PREPARING SOCIALLY CONSCIOUS TEACHERS:
A Social Justice-Oriented Teacher Education

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Introduction

For decades, educators and researchers have observed practices of educational inequality in U.S. schools (Kozol, 1991). In a multicultural democracy, schooling without educational equality constitutes injustice. Stevens and Wood (1995) perceptively beg the question, "How democratic can a society be that provides unequal education?" (p. 312). In a multicultural democracy, education is a major means for achieving a more just and equitable society.

Historically, many Americans including teachers have been socialized to believe that America is a land of equal opportunity. The American creed and achievement ideology purports a social perspective that sees America as open, fair, and full of opportunities, and education is believed to be the great equalizer in matters of opportunity and upward social mobility (Oakes & Lipton, 2003). Those that succeed or fail, do so because of their hard work and ability or the lack of.

But is the educational playing field

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really level? Are schooling benefits and opportunities equally accessible to all? How well prepared are classroom teachers for urban students? Numerous reports document the low quality teaching in many urban schools (Delpit, 1995; Gay, 2000; Haberman, 1991; Haycock, 1998). Haberman (1991) characterizes this reality as the "pedagogy of poverty." Recently, President George W. Bush's *No Child Left Behind* 2002 legislation recognized the poor teaching in urban schools.

The purpose of this article is to illuminate both the ideological, contextual, and political dynamics that contribute to the inadequate preparation of teachers for urban schools. Specifically, the paper highlights the many ways current teacher education programs ill-prepare teachers for urban schools and concludes with specific recommendations for transformation.

Literature Review

The need to prepare quality teachers for our nation's schools continues to receive considerable attention (Cochran-Smith, 2000). A host of federal, state, local and scholarly initiatives and research continue to question the viability of traditional teacher education programs to prepare new and experienced teachers for today's and tomorrow's classrooms (Blair, 2004; U.S. Department of Education, 2002).

Classroom teachers are directly linked to the quality and equitable delivery of education and student academic achievement (Ayers, 1998; Darling-Hammond, 1997a; Flores-Gonzalez, 2002; Kozol, 1991; Ladson-Billings, 2000; Nieto, 2000; Marzano, 2003; National Commission on Teaching, 1996). Unfortunately, studies indicate that prospective and inservice teachers who are predominantly White, middle-class, and monolingual (Futrell, 2000; Kailin, 1999) lack the knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed to successfully work with urban students (Gay, 2000; Haberman, 1991; Smith, 1998). As Garmon (1996) clearly points:

> A large white and female teaching force may bring negative, unacceptable attitudes toward the growing numbers of student of color in their classrooms; these attitudes coupled with the attendant lower expectations, are major contributing factors to the widespread academic failure among minority students. (p.5)

Also, beginning teachers themselves report feeling inadequately prepared to teach diverse students and in multicultural school settings (Futrell, Gomez, & Bedden, 2003; Valli & Rennert-Ariev, 2000). Among educators and researchers, teachers' racial

attitudes and beliefs about urban and low-income students, are the most compelling reasons to prepare teachers for diversity (Buttery, Haberman, & Houston, 1990). Imperatively, researchers as well as professional organizations have called for educating teachers to cultivate the habits and minds of transformative intellectualism and change agents (Giroux, 1988).

For example, both the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) and the Interstate New Teacher Assessment Consortium (INTASC), have diversity standards that specifically require teacher education programs to prepare their candidates for diversity and educational equity. Although these diversity standards exist studies continue to reveal that teachers are inadequately prepared for working with urban students (Cochcran-Smith, 2000; Futrell, Gomez, & Bedden, 2003). This is a significant matter, as studies indicate today that the "missing element" [in k-12 school reform] are teachers (Steiner, 2003).

In the following I discuss the various forms in which teacher education prepare teachers who cannot successfully teach urban students. These include ideological underpinnings, lack of commitment to cultural pluralism, and programmatic issues.

How Teacher Education Ill-Prepares Teachers for Urban Schools

1. Pervasive Assimilationist Ideology That Frames Teacher Education

Although teacher educators recognize the achievement gap reality and agree that preservice and inservice teachers need to be well prepared, they continue to implement conservative ideologies and programs that are Eurocentric and monocultural. Multicultural scholars have been most vocal about the existing ideologies and pedagogies that inadequately prepare teachers for diversity (Greene, 1998; Ladson-Billings, 2000; Nieto, 2000). These scholars have criticized policies and practices of assimilation that maintain the status quo.

For example, Nieto (2000) writes about the "sluggish pace" (p. 181) with which teacher education programs approach diversity, in spite of the rapidly changing demographics of the student populations in the public schools. Ladson-Billings (2000) adds that many teacher education programs continue to prepare teachers as if they will be teaching in homogenous, white, middle-class school communities (p.97) or, in Nieto's (2000) words, "classrooms of half a century ago" (p. 181). Ladson-Billings (2000) specifically indicts teacher educators for their reluctance to

"address their own culpability in reproducing teachers who cannot and will not effectively teach diverse learners" (p.96). Vavrus (2002) criticizes teacher education for socializing preservice teachers into status quo social climates of K-12 schools, as faculty "avoid interrogation and critique" of the political nature of schooling.

Research shows that although accrediting agencies stipulate diversity standards, only a few institutions are in full compliance (Gollnick, 1995), that most programs remain monocultural, largely dominated by traditional thought with token expressions of diversity as well as the power structure unchanged (Pang, Anderson, & Martuza, 1998). Pang, Anderson, and Martuza (1998) eloquently articulate this concern:

> Although professors of color may be recruited or new books with cultural content added to the bookstore shelves, the power structure remains solidly in place; this structure is based on the legitimacy of the Western construction of knowledge, value orientation, and historical tradition. (p. 55)

2. Lack of Faculty Commitment to Multicultural Education

Studies that have examined the commitment of teacher education faculty to cultural diversity indicate that many reject it and criticize it for being politically motivated, lacking credence in the academe (Kincheloe, 1993) and viewing it as a minority issue (Garcia & Pugh, 1992). This is not to say that diversity is not talked about or articulated in the programs. Due to accreditation requirements teacher educators talk of diversity and even reflect it in their program's conceptual framework but fall short in implementation. At best, they hold a human relations' and moralistic perspective on cultural diversity rather than an anti-racist perspective.

In addition, research indicates that a vast majority of teacher educators have not been disciplined in multicultural education and so lack a commitment to it (Grant and Koskela, 1986; Grant and Miller, 1993) and limited in engaging preservice teachers in the analysis of the sociopolitical contexts of schooling and systemic educational inequities (Cochran-Smith, 2000; Kailin, 1999; Nieto, 2000). As a result most teachers continue to view the academic problems of diverse, urban and low-income students as situated primarily in pathologically deficient families, and so rarely consider deficiencies within the school and especially in their own practices.

Additionally, studies suggest that the reluctance of teacher education to provide adequate field experiences for prospective teachers in multicultural school settings

contributes to their ill-preparation for urban teaching as they miss the opportunity to gain self-knowledge, community knowledge, and skills for empathetic connection and sensitivity.

As a case in point, I teach at a university located in an urban community that shares its boundary with a large urban school district. Over 95% of the teacher candidates come from the affluent suburban communities, who plan to return to teach in those communities. In most cases, these candidates self-select and are allowed to engage in field experiences and student-teach in suburban schools.

The argument is that these candidates will teach in suburban schools, not urban schools. The fallacy in this argument is that most White teachers end up taking positions in urban school communities. They do so by default due to the limited positions in suburban school communities. These teachers often go into urban school settings without developing critical knowledge, skills and dispositions needed to work with urban students and families and so struggle unsuccessfully to reach them.

3. The Dominance of Behaviorist Thinking in Teacher Socialization

Traditionally, teacher education has been, and in most cases still is, guided by the thinking of behaviorism (Garrison, 1988). According to critics of behaviorism, the teacher is merely a rule follower, a guidebook reader of mandated curriculum with standardized materials that determine class activities (Bowers & Flinders, 1990; Britzman, 1991) who is discouraged from interpretative acts (Bullough and Gitlin, 1991). In particular, Kincheloe (1993) explains that the goal of behaviorism is to prepare teachers to develop technical competence and to conform to the existing school structure.

A teacher education program based on behaviorist paradigm socializes teacher candidates to a culture of conformity, "banking education," and competitiveness as they are passive learners, compete for grades, praise, and instructional resources (Kincheloe, 1993) and so fail to learn the habits and minds of inquiry, collectivism (Goodlad, 1990) and community practice (Wenger, 1998). Given this socialization, do we wonder why teacher candidates transition into their own classrooms perpetuating the same "banking education," individualism, and competitiveness!

Additionally, guided by behaviorist thinking, teacher educators often view prospective teachers as "babies" whose hands need to be held. As babies, they are per-

ceived as empty vessels, "shapeless blobs of clay waiting to be molded into teachers" (Kincheloe, 1993, p.11). Consequently, they are viewed as incapable of grappling with critical issues of diversity or transformative learning.

Personally, I have encountered colleagues within and outside my institution who hold fatalistic beliefs about preparing teachers for transformative intellectualism and change agency. They often argue that because of the student challenge and the "toxic" culture in urban schools it is unrealistic to expect teachers to function as change agents; that if we can get teachers to learn how to teach their grade-level curriculum, maintain classroom discipline and get along with students and their families, that is the best we can hope for.

I have been cautioned about my ideas of transformative intellectualism and reminded that my preservice teachers are young and not ready for the kind of higher order intellectualism and change agency I advocate for our program. In fact, once a colleague noted in my peer teaching evaluation that I needed to approach my teaching with preservice teachers from a more didactic rather than the critical inquiry stance she observed. What a contradiction!

As teacher educators we impress upon teacher candidates the importance of high expectation and yet we have low expectation of them. Although many teacher education programs often create conceptual frameworks premised on "teachers as reflective practitioner and inquirer," "empowering professionals" and social justice educators," in reality, they are geared toward technical competence and passivity. Prospective and classroom teachers often lack the opportunity to learn to interrogate the meaning of practitioner thinking. In fact, Kincheloe laments that, "as long as teacher educators believe that novice teachers' survival is the cardinal goal of professional education, little substantive change will occur" (1993, p.4).

4. Failure To Recruit and Retain Diverse Faculty

Research reports that teacher educators are predominantly White (Ducharme & Agne, 1989; Fuller, 1992). Although colleges and schools of education administrators talk about faculty diversification, the faculty remains homogenously White. According to the RATE study, less than 20% of minorities constitute the professoriate with: 2.9% as full professors, 6.4% are at the associate level, and 9.9% at the assistant level (Zimpher, 1989, p.9). In many teacher education programs tokenism in the faculty composition is the norm. For the past fifteen years I have taught at two universities, one located in a rural community and the other in a large urban community. In both institutions, I have found myself the only minority in my departments.

Conventionally, faculty of color are often assigned to teach diversity courses. The faculty often experience student resistance, frustration, and hostility from White prospective and in-service teachers especially if they approach their courses from a critical stance that brings critical diversity issues to the forefront (Ahlquist, 1991; Ladson-billings, 2000; Ukpokodu, 2002). Often, faculty of color are viewed stereotypically, both by their colleagues and students, as incompetent, inferior, and ineffective in their teaching (Ladson-Billings, 2000) and so receive unfavorable teaching evaluations.

Further, it is documented that faculty of color are often perceived as affirmative hires, experience feelings of isolation, marginalization, unwelcomeness, unappreciation, unwantedness, disrespect and lack of support from the administration and colleagues (Bourguignon et al., 1987). Because they are often erroneously perceived to be intellectually inferior, they feel pressured to prove that they deserve their positions (Reyes and Halcon, 1991).

The stress associated with these conditions and unwelcomeness can be harrowing, overwhelming, and sometimes lead to their early exit from the institutions and the professoriate altogether thus limiting opportunities for preservice teachers as well as White faculty to develop broadened and diverse perspectives.

5. Failure To Open the Gates of Teacher Education to Diverse Teacher Candidates

Even though research suggests that most white teacher candidates have negative dispositions toward diversity, and that they lack the inclination to teach diverse students (Garmon, 1996; Haberman, 1991; Smith, 1998), they continue to be admitted while potential prospective teachers of color who may be more inclined and dedicated to working with culturally and linguistically diverse students are screened out (Ladson-Billings, 2000; Fields, 1988).

The use of idiosyncratic, discriminatory admission requirements that focus on student test scores, grade point average (GPA), and standardized test scores such as C-BASE, Pre-Professional Skills Test (PPST), and Praxis often slams the door shut for prospective teacher candidates of color (Darling-Hammond, Wise and Klein, 1995; The National Commission on Testing and Public Policy, 1990).

6. Ill-Conceived Alternative Certification Programs

In the last few years, with the dire need to recruit teachers into urban school districts, alternative certification programs have become a common phenomenon. Across the nation, various teacher corps initiatives such as Teach for America (TFA), Urban Teacher's Corp, Yearlong Internships, Associate Teachers' Programs, Paraprofessional Evolving into Teachers (PET), Teaching Fellows Programs (TFP) have been launched.

A common experience with these programs has been nothing but disappointment. Many of these programs have been found to be shallow and designed for failure. For example, one program, PET is aimed at recruiting candidates of color, predominantly African Americans, Latino Americans, and Asian Americans into teacher education. The candidates are mostly non-traditional, older adults without college degrees who work in urban schools as paraprofessionals. The gap in their education has been a big factor in their ability to pass the qualifying standardized tests—C-Base and Praxis.

Primarily, the students have lacked the support and preparation needed to perform well on courses and required tests. Participants have reported failure of education programs to adequately prepare them to work with urban and diverse students (Darling-Hammond, Hudson, & Kirby, 1989). The courses that are part of these programs remain very traditional, monocultural and with token diversity at best. Although some of these courses may have diversity titles, in reality, they are nothing but hit-and-run workshops on cultural diversity that span a few days.

Program designers often believe that knowledge of the cultures and lived experiences of urban students, their families, and communities are inconsequential except to know that minority students do not look the teacher in the eye. Teaching fellows are often thrown into urban classrooms without opportunities to develop reflective knowledge base on cultural diversity. Overwhelmingly, in formal and informal surveys, Teaching Fellows across programs have reported dissatisfaction with their preparation (Roth, 1993; Texas Education Agency, 1993). Darling-Hammond (1994), in criticizing the widely popularized TFA, explains:

> It is clear from the evidence that TFA is bad policy and bad education. It is bad for the recruits because they are ill-prepared. They are denied the knowledge and skills they need, and many who might have become good teachers are instead discouraged from staying in the profession. It is bad for the schools in which they teach; because

the recruits often create staffing disruptions and drains on school resources….it is bad for the children because they are often poorly taught. With their teachers floundering, they are denied opportunity to fully develop the skills they need. They often lack continuity in instruction and are frequently exposed to counterproductive teaching techniques that can destroy their inherently desire to learn. (p. 33)

The above factors are critical concerns and challenges that teacher education programs must rethink and address if they are to prepare competent teachers for urban schools. This is not to say that all teacher education programs are deficient. Across the nation some teacher education programs have embarked on bold reform efforts.

For example, teacher education programs at the University of California, Los Angeles, University of Massachusetts at Amherst, and few others are known for their exemplary social justice-based programs. My institution, the University of Missouri-Kansas City, has also restructured both its undergraduate and graduate programs with transformative, culturally responsive, and social justice pedagogy. However, many others are yet to do so. The commitment to quality preparation of teachers for all classrooms and for every child should permeate all teacher education programs regardless of size and geographic location. How might teacher education programs rethink and reform their programs in order to prepare socially conscious, transformative intellectuals for urban students?

Transforming Teacher Education

Transforming teacher education must include program reconceptualization, teacher educators' self-transformation and commitment to social justice, offering courses on social justice, integrating social justice across the program and aggressive efforts to diversity faculty and teacher candidates. These are discussed as follows.

1. Program Reconceptualization

Given that social justice education is a perspective that involves looking critically at why and how schools are unjust for some students through analyzing school practices and policies, the curriculum, instructional materials and strategies, tracking practices (Nieto, 2000), a reconceptualized teacher education would be one that is transformative in structure, curriculum, pedagogy, and in the consciousness of its faculty. Thus a receconceptualized teacher education must begin with rethinking programs' missions, goals and conceptual

frameworks to reflect a social justice and sociopolitical perspective.

Teacher candidates need to develop the understanding that every act of teaching is a political act (Cochran-Smith, Freire, 1970; Greene, 1998; Kriesburg, 1992), that their role as teachers within a democracy is to ensure equitable delivery of education to each child, be socially responsible by challenging the status quo and unjust educational practices. Foucault (1980) enlightens us about the political context of education—the tacit rules that define what can and cannot be said, who speaks and who must listen, whose constructions of reality are valid and scientific, whose knowledge is legitimate, whose voice is heard and not viewed as problematic. When teachers understand the sociopolitical context of schooling, they are more likely to deepen their commitment to students and broaden their role to include advocacy and change agency. Palmer (2002) explains this point most passionately:

One of the major challenges in educational reform is for teachers—who see themselves as working in service to the young—to see themselves as leaders in service to our schools and our society. By embracing a larger leadership role, teachers would not dilute but deepen their commitment to children and youth. If more and more educational leaders were to rise from the ranks of teachers—transforming both our schools and the way our society supports them—the ultimate beneficiaries would be our young people, the most precious asset any society has (p. xxiv)

Preparing teacher candidates with a socio-political orientation will: (1) raise and heighten their awareness of educational and social inequities and how they are embedded in the systems especially their practices; (2) learn to teach with hope and integrity; (3) learn to rise above bureaucratic red tapes to examine their students' educational problems and why they exist in the first place (Nieto, 2000); and (4) learn to resist becoming contributors to the educational inequities and to work to end the cycles of oppression and inequitable systems.

To achieve these, first, teacher education programs will need to examine and challenge existing ideological underpinnings and frameworks, place culture, racism front and center (Cochran-Smith, 2003). Second, teacher educators themselves must reorient their own thinking to embrace the sociopolitical context of education, and to explicitly assist their candidates in developing the skills and empowerment for resisting and challenging structural inequalities.

Whether we know it or not, teacher educators as well as public school teachers,

make political decisions on a daily basis. On this, Giroux (1988) persuasively argues that when educators select a particular textbook, a unit of study, or provide specific knowledge, they are exercising political choices and decisions. A teacher educator who avoids integrating issues of diversity, equity and social justice into his/her discipline, has made a conscious judgment about the value of equity, justice, power, and culture.

As Shor (1992) points out, a curriculum that does not challenge the standard syllabus and conditions in society informs students that knowledge and the world are fixed and are fine the way they are, with no role for them to play in transforming them and no need for change (p.12). Similarly, Palmer (1998) points out that without a curriculum that offers critical awareness, prospective and classroom teachers will not be able to find the "absolute truth" they need to empower themselves to make personal changes in their pedagogical practices that ensure equity and social justice.

Third, the behaviorist thinking and tradition must become obsolete. Given the complexity of schools today and the achievement dilemma, teacher educators cannot be complacent with preparing teachers who are passive. Critical pedagogues argue that education is an integral part of a society's ethical, social and cultural enterprise, and consequently, teachers must be ethically and legally responsible to help students engage in a struggle for a more just and humane world (Freire, 1970; Giroux, 1988; Shor, 1992).

2. Teacher Educators' Self-Transformation and Commitment to Social Justice Stance

Given that teacher educators or others involved in the preparation of teachers have been noted to lack multicultural knowledge and commitment to multicultural education, transforming programs must include comprehensive professional development on multicultural education, inclusive teaching, social justice education and self-transformation. Since most teacher educators are White and have been shaped by ideologies of color/culture blindness, it is critical that they learn to deconstruct who they are as socio-cultural/racial beings and how their socio-cultural/racial worldview and positionalities might influence their thinking, perception, knowledge base, relationship, and practice.

By the very fact that teacher educators, like other individuals, live in a racist society (McIntosh, 1989), they harbor, whether consciously or unconsciously, racialized dispositions that affect their curricular and instructional decisions, especially their complicity with the sta-

tus quo. As Castenell and Pinar (1993) eloquently argue:

> All Americans are racialized beings; knowledge of who we have been, who we are, and who we will become is a story or text we construct. In this sense curriculum—our construction and reconstruction of this knowledge for dissemination to the young—is a racial text. (p. 8)

Consequently, Nieto (2002) urges that we must become multicultural persons before we can become multicultural educators, that "without this transformation of ourselves, any attempts at developing a multicultural [social justice] perspective will be shallow and superficial" (p.338). Cochran-Smith (1995) writes about the need for teacher educators, especially those of European background, to engage in "unlearning" racism by:

> Interrogating the racist assumptions that are deeply embedded in the courses and curricula that we teach, our often unknowing complicity in maintaining existing systems of privilege and oppression, and grappling with our own failures to produce the kinds of changes we advocate. (p. 157)

To unlearn racism, researchers suggest that teacher educators read, reread and analyze (1) teacher education as "racial text" (Castenell & Pinar, 1993); (2) approach teaching as text—stepping outside to search for perspective on the events inside; and (3) scrutinize texts and subtexts in teacher education (Cochran-Smith, 1995).

Particularly, Castenell & Pinar imply that teacher educators analyze the curriculum and pedagogy to discern what messages or stories about race or racism are presented, what assumptions are made, what perspectives and points of view are implicit, and what is valued or devalued. Further, they point out that curriculum is not only a racial text, but is also a text that is political, aesthetic and gendered.

One common professional development practice for empowering faculty for self-transformation is through book club collaboration where faculty members read and discuss critical books on diversity and develop action plans. Personally, I have participated in such effort as our department embarked on a journey toward transformation. Among others, we read: *Beyond the big house: African American educators on teacher education* by Gloria Ladson-Billings (2005), *Young, gifted and black* by Theresa Perry, Claude Steele and Asa Hilliard, III, and *Understanding the framework of poverty* by Ruby Payne. My colleagues and I have found the book discussions empowering and transforming.

3. Create and Offer Courses on Teaching for Social Justice

Most teacher education programs often assume that one course on multicultural education adequately prepares teachers for teaching as a political activity. As Nieto (2000) points out, most diversity courses are not linked to the issues of social justice and most approaches to multicultural education avoid asking difficult questions related to access, equity, and social justice. Most cultural diversity courses promote awareness of diversity. This is not enough if we desire to prepare teachers who are socially conscious.

While some researchers have suggested an infusion strategy whereby issues of social justice are addressed throughout the curriculum (Zeichner & Hoeft, 1996), although appealing, its implementation often results in superficial treatment of critical and complex issues. Specific courses on teaching for social justice will provide opportunities for preservice teachers to engage in in-depth exploration of issues and practices of equity/inequity, responsive and equitable curricular and pedagogical practices—tracking, labeling, stereotyping, low expectation, colorblindness and discriminatory policies. Such courses will also focus on helping presevice teachers develop habits of critical reflection and questioning about access, equity, and social justice.

A one-time, single, survey course on diversity does not allow for an in-depth exploration of issues of diversity, equity and social justice. My suggestion is for teacher education to consider a sequence of courses on diversity and social justice—a three-credit hour course on cultural diversity followed by another three-credit hour course on teaching for equity and social justice. This sequence of diversity and social justice courses, if taught by knowledgeable and committed educators, will go a long way to ensure that prospective and classroom teachers leave teacher education programs with adequate knowledge, skills, and dispositions for transformative practice.

I recently developed and taught a course on teaching for equity and social justice to k-12 teachers. Teachers and prospective teachers who enrolled in the course were shocked at what they did not know about education, schooling, and teaching, especially its sociopolitical context even when they had previously taken a diversity course. For most of the teachers it was the first time they were learning about real issues of equity and social justice, especially how they, as teachers, might be contributing or exacerbating educational and social inequities, and more importantly, learning about their roles as change agents.

4. Integrate Issues of Social Justice across the Curriculum

Nieto (2000) as well as others believe that if all students are to have equitable opportunities for academic and personal success, teacher education programs must weave a social justice perspective throughout the program, and "promote teaching as a lifelong journey of transformation" (p.183). Although I have suggested above offering specific courses on teaching for equity and social justice this should not absolve other teacher educators from integrating concepts of social justice as they relate to access, equity and justice in other courses, especially methods courses.

Methods courses are the ideal places for integrating such issues into the curriculum. As prospective teachers learn about curriculum development and unit/lesson construction, and pedagogical strategies, they should discuss issues of inclusion/exclusion, power relations, access to higher order knowledge, instructional accommodation, culturally responsive practice, equity in communication and interaction with students, tracking/detracking, and democratic classroom community, etc.

5. Diversify Faculty and Student Population

A reconceptualized teacher education will recognize the importance and value of faculty/student diversity and so will strive to create a balance in the faculty/student composition. Bold efforts must be embarked upon to recruit as well as retain faculty/students of color who are currently underrepresented in teacher education programs. Diversifying the faculty as well student populations provides for knowledge sharing, communication, border-crossing, and community building (Moody, 2004).

For mainstream faculty and students, diversity allows them to expand their worldview, to hear different perspectives about social history and lived experiences. Today, there exist a growing number of people of color with doctorates in education and many more in doctoral programs. What is needed is the commitment to diversify.

For example, faculty searches must be broadened. This includes composing racially diverse search committees, coaching search committee members and reminding them about typical violations of equal opportunity hiring practices, designating a diversity and equity monitor, and advertising in both traditional (*Chronicle of Higher Education*) and nontraditional channels such as *Black Issues in Higher Education*, *The Hispanic Outlook in Higher Education*,

Tribal College Journal of American Indian Higher Education, and multicultural organizations.

In addition, upon successful recruitment, administrators and colleagues should be prepared to provide support for the new faculty. The new faculty should be provided experienced and multiculturally competent faculty for mentorship, especially in the areas of the tenure process, developing syllabi and navigating student resistance. Teacher educators must recognize that isolationism can be debilitating for a new faculty of color. Such faculty should be encouraged and supported to network within and outside their institutions.

Similarly, recruitment and retention of prospective teachers of color should be a priority in the teacher education program. To recruit prospective teachers of color, programs like Paraprofessional Evolving into Teaching (PET) and Future Teachers' Clubs are great possibilities for exploration. Revamping current alternative teacher certification programs is another possibility.

However, such programs should be carefully planned, must be innovative and different from current traditional programs and focused on culturally responsive practice. It is important that a balanced committee, which includes faculty of color, be a part of this revamping process. Incentive programs such as scholarships and mentorship should be provided to ensure the success of participating teacher candidates.

6. Create and Foster a Collaborative Community of Practice

Wenger (1998) defines communities of practice as a "social context of our lived experiences of participation in the world" (p.3). A collaborative community of practice is based on members recognizing a common goal, aimed at transforming practice and change. A community of practice promotes an interdisciplinary team practice where faculty collaboratively plan, develop, team teach courses, and evaluate. This will ensure program integration, efficiency and coherence.

Teacher educators have been known to function within a culture of competitiveness—ranking—and isolationism. Methods instructors teach their courses in isolation, rarely cross borders or engage in collaboration with each other. Issues of equity and quality, race, class and gender dimensions are rarely examined in methods courses because they presumably belong to the cultural diversity instructor.

Fostering a community of practice will

allow faculty to appreciate the value and need for collective teacher action in the struggle for educational change, especially as they engage in thoughtful discussions about how they are meeting the needs of public schools and preparing teachers for successful teaching in p-12 schools. Dialogues on critical issues, sociocultural and political contexts of education and schooling, color/gender blindness, urban education, and team-teaching allow faculty to gain critical perspectives about each other and their work, and in the process learn to build connection and interdependency.

Such collaboration will model for prospective and classroom teachers how to function as a community of practice. Too often, most k-12 teachers are strangers to each other within their own building. They function in isolation. They lack the empowerment and desire to work together cooperatively and collaboratively to dialogue and solve critical, social and academic issues.

This sense of disempowerment is learned in teacher preparation program as they are seldom provided opportunities to dialogue and engage in collective activism. Preparing teachers for today's classrooms and for diversity, equity and justice is complex and challenging.

Working together and in collaboration will increase the impact teacher educators can make to effect needed changes as well as reduce the complexity and difficulties associated with transformation. Strategies such as book conversations, sustained brown bags, team teaching, and other joint projects will foster a collaborative community of practice. Nieto (2000) suggests that practitioners should learn to become, and function as, critical colleagues, who debate, critique, and challenge one another to go beyond their current ideas and practices.

David Imig, former president of the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, and Tom Switzer, former education dean (1996) perceptively write about the importance of teacher educators functioning as a community of practice:

> Until faculty…step back from the daily routines [and to] engage in a moral conversation about their responsibilities to create a just and caring society for children, to hold political conversations about the regulations in which they and their institutions are willing to invest to benefit all children, to sponsor dialogue about the role of the public school in America and its purpose in preserving political democracy, and to debate the importance of beginning teachers being able to transform and restructure schools, we will continue to conduct teacher education in settings absent mission and genuine purpose. (p.224)

Conclusion

This article has explored the limitation of the current traditional teacher education in preparing highly competent and socially conscious teachers needed for today's urban school communities. Specifically, it explored traditional practices in teacher education and how they might contribute to the inadequate preparation of teachers for urban schools.

It argues that unless teachers are prepared to develop a sense of consciousness of schooling as a sociopolitical context and a sense of social responsibility, the academic failure of urban students and the achievement gap will remain problematic and will continue to prepare teachers who will and cannot successfully teach in urban schools. It further argues that when teachers are prepared with a social justice perspective, they will be more able "to cultivate firmly established core beliefs and practices needed to act as change agents in their classrooms (Renzaglia, et. al., 1997, p. 361), develop the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to engage in culturally responsive and responsible pedagogy.

The promise of ending educational inequity and the achievement gap rests upon teacher educators who are committed to diversity, equity and social justice. Our responsibility, as teacher educators, is not only to our teacher candidates; it is also to the defenseless children in the public schools who indirectly benefit or are harmed and disadvantaged by our work with prospective and classroom teachers.

By inadequately preparing prospective and classroom teachers, we deny P-12 students their rights to a high quality and equitable education. As Kivel (1996) noted, until educators have enough integrity to acknowledge their role in these injustices, they will continue to stand in the way of progress toward full equality.

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