

Introduction

Diversity as a Cornerstone in Teacher Training

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As schools reflect increasingly heterogeneous student populations, teacher pre- and in-service education must prepare future educators to navigate and embrace diversity in all its forms: cultural, linguistic, socioeconomic, cognitive, and experiential. A robust understanding of these dimensions is essential for fostering inclusive learning environments that promote the success of every learner.

The pandemic has deeply impacted the social and emotional development of young children, with the most severe effects seen in those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. Doctoral candidate Moore offers insights in her commentary “Rebuilding the heart of the classroom: A Kindergarten teacher’s reflection on social-emotional development in a post-pandemic world” about how many young children’s social and emotional development has been affected during the pandemic, leading to increased anxiety, behavioral issues, and communication delays. Educators are addressing these challenges through Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) curriculum, trauma-informed practices, and family engagement. Home-based programs offer support for early development, contributing to a coordinated effort to help children recover and thrive in post-pandemic classrooms.

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Within an increasingly restrictive national context for DEI in education, marked by federal actions and institutional rollbacks, the commentary by Dr. Sales argues that educators broadly support anti-racist principles, yet feel underprepared to enact them pedagogically. The 4D Exercise proposed offers a structured, critical pedagogy tool that builds reflection, dialogue, and agency. Grounded in Freirean theory, it supports educators in aligning equity-centered beliefs with concrete instructional practice under heightened political scrutiny.

Dr. Gallavan's essay examines effective teacher preparation education (TPE) amid fragmented goals and practices across institutions and systems. It highlights misalignment among stakeholders responsible for teacher education and professional learning. Using an ecological systems lens, the analysis outlines three design principles, ten intersecting considerations for program development, and five dialogic practices for delivery. Emphasizing transactional and relational communication, it argues that authentic collaboration and collective agency are essential to coherent and high-quality teacher education. Beyond diversity, "when all voices are accepted and all choices are respected", we can have an ecology of change for teacher preparation programs.

In the "Teacher professional development in a pandemic and post-pandemic era: Does practice reflect adult learning theory?" qualitative case study, researchers Drs. Skyes and Mraz examined how instructional leaders incorporate adult learning principles, specifically Knowles' theory, in planning and implementing virtual professional development. Using interviews, observations, and document analysis, the study found that while adult learning concepts were present, they were sometimes loosely applied. It also revealed that instructional leaders' personal beliefs and perceptions of teachers' needs often influence the curriculum.

Dr. Nordgren's conceptual analysis explores how anti-DEI mandates may intensify the U.S. teacher shortage. Drawing on policy data, labor statistics, Self-Determination Theory, and Systems Theory, it links restrictive DEI policies to reduced teacher autonomy, morale, and retention. Amid already severe shortages—11% of classrooms staffed by uncertified teachers — the analysis argues that limiting DEI undermines culturally responsive pedagogy, exacerbates attrition, and deters new entrants, particularly harming schools serving marginalized populations.

The limited transfer of teacher education into classroom practice may also stem from researchers primarily engaging with administrators, often responding to their needs over those of teachers. This disconnect can lead to content and structures that fail to align with teachers' diverse goals, reducing their motivation. To better

support effective teacher training, it is crucial to understand the diversified perspectives of both teachers and administrators. Dr. May's article "Administrators' and teachers' perspectives on professional development" explores qualitatively teachers' and administrators' perspectives on the strengths and weaknesses of a school district's professional development (PD) system. Through interviews with three teachers and four administrators, key findings emerged: aligning PD with teacher goals boosts motivation, veteran teachers often face limited PD options, time constraints hinder participation, and there is a disconnect between campus and district leadership. The study offers recommendations for improving PD practices.

Another crucial factor in addressing diversity in the classroom is to recruit teachers from diverse racial backgrounds. When students of color see educators who reflect their own identities, it can foster a stronger sense of belonging and aspiration. Supporting diverse teacher pipelines and ensuring that teacher education programs are inclusive and equitable is an essential part of this work. The "Cultivating critical consciousness within communities of practice for the recruitment and retention of Black and Latinx male teacher candidates" article by Drs. Collier, Einhorn, and Arizala evaluates a university initiative aimed at supporting male teacher candidates of color by creating communities of practice. Through focus groups, surveys, and observations, the study found that the program fostered critical self-awareness among participants and increased faculty sensitivity to their experiences. It also offers insights into developing broader support systems for underrepresented groups in teacher education.

These empirical essays emphasize clinical practice and community engagement as essential components of educator development. When faculty and candidates maintain active engagement in diverse educational settings, they strengthen the connection between theory and practice and ensure the ongoing relevance of teacher education curricula.

Ultimately, teacher education committed to diversity and equity advances not only the professional competence of educators, but also the broader goals of social justice and democratic education. Diversity in teacher training is not just about representation, but, rather, it's about transformation. Preparing teachers who are critically conscious, reflective, and responsive to the needs of all students is essential for dismantling educational inequities and promoting inclusive excellence. In today's increasingly multicultural classrooms, diversity must be recognized not as a complementary element, but as a cornerstone of teacher training.