



Designing Teaching Cases That Integrate Course Content and Diversity Issues

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Introduction

The U.S. Census Bureau (Ortman & Guarneri, 2009) estimates that between the years 2040 and 2050, the U.S. population will experience the “majority-minority crossover” (p. 4), after which White, non-Hispanics will represent a minority of the population.¹ As a result of immigration from the Pacific, Middle East, Caribbean, and Latin America, as well as population growth patterns within segments of the existing U.S. population (Ortman & Guarneri, 2009; Phuntsong, 2001), this demographic shift will make it necessary for educators at all levels to review their educational philosophies and pedagogy regarding cultural diversity and take action where needed to improve the cultural competence of educators. Teacher education will need to renew its efforts to restructure programmatic experiences so that pre-service teachers understand cultural systems (Ladson-Billings, 2004), rather than viewing culture as simply a list of shared habits. Teacher educators must also help

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Designing Teaching Cases

new teachers develop a complex understanding of their own culture and how it might influence their instruction. These experiences will help teachers understand how student identities such as ethnicity, race, language, gender, sexual orientation, and religion (Banks, 2006) will influence their school experiences.

The educational research community has underscored the importance of preparing teachers to embrace a culturally responsive pedagogy for all their students (e.g., Au, 1980; Kidd, Sanchez, & Thorp, 2005; Ladson-Billings, 1995a, 1995b; Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 2005; Phuntsong, 2001). At the same time, teacher education programs have been criticized for being overly theoretical and lacking a bridge for preservice teachers to connect theory to practice (Darling-Hammond, Hammerness, Grossman, Rust, & Shulman, 2005). Teaching cases allow a methodology for connecting practical, field-based scenarios within a social constructivist teacher education approach (Beck & Kosnik, 2006) that promotes culturally responsive dispositions (Villegas & Lucas, 2002).

Based on the research study discussed below and our personal experiences, teaching cases can be used to situate both diversity and content area issues at the center of classroom discussion. Teaching cases also foster a critical discourse that helps preservice teachers think in complex ways about authentic educational situations, and thereby connect theory to practice. The purpose of this article is to (a) provide a brief background and rationale for the use of teaching cases within a social constructivist paradigm that promotes culturally responsive dispositions and (b) discuss a study that modified teaching cases to feature diversity issues and discipline-specific content.

Background and Rationale for Teachings Cases in Teacher Education

What are Teaching Cases?

The history of teaching cases in higher education began in the late 1800s at Harvard Law School (Shulman, 1992), as narrative scenarios that depicted situations a professional lawyer could face in the field. Over subsequent decades, the use of teaching cases as a methodology spread to many other disciplines and practices, and teaching cases are now used across many disciplines, including business, education, and medicine (Merseeth, 1996). Even the teaching of chess now relies on teaching cases to develop expert strategy and skill.

Often teaching cases are short vignettes based on real events that expose teacher candidates to types of problems from which they may gain significant learning and insights. Shulman (1992) explained, "To call something a case is to make a theoretical claim. It argues that the story, event, or text is an instance of a larger class, an example of a broader category" (p.17). Another definition of teaching cases comes from Broudy (1990):

Cases, therefore, consist of selected problems of professional practice and constitute the problem of the professional curriculum. In the training of prospective professionals they form the core of clinical experience and test whether the student can apply theory...Consensus on this clinical experience in turn must rely on the identification of paradigm cases of professional practice. (p. 432)

Shulman (1992) identified some common characteristics of teaching cases. They are: (a) narrative in form, with a beginning, middle, and end; (b) specific with regard to a time and place; (c) designed to foreground social and cultural dimensions of the situation through case events; (d) multidimensional and open to diverse interpretations; and (e) crafted to critically engage and challenge the reader as dramatic tensions in the plot unfold. Due to their narrative nature, teaching cases can be even more relevant and effective for delivering content than expository text. Teaching cases are designed to foster dynamic, in-depth discussions that demand from professors and preservice teachers high levels of reflective engagement and integration of content knowledge with pedagogy (Shulman, 1992).

The research base on teaching cases that infuse diversity issues within teacher education coursework reveals three overarching findings. First, teaching cases appear to be a useful tool to guide the reader to identify and discuss multicultural issues (Kleinfeld, 1988, 1998; Lee, Summers, & Garza, 2009; Sudzina, 1993). Second, case-based instruction is a useful vehicle to discuss and challenge beliefs and biases preservice teachers hold towards multicultural issues (Brown & Kraehe, 2010; Dana & Floyd, 1993; Lee et al., 2009; Sudzina, 1993). Finally, sociocultural theories can be used as a theoretical framework for scaffolding preservice and in-service teachers' multicultural dispositions and skills during case-based discussion (Brown & Kraehe, 2010; Moje & Wade, 1997).

Theoretical Framework for Case-Based Instruction

Teaching cases are excellent tools for teaching and learning within a theoretical framework of social constructivism (Beck & Kosnik, 2006) that promotes reflective and culturally responsive dispositions in preservice teachers (Villegas & Lucas, 2002). Based on the foundational work of Dewey, Piaget, and Vygotsky, social constructivism maintains that powerful learning occurs when knowledge is socially constructed by learners within learning communities that are inclusive and equitable. Discourse between mentors and novices promotes collective knowledge construction through collaborative analysis. The social constructivist paradigm considers knowledge as not only dependent on social interaction, but connected to all other aspects of a person's experiences, thoughts, emotions, attitudes, and actions (Beck & Kosnik, 2006). Integration, critical reflection, inquiry, and community are other important concepts within teacher education programs built upon social constructivist learning principles.

According to Villegas and Lucas (2002), a constructivist perspective on teaching and learning is also central to culturally responsive pedagogy. These research-

Designing Teaching Cases

ers maintain that teachers need to develop six qualities to successfully teach in culturally and linguistically diverse classrooms: (a) sociocultural consciousness; (b) affirming views towards students from diverse backgrounds; (c) commitment and skills for promoting change in schools; (d) understanding of how learners construct knowledge; (e) skills for learning about students' backgrounds, experiences and proficiencies; and (f) the ability to use appropriate instructional strategies for diverse students. Case-based instruction is one method teacher educators can use to incorporate social constructivist learning principles and promote culturally responsive dispositions throughout content area coursework.

In a review of approaches to reform in teacher education implemented over the past few decades, Téllez (2007) critiques approaches focused on multicultural competencies as a predetermined skill set. Generic strategies designed to address an inventory of essentialized cultural traits ignores the complexities of culture and learning needs of multilingual, multicultural students across diverse educational settings. Téllez also argues that reflective and constructivist approaches can be too abstract and fail to “orient preservice teachers around the specific teaching acts that would demonstrate its premises” (p. 559). Preservice teachers require more contextualized instruction through coursework and field experiences to learn how to co-construct knowledge about and with multilingual, multicultural students in order to design effective pedagogical practices.

Teaching Case-Based Approach as Contextualized Learning

The specific content methods, social contexts, and cultural dilemmas integrated within teaching cases can potentially move preservice teachers from abstractions to the type of situated learning paradigm in which contextualized knowledge construction informs problem-solving and pedagogical decision-making. Case-based discussions encourage connections between learners' personal experiences to those they may actually encounter in diverse classrooms, potentially constructing a bridge from content and theory to classroom practice (Shulman, 1992). The professor's role is to scaffold sociocultural and cognitive skills that undergird “reflection-in-action” (Schön, 1987) as preservice teachers consider multiple viewpoints, identify biased perspectives, and challenge specific inequitable practices they might face in diverse K-12 settings. By focusing on diversity issues integrated with content methods for instruction, the professor can facilitate preservice teachers' application of culturally responsive habits of mind (Dewey, 1916/1944; Villegas & Lucas, 2002) to formulate content-based strategies to address specific teaching and learning issues of the case.

Teaching case discussions can contextualize inquiry and problem-solving in a way that values the importance of seeking deep familiarity with students, and constructing a localized knowledge of the classroom and educational community, as recommended by Téllez (2007). Discussion can go beyond the case to identify further information needed to design a well-developed, culturally responsive plan

of action, or to spark service-learning related to social justice issues presented in the case. This type of critical discourse and collaborative inquiry could serve as a model that preservice teachers might implement with their own future students and professional colleagues to co-construct curriculum for transformative change, while setting high expectations for educational rigor and student achievement.

Research Study

The purpose of this study is to understand the experiences of preservice teachers in a literacy course that incorporates teaching cases that feature diversity issues as a methodology. Both qualitative and quantitative data were analyzed to answer the research question: How do teaching cases that feature diversity and disciplinary content issues influence preservice teachers' perceptions and insights related to culturally responsive teaching practices?

Context and Participants

The researchers and professor of the course chose to use teaching cases as a methodology and pedagogy to explore diversity issues in a content area course. This study took place at a public four-year college in the southeastern United States, in a course entitled Early and Emergent Literacy. The participants in this study included the professor of the course, Dr. Grace (a pseudonym), and 20 preservice teachers (17 women and three men). Two of the 20 preservice teachers identified themselves as Hispanic; the rest as Caucasian.

Methods

In this mixed-methods study, 10 teaching cases were written or modified to fit the objectives of this course and to feature diversity issues. A panel of experts reviewed all of the teaching cases for content and clarity (see sample teaching case in Appendix A). Each case featured a minimum of one content area component (literacy) and one diversity issue. The panel of experts selected five teaching cases, and then aligned them with weekly syllabus topics throughout this 16-week course. In addition, one teaching case was selected for preservice teachers to analyze at the beginning and end of the semester for a pre- and post- data comparison (see data analysis for further description of pre- and post- teaching case assessment).

Qualitative data sources. The primary researcher (first author) interviewed the professor of the course five times, once after each of the classes in which teaching cases were implemented, and then one final interview. During these interviews, Dr. Grace explored her ideas about the implementation of teaching cases as well as her perceptions of preservice teachers' responses. Dr. Grace also emailed responses from a professor's journal she kept to discuss the teaching cases, questions she might have, or comments and feedback about the study. Other qualitative data sources

Designing Teaching Cases

included (a) non-participant observational field notes that described and reflected on the flow of classroom activities (Creswell, 2007; Strauss & Corbin, 1998); (b) a researcher's reflective journal to record researcher thoughts and potential biases; as well as (c) preservice teachers' written reflections and analytic responses to a pre- and post-teaching case.

Quantitative data sources. The quantitative data sources included the pre- and post-test scores from the Cultural Diversity Awareness Inventory (CDAI) administered to the preservice teachers. The CDAI was developed by Henry (1991) to examine attitudes of educators towards culturally diverse students and their families. The survey is comprised of 28 opinion statements that address general cultural awareness. Respondents are asked to rate the degree to which they agree with each statement using a 5 point Likert-type scale (e.g., 5=strongly agree, 4=agree, 3=neutral, 2=disagree, 1=strongly disagree). The CDAI assesses cultural diversity awareness by measuring attitudes on three dimensions: attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors. The following sample items from this survey demonstrate the general assessment of the cultural diversity awareness construct: *I believe I would prefer to work with children and parents whose cultures are similar to mine; I believe cultural views of a diverse community should be included in the school years program planning; and I believe other than the required school activities, my interactions with parents should include unplanned activities (e.g., social events, meeting in shopping centers), or telephone conversations.* This questionnaire was used to determine whether there was significant growth in preservice teachers' cultural awareness from the beginning to the end of the semester, and as an additional data source to triangulate qualitative data.²

Data analysis. Grounded theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) provided a systematic method for analyzing the qualitative data. Coding began with a microanalysis of all the data. The primary researcher continued analysis by following these steps (Strauss & Corbin, 1998): (a) open coding, (b) axial coding, and (c) selective coding. Analysis was further documented with a series of coding charts and a code book. These codes were then organized in ATLAS.ti, a qualitative data analysis software program, to assist with management of the data and mapping of conceptual relationships. See Appendix B for coding chart that showed final codes, code descriptors, and exemplar quotes from qualitative data sources.

At the beginning and end of the semester, preservice teachers read and responded to the same teaching case by identifying the cultural and literacy issues presented in the case. They also described what pedagogical strategies they would choose when handling those issues. Participants' responses were tabulated to determine the frequency and type of cultural issues and pedagogical strategies identified in the pre- teaching case as compared with the post- teaching case. Comparison of pre- and post- case responses were used to understand how teaching cases and case-based instruction influenced participants' perceptions and insights regarding

content and cultural diversity issues, and to determine shifts in dispositions and pedagogical strategies over time (Creswell, 2007). A dependent means t-test was used to analyze the pre- and post-test composite scores from the CDAI to determine whether there were significant changes in the preservice teachers' cultural awareness over the course of the semester ($\alpha=.05$).

Trustworthiness. Our analysis of research data was strengthened by using multiple data sources, methods, and theoretical perspectives to triangulate study findings (Patton, 2002). To minimize researcher bias, the primary researcher established an audit trail to verify the rigor of the research and maximize the accuracy of the final report. The primary researcher also met with an external coder with the goal of establishing an 80% intercoder reliability rate (Miles & Huberman, 1994); an 87% intercoder reliability was obtained between the external coder and primary researcher.

Findings

Findings from grounded theory analysis. The themes that emerged from the qualitative data analysis were: (a) culturally responsive pedagogy, (b) need to be challenged, (c) equality, (d) empowerment, (e) negativity, (f) case-based discourse, (g) personal connection, (h) dispositions, (i) solutions orientation, and (j) attachment. The themes and exemplar quotes from qualitative data sources in Appendix B illustrate the multicultural knowledge construction within the classroom learning community. This data provide evidence that case-based instruction fostered dispositions for culturally responsive pedagogy and reflected preservice teachers' journey toward becoming educators committed to social justice (Villegas & Lucas, 2002).

Pre- and post- teaching case findings. Preservice teachers' identified cultural and literacy issues, and suggested pedagogical strategies based on the pre- and post- teaching case. For example, on the pre- and post- case assessment, question number 1 asked, "What are all the different issues in this case?" One participant stated, "The teacher is unaware of the local heritage and doesn't understand what is going on." Pre- and post- case findings showed an increase in the number of preservice teachers who were able to recognize cultural issues presented in the teaching case. Participants identified a total of 27 issues on the pre- case assessment, as compared to 47 issues identified on the post- case assessment. In addition, post- teaching case data brought to the forefront three new cultural issues within the teaching case that further illustrated a deeper development of participants' culturally responsive literacy pedagogy.

Quantitative findings. Based on analysis of pre- and post- data from the Cultural Diversity Awareness Inventory (CDAI; Henry, 1991), preservice teachers demonstrated statistically significant gains in cultural awareness after one semester of this literacy course. Quantitative analysis revealed that mean CDAI post-test scores were significantly higher ($M=91.36$, $SD=7.04$) than pre-test scores ($M=88.00$, $SD=7.18$;

Designing Teaching Cases

$t(18)=3.36; p<.05$). The computed effect size of 0.47 represents a medium effect (Cohen, 1988). Despite limitations related to sampling and independence, these data support qualitative data indicating increased awareness of cultural diversity among the participants. Another limitation to this study is the small homogenous sample size; 17 of the 20 participants identified themselves as Caucasians. Because preservice teachers were also enrolled in a 15-hour field-based experience, the gains shown on the CDAI could also be attributed to this experience and the process of maturation over the semester. Results cannot be projected to the total teacher candidate population.

In summary, the qualitative data analysis revealed that case-based instruction and teaching cases that featured diversity and literacy issues appeared to enhance preservice teachers' perceptions and insights related to culturally responsive teaching practices, a finding that is consistent with and supported by the evidence provided by the quantitative data.

Discussion

All teaching cases in this study were written or modified to integrate diversity and literacy issues. Cases were aligned to weekly topics and contextualized within the content area curriculum of the course. For example, the teaching case entitled "Anna" (see Appendix A) featured literacy assessment methods and issues of linguistic diversity. This case was aligned with the week in the syllabus focused on content of early literacy assessment and running records. This contextualized dimension became an integral part of the study because the preservice teachers and the professor were able to conceptually connect course content and diversity issues within teaching cases. Dr. Grace stated, "I connected to it right away because I think it fit really well to what we are talking about" (Interview, March 16, 2011).

Our findings corroborate those of Merseth (1996) who maintained, "Skillful teachers do not operate from a set of principles or theories, but rather build, through experience on contextualized situations, multiple strategies for practice" (p. 724). Each one of the cases in the current investigation featured one or more literacy and diversity issues in order to stimulate social knowledge construction within critical classroom discourse. Culturally responsive literacy pedagogy is developed by integrating preservice teacher's knowledge about diversity into the content areas (Banks, 2006). By allowing the time to discuss these issues in the case, the preservice teachers and professor as a community of learners can examine the many perspectives and biases of everyone in the case-based discussion (Beck & Kosnik, 2006). Generally, our research suggests that instructors who use cases should keep in mind critical dispositions for culturally responsive teaching and keep a list of objectives and content/diversity issues when listening to the classroom discussion and guiding the discourse.

The professor found the use of teaching cases motivated her students, fostered

a deeper discussion of the weekly topics, and powerfully transferred important topics of diversity and literacy from scholarly readings to the center of dynamic classroom discourse. Moreover, teaching cases leveraged learning of content area theory and concepts within pragmatic contexts, effectively bridging theory into practice while promoting culturally responsive dispositions.

Summary

Cultivating experiences that allow preservice teachers and teacher educators to learn about other cultures and embrace cultural differences is a necessary component of developing a culturally responsive pedagogy (Gunn, 2011). We believe that the use of teaching cases is an authentic, engaging, and effective pedagogical tool to teach content area course objectives anchored in contextualized practice, and bring diversity issues to the forefront of classroom discourse.

Notes

¹ As of 2008, the U.S. Census stated Hawaii, New Mexico, California, and Texas have already seen a turnabout in demographics for majority-minority populations. Moreover, as of 2011, more than 50% of the U.S. population younger than one year of age is from what is considered to be a minority background (U.S. Census Bureau, 2009, 2012).

² Henry (1995) determined test-retest reliability of the CDAI to be at the .66 level with 506 teacher participants from Texas and Virginia. These districts were chosen because of the states' diverse populations. Each statement of the inventory was appraised by a panel of experts for clarity, significance, and content validity. Cronbach's test for internal consistency reliability yielded an overall alpha coefficient of .90 (Henry, 1995).

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Designing Teaching Cases

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Appendix A

In the following teaching case, content knowledge regarding literacy methods is integrated with issues of cross-linguistic diversity and culturally responsive assessment that would impact instructional decision-making for Juan, and other dual language learners. The teacher (Anna) recognizes Juan's miscues are not "errors," but cross-linguistic substitutions, that according to the district's running record scoring procedures would count as separate miscues and underestimate his reading achievement level and instructional placement. Arbitrary implementation of assessment procedures penalizes dual language learners students like Juan. Although seemingly "minor," culturally insensitive assessments pose significant barriers to achievement and educational equity system-wide (Jordan, 2010). Teaching cases such as this one may be analyzed at several levels with respect to educational policy and practice. Case-based discussion offers opportunities to develop nuanced understandings regarding language and literacy instructional methods (i.e. content), as well as critical perspectives regarding "invisible" yet significant barriers to culturally responsive pedagogy and social justice.

Designing Teaching Cases

“Anna”: Literacy Assessment through Running Records

Anna Cohen is a new teacher in Brown County. Anna just graduated from college and is excited to have been hired as a second grade teacher. Anna is nervous about her first year, but is excited to begin her new career as an elementary school teacher.

During the first month of school, the county requires all teachers to assess their students using a running record form and report the results to the county literacy department. In the classroom, the results of the running records will then be used to level the students into the appropriate reading groups. Anna completed her running records but had a concern about one student’s assessment. She was concerned about Juan Ramirez. Juan is Mexican-American, born in the United States. He is an ESOL student who has been in this school since Kindergarten and is considered to be a bright boy. When Juan read with his teacher, he kept mispronouncing the word “chicken.” Every time he came to that word he pronounced it, “shicken.” According to the Brown County Running Record Assessments Guide his mispronunciation should be counted as a miscue. Anna could tell that Juan was getting nervous as she was marking his assessment paper. She also knew that the three miscues for this specific word would score him into a lower reading group although he knows the meaning of the word. Anna does not know how to handle this situation so she asks the reading coach for guidance. Louise Waites, the reading coach replies to her question by stating, “Anna you need to mark them as miscues and put him in the lower group. This is stated in the county reading record guidelines.” Anna feels that this is unjust.

Appendix B

Coding Chart for Grounded Theory Findings

Code	Description of Code	Exemplar Quote	Data Source
Culturally responsive pedagogy	This code was assigned to data that illustrated preservice teachers' understanding of classroom content and cultural concept as one unit.	“Why is only one assessment being used to determine the level of reading? It's only the beginning of the word. We would work on the beginning sounds, since that is what he is saying wrong.”	Observation notes
Need to be challenged	This code was assigned to data that illustrated the need for all students to be challenged academically in the classroom.	“I feel stupid, low and different when the teacher gives me problems that are much easier. I want you to give me problems that challenge me so I can learn more. I want to be like everyone else” [reflection from standpoint of student in teaching case].	Preservice teacher's written reflection

Code	Description of Code	Exemplar Quote	Data Source
Equality	This code was assigned to data that illustrated diverse students' desire to be treated equally, not ostracized.	"I am Jose and I feel insulted when my teacher does not challenge me academically because of my ethnicity. I want you to treat me with the same respect as the other students in my class" [reflection from standpoint of student in teaching case].	Preservice teacher's written reflection
Empowerment	This code was assigned to data that illustrated how preservice teachers' frustration with teaching case issues shifted to a voice of empowerment or consideration of their roles as agents of change or social justice.	"I think because he is saying one word wrong he should only be marked wrong once. We would buck the system."	Observation notes
Negativity	This code was assigned to data that illustrated preservice teachers' written or verbal illustration of being frustrated, upset, or nervous when responding to the teaching case.	"I am nervous and feel like a failure when my grade/reading group depends on one assessment. I want you [the teacher] to test me using various assessments" [reflection from standpoint of student in teaching case].	Preservice teacher's written reflections
Case-based discourse	The preservice teachers and professor engaged in discussion and were introduced to and practiced discourses not only presented in this case, but used in the education profession.	"I heard one group talking about a spelling test. I heard them actually talk about negative things about spelling tests from them growing up ...and I thought, gosh— what a great literacy topic, a great literacy case."	Professor interview

Designing Teaching Cases

Code	Description of Code	Exemplar Quote	Data Source
Personal connection	This code was assigned to data that illustrated how preservice teachers made personal connections with teaching case literacy issues.	“Now they are talking about how much they hated spelling tests when they were young. And I now hear another group discussing the lack of worth of a spelling test.”	Observation notes
Dispositions	Dispositions emerged as a theme when the preservice teachers and the professor discussed different ways to handle administrators and situations that could be controversial.	“In a situation like this it’s pretty easy in this case to be all bravado— but in the real world, you would never confront an administrator in a challenging manner. One group did a good job of [stating to the administrator] this is how it will help our school instead of this is what I want to do, you need to let me. So it was an unintentional thing that happened, because ...maybe they don’t know, when it comes to administration you need to mind your P & Q’s.”	Professor interview
Solution orientation	This code was assigned to data that illustrated preservice teachers expressing the notion that they were trying to fix or find solutions to the issues presented in the teaching cases.	“...it’s all very black and white; they want to fix a problem. They don’t see that these are things you don’t really fix but they are things that evolve and happen and also they see teachers in black and white.” Dr. Grace responded with, “That is interesting because in education there are shades of gray... especially in this case with the running records.”	Professor interview

AnnMarie Alberton Gunn, Barbara J. Peterson, & James L. Welsh

Code	Description of Code	Exemplar Quote	Data Source
Attachment	This code was assigned to data that illustrated the preservice teachers asked questions that showed they were concerned about the people represented in the teaching cases.	“Students are starting to filter out and two of them have just stopped me to discuss the case. One just asked me how the student in the case turned out. She commented, “I wonder if he turned out okay.” These preservice students are becoming invested in these [cases].”	Researcher reflective journal