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# Repositioning Students in Initial Teacher Preparation: A Comparative Descriptive Analysis of Learning to Teach for Social Justice in the United States and in England

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**Repositioning Students in Initial Teacher Preparation: A Comparative Case Study of Learning to Teach for Social Justice in the United States and in England.**  
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**Abstract**

Discussions of learning to teach for social justice generally focus on the social commitments, institutional structures, course content, and pedagogical processes that support prospective teachers. Missing from this array of foci is a consideration of how school students are positioned within teacher preparation and how their positioning and participation can inform prospective teachers' preparation to teach for social justice. In this article the authors present a comparative descriptive analysis of two projects, one based in the United States and one based in England, that provide opportunities through which prospective secondary teachers are prepared to teach for social justice through direct dialogue with secondary students focused on issues of teaching and learning.

**Key words:** student teachers, teacher preparation, repositioning, social justice

In considering how best to encourage prospective teachers to reflect critically on their own experiences and perspectives, examine social constructions of privilege and inequality, and work to change classrooms, schools, and society so that they support learning for all students, initial teacher preparation programs rely on social commitments, institutional structures, course content, and pedagogical processes (Cochran-Smith, 2004; Darling-Hammond, 2002; Michelli & Keiser, 2005; Oakes & Lipton, 2006). Rarely considered, however, is the positioning of school students within teacher preparation and how their positioning and participation can inform both prospective teachers' preparation to meet the challenges outlined above and students' own experiences of and critical perspectives on education.

An individual's or a group's position in relation to other individuals and groups has a significant impact on the perspectives, relationships, and experiences of all involved (Bullough & Draper, 2004; Ellsworth, 1997; Gergen, 1999; van Langenhove & Harre, 1999), and it shapes in profound ways the possibilities for learning and change. Therefore, positioning students only as beneficiaries—or victims—of whatever pedagogical commitments and approaches prospective teachers develop is an issue of social justice in and of itself and has as well implications for how we conceptualize and structure learning to teach: Students are stakeholders who have a right to play an active role in the co-construction of their learning, the development

of pedagogical commitments and approaches, and the critical revision of educational and social structures.

We therefore suggest that if the responsibility of teacher education programs that teach for social justice is to “work systematically and consciously to help prospective teachers develop empathy and vision that will help them truly ‘see’ their students, the skills to address their learning needs, and the commitment to keep working for students when obstacles are encountered” (Darling-Hammond, 2002, p. 4), a focus on social commitments, institutional structures, course content, and pedagogical processes alone is not enough. In addition to those, teacher education programs must ensure that students are not only made visible but also repositioned as active participants in the process of learning to teach for social justice. Such repositioning has an impact on the individual students involved, on students as a group, on the power dynamics between young people and adults, and on how learning is conceptualized and enacted both individually and institutionally.

In this article we present a comparative descriptive analysis of two projects, one based in the United States and one based in England, that reposition students as active participants within initial teacher preparation. We begin by defining three terms that provide the premises both of our projects and of our discussions of them—social justice, repositioning, and teacher learning. Then, after providing brief explanations of the contexts in which the projects unfold and short descriptions of the projects themselves, we compare the ways in which the projects strive to enact a social justice approach and endeavor to prepare teachers to embrace a commitment to teaching for social justice.

### **Defining Terms and Premises: Social Justice, Repositioning, and Teacher Learning**

Noddings (1999) points out that, “A central question for every modern theory of justice is who has a right to what” (p. 23). A fundamental aspect of our working definition of social justice is that all students have the right not only to learn (Brown, 2002; Darling-Hammond, 1997) but also to have a say in how their education is conceptualized and enacted (Cook-Sather, 2006c, 2002a, 2002b; John, 1996; Pollard, Thiessen, & Filer, 1997; Rudduck, forthcoming). This definition responds in part to national policy in both the U.S. and England.

Much federal legislation in the 20<sup>th</sup> century United States was framed in terms of student rights, particularly regarding equal access to education regardless of race (Brown v. Board of

Education of Topeka, Kansas in 1954), gender (Title IX), class (Elementary and Secondary Education Act in 1965, including Title I), ability (The Education for All Handicapped Children Act in 1975), and, most recently, No Child Left Behind (NCLB, 2001), a bipartisan law “designed to change the culture of America’s schools by closing the achievement gap, offering more flexibility, giving parents more options, and teaching students based on what works” (<http://www.ed.gov/nclb/accountability/index.html?src=ov>). No legislation exists, however, that guarantees students’ right to be consulted regarding what they want, what they need, or “what works.”

In England a policy that resonates with the No Child Left Behind legislation, *Every Child Matters: Change for Children* (DfES 2004b), sets out a national framework for local change programs to build services around the needs of young people to maximize opportunity and minimize risk for all youth. The recent appointment of a Children’s Commissioner for England has the stated aim of giving all young people, but particularly the most vulnerable in society, a voice in government and in public life (DfES, 2004b). Alongside these general initiatives are national frameworks intended to guide educational practices, such as the Department of Education and Skills (DfES) consultation paper *Working Together: Giving Children and Young People a Say* (2004a) or the Office for Standards in Education (OfSTED) framework *Evaluating Educational Inclusion* (2000), which assert the “rights of children and young people to have a voice and an active role in decision making and planning in education” (Cruddas & Haddock, 2003, p. 5). Numerous studies and publications have been produced that build on this foundation of national support (Rudduck et al., 1996; Macbeath et al., 2001; Fielding, 1999; Youens & Hall, 2006).

In both countries, critical voices raise questions about the emphases, mismatches, and omissions in educational policies and practices. Critics in the U.S. assert that students have the right to be consulted regarding what they want, what they need, or what works for them as learners (e.g., Cook-Sather, 2006c, 2002b; Nieto, 1994; Rubin & Silva, 2003; Yonezawa & Jones, forthcoming), and yet little systemic change takes place based on what students have to say. Similarly, in England critics argue that students do not have in reality the rights they are ostensibly designated (Pollard & Triggs, 2000; Thomson & Gunter, 2005); rather, their “rights to participate in decisions that affect them are daily violated in schools” (Wyn, 1995, quoted in Thomson, forthcoming; see also Rudduck, forthcoming). Even though calls to reposition students

in conversations about schooling and school reform have echoed on both sides of the Atlantic for more than a decade (Nieto, 1994; Phelan, Davidson, & Cao, 1992; Rudduck, Chaplain, & Wallace, 1996; Corbett & Wilson, 1995), students are still rarely asked to contribute to discussions about what is useful, problematic, or inadequate about schooling.

While the arguments above focus primarily on discussions of education and school reform within school contexts, they apply as well to discussions within teacher education, where student participation is even more rare. Thus, social justice as we conceptualize it within teacher education means affording students an opportunity to have a say in the preparation of teachers and the right to have what they say matter. It means preparing teachers to listen to their students and to develop a stance toward students in which they are viewed as being knowledgeable and in which their backgrounds and experiences are seen as enabling as well as disabling (Arnot et al., 2004; Fielding, 2004; Holdsworth, 2000; MacBeath et al., 2003; Rudduck & Demetriou, 2003). Teaching for social justice includes striving to see from and value the student perspective (Cook-Sather, forthcoming; Oldfather, 1995; Rodgers, 2002; Shultz & Cook-Sather, 2001); working to develop accessible and effective teaching approaches by listening closely to what students have to say about their learning and responding to that input (Duckworth, 1987; Rodgers, 2006; Schultz, 2003); learning how to build teaching approaches around themes that are relevant to and that emerge from students' own lives and that can thus be transformative for students both personally and politically (Hull, 1985; Freire, 1990; McLaren, 1989; Shor, 1992); developing well-informed strategies for countering discriminatory and exclusionary tendencies in education both by genuinely listening to students and by respecting and responding to what they say (Banks, 1996; hooks, 1994; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Nieto, 1994); and creating situations within which students feel empowered and motivated to participate constructively in their education (Oldfather et al., 1999; Sanon, Baxter, Fortune, & Opatow, 2001; Shultz & Cook-Sather, 2001).

The second premise that underlies and informs the two projects we describe in this article is closely related to the first: In order to honor and facilitate their right to have a say in how education is conceptualized and enacted, we need to reposition students—both in our minds and in actual contexts and relationships—in their own education and in the education of prospective teachers. Traditionally, students have been designated the “least able and least powerful members of the educational community” (Fielding, 1999, p. 21), they have been positioned as passive recipients of what adults decide is knowledge and education (Bullough & Gitlin, 2001;

Cook-Sather, 2002a; Freire, 1990), and they have been excluded from conversations within and beyond classrooms that focus on issues of teaching and learning. Rudduck and Flutter (2004) suggest that, “The traditional exclusion of young people from the process of dialogue and decision-making...is founded upon an outdated view of childhood which fails to acknowledge young people’s capacity to take initiatives and to reflect on issues affecting their lives” (p. 1). Repositioning students means not only placing them in different positions in a literal sense, it means insisting on changing images of young people, relationships between young people and adults, and power dynamics within teaching and learning (Fielding, 2004; Oldfather, 1995).

The term “repositioning” as we use it builds on positioning theory (Bullough & Draper, 2004; Gergen, 1999; van Langenhove & Harre, 1999) and on Ellsworth’s (1997) notion of modes of address. Positioning theory argues that people take up “fluid ‘parts’ or ‘roles’” in different contexts (van Langenhove & Harre, 1999, p. 17) and that because “reality is situational and interpreted rather than fixed and predefined” (Berghoff, 1997, p. 4), as human subjects, “we are not *contained* in a context, rather we *are* simultaneously subject and context” (Sumara, 1996, p. 387). Likewise, because positions are relational as well as contextual, teachers and students take up—or are assigned—positions in relation to one another as well as to contextual constructs. Illuminating this point from a different angle, Ellsworth’s (1997) notion of modes of address challenges us not only to take note of how “all curricula and pedagogies invite their users to take up particular positions within relations of knowledge, power, and desire” (Ellsworth, 1997, p. 2) but also to act on the mismatch between assumed positions and actual experiences.

Given these theories of positioning, it is clear that the choices we make—and the choices that are made for us—“change our position relative to the normative constructs of a discourse or a social system” (Berghoff, 1997, p. 8). The particular normative constructs with which we are concerned here are those of initial teacher preparation—the participants in, structures of support for, and processes of learning within teacher preparation programs. Rejecting the traditional idea of young people as unable and powerless, we argue not only for acknowledging their ability and potential power but also for placing them in positions from which they can use their abilities and power. Of course, when students are repositioned, so too are prospective teachers and teacher educators. Thus, the repositioning of students has implications for all participants in teacher preparation. As an attempt “(that might not be successful) to help others exercise power” (Gore, 1992, p. 59), the repositioning we describe here raises issues not only of power but also of

authority, role, and identity that must be continually addressed within the projects themselves but also beyond them (see Cook-Sather, 2006a, for a more extensive discussion of these issues).

The third premise that underlies and informs our two projects concerns the definition of teacher learning that we embrace. Teacher learning within both projects is based on a constructivist perspective and emphasizes critical reflection. While “constructivism” means different things to different people (Davis & Sumara, 2002; Kroll & Galguera, 2005; Shapiro, 2002, 2003), constructivist approaches have in common the belief that learners actively construe and construct their own understandings in relationship and context (Davis & Sumara 2002; Dewey, 1964; Duckworth, 1987) and adapt their behavior based on the sense they make (Kroll, 2005; von Glaserfeld, 1996). The learning process that unfolds when understanding is constructed neither occurs nor is completed in a single event (Dreier, 2003). Rather, learning and understanding of that learning take place over time, and “learning changes not just what the learner knows...but also who the learner is” (Wortham, 2004, p. 716; see also Cook-Sather, 2006b; Packer, 2001). And while constructivism is not a theory about how to teach, it “reminds us that the learner must be at the center as we think about our subject matter, our curriculum, and our pedagogy” (Kroll, 2005, p. 58).

Critical reflection (Rodgers, 2002; Colton & Sparks-Langer, 1990; Richert, 1990; Rudney & Guillaume, 1990; Zeichner & Liston, 1987) framed within and supported by the social justice principles that underlie our projects helps to ensure that prospective teachers in our projects develop conscious and metacognitive awareness of their learning and reinforces the development of a commitment to social accountability (Cochran-Smith, 2004; Gramsci, 1916/1977; Aronowitz & Giroux, 1985). In combination, constructivism and critical reflection, like social justice and repositioning of students as we define them here, keep the focus of learning and teaching on learners as complex, social beings enmeshed in relationships of power and ongoing process of self-construction.

Since the learners in our projects are both prospective teachers and secondary school students, our approaches to initial teacher preparation deliberately create opportunities for these groups to develop together the skills to address students’ learning needs and the commitment to keep working for students. By repositioning students, we bring them into direct contact with future teachers, we create spaces for dialogue within which students’ are knowledgeable and authoritative participants in teacher education, and through “a very delicate interaction between

challenge and support” (Van Soest & Garcia, 2003, p. 23), we strive both to enact and to foster the development of “teaching that arouses students, engages them in a quest to identify obstacles to their full humanity, to their freedom, and then to drive, to move against those obstacles” (Ayers, 1998, p. xvii; see also Greene, 1998).

## **Two Contexts, One Challenge: Teacher Education Reform in the United States & England**

Repositioning school students as those with rights and a role within teacher preparation runs counter to contemporary currents of national control and standardization in the United States and in England. Despite the rhetoric of student rights as it is variously embodied in national policies, recent reform efforts in secondary schools and in teacher preparation consist largely of top-down measures that consider students’ positions and perspectives, if they do so at all, “primarily through insistent imperatives of accountability rather than enduring commitments to democratic agency” (Fielding 2004, p. 295).

In the United States, teacher preparation is seen as “a technical problem of testing and training and an implementation problem of getting to scale with policies that specify the qualifications and practices of teachers ‘proven effective’ in producing pupil outcomes” (Cochran-Smith, 2004, p. xix), with “pupil outcomes” defined as acceptable scores on standardized tests. Discussions of how to reform teacher education in the U.S., even those that critique the dominant model and set of approaches outlined above (Adams, 2004; Cochran-Smith, 2004, Darling-Hammond, 2006; Kumashiro, 2004; Michelli & Keiser, 2005; Reid & O’Donoghue, 2004; Zeichner, 2003), do not address the role of school students in teacher preparation, either as a social justice issue or as a pedagogical issue. Individual examples of efforts to reposition students as active participants in teacher preparation in the U.S. are few and far between (Bowman & Edenfield, 2000; Cook-Sather, 2002b; Donohue, Bower, & Rosenberg, 2003; Hadaway, 1993; Randolph, 1994; Sipe, 2000; Sullivan, 1998), and fewer still position students as those with the right and authority to be active contributors to the teacher education process (Cook-Sather, 2002b; Donohue, Bower, & Rosenberg, 2003).

The present situation in England has been described as one where “national control of teacher education...has meant, among other things, reduced time in the university, a high stakes inspection regime, and extensive legislation that has prescribed both the university curriculum and the nature of the school experience” (Hall & Schulz, 2003, p. 370). Nevertheless, in



England, in contrast to the U.S., the potential of students to contribute to initial teacher education has been discussed sporadically for almost thirty years (Meighan, 1977; Hull, 1985; McKelvey & Kyriacou, 1985; Fielding, 2001). One study involving students, student teachers, teachers, and supervisors concluded that the students' viewpoints "provided an essential perspective from the very centre of teaching practice, the classroom" (Harrison et al., 1990, p. 253). A more recent study suggested that student teachers' professional development "is enhanced by reciprocal dialogic encounter with students about the quality of teaching and learning" (Fielding, 2001 p.130), and Youens and Hall (2006) found that all participants in the project described in this article were able to identify benefits to themselves and to other participants in the project.

Because programs of teacher preparation in the United States and England include planned opportunities for student teachers to learn from college faculty, school-based mentors and classroom teachers, school administrators, support staff, and other education professionals but only from students in the context of school observations and student teaching, if we are to enact as well as advocate teaching for social justice in a way that truly honors the knowledge, skills, and experiences of participants from both school and university contexts (Cochran-Smith, 1991; Fullan & Hargreaves, 1992; White, Deegan, Alleksaht, 1997), then we need to reposition students as critical participants in teacher preparation.

### **Two Cases of Repositioning Students in Initial Teacher Preparation**

Elsewhere we offer extensive reports of the design, participants, components, and outcomes of our two projects (Cook-Sather, forthcoming, 2006a, 2006b, 2002a, and 2002b; Youens & Hall, 2006). Here we provide brief summaries of the structures within which prospective teachers learn with and from students who are positioned as those with important perspectives heretofore missing from teacher education.

Since 1995, Alison has facilitated a project called Teaching and Learning Together (TLT) based in the penultimate course required for certification to teach at the secondary level through the Bryn Mawr/Haverford Education Program, a small, bi-college, undergraduate teacher preparation program at two selective, liberal arts colleges in the northeastern United States. The project aims to achieve the following political and pedagogical goals: (1) To complicate the traditional model according to which educational theorists and researchers generate pedagogical knowledge and pass it down to teachers with students positioned as passive recipients of this

transfer; (2) To alter the power dynamics that usually inform the teacher/student relationship, with the teacher conceptualized as the sole authority and the student conceptualized as passive recipient of the teacher's knowledge; (3) To prepare teachers committed to eliciting and acting upon students' perspectives not only during their preparation but also throughout their careers; and (4) To foster in high school students a critical awareness of their educational experiences and opportunities and the confidence and vocabulary to assert what they need and want as learners.

Through its four-part design, TLT strives to enact these commitments in the semester prior to practice teaching. The first component of the project is a weekly email exchange between pairs of student teachers and 10<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grade (15- through 18-year-old) students who attend a suburban, public high school; the email exchange is based loosely on topics explored in weekly seminars at the college (i.e., what makes a good teacher, lesson plan, test, etc.) but also addresses topics the individual pairs feel are relevant to teaching and learning. The second component is weekly conversations among all the high school students convened by a school-based educator at the students' school; these discussions are also based on the topics explored in the college seminar and expanded based on the students' own issues and interests, and they are audiotaped, transcribed, and assigned as required reading to the student teachers. The third component is a weekly discussion in the college course of how the exchange is going—what student teachers are struggling with, learning, and integrating into their plans for practice. And the final component is an analysis paper written by each of the student teachers at the end of the semester that draws on the email exchange, transcripts, and class discussions.

For the past seven years the University of Nottingham in England has coordinated a project, the Pupil Mentoring Project (PMP), in which Year 10 (14- and 15-year-old) students from participating schools apply to act as mentors to student teachers during their practice teaching placement. The overarching aims of PMP are to provide student teachers with the opportunity to broaden the learning partnerships that they engage with during their initial teacher preparation and to enable students to contribute actively to the initial teacher education process.

Each year the selected students, together with their respective student teachers and teachers, attend the university for a half-day training session at the start of the practicum. The overall aim of the training session is to ensure that all participants understand the rationale for the project and are clear about their roles within the project. Regular meetings between student mentors and student teachers are scheduled throughout the thirteen-week teaching practice, either as a small-group

discussion or two student mentors meeting with one student teacher. The meeting times are generally at lunchtime or just after school in an identified area of the school. Each year the school coordinator, usually a senior manager in the school, has maintained oversight of the project throughout, although decisions about discussion topics rest with the student mentors and the student teachers. In addition to weekly discussions, student mentors may observe and critique a lesson taught by the student teacher they are mentoring. Each year the project has run for the duration of the practice teaching placement and has been evaluated by means of questionnaires and interviews with student mentors, student teachers, and coordinators.

### **Comparing and Contrasting TLT and PMP**

As suggested by our opening discussion, the similarities between TLT and PMP primarily lie in the ways we strive to enact and support teaching for social justice, reposition students, and foster a particular kind of teacher learning. The differences have primarily to do with contextual (national and local) support, type of orientation provided for participants, and timing within initial teacher preparation.

#### **Similarities between TLT and PMP**

TLT answers Noddings' (1999) question regarding theories of justice—"Who has a right to what"? (p. 23)—by working against the injustice created in part and perpetuated by the absence of federal legislation, local policy, or institutional practices that assert, require, and support the consultation of students regarding issues of teaching, learning, and schooling. TLT asserts and acts on the conviction that students have the right to have a say in their own and other students' education and the right to have what they say affect how prospective teachers think and what they plan to do.

Students' repositioning through TLT ensures that they have greater presence and power (Cook-Sather, 2006c) in teacher preparation as well as in their own learning. No longer passive recipients of what adults decide is knowledge and education (Bullough & Gitlin, 2001; Cook-Sather, 2002a; Freire, 1990), students are recognized as having the "capacity to take initiatives and to reflect on issues affecting their lives" (Rudduck & Flutter, 2004, p. 1). In the context of the email exchange, the secondary students are repositioned such that they engage in weekly dialogue directly with prospective teachers, thus making the prospective teachers constantly

aware of the needs, interests, critical perspectives, and hopes of a particular high school student. Through the weekly, school-based conversations, prospective teachers hear the voices of many, diverse students, who express a range of needs, interests, critical perspectives, and hopes, which complicate the individual students' perspectives and shape further the prospective teachers' thinking about and plans for practice. Required readings that present other students' perspectives (e.g., Cushman, 2003; Cruddas & Haddock, 2003; Nagle, 2001; Shultz & Cook-Sather, 2001; Rudduck & Flutter, 2004; Wilson & Corbett, 2001) add to the voices student teachers learn to hear and heed.

Illustrating how learning can change not just what the learner knows but also who the learner is, both the student teachers and the secondary students who participate in TLT change what they know and believe, how they come to know and believe what they do, and how they see themselves, in relationship and in context, as a result of the project. Coming to understand and taking action against the racist treatment of an African-American high school student (see Cook-Sather, 2002b) and revising their stereotypes of learners labeled learning disabled (see Cook-Sather & Reisinger, 2001) are examples of how prospective teachers who participate in TLT learn to discern and combat obstacles to their—and students'—humanity. Recognizing and striving to change the social injustice both within themselves and in the larger systems within which they work constitute a significant part of the prospective teachers' learning. As importantly, the confidence and critical perspectives high school students develop contribute to their sense of empowerment and agency within their education (see Cook-Sather, 2002b).

The PMP also strives to support teaching for social justice, repositions students, and fosters constructivist and reflective teacher learning. The project aims to create democratic spaces where student teachers and student mentors can engage in meaningful dialogue around issues that surface when the former are learning to teach in schools. Within the 'space' created by the meetings, student teachers and student mentors are afforded the freedom to openly discuss and debate students' perspectives of teaching, learning, and schooling. It is through this negotiated space that PMP aims to provide novice teachers with a lived experience of listening to, and working with, the students they are learning to teach, in a situation that Fielding (1999) has described as a "radical collegiality."

In addition, school students' repositioning through the PMP is highlighted by according them the status of mentors. The term 'mentor' has come to have a particular meaning in initial

teacher education in England (see Franke & Dahlgren, 1996, Furlong & Maynard, 1995). However, the term is also used in a much more generalized way in other contexts, including in schools where a plethora of mentoring strategies has been implemented in England over recent years. As well as being mentored by teachers or other adults, school students themselves may act as mentors in, for example, buddy schemes or anti-bullying initiatives (see Alexander, 2000; Cowie & Wallace, 2000; Ender & Newton, 2000). It is not therefore surprising that school students possess clear views on the mentoring process in general and about the qualities that make a good mentor (Rudduck & Flutter, 2004). One fundamental principle underpinning the PMP is that student teachers should take the views of school students seriously and students should approach their role seriously; the term ‘pupil mentor’ accords the students an appropriate status in the teacher preparation process, and the process of mentoring is considered one in which knowledge about teaching is constructed collaboratively rather than residing in a more hierarchical model of expert and mentee (Cochran-Smith & Paris, 1995; Hargreaves, 1995; Anderson & Shannon, 1988).

Through PMP the student teachers are able to access the thoughts and ideas of the students that they are preparing to teach and come to view them as “co-conspirators in creating optimal learning situations” rather than potential “adversaries” (Phelan, Davidson, & Cao, 1992, p. 704). Thus, the PMP is fundamentally concerned with taking account of the ‘social maturity’ of young people within contexts that help both students and teachers reflect upon the conditions of learning within the school. A dilemma for any teacher, but particularly for someone new to the profession, is how to maintain one’s authority while working openly and collaboratively with students. Goodson and Hargreaves (1996) suggest that teacher professionalism in a complex, postmodern age needs to aim for “occupational heteronomy rather than self protective autonomy,” with teachers working “authoritatively yet openly and collaboratively with other partners in the wider community (especially parents and students themselves), who have a significant stake in the students’ learning” (p. 21). To the extent that the project helps surface and legitimize students’ perspectives on classroom practice and school life, the PMP can be considered to offer a practical strategy for helping student teachers to develop their understanding of the professionalism that teachers require to work openly and collaboratively with students.

### **Differences between TLT and PMP**

The qualities and commitments that TLT and PMP share play out differently in several structural ways. The differences are primarily to do with contextual support, orientation of participants, and timing within initial teacher preparation.

As mentioned earlier in our discussion, while much federal legislation in the 20<sup>th</sup> century United States has been framed in terms of student rights, no legislation exists that requires the consultation of students regarding educational policies and practices. It is not surprising then that it is only recently—and still rare—that individual teacher education programs in the U.S. have created projects that connect school students and prospective teachers. Likewise, at the local level, supporting TLT is not high on the agenda of the secondary school with which Alison collaborates. Indeed, each year the school-based facilitator of the project, a teacher at the school, must seek approval not only from the principal but also from the district superintendent for the project to take place, and the project is really tolerated rather than celebrated by the school administration.

In part because there are relatively small numbers of participants in TLT each year (between ten and 20, generally) and in part because Alison and her school-based collaborator must squeeze the project in among the school's primary commitments, there is no formal preparation for participation in the project; rather, orientation takes place as the project unfolds. Issues of purpose, confidentiality, and safety are addressed both before the project begins—by Alison with the student teachers and by the school-based mentor with the high school students—and throughout the project. An integral part of the weekly discussions at both the college and the school is an assessment of how the exchange is going, and formal, anonymous evaluations are gathered from both the student teachers and the students at the conclusion of the project. Although institutional support and greater participation of school-based personnel would potentially increase the impact of the project, the current approach affords the student teachers and students the opportunity to find their own ways of building relationships and knowledge about teaching and learning, and it challenges them to work through the difficulties as well as the joys of such work as they arise.

This opportunity to build relationships and knowledge unfolds in TLT prior to the student teaching semester. The student teachers learn how to listen to and learn from students, and they gain in-depth glimpses into individual students' experiences and needs, before they are overwhelmed by the sheer number of students and responsibilities they encounter in the

classroom during their student teaching semester. They can take risks, check their approaches with Alison and with other student teachers before attempting them, make revisions, and clarify their commitments and plans before having to enact them on a daily basis (see Cook-Sather, forthcoming, for a more extended discussion of these points).

In contrast to the U.S., England has legislation and national frameworks that call for student participation in educational conversations and reform. Furthermore, the ongoing discussion of the role of students in initial teacher preparation in England creates a very different kind of context for the unfolding of PMP than is afforded TLT in the U.S. At the more local level, while TLT is the work of a single teacher educator and school-base collaborator, PMP is jointly planned and taught by school and university staffs with the overarching aims of sharing the philosophy of the project, discussing the nature of the particular roles within the project, and initiating and supporting the mentoring relationships.

In part because the project is embedded in a larger school-university collaborative relationship, PMP has a structured orientation that involves the many participants. In the first session of the program, the rationale for the project is discussed with all participants and the emphasis is on how valuable the students' knowledge, understanding, and perspectives of schools and teaching are to the student teachers about to embark on their practice teaching. Students, student teachers, and teachers then attend separate workshops that focus on their individual roles within the project. The students watch a series of video clips in which student teachers from previous years discuss the concerns they have about starting their teaching practice and also what they are most looking forward to about teaching. The student teachers in the video clips look forward to getting to know students and being known by them, seeing someone learn something that they have taught them, and trying out in practice planned lessons. After viewing the video clips, students work together in small groups to practice listening and responding to the issues raised by the student teachers. At the same time, the student teacher group meets with a university tutor to explore how the student mentors can contribute to their development as teachers and to have an opportunity to discuss any concerns that they might have about participating in the project. The schoolteacher's group uses the time to share ideas and strategies for managing the project in schools. In the final workshop students and student teachers begin to establish a mentoring relationship.

PMP facilitates the building of relationships and knowledge between students and student teachers through the weekly discussions between mentors and student teachers while the student teachers are teaching classes in the school. Throughout the teaching practicum the student teachers and student mentors meet on a regular basis. The exact timings and frequency of the meetings are at the discretion of the individual schools, although a typical format is for the student teachers and student mentors to meet once a week, during a lunchtime or after school. The school coordinator arranges the venue (e.g. school canteen or library) and provides refreshments. An agenda for the meeting is identified in advance so that all parties have an opportunity to reflect on the topic and to bring along any resources if necessary. Each student teacher works with a pair of student mentors, although on occasion all of the student teachers and student mentors will meet together as a group. The quality of the relationships established between the student teacher and the student mentors is crucial to the success of the intervention.

### **Conclusion**

Nieto (1994) made clear over a decade ago that “educational transformation cannot take place without the inclusion of the voices of students, among others, in the dialogue” (p. 396). In this article, we have argued for the importance of including students in the dialogue that constitutes teacher preparation on both social justice and pedagogical grounds. Such inclusion prompts student teachers to reflect critically on their own experiences and perspectives because, in direct dialogue with students, those experiences and perspectives are thrown into immediate, stark relief. It prompts student teachers to examine social constructions of privilege and inequality first by changing some of those and also by having those as a focus of dialogue. Finally, it challenges student teachers to begin to work to change—or imagine and plan for how they can change—classrooms, schools, and society so that they support learning for all students by giving student teachers the opportunity to learn directly from students about how such changes might be made.

Mindful of the cautions against tokenism, manipulation, and practices not matching rhetoric that characterize some efforts to reposition students (see Fielding, 2004; Holdsworth, 2000; Lodge, 2005; Silva, 2001; Silva & Rubin, 2003; Thiessen, & Filer, 1997; Thomson & Gunter, 2005), we have found that within our projects the benefits of repositioning outweigh the potential dangers. Although our projects evolved independently in countries with different



models of teacher preparation but with similar national movements towards increased prescription, our comparative analysis has revealed common commitments to embrace and act upon Fielding's (1999) assertion that "at the heart of an educative encounter there is a mutuality of learning between the teacher and the student," and that students are therefore not "objects of professional endeavor" but rather "partners in the learning process" and, sometimes, "teachers of teachers" as well as learners (p. 21). By embracing the working definition of social justice we have developed, repositioning school students within initial teacher preparation, and facilitating teacher learning through constructivism and critical reflection, we have built and expanded upon the social commitments, institutional structures, course content, and pedagogical processes within our teacher education programs that support prospective teachers learning to teach for social justice.

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