

Reality and Possibilities of Teacher Education for Diversity in Japan: Lessons from International Trends

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The purpose of this paper is to examine the current position and possibilities of teacher education for diversity in Japan, with reference to discussions on teacher education for diversity in other countries. To achieve this purpose, we pose the following two research concerns. One is the organization of international trends in teacher education for diversity and the clarification of their characteristics. The other is the clarification of the characteristics and challenges of current teacher education for diversity in Japan from the perspective of teacher education policy and practices in teacher preparation programs. In terms of the first concern, we focus on trends in discussions of teacher education for diversity in the United States and Europe, from which it is evident that teacher education for diversity is not simply about correcting the achievement gap in the context of educational equity but is designed to create an equitable and inclusive society. This is a rethinking of teacher education in relation to the state of society and has the potential to take the debate on attempting to ensure equity in the school setting one step further. Regarding the second concern, we focus on human rights education in teacher education and analyze the contents of human rights education syllabi in teacher preparation programs, finding therein a focus on the development of knowledge and understanding of individual issues related to human rights and the historical contextualization of issues. This means that human rights education in teacher preparation focuses on how to teach and promote human rights education in schools, so that teachers have few opportunities to consider the relationship between themselves and human rights, such as how they perceive human rights in society.

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1. Background

In recent times, Japan has witnessed a growing need to train teachers to work with students from diverse backgrounds, including foreign nationals, students identifying as LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer or questioning), and children facing poverty. Implementations to this end have included, for example, making special needs education courses mandatory in teacher preparation programs, as well as improving teachers' practical skills based on responding to the needs of each student, such as the "Project for Development of a Model Program for Training Teachers of Education for Foreign Students and Others" of the Association for Japanese Language Education. Certainly, from the perspective of guaranteeing student learning and ensuring educational equity, it is important to improve the practical skills of teachers who can respond to their students' individual needs. However, these procedures reduce the practical ability of teachers regarding student diversity to the empirical technical ability to deal with differences. This means that student diversity leads to different responses and treatments, turning diversity into a disparity (OECD, 2010).

These arguments have been developed mainly in Europe and the United States (US). For example, in the European Commission's discussion of teacher education on diversity, the point with regard to the understanding of diversity itself is changing from a deficit-based approach in which "heterogeneity is perceived as a burden to be dealt with" (European Commission 2017, p. 29) to an asset-based approach which "understand[s] the benefits of diversity to society as a whole" (ibid.). Amid social challenges such as increasing socio-economic disparities and the growing exclusion of migrants and refugees, there is a need not only to address diversity in individual areas but also to build a society where diversity is respected through education and to prepare teachers to support this education. This means that it is necessary to pursue equity within the existing social structure and to prepare teachers to promote education building a society where equity and inclusiveness are protected.

In Japan, although there have been discussions and practices of teacher education with a specific focus on each dimension of diversity such as LGBTQ and students with special education needs, there is limited research on teacher education based on an asset-based approach, or what we call "teacher education for diversity." There are some discussions of international trends focusing on other countries (Ito & Sato 2020, Morimo & Aoki 2023, Nakayama 2016), but teacher education for diversity has developed in a country-contextualized manner amidst the complex interplay of the research base of the concept of diversity, the institutional and policy base on which teacher education is established, and the practical base developed by each teacher education program. In other words, to examine the potential for diversity in teacher education in Japan, the discussion must consider the Japanese context.

2. Purpose of this paper

The purpose of this paper is to examine the current position and possibilities of teacher education for diversity in Japan, with reference to discussions on teacher education for diversity in other countries. Diversity in this paper is defined as "characteristics that can affect the specific ways in which developmental potential and learning are realised, including cultural, linguistic, ethnic, religious and socio-economic differences" (OECD 2010, p.21). Teacher ed-

education for diversity is generally defined as “a general phrase describing teacher preparation curricula, programs, and pathways intended to prepare teachers to work effectively with diverse learners” (Cochran-Smith 2010, p.2127). This paper positions teacher education for diversity as teacher education that not only responds to diverse students’ needs but is also based on an asset-based approach for diverse students. Additionally, this paper focuses on the level of teacher preparation and initial teacher education in the discussion of teacher education.

To achieve this purpose, we pose the following two research concerns.

1. Organization of international trends of teacher education for diversity and clarification of their characteristics.
2. Clarification of the characteristics and challenges of the current teacher education for diversity in Japan from the perspective of teacher education policy and practices in teacher preparation programs.

Regarding the first concern, we focus on trends in teacher education for social justice discussions in the United States and Europe. In the United States, discussions and practices regarding “teacher education for social justice (or social justice teacher education)” have flourished since the early 2000s. It is worth noting that there is a trend toward diversity in teacher education. In Europe, the European Commission has been discussing teacher competencies based on diversity in relation to social realities (social exclusion), providing useful insights on the specifics of teacher education for diversity.

Regarding the second concern, we focus on human rights education in teacher education. The reasons for this are as follows: 1) The European Commission and other organizations in Europe have developed discussions on teacher education for diversity referring to human rights education; 2) there is high affinity between the philosophy of human rights education, that is mutual respect for human rights, and the concept of diversity, which views differences as an asset; and 3) there is a certain amount of accumulation at the practical level regarding human rights education in current teacher preparation programs (Jimmura 2019).

3. International trends in teacher education for diversity

(1) United States

Here, we briefly summarize the characteristics of teacher education for social justice in the US. According to McDonald (2012), teacher education for social justice is aimed to “prepare teachers with the knowledge, dispositions, and practices for teaching all students, for advocating not only for change within their own classrooms but for the transformation of whole schools and districts, and for viewing their efforts as teachers as connected to and part of a larger movement for justice and equity” (p. 2002). Teacher education for social justice was originally derived from multicultural teacher education based on multicultural education theory, which was developed in the 1970s (McDonald & Zeichner 2009). Multicultural teacher education aims to train teachers to teach diverse students about the development of diverse cultural groups in American society. Although multicultural teacher education took various forms within the development of multicultural education theory, it has been influenced by the social reconstructionist approach, especially since the 1990s, due to increasing criticism of multicultural education theory (praise for cultural diversity and disregard for oppressive struc-

tures in society) and the development of critical pedagogy. Consequently, teacher education for social justice has emerged. It differs from multicultural teacher education in that it focuses on social structural issues surrounding justice (discrimination and oppression) and encourages action toward social change, not just change in individual teachers (McDonald, 2012). This point can be seen in the above definition of social justice teacher education, which includes “the transformation of whole schools and districts” “connected to and part of a larger movement for justice and equity.”

Teacher education for social justice is practiced in a variety of ways in many teacher education programs and is not uniform in appearance. For example, some programs include social justice content in their mission to clarify the overall concept, offer courses on social justice and education, and develop community-based activities, particularly in teaching practices and field experiences. Cochran-Smith (2010) describes four specific conceptualizations of these practices. The first is “knowledge.” In addition to the general body of knowledge and traditional school knowledge required of teachers, it is necessary to understand and critically examine the limitations of those knowledges. The second is “interpretative frames.” For example, this includes the views of students with diverse backgrounds as assets for learning and an attitude of inquiry that challenges one’s own and others’ assumptions. The third is “methods, skills, strategies, and techniques.” Here, the principles guiding the various methods are envisioned, such as culturally responsive pedagogy that structures the curriculum and teaching based on the resources that students bring to school. The fourth category is “advocacy and activism.” This has been shown to raise awareness of injustice in schools and classrooms, leading to active work with students, other teachers, parents, and the community in the pursuit of justice.

In terms of policy, Washington State has established Cultural Competency, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (CCDEI) standards among its teacher standards and requires teacher preparation institutions to ensure the content outlined in these standards. The standards consist of four components: (1) understanding self and others; (2) student, family, and community engagement; (3) learning partnership; and (4) leading for educational equity (Professional Educator Standard Board 2021). The content of the standards is highly compatible with that of teacher education for social justice, such as understanding the diversity of others along with their needs and strengths, and acting for the common good, not just for education.

As described above, discussions on teacher education for social justice in the US link teacher education with the construction and transformation of society. These can be seen as activities that support diverse children based on the assumptions of the existing society, exploring methods of teacher education that construct a society that respects the diversity of students.

(2) Europe

Focusing on trends at the European level, this section summarizes the trends discussed by the European Commission. Additionally, the European Commission has been discussing teacher competence for diversity based on the results of projects by the Council of Europe, whose principles are human rights, democracy, and the rule of law. The most notable projects in relation to this theme are: “Study on How Initial Teacher Education Prepares Student Teachers for Diversity in the Classroom” (ITE Project, 2016–2017) and “Educational Needs of Teachers in the EU for Inclusive Education in a Context of Diversity” (INNO4DIV,

2019–2020).

The common background to these projects is the “Paris Declaration” (Declaration on promoting citizenship and the common values of freedom, tolerance, and non-discrimination through education) made at an informal meeting of EU Education Ministers. In response to the 2015 terror attacks in France and Denmark, there was a need to confront social exclusion, intolerance, racism, and radicalization. Therefore, the Declaration emphasizes “empowering teachers so that they are able to take an active stand against all forms of discrimination and racism, to educate children and young people in media literacy, to meet the needs of pupils from diverse backgrounds, to impart common fundamental values, and to prevent and combat racism and intolerance” (Paris Declaration, 2015 p.3).

In response to the Paris Declaration, the ITE Project researched the actual situation regarding diversity-based initial teacher training, while considering the needs of teachers who “should be able to provide support to newly arrived pupils, to address the specific needs of all learners, and to foster tolerance, respect for diversity and civic responsibility in all school communities” (European Commission 2017, p.12). The meaning of “diversity” referred to in the project focuses on migrant and minority backgrounds. Thus, this project emphasizes intercultural competence, including valuing and adapting to diversity and being culturally self-aware. Furthermore, it analyzes the position of diversity in the whole education policies; it also indicates that there are still few asset-based arguments about diversity. Although diversity is included in the goals of general education policies, it is not mentioned in relation to teacher education. The project analyzes two trends. First, terms such as intercultural or multicultural education, plurilingualism, tolerance and citizenship, religious diversity, and inclusive education have been included directly in the goals of teacher education. Second, these terms have been indirectly included in the goals related to broader concepts such as respect for human rights, anti-discrimination, and the promotion of equality. In light of this analysis, the project recommends the establishment of a competence-based initial teacher education system in which diversity is clearly defined.

While the ITE project aimed to understand the current situation, the INNO4DIV project was established to support educational policies on teachers’ intercultural competence. Specifically, the project aims to define the intercultural competence needed for teachers, identify elements of competence development, and present cases and policy recommendations based on these elements. Here we focus on the definition of intercultural competence, or so-called “intercultural democratic competences (IDC).” This project takes an asset-based approach in order to adopt intercultural competence and the “Competences for Democratic Culture (CDC)” promoted by the Council of Europe by comparing various discussions of competences. The reason for this approach is that the CDC framework is based on the development of an ethical commitment towards democratic values, inclusion, and social justice, as well as on a critical pedagogy approach. The definition of IDC is as follows: “The capacity to engage in open, appropriate and effective interactions across cultures. It is the ability to establish positive interactions with people of different national, ethnic, religious, social or cultural backgrounds or gender, these being the dimensions that are most immediate and required when it comes to educational settings. These dimensions address all marginalized groups such as minorities, religious groups or economically marginalized individuals” (Shuali et al. 2020, p. 36). These competences are influenced by the culturally responsive pedagogy theory of Ladson-Billings.

Based on a brief review of the trends discussed by the European Commission, both projects focused on teachers' intercultural competence. This can be seen as an emphasis on teachers' intercultural competence to prevent the continuation of intolerant societies and promote equitable and inclusive education in light of the Paris Declaration. In addition, considering the influence of critical pedagogy and the culturally responsive education theory, it is possible to find commonalities in trends between the US and Europe.

4. Current status of teacher education for diversity in Japan: Focusing on Human Rights Education

(1) Teacher education policy

As mentioned above, the accumulation of practices and research on diversity in teacher education using an asset-based approach is insufficient in Japanese teacher education. These discussions are rare, especially regarding teacher education policy. In this section we analyze the content of the Core Curriculum for Teacher Preparation Programs (*Kyōshoku Katei Core Curriculum*) and recent governmental reports on teacher education.

The Core Curriculum for Teacher Preparation Programs outlines the objectives and contents of the courses stipulated in the Educational Personnel Certification Act. Universities that offer teacher preparation programs are required to establish courses that adhere to these requirements: specifically, to create course syllabi in accordance with the Core Curriculum for Teacher Preparation Programs and to conduct courses based on these syllabi. The Core Curriculum for the course "Understanding Infants, Children, and Students with Special Needs" provides understanding and support methods for students with disabilities, as well as for students with special needs other than disabilities, such as poverty and Japanese language education. Here, responses and treatments to individual differences, such as "support methods," are required. This highlights the importance of ensuring equity in education. However, the perspective of teacher education for diversity, which focuses on the development of teachers who envision education building a society based on the existence of diverse people where equity and inclusiveness are protected, is not indicated in the content of the Core Curriculum for Teacher Preparation Program across disciplines. For example, words such as "diversity," "equity," "social justice," "human rights," and "anti-discrimination" are not present.

Teacher education for diversity is not covered in the content of a single course but must be recognized in the context of the entire teacher preparation program. This paper also examines whether discussions on teacher education for social justice are being developed within the framework of the overall teacher education policy. We focus on the governmental report by the Central Council for Education of December 2022, "The Ideal Role of Teacher Preparation, Recruitment, and In-service Training in the Pursuit of 'Japanese-Style School Education in the Reiwa Era' (*'Reiwa no Nihon-gata Gakkō Kyōiku'* wo Ninau Kyōshi no Yōsei, Saiyō, Kenshū no Arikata ni suite)." The word "diversity" appears amid the discussion of the need for teachers' groups that can accept and respond to the diversity of children, but it is only mentioned there once. "Diversity" appears more prominently in the context of the diversity of teachers and teachers' groups. Words such as "equity," "social justice," and "human rights" are not used at all. Since this report focuses on pressing issues such as teacher shortages and the reform of teacher work styles, there is no room for philosophical discus-

sions such as teacher education for diversity. Actually, the governmental report “Toward the Construction of ‘Japanese-Style School Education in the Reiwa Era’ (*“Reiwa no Nihon-gata Gakkō Kyōiku” no Kōchiku wo Mezashite*)” (January 2021), which is the premise for the 2022 report mentioned above, indicates the importance of realizing a diverse and inclusive society and fostering an attitude of respect for diversity. However, it is inadequate in terms of diversity in teacher education (Jimmura 2022).

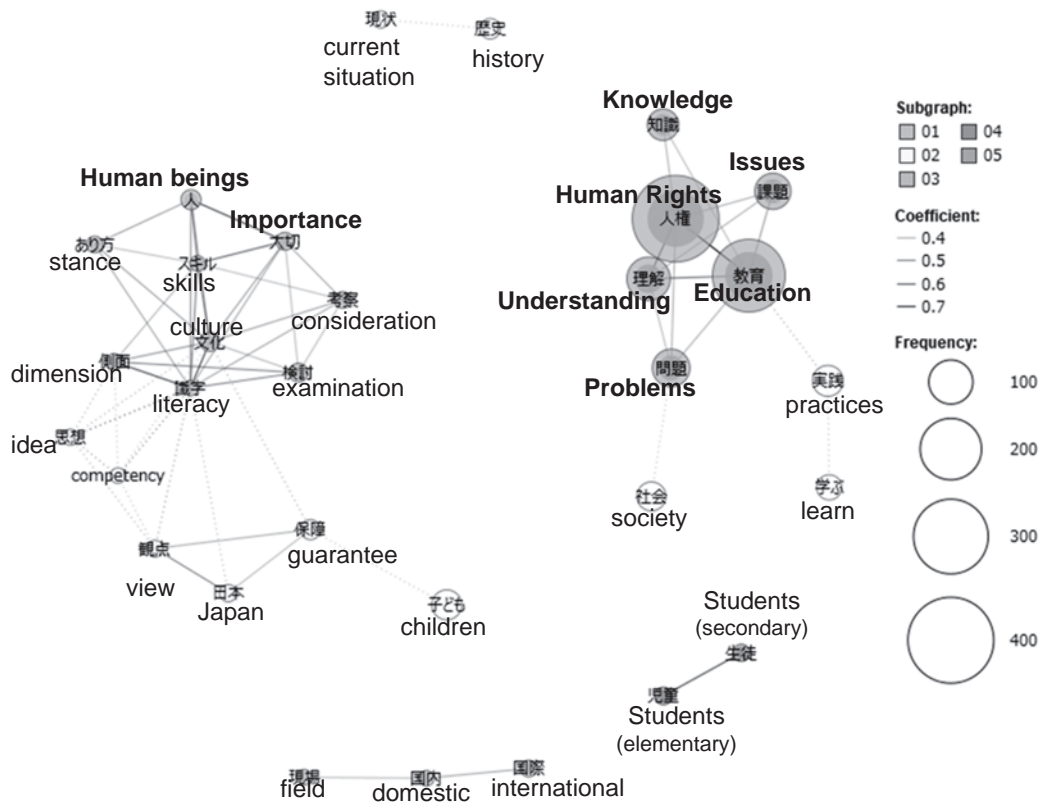
Considering this situation, teacher education for diversity in Japan will not immediately be positioned as a teacher education policy. Rather, as mentioned in the teacher education policy, we can see potential in the initiatives developed by each teacher preparation program from the perspective of their “autonomy.” For example, Osaka Kyōiku University started “Diversity and Human Rights Education Program in Collaboration with Local Communities” as a minor program in 2021. This program incorporates lectures and fieldwork with the aim of “preparing teachers who will promote respect for diversity and human rights education” (Jimmura 2022, p. 11). However, under Japan’s teacher education system, which is based on an open system (all universities have opportunities to establish teacher preparation programs after government approval), the possibility of developing teacher education for diversity at the program level relies on the resources and missions of universities with teacher preparation programs. Therefore, this paper reviews the current status of practical efforts at the course level rather than at the program level. In doing so, we focus on “human rights education” in teacher preparation¹. Human rights education in teacher preparation does not exist as a mandated course under the Educational Personnel Certification Act, nor is its content required in the Core Curriculum of Teacher Preparation Programs. However, based on the importance of human rights education in school settings, some universities have established it as an additional course in teacher preparation programs (Matsushita 2017).

(2) Human rights education in teacher preparation programs

To clarify the characteristics of the human rights education offered in teacher preparation programs, this paper covers approved elementary teacher preparation programs (as of 2022) at 148 universities. We searched the syllabi of human rights education courses online, filtering for “human rights” and “education” in course names, and confirmed the courses required for teaching licenses. A total of 94 courses were administered. Their goals, descriptions, and plans, including topics addressed in the course, were text mined using KH Coder (version 3)². This section focuses on analysis of the course goals and the topics included in the course plans.

In the analysis of the course goals, we focused on the two co-occurrence networks shown in Figure 1. The first includes “human beings,” “importance,” “stance,” etc., showing subjective and emotional goals. These can be understood as targeting the value and emotional dimension of human rights education. The second shows objective and knowledge-based goals. Terms frequently occurring included “human rights,” “education,” “understanding,” “knowledge,” and “challenges,” with strong interconnections. Furthermore, it should be noted that the linkage between “practice” and “education” is very weak. The above suggests that the course goals are limited to the dimensions of value and knowledge, with a very weak practical dimension concerning what should be done to realize human rights.

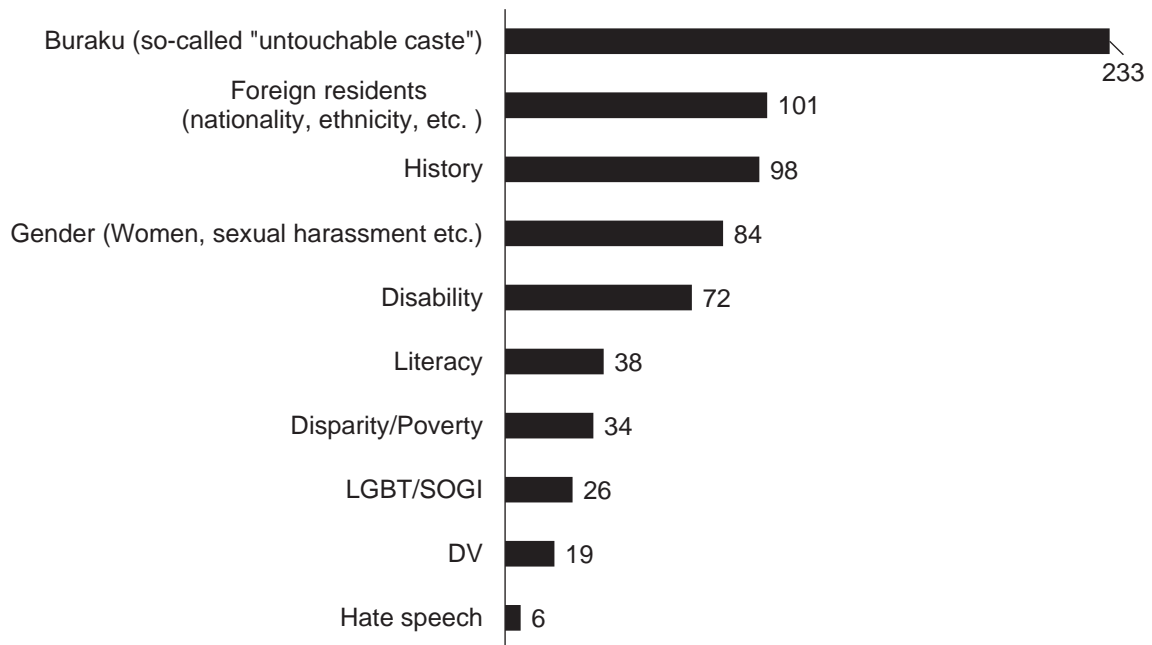
Figure 1: Co-occurrence network of course goals



In analysis of the course plans, the chart showed the top three most frequent occurrences related to Japanese-specific historical contexts, such as discrimination against *buraku* (a social sub-class similar to the Indian untouchable caste) based on the pre-Meiji period social status system (Figure 2). Regarding foreign residents, there is still serious discrimination against Korean Japanese (*Zainichi* Korean), who have been in Japan for generations with historical backgrounds related to the Japanese occupation of Korea and World War II. Other issues addressed include discrimination against the increasing number of foreign residents, gender, disability, literacy, disparities/poverty, and LGBT/SOGI (sexual orientation and gender identity). Discrimination regarding these factors does not always emerge as a single issue; therefore, intercultural and intersectional perspectives are required.

The above analysis suggests that human rights education at the teacher preparation program level tends to be limited to the knowledge and understanding of individual issues related to human rights. Hence, it is severely lacking in terms of how to concretize knowledge, values and attitudes, and skills, and possesses fundamental weaknesses in acts for the realization of human rights.

Figure 2: Frequency of word occurrence in lesson plans



5. Discussion

Finally, considering what has been clarified thus far, we examined the possibilities of teacher education for diversity in Japan.

From the discussions of the US and Europe, it is evident that teacher education for diversity is not simply about correcting the achievement gap in the context of educational equity, but is designed to create an equitable and inclusive society. This is a rethinking of teacher education in relation to the state of society and has the potential to take the debate on attempting to ensure equity in the school setting one step further. In Japan, as confirmed by the analysis of teacher education policy documents, the discussion on diversity emphasizes the aspect of responding to the individual needs of students with “personalized learning” (*ko-betsu saiteki na manabi*) at its core. Responding to and handling diverse students individually are important initiatives for ensuring equity in learning. To discuss education and equity further, it is necessary to reconsider the relationship between teacher education and the construction of a society that respects diversity. This will lead us to move away from the assumption of a linear link between teacher education and students’ academic achievement (the simple logic being that improving teacher quality will improve academic achievement) and to consider the complexity of the work of teacher education (the range of impact teacher education has on school education, and the differences in impact by the constituencies involved in teacher education) (Ell et al. 2019).

Regarding the practice of human rights education in teacher preparation programs in Japan, there is a focus on the development of knowledge and understanding of individual issues related to human rights and the historical contextualization of issues such as discrimination against *buraku* and *zainichi* Koreans. This means that human rights education in teacher

preparation focuses on “how to teach and promote human rights education in schools,” with few opportunities for teachers to consider the relationships between themselves and human rights, such as how they perceive human rights in society. Regarding intercultural competence and CDC in the European discussion, the role of teacher education institutions is “not only to train teachers to be able to make effective use of the CDC Framework in schools and other educational institutions (the ‘technical’ side), but also to equip them with a set of competences necessary for living together as democratic citizens in diverse societies (the ‘substantial’ side)” (CoE 2018, p,76). Additionally, the CCDEI teacher standards of Washington State mention self-understanding, reflection, and advocacy perspectives for teachers to lead educational equity, indicating an action aspect that focuses on teachers. Given these circumstances, human rights education in teacher preparation can be transformed into a course that considers the relationship between the self and society as a teacher, and the nature of society based on human rights. This would not be limited to the enhancement of the content of one course, but would spill over into discussions on how to provide opportunities and occasions to think about the state of society from the perspective of diversity in teacher preparation programs.

Notes

1. Matsushita (2017) conducted a study about human rights education in teacher training university through a questionnaire survey and an analysis of syllabi. In this study, the content analysis of human rights education courses from the perspective of teacher education for diversity was inadequate.
2. KH Coder is free software for quantitative content analysis and text mining. It can be downloaded from <https://kncoder.net/en/>.

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