Grow Your Own Educator Programs

A Review of the Literature with an Emphasis on Equity-based Approaches

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Introduction

This literature review provides an overview of the research on Grow Your Own (GYO) educator programs as a strategy for states and district to employ to help recruit and retain teachers of color. It emphasizes equitable approaches and critical perspectives that combine the powerful roles of "homegrown" teachers, culturally-relevant curriculum and social justice pedagogy in addressing achievement and opportunity gaps, especially for the nation's woefully underserved, largely urban schools serving students of color (e.g., Rivkin, Hanushek, & Kain, 2005; Sanders & Rivers, 1996). A growing body of scholarship underscores the value of recruiting people from communities that could successfully transition as teachers to the very communities from which they come (Fenwick, 2001; Gist, Bianco, & Lynn, in press; Skinner, Garreton, & Schultz, 2011; Valenzuela, 2016).

GYO teacher programs help address teacher shortages, retention issues and teacher diversity by engaging in a variety of strategies that aim to recruit teachers from local communities in hopes that the pool of candidates will increase in diversity and will be more likely to stay teaching in the community. GYO programs come in many shapes and sizes in terms of recruitment, financial assistance, curriculum and support. Some programs recruit prospective teaching candidates from middle and high schools and some from the college level, and others recruit paraprofessionals and college graduates with non-teaching degrees. Some also are designed at the state and university levels, while others are designed at the school district and community level, or a combination thereof (see e.g., Skinner, Garreton, & Schultz, 2011). From an equity perspective, it is important to keep in mind that when designing GYO programs, different strategies may work differently for different communities.

This review begins with a summary of the vast inequities in the representation of teachers in color in our nation's primary and secondary schools. It next defines important terms in GYO scholarship, such as *pathways*, *pipelines*, and *partnerships* (Gist, Bianco, & Lynn, in press). Next follows a discussion of *community solidarity*, which provides helpful language for distinguishing GYO models like those examined here, from perhaps many, if not most, university-based teacher preparation programs in the United States (Zeichner, 2016; Kretchmar & Zeichner, 2016). The review ends with a summary of specific GYO-program types that could potentially not only increase equity in terms of the number of teachers of color entering the profession but also help ensure that those teachers are critically conscious leaders (Valenzuela, 2016).

Crisis of Teacher of Color Representation in K-12 Education

According to the Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS) conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics, 2011-12 data reveal wide racial and ethnic disparities in the teacher workforce. For example, White teachers represent 82.9 percent of all general education teachers defined in the SASS as pre-K, elementary grades, and special education. In contrast, the remainder is comprised of 7.1 percent Latino, 7.0 percent African American, 1.9 percent Asian American, and 0.4 percent American Indian (NCES, 2015).

Moreover, regardless of teaching area (e.g., humanities, arts and music, social studies, sciences), teachers of color are sorely underrepresented while White teachers are systematically overrepresented (Guarino, Santibanez, & Daley, 2006). To wit, whereas in 2011, 48.3 percent of public school students were minorities (NCES, 2016), an analysis of data from the Schools and Staffing Survey for 2011-12, found that 82 percent of teachers nationwide were non-Hispanic Whites (NCES, 2014). Complicating matters is a marked decline in the number of students enrolling in traditional, university-based teacher preparation programs, resulting in a shortage of 60,000 teachers in 2015-16 (Sutcher, Darling-Hammond, & Carver-Thomas, 2016).

Pathways, Pipelines, and Partnerships

While teacher education terms of *pathways* and *pipelines* are used interchangeably in the research literature, the former often signifies pro-active attempts to cultivate pathways into the teaching profession for students of color to address both teacher shortages and the lack of diversity in the teacher workforce (Skinner, Garreton, & Schultz, 2011; Valenzuela, 2016). These typically involve university-K-12 partnerships, memoranda of understanding, articulation agreements and the like (e.g., Skinner, Garreton, & Schultz, 2011). Moreover, partnerships may either be programmatic, targeting a specific educational intervention, like improving teacher or principal preparation; or they may be comprehensive, involving the establishment of new institutional arrangements and collaborations aimed at changing educational policies and structures. In one of very few large-scale, quantitative studies of both programmatic and comprehensive partnerships between school districts and higher education institutions in the state of California, researchers found that comprehensive partnerships substantially increased high school graduation rates and college access (Domina & Ruzek, 2012). However, this outcome was found to apply more to "non-selective," rather than "selective" university enrollment for reasons that are both unclear and contradictory given the University of California system's investment in comprehensive partnerships (Domina & Ruzek, 2012).

"Pipelines" often accord emphasis to a "leakiness" in students' trajectories as they navigate the various stages from kindergarten to middle school, high school, and ultimately, post-secondary enrollment and graduation, including the passage of teacher certification exams (Bianco, Leech, & Mitchell, 2011; Brown & Butty, 1999; Torres, Santos, Peck, & Cortes, 2004). Stated differently, the path to becoming a teacher occurs far in advance of teachers accepting their first teaching assignments, beginning, in earnest, at the secondary school level or earlier (Bianco, Leech, & Mitchell, 2011). Hence, it is imperative to develop pathways into teaching that begin in the early grades.

With myriad barriers that students of color face throughout the school pipeline (Gándara & Contreras, 2009; Bianco, Leech, & Mitchell, 2011), the net effect is a dearth of public school teachers of color that is particularly glaring, especially in urban schools with large populations, frequently underprivileged students of color (Skinner, Garreton, & Schultz, 2011).

The consequences are magnified when considering the lack of culturally-relevant pedagogy in the curriculum and the negative impact the absence has on learning for students of color. Significant evidence shows great learning benefits and positive outcomes resulting from culturally-relevant pedagogy, also referred to as *ethnic studies* or *multicultural education* (Cabrera, Milem, Jaquette, & Marx, 2014; Dee & Penner, 2016; López, 2016; López, 2004; Sleeter, 2011).

Similarly, the academic benefits of racial and ethnic congruence between students and teachers provide yet another window through which to view the power of race-conscious, equity-based approaches (Dee, 2004; Egalite, Kisida, & Winters, 2015; Clewell, Puma, & McKay, 2001; Villegas & Lucas, 2004; Villegas & Irvine, 2010) that lay at the heart of GYO efforts (Ocasio, 2014; Skinner, Garreton, & Schultz, 2011; Valenzuela, 2016; Wong, et al., 2007).

When anchored in community-based organizations (CBOs) (Skinner, Garreton, & Schultz, 2011; Valenzuela, 2016; Valenzuela, Zamora, & Rubio, 2016), GYO efforts can create more fluid and meaningful connections among parents, local advocates, partnering schools, school districts, community colleges, and universities that can transform higher education institutions followed by a new landscape of work relations (Domina & Ruzek, 2012). For reasons that are largely attributable to teachers of color shared cultural knowledge and experiences with students whose knowledge and experiences often may mirror their own, the student-teacher relationship and the learning process itself are frequently optimized (Bartlett & García, 2011; Espinoza-Herold, 2003; Gutierrez-Gomez, 2007; Villegas & Lucas, 2004). In this vein, it is important that GYO programs not only recruit Black and Brown bodies for Black and Brown schools and other schools, but also foster students' critical consciousness so that they can themselves be agents of transformational

change (Valenzuela, 2016).

Research shows that despite predominantly White cohorts of teacher candidates' familiarity with the concept of culturally-relevant pedagogy, they typically tend to blame students' families, cultures, and communities as primary causes of unequal educational outcomes (Sleeter, 2016). This discrepancy has been attributed to a lack of diversity in teacher education together with systemic privileges related to standardized tests that disproportionately benefit White students pursuing careers in teaching. Consequently, several scholars recommend that GYO pathways be created for students of color to address the achievement gap by bringing "homegrown" teachers of color into the teaching profession (Ocasio, 2014; Skinner, Garreton, & Schultz, 2011; and Valenzuela, 2016).

GYO as an Expression of Community Solidarity

Whereas virtually all teacher preparation models rhetorically espouse the goals of diversity and inclusion and typically profess a social justice mission, true, equity-based GYO initiatives best exemplify what Zeichner (2016) terms, *Teacher Prep 3.0*, meaning that they work "in solidarity" with the communities that they seek to serve (also see Kretchmar & Zeichner, 2016). This 3.0 model contrasts from both first-generation 1.0 models that focus on preparing teachers for clinical practice and second-generation 2.0 models that train "teachers to engage in a set of teaching and classroom management practices that supposedly will raise student test scores" (Zeichner, 2016). Consequently, GYO is widely construed as a best practice (Hallett, 2012; Warren, 2011; Wills, 2017).

Regrettably, research in this area, including evaluation studies, is still in its infancy (Torres, Santos, Peck, & Cortes, 2004). While Martin (2011) maintains that GYO programs fall roughly into one of two categories, namely *middle and high school "grow your own programs,"* which is simplistic and fails to substantively differentiate them from *"alternative routes to teaching."* These include teacher residency models, alternative certification, recruitment partnerships, and scholarship models.

While certain features of equity-based GYO programs may overlap conceptually with alternative routes to teaching in areas such as improved student recruitment, scholarships, stipends, counseling and mentorship supports, induction, and career development, their goal of drawing new, frequently first-generation, underrepresented minority group candidates into the teaching profession makes them different – particularly when considering that such individuals are prized precisely because of their advocacy and commitments to their communities (Wong, et al., 2007). Consistent with this community-based perspective, GYO teachers often are prepared in

environments that foster academic identity development, cultural relevancy, language- and race-conscious pedagogies, and critical perspectives that disrupt institutional hierarchies and dehumanizing discourses, policies, and practices (Valenzuela, 2016; Wong, et al., 2007). Accordingly, such programs exhibit a strong social justice mission that either work in direct partnership with CBOs (e.g., Skinner, Garreton, & Schultz, 2011; Valenzuela, 2016) or manifest deep commitments to community in the context of service-learning, which includes social justice research projects as a core aspect of their pedagogy (Bowen & Kiser, 2009; Wong, et al., 2007).

Importantly, whereas all GYO programs consist of partnerships of various kinds – for example, partnerships between school districts and two- and four-year institutions that bridge pathways into teaching – not all partnerships are GYO, either philosophically or operationally. Whereas their missions may be as much about elevating the standards of the profession through, for example, the recruitment of "top teachers" as it is about recruiting a diverse teacher workforce, this does not make for a successful, equitable GYO program (see Clewell, et al., 2000, for an in-depth review of successful, non-GYO, teacher recruitment programs, nationally).

Grow Your Own Programs and Recruitment Frames

GYO programs typically recruit either through pre-collegiate pathways or through community-focused pathways (Gist, Bianco, & Lynn, in press). Hence, the final section of this review illustrates this difference with two GYO programs that are pre-collegiate and two that are community-focused. Because of their distinctiveness, these four programs are further characterized as *pre-collegiate, selective* (South Carolina Center for Educator Recruitment, Retention, and Advancement); *pre-collegiate, non-selective* (Pathways2Teaching); *community-originated, community-focused* (Grow Your Own Illinois); and *community-focused, university educator initiated* (Cal State University Sacramento).

Pre-collegiate, Selective

In existence since 1986, the South Carolina Center for Educator Recruitment, Retention, and Advancement (CERRA) Teacher Cadet program is heralded as one of the oldest and better-known GYO programs in the nation (Berrigan & Schwartz, 2000; Martin, 2011). Located on the campus of Winthrop University, this state-funded program is committed to the recruitment of high-achieving, homegrown students. Cultivating teachers for rural areas experiencing shortages is an important aspect of the program. While in high school, students take a dual-credit course taught by a certified teacher that exposes them to the education profession, as well as to problems and critical issues that affect educational quality in our nation's schools. They additionally get field experiences, reflections, self-assessments, and the opportunity to conduct classroom observations. The Teacher Cadet program aims to cultivate future leaders who will become civically-engaged advocates for public education.

In 2015-16, 32 percent of completers were non-White and 22 percent were males, many of them from rural communities (Center for Educator Recruitment, Retention, and Advancement, 2017). Significantly, the program was available in 70 percent of all South Carolina public high schools. Upon completing the Teacher Cadet course, a high percentage (39.4 percent) chose teaching as their career. A majority of students (74 percent) who applied for admission into a pre-service, college teaching program indicated their prior involvement as Teacher Cadets.

Pre-collegiate, Non-Selective

Since 2010, Pathways2Teaching in Denver at the University of Colorado Denver (UCD) has promoted careers in teacher education at the secondary level by offering a dual credit, academically challenging course in educational justice at the high school level. Unlike the

Teacher Cadet model, the program makes no distinction between high- or low-achieving students. Chosen because of their commitment to youth in their respective inner-city schools, carefully-selected "pathway teachers" work collaboratively in partnership with UCD staff who play a supportive role in the classroom. They offer a year-long, concurrent enrollment, dual credit course to high school students attending low-income schools in the Denver area.

The course is informed by frameworks like critical pedagogy, critical race theory, and sociopolitical theory to encourage Latino/a and African American youth to critically analyze power differentials in society and how they get mirrored in institutional practices like curricular tracking and assimilation in hopes that students will come to see teaching as a political act and motivate them to become teachers (Gist, Bianco, & Lynn, in press). Community members and leaders are also a constant presence in Pathways2Teaching classrooms as resources that give depth and veracity to instruction.

Other features include research, writing and presentation skills, field experiences, and help with college applications. Once enrolled at UCD, candidates continue to benefit from mentorship opportunities, as well as regular exposure to many scholars of color throughout the country primarily through class lectures via Skype. Today, many of its graduates are either enrolled in teacher education programs or in other areas like social work (Tandon, Bianco, & Zion, 2015; Bianco, Leech, & Mitchell, 2011).

Pathways2Teaching started as a pilot program during the 2010-11 year in a single high school that also had the unfortunate distinction of being the lowest-performing school in the state of Colorado. All of the students (100 percent) who had enrolled in the class that year graduated from high school with their cohort. This outcome grows in significance when considering that enrollment in the concurrent course in high school targets low-achieving students of color. Pathways2Teaching now has programs in nine Colorado high schools located in seven school districts, including three in Nashville. Given that their goal is to increase the representation of not solely students of color but also male students of color seeking college careers, the total number of participating students to date is impressive. In the first seven years, 434 enrolled with 43 percent among them being Latino and African American males of color. A significant number of these students go on to college (Tandon, Bianco, & Zion, 2015).

Community-originated, Community Focused

GYO Illinois' roots in Chicago date back at least to the early 1990s when families, many of whom were immigrant, Latina mothers from a grassroots nonprofit, the Logan Square Neighborhood Association (LNSA), expressed concerns related to overcrowding in their children's schools. Out

of this evolved the LSNA Parent Mentor program with parents spending two hours daily as assistants in classrooms for which they received a modest stipend. As the program grew, skills and leadership development opportunities did as well, leading to the establishment of community learning centers (Skinner, Garreton, & Schultz, 2011; Warren, 2011). In time, these women became increasingly interested in becoming teachers themselves. Out of these efforts, a pilot program that created a pathway for paraprofessionals into higher education called, "*La Nueva Generación*" ("the new cohort"), emerged to address the shortage of teachers of color in Chicago Public Schools (Gillette, in press; Hallett, 2012; Warren, 2011).

A commitment to working in and with historically-marginalized communities requires a new set of pedagogical lenses that are anti-oppressive and promote cultural uplift to counter the silencing and dehumanization to which they are regularly subjected (Schultz, Gillette, & Hill, 2011). Accordingly, at Northeastern Illinois University, which houses the GYO program, critical race theory, critical pedagogy, and an ethic of care guide its curriculum and pedagogy. The university describes its work as a community-based approach to teacher education that operates for their GYO candidates in a culturally-relevant way "as if they were members of their own families" (Schultz, Gillette, & Hill, 2011, p. 15).

In 2004, the LSNA and Action Now, another community organizing group in Chicago linked arms and formed a coalition with several other community organizations to pursue a policy solution to the teacher retention crisis. Specifically, they wrote and successfully advocated for the *Grow Your Own Teacher Education Act*, which institutionalized the LNSA's approach to teacher recruitment. This brought in a state-funded $1.5 million planning grant. In 2005, legislators allocated an additional $3 million in funding that went statewide to a total of 11 consortia of community groups, school districts and either two- or four-year universities. Although beginning with parents and paraprofessionals, the program explicitly targeted community members who specifically wanted to teach in their neighborhood public schools but could not afford college. Unfortunately, in 2015, GYO Illinois faced a budget impasse when the state's budget crisis began, leaving only one program standing at Northeastern Illinois University in Chicago. The success of this 10-year effort is the presence of "120 GYO teachers in 88 schools teaching more than 2,000 students" (http://www.growyourownteachers.org).

Community-focused, University Educator Initiated

The Multilingual/Multicultural Teacher Preparation Center (M/M Center), founded in the mid-1970s at Cal State University Sacramento, was established by a group of progressive teacher educators that sought, and continues to seek today, to develop a program that would prepare teachers to be agents of change in service to their communities (Wong, et al., 2007). Today, it is

a GYO program that serves as the inspiration for a key initiative of a national-level organization called the National Latino/a Education Research and Policy project (NLERAP) (Valenzuela, 2016).

Over 75 percent of the students are of color, and most of its White students are bilingual. Its teaching staff is also very diverse. As of 2007, 37 percent of the faculty were Latino/a, 25 percent Asian, 25 percent White, and 12 percent African American. The diverse teaching staff facilitates such things as higher education advocacy with respect to faculty hiring, the establishment of new courses, and transforming higher education institutions themselves (Wong, et al., 2007).

Students are offered a curriculum that is praxis-oriented, dialogical, promotes students' identity development, and is asset-based, tapping into students' funds of knowledge (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992). With a history dating back to the mid-1970s of serving Mexican American and Chicana, migrant, and other bilingual students in the college's baccalaureate program and fifth year, post-baccalaureate credential program, the center has taught English as a second language and cultural diversity courses for decades. The original target population was always the local community so that there could be more teachers of color in the Sacramento area – hence, "GYO teachers" before there was a name for this (Cintrón, 2017).

These equity-minded, CSUS faculty further engaged in state policymaking, most notably involving the creation of a culture and language emphasis for the state's teaching credential that authorizes instruction to emerging bilinguals/English language learners. By 1994, these same faculty eventually departmentalized, creating a separate Bilingual/Multicultural Education Department (BMED) within the M/M Center to gain control over faculty hiring, course scheduling, course content, and student admissions.

Race-consciousness informs every aspect of its work, including recruitment and outreach efforts, candidate interview protocols, evaluation rubrics, and course content. Other important features include early advising so that students are clear on which courses to take. The BMED is also instrumental in helping students form study groups, linking them to financial aid sources, tutoring opportunities, securing work as bilingual teacher aides, and helping students complete applications for the credential program. Students also are grouped to foster a peer support network and placed with mentors who model teacher activism committed to educational equity. Professional development sites where candidates partake in extensive field experiences are philosophically congruent.

Surveys using a tool that gauges candidates' knowledge base and orientation toward multicultural education and educational equity showed that in comparison to another similar

center with an "urban focus," M/M Center candidates "listed at least twice as many strategies as the other group for creating democratic classroom structures and developing multicultural curriculum" (Wong, et al., 2007, p. 21). Reflecting the kind of curious and critical learners that the program cultivates, candidates were found to be significantly more skillful in their listing of classroom strategies while generating significantly more questions about them.

Finally, exit surveys indicate strong desires to work in culturally-diverse, low-income schools, including those very communities from which they emanate. Due to departmental restructuring yet again in 2012, the BMED program exists primarily under the auspices of NLERAP that allows CSUS to keep admitted bilingual students in a cohort. Another significant success in its restructured context is the availability of its courses formerly taught only in the M/M program to all students college-wide.

Conclusion

Both GYO programs and research of these programs are still in their infancy. While all are focused on teacher recruitment and addressing the dearth of teachers of color in our nation's schools, standard metrics do not apply across programs, making it difficult to draw comparisons about program effectiveness. That said, the programs tend to converge philosophically primarily with respect to what may be inferred as a best practice to which all the programs speak, namely, the social justice aspect of their mission found in their equity- and community-based curriculum and praxis.

Hence, practitioners should be mindful of working in solidarity with the communities that they ostensibly seek to serve (Zeichner, 2016; Kretchmar & Zeichner, 2016). Operationally, this means an expansion of GYO programs together with a philosophical and structural merging of teacher preparation with ethnic studies frameworks, including critical pedagogy, critical race theory, sociocultural perspectives, and sociopolitical theory that should rest at the heart of all equity-based, GYO programs.

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