

Are Teacher Education Programs Failing the Nation's Urban Schools? A Closer Look at Pre-service Teachers' Beliefs about Working with Inner-City Students

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Abstract

To address the issue of pre-service teachers being under-prepared for work in multicultural and impoverished environments in America's urban schools, teacher education programs have taken steps to improve diversity-oriented curricula and provide relevant fieldwork experience. However, research indicates that a large proportion of teacher candidates still do not have the necessary skills to deal with students from divergent upbringings. This interpretive study investigated the beliefs of pre-service teachers about urban students and how well their teacher education programs are addressing the issues of working in inner-city schools. The results revealed that, although some progress has been made, a significant gap remains between the need to prepare teachers for work in urban schools and the reality that many teacher education programs fall short of this goal. The authors concluded that further research is necessary to pinpoint the failings of teacher education programs in training future teachers for work in diverse settings.

Keywords: *Urban schools, urban students, pre-service teachers, teacher education programs*

Introduction

Urban schools serve students from a wide range of backgrounds in terms of ethnicity, language, culture, and socio-economic status. As Balfanz and Neild (2006) explain, urban neighborhood schools cater “primarily, and often almost exclusively, [to] students with multiple risk factors for academic failure” (p. 123). In contrast to these under-advantaged student populations, the teachers in urban schools are predominantly white, female, and from a middle-class upbringing (Feiman-Nemser & Remillard, 1996; Sleeter, 2001); they have typically been raised in homogeneous suburban areas, seldom interacting with students from other cultures and lifestyles. As Zeichner (2003) underscores in his article on teacher education reform, there is a substantial “cultural divide” between urban teachers and their students as a result of their disparate upbringings (p. 493). Few teachers in urban schools have received adequate training by the time they enter the profession; they are often ill-prepared to cope with students from diverse backgrounds (“Preparing for Diversity,” 2004). These deficiencies make it difficult for them to teach effectively in inner-city schools (Lankford, Loeb & Wyckoff, 2002). With this issue affecting increasing numbers of disadvantaged students, there is extensive recognition of the need to equip teachers with the necessary skills to cope with students from dissimilar backgrounds, to address diversity issues, and to teach according to culturally relevant pedagogy.

In response to this widely-acknowledged problem, a variety of programs and projects have been implemented in order to address pre-service teachers’ awareness of cultural differences. For instance, the Teach for Diversity (TFD) graduate program was developed at the University of Wisconsin-Madison by Gloria Ladson-Billings and her colleagues. The TFD curriculum aims to better prepare aspiring teachers to “face large numbers of students who are poor, who come from varied racial and ethnic families, and who speak a first language other than

English” (“Preparing Teachers for Diversity,” 2004). Similarly, the Beyond Awareness Research Project was created at another large Midwestern university in order to “develop more effective ways to address culture and cultural differences in the preparation of pre-service teachers, in-service teachers, and university faculty” (Lenski, Crumpler, Stallworth, & Crawford, 2005, para. 2). Yet, in spite of such programs, many pre-service teachers are frightened by the demands of teaching in urban schools where the students’ culture and backgrounds are significantly different from their own, illuminating the reality that, in spite of the progress that has been made, there is still work to be done (Lenski et al., 2005).

In order to prepare future educators for teaching in urban schools, teacher education faculty should be aware of these issues and model the teaching/learning process in such a way that teacher candidates will be better prepared to meet the needs of inner-city students. Using interpretive research, this study sought to expand on the current body of knowledge about how teacher education programs prepare future educators for work in urban schools.

Literature Review

Over the last two decades, a growing body of research has been directed toward pre-service teachers’ perceptions of urban schools. The following sections first provide an overview of the research into how teacher education programs affect student teachers’ beliefs toward diversity and urban schools and then discuss the impact of urban field experiences on prospective teachers’ perceptions of how prepared they are to teach effectively in multicultural environments.

Teacher Education Programs and Learning to Teach

There is a multitude of existing literature which emphasizes the cultural, ethnic, and socioeconomic disparity between teachers in urban schools and the student populations they serve. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) (2008), 75.6 percent of

the teaching force in the United States is female; only 24.4 percent is male. In terms of ethnicity, 83.5 percent of the U.S. teacher population is white, 6.7 percent is African American, 6.9 percent is Hispanic, and 2.9 percent come from other ethnic groups. Brookhart and Freeman's (1992) review of research confirms that pre-service teachers are "predominantly white females" (p. 42). The majority of future educators lack experience with students of other cultures and have no firsthand knowledge of urban school settings. However, upon entering teacher education programs, most students have already developed preconceived notions about urban schools, the students who attend them, and what it may be like to teach in these settings. Their beliefs and attitudes are largely constructed by their own school experiences, the communities in which they live, and the media. Furthermore, research indicates that, in many cases, pre-service teachers have negative beliefs about urban students and urban schools which may carry over into their teaching in spite of efforts to change these perceptions (Saffold, 2008).

Hampton, Peng, and Ann (2008) bring up this point in their study on pre-service teachers' beliefs toward under-advantaged learners, asserting that student teachers presume urban students to be under-motivated, with fewer academic skills, poor discipline, and little parental support in comparison with their suburban counterparts. Their research, conducted with respondents from a rural college in central New York State which has a mostly-white student population, investigated the perceptions of education majors concerning urban institutions. While this teacher education program was specifically geared toward preparing future instructors to teach in urban areas, 38 of the 41 participants had grown up in suburban or rural settings and had never attended or visited an urban school. The study revolved around several open-ended questions regarding the students' views of the physical attributes of urban schools, as well as the characteristics of urban students. In their findings, Hampton et al. (2008) reported that the

predominant opinion of the respondents toward urban schools was negative. One of their participants, referred to as Subject 38, explained:

I've never experienced urban schools directly, but my expectations or thoughts of the physical appearance, is that it has bars on the window, graffiti on the walls. Students gathered in big groups outside talking and smoking. Inside the halls are loud, crowded and vandalized (p. 278).

Subject 30 expressed similar concerns, stating that:

Coming from a suburban community on Long Island, I find myself a bit apprehensive [about] entering an urban school. All you hear about is the violence, metal detectors, gangs, and security personnel of the urban school. Coming from a learning environment where we did not even have actual security guards until my senior year in high school, I am worried about what to expect (p. 278).

A study by Easter, Schultz, Neyhart, and Reck (1999) also explored “student [teachers’] beliefs about urban environments and perceptions of themselves as teachers in urban settings” (p. 210). Their study was conducted using a survey designed to collect information about student teachers’ perceptions of the characteristics of teachers and students in urban schools. The city where the data were collected had a diverse population, but, as in Hampton et al.’s (2008) study, the student teachers interviewed had little experience working with students in urban environments. The participants were all college students taking an introductory course in their teacher education program. Of the eighty respondents, 51 percent felt comfortable with the prospect of teaching in diverse classrooms. On the other hand, 67 percent of the student teachers interviewed indicated that they would prefer to teach in schools that were similar to the ones they had attended, mainly suburban institutions. Interestingly, the majority of the participants did not

answer the final portion of the survey, which asked them to describe an urban school setting; one possible reason for skipping this question might be that the respondents, like the participants in the current study, had little or no firsthand information about the conditions in urban schools.

In a related investigation, Sconzert, Iazzetto, and Purkey (2000) studied a teacher education program known as the Associated Colleges of the Midwest Urban Education Program (ACMUEP). The researchers selected twelve participants and interviewed them before and after they had completed the program; in addition, they asked the interviewees to write reflective essays about their experiences with ACMUEP. Analysis of the data revealed eight important themes regarding the effects of student teaching on the participants. These themes included: (1) Recognition of the challenges of teaching and awareness that they were not yet prepared to begin teaching on their own; (2) School politics and the understanding that “teacher attitudes get [students] down” (p. 474); (3) Comprehending that teaching is about relationships between teachers and students; (4) Understanding teaching as personal development; (5) Realization that adapting teaching to students needs is important; and (6) Recognizing the value of student diversity. The researchers attributed the final three themes, in particular, to the structure of the program, which promotes teaching for all.

The findings of a study conducted by Whitney, Golez, Nagel, and Nieto (2002) revealed somewhat different results. The researchers surveyed a total of 900 teachers, as well as arranging four focus groups to discuss how participants viewed their teacher preparation program. Each focus group included between one and ten participants. The purpose of the study was to obtain meaningful feedback from graduates about the impact of their teacher education program, which, like ACMUEP, was designed to prepare teachers for employment in large urban school districts. While more than 30 percent of the students interviewed by Sconzert et al. (2000) went on to seek

employment at inner-city schools, Whitney et al. (2002) found that the teacher education program their respondents were attending had little or no impact on the students' ability to teach to a diverse population; the respondents expressed that they had not been given sufficient opportunities to work with students from a broad range of backgrounds during the course of their pre-service fieldwork. These results indicated that there was a gap between the stated purpose of the program and the actual experiences of student teachers in real classrooms, a significant problem which affected the researchers' motivation to conduct the current study.

On the other hand, Lazar (2007) compared the results of surveys conducted on two groups of primarily white students who had participated in an urban field placement program through St. Joseph's University in Philadelphia, PA. The first group of seventeen students had taken a general literacy course that did not deal specifically with the needs of children in urban classrooms, while the second group of fifteen students had completed a literacy course that was created by the researcher specifically for educating pre-service teachers on teaching literacy in impoverished inner-city schools. The results of the surveys indicated that the students who had taken the urban schools literacy course had a much higher degree of satisfaction with their field placements than those who took the general literacy course, and that they felt much more confident in their abilities to teach in an urban setting. Similarly, a study by Lee, Eckrich, Lackey and Showalter (2010) found that a program of both classroom instruction and fieldwork designed to target the issues of teaching in urban classrooms resulted in more positive attitudes of pre-service teachers toward work in inner-city schools.

Impact of Field Experiences on Learning to Teach in Urban Schools

The vast majority of teacher education programs require that their students perform fieldwork in real classrooms in order to obtain hands-on experience pertaining to the material

they have learned in their teacher preparation programs. Numerous studies (e.g., Easter et al., 1999; Groulx, 2001; Marxen & Rudney, 1999; Nelson, 1998) have examined the impact of field experiences on student teachers' beliefs and attitudes toward inner city schools and diversity issues.

For instance, Nelson (1998) investigated the impact of student teaching assignments on aspiring teacher's attitudes toward work in inner-city schools. She compared two groups of student teachers; the first group of four students had been placed in suburban schools, and the second group of six students conducted their fieldwork in urban schools. Upon completion of their field assignments, these students participated in focus group discussions about their experiences in different school settings. Of the ten participants, six students related that they had no previous experiences with other cultures, and all had been raised in suburban settings. Only three of the participants had some prior contact with other cultures, which they gained through attending extracurricular activities in their former schools. Of the participants, one was an African American. The results of the study revealed that the six students who had been assigned to inner-city schools expressed interest in teaching in urban schools in the future. On the other hand, the four students who had completed their fieldwork in suburban schools indicated that they had not been given the opportunity to work with students from diverse cultural groups. The researcher concluded that three things should be done in order to prepare student teachers for work in culturally diverse urban classrooms: (1) Provide information about other cultures in educational courses; (2) Provide student teachers with sufficient opportunities to work with culturally diverse students in field placements; and (3) Increase the number of faculty and students from different backgrounds in teacher education programs.

Marxen and Rudney (1999) conducted a related investigation, exploring how a one-week field placement in a Chicago urban setting influenced student teachers' attitudes toward students of different backgrounds and their beliefs about urban school teaching. They observed twenty-five participants' field experiences and examined these students' self-reports; in addition, they reviewed the reflective essays written by the students for the Human Relations Competence Document, one of the requirements for teaching licensure. The findings of the study revealed that field experiences played a significant role in helping pre-service teachers to develop positive attitudes toward students of different cultural backgrounds and learn how to address diversity effectively in their classrooms.

Through a longitudinal study, Groulx (2001) also illuminated how pre-service teacher education impacted students in terms of teaching in urban school settings. A group of 112 college juniors was surveyed before taking a required entry-level educational psychology course. After completing their student teaching, twenty-nine of these students were surveyed again. As in the study undertaken by Easter et al. (1999), the results of these surveys made it clear that pre-service teachers generally feel more comfortable teaching in suburban schools than in an urban setting. Analysis of preferred school characteristics showed that pre-service teachers prefer to work in schools that they consider to be safe; this fact had the highest mean score (3.47 out of 4) among other school characteristics, including diversity, ideal students and similarity. After examining the data from the study, the researchers identified several important themes: teaching in one's comfort zone; preconceptions and stereotypes about urban schools; professional and personal challenges of working in urban schools; and concerns about students' first languages.

The literature demonstrates that, as was the case with the participants in the present study, a significant percentage of pre-service teachers have had little or no contact with other cultures

and lack experience working with people of different backgrounds, and that appropriate instruction and relevant fieldwork is needed in order to prepare pre-service teachers to teach in urban schools. The process of training future educators for teaching positions in culturally diverse settings creates a greater awareness of the challenges they may face, as well as the rewards they may experience through working with heterogeneous student populations. The authors of this study hoped that the answers to the questions outlined below would provide valuable information about where teacher education programs are succeeding, as well as highlighting the areas where more work is needed to develop culturally responsive educators who are capable of teaching competently in diverse classrooms.

Purpose of the Study and Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to examine pre-service teachers' beliefs and attitudes concerning urban schools, expanding on previous research by focusing on how well teacher education programs prepare future instructors for urban classrooms. A better understanding of these programs' strengths and weaknesses may lead to recommendations for improving teacher training, so that future teachers may more effectively instruct students in inner city schools. The research was based on the following questions:

1. What does teaching in urban schools mean to prospective teachers?
2. What types of beliefs do pre-service teachers hold about conditions in urban schools?
3. What do pre-service teachers think about students from different backgrounds?
4. How do pre-service teachers feel about how they are being prepared for urban teaching?

Research Design and Methodology

The researchers conducted this study with the objective of illuminating the beliefs of future teachers concerning urban schools. To achieve this goal, the authors chose an interpretive research method that aimed to explore the personal beliefs and attitudes of the population of interest; i.e., pre-service teachers. As Orlikowski and Baroudi (1991) explain, “Interpretive studies assume that people create and associate their own subjective and intersubjective meanings as they interact with the world around them” (p. 5). Interpretive research, in effect, permits researchers to explore the meaning-making practices of their informants as they reveal the ways in which they make sense of the phenomena in question (Mottier, 2005; Walsham, 2006). This investigative framework was well-suited for an interpretation of the meanings that the study participants constructed with respect to culturally diverse student populations based on their experiences in their teacher education program.

Setting and Participants

The study took place at a Midwestern university town of about 70,000 in the United States, with a university student population of around 40,000. Prior to the participant selection phase, the project was reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of the university where the research was conducted. Since the goal of this study was to obtain insight into the beliefs and attitudes of pre-service teachers, choosing participants from this population was essential. Thus, the researchers used purposive sampling in order to select those respondents who could provide the most relevant information, as supported by Fraenkel and Wallen’s (2008) assertion that this method is most appropriate for choosing subjects who are well-suited to the intent of a particular study. The participants in the project were five elementary major prospective teachers who were enrolled in various sections of a teaching methods course at the university. All of the participants were white females, with the exception of one white male. Out

of the group of participants, four students were in the elementary education program, while one student was majoring in education for all learners. The participants indicated that they chose to attend this university because they were residents of the state and were qualified for tuition reduction at this specific institution.

Data Collection

The data were collected through a series of interviews with the study participants, which allowed the researchers to access the interpretations of their informants pertaining to the topic in question (Walsham, 2006). The interviews, which consisted of open-ended questions, took place in various classrooms at the university at the convenience of the participants. The researchers used semi-structured questions (see Table 1), allowing the interview to proceed in the manner of a normal conversation. By doing so, the researchers gave the participants an opportunity to report the feelings and attitudes they held toward the topic of inquiry, as emphasized by Gilbert (1997). By using this technique, the researchers were able to gain insight into the “emerging worldview of the respondent[s]” (Merriam, 2001, p. 74). The interviews were tape-recorded with the permission of the participants, allowing the researchers to listen repeatedly to the tapes to become familiar with the responses.

Table 1: Sample interview questions

1	What would you say is your teaching philosophy?
2	What do you expect from teaching, students, and parents?
3	How would you describe/imagine urban schools?
4	Do you think urban schools are different than other institutions in terms of students, teaching and resources, and why or how?
5	What do your instructors/friends say about teaching for kids of different backgrounds?
6	What kinds of courses have you taken related to urban education?

7	How well do you feel your teacher education program has prepared you to teach in urban schools?
8	What did you learn from your courses about the conditions in urban schools?
9	How do you prepare yourself for teaching students from diverse backgrounds?
10	What is the extent of your contact with students and families from other cultural backgrounds?
11	Would you choose to teach in urban schools? Why? Why not?
12	Would you be worried or frightened about teaching in urban schools? Why or why not?
13	How prepared do you feel to teach generally? In which subjects do you feel strong/weak?
14	What would you change in Teacher Education programs at this university if you could?

Analysis of Data and Use of Credibility Checks

The interviews were transcribed verbatim immediately after the conversations took place. The transcripts were read by the researchers several times and organized according to similarities and differences. For the purpose of credibility (Merriam, 2001), a peer review was conducted by a doctoral student with over eight years of experience teaching at inner-city schools; this step was useful for confirming the themes that emerged from the study and for validating the researchers' interpretations of the data (Walsham, 2006).

Results

During the analysis phase, five themes developed around student teachers' concepts of urban schools: (1) Perspectives of pre-service teachers about teaching students from different backgrounds, (2) Preconceptions about urban schools, (3) Learning how to teach in urban schools, (4) Lack of experience in urban schools, and (5) Responsibilities of teacher education

programs to prepare educators to teach in urban schools. The research results are presented here according to these themes.

Perspectives of Pre-service Teachers about Teaching Children of Different Cultures

The participants in this study were aware that they would encounter students from different backgrounds in their future classrooms. They also affirmed that the differences between their own experiences and those of their students might have both negative and positive effects. For example, Judy (names have been changed to protect the identity of the participants) believed that all children should be able to learn equally regardless of their upbringing; however, she presumed that having limited English skills might cause problems with understanding what is being taught in the classroom. Although she expressed her opinion that English as a Second Language (ESL) classrooms are beneficial, she felt that the need to “catch up” with other students could be problematic for non-native speakers. On the other hand, Matt expressed that having students of different cultures in a classroom would be enriching, because every student would have the opportunity to learn from the others. Jennifer’s statement about teaching in a multicultural classroom was especially articulate:

Needless to say, each classroom we will be teaching is likely to have students from different backgrounds. It’s sometimes complicated for us, as teachers, to know what their varied needs are, and how these needs are met in a single setting with inadequate supplies and [a] limited amount of time. What’s more, a multi-cultural environment will add to the anxiety and pressure teachers are likely to experience, especially in their first few years of teaching.

The testimony from both Judy and Jennifer bears out the findings of Hampton et al.’s (2008) study, which demonstrated that pre-service teachers often have negative conceptions about

teaching students from multi-cultural backgrounds. This problem becomes further evident in the following section concerning beliefs about teaching in urban settings.

Preconceptions about Urban Schools

Throughout the recorded interviews with the participants, certain preconceptions about urban schools recurred. Although none of the respondents had attended an urban school, all of them talked extensively about how difficult it would be to teach in such an environment. For instance, Pam expressed that:

I think it is really hard to survive in an urban school setting. As revealed by the media, these schools present numerous problems, such as the limited academic and social resources, you know, and misbehaviors of students and related safety concerns. I believe such issues have roots in the economic instability associated with the communities these schools serve, as well as the complexity of meeting the demands of a diverse group of students, parents, and maybe families in general.

Pam's response reflects the results of the studies by Hampton et al. (2008) and Easter et al. (1999), where it was found that many of the participants had already developed negative beliefs about students in urban schools despite their lack of exposure to these settings.

Learning How to Teach for Urban Schools

When asked about how well her teacher education program had prepared her for work in inner-city classrooms, one of the respondents, Linda, revealed that her experiences during her course work had been helpful in opening her eyes to what urban schools were really like:

My educational experiences [...] helped me become familiar with the urban school settings to an extent. Teaching methods classes I took included some discussion of, you know, how to provide students in urban schools with an education they deserve to make

changes. Besides, we watched videos of actual classrooms from urban schools and talked about issues that emerged in what we saw.

However, she also expressed that prospective teachers need to be better prepared for urban teaching. Her views reflected the findings of the study by Whitney et al. (2002), which found that even after completing a training program designed to prepare student teachers for work in urban schools, respondents did not feel adequately prepared to take on inner-city teaching assignments.

Lack of Experiences with Urban Schools

As stated previously, widespread research indicates that the majority of teacher education students are white, middle-class females who have been raised mainly in suburban areas and attended schools with students from similar backgrounds; the typical teacher candidate has had few opportunities to interact with students from other cultures. While attending a university can be an opportunity for pre-service teachers to meet peers from other backgrounds and get to know more about them, this by no means compensates for the fact that many teacher education programs do not provide sufficient multicultural experiences. It is crucial that teacher education programs prepare future teachers to work with students from diverse backgrounds; yet, as the participants in this study consistently reported, most of their knowledge of urban schools comes from media sources, rather than direct experience. Jennifer explained that:

I had no idea about what an urban school environment would be like before I chose to major in education, as all my siblings and friends, including me, went to private schools, which was nothing but a dissimilar background. Also...well...I met some people here with urban school backgrounds, but I haven't been in touch with such people before, nor was I familiar with their experiences.

The respondents also repeatedly expressed the opinion that pre-service teachers should have more contact with diverse students and their families during the course of their fieldwork, with more hands-on experience to prepare them for classroom management and communicating with parents. As Judy indicated:

Teacher education programs should do more than just transfer the pure knowledge of the theories, methods, and research in the field, but rather provide the necessary experience to handle different students and situations. Pre-service teachers should be made aware of the fact that actual teaching is full of surprises, and that it is, at times, impossible to estimate what is going to happen even in a precisely planned class time. It would be a good idea to increase the opportunities for pre-service teachers to practice the education they attain in college through intensive amounts of microteaching and fieldwork experiences. One-to-one supervision throughout this process would be crucial.

Judy's somewhat idealistic statement suggests that increasing the amount of hands-on experience through fieldwork is essential in preparing pre-service teachers for work in urban settings; a point which is borne out by the findings of Groulx (2001), Lazar (2007), and Marxen and Rudney (1999).

Discussion

In order to prepare future educators for teaching in urban classrooms, teacher education faculty should be aware of the preconceptions of student teachers and model the teaching/learning process in such a way that future teachers will think more critically about the accuracy of what they may hear about urban students. As Hollis and Guzman (2005) have argued, although there has been a fairly persistent call over the last decade to implement multicultural curricula for teacher education programs, it is clear such curricula have not been

successfully applied in practice. While this study focused on a limited selection of participants from a single university (albeit one that is described as one of the premier teacher education schools in the country), the results reflect the attitudes of pre-services teachers in the majority of the research included in the literature and can be extended to similar populations in other parts of the country.

It is hoped that this study will highlight the urgent need for hands-on training and encourage teacher educators to re-examine their current assumptions about preparing teachers for inner city schools, taking the appropriate steps to provide the necessary groundwork for prospective teachers to deal with diverse student populations. Further research, using greater numbers of participants and various research methodologies, would be beneficial for achieving a better understanding of what is needed to provide student teachers with sufficient first-hand experience teaching in urban schools.

In addition, it is necessary to re-examine and redesign teacher education programs by grounding new approaches on prospective teachers' experiences and beliefs about students from diverse backgrounds, in order to meet the needs of students in urban schools. While there have been some successful endeavors at improving fieldwork experiences and classroom instruction aimed at preparing teachers to work in culturally diverse conditions, these are by no means widespread, and much work remains to be done. Ultimately, as Weiner (2002) affirms, further research is essential in order to properly identify the failings in programs designed to prepare teachers for positions in urban schools.

Conclusion

Like the vast majority of pre-service teachers in the United States, the participants in this study had little or no direct experience in dealing with diversity in urban schools, yet they held

very definite opinions about inner-city students. Their impressions of urban schools were based largely on negative media reporting, which led them to express doubt and concern about their ability to teach in such an environment. Unless pre-service teachers become aware of their own preconceptions and how these affect their ideas about teaching and learning, they are unlikely to develop a constructive point of view that will permit them to engage fairly and equitably with students from a wide range of backgrounds. In order to rectify this issue, it is critical that teacher education programs prepare new teachers for work with students from diverse cultural backgrounds.

While numerous teacher education programs have been implemented to cope with the ongoing need to adequately prepare future teachers for work in urban schools, many of these programs are falling short of this goal. In order for underprivileged populations to improve their economic and social prospects, educational programs designed to prepare our future teachers to meet the needs of culturally diverse students must not only include diversity-oriented coursework, but also incorporate extensive hands-on experience in urban classrooms. By developing a better understanding of the perceptions and beliefs of pre-service teachers about working in inner-city schools, teacher educators will be better prepared to implement appropriate curricula and fieldwork opportunities to provide future teachers with the knowledge and hands-on experience they need to successfully instruct students from all types of backgrounds.

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