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Awareness, Discovery, Becoming, and Debriefing: Promoting Cross-Cultural Pedagogical Understanding in an Undergraduate Education Program

This article discusses the first phase of an action research project aimed at identifying a collaborative and collective response to the need to prepare student teachers to work in diverse school contexts. The research brought together university researchers, community and cultural institutions, professional associations, school boards, and government and civil organizations to design a Diversity Institute for integration into the teacher preparation program at the University of Alberta. Student teachers' responses to the Diversity Institute suggest that although a few participants were able to develop new understandings of themselves and others and to effect changes in their pedagogical practices, many remained at a shallow level of awareness about the complexities of diversity and difference. Reflections on the first phase of the Institute point to the underlying

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dynamics of learning and unlearning that are at work in becoming a teacher and the need for time and space for a deeper engagement with diversity in the teacher education program.

Cet article présente la première phase d'un projet de recherche action visant l'identification d'une réponse collaborative et collective au besoin de préparer les étudiants en pédagogie à travailler dans divers contextes scolaires. La recherche a impliqué la collaboration de chercheurs universitaires, d'instituts communautaires et culturels, d'associations professionnelles, de conseils scolaires et d'organisations gouvernementales et civiles, dans la conception d'une série d'ateliers et de présentations (nommée Diversity Institute 2008) qui a ensuite été intégrée au programme de pédagogie à l'Université de l'Alberta. La réaction des étudiants en pédagogie qui ont participé aux ateliers et aux présentations indique que, même si quelques participants ont pu développer de nouvelles connaissances sur eux-mêmes et les autres, et qu'ils ont réussi à modifier leurs pratiques pédagogiques, plusieurs n'ont acquis qu'une connaissance superficielle des complexités de la diversité et la différence. Les réflexions sur la première phase de Diversity Institute ont fait ressortir, d'une part, les rapports dynamiques et sous-jacents d'apprentissage et de désapprentissage qui accompagnent la formation des étudiants en pédagogie et, d'autre part, le besoin de temps et d'espace au sein du programme de pédagogie pour permettre une appréciation approfondie de la diversité.

Introduction

In this article, six teacher educators reflect on the results of an action research project designed to address issues of difference and teacher identity with student teachers as they prepare to teach in increasingly diverse school classrooms. Our interest in this research began with a recognition of the changing face of Canada's population. Although the public schools of most Canadian urban centers have experienced great demographic changes with increasing numbers of students who are recent immigrants, first- and second-generation Canadians, and students with Aboriginal ancestry, Canada's teaching population remains predominantly white, with a majority of teachers of European heritage. We understood that these demographics had particular relevance for us at the University of Alberta with over 3,000 teacher education students enrolled each year in our teacher education program. Approximately 1,300 of these are enrolled in the Secondary Education Route, preparing to teach in secondary school subject areas. Surveys of these secondary-route preservice teachers in 1997 and 1998 (Carson & Johnston, 2001) indicated that most were born in Canada, were of European ancestry, and spoke English as their first language.

In the same survey, many respondents reported feeling unprepared to teach in classrooms with students from a wide range of ethnocultural, linguistic, and socioeconomic backgrounds. These feelings of anxiety were confirmed by exit surveys conducted with graduating student teachers at the three major teacher preparation institutions in the province, the Universities of Alberta, Calgary, and Lethbridge. When asked to rank the various components of their teacher preparation program, students in these three institutions routinely rated preparation to teach in diverse classrooms as one of the least successful aspects of their programs (Snart et al., 2003). Given the concerns of student teachers noted above, we felt it was crucial for us as teacher educators to develop and implement policy initiatives that promote cross-cultural understanding, encourage inclusiveness, and develop an appreciation and understanding of diversity.

Research in teacher education (Britzman, 1991, 1998; Carson & Johnston, 2000; Dei, 1993, 1996, 1999; Ghosh, 1996; Goodwin, 1994; Graham & Young, 1998; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Lund, 1998; Wyatt-Beynon, Ilieva, Toohey, & Larocque, 2001) has shown that teacher education programs in and of themselves are insufficient to address the complexities of teaching in ethnoculturally diverse environments. Theoretical and conceptual notions about diversity and difference are ineffectual unless they translate into real-world practice in today's classrooms and unless they are grounded in the lived experience of beginning teachers. Consequently, there is a need for cohesive and collaborative partnerships between postsecondary institutions, teacher educators, practicing teachers, civil society organizations, governments, and professional associations aimed at developing the expertise necessary to design sustainable approaches to promote cross-cultural understanding among student teachers. Such partnerships enhance opportunities for creating conditions for sensitizing student teachers to issues of ethnocultural diversity while they build what Wenger (1998) terms "communities of practice" (p. 73) in which mutual engagement, joint enterprise, and shared repertoire create a sense of coherence and purpose.

Objectives of the Research

The action research project discussed in this article aimed at identifying a collaborative and collective response to the need to prepare student teachers to work in ethnoculturally diverse school contexts. The project emerged from several years of research in the Department of Secondary Education at the University of Alberta on student teachers' attitudes toward ethnocultural diversity. The results of these investigations, which included large-scale surveys, interviews, and focus group discussions with preservice teachers, suggested that many student teachers had ambivalent attitudes toward multiculturalism. On one hand, they fully subscribed to Canada's policy of official multiculturalism and were supportive of equity and fairness for all students including recent immigrants, visible minorities, and students of Aboriginal heritage. On the other hand, they expressed strong concerns about how much they should accommodate this difference and whether they personally would be able to teach in the plural environments that increasingly characterize Canada's schools. In response to these concerns and this ambivalence, we introduced changes in several courses in our teacher preparation program to promote positive attitudes to diversity and to introduce teaching strategies and pedagogical approaches that are more open to cultural difference in the classroom. Although these initiatives achieved a certain level of awareness of the need to take cultural difference into account in their teaching, many student teachers continued to see cultural identity as something external to their own identities (Njoki, 2003; Schick, 2000). Some researchers have suggested that when student teachers assign cultural identity to *the other* while refusing to interrogate their own cultural location, they are engaging in an act of resistance to the perceived threat that multiculturalism represents to their own identities (Conle et al., 2000; Finney & Orr, 1995). But such perceptions create significant barriers to establishing inclusive and open learning environments that are capable of bridging cultural differences and promoting a sense of shared citizenship.

Given the partial success of our efforts at promoting positive attitudes toward inclusiveness and cultural difference among student teachers at the University of Alberta, we saw an urgent need to reexamine further our existing teacher education practices. A key element in this reexamination was the attempt to form networks linking both the academic and the wider community in the effort to create collaborative and lasting structures that are better able to promote and foster cross-cultural awareness. With this aim in mind, the intent of the action research described here was to draw together community and cultural institutions, professional associations, school boards, government personnel, and civil society organizations in a collaborative project aimed at designing a Diversity Institute that could be integrated into the University of Alberta's teacher preparation program. Specifically, the research was directed toward achieving three objectives:

- To understand the question of teaching for cultural difference within the wider framework of teacher identity formation.
- To develop the institutional expertise of the University of Alberta's Faculty of Education to create programs and institute policies promoting inclusivity and cross-cultural understanding among student teachers.
- To develop sustainable, cooperative links between the university, schools, civil society organizations, and professional bodies that are able to respond to the changing needs of Canada's diverse school populations.

The Diversity Institute, funded by a strategic grant from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada and Canadian Heritage, set out to create a curriculum of cross-cultural understanding for the Secondary Route Teacher Education Program. We hoped that this Institute would provide student teachers with opportunities to learn about the histories, values, and world views of diverse cultural communities as well as a range of culturally sensitive pedagogies, instructional strategies, and reflective activities that are appropriate to teaching in ethnoculturally diverse contexts. The Institute was planned and designed using processes of collaborative action research, which included a commitment to observe the results of the plan in action carefully and to make subsequent revisions. We further committed to sharing the results of our attempts to infuse cross-cultural understanding into teacher preparation programs on a national scale.

Project Methodology and Timelines

Collaborative action research aims to effect changes in practice through the reflections and actions of those affected by the change (Atweh, Kemmis, & Weeks, 1998; Carson & Sumara, 1997; Elliott, 1991; Richardson & Judah, 2002). It is particularly suited to situations of institutional change and development. The research was conducted in three phases.

Phase I: Reflection and Planning

Preliminary planning began with a survey of Secondary Route teacher education candidates presently in the Advanced Professional Term (APT) of their program. The APT consists of five and a half weeks of intensive on-campus coursework in the subject area major and nine weeks of field experience (student teaching) in a junior or senior high school in that subject area. The survey

was administered to 160 teacher education candidates. Questions on the survey asked about their previous school experiences with diversity, their views and expectations regarding the current state of diversity in Alberta schools, and feelings about their own preparedness to teach in these schools. The results of the survey were used in the design of a Diversity Institute that was planned for the next intake of students in the January 2005 APT term. The Institute would form part of the on-campus instruction. The design team was drawn from Department of Secondary Education faculty and graduate students as well as advisors from Edmonton Public Schools, Edmonton Catholic Schools, the Alberta Teachers' Association, the Edmonton Multicultural Heritage Centre, and the Alberta Department of Education. During the fall of 2004, the design team met five times to discuss the intent of the Diversity Institute, analyze the results of the questionnaire, and use the results to help plan the Institute. The Institute, taught by various members of the design team, introduced student teachers to a range of culturally sensitive pedagogies, instructional strategies, and reflective activities that are appropriate to teaching in ethnoculturally diverse contexts.

Phase 2: Action and Observation

In Phase 2, 50 students volunteered to take part in the Diversity Institute, which was offered outside their regularly scheduled classes in a workshop format. The first was a full-day session before the beginning of term. The three following half-day sessions were offered on Friday afternoons. By way of follow-up, students were asked to choose and attempt to incorporate some aspect of the Institute into their student teaching field experience. During this phase the researchers used e-mail to determine how and with what results student teachers applied the pedagogies and resources to which they were exposed in the Diversity Institute

Phase 3: Reflection and Replanning

In Phase 3, the researchers met to analyze the data, reflect on the Diversity Institute, and use their collaborative analysis and reflection to revise and re-plan the Diversity Institute for further incorporation into the teacher education program. The intent was to develop policy initiatives for promoting cross-cultural awareness in our teacher education program and to create ongoing links with our research partners and the various institutions and organizations involved in the Diversity Institute.

Theoretical Context of the Research

Our research was informed by two related theoretical frameworks drawn from critical multiculturalism and recent studies of teacher identity formation. The term *multicultural education* has been used over the past decades to describe a variety of ways that students and teachers encounter and consider questions of culture, ethnicity, race, identity, and representation. Many researchers in Canada and the United States (Cochran-Smith, 1995; Dei, 1996; James & Shadd, 2001; Johnston, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 1995; McAndrew, 2002; Richardson, 2002; Sleeter & McLaren, 1995) have suggested that traditional multicultural practice obscures issues of inequality in society and places the focus of attention on the experiences of *other* without attention to how such practices are embedded in discourses of power and into institutional practices.

The concept of critical multiculturalism, in contrast, includes an anti-racist perspective on education; it has a transformative political agenda and is more in line with the work of critical researchers such as Giroux (1993) and Shor (1996) who have long urged educators to rethink or critique the relations of power and knowledge distribution that support and validate mainstream values and traditions. This form of critical multiculturalism involves deconstructing traditional knowledge and power boundaries and constructing knowledge that includes, rather than excludes, diverse world views (Mahalingam & McCarthy, 2000; Mouffe, 1995; Scott, 1995).

As Britzman (1991, 1998) explains, teaching identities emerge partly from the professional skills and subject matter discipline knowledge learned during formal teacher education, but also at a more unconscious level, from individual biographies of family, community, and learning experiences, and from personal, often unarticulated, investments in teaching. Britzman argues that teacher education needs to be understood as a time of “biographical crisis” because the process of becoming a teacher sets identities in motion as preservice teachers attempt to negotiate the varied and often conflicting demands of teacher educators and cooperating teachers and become aware of previously unconscious personal investments (Ellsworth, 1997; Richardson et al., 2003; Zeichner, 1993; Zirkel, 2002).

To prepare preservice teachers for working in highly diverse classroom environments, these personal investments, described by Dee and Henkin (2002) as “highly personalized behaviours,” cannot remain unexamined. As these authors note, foregrounding the issue of identity in teacher education programs requires that reflective and critical spaces be created in which preservice teachers are encouraged to examine and develop an understanding of “the ambiguities and psychological risks associated with learning about their own culture and those of others” (p. 36).

Focusing on theories of teacher identity formation as articulated by researchers such as Britzman (1991, 1998, 2003) and Dee and Henkin (2002), and drawing on insights provided by critical multiculturalism, our research highlighted the need for preservice teachers to consider how their personal and professional identities are underpinned by strong emotional investments in particular belief systems and how these identities are situated in the changing cultural dynamics of the schools in which they will teach.

In an attempt to understand better how the complex and fluid nature of teacher identity formation relates to cultural difference, the Diversity Institute was designed around the themes of “Awareness, Discovery, Becoming, and Debriefing.” These themes allowed us to describe a process that related encounters with diversity to personal and professional identity formation. Each workshop explored a specific encounter with diversity and asked students to consider:

- Awareness of highly personalized behaviors;
- Discovering new perspectives and new experiences of the world;
- Becoming open to new perspectives;
- Debriefing and discussion.

Activities and presentations focused not only on issues of race and culture, but also included discrimination based on sexual orientation, disability, class, gender, and language.

Workshops and Activities

Through the framework of personalized behaviors, discovery of new perspectives, and becoming open to new perspectives, teacher candidates were challenged to reflect on personal and professional identities associated with diversity issues, rather than simply to receive teaching strategies and resources. With this regard as our groundwork, each workshop was organized to develop the four themes of Awareness, Discovery, Becoming, and Debriefing described above. Although the framework of the four themes seems like a linear process, we attempted to pursue the themes as a nonlinear, interrelated, and comingled process during the workshops and activities. Each workshop incorporated activities oriented around various aspects of diversity such as racism, sexual orientation, disabilities, linguistic diversity, religions, cultures, and ethnicities. The contributions of stakeholders and NGOs through various activities and presentations were provoking and informative in terms of the importance and values of presenting a range of perspectives.

To enhance awareness of highly personalized behaviors, several workshop activities challenged our participant student teachers to interpret their personal experiences, prejudices, assumptions, actions, and reactions in everyday environments. We hoped that they would begin to move beyond a taken-for-granted view of such experiences and to understand how a person's actions and reactions are formed in particular social and cultural understandings.

In other workshop activities, we tried to help student teachers to discover new perspectives and new experience of diversities. Through encountering and interacting with artifacts, media, other languages, and case study narratives associated with diversity issues, participants were provided with opportunities to gain insights into a variety of cultural perspectives and to expand their understandings of the meaning of diversity.

Students' Feedback

We solicited feedback from the student teachers participating in the Diversity Institute in order to understand their experiences of the workshops, to acquire their responses as participant-contributors to the initiative, and to evaluate the Institute's successes and shortcomings in respect to the participants' new perspectives and teaching. This feedback was collected in three ways. First, response sheets were made available during the workshops. These enabled the participants to provide anonymous comments or suggestions about the activities and themes of the workshops. Second, as a debriefing activity at the end of the fourth workshop, the participants were asked to write brief journal reflections. These were guided by seven questions based on the pedagogical process model of Awareness, Discovery, Becoming, and Debriefing:

1. Why did you agree to take part in the Institute?
2. Which aspects of the Institute did you find most meaningful for you as a new teacher?
3. What have you learned about yourself and your own behaviors and beliefs from participating in the Diversity Institute?

4. What new perspectives have you discovered about “others” from your participation in the Institute?
5. How do you plan to adopt these new perspectives into your own sphere as a teacher?
6. Are there other aspects of diversity or specific concerns you have that you would like to see addressed in a future Diversity Institute?

Third, the participants were asked if they would correspond by e-mail with one of the facilitators during their nine-week student teaching practicum. This e-mail correspondence was guided by three questions that were provided in advance of the nine-week practicum period and then asked one by one at two-week intervals during the practicum. Again, these questions followed the pedagogical process model of Awareness, Discovery, Becoming, and Debriefing:

1. While in the school these last few weeks, what has caught your attention regarding diversity?
2. While teaching this week (or over the last few weeks), have you learned any new perspectives regarding the diversity of your students?
3. Have you thought about integrating the cycle of “awareness, discovery, and becoming” into your lessons? If so, how?

In total we received 21 responses on the anonymous feedback sheets and 18 journal reflections from participants. Thirteen student teachers corresponded by e-mail with the facilitators during the practicum.

Analysis of Participating Students’ Feedback

Reasons for participating in the Diversity Institute

The 18 student teachers who volunteered feedback on their experiences in the Diversity Institute chose to participate in the Institute for several reasons. Some were motivated by a proclaimed personal ideology or pedagogical stance of care and inclusion:

I think that entering the school system these days, we need to realize that a school is a culture in itself full of diversity. In order to reach out to students of all backgrounds, it’s important to have some understanding.

Others assumed the official political and popular discourse of Canadian multiculturalism and acknowledged the varied and changing demographic nature of Canada and the concomitant obligation (as white Canadians of European descent) to respond to others with an open mind:

In Canada’s multicultural society, it’s important to be as aware, knowledgeable and understanding as possible with our increasing diverse classes.

Both these reasons for participating are declarations of an apparently commonly accepted value that diversity is an important issue in Canadian society. For some student teachers, such an attitude was perceived as a social and professional expectation that they felt was impressed on them by institutional and career expectations:

Honestly, because I thought it would look good on my résumé. As well, several of my friends were planning on attending.

This participant's frank admission of wanting to build her curriculum vitae was echoed by many other respondents and reveals a belief among student teachers that being able to indicate some attention to diversity could make the difference between getting a job and achieving personal success, or not getting a job in a competitive professional market. That groups of friends and future colleagues had signed up for the workshops added a sense of complicity and seems to confirm a shared interpretation of the professional culture.

No matter the personal, social/popular, or professional disposition motivating the participants, most identified a need for action on their part:

I wanted to learn more about the situations that I might encounter in the classroom and how I could respond to each in a positive way.

It is telling that action was expressed in terms of enhancing work or craft knowledge; they wanted to "equip" themselves with "a useful tool," "skills," "techniques," or "strategies." Diversity was something for student teachers to "work with" and "deal with." Awareness of diversity implied a skill set for them to have in order to apply to their practice teaching the "diverse other." This conception of the pedagogy of diversity as possessing certain professional attributes served as an even greater motivation for those who had been made aware of the degree to which they lacked this knowledge. Some maintained that they already possessed a level of expertise about diversity but that what they had was not enough:

I have been self-educating in diversity for some time and this was an opportunity to learn more.

Alternatively, other student teachers interpreted their condition as a complete personal, professional lack:

I felt totally unprepared when in my IPT [introductory professional term] I had three deaf students in my class.

For most respondents, diversity awareness was perceived as a way to gain a better understanding of others from a largely unquestioned "diversity as object" perspective, rather than from a dialogical perspective reflecting a willingness to interact with others in order to appreciate the world from another's perspective and to change as a consequence.

Participants' Assessments of the Diversity Institute

Participants found various aspects of the Institute to be the most meaningful. Many emphasized the influence of the presentations by gay-lesbian-bisexual-transgendered educators and by an Aboriginal woman, which challenged stereotypes through the use of visual media and personal stories. Several also mentioned as insightful the activity in which the participants were placed in a Croatian immersion situation following a simulated "war in Canada," so as to appreciate the experiences of refugee students who arrive in Canada not knowing English language and culture. A few participants described how their assumptions were challenged as a result of such workshop activities.

[I learned] how something that seems different from what I know or am used to is not wrong—but rather a unique perspective on an aspect of learning.

The “Out is In” presentation made me think about sexuality in junior high schools.... I realize now that a junior high student who is already living with a constant peer pressure could be saved by something as small as having a teacher with a “safe place” sticker on their window to talk to.

A large number of these participants continued to request more “specific strategies” or “practical examples of what we could do in the classroom, rather than just awareness.” Thus for many student teachers there was still a focus on tips and tricks as opposed to self-examination and engagement with others. As the feedback shows, being aware of the fact of diversity does not equate with being aware of what it means to be or be seen as diverse. Simply being aware of the fact of diversity does not explain the complexities of one’s relation to diversity.

Awareness of one’s own behaviors

When asked what they had learned about themselves, the participating student teachers indicated that they had come to recognize that they had personal biases and beliefs about people they saw as different from themselves, and that they behaved according to these biases:

Even the most open individual has biases that we need to learn to work with. If we don’t address these, we can never improve teaching to diversity. I was able to realize more of my personal biases. I was also pleased to get some resources and contacts to help me in my future of teaching diversity.

This awareness of personal behaviors and beliefs was most often talked about in general terms:

I have biases that will make it into my teaching, but being aware of them can help.

In expressing this general awareness, some respondents switched perspectives from *I* to *we* as if to shift the responsibility for personalized behaviors, their effects, and their reconsideration from the self to a less clearly identifiable group. One participant even ultimately adopted an impersonal pronoun and a passive voice that seemed to distance the individual further from any particular obligation:

I have learned that no matter how hard we try, we always have some element of bias in our lives. It is important to be aware of these so progress can be made.

Only two participants gave an example of a specific bias or personalized behavior of which they had become more aware or about which they were more concerned. One mentioned becoming aware of the language and common expressions he used, especially as to how these words denigrated gays and lesbians. A second admitted her own racial stereotyping:

One of the areas in which I really was able to question my beliefs was about Canada’s Aboriginal people. I know that my personal beliefs are often not fair or accurate.

When asked about what they had learned about their personalized behaviors, most student teachers focused on expressing a positive, that is, uncritical individual self-assessment. Participants explained that they were “very

accepting of *all* types of diversity,” “a really empathetic person,” “committed to learning and sharing,” “quite open to diversity,” “an aware person,” “a caring, aware and accepting individual.” The phrase “I am an open-minded person” rang through the responses like a proud refrain. Still other participants concentrated on the job ahead, mentioning “all the different resources available” to which they had been introduced.

It is somewhat ironic that a question that asked the participants to identify their self-learning in regard to their personalized behaviors to others should become an opportunity for them to use diversity awareness (and by implication diverse peoples) to reiterate a highly positive self-image rather than examine themselves and the part their everyday behaviors play in reinforcing false or inaccurate perceptions of others. The Diversity Institute itself became a highly personalized behavior of self-assertion. The participants’ awareness of diversity and otherness served in many cases to contribute to their need to feel good about themselves rather than to critically understand one’s relation with another.

Discovering new perspectives about others

When the participants were asked about the new perspectives they had learned about others during the workshops, they were generally enthusiastic about the new insights they had gained from participating in the Institute. One student teacher commented:

This Institute has taught me that despite our physical or cultural differences we all share intrinsic qualities. The best way to understand this is to put yourself in someone else’s place and see how you are treated. The exercises we did like this give you insight into how others feel, which in turn changes your feelings.

Few respondents provided specific examples. One person mentioned discovering how to be more sensitive to GLBTQ students, whereas two others emphasized finding out what it was like to have to live and go to school in a second language. None of these was elaborated with details. Similarly, during the practicum some mentioned how they had got to know their students’ ethnic origins, and that they had learned that several were ESL students (which they had not realized at first). But these participants did not mention that they had discovered any particular new insights as to their students’ perspectives on life at school.

Although this feedback question gave the participants the chance to look outwardly and discuss the new knowledge they had discovered about others, most looked inwardly on the group of fellow students in the Institute, or on the profession to which they were soon to belong. Their assessments of the group were positive, whereas the teaching profession received negative—almost blaming—assessments:

I was pleasantly surprised at the open-mindedness of some of the participants.

I have learned a lot about how much people around me know: other students (peers), teacher resources, groups, and our future students.

Schools and principals are not as encouraging about stopping racism and prejudices because they want to hide the fact that it exists in their school.

The “other” is very much present and the hidden curriculum involves discrimination against diversity.

Once again, many participants seem to have avoided engaging explicitly in learning about others. Instead, the question elicited a sense of positive peer assessment and feelings of camaraderie : “I am not alone in this pursuit.” It appeared that many student teachers who chose to become more aware of the diversity in their classrooms were just as preoccupied with maintaining a self-image as accepting and open. Overall, they appear not to have challenged their beliefs or lack of knowledge of others. Certainly the participants’ feedback at this point is replete with platitudes projecting a bland fantasy of harmony:

We can be different and similar at the same time. We need to be considerate.

Everyone comes from an awesome background but just views things differently.... If you want people to listen to you and respect your background, you should respect them.

Others may not be so “other” after all.

There will always be “others.” ... Truly everyone is an “other” in their own right.

People want to be a part of a co-operative accepting society.

These comments suggest that many participants remained at the ethnocentric stage in their development of cross-cultural awareness (in which all diverse people are considered the same when compared with the self as norm) and so have not advanced to what Bennett (1993) describes as a more ethno-relative stage of acceptance, adaptation, and integration.

Bringing new perspectives into one’s sphere as a teacher

Because so few participants identified new perspectives that they had discovered during the workshops, it follows that only a few were able to speculate on integrating new perspectives into their sphere as teachers. One participant who was a science major described emphasizing the cultural diversity of scientists.

I will try to present my lesson in such a way that more than one perspective is presented, for example making reference to scientists of note from different cultures, rather than focusing only on western accomplishments.

Most participants responded not by drawing attention to a particular perspective, but by suggesting that they would change their classroom practice by being generally more inclusive:

I will develop lessons that make use of multicultural perspectives.

I will try to welcome guest speakers from different walks of life to show students respect for everyone.

Asking students about themselves in an informal way (like in the hallway or directly after class) would be a good way both to learn about their culture, race, religion, etc. and to get to know them better as an individual.

I will go out of my way to incorporate all sorts of cultural activities from all areas of the globe into my classroom.

Often the descriptions of teacher behavior reflected a concern for students' well-being in general rather than indicating any specific attention to diversity. Most of these responses could match just about any question about perceptions of good teaching:

Review my lesson plans from a student's point of view before implementing it.

Spend time getting to know the backgrounds of the students to increase understanding.

The most important things that I will take to my classroom are a motivation to get to know as much as I can about my students and an ability to relate to them as individuals. I want to treat each student individually based on his or her particular situation.

By having an open mind and heart, by embracing differences, by reflecting on my classroom practices and through dialogue with my students.

Still others seemed vague about how they would bring diverse perspectives into their teaching. For example, one participant commented,

I'll cross that bridge when I come to it. It is hard to say when I don't know what my students' backgrounds will be.

Other participants responded to the question in terms of harm reduction. They described their intention of creating a safe place or an atmosphere or environment where students could feel safe.

Once involved in the field experience practicum, a few more students were able to find ways of integrating awareness of others and the discovery of another's perspective into their teaching. One related how she was able to respond with a "teachable moment" discussion when her students used the word *gay* as a negative adjective (as in "those shoes are so gay"). Another participant discussed how he no longer assumed that the nature of high school students' lives was much like his own at that age and how he became more sensitive to the daily needs and circumstances of lower income students.

The institute was a great experience for me because it taught me not to take anything for granted, and to realize that the conditions at home for these kids might be completely foreign to me. (The lower-income kids that is.) Having the luxury of being raised in a caring and safe environment, I can't even comprehend what many of these kids go through on a daily basis.

The same participant described a sensitive way of including students of diverse ethnic backgrounds to participate in a discussion on racism by modeling his own experiences of racism as a white Westerner in Asia.

I am also trying to engage the students from visible ethnic backgrounds. We covered racism last week, and while I was careful not to focus the discussion on the kids from visible minority groups in the class, I did encourage those students to share their experiences with racism with us. I attempted to make them feel comfortable in doing so by relating my own experiences with racism that I experienced while living in Japan.

These specific examples of new perspectives being brought into the classroom were disappointingly few. Overall, participants' responses suggested that diversity awareness was understood by these student teachers as some-

thing to apply in regard to others rather than requiring them to understand other people's perspectives and in turn to change themselves. We have come to believe that student teachers require more instruction, encouragement, reflection, and practice if they are to adopt the Awareness, Discovery, Becoming, Debriefing model as something to apply to themselves to help them become more inclusive and flexible in their own daily and pedagogical practices.

Reflections on the Diversity Institute

Although the Institute was considered a positive experience by nearly all participants who chose to offer feedback, it seemed to do little to alter self understandings. Most of the teacher candidates saw the Institute as reinforcing their sense of their own openness rather than seeing the experience as a challenge to themselves. The experience seemed not to awaken the need to learn deeply about others. The challenge for teacher educators remains. As Philpott and Beynon (2005) remind us, teachers' notions of social responsibility tend toward a desire for the common good rather than a desire to engage with more thorny and personally threatening issues of addressing difference in the classroom:

Teachers talk about wishing to educate children to move beyond the self, to embrace the common good, to be compassionate and caring. However, the notion of difference is commonly swept into the corner in favour of more polite and socially accepted understandings that tidily collect people together in we-are-all-the-same groupings. (p. 47)

Although we can celebrate with those student teachers who have significantly reviewed how they think and act in the classroom, we also know that diversity education cannot be packaged in terms of a single aspect of one program. Student teachers and practicing teachers will require repeated opportunities in which to work explicitly with considerations of diversity and their role and place in it.

Our reflections on the Diversity Institute indicate that most student teachers primarily considered this program as an opportunity to feel good about themselves as apparently open people. Certainly an open disposition is important in diversity awareness. However, this openness needs to be accompanied by a genuine reflective engagement with discrimination, personalized habits and biases, learning about others deeply, and changing one's own ways. Our data from the Diversity Institute suggest that a few participants did come to new understandings of themselves and others and were able to effect changes in their pedagogical practices. Most participants, however, remained at a more shallow level of awareness about diversity and difference and unconsciously resisted efforts to encourage a deep reflection on their own biases and world views.

Our desires as organizers of the Diversity Institute to have attention to diversity become part of the identities of prospective teachers were ultimately frustrated. Although we could chart a curriculum as a plan that charted a process that moved from awareness of various forms of diversity, through a self-reflective discovery of personal responses to difference, to finally becoming changed in oneself, this did not lead to self-reflection and change. In

retrospect, the Diversity Institute exposed our own lack of understanding of identity and the dynamics of learning and unlearning that are at work in becoming a teacher.

The sources of the desire to address diversity are clear. Urban public schools are ethnoculturally diverse, with increasing numbers of students having histories and identities different from those of many of their teachers. Prospective teachers continue to have family and cultural backgrounds that are largely non-immigrant and non-Aboriginal. Hence there is an evident reality that the work of teaching for new teachers will involve engaging with difference. Whereas diversity tends to coalesce around ethnocultural difference, diversity proves to be a slippery signifier that includes race, religion, sexual and gender identities, disability, and so forth. These are also seen to require attention because of a general expectation that public schools are “expected to respect” diversity.

In order to include diversity meaningfully in the teacher education program, we need to recall that the signifier *diversity* has been mobilized in a milieu that constructs teachers as the bearers of expert knowledge (Britzman, 2003). For student teachers, respecting diversity becomes one more of the many authoritative and personally persuasive discourses at a time that is “taken up with negotiating, constructing, and consenting to their identity as a teacher” (p. 221). Given that student teachers are already summoned by the “cultural myth of teachers as self-made and knowledgeable” (p. 224), it is not surprising that they should want to know all about diversity. Their attendance at the Diversity Institute, their self-assurances that they are already comfortable with diversity, and their efforts to normalize it can be read as defenses against the terror of confronting the unknown other. At the same time these defenses prevent deeper engagement.

In expecting student teachers to cross over a bridge that has already been mapped out as a route of awareness, discovery, and becoming, we as organizers of the Diversity Institute showed little appreciation for what is at stake for them in the teacher education program. We felt constrained to objectify diversity and map a path of change to fit within the existing teacher education curriculum. The Diversity Institute was only a series of four workshops held over a period of slightly over five weeks in an already busy term. It was hardly reasonable to expect reflection on demand in a context that already allows little space for negotiating identities. Fortunately, the action research process allows for reflection on the problem of objectifying diversity and allows us to reflect more deeply on how we might free teacher education for a deeper engagement with diversity. In the process it will allow us to trouble the object of diversity on the way to a more pedagogical relationship in the teacher education program. It should also allow us to attend more directly and collaboratively to the kind of schools we want for a just and humane Canada.

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