Multicultural Teacher Education as a Community of Practice: M.Ed./PDS Graduates' Perceptions of Their Preparation to Work with Diverse Students

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Abstract

This study used qualitative case study methods to investigate how a particular community of practice located in a Midwest university influenced the M.Ed./PDS graduates' perceptions of working with diverse students. We use the term multicultural education to refer to the orientations and practices of the M.Ed. program and how the graduates thought about equity, diversity, and social justice. The data for the current study included exit interviews and focus group interviews after graduation, and a case study of three of the graduates. Through an analysis of the graduates' perceptions of their preparation to work with diverse students, we aimed to explore the influence of the purposes and practices of the program as a particular kind of community of practice on its graduates.

To teach all learners well, especially learners with diverse backgrounds, the demographic differences and similarities between teachers and students need to be examined and incorporated into teaching and learning. Many teacher educators have applied and studied ways to develop teacher candidates' knowledge, dispositions, and skills for effectively teaching students from diverse backgrounds; for example, curricular or course development (Clark & Medina, 2000; Laframboise & Griffith, 1997; McFalls & Cobb-Roberts, 2001), field experiences in diverse settings (Cook & Van Cleaf, 2000; Groulx, 2001; Rushton, 2001), and community service learning (Bondy & Davis, 2000; Burant & Kirby, 2002; Seidl & Friend, 2002). Despite these varied efforts, there have been slow changes in preparing culturally responsive teachers and improving minority students' academic achievement (Lee, 2004). Some researchers point out that diversity issues should be more comprehensively infused into teacher education programs and curricula (Ladson-Billings, 1995; Zeichner & Hoeft, 1996). However, there have been only a few studies conducted on multicultural education at a program level (Ladson-Billings, 2001).

There is a need for more in-depth studies that demonstrate effective ways to holistically promote teacher candidates' ability to work with diverse students. In the study, we focused on the influence of this particular kind of community of practice (M.Ed/PDS program) on its graduates' perceptions of their preparedness related to issues of equity and diversity. We use Wenger's (1998) concept of

communities of practice to describe how this program attempted to reach this goal as seen from the perspectives of its graduates.

Multicultural Teacher Education

The purposes and practices of this program mirrored many of the goals in the multicultural teacher education literature. First, the program addressed the multiple dimensions of multicultural education: content integration, knowledge construction, prejudice reduction, equity pedagogy, and creation of empowering schools and society (Banks, 2015). Second, to holistically infuse these multiple dimensions, the teacher education program strove to construct clear goals and procedures reflecting values of multicultural education, as Zeichner and colleagues (1998) argue is necessary. They also suggest that goals and procedures need to be explicitly communicated to teacher candidates, because they shape their experiences regarding diversity and equity. Many collaborative contexts within the program were sites for communicating and negotiating the goals and procedures. Third, Vavrus highlights that teacher educators need to enhance "reflection that is multicultural" (2002, p.38) by making reflectivity a dominant norm of the program. That is, reflection needs to promote teacher candidates' abilities to critically think and act on complex issues in multicultural education moving beyond technical deliberations of instruction. This was a major initiative within the program. Finally, teacher educators need to promote collaborative and harmonious relationships among all participants in the program (Hidalgo et al., 1996). All aspects of the M.Ed. program were designed to be collaborative. The strong implementation of these multicultural goals made us, the authors, curious to investigate the program's influence on the students' understandings of equity and diversity issues in education.

We use the term *multicultural education* to refer to the orientations and practices of the M.Ed. program and how the graduates thought about equity, diversity, and social justice. Banks (2007) defined *multicultural education* as the idea that all students, regardless their diverse racial, cultural, ethnical, language, gender, or social class, have an equal opportunity to learn in school (p.3). From his point of view, multicultural education is a reform and an ongoing process to achieve equity, democracy, and social justice. We recognize the complexity in the literature related to defining these terms and how definitions have migrated over time. In our data, both faculty and graduates used terms interchangeably and so, for the purposes of this research, we do likewise.

Communities of Practice

The multicultural purposes and practices of this program can be described as a particular kind of community of practice. According to Wenger (1998), communities of practice can be thought of as "shared histories of learning" (p. 86). They are communities where participants come together and participate in shared practices, and in the process, learn from each other. The shared practice of this program was the preparation of future teachers. Wenger writes:

Communities of practice ... are a force to be reckoned with, for better or for worse. As a locus of engagement in action, interpersonal relations, shared knowledge and negotiation of enterprises, such communities hold the key to real transformation—the kind that has real effects on people's lives. From this perspective, the influence of other forces (e.g., the control of an institution or the authority of an individual) is no less important, but they must be understood as mediated by the communities in which their meanings are to be negotiated in practice. (p. 85)

Wenger's concept of community is defined by three dimensions of practice: (a) mutual engagement—people in a community of practice are jointly engaged in the process of negotiating meanings that involve various activities, symbols, and artifacts, (b) joint enterprise—people in a community of practice explicitly articulate indigenous enterprise and recreate and negotiate enterprise that keeps a community coherent, and (c) shared repertoire—people gain coherence and a sense of belongingness by participating in activities, symbols, artifacts, or discourse created and adopted by the community.

Wenger's three dimensions were helpful to interpret the practices of this community and the consequences of participation as seen from the perspectives of the graduates related to multicultural education. Mutual engagement helped us examine whether the M.Ed./PDS program promoted transformative learning through collaborative relationships rather than one-way transmissions of information. Joint enterprise helped us understand whether the program communicated and negotiated multicultural education goals with the graduates. Shared repertoire helped us identify the kinds of learning activities and resources the program provided to prepare the graduates to teach multicultural education.

Context and Participants

This study is situated in a five-quarter M.Ed./PDS teacher education program located in a Midwest university in the United States. The M.Ed./PDS program was an experimental K-8 certification program that was designed to promote collaboration between schools and the university in an effort to reform teacher education. The program was in operation from 1992 to 2002. PDS teachers and university faculty participants met with each other weekly to collaboratively develop the program and to support long-term, self-defined professional development. The program was explicit about preparing teachers for urban contexts. The program goal was to thread issues of race, culture, and social justice throughout the program. Faculty participants in the program worked hard to build a democratic environment where the teacher candidates and cooperating teachers felt that their voices and needs were taken into account in the decision-making process (Johnston & PDS Colleagues, 1997).

All teacher candidates were required to take a one-quarter course on diversity and equity, and they voluntarily participated in a community service learning project at a school that was held in a primarily African American church. All teacher candidates did their field experience in a year-long placement primarily urban settings and had a week of "buddy placement" in a school different from their primary placement (nonurban schools with different grade levels)

To know how multicultural education was communicated and practiced in the program, we interviewed four of the tenure-line instructors who taught the general and methods courses. We focused on their goals and practices related to multicultural education. We found that they had many shared goals of preparing teacher candidates to effectively work with diverse students.

Mary, the M.Ed. program co-coordinator and instructor for social studies methods, discussed what she considered to be a shared M.Ed. program goal: "teacher educators need to help students think critically about a world that is becoming increasingly diverse." In her teaching, she integrated discussions of issues of equity and diversity and tried to encourage students to see ways in which diversity provides opportunities to learn, both for themselves and their students. This involved learning to see multiple points of view within issues and contexts and to deal with controversial issues. The students did assignments in class designed to help them examine their stereotypes and prejudices and how these had developed within their own sociocultural contexts.

Beth taught the diversity and exceptionality course in the M.Ed. program. Her teaching focused on examining and deconstructing power relationships to promote students' ability to see multiple perspectives. She believes that everyone has the responsibility to teach multicultural education, and she hoped that all of the students in her classes would develop a commitment to social justice.

David taught the science methods courses, and Steve taught the mathematics courses. They both considered multicultural education an important issue. David's goal was to help the M.Ed. students see the scientific world in more complex ways. He wanted students to teach science by considering multiple views of scientific knowledge, thus challenging the view that knowledge is stable and determined. Steve, teaching mathematics methods, had students do a case study of a student in their field placement classroom. While this was not initially developed to support the M.Ed. students' understandings of equity, he came to see that reaching out to understand one of their student's knowledge and background was a critical component of teaching for equity and social justice. He also used a model for culturally responsive teaching (also used by the other methods instructors) to discuss mathematical thinking related to social justice issues.

Based on these interviews, it seemed that the M.Ed. faculty valued multicultural education, and all of them tried to increase students' knowledge of and attention to equity and diversity issues. While these instructors approached teaching of multicultural education in different ways, the interview data demonstrates a strong community that had developed among the faculty members with a shared commitment toward equity and diversity issues.

The primary purposeful selection (Patton, 1990) of participants was a strategy of convenience. The participants for the exit interviews were the teacher candidates enrolled in the program between 1992 and 2002. The population of the M.Ed. program was similar to teacher populations nationally for these grade levels—mostly white women coming from the same state where they grew up. Students of color were 10–20% of the student cohort. The participants for the focus group interviews were former graduates of the program who gathered at reunions, retreats, and follow-up projects after graduation and were willing to do focus group discussions. They were all teaching in the area.

Mode of Inquiry and Data Sources

A qualitative case study approach was used in an effort to explain how the sociocultural context of the M.Ed./PDS teacher education program influenced the graduates' perceptions of working with diverse students. We attempted to explain the case through interpretations of the participants' program experiences and their perceptions of preparedness to teach diverse students using a specific theoretical framework, communities of practice (Wenger, 1998). For this case, detailed information was collected and analyzed to describe specific cases that might be overlooked in studies looking for generalizable knowledge.

For this study, we collected two data sources: exit interviews and focus group interviews. At the end of each year for 10 years, the program conducted exit group interviews (see Appendix A) with groups of three to six graduating M.Ed. teacher candidates for 1 to 2.5 hours. Their conversations during exit interviews were free-flowing with semi-structured focus group interview questions. All of the questions were covered, but not everyone responded to every question (Johnston-Parsons & PDS Colleagues, 2012). We collected all audiotaped exit interviews and selected responses that were relevant to issues of equity and diversity. We further conducted five focus groups (see Appendix B) with a total of 35 participants who joined us at the weekend program evaluation retreat, and four focus

groups with a total of 28 participants who gathered for a reunion. The participants for both focus group interviews were teaching in the area.

Data Analysis

For the data analysis, we continuously read the transcribed data from the interviews with the faculty and the focus group discussions. We looked for themes and consistency across the data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). To frame our data analysis, we used Wenger's (1998) concept of community of practice. The research question was: In what ways do the M.Ed./PDS graduates' perceptions of multicultural education aspects of the program reflect the purposes and practices of this community of practice? In what follows, we first describe the shared purposes and practices of the faculty in this program, and then the graduates' perspectives about multicultural education under the influence of the program.

Results

In the following sections, we describe the graduates' perspectives about multicultural education and the program influences framed by Wenger's three dimensions of a community of practice.

Mutual Engagement

According to Wenger (1998), to make engagement in practice more productive, diversity is inevitable. In a community of practice, all members mutually share tensions and conflicts as well as peace and harmony generated from interpersonal relationships. It is important to recognize and utilize differences among community members to become a multicultural educator. Some of the graduates' responses were related to these characteristics of mutual engagement.

Diversity and partiality. Diversity and partiality refer to the ways in which an individual's participation is always partial but complements and extends the participation of others who contribute in different ways. It takes everyone's different expertise to be productive. This concept is closely related to multicultural education tenets, such as recognizing and celebrating differences and collaborating with people who are involved in education. Kelsey expressed a theme common in the data:

> I think there were a lot of really smart people who were classmates and that those were good people to ask too [in addition to the instructors]. We were constantly comparing what we were doing, and also it was a good way to let off steam, too.

Kelsey did not explicitly describe learning from differences, but she was clear that the differences between her and her colleagues did not cause conflict in their collaborative work because she was allowed to change things without causing offense.

Some of the M.Ed. students talked about initial anxiety related to the differences between them and their mentor teachers, but the mentor teachers seldom did. This may be that inservice teachers take it for granted that there are differences in how their colleagues think and teach. Also, differences typically cause problems, and M.Ed. students may have felt more anxious about potential difficulties with their mentor teachers, than did the mentor teachers possibly due to their different positioning in within institutional hierarchies, which the program tried to dispel as much as possible. Even though the program adopted a co-teaching and co-learning principle, some students put their mentor teachers in a position of power because their teaching practices and dispositions were graded by their mentor teachers. The strong democratic and collaborative norms within the PDS supported the expression of difference. The cooperating teachers and teacher candidates actively participated in many discussions

at the weekly Thursday night PDS community meetings about different approaches to teaching in search of various pedagogies that can serve all learners equitably. Over time, a consensus developed that the program was not expecting cookie cutter teachers to emerge from this program. The goal was to help the M.Ed. students develop their own teaching stance and practices informed by the many people and ideas within this community of practice. Since this was a goal developed by the teachers within this community of practice, it may have been easier for them to feel comfortable with differences, than for the M.Ed. students.

Wenger (1998) suggests that the better the community can handle tensions resulting from differences, the more engaged, alive, and productive it becomes. Trust in the community is a key to coping with such tensions. Related to these points, Amanda expressed a typical response:

> I think now I cherish the people who I really bonded with in the M.Ed. program, because we can vent, we can say anything, and they [other students and faculty] understand.... And so it's great to send an email and say, "Ooh, you must see what happened [in my classroom]." And I know that it's fine, and I feel safe because you know they understand. You know they can relate.

Amanda's response implies that a safe and trusting community where they can comfortably share their stories that might create tensions had evolved among teacher candidates. This was also true for some as they went out into their schools. Abby said: "In my school, my team is very open and good. We're very tight. We're very different but we work well together."

Of course, this depended on the willingness of others, not just their desires. Many did not find willing collaborators in their schools. Morgan described how she worked with another fourth grade teacher during her first year of teaching, but she felt that their collaboration was more conversational than dialogic. Their interactions lacked the kinds of negotiations that were characteristic of her interactions in the M.Ed. program:

> Really the only thing we've collaborated on is math. At first we started out with both of us looking through the guide and finding things we wanted to talk about. Now it's like we're both kind of rushed. We both want to go home after school rather than talk.

Morgan, like many of the graduates, wanted to work in more collaborative ways and was disappointed when she found herself in more isolated situations. "I miss working with other people. I feel so lonely. I feel like my room is like my office, and I never thought it was going to be like that."

While there were generally positive statements about collaboration within the cohort, there was a minority point of view. Some graduates felt oppressed by the requirements for a lot of collaborative work, particularly at the beginning of the program. By the end of the program, many had changed their minds about collaborative work. Betty said the following:

> I came in very much as an I-will-do-it-myself type of person. I preferred to work by myself, because I knew that I would get it done in time and I would do it right. And I wouldn't have dreamed of working with someone else on academic things ... in the beginning I hated it. But now working in groups is almost more comfortable because you realize how many more ideas you can get.

For many, the collaboration during the program carried over into their years of teaching. Diane expressed it this way:

No one I know from other teacher education programs has the sense of belonging to a group like we did in the PDS program. We all feel like we could count on each other and tell each other anything and get and give advice. This mindset ... has carried over to working as a teacher. We still contact each other occasionally, ten or more years later, and most of us ... work collaboratively with our current colleagues. I find that my preparation insisted on this, and now I crave it.

There were some students who were part of a racial minority group and felt that their points of view were not recognized. Three African American students did their exit interview with one of our African American faculty. They talked about the challenges of collaborative group work. This is an exchange between three African American students:

Casey: But you know, when we would get in a group, it was like we're either invisible, silenced—I'm trying to think of factors that can attribute and I don't know, we're not very shy people. We're not very soft spoken people, but I really felt marginalized because when I made a suggestion, five heads would turn and then turn back.

Interviewer: As if what you said didn't matter or didn't make sense?

Katarina: They just had their own ideas. Everybody had their own ideas.

Interviewer: Did that bother you?

Katarina: Well, maybe I was just silent. I was just like whatever.

Davona: Most of the time we were all "split up" and randomly placed in different groups; that broke up our social structure. Well, maybe we just didn't catch on—sometimes stuff was developed and done and ready for implementation before we could really process what we were supposed to be doing. Or maybe it was just that we approach education in a different way. Like maybe we could see a different method or a different pedagogy or a different way to approach it as African Americans or as females or whatever.

Interviewer: Did it bother you?

Davona: Uh-huh, because, I know where I can negotiate those things ... I realized that it had to be done, but it always seemed like I had to be the person to turn over and make it work.

Interviewer: Why not disrupt it? Why not try to change it?

Casey: It wasn't worth it. We didn't have the time or energy.

These three African American students felt marginalized and silenced when working in groups, and there were similar feelings for some of the other minority students. There were likely cultural and

personality differences also influencing their responses, but their perspective points to the reality that it is difficult to be a minority person in a majority White cohort. Students of color were 10–20% of the student cohort.

While there was a lot of talk about diversity in the program, and discussions directly addressing issues of race in the methods courses, from these students' points of view this was not enough and the group work often felt difficult and inequitable. The White students reported learning from the students of color, but in general, the reverse seems not to have been true for the Black students. Diversity viewed from the students of color did not provide for mutual learning for these students. These responses also suggest that students in a minority status should be allowed to work together at times rather than always randomly assigned to groups.

Mutual relationships. Mutual engagement also requires mutual and collaborative relationships among people, including the challenges and competition that may arise within the community. "A community of practice is neither a haven of togetherness nor an island of intimacy insulated from political and social relations" (Wenger 1998, p. 77). We might say that a community of practice is a real-life setting with all it bumps and challenges as well as rewards.

Of course, relationships are not always bumpy. Abby (earlier) described collaboration with her mentor teacher as a "more even relationship," suggesting fair sharing across roles. This relationship developed throughout the school year and created a comfort zone for negotiation and learning. For her, sharing and collaborative work was the way "to move forward." She carried this into her own classroom, telling students that they will need to be collaborative throughout their lives. Many educators may agree that collaboration is an important component of their teaching. To become a multicultural educator, it is inevitable for people who are involved in education to work together through genuine dialogues. Hidalgo, Chavez-Chavez, and Ramage (1996) stressed that multicultural education teachers commit to promote collaborative relationships among all people who are involved in education.

Some graduates, however, reported problems with their mentor teachers, often because their teacher did not yet understand the collaborative norms or goals of the PDS. In these cases, there were often strains in their relationships and less consistency between their university work and classroom placements.

Many of the M.Ed. students reported continuing relationships with mentor teachers, cohort peers, and/or professors, even long after they graduated. Sometimes they hung on to these relationships because they did not find the same kind of dialogue and support in their school contexts.

Joint Enterprise

A second component of a community of practice is joint enterprise. A joint enterprise is a local collective process where community members produce, through negotiation, the everyday practices to deal with what they understand to be their enterprise. Even if community members do not necessarily have the same beliefs or agreements, together they generate common knowledge (goal and practices) to ground their shared commitments.

The M.Ed. program instantiated multicultural education as a joint enterprise with the students. The faculty of the M.Ed. program we interviewed all described ways in which this goal was shared and implemented. In reading the graduates' responses, it was evident that a strong majority also considered multicultural education to have been a significant part of the repertoire of the program. As Elaine said:

We did a lot of things as far as multicultural education, and I still have a big perspectives unit that I got ... from my mentor teacher about how to take different perspectives and try and think things through and maybe think of someone not in your shoes.

We found a variety of ways that the M.Ed. students described multicultural education. Some talked about various kinds of diversity, focusing on diversity throughout the curriculum. Frank said the following:

I first saw it [multicultural education] as *diverse* means they all come with different needs, and I think that is a huge challenge.... It always seemed like there was a tie-in to cultural diversity and making accommodations for all the different types of learners. I think the program prepared me for meeting the needs of all types of learners, all types of cultures, all types of socioeconomic backgrounds.

James spoke about multicultural education as awareness: "I just try to keep them open to all kinds of other people, make them aware of our differences." Kathryn described teaching multicultural content as a discrete area of curriculum content, i.e., cultures and holidays, "We try to make sure that we include lots of multicultural approaches to holidays, not just Christmas." Martha talked about multicultural education as learning to *get along*:

I think one of our goals as teachers should be to increase acceptance. I think we'll have a happier nation and more success if we increase acceptance, if people can get along and work in groups.

There were many graduates who talked about multicultural education as a pervasive aspect of their teaching. Shawn explained his approach while talking about the pressures of testing. He described integrating questions about racism (not on the test) into the reading of a novel required to teach cause and effect (on the test). He went on to describe his response to two White girls in his class who asked about what they were going to do for Black history month.

I asked them, what did we do last month? They're like, "Oh, yeah," and I asked what did we do the month before that, "Oh, yeah" they replied. It doesn't have to be a one-month thing. I was glad that they asked me about it, but I was also glad that I could turn around and show them that we've been doing things all along.

The instructors in the program wanted a more comprehensive and critical conception of multicultural education, but this was not always evident in the students' responses. It was somewhat evident when students switched from talking about cultures to talking about equity. Owen said:

Equity is a concept I developed through the program. Initially I was concerned about being fair, and that meant treating everyone the same way. Leaving the program, I was still concerned with fairness, but it meant treating each child as he or she needed to be treated, which means not the same.

Social justice appeared in some discussions about testing. Rachel discussed it this way:

The tests are socially and racially biased, and yet we use them to make very important decisions about children and their futures. I think this is unethical and further divides society between the haves and the have nots.

From our focus group data, we cannot produce percentages of agreement within different conceptions of multicultural education, but it was clear that only a few of the graduates considered Banks'(2015) final dimension of multicultural education as creating empowering schools and society. While we can point to many indications that graduates learned many things about multicultural education during the program, we agree with other critically minded authors (Cochran-Smith, 2004; Nieto, 2000; Villegas & Lucas, 2002) that it is challenging to change student teachers' perceptions of diversity during a short teacher education program, particularly if you want to create critical perspectives and social justice orientations.

In contrast to this scarcity of talk about social justice practices, students often described ways they had changed their minds about a number of things during the M.Ed. program. Their descriptions often referenced their experiences working in urban schools. Quite often they used the adjective *eye-opening* when comparing their sheltered childhood experiences in suburban schools or homogeneous communities to what they learned in their courses and experiences in their field placements. Sandy explained:

> In my situation [in a densely urban school], because of where I grew up, it just opened my eyes to new ways of living, new kinds of people. It allowed me to see kids and family situations that I really hadn't had that much contact with, and it kind of opened my eyes to the way the world is.

For many students, what they learned in the M.Ed. program challenged their upbringing and the prejudices they had learned from their families. Kelsey explained how she developed a new kind of awareness during the program.

> Maybe issues related to diversity, issues related to class. I just kind of never really thought of anything besides what I knew, and my father was very "if you work hard, you will succeed. The people who are in poverty are there because they are lazy. They don't want to work. Maybe they're not even as smart as everyone else, and it's just a genetic thing perpetuating itself..." You hear that growing up, and everything has gone well for you. You don't really question it. Maybe some people do, but it's like I hadn't been exposed to any reason to question it. I always worked hard and did well. It seemed to make sense to me. I see a lot of different perspectives now that I didn't really even know existed.

This kind of retrospection often led to increased sensitivity. There were many expressions of this in the focus group discussions. For example, Wanda said, "I realized the [my own] biases that I don't think I would have ever felt [recognized]—I think it made me very sensitive. I think now I'm really sensitive to everything."

This kind of self-knowledge was not easy to uncover or admit. Students struggled with making sense of their ignorance or lack of experience to a wider world and issues of poverty, race, and multiple sites of discrimination. However, there are many graduates who kept learning about these issues long

after they graduated. Betsy, who had been teaching for 5 years when she joined the focus group, described how the veteran teachers on her current teaching team were always complaining about the students with Individualized Education Programs (IEP). She felt differently, saying:

> I think coming from the M.Ed. program allowed me to recognize that having diversity [in my classroom] is a benefit rather than griping about it and complaining about it and wanting a class where everyone is the same because it's easier.

Instead of seeing diversity as promoting tensions and trouble in their classrooms, many of the graduates saw diversity as a resource for their teaching.

Reading these responses, we found that many of the students had developed an understanding of cultural awareness and sensitivity to differences representing a joint enterprise within the M.Ed. program. Many also had incorporated multicultural education as part of their teaching practice, which is what the M.Ed. faculty demonstrated in their teaching and hoped the students would do as well. Even though the majority of the graduates' understandings of multicultural education did not move as far as the faculty advocated toward social reconstructivist views, there was evidence that multicultural education was a joint enterprise in the M.Ed. program.

A Shared Repertoire

A shared repertoire represents the common resources that members of the community use to negotiate meaning and to engage in practice. The development of a shared repertoire brings community coherence. According to Wenger (1998), "a shared repertoire consists of routines, discourse, articles, lessons, and ways of doing things, i.e., symbols, stories, and actions" (p. 82–84).

In the data we found, discussions of a wide range of shared repertoire in the program aimed to encourage M.Ed. students to examine their attitudes toward differences and social cultural learning. They accumulated a variety of experiences and perspectives in the field placements and in the programs that supported asking questions, critical thinking, reflection, multiple perspectives, support, and collaboration. The methods courses supported the development of this repertoire by having students write autobiographies, participate in service learning experiences, and construct memoir projects to critically examine influences on their perspectives. This repertoire was important to multicultural education as well as more general areas of teaching.

Diverse field experiences. One shared repertoire to help students understand multicultural education and issues of equity and diversity was diverse field experiences. An example was having field experiences in multiple sites, both urban and suburban. Students had a yearlong placement in one classroom (most were in urban schools), but they also had a "buddy classroom" that was a different grade and context. They went to this classroom for two intensive weeks at the beginning of the year and then one day every two weeks for two quarters. They also had visiting days when they could go to a peer's classroom and work together for a day. Caitlin, and also many other graduates, described how her placements and experiences in multiple locations helped her understand meanings of multicultural education:

> Just the different classrooms. I mean my student teaching was at Tremont [pseudonym], but we went and observed friends teaching and we saw different classrooms that were just different, different approaches with different students, different situations in schools. These experiences helped me understand multicultural education a lot.

Using the M.Ed. program's field experience as a shared repertoire, the community members negotiated meanings of multicultural education as they discussed their experiences, questions, and issues related to equity and diversity.

Questioning. Questioning was a shared repertoire in the program and is related to multicultural education here because it is a means to developing new knowledge, critical thinking skills, and dispelling stereotypes. Multicultural education is not a deliberation of prescribed curriculum or pedagogy. Students often described how they were encouraged to ask questions. They appeared not to be afraid of asking questions. Asking a question was a resource for both engagement and development of this shared repertoire. In a focus group discussion, Joyce was asked, "So you were supposed to ask questions?" Joyce answered confidently, "Yes, definitely." Jessica commented, "I always felt comfortable to ask questions." In the faculty interviews, they all talked about encouraging students to ask questions, to think for themselves, to develop their own philosophies, and to argue their individual points of view. Questions were also used to ask for help, as Ellen describes.

> Yeah, we were as prepared as you can be to be a first year teacher, but you still have so many questions, and I wasn't afraid to ask. I'm always asking, and with my IEP students, I had a wonderful special education teacher this year, and I was always drilling her and asking her questions. I think that's another thing we learned, that there's support. Sometimes you have to ask, but it's there, and I think that is something else I really got out of it [the M.Ed. program].

Asking questions was a way students could engage, feel a part of the community, and develop ownership in the shared meaning.

Students' questions and opinions were solicited in all M.Ed. activities. There were weekly seminars to discuss problems in the program and courses, students periodically attended the weekly PDS meetings, and student representatives met weekly with faculty as they planned for the methods courses. There were also weekly meetings in the schools with the M.Ed. students, their mentor teachers, and the university supervisors (doctoral students associated with the PDS). In these ways, students were invited to participate in sustaining this repertoire in the community.

Asking questions had ramifications outside the M.Ed. program related to multicultural education. Students talked about ways they experienced issues in their school contexts and that they felt empowered to speak out. Francine demonstrated this by saying:

> I've found that the program gave me the confidence to speak up when I feel that there is something wrong, and that could be whether it's my students [or some other issues]. One of my biggest sources of multicultural education is just challenging the stereotypes, and I do that constantly.

Of course, this encouragement to speak out should not be overgeneralized because students in follow-up interviews and surveys also talked about being *voiceless* in schools, how mandated curriculum, bureaucratic systems, test prep mandates, and politics within school buildings silenced teachers. For some, this was a difficult reality to accept. Gretchen discussed it this way:

> Because of testing pressures on the district and principal, we have been unable to adequately meet the needs of our individual children.... We do not teach science or social studies until after testing. We focus on testing constantly and are no longer preparing kids for life. All writing is scripted.

> There is little choice for us or kids. The [M.Ed.] program did little to prepare me for good reason—this is not good teaching.

As was true for many, the burdens of increasing accountability pressured M.Ed. students in ways that felt restrictive.

Critical thinking. A third shared repertoire that emerged from these data was critical thinking skills, which help the students be equipped with more informed knowledge rather than opinion, often drawn from common sense understandings (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012). The faculty in this program all spoke of expecting the students to develop critical thinking skills, whether they were reading, developing curriculum, or thinking about school practices in their field placements. Helena talked about encouragement in this area, using an example from her literacy course.

> The literature base was huge for me in the M.Ed. program. What is good literature? How to look. We looked at books, both textbooks and picture books with that viewpoint. How is it? Is it a good authentic book to use? ... that's something I might not have been so aware of, but we actually did it.

Many students talked about being encouraged to think critically, which was often combined with discussion about both learning to be reflective and learning to consider other perspectives.

Reflection. Reflection was another topic that was much discussed in the focus group conversations, case studies, and exit interviews. Some students talked about being "sick of reflection," because they were asked to reflect on everything. In some cohorts, they jokingly started calling reflection the *R word.* Kevin said:

> I've always been reflective. The program really empowered me to have the tools of reflection . . . I think now I have the equipment. I needed the terminology, and I needed to be aware of the tools that were always out there ... Now I can spend the rest of my life, whether I like it or not, reflecting, because it has fostered that environment.

This shared repertoire seems to have had an impact on many of the students' teaching practice after they graduated. For example, Lindsey said:

> I think that's one thing the program really helped me to do, really reflect ... at the end of every day, I always will go over my lesson plans and see what I did, think about what I really wanted them to do, and think about what happened and how it was. Did each and every kid learn something? Was that a really great thing that I said? Did I do what I should have done? Should I have said more, said less? That kind of thing. And we always showed how much reflection we did [in the program]. But I really felt like that was good. I think that that helped us just learn to do it.

Multiple perspectives. Another item in the shared repertoire related to multicultural education was the concept of multiple perspectives. Our data showed that this concept was often used to negotiate and understand multicultural education issues. Marian said:

> I think the big thing we see about multicultural education is just what you [speaking to another student] said, multiple perspectives because there are differences religiously and

socioeconomically, learning styles, home life. Just trying to get them to see that there is more than one perspective.

Nancy said:

I want my students to know that there are always other perspectives to consider. I want them to realize that there's more than their perspective and they need to think empathetically about what other people think.

Many of the graduates talked about incorporating multiple perspectives into their teaching, Pamela said: "[I'm] just trying to get them [my students] to see that there is more than one perspective. There are other cultural perspectives." In one of the reunion focus group discussions, two of the graduates gave multiple examples of things they had done to help the students appreciate multiple perspectives. Rachel summed it up this way: "You can teach all the math, science, social studies facts in the world, but if kids can't work in a group of people who are different from them, they can't function in life." Sarah said, "And you can be guaranteed in this country that you're going to find people different than you. Guaranteed." Emily concluded:

Multicultural education starts with the kids you're faced with, and you try and take it out to the world, as we said before. But it starts with those kids, where everyone is accepted, no matter what. And what better way to learn and then take it a further step outside the classroom.

Students as well as faculty members frequently mentioned multiple perspectives as an important concept to understanding multicultural education.

Support and collaboration. Support and collaboration was another shared repertoire in the M.Ed. program. Through support and collaboration, the M.Ed. community members negotiated meanings of multicultural education. This shared repertoire occurred frequently in the data and has been described earlier as part of the mutual engagement in a community of practice.

Readings on multicultural issues were also frequently mentioned as a shared repertoire. Sandy said: "There was required reading throughout the M.Ed. program that dealt a lot with multicultural issues." Using reading materials as a shared repertoire, the M.Ed. community members negotiated meanings of multicultural education. The M.Ed. faculty members also used other resources (e.g., discussion, reflection, service learning, and journal writing) to negotiate and understand multicultural education with their students. In sum, the M.Ed. program used some concepts, experiences, and materials as shared repertoires to help students negotiate and understand meanings of multicultural education and work together as a community.

Challenges to Teaching Multicultural Education

The M.Ed. program built a community of practice with a joint enterprise through mutual engagement and shared repertoire. Our data show that many of the graduates we talked with understood the importance of multicultural education and discussed issues of equity and diversity in their teaching. However, the major challenges they found in their subsequent teaching outside the M.Ed. community included assessment policies and lack of collaboration and support.

Assessment policies. Related to assessment policies, Tim expressed a typical complaint:

I think in part because of the M.Ed. [program], I detest what we are doing to our children. I believe that kids sometimes need more time than we give them and are more likely to fall through the cracks than ever before. I can't really speak about the difference in performance because I have virtually become a robot, reading scripted lessons, and following curriculum designed around one test.

Similarly, Rachel commented:

I only teach what is in the test preparation book. There's no time for anything related to the diverse children in my classroom. We all do the same thing at the same time, and it has nothing to do with their lives outside of school.

There was no time for multicultural education when improving test scores is the primary goal.

Lack of support. Another challenge related to teaching multicultural education mentioned by graduates was the lack of support in their new communities. Annabelle said, "…because that's all we did [in the M.Ed. program]. What we did was share ideas and share this and share that. It's different to go somewhere else."

Many of the graduates indicated that while they felt supported in the M.Ed. program and valued the collaboration and sharing, they often did not find similar support from administrators or colleagues. This implies that these new communities did not have support and collaboration as a shared repertoire.

Conclusion

The search for a clear mandate for how best to develop multicultural education within teacher education may best be constructed from studies that look carefully at the ways particular programs work and their influences on students' perspectives. Toward this goal, this study attempted to examine the relation of teacher education goals and practices of multicultural education and its graduates' subsequent perspectives.

As the result shows, the program infused the goals and practices of multicultural education. The participants indicated that their learning about multicultural education was influenced by the goals and shared practices of the overall program rather than limited to a particular course. The graduates' most consistent descriptions of their practices included developing critical reflection, collaboration, critical thinking, and multiple perspectives. These are closely connected to the primary goals of the program, which reflected this program's commitment to multicultural education.

Building the skills described above is critical for teacher candidates to succeed in their future diverse classrooms. Teacher candidates may demonstrate improvement, often temporary, while they are in the program, as other studies showed (Laframboise & Griffith, 1997; Nathenson-Mejia & Escamilla, 2003). To the contrary, our data showed lasting influences in the 3 to 5 years following the program as graduates discussed ways they continued to use the shared repertoire they learned in the program and/or to resent the lack of opportunity to collaborate and teach in ways that reflected sensitivity to diversity in their current educational settings.

The strong focus of this program on multicultural education suggests that while it seems to have had an influence on students, particularly in raising awareness and sensitivity to issues of diversity, it is not an easy transition to teaching multicultural education in the real world of schools. When teacher

candidates enter a new environment with different goals, practices, and tools, they may not be able to easily transfer their knowledge from their teacher education program.

The major problems and challenges faced by the graduates of this program were test-oriented teaching and lack of support. These challenges suggest that helping students to teach from multicultural perspectives is a complicated affair and cannot be implemented solely by individual effort. Graduates were most satisfied when they found the shared practices of the M.Ed. program in their subsequent teaching environments. When they did not, it was difficult, on their own, to feel supported in using their skills to teach diverse students using the repertoire advocated in the program.

Our study contributes to a wider literature that is concerned with the importance of multicultural education as an agenda in teacher education programs (Banks, 2007; Cochran-Smith, 2004; Darling-Hammond, 2007). In doing this research, we found that Wenger's concept of a community of practice provided a useful theoretical framework for analyzing the perceptions of the M.Ed./PDS graduates of this program. His concepts of mutual engagement, joint enterprise, and shared repertoire helped us to explain how the shared goals and practices of this teacher education program were connected to responses from our graduates 3 to 5 years after they graduated. However, it needs to be applied with critical examinations about overgeneralizing and misrepresenting the community, which may produce counterproductive patterns, injustice, and other prejudicial issues (Wenger 1998).

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Appendix A
Exit Interview Protocol

1. In what ways do you feel you have become a reflective teacher, practitioner?
2. How will that (reflective practitioner) transfer into your teaching? As you do a lesson, how will that help you in teaching?
3. What were the kinds of things in the program that encouraged that kind of reflective thought? That were beneficial or things that discouraged you from reflecting? Anything?
4. What would you say would be the strongest aspects of the M.Ed. program that you are completing now? What would you say are the strengths?
5. What could be improved in the program?
6. What were some strengths and weaknesses in the methods courses?
7. Any of the other methods courses that could be improved?
8. What did you expect that did or did not happen in the program? What were some expectations you came with? Did they happen? Did they not happen?

Appendix B
Focus Group Interview Protocol

1. What are the main challenges you face in attending to diversity in your classroom? The mentoring? Those of you who are finishing your third year may want to think very seriously about this. Issues around multicultural education and diversity and also issues around leadership?
2. To what extent did the program prepare you or to what extent did the program add to what you already had?
3. How did the program help you in dealing with issues of diversity, or how did it fall short in that regard?
4. How would you define or perceive *multicultural education*?
5. How about the accountability movement in proficiency tests? Does that interfere with this at all, or have you found ways to integrate that into multicultural education?
6. What resources do you (or did you) get to support multicultural education?
7. Do you perceive yourself as a culturally competent teacher?
8. Do you have someone that you could call culturally competent?