their items and knowledge of their cultures with our class." These comments indicate that the teachers implemented the practice of cultural responsiveness without properly understanding the deeper components of the theory.

The survey served as the primary source of information on the participants' knowledge and understanding of the terms equity, inquiry, and culturally responsive pedagogy. The questions on the survey (see Appendix D) that addressed this part asked participants to explain, in their own words, what equity, inquiry, and culturally responsive pedagogy means to them and discuss how they imbed this in their classroom practice. The relevant focus group question (Appendix E) similarly asked the participants to provide their knowledge and understanding of social justice and how they incorporated into their own practice. The information gathered from the surveys shows a wide range of knowledge. The responses to the questions ranged from non-responses (such as "I don't know" or leaving the space blank) to those indicating a fairly complete understanding

with attempts at specific classroom examples. Six of the 14 participants demonstrated some understanding of the terms and four gave examples incorporate them into their classrooms. These numbers were representative of the larger sample of 53 surveys that were originally returned which indicated that the participants had acquired a very basic understanding of the terms, but overall still confused them. When defining equity and culturally responsive pedagogy, the following terms appeared repeatedly: modifications, accommodations, equality, cultural awareness, and respect for differing ideas and cultures. Their answers indicate a superficial understanding and a misunderstanding of the concepts, because the terms were used interchangeably without a clear differentiation between the concepts.

Furthermore, the participants' examples of their implementation of the ideas in their classrooms also showed that a lack of clarity about how to create classrooms and expand their curriculum beyond what Banks (2002) identifies as the "the heroes and holidays" stage. For example, one middle-school teacher explained, "There are not a great variety of cultures in my classroom. But I have five or six students that practice their heritage outside of school, but nothing is brought inside." This teacher acknowledged other cultures, but lacked either willingness or an ability to incorporate outside experiences into classroom experiences. Another teacher stated, "I talk about different holidays (Kwanzaa, Hanukkah) and want my students to know that their families and cultures are important to me." Again, while acknowledging the importance of cultural diversity, this teacher does not go beyond superficial "coverage" of the students' cultural experiences. Another teacher stated, "I try to include all types of cultures into my classroom. My textbook shows all different cultures and that is nice."

Such comments also seem to reduce culturally responsive teaching to allowing the students to share, rather than acknowledging the responsibility of teachers to expand the curriculum and to embed students' cultures and experiences into all aspects of the learning environment. This again clearly indicates a shallow understanding of the concepts and shallow implementation of the basic theory.

Data from the focus groups provides a second source for participants' understanding of social justice, how it can be implemented, as well as barriers which make teaching for social justice difficult. Again, common themes emerged from the three focus groups. First, participants recognized how much past experiences in their lives impact their viewpoint. In order to teach for social justice they said they needed to move outside their own experiences and learn about others. Second, their responses exhibited a need for empathy and to keep different perspectives in mind. In discussing how social justice looks in their classrooms, "Fair is not equal" was a common theme. Third, participants felt that teachers who teach for social justice are the voice for the voiceless, stand up for students, give students choice and ownership, engage parents, and have open discussions about world issues. Teachers for social justice, according to focus group participants teach from different viewpoints, explore all sides of the issues and include perspectives of the underrepresented. Participants also noted that in schools, children need to hear the counter narrative, be critical thinkers and be allowed to inquire and problem solve.

Even as the focus groups all indicated that teachers should strive for social justice in the classroom, they recognized some of the barriers in place that prevent a culturally responsive environment in the classroom. All three groups identified a lack of

collaboration with parents as a major obstacle. Some teachers believed that some parents did not want their children to evolve beyond their ideals and values. Such parents did not, according to the teachers, want their children to learn multiple perspectives, because they might question their own family ideologies.

Additional barriers identified by the groups focused on others outside of the classroom. All three groups identified standardized testing and state standards as a barrier. Participants reported that they believed state standards and tests were written by middle-class, white males that don't value diversity or cultural relativism. In addition, teachers saw the achievement gap issues as actually a resource gap issue. New textbooks that were being published are starting to include topics of diversity, but many districts that house diverse population of students do not have the money or resources to attain these books or materials. The final barrier, unclear expectations of the administrators on the topic of social justice, was also a common theme among the three focus groups. Many administrators reportedly do not take a stand because they are afraid to upset the parent population.

Implementation

So far the findings that have been presented in this chapter have dealt with the participants' responses to specific questions on the survey and focus groups. Their responses provided valuable insight into their understanding of equity, inquiry, culturally responsive pedagogy and teaching for social justice. The next portion of data that will be discussed was gathered by the observations in the classroom. These findings address the second part of my question, that of implementation. That is, whether the participants' put their knowledge and understanding of equity, inquiry, and culturally responsive pedagogy

acquired during their undergraduate teacher education program into practice by embedding it into their everyday teaching.

The final piece of data collected was the notes taken during the classroom observations. Fourteen observations were considered for this research section of analysis. These are representative of the larger data set. The observations consisted of spending a half-day in each classroom with the participant. Each observation was conducted using a data form (see Appendix C) mirroring Gay's (2000) eight attributes of culturally responsive classrooms: high expectations, parent involvement, making adaptations, learning environment, curriculum, assessment, student voice, and inquiry, discovery, student experiences. After completing the observations, I realized that the teachers' implementation of attribute fell onto a broad spectrum. In order to better understand and analyze the data, I created a continuum of evidence for each attribute ranging from no evidence of implementation found to significant levels of implementation (see Appendix F).

Teachers' Expectations Academically and Personally

In the area of expectations, the range of the continuum was from the teacher having no or minimal expectations for the students to succeed to the highest level of teachers expecting all students to succeed and learn by exploring and discovery. The majority of teachers I observed had established a classroom environment that expected all students to succeed. Twelve of the participants seemed to expect all of their students to succeed. This was demonstrated by clear routines and expectations of student involvement in lessons. For example, if a student had not brought all of their materials to contribute to the lesson, additional materials were provided and the student was expected

to actively engage and contribute. Six of the twelve went beyond just expecting their students to succeed and created an atmosphere of inquiry and pushing their students out of their comfort zone to take chances. One teacher illustrated this by encouraging active and self-directed learning. The students were held accountable for their learning by requiring ongoing self-assessment and reflection on their work, attitudes, and contributions to the classroom. In this particular classroom, no students were allowed to "check-out."

During the pre- and post-observation conferences, a few teachers indicated that they expected all their students to succeed. Nevertheless, during my own observations I noticed that these teachers rarely allowed students enough time to solve the problems themselves. As a result, these teachers prematurely led the students to the correct answers because of time constraints on their lesson plan. Nevertheless, most teachers had high expectations for their students and allowed them enough time to solve problems on their own.

Parent Involvement

Parent involvement in the school community and their child's learning is the next attribute that was observed. Data for this attribute was obtained through the pre- and post observation conferences and newsletters and other communication media used to stimulate parent involvement. The range of the continuum that was created from this data starts with very little parent communication to the other extreme that all parents are part of the classroom community with open communication between parents/teacher/students.

The majority of teachers had established a system of ongoing communication with parents. The remaining teachers seemed to establish this relationship with all the

parents overcoming any barriers that might be in place. For example, one teacher who was aware that many homes did not have access to the internet, instead relied on a daily communication journal between the parents and the teacher. This process was modeled during the open house and, because this particular teacher was bi-lingual, was written in both Spanish and English to accommodate language barriers.

A common theme that emerged was how the language barrier and lack of support affected parent-teacher communication. The type of bilingual communication the one teacher used was possible only for teachers who were themselves bilingual or who had access to support from additional language resources. Many teachers expressed that they had to find their own resources to translate communication home to their parents. They explained that while the schools did provide translations of general school information, they provided little resources for the individual teachers to send their classroom communication home in multiple languages. The teachers appeared frustrated by this lack of support from the administration.

Understanding that families have a profound impact on children's cognitive, social, and emotional development (Benson & Martin, 2003), the teachers realized that the parents who needed this information in their own language were likely frustrated and likely led to parents feeling isolated and prevented from support their children in school. Participants realized that it was equally important to work with the students and their families knowing that students' development and academic progress were affected by the beliefs and practices of the teachers and administrators (Protheroe, Shellard, & Turner, 2003).

Adaptations to Meet the Needs of All Students

The data collected for this attribute on adaptations was influenced by what structures had been established within the schools in terms of special education support. There are two distinct systems established in most public schools: push-in or pull-out. In a push-in system, special education resource personal come into the general education classroom and support students assigned an individual education plan (IEP). The push-in system does not require the resource person be in the classroom all day, only for particular subjects. With the push-in system the teachers and the resource personnel are expected to collaborate to support the students. In the pull-out system, however, students leave the classroom for a portion of the day to receive additional support outside of the general education classroom. They are only pulled out for the particular subjects and services that their IEP requires.

When creating the continuum for this attribute, I considered the systems utilized in the schools. The continuum that was created began with no adaptations made by the classroom teacher regardless of system, then moved to where teacher made little or some adaptations in a pull-out system, moved to a collaborative working relationship with the resource personnel and ended with teachers making additional adaptations to meet the needs of all the students in the classroom. The range of what teachers did to make adaptations for their students was slightly more distributed across this continuum. While some teachers made very little adaptations with the pull-out system, a substantial number did make adaptations with it. The push-in system seemed to be most conducive for the classroom teacher making adaptations for the special education students and the rest of the students in the classroom. The teachers expressed that they favored the push in

system over the pull out system because it supported the children in their own classroom environment. Taking students out of the classroom for support creates a disjointed learning environment that frustrated the teachers and the students.

Positive and Supportive Learning Environment

For the attribute of creating a positive and supportive learning environment, the continuum ranged from an environment of not welcoming students to the highest potential where the classroom was a community of learners, safe and open to all types of diversity. Over half of teachers fell on the upper end of the continuum. That is, my observations led me to conclude that teachers had created a classroom environment in which students understood the classroom was their community and felt safe to ask questions, take chances, and be who they really were. For example, these classrooms contained many resources on the walls and desks to allow the students to act independently. They contained a variety of technology available to the students to support independent learning. In these classrooms I also noticed an atmosphere of acceptance demonstrated by a lack of conflict and a general sense of students working together rather than competing against each other. I witnessed several teachers actively promoting diversity by introducing the "hard conversations" such as bullying and religious diversity which are challenging, yet necessary, to address if one desires a culturally responsive learning environment.

The remaining teachers whose classrooms I felt fell on the middle to lower end of the continuum did create a welcoming environment, but I found no evidence of embracing diversity. In such cases, I did not observe any instances of this during the time I was present in their classrooms and the teachers did not mention any specific instances

of incorporating diversity into their classroom environment during the pre- and post-observation conferences.

Curriculum-Embedded Diversity Resources

During the observation and conferences with the participants about curriculum, I focused on how the teachers embedded diversity resources into the current trend of having a highly prescribed curriculum. Not surprisingly, it was rare to see a classroom in which issues of diversity were evident in the everyday lessons of the classroom. Most of the teachers admitted that they only sometimes brought in additional topics. However, these were "added onto" the existing curriculum, rather than embedded within it.

Interestingly, years of teaching experience seemed to affect their ability to adapt curriculum. Those teachers who made significant curriculum adaptations had three to five years of teaching experience. The data collected in this attribute indicates that teaching experience was a factor for the teachers to move beyond the prescribed curriculum and bring the true art of creative teaching into their classroom.

Assessments

The data collected in the assessment attribute was acquired mainly by the discussions I had with the teachers. During the observations I did notice some of the teachers using various types of formative assessments such as white boards, question and answer sessions, think-pair-share, and exit slips. The true picture of their use of assessment and their philosophy was provided through our pre- and post-observation conferences. The range of this continuum was the teacher only using very traditional assessments, such as quizzes and tests for a summative purpose to the teacher using a

various forms of assessments (e.g. traditional, authentic, formative, and summative) and using the data collected from their assessments to drive the instruction.

In this attribute of assessment, the years of experience also affected how the teachers were assessing their students. The majority of teachers of teachers with more years of teaching experience used traditional assessments (worksheets, quizzes and tests) and incorporated authentic assessments (portfolios, journals, exit slips, rubrics, projects, presentations). These teachers also incorporated formative and summative assessment throughout the school day and used the data collected from all the assessment to drive their instruction.

Student Voice

The data collected for the student voice attribute focused on whether students were allowed to share their own experiences and if their ideas were valued in the classroom. In order for a classroom to have equity, inquiry, and be culturally responsive, student voice is a key element. The classroom environment that needs to be established has to be a community of learners that is open to the multiple perspectives that the children bring to the room. The range of this continuum began with students having no voice to the highest level of the continuum in which the classroom was a community of learners where students felt safe to take initiative by asking questions or offering up their opinion about a topic. The important component of this is that student contribution was in fact valued.

Importantly, I found no evidence of teachers at the lowest level of the continuum. However, as in the closely related attribute of "positive and supportive learning environments," over half of the participants had established a classroom environment that

allowed students to be whom they were and in which the diversity of each student was honored and valued. The examples I witnessed ranged from classrooms in which students chose classroom learning stations or promoted group work and interaction between the students, to classrooms that encouraged robust conversations on topics that asked students to give their opinions and perspectives. Specific examples of how the participants provided an atmosphere for their students to have voice and choice included students choosing their own topics during literacy and social studies and during math classes students making up their own math story problems and the teacher using them during the lesson. The large portion of teachers who had established an environment that was open to multiple perspectives and which embraced the children's diversity is a positive indicator for the undergraduate teacher education program.

Inquiry, Discovery, and Student Experiences

This last attribute of CRP is linked to the previous attribute of student voice. If the classroom environment did not value student's having a voice, then it would not be possible for the pedagogy of inquiry and discovery to be practiced. As a result, the continuum created for this attribute ranged from an exclusively teacher-directed classroom to one in which inquiry was evident most of the time, students were allowed to discover their own answers, and student individual experiences were valued. Because the majority of these teachers established a classroom that allowed student voice, the portion of teachers who promoted inquiry, discovery, and valued student experiences were comparable to the previous attribute. Again, more than half of 14 teachers analyzed, which is a comparable sample of the larger 37 observed, established classrooms which

had their students using inquiry, problem solving, and being engaged in learning at the medium to highest levels on the continuum.

Students were also allowed to have an option of choice. The teachers either allowed students to pick their own topics to research or discuss what students wanted to learn and different ways to acquire the knowledge. In these classrooms students were excited about what they were learning because they were involved in the decision making process about their own learning. Students in these classrooms worked well together in groups, supported each other, and complimented each other for their accomplishments. Students worked independently using the resources in the classroom and each other. The teachers served as facilitators in these classrooms and effectively sustained an atmosphere of discovery, inquiry, and experimentation.

The Program: Understanding and Implementation

The last area of this research study is how the components of the teacher education program contributed to the understanding and implementation of teaching for social justice. The survey questions asked participants to recall their coursework and field placements during their elementary education teacher education program (Appendix D). In addition, both the survey and the focus group questions asked: "Did the National College of Education Teacher Education Program prepare you to be a teacher of equity, inquiry, and culturally responsive pedagogy?" The data collected from these sources were used to determine which structures of the program influenced the teachers.

Program Components

When asked to recollect about the specific program structures that influenced their understanding and implementation of a CRP, the teachers identified the following

structural elements: the cohort model, faculty, embedded topics/integrated coursework, and field placements. I will discuss each of these when I conclude this chapter and answer my research question: In what ways, if any, did the teacher education program influence its' teacher education candidates understanding and implementation of culturally responsive pedagogy?

       Understanding. The structure of the seminar course that was linked with the field experiences provided the teacher candidates the greatest exposure to the theory of CRP. These courses required students to constantly reflect on the readings in relation to their observations in the K-8 classrooms. The seminar design helped the teacher candidate understand the theory and simultaneously develop their own theories about teaching and learning. In the elementary education courses the participants recalled working in small groups and learning from each others' experiences views and ideas. For example, students shared

- "I loved the format of the coursework as student-centered versus lecture. They just didn't tell you how to do it; they modeled it all the time," and

- "The educational experience I had at NLU was excellent and what I learned is reflected in my current teaching style."

The integrated and related coursework and topics were another influential element of the program. Another participant stated,

> The biggest influence in my teaching was the knowledge I gained by taking the courses that were focused on teaching diverse learners or teaching students in poverty. No matter what school I have gone to, these strategies have shaped the way I teach all students.

Smith (2009) emphasizes the importance of understanding how to work with all students in varied situations:

> Teachers need to acquire knowledge and skills that maximize the opportunities diversity offers and minimize its challenges. Teacher education programs should help teachers attain the knowledge and behaviors needed to work effectively with students from diverse groups, as well as help students from mainstream groups develop cross-cultural knowledge, values and competence (p. 45).

An additional theme that coincides with the pedagogy of the teacher education program was the importance of self-examination and self-reflection. Many responses to the question on coursework addressed how the instructors stressed teacher candidates' engagement in self-reflection so that they would know who they were and what they believed. Responses included:

- "The program encouraged me to be reflective and I have continued to reflect on my own teaching currently. The program required a reflective teacher and a life- long learner;" and

- "The program stressed I focus on my own philosophy and set goals based on it."

The participants' responses on the survey also acknowledge the importance of self-reflection. Participants noted not only that they continued this practice, but that it helped them to focus on what is good for all children. Sparks (1994) states that "when teachers are given the responsibility of teaching students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, their attitudes must reflect an appreciation of the culture, linguistic and social characteristics of each of their students" (p. 35).

The undergraduate program emphasized the self-reflection processes of teacher's knowing who they were. This began with encouraging them to understand their backgrounds and then move forward a self-reflective process that enabled them to know their students. One participant stated,

> National Louis definitely introduced me to the concepts of equity, inquiry, and culturally responsive pedagogy. I never had reflected or was aware of my beliefs and/or thinking about these topics. I am now aware and intentional as a teacher in applying the philosophies in these topics.

According to Zeichner & Liston (1987) teachers are self-reflective when they make independent decisions, lead in both curriculum development and implementation, and are actively involved in social and moral issues. While each of these examples connects to coursework and understanding of ideas, participants most often referred to the instructional delivery model rather than the theories and knowledge they encountered. This seems to confirm the concerns noted earlier that graduates of the program were confused and/or had a weak understanding of the conceptual and theoretical underpinnings of CRP. This is an obvious program weakness.

Implementation: To identify program structures which influenced teacher's implementations of CRP, I will use Gay's (2000) attributes of a culturally responsive classroom to analyze the specific structures teachers referenced.

The cohort model provided the overarching structure in which all the other components existed. The teachers cited the "small size" of the cohorts, and the "resources shared by members of the cohort," as being two major benefits of the model itself. NLU designed the program using a cohort model both to facilitate a strong learning community

and as way of allowing coursework integration. Because education courses were taught by one of three instructors and each faculty member embraced a constructivist pedagogy, the cohort model created a team-teaching environment and thus further supported the cohesion of teaching strategies. Therefore, students were able to see consistent modeling of "best practices" throughout their coursework and seminars. (See Appendix A)

Many participants responded positively to the structure of the courses and expressed their appreciation for the collaborative approach used in the courses. They noted the instructors modeled how to learn by sharing ideas and listening to the ideas of others. This collaborative approach to teaching and learning impacted the way these participants are teaching in their own classrooms today. Small group activities in the cohort had a lasting impression on the teachers which continued on in their classrooms. One participant explained

> The small group cooperative learning (which we were exposed to in most of our courses) was an enjoyable experience. This has influenced the way that I teach because I allow students to work together towards a common goal in small groups or partners, much like my cohort did at NLU.

Teachers also mentioned sharing ideas and hearing multiple perspectives in their NLU courses and then discussing and being allowed to voice opinions that ran counter to what was being presented. One participant shared

> I strongly believe these courses influenced me as a teacher. They taught me to think more "outside the box." The seminar allowed me to relate to others. I was able to not only build off of my own experiences, but those of others, both positive and negative.

The structure of the cohort and instructional strategies modeled by university faculty clearly impacted how the teachers taught and related to students in their own classroom. The survey responses about their understandings of course structure and instructional strategies corresponded to the findings from the observations. In particular, both the surveys and the observation notes indicated that the attributes of positive learning environment, student voice and inquiry, discovery and student experiences that were transferred into their own classroom were experienced in and learned from their NLU coursework.

Only a few surveys indicated that participants believed they had learned all they needed to know about teaching in their field placements. These teachers valued the field placements over the coursework. One teacher indicated that even though she felt the coursework was helpful, she really learned most of her teaching from the principal and district once she received a teaching job. However, the number of surveys that reflected these ideas was minimal in both the sample (14 participants) and the larger data set (37 participants). The majority of responses indicated that the coursework did influence the way they teach. In particular, both survey responses and observations indicated that the topics and discussions were valuable and impacted the way they teach.

Modeling of instructional strategies by the faculty and supervisors was an important theme that emerged in my data analysis. Teacher responses included statements such as:

- "The topics, experiences, presentations and instructional strategies presented in the courses influenced the way I teach today;" and

- "The seminar structure, that allowed for presentations and discussions--I use presentations and discussions in my classroom also."

In the survey, participants were also asked to describe the two distinct field placements that were required in this program: Practicum II/III and Student Teaching. Practicum II/III field experience is an elementary classroom placement for twenty weeks, two full days a week. In this extensive field placement, teacher candidates planned and taught 30 lessons in the academic areas of math, science, reading, and social studies. This experience also has a supervisory component supported by the university. The student-teaching experience was a minimum of eleven weeks, five full days per week. As such, the student experiences were typical of student teaching placements in other programs.

The initial data collected determined that most participants believed they had two effective field placements based on the modeling of their cooperating teacher. When these teachers described their cooperating teacher, they used descriptors such as: facilitator, supportive, safe, caring, and a nurturing classroom environment. Participants described their cooperating teachers as good role models by recollecting that they differentiated, allowed their students to have choice, provided an atmosphere of inquiry, and encouraged higher level thinking skills through problem-solving.

Most respondents cited evidence of cooperating teachers having a well-managed classroom as evidence of effective teaching. Teachers characterized effective classroom management as being organized, creating structure, and having routines in place. The statement provided by the participants to describe effective teachers echoes the findings of educational researchers. Within teacher education it is widely acknowledged that qualities of effective teachers include effective organizational skills, a deep

understanding of the subject matter, strong communication skills, and familiarity with numerous pedagogical approaches.

> Nieto (2006), states that

> in order for teachers to be effective and have a positive influence on students who have been marginalized by their school experiences, the following qualities need to be also included in the above list: sense of mission, solidarity with and empathy for students, the courage to challenge mainstream knowledge and conventional wisdom, improvisation and a passion for social justice. (p. 464).

My analysis indicates that program graduates lack these last qualities. These qualities require a deeper understanding of multicultural education and social justice than I found in the students. Furthermore, evidencing each of these latter qualities requires students to act on that level of understanding and to move toward becoming agents of change. Although this was one of the program's goals, I did not find evidence of it being enacted in the classrooms I visited.

Participants also commented on the teachers in their field experiences, sharing such statements as:

- "The cooperating teacher held high expectations for all of her first graders. Her classroom was very well managed and the students knew what was expected. She did tons of modeling, scaffolding, conferencing, small group work, whole class work, partner work, etc.";

- "She had resources on the walls for the students to use, as well as things labeled in English and Spanish. This was not a bilingual classroom";

- "I was able to learn different ways to approach the students in ways that I may not have considered, such as giving some students more autonomy, with what they were learning by letting them look into a topic that they were very interested in instead of staying with a standard curriculum"; and

- "My cooperating teacher related well with her students, the teacher interacted with the students during the discussions and relating the materials to previous knowledge or their own experiences."

The modeling of the cooperating teachers also impacted what teachers put into practice. The statements made on the surveys about their cooperating teachers corresponded directly to what I observed in their classrooms. Again relating this data from the participants on the survey to the eight attributes identified in the observation notes, cooperating teachers influenced the participants not only in regards to positive learning environment, student voice, inquiry discovery student experiences but also adaptations and high expectations. The information provided on the survey about their field experiences also showed that the modeling of the cooperating teacher in the area of differentiation and setting high expectations impacted these teachers to continue this practice in their own classrooms.

The common thread that continually emerged was that the modeling and practice was the strongest component of teacher education program while the theory component was weaker. This conclusion is further supported when relating the data from the survey and the data on the observation notes. In particular, attributes such as curriculum, assessment and parent involvement that require a deeper theoretical understanding were

seldom mentioned on the survey. In addition, I gathered minimal information about these areas during my observations.

A number of teacher candidates in this program had one or more experiences in which they believe effective teaching was not modeled. In these situations, students characterized the cooperating teacher as not being welcoming to the teacher candidates, exhibiting a traditional (direct instruction) teaching style, not differentiating or engaging students in learning, using textbooks alone, and poorly managing their classroom. For example, students shared

- "I did not have a good field experience. My coop [sic] teacher and I had a difference of opinion. Her idea of classroom management was to yell more and louder."

- "I did not have a positive student teaching experience. The teacher did not want me to teach the class, and I felt like she really did not want me there. She didn't share materials or her experiences. It was very uncomfortable. I was on my own as far as planning and learning what to do as a teacher."

Modeling during field experiences has a powerful impact on how teacher candidates taught in their own classrooms. The majority of the teacher candidates from this program in the subset and larger data set had at least one good field experiences.

One of the challenges of placing pre-service students in diverse/high-needs schools is providing placements where students not only witness a high quality of teaching but see students of color being successful. If pre-service teachers fail to see quality teaching in these diverse/high-needs placements, it is likely to affirm students own beliefs about what students in high-needs schools are capable of. Zeichner (1992)

states that "good field placements offer prospective teachers an opportunity to challenge their apprenticeship of observation and obtain an informed experience of teaching students from diverse cultural backgrounds" (p. 301). Participants in this research study were all deliberately placed in high-needs schools. Darling-Hammond (2007) adds,

> But if student teachers do not witness high-quality teaching and success on the parts of students of color, such placements may merely reaffirm beliefs that these students cannot learn or that the status quo cannot be changed. Novices may see practices and possibilities through the narrow lens of their prior personal experience and prejudices and draw stereotypic conclusions shaped by assumptions of which they are unaware. (p. 224)

Obviously, the data from this study shows that all did not have high quality placements. Nevertheless, a majority did have placements that provided a learning environment that indicated that all children can learn and high expectations were set.

Not surprisingly, many of the students reported their field experiences as one of the most influential aspects of the program on their current teaching practices. One student commented,

> NLU and my practicums combined made me the teacher I am today. Enstilled [sic] in my brain are thoughts of embracing cultural differences—never label students, understanding that all students have different learning styles which is a must for all my lesson plans. And remember why you choose to be a teacher—it's all about the kids!

Ladson-Billings (1999) notes that students need to have the expertise of cooperating teachers to help novice teachers learn appropriate ways of teaching all students in order to

eliminate any preconceived notions they may have been based on race, class, gender, language, etc. A number of teachers in my study cited the modeling of best practices by their cooperating teacher within the field experiences as being highly influential. For example, one teacher noted that in his practicum,

> I was able to learn different ways to approach the students in ways that I may not have considered such as giving students more autonomy in what they were learning by letting them look into a topic that they were very interested in instead of staying with the standard curriculum.

Another teacher who was powerfully influenced by her cooperating teacher explained,

> I was in a *very* low economic status school that had a very diverse student population. I had a lot of experience seeing my cooperating teacher teach to accommodate the different cultures in the class. I also saw a lot of differentiation due to the large class size and diverse learners. [*participant's emphasis*]

This data suggest, therefore, that the structure of the program itself was not the most influential. Instead, what had the greatest impact on the teachers were the instructional practices of the university professors and the cooperating teachers in the schools that they saw being modeled throughout their program. This confirms Darling-Hammond's (2007) contention that

> although it is important to have well-chosen courses that include core knowledge for teaching, it is equally important to organize prospective teachers' experiences so they can integrate and use their knowledge skillfully in the classroom. (p. 97)

This is not meant to downplay the importance of each of the program structures. Instead, it indicates that that their importance lies in their ability to facilitate modeling of a CRP

by university faculty, school district mentors, cooperating teachers, and the students themselves. Clearly, these role models and the practices they exhibited have had the greatest influence on the teachers and their classroom practice.

Among all of the pertinent information and resources gathered in this study, nothing provided more clarity and substance than NCE's graduates in the field voicing their own experiences and insights. The input and data participants directly provided for this research opened up a doorway to a deeper understanding of the impact that this undergraduate teacher education program has had. Observational data reinforced the participants own experience and indicated that the teachers were implementing most of Gay's (2002) attributes a culturally responsive classroom. Nevertheless, when asked on the surveys and in the focus groups to explain their understanding of the terms and concepts, participants showed minimal comprehension. Such lack of understanding seems to have contributed to the disconnect between theory and the practice.

Based on the graduates' apparent superficial understanding of the theory underpinning CRP, the teachers seem to have constructed the following characteristics for a good teacher for culturally and economically diverse students:

- Creates a safe, supporting, nurturing learning environment that is structured, democratic, and student-centered;

- Meets the needs of all students by differentiating, respecting and encouraging students to share their cultural diversity and experiences;

- Treats all students fairly; and

- Holds high expectations for all students.

When reflecting on this list of characteristics, I am encouraged because the teacher's list does reflect the characteristics described in the literature of a culturally responsive teacher (Gay, 2002). In addition, in my observations, I did see examples of these characteristics modeled by the majority of the teachers in their classrooms.

Nevertheless, I am left with the question, "what is the importance of theory to practice?" That is, "If teachers can practice CRP without fully understanding its theoretical underpinning, how necessary is a deep understanding of the theory behind the practice?" I will explore these areas in greater depth in chapter five.

Significant Findings

This research study sought to answer the following question: in what ways, if any, did the teacher education program influence its teacher candidates' understanding and implementation of culturally responsive pedagogy in their own classrooms? We can answer this by summarizing the significant findings discussed in the chapter. In particular, the study indicates that the program produces teachers who

- have a weak understanding of the theory underlying CRP;

- have a limited knowledge of the terms related to CRP (i.e. social justice, equity, inquiry);

- confuse or see the terms related to CRP as synonymous with differentiation, meeting the needs of all learners, and multiple intelligences; and

- are effective teachers who implement CRP well.

Nevertheless, despite nearly half of the teachers have taken additional coursework after graduating or earned a masters degree, the understanding of why they do what they do appears to be weak and/or lacking. The overarching significant finding is related to

practice. Throughout the data analysis it has become clear that there were specific structures apparent in the program that supported and modeled the practical aspects of CRP. It is these practices that these teacher candidates took into their own classrooms.

In answering my research question, "In what ways, if any, did NCE's teacher education program influence its teacher candidates' understanding and implementation of culturally responsive pedagogy?" my overall reactions to the findings are mixed. On the one hand, I am heartened that the teachers have been positively impacted by the program and are practicing instructional strategies that we sought to teach them. On the other hand, I believe that their lack of theoretical understanding will ultimately hinder their ability to become change agents and leaders in their profession. Moreover, I believe this weakness will prevent them from embodying Nieto's (2006) essential characteristics of culturally responsive teachers such as "a sense of mission, solidarity with and empathy for students, the courage to challenge mainstream knowledge and conventional wisdom, and improvisation and a passion for social justice" (p. 464). I will explore the implications of these findings in my final chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE

Conclusion

The most extraordinary thing about a really good teacher is that he or she transcends accepted educational methods

--Margaret Mead, 1963

The vision guiding the Teacher Quality Education (TQE) grant and the National College of Education's (NCE) teacher education program at National Louis University was to effectively educate and prepare its teacher candidates to become highly qualified teachers who were able to meet the needs of a diverse student population. In this chapter I discuss program areas that should be celebrated and built upon, items that were surprising, and features which require improvement. The aspects identified are relevant not merely to this particular teacher education program but also to the larger field of teacher education, specifically programs committed to preparing teachers to teach for social justice. Finally, I conclude with some unanswered questions which merit being addressed in future research studies.

Celebrations

This study discovered positive results that stemmed from the TQE grant and the teacher education program. The results indicated that many of the students who graduated during the grant currently integrate many culturally responsive ideals in their classroom. Many of the alumni chose to teach in high-needs schools and showed a commitment to their students as teachers who are committed to social justice. Classroom observation indicated that most teacher practices were modeled after those of highly-qualified teachers, including setting high expectations for all students. The participants in the study showed through their teaching and in our conversations that they are striving to be

teachers of equity. These results that were observed in the classrooms confirmed the survey evidence. The teacher education program provided some theory, but the emphasis was on the modeling of best practices in terms of instructional strategies and course assignments that did transfer to these teachers' classrooms. Overall the teachers in this study are highly-effective, culturally responsive teachers in their own classrooms.

Another very positive, but unexpected, aspect of the study was the willingness of our alumni to participate in this study. I was overwhelmed by the number of teachers who wanted me to come to see them teach. In addition to the 37 teachers whom I observed, some 10-12 other teachers expressed their willingness and interest in such an experience. (I was not able observe them because of time constraints). Observing these teachers proved to be a great experience for all of us. In addition to being honored that a professor wanted to observe them teach in their own classroom, teachers were excited to show off their classrooms and share their accomplishments since graduating from the program. This excitement was definitely reciprocal; I too was interested to see not only the impact the program had had on these educators, but the results of my own teaching. Reconnecting with alumni from a teacher education program by observing them in their classrooms provides an excellent way to evaluate a program.

One unexpected benefit of the establishment of positive relationships with alumni of the NCE he teacher education program will be in finding future field placements in culturally responsive classrooms. As previously discussed, because of the importance of excellent field placements in diverse settings, the NCE's teacher education program strives to provide the best field experience. These teachers are in diverse settings,

understand our program, and embrace our philosophy. Therefore, this is likely to become a great avenue for cultivating future field placements for the current students.

Even though conducting this study was a very positive experience and provided important information, the observations themselves were very time-consuming. As a result, in order to continue this valuable practice, university personnel need to be given either release time or have time counted towards teaching load.

Improvements in the Program

When those involved with the undergraduate elementary teacher education program learned about the findings from this study, those involved immediately began examining the issues brought to light through this study. With this newfound knowledge, the faculty developed purposeful assignments to enable teacher candidates to develop a deeper understanding and a practical application of what it is to be teachers for social justice. After all the evidence was gathered and analyzed it became clear that teacher candidates need to acquire a deeper understanding of culturally responsive pedagogy during their university program. In addition, as professional educators, they must focus on curriculum, assessment of student learning, and parent involvement.

The program has already begun to address some of these areas. By addressing the issue of teacher candidates understanding what it means to be culturally responsive teachers for social justice, the program has adopted some common assignments. These include a teacher candidate cultural autobiography, and context of the classrooms and school community write-up. The cultural autobiography engages teacher candidates critically in thinking about classroom content from the standpoint of their own knowledge and the events and experiences that comprise their living history (Freire, 1971). Both of

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these assignments address what Darling-Hammond (2000) suggests is necessary for candidates and teachers to understand about their own identity in order to become culturally responsive teachers. The context papers, which are completed during each field placement, ensure teacher candidates have multiple opportunities to understand the various contexts in which schools are situated. In addition this assignment helps teacher candidates develop skills in modifying their knowledge and teaching by paying attention to classroom context and to individual students' needs and experiences (Irvine & Armento, 2001).

Teacher candidates complete an analysis of student work to drive instruction assignment to address the area of assessment of student learning. Similar to the unit assessment discussed in Jennings and Smith (2002), teacher candidates analyze their lesson plans and the resulting student work from the lessons they teach in their field experiences. Done at various benchmarks throughout the program, this assignment gives teacher candidates multiple points of access for discussing content and context of instruction, their expectations of students, and their effectiveness in providing equitable access to success for students. The program also incorporated a teacher work sample as the capstone project that brings the context of the classroom, assessments, and their teaching together during student teaching. Even though the program has begun to address the findings of this study, there are still additional areas to work on and improve.

In fall 2010, the NCE elementary teacher education program was awarded a Teacher Quality Partnership grant (TQP). The TQP grant is designed to provide data show that teacher education programs can attract and retain teachers from underrepresented minority populations, as well as have a positive impact on the

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preparation of highly effective teachers for high-needs/diverse classrooms. This grant also addresses the issue that teachers often lack sufficient content knowledge in math, science and literacy. Therefore, this undergraduate elementary education program is undergoing another redesign that will look carefully at teacher candidate acquisition of content knowledge as well as their preparedness to support high achievement in largely minority and economically-challenged classrooms in Chicago public schools.

The initial cohort model was incorporated during the last grant, but many changes are underway including the transition from a two year to a four year program. Our first TQP cohort, which began in fall 2010, had significant demographic differences from the cohorts studied under this model. Members of this new cohort are all first-generation college students, two-thirds of whom are Latino/a, and one-third African American.

In addition, the program was redesigned to address specifically what elementary teachers need to be effective educators in the diverse systems of the Chicago public schools. One of the major objectives of the grant is to reduce the achievement gap by increasing the content knowledge of teacher candidates in the areas of math, science, and literacy. As the lead faculty member on this grant, I have already used what I learned from this research to ensure that while we integrate more content in math, science and literacy, we also continue to teach our teacher candidates to be culturally responsive teachers for social justice. This is especially important as Feiman-Nemser (2001) points out, saying "What teachers know and can do makes the crucial difference in what teachers can accomplish. New courses, tests, curriculum reforms can be important

starting points, but they are meaningless if teachers cannot use them productively" (p.1013).

A unique feature of the instructional design of the content piece of the grant is that the additional content knowledge has pedagogy integrated into these content courses. These students will be learning the content of math, science and literacy to teach in elementary schools with a lens on how they will teach this to school children. This elementary education program is constantly evolving to become a teacher education program that will be able to set standards for a premier program.

Room for Improvement

Even after implementing common assignments in the program that continue to address culturally responsive pedagogy, and being involved in a TQP grant, there are still some major components of the program that need to be examined. Having a deep understanding of teaching for social justice is an area that still needs continued growth and professional development for undergraduate elementary education faculty. As a college of education and teacher education program which strives to have their graduates be change agents for school reform in schools, our teaching needs to improve especially in the area of educational theory for social justice. It needs to do so, however, without losing the robust elements we have incorporated in the area of modeling and practice.

The modeling of effective instructional strategies in our courses and the "often good" field experiences of our teacher candidates receive has had an impact on our teachers as seen in the results of my study. However, the statement –"often good" field experience is an issue. An important component that is lacking in our program is excellent field placements for all our teacher candidates. If the teacher candidates had

cooperating teachers who also had a deep understanding of culturally responsive

pedagogy and could guide and facilitate the theory and practice while they are in schools,

teacher candidates could make better connections and develop a deeper understanding

that would be grounded in their own teaching. Darling-Hammond (2007) supports the

notion that good field placements contribute immensely to effectiveness of the teacher

candidate when they enter the classroom.

> The success of field placements in developing knowledge for productive practice
>
> depends on the expertise of cooperating teachers or other professionals at the site,
>
> their capacity to explain what they are doing and why ,and the extent to which
>
> novices' perception can be elicited, analyzed, and extended. (p. 225)

NCE's teacher education program is striving to be transformative as it supports its

teacher candidates in becoming culturally responsive teachers for social justice. In

general terms transformation in teacher education describes how pre-service teachers

become practicing teachers (Romo &Chavez, 2006) and the language surrounding CRP.

Nieto (2000), meanwhile, uses transformation to describe the process of becoming a

culturally responsive teacher by stating, "Without this transformation of ourselves, any

attempts at developing a multicultural perspective will be shallow and superficial" (p.

338). Ladson-Billings (2006) wants prospective teachers to understand that CRP requires

transformative changes in ways of thinking and being.

Thus, the program needs to continue its work in improving in areas of curriculum

and assessment and parent involvement. However, when dealing with these individual

areas, it must remain focused on the larger vision of transforming teacher candidates to

be culturally responsive and teach for social justice. If the teacher education program is to

embrace CRP transformation as its goal while continuing to improve its curriculum, its

faculty must not lose sight of creating experiences to help our teacher candidates do what

Nieto (2000) describes as identity work as well as rethink their social, political and

historical knowledge.

Additional Research and Questions

After conducting my research and analyzing my data I discovered additional

questions that did surface during this study. In the area of candidates' dispositions, there

were several questions:

- Do the teacher candidates who are in this teacher education program already
  have beliefs and values that embrace CRP?

- Did these teacher candidates choose this teacher education purposefully
  because of our vision to teach for social justice?

- To what degree did this program impact the teacher candidate dispositions in
  the area of social justice?

NCE's conceptual framework states that our teacher candidates "will be advocates of

democratic values, equity, access and resources to assure educational success for all"

(National College of Education, n.d.). Because this is a central task of our teacher

education program, the area of dispositions is a crucial area that needs to be researched.

Pre-service preparation programs build on teacher candidate current thinking on

what teachers need to know, care about, and be able to do in order to promote student

learning. According to Feiman-Nemser (2001),

> the images and beliefs that prospective teachers bring to their preservice
>
> preparation serves as filters for making sense of the knowledge and experiences

they encounter. They may also function as barriers to change by limiting the ideas

that teacher education students are able and willing to entertain. (p. 1016)

Further, the students in these cohorts were recruited specifically to be a part of the grant,

which was first and foremost about working with high-needs students in high-needs

school. Thus, did the candidates choose our program because they were already "primed"

to accept a "social justice" agenda and to teach that way? Or did our program change

their thinking?

There is some evidence that we introduced them to new ideas, but because we did

not measure their thinking about social justice issues prior to starting their program, it's

not something that I can fully answer. However, I believe it's something that should be

done. Researching teacher candidates' dispositions before, during and after a teacher

education program is an important topic that is currently being discussed in colleges of

education, but little research has been conducted in this area.

An additional question that emerges from this study emerged from the focus

group participants' response to the question "what are some barriers to teach for social

justice?" As was indicated before, many responses to this question indicated that the

barriers to teach for social justice were the parents, curriculum, standardized test, and

administrators. Further research needs to respond to the question: How does the school

culture a teacher teaches in support or inhibit them from using a CRP and/or teaching for

social justice? This question is broad, so individual studies could be done in regards to

just the topic of parents, curriculum, standardized tests and the educational leaders in the

building or even at the district level. If NCE and this program are truly committed to

graduating change agents for school reform, we need to understand all the barriers in

place for our teacher candidates once they enter the profession. By doing so we can better prepare teachers to promote social justice in the schools by helping them to respond to those barriers—be it by overcoming them or working within their restraints.

The final major questions raised by this study encompass critical pedagogy and the larger social and political context. These questions are:

- During an era of high-stakes testing, accountability and resource reduction, how can a teacher education program support its teacher candidates during the program and after graduation to remain teachers for social justice?
- How does a teacher education program teach future teachers to balance the current structures in our schools without relinquishing their beliefs for social justice?

As a college of education committed to graduating change agents for social reform, this is no easy task. Therefore, NCE's elementary teacher education program needs to continue its own self-reflection and remain committed to educating future teachers with a deep understanding of culturally responsive pedagogy and the practical experiences necessary to incorporate this into a standard-based environment. Additionally, the teacher education program will need to move from the classroom environment and create teachers who are committed to changing school policy. If our graduates are to become change agents for school reform, then the program needs to include a focus on the social and political context of schools. After all, educators who promote social justice and quality education do not limit themselves to mere self-preservation.

Past and Present

Program graduates carry on NCE's longstanding tradition of teaching for social justice. Indeed the centrality of teaching for social justice to NCE's philosophy since its inception is evidenced in this excerpt from a speech given by Miss McDowell, an early graduate of the National Kindergarten College in 1923.

> We kindergartners must know the conditions under which the children live. We must know the father and the mother. We must know the economic condition of the home. We ought to have enough leisure to know the family life of every child we are dealing with, for only in knowing the child's home life can we really know the child. Then I think the kindergartner should know something about how to get better conditions for the children of the poor, know something of the conditions that those children will have to face when they go to work to help people change bad to good conditions in school and shop. Every little child is worth-while in our democracy and every little child, no matter what the color of his skin, is a little citizen who can make our country what it ought to be; for the hope or despair of our democracy lies very much within the cities of the nation. This is a very great responsibility we have on our hands. (qtd. in Harrison, 1930, p. 145)

These words are indicative of what National College of Education currently strives to accomplish as it continues to educate future elementary teachers. I believe an important aspect of this philosophy is maintaining a connection with graduates as they teach in our elementary schools. I see this as valuable and will attempt to remain connected with this group of students to continue these conversations to further develop their understanding culturally responsive teaching. During the focus groups, students also expressed an

appreciation for the opportunity to reconnect around these topics and expressed an interest in further opportunities to dialogue about their practice. By staying connected to alumni and following their progress as professionals the program has the incredible advantage of choosing only extraordinary teachers to pair with their teacher candidates.

Nevertheless, based on the observations, surveys and focus groups, it is clear that these alumni lack a sufficient depth of the theoretical and philosophical basis for a CRP that allows for informed dialogue and leads to large-scale advocacy that can transform schools, rather than just individual classrooms. Having conducted this research, I find myself positioned to advocate for change within NCE's elementary education program, especially in terms for of striking a better balance between instruction in the theory and practice of culturally responsive teaching and teaching for social justice.

I am fortunate to be in an academic environment that allows for "thinking outside of the box" in program development and change. The TQP grant gives added support in working for a significant the restructuring of the undergraduate elementary teacher education program. As I continue my journey as a teacher educator and an advocate of change, I do not want to lose sight that my overall objective for being a professional educator is to be an effective teacher to all students. This study provides me with the knowledge to explore and improve myself in the area of CRP and other endeavors.

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Appendix A: Undergraduate Elementary Education Professional Course Sequence

Junior/Senior Year

Course Title	Major Topics	Faculty
Practicum I Seminar/Field Experience	Diversity/Equity Lesson Planning Classroom Management Assessment School Law Portfolio	Cohort Instructional Leader
Professional Seminar	Professionalism Community of Learners District Needs/Demographic Parent Communication Poverty ELL/Special Ed	Cohort Instructional Leader and Adjunct District Faculty/ Mentor Coordinator
Intro to Technology in the Classroom	Digital Divide Ethical Issues Integration of Technology into lesson planning Technology and Education	University Faculty Technology Department
History and Philosophy of Education	History of Education Philosophies in Education Inequalities in Education Past and Present Gender Issues	Cohort Instructional Leader or Elementary Education Faculty Team Member
Middle School Overview Middle School Curriculum	Diversity Lesson Planning Differentiation Service Learning Bullying Curriculum Development	Cohort Instructional Leader or Elementary Education Faculty Team Member
Practicum II/III Seminar Field Experience (Continued) Practicum II/III Seminar Field Experience	Diversity/Equity Culturally Responsive Pedagogy Lesson Planning Assessment Classroom Management Parent Communication Problem Base Learning Critical Thinking/Inquiry Special Education Differentiation ELL Learners Equity Curriculum Technology Integration Portfolio	Elementary Education Faculty Cohort Team Member And Adjunct District Faculty/Mentor Coordinator Elementary Education Faculty Cohort Team Member And Adjunct District Faculty/Mentor Coordinator

Course Title	Major Topics	Faculty
Methods of Math, Science, Social Studies, Reading and Language Arts	Lesson Planning in Content Areas Curriculum Differentiation Assessment Unit Planning	Elementary Education Faculty Cohort Team Member And Adjunct District Faculty/Mentor Coordinator
Student Teaching Seminar/ Field Experience	Teaching for Social Justice Integrated Unit Portfolio Peer observation Video Analysis	Cohort Instructional Leader

Appendix B: Invitation Letter and Initial Data Form

Dear Fellow Students of Debbie O'Connor

I hope you remember me, I definitely remember you. I am excited to get in touch with all of my former students. This letter is being sent to you in order to ask for your help. I am currently in the Educational Leadership doctoral program at National-Louis University (NLU). My research study for my dissertation is to follow up with all my previous students. The purpose of my study is to gather information about the alumni of NLU and the implications of the ITEP grant.

While you attended National Louis University and studied to become a teacher, you were involved in a Teacher Quality Education grant called ITEP. During this time at NLU, data was collected on your perceptions and understandings of the teaching profession. Now that you have graduated and entered the profession, the elementary education program and I are interested in what you think about teaching profession now. I am very eager to see everyone again. I am also very excited about this research project because I was very involved in the ITEP grant and in your education at NLU and I would like to reconnect with all the alumni.

My research study will be collecting three forms of data:

- The first piece of my data collection is to visit you in your classroom for a whole day or half day and observe your teaching and your classroom environment. The notes I will take during this observation will be confidential and will not be shared with your administrator or be used for any evaluation process in your district. The results of the observation will be for my dissertation and no one's names will be used in the document.

- The second piece of my data collection is a survey; even the alumni that are not teaching at this time will be asked to complete the survey. The answers to the survey will be anonymous in my dissertation.

- The third piece of my data collection is to hold focus groups at the Elgin Campus to discuss the current teaching profession and you're prospective on this topic. The discussions during the focus group will also be anonymous in the dissertation.

I hope that you can participate is all three steps of my data collection, but I welcome your involvement at any level.

How can you get involved in this project? Fill out the second page of this mailing and fax it back to me as soon as possible (XXX-XXX-XXXX). As soon as I receive your paperwork I will contact you via e-mail to determine what the next steps will be.

I hope that everyone can help me with my research study. Even if you are not teaching at this time, I would still like to have your thoughts on my survey and in the focus groups.

If you are not able to help me out, please fill out the general information part of the form, so I can gather updated information.

Debbie O'Connor Assistant Professor
Fax# XXX-XXX-XXXX
e-mail xxxxxxxx@nl.edu

Reconnecting with National-Louis University Elementary Education Alumni

Please fax this form to Debbie O'Connor ASAP
Fax# XXX-XXX-XXXX   E-mail xxxxxxxx@nl.edu

Name_____

Address_____

_____

E-mail_____

Are you currently teaching: Yes   or   No

If yes please provide the following information

School _____

School address_____

School District_____

Grade Level/Subject Matter_____

Number of years of teaching experience_____

_____Yes - I will participate in the research study

_____Yes- I will allow you to observe me in my classroom

_____ Yes – I will complete the survey

Appendix C: Observation Notes

- Examples of how the teacher had high or low expectations academically and personally for each child

- Examples of a nurturing or absence of learning environment (e.g. families, peers, homework, and after school support)

- Examples of adaptations or lack of that match the needs of all the students

- Examples of a positive and supportive learning environment that is grounded in respect for culturally diverse population

- What type of curriculum is being used? What additional diversity resources supplement the curriculum not as an add-on but embedded?

- Types of assessments are used to meet the needs of all the students? If not what types of assessments are used?

- Examples of how student voice is heard or suppressed in the classroom

- Examples of how students inquire, experiment, and use their own experiences and culture to learn in the classroom.

Appendix D: Attitude Survey

Teaching profession and teacher education program

The purpose of this study is to reconnect with the alumni of National-Louis University undergraduate elementary education program and to determine if the outcomes of the ITEP grant were accomplished. All the data collected during this study will remain completely anonymous. Your candid response to these questions will be greatly appreciated. Please respond to the following questions based on your current knowledge and understanding.

Please fax the completed survey to Debbie O'Connor   Fax# XXX-XXX-XXXX

Name_____(Optional)

Part A: Educational/Teaching Information

Additional degree(s) attained after your Bachelor's degree

_____(Degree/ University)

Additional endorsement(s) attained after you graduated from NLU

_____(Endorsement/University)

_____(Endorsement/University)

If you currently have a teaching position – Reason(s) you got the job (check one or more)

_____You knew someone in the district

_____Your Middle School Endorsement

_____Your concentration (Math, Science, English, Social Studies)

_____Your student teaching experience

_____Your Practicum II/III experience

_____Other_____

Part B Teacher Multicultural Attitude Survey

Strongly Disagree=1;   Disagree=2;   Uncertain=3;   Agree=4;   Strongly Agree=5

I find teaching a culturally diverse group rewarding.   1 2 3 4 5

My teaching methods need to be adapted to meet the needs of a
culturally diverse student group.   1 2 3 4 5

Sometimes I think there is too much emphasis placed on
multicultural awareness.   1 2 3 4 5

Teachers have the responsibility to be aware of their students'
cultural backgrounds.   1 2 3 4 5

It is the teacher's responsibility to consistently communicate
and be welcoming to all the guardian(s) of their students   1 2 3 4 5

It is not the teacher's responsibility to encourage pride in one's
culture.   1 2 3 4 5

As classrooms become more culturally diverse, the teacher's
job becomes increasingly challenging.   1 2 3 4 5

I believe the teacher's role needs to be redefined to address the
needs of students from culturally different backgrounds.   1 2 3 4 5

 When dealing with bilingual students, some teachers may
misinterpret different communication styles as behavior
problems.   1 2 3 4 5

 As classrooms become more culturally diverse, the teacher's
job becomes increasingly rewarding.   1 2 3 4 5

 I can learn a great deal from students with culturally different
backgrounds.   1 2 3 4 5

 In order to be an effective teacher, one needs to be aware of
cultural differences present in the classroom.   1 2 3 4 5

Students should learn to communicate in English only.   1 2 3 4 5

Today's curriculum gives undue importance to multiculturalism and diversity.	1 2 3 4 5
I am aware of the diversity of cultural backgrounds of the students I am working with	1 2 3 4 5
Regardless of the racial and ethnic makeup of my class, it is important for all students to be aware of multicultural diversity	1 2 3 4 5
Being multiculturally aware is not relevant for the students I teach.	1 2 3 4 5
Teaching students about cultural diversity will only create conflict in the classroom.	1 2 3 4 5

Part C: Reflection on your own teaching and your Teacher Education Program

(If this space is too limited for your response, please feel free to expand your answer on an additional document.)

- Explain what equity means to you and describe if you include this into your classroom practice.

- Explain what inquiry means to you and discuss how you include this into your classroom practice.

- Explain what culturally responsive pedagogy means to you and describe how you incorporate this into your classroom practice.

Recall your field experiences during your undergraduate program at National-Louis University. Explain what type of teaching was modeled to you by your cooperating teacher. *(If this space is too limited for your response, please feel free to expand your answer on an additional document)*

- Practicum II/III Field Experience (2 full days a week for 20 weeks)

- Student Teaching Field Experience (5days a week for 11 weeks)

Recall your coursework at National-Louis University (Practicum Seminar I, II, III; History and Philosophy and Student Teaching Seminar). *(If this space is too limited for your response, please feel free to expand your answer on an additional document)*

- Did the topics, experiences, presentations and instructional strategies presented in these courses influence the way you teach? Please explain how in as much detail as possible.

- Did the National College of Education Teacher Education Program prepare you to be a teacher of equity, inquiry, and culturally responsive pedagogy? If yes, please give specific details/examples? If no, what could the program have done differently?

Thank you for taking the time to fill out the survey, your answers are very valuable to my research and to the improvement of the undergraduate teacher education program at National-Louis University.

Debbie

Appendix E: Focus Group Questions

- Explain what "Social Justice" means to you.

- What does it mean to teach for social justice?

- How do you teach for social justice?

- What instructional strategies and materials do you embed in the curriculum to teach for social justice?

- What barriers are in place that makes it difficult to teach for social justice?

- How did the coursework and field experiences in the undergraduate program at National-Louis University prepare you to teach for equity, inquiry, and culturally responsive pedagogy?

Appendix F: Continuums of Evidence

Continuum: Knowledge of Equity, Inquiry and Cultural Responsive Pedagogy

Equity				
None	Superficial Basic Knowledge	Basic Knowledge with classroom examples	In Depth Understanding	In Depth Understanding with classroom examples

Inquiry				
None	Superficial Basic Knowledge	Basic Knowledge with classroom examples	In Depth Understanding	In Depth Understanding with classroom examples

Culturally Responsive Pedagogy				
None	Superficial Basic Knowledge	Basic Knowledge with classroom examples	In Depth Understanding	In Depth Understanding with classroom examples

Continuum: Culturally Responsive Classroom Attributes

Expectations			
Students not expected to succeed/Teacher Centered.	Some students expected to succeed/others are still spoon fed information.	Most students expected to succeed. Teacher aware of all students abilities Allows students to discover figure out their own answers.	All students are expected to succeed. Are independent to explore and discover. Teacher pushed students out of their comfort zone.

Parent involvement			
Very little parent communication	Communication goes home in both languages by the school, but not by the teacher	All parent communication goes home in both languages by the school and teacher. Teacher is inviting to the parents.	All parents are part of the classroom community, parents are involved in the classroom open communication between Teacher/parents/students

Adaptations			
No Adaptations	Pull out system in schools Teacher does little adaptations	Pull out system in schools. Teacher still makes adaptations to meet the needs	Push in system in schools. Teacher works with resource specialists to make adaptations

Learning environment			
Environment not welcoming	Welcoming, warm, safe, environment for some children.	Welcoming environment for most children, some type of diversity embraced.	Classroom community of learners. Safe, open to all types of diversity welcoming environment evident in interactions between teacher and students, student and students.

Curriculum			
Only uses district curriculum	Uses district curriculum, diversity resources added on	Uses district curriculum, frequently embeds diversity topics and resources.	Uses district curriculum, integrates diversity resources throughout the whole school day.

Assessment			
Uses traditional assessment-summative only	Uses traditional assessments-formative and summative.	Uses traditional/alternative assessment-formative and summative.	Uses traditional/alternative assessments-formative and summative. Uses assessment data to drive instruction.

Student Voice			
No student voice	Student Voice sometime, evident mainly when solicited by teacher.	Student Voice evident even when no solicited by teacher, but not always valued.	Community of Learners includes valuing of student voice which is evident when teacher initiates, as well as regularly initiated by students.

Inquiry, discovery, students own experiences valued			
No inquiry, teacher directed	Some inquiry/Some teacher directed learning.	Inquiry is evident occasionally, students own experiences and choice not always integrated in the school day	Inquiry is evident most of the time. Students find their own answers/share experiences that are valued and used in the instruction of the classroom.