Social Justice Education: Preparing Pre-Service Teachers

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Preparing Teachers For a Changing World

• On a daily basis, teachers confront complex decisions that rely on many different kinds of knowledge and judgment and that can involve high stakes outcomes for students’ future. To make good decisions, teachers must be aware of the many ways in which student learning can unfold in the context of development, learning differences, language and cultural influences, and individual temperaments, interests, and approaches to learning (Bransford, Darling-Hammond, & LePage, 2005, p.1)
The Changing Classroom

Concentration of Students Eligible for Free- or Reduced-Price Lunch
Among public school students in 2009–10, higher percentages of Hispanic (37 percent), Black (37 percent), and American Indian/Alaska Native students (29 percent) attended high-poverty schools than did Asian/Pacific Islander (12 percent) and White students (6 percent). The Condition of Education: - NCES http://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator_pcp.asp

English Language Learners in Public Schools
The percentage of public school students in the United States who were English language learners (ELLs) was higher in 2009–10 at 10 percent (or an estimated 4.7 million students) than in 2000-01 at 8 percent (or an estimated 3.7 million students.) http://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator_ell.asp

Children and Youth with Disabilities
The number of children and youth ages 3–21 receiving special education services was 6.5 million in 2009–10, or about 13 percent of all public school students. Some 38 percent of the students receiving special education services had specific learning disabilities. http://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator_cwd.asp
As Hackman (2005) stated, social justice education encourages students to take an active role in their own education and supports teachers in creating empowering, democratic, and critical educational environments.

- Social justice education does not merely examine difference or diversity but pays careful attention to the systems of power and privilege that give rise to social inequality, and encourages students to critically examine oppression on institutional, cultural, and individual levels in search of opportunities for social action in the service of social change.
Why Social Justice Education?

  Promoting Social Justice is an ISLLC (Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium) Standards for School Leaders
  - Standard 5: An education leader promotes the success of every student by acting with integrity, fairness, and in an ethical manner - E. Promote social justice and ensure that individual student needs inform all aspects of schooling.
  
  http://engageny.org/?s=social+justice&submit=Find

- Dignity for All Students initiative and the Educating All Students require social justice be addressed in the curriculum and school culture.
Master of Arts in Teaching Program & Social Justice Education is a Natural Fit into ESC

Given the previous definition of social justice education (SJE), the keywords support the academic practice at SUNY Empire State College and its work with adult learners. This type of education allows students a democratic space in which to actively participate in their education while learning strategies that empower them and those within their fields of influence.
The Relevance of Social Justice in Teacher Preparation

- The current driving forces in teacher education today are content knowledge and effective pedagogy.
- In order to prepare teachers for social justice education, 5 criteria should be met (Hackman, 2005):
  - Content mastery
  - Tools for critical analysis
  - Tools for social change
  - Tools for personal reflection
  - An awareness of multicultural group dynamics
Hackman’s Five SJE Criteria

- Content Mastery
  - Factual Information
- Tools for Critical Analysis
  - (Systems of Oppression)
- Multicultural Group Dynamics
- Tools for Action and Social Change
- Tools for Personal Reflection
Lipman’s Imperatives as a Vision for Teaching Social Justice Education

- Equity - all children should have equal opportunities and rights
- Agency - education should empower students to be change agents
- Cultural Relevance - teachers should use students’ culture to support academic success
- Critical Literacy - schools should be a place in which students can examine knowledge and their own life experiences critically (2004)
Covering the Bases

In Sleeter’s (2001) review of research studies focused on preparing pre-service teachers to serve diverse student populations in historically underserviced communities. She found the following three teaching methods to be most commonly used with varying degrees of success:

- Community-Based Cross Cultural Immersion Experiences
- Multicultural Education Coursework
- Multicultural Education coursework with a Field Experience.
Our Social Justice Education aligns with conceptual framework of the new Educating All Students test (EAS).  
5 main areas addressed by the EAS  
- Diverse student populations (EUS, EXC, TDL, MCAD)  
- English language learners (EUS, TDL)  
- Students with disabilities and other special learning needs (EXC)  
- Teachers Rights and Responsibilities (Teacher Responsibility Website, Orientation, Professional Expectation Policy)  
- School-home relationships (EUS)
Dignity for All Students Act

Signed into law Sept 13, 2010 – went into effect July 1, 2012

- Addresses issues related to harassment and discrimination in schools – including amendments to codes of conduct
- Amended State Education Law by creating a new Article 2 – Dignity for All Students Act
- As a result of the Dignity Act, the Board of Regents amended Commissioner's Regulation 100.2(c) to include classroom instruction that supports the development of a school environment free of discrimination and harassment, including but not limited to, instruction that raises awareness and sensitivity to discrimination and harassment based on a person’s actual or perceived race, color, weight, national origin, ethnic group, religion, religious practice, disability, sexual orientation, gender, and sex.
- www.p12.nysed.gov/dignityact/
How our SJE Curriculum Aligns with the DASA

Effective Urban Schools and Teaching Diverse Learners courses highlight the problem of bullying, provides strategies that support a bias free classroom community for GLBTQ students and diverse student populations.
NEA Social Justice Strategies

- Focus on diversity—awareness of the diversity in communities is critical to fostering social justice.
- Address real consequences of oppression—when discussing social justice in lessons or staff meetings, it is important to acknowledge the real social and economic disadvantages that oppressed people face in society, not simply the psychic harm of oppression.
- Understand the mechanisms that perpetuate oppression—i.e., those attitudes and behaviors (e.g., racism, sexism, ageism, heterosexism) from a position of privilege.
- Resist hierarchies of oppression—form strategies to foster justice with an inclusive mindset: who is being left out?
- Seek to address social justice on three levels—personal (self), institutional (school) and societal (community).

http://www.nea.org/tools/30414.htm
Best Practices for Preparing Pre-service Teachers for Cultural Diversity

- Centralize multicultural education throughout program (Cochran-Smith, Davis, and Fries, 2004)
- Incorporate multiple theories to explain school failure (Ladson-Billings, 1999)
- Provide transformative learning experiences to counter ingrained ideologies (Sleeter, 1996)
- Expanded knowledge base to challenge traditional knowledge (Irvine, 1997)
- Inquiry based approaches to facilitate transferring multicultural theory to practice (Gay, 2002)
  (Summarized in Trent, Kea, Oh, 2008)
Research on Pre-service & In-Service Teachers’ Perceptions of CTS and MEAB

- Upon reviewing our claims and documentation for our TEAC Brief, the Caring committee concluded that students needed to be active participants in the discussion on caring teaching skills. It was decided to assess pre-service teachers’ perceptions of caring teaching skills via the 2011 & 2012 summer course Teaching Diverse Learners.

- Students were introduced to Nel Noddings, and reviewed her articles titled, A Morally Defensible Mission for Schools in the 21st Century, (1995) and Caring in Education, (2005).

- In the online discussion students were given questions.

- In this module discuss caring in relation between the teacher and student, the teacher and parent and the teacher and the community. Define what you believe to be caring teaching skills.

- 1. Should the moral imperative of schools focus on developing caring, competent and loving individuals? Will a curriculum that includes caring improve student achievement? Will this detract from the academic curricula?

- 2. Is there a difference between being a caring teacher and having caring teaching skills? Define caring teaching skills.
Of 51 students recruited 19 responded with a 37.25% rate of return. Emergent themes based on the 2011 Teaching Diverse Learners summer discussion posts about caring and caring teaching skills were:

Caring is:
- Modeling – modeling caring for students, so they can model caring
- Developing caring and confident students
- Take action when students are in need or mistreated
- Being compassionate
- Empowering students to achieve their best
- Fostering a safe and positive classroom environment

Caring Teaching Skills:
- Guidelines for teaching
- Is acquired through training
- Not mutually exclusive from each other- splitting hairs between caring and caring teaching skills
- Teacher demonstrates caring to students on a daily basis
- Meeting needs of students

Isaac, Domingo & Wagle SUNY Empire State College
The 2012 EBMAS is a 38 item, 6 point Likert scale instrument designed to capture pre-service teachers’ and teachers’ perceptions and multicultural beliefs about diverse learners. The survey was revised and comprised of 10 demographic questions and 40 items.

Students who enrolled in the 2012 Teaching Diverse Learners summer course were recruited online and in the summer course. Of the 50 students recruited, 12 students completed the survey with a 24% rate of return.

22 items of the EBMAS where students rated Strongly Agree to Moderately Agree and Strongly Disagree to Moderately Disagree on specific items totaling 75% -100 % response rates were identified.

The 2013 EBMAS was modified to only include only 20 of the highly rated items. 23/119 pre-service teachers and in-service teachers responded.

Findings

In-service teachers scores lower than pre-service teachers for CTS & MEAB

Caring Teaching Skills requires further defining and exploration as a specific pedagogy.
Summary of Findings CTP

- For CTP - high agreement between groups on Q, 6, 8, 11 & 20 (respect, meet standards, role of teacher & empower students).
- Low agreement on Q 1, 2, 3, 4, 15, & 18 (teacher’s influence, student motivation, teacher training/ preparation, teaching critical thinking, teacher’s role in building community).
- In-service teachers are not feeling in control in their classroom teaching, which may have an impact on self-efficacy.
- Pre-service teachers feel a stronger sense of self-efficacy.
Summary of Findings - MEAB

- For MEAB- high agreement on Q, 9 & 10 (teachers can learn for their culturally diverse students, & stereotypes still exits).
- Low agreement Q 5,7,12,13,14,16,17,&19 (problems of low SES too complex, teacher’s responsibility to be culturally aware, methods for teaching diverse students, being multiculturally aware is not relevant for the subject I teach)
- For some In-service teachers being multiculturally aware is not central to teaching.
- Pre-services teachers overall express a stronger sense about multicultural awareness and beliefs in teaching.
Conclusion

- In an analysis of our first year MAT foundation courses, we have found that we use a variety of best practices to ensure a strong social justice emphasis in our curriculum which is aligned with the Educating all Students framework and the Dignity for All Students Act. We are expanding our scope by exploring the idea of being a caring teacher and fostering ways to develop a caring teaching pedagogy.
References-


References


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