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Gaps in Teacher Education: Defining, Developing and Diverting on the Path to an Equity Stance

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Abstract

Heeding the call for equity and transformative praxis in teacher education, teacher education programs often focus on equity and justice in mission statements and program design. This bounded case study explores how the construct of equity stance is framed by one teacher education program and then how the enactment of an equity stance is actualized in clinical field experiences. Feedback from clinical supervisors during observation cycles along with focus group interviews, surveys, and the examination of addressing an equity stance in teacher education are the focus of this article. Findings documented a continuum of equity enacted practices building from inclusive pedagogy to a heightened awareness of inequities, and the development of more equitable teaching practices. We recognize that both teacher candidates and teacher educators need to continue development of an equity stance moving from awareness to action within educational contexts.

Keywords

educational supervision; clinical practice; equity and inclusion; teacher development

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Introduction

Most universities claim to focus on equity and/or social justice within their teacher education programs (Zeichner, 2016). Cochran Smith et al. (2018) state, "The goal of teacher education is to prepare teachers who understand that part of their job is recognizing inequities in schools and society and working with others to challenge the structures that reproduce inequities" (p.154). Equity initiatives in teacher education programs are often responding to what McDonald (2007) describes as the "demographic imperative" – taking into consideration the growing diversity of p-12 students, and the predominantly White middle-class teacher population – as well as a call for greater coherence and unity of message within teacher education programs. As a result of both the emotional pull and the pragmatic impetus, many teacher education programs create vision and mission statements that include some version of preparing teachers to teach with "equity" in mind (Zeichner, 2016).

Given Cochran-Smith et al. (2016) and Young's (2011) assertions that education for equity is context-specific, we sought to examine our own teacher education programs. Additionally, we responded to Mette's, (2020) call to "reclaim the importance of educational supervision, and the role it can play in providing both theoretical frameworks to rethink education, and the practical and hands-on application to improve learning outcomes for students" (p.2) by engaging in an interrogation of our own clinical practices in facilitating the development of an equity stance toward teaching and learning.

In the initial stages of developing a shared conceptualization of what taking an "equity stance" toward teacher education could look like, we focused on enacted practices of predominantly White women candidates who moved into diverse field placements and worked face-to-face with students of color. We build on Cochran-Smith and Lytle's (2001) conception of *inquiry stance* that calls for teachers to question the authority of their own practices, willing to examine and change in response to evidence. We define an *equity stance* as the development of a critical stance toward teaching and learning that honors individual needs, stories, and situated contexts to transform opportunities and redress unjust systems of teaching and learning. Developing an equity stance toward teaching is a continuum that begins with teaching preservice teachers how to identify learning gaps for students and to implement pedagogies that disrupt inequities in their education settings (Hollings, 2011). Further along the continuum, teachers can recognize and work with others to "undo the racialized, structural, and systematic aspects of schools and society that maintains inequities" (Cochran-Smith et al., 2018, p.158).

Griffin et al. (2015) found that supervisors have gaps in their conceptions of their roles and abilities when it comes to fostering learning environments that support diversity. The authors contend that this gap in ability and dispositions must be addressed before supervisors can play a role in helping candidates develop culturally responsive practices. Given that, the purpose of the research described in this article was to understand how we as clinical supervisors (liaisons in our context) viewed our role in developing candidates' equity stance as well as how our use of feedback might promote candidate development within clinical field experiences. We explored the possible ways in which we used our role as supervisors to disrupt the 'deficit gaze' often applied to students living in poverty or from underrepresented groups (Dudley-Marling, 2007, Yeigh, 2020) in traditional education systems. We also inquired into how our teacher candidates

themselves conceptualized an equity stance throughout their clinical field experiences. This research study was guided by the following questions:

1. In what ways do teacher educators (liaisons) conceptualize their role, particularly their use of feedback, to prepare teacher candidates to develop an equity stance during their clinical placements in a title one community school?
2. How do teacher candidates perceive an equity stance and in what ways do they enact and develop that stance based on their clinical experiences in a title one community school?

Literature Review

This study frames our idea of equity stance as a continuum on Cochran-Smith's (2020) concepts of thin and thick equity as a framework for understanding equity in educational contexts. Cochran-Smith identifies "thin equity" as a focus on teaching and learning outcomes. This viewpoint is an important starting point for teacher candidates but does not acknowledge unjust systemic structures that are the root of educational injustices.

In teacher education programs, thin equity is more easily focused on as it aligns with the acquisition of teaching and learning strategies that bridge opportunity gaps within the classroom setting. However, the construct of thick equity deepens positionality in teaching such that the complex systems of teaching and learning might be interrogated to further systemic change or at least awareness of entrenched inequities in the U.S. education system. We recognize thick equity requires more focused work to purposefully push for disruption of the status quo in meaningful ways. Cochran-Smith's (Cochran-Smith et al., 2016) description of teacher education for equity is helpful when considering the actions of teacher educators as it operationalizes an equity stance toward teaching as having twin goals: preparing teacher candidates to teach all students well and preparing teacher candidates to recognize and challenge inequities in the systems within which they work (p. 70). These twin goals do not stand in isolation of one another, but represent a continuum. They allow teacher education programs to recognize that teacher quality and actions matter while still acknowledging that there are systemic issues that impact teaching and learning, such as state policies that oppress what teachers can teach and what students can read. In this study, we will refer to these twin goals as *inclusive pedagogy* and from *awareness to action*.

Inclusive Pedagogy

Inclusive pedagogy is rooted in notions of culturally relevant teaching. Ladson-Billings (1994) explains that culturally relevant teaching is a way to "empower students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes" (p.18). Ladson-Billings (1995) defines culturally relevant teaching as the intersection of student achievement, cultural competence, and critical competency. Through this lens, teachers can problematize their teaching, examine the nature of their relationships with students, and look for ways to make the curriculum and schooling more relevant to their learners. To implement inclusive pedagogy educators must recognize and value the assets or funds of knowledge (Moll, et al.,1992) culturally diverse students bring to the classroom community as opposed to seeing them through a deficit lens as a problem to be fixed. Clark et al. (2016) state that "we've got to do a better job of helping our preservice candidates think about race, culture and equity across all

of their courses," (p. 272). However, Yeigh (2020) points out that even if we help our teacher candidates see the importance of countering dominant narratives and deficit stances in their programs, most do not have the strategies in place or the working capital to do so from their role as teacher candidate in clinical experiences.

Awareness to Action

Much of the literature on equity in teacher education indicates that teaching strategies that would move candidates from *awareness to action* are often forgotten in teacher education programs as teacher educators may feel safer simply focusing on *inclusive pedagogy* (Baily & Katradis, 2017; Picower, 2011). Given the homogeneity of educators in the U.S. (Baily & Katradis, 2017), it can be difficult to truly engage with the challenging issues surrounding social injustices and systemic inequities. This has been made even more difficult when considering the plethora of recent legislation that prohibits schools and universities from discussing issues of white privilege, bias, or critical race theory in some states or via local school board policies. With critical discussions focused on equity now limited in some educational contexts due to state and local policy, many teacher candidates may struggle seeing injustices from other points of view because "humans are products of their socialization and follow habits of mind and thought that have been instilled in them" (Love, 2018, p.131). In other words, there can be an inertia of ideology and behavior that may preclude the development of *awareness of* systemic inequity that could lead candidates and teacher educators to take *action*. This may explain why teacher educators tend to initiate their efforts to teach equity on *inclusive pedagogy*.

Recognizing that teacher candidates may struggle to notice or be able to identify social inequities both in their own contexts or as larger systemic issues suggests that teacher educators and candidates might make more headway if they began by developing a more proactive awareness of how "much larger, long-standing and systemic social inequalities" (Cochran-Smith et al., 2016, p. 94) present and manifest themselves in their own educational contexts and clinical placements. However, Gorski (2019) pushes back against a developmental approach that focuses on cultivating awareness saying, "The hard truth is that racial equity cannot be achieved with an obsessive commitment to 'meeting people where they are' when 'where they are' is fraught with racial bias and privilege" (p.58). Some scholars have asserted that teachers must see themselves as capable of actively engaging in disrupting inequities (*awareness to action*) and recognize that teaching is a component of that engagement (Picower, 2012; Woodrow & Caruana, 2017), making the *action* portion of *awareness to action* key. DeMulder et al. (2009) concur with Gorski's perspective and argue that a teacher education program should include explicit instruction on how to act against injustices; a teacher education program that simply develops awareness of social justice issues and inequities without challenging teacher candidates to be agents of change "would be failing to fully contribute to the quest for social justice and peace" (p. 31).

Clinical Supervision

In trying to understand how the twin goals of teacher education – inclusive pedagogy and awareness to action – might be enacted at the end of a teacher preparation program, we focused on the interactions between teacher candidates and their liaisons who serve as supervisors during

clinical practice. These relationships and spaces in the program were key for teacher development as the candidate experience blurred boundaries between coursework and professional practice. Living in this hybrid space of p-12 schools and teacher education coursework presents a powerful opportunity for liaisons and teacher candidates to grapple with inequities present in both systemic issues of schooling and individual professional practice. A primary site for such interrogation includes the debriefing of observations.

Supervisors of teacher candidates could play a significant role in developing an equity stance and more equitable practices through their feedback practices. "Feedback is one of the most powerful influences on learning and achievement" (Hattie & Timperley, 2007, p. 81). Hattie and Timperley (2007) claim that feedback is the bridge from classroom learning to clinical placement. Engaging jointly in the decomposition of observed teaching episodes provides an opportunity for liaisons to model an equity stance through posing inquiry questions and then jointly deciding on a clear goal for more equitable practice (Dismuke et al., 2019). In a recent webinar on anti-racist teacher education, Dorinda Carter Anderson (2020) stated that it is not enough to simply place teacher candidates in diverse settings in order for them to develop equity-based practice. Feedback in a diverse clinical placement allows for guided scrutiny of teacher candidates' initial approximations of practice (Grossman et al., 2009) toward racial inequity and goal-setting for more equitable practice.

Hattie and Timperly (2007) accentuate the role the liaison can play in helping teacher candidates reach goals for more equitable practice by "clarifying goals, enhancing commitment or increased effort to reaching them through feedback" (p. 87). Feedback discussions can provide opportunities for liaisons to influence professional judgment. Hess and McAvoy (2015) describe teachers' professional judgment as considering "the *context* in which they teach, the available *evidence*, and their educational *aims*" (p. 12, emphasis original). However, Griffin et al. (2015) found feedback strategies only work to develop an equity stance if faculty/liaisons/supervisors have themselves developed an equity lens, cultural awareness, knowledge and skills and courage to address and engage in these difficult discussions, particularly when they involve deficit beliefs, prejudices, biases. "Culturally responsive supervision proved difficult to support due to supervisors' own feelings of inadequacy" (p.7). These supervisors did not feel confident in helping teacher candidates enact culturally responsive practices even though they valued them.

Methods

In order to study influences on how teacher candidates develop an equity stance via clinical experience practice and liaison feedback, we explored how this teacher education program's commitment to equity was being enacted in the culminating professional year of the teacher education program. To answer our research questions, we engaged in a bounded case study (Stake, 1995) embedded within teacher candidate clinical placement in three title one, community schools, in one school district. Within this metropolitan school district, six schools are designated as Community Schools. Services provided by community schools include parenting information and support, free after-school care, support in securing food and clothing, access to health care, social workers, and early childhood resources.

Context of the Study

In the teacher education context for this study, teacher educators in both the university and in the school-based partnerships demonstrate value for clinical experiences and the relationship between teacher candidates and liaisons (clinical supervisors) as critical to the development of new teachers. The university provides continuous professional development and support to both school-based and university-based clinical educators (Snow et al., 2023). Teacher candidates spend two semesters in clinical experiences across a "professional year" with support from a school-based mentor teacher and university liaison. Semester one they spend three full days teaching in schools while taking courses at the university, and the last semester they engage in student teaching full-time, following their mentor teachers' schedule. University Liaisons visit partner school sites weekly for informal and formative observations, teach site-based seminars, and hold meetings with mentor teachers, in addition to individual "check-ins" with candidates and mentors. In some partnership schools there are liaisons-in-residence (Snow et al., 2018). Liaisons-in-residence (LiR's) are full-time classroom teachers in our school-university partnerships who also serve as clinical supervisors for teacher candidates in their building in addition to their pk-12 classroom teaching. The LiR also supports mentor teachers in their work and shares responsibility for teacher candidate development and evaluation with a university-based liaison.

Clinical Practice in a Pandemic

This study took place during the 2020-2021 school year. The university campus closed its doors to in-person learning in March 2020. However, teacher candidates continued teaching from their school buildings until May, when they returned to their homes. Teacher candidates returned to a partially reopened university campus to begin their clinical placements in Fall 2020, teaching completely online or remotely from inside their assigned schools. Liaisons, who would typically meet with their teacher candidates once a week for face-to-face seminars and be fully present in their school buildings were also working remotely and participated with candidates in electronically mediated observations through video observations and conferencing. As the semester progressed, candidates and their mentor teachers pivoted to a hybrid model of remote and face-to-face instruction and ended their placements fully face-to-face. Although this was not the context we expected for this study, it had a profound impact on all participants.

On return to campus Fall 2020 candidates were met with protests near our capitol building, just miles from the schools where they were teaching. Citizens took to the streets to voice a multiplicity of opinions. However, the state where this study takes place is dominated by republican policy making. In stark contrast to state politics, the schools where this study took place are Title One Community Schools that serve our most economically challenged and racially diverse students with 80-90% of students qualifying for free and reduced lunch. These schools welcome new to country and refugee families from around the world. In one of our participating schools, 21 different languages are spoken. Title One Community Schools provide a variety of social and medical services to the attending students and their families, including on site food pantries, dental services, and social workers. By the end of these teacher candidates' clinical year, they would see their university and professors sanctioned for teaching about bias

and social justice and the governor sign a law to ban the teaching of critical race theory in public schools.

Participants

Participants included two full-time university faculty as liaisons, the authors of this article, and two place-based LiR's along with all of our teacher candidates. Teacher candidates were both interns (first semester; 3-4 days per week in their clinical placements) and student teachers (full-time in their school sites). University Liaison 1 (author) is a veteran, tenured professor who had been working as a liaison for more than 20 years. University Liaison 2 (author) was a clinical associate professor with a wealth of experience in this context who served as a program coordinator and had been a liaison for eight years. LiR 3 had been an elementary teacher in a title one community school for more than 10 years at the time of this study, had served first as a mentor teacher and then added her role as a LiR. LiR 4 had taught in a title one community school for more than five years, served as a mentor teacher and had been a LiR for two years. All liaisons had completed state approved certification for evaluating candidates on the evaluation tool in our state. The 15 teacher candidates were all seeking K-8 elementary certification with an additional K-12 or middle school content area endorsement in Mathematics (5-9), Special Education (K-12), Literacy (K-12), or Health (5-9). These endorsements require candidates to take courses in other programs, making them a representative sample across programs. They were at the end of their preparation programs in their year-long clinical experience.

In order to better understand how teacher educators conceptualized their role in terms of developing their candidate's equity stance through their feedback in clinical practice, we collected the following data sources which could inform our supervision practices as well as the larger field of teacher education.

Data Sources

Survey. Prior to beginning in clinical placements, the four liaison participants and 15 teacher candidates participating in the study completed a survey via Qualtrics. This survey included a mix of Likert scale and open-response questions to explore how liaisons conceptualized their work in terms of preparing teacher candidates to teach for equity. The survey also investigated how teacher candidates perceived *equity* before entering their placements. For instance, we asked questions such as, is it the teachers/liaisons responsibility to point out inequities in teaching and learning? Another question asked if it was the teacher or liaisons responsibility to differentiate for socio-cultural needs?

Observations. Artifacts from liaison conducted observations of teacher candidates in the field were collected during the 2020-2021 school year. There were four formative observations conducted per 15-week semesters and Professional Year Assessments (PYA) (two per semester). Observations were guided using the program Formative Observation Form (see Table 1). Liaisons and candidates selected and recorded goals based on the observation for each of the formative observations. The written notes and goals were analyzed for evidence of candidate enactments of equitable practices or goal setting.

Table 1. Formative Observation Form Equity Check List Responses

Formative Observation Form Equity Check List Responses	**Intern 2**		**Intern 4**		**Student Teacher 2**		**Student Teacher 4**	
Response(s) Fall 19 & Spring 20	**n**	**%**	**n**	**%**	**n**	**%**	**n**	**%**
Candidate ensures that opportunities for all students to be productive and participate are in place.	80	63%	84	67%	76	63%	43	52%
Candidate finds multiple ways to communicate so all students may understand. Candidate connects content to students' lives and experiences.	49	38%	49	39%	52	43%	31	37%
Candidate provides scaffolds and supports so that all students have opportunities to think deeply, answer questions and contribute to discussions.	46	36%	57	45%	43	36%	22	27%
Candidate ensures that all students have access to the content and they can share how it affects their lives.	33	26%	40	32%	49	41%	21	25%
Candidate recognizes what interests and cultures students bring to the classroom and honors these.	28	22%	26	21%	36	30%	12	14%
Candidate ensures that students are optimally grouped, and activities used are personally relevant and individually appropriate.	24	19%	27	21%	29	24%	9	11%

**Results are shown in rank order, highest number of observed qualities across participants*

Observation Feedback. All observation feedback sessions among liaisons, mentor teachers, and the teacher candidates were digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim along with any written notes that were made.

Focus Groups. A focus group interview was conducted after the clinical experience. One focus group interview was conducted that included the two university-based liaisons, the two school-based liaisons (LiR's) and three of the teacher candidate participants to revisit liaison and teacher candidate conceptions of taking an equity stance toward practice. The focus groups were facilitated by one of the university liaisons using pre-constructed questions. The focus group interviews lasted approximately 90-minutes, were transcribed verbatim, and were coded for themes along with the additional data sources, including researcher journals and memos.

Data Analysis

Data analysis occurred simultaneously for sources at the completion of the study. The quantitative survey data was used to triangulate the multiple sources of qualitative data. Quantitative elements of the surveys were analyzed in Qualtrics using descriptive statistics; t-test analysis was performed on the pre/post survey questions. Qualitative responses on the survey, formative observation forms and focus group interviews were read and coded by two researchers. The a priori lens of equity stance influenced the codes, but did not prevent other codes from emerging. Each researcher coded and identified themes among the survey responses and

interview transcripts separately with inductive line-by-line coding and word/phrase categorization (Saldana, 2016). Once each researcher read all of the transcripts, they memoed the initial codes and then shared them with each other. Primary themes were identified from the shared coding and analysis. Transcripts of all feedback sessions were recorded and transcribed verbatim and coded in the same manner as above. To ensure trustworthiness, researchers were assigned to read transcriptions of all debriefings they were not connected to. Researcher 1 coded data from school site B & C. Researcher 2 coded the data from School Site A.

Quantitative and Qualitative data were analyzed separately and then brought together to look for areas of triangulation, illumination, and for disconfirming evidence. Final themes were determined where the qualitative and quantitative data supported each other.

Findings

Analysis of all data sources yielded three main findings. First, liaison and candidate feedback centered more on inclusive pedagogy than awareness to action. In addition, clinical placements in diverse Title One Community Schools gave candidates a heightened awareness of equity issues in their context. Lastly, when candidates had the opportunity to collaborate with others around issues of equity they were able to take localized actions within their locus of control.

Focus on Developing Inclusive Pedagogy

Despite our passion for moving candidates from *inclusive pedagogy* to *awareness to action*, multiple sources of data triangulated to reveal that most interactions between liaisons and candidates were rooted in inclusive teaching practices. Teaching during a global pandemic, the candidates and mentor teachers had to adjust to what it meant to teach inclusively. Mentors, candidates, and liaisons had to consider access to technology, family and community dynamics, and the limitations of their own skill sets for online, remote, or hybrid instruction. Liaison feedback often was directed at noticing and problem-solving inequities in individual episodes of teaching in this new format. Analysis of the formative observation forms for written comments provided candidates with some content-specific references to equity-based practices. For instance, candidate two received written feedback during a social studies lesson that read, “Taking a critical view of whose voices were represented and whose were not when forming the constitution” and candidate four had written comments on her Thanksgiving lesson that read, “You were mindful that not all students celebrate Thanksgiving and included a thoughtful comment within your lesson to recognize different cultures in your room.” There was also written feedback pertaining to supporting language learners such as a comment to candidate two: “Provided language supports- Use of video, hands on activities, movement activities and sharing work with peers.” However, most equity-based feedback was provided during oral feedback sessions where there was an opportunity for dialogue.

Analysis of the transcripts of debriefing sessions identified several feedback patterns. The most prominent pattern occurred when the university or school-based liaisons helped candidates notice issues of inequities in access to the curriculum or resources by posing questions. For example, LiR three said in her debrief with a student teacher, “I noticed that you did not call on your ELL [English Language Learner] students as much as the others.” The candidate did not want to cold

call a student who in her words, “could not speak.” The liaison went on to confront that disposition by modeling strategies that would help scaffold ELL participation in the remote discussion. She also wanted her teacher candidate to notice that the same two students in the class never turned on their camera or audio during remote instruction, despite the candidate’s instructions for all cameras on. She used a probing question, “you set the expectation…. Is there a need for follow up?” (L3MO1). The candidate replied, “She is not comfortable with her camera or audio on.” The liaison wanted her to think more deeply and probed further, “Neither is her brother” (L3MO1). The liaison was engaging the candidate in thinking beyond a management issue to help the candidate think through what conditions could exist in the home that might make a student uncomfortable with a camera on. The candidate was able to notice that even when the student virtually raised her hand and asked for help she would not turn the camera on. The candidate was able to shift from needing to reinforce a behavioral expectation to thinking through how to meet this student’s academic and social needs without forcing this student to open her home life to everyone. Data from researcher journals triangulated debriefing recordings that found liaison feedback was centered on recognizing inequities in practice, rather than a call to systemic action. In a memo, one liaison said,

> To be fair, I don't think we (I, anyway) have ever really focused on my feedback as a means for ‘disrupting inequity’ in any other way than teaching and learning during the professional year. I mean I talk about it generally speaking, and might even share in outrage with teacher candidates, but when we talk about their work in schools, our discussions stay practically focused on teaching/learning contexts in their classrooms/schools/districts… (Memo, L1, 3/2021)

This reflection noted it was easier to focus on aspects of teaching and learning rather than systemic inequities when working as a member of the dominant culture with and in a context embracing white hegemony. Liaisons could support candidates in “practically focused” feedback discussions quite safely - without challenging systems based on privilege, oppression and inequity. We knew we should and could do more to move candidates toward actions that push for equity within systems in education even as we focused on equity in teaching and learning and provided opportunities for questioning strategies to become more aware and more sensitive to the lived experiences of their students.

Pandemic Context Heightened Awareness of Inequities

Remote and online teaching that occurred during the pandemic pulled back the curtain into students' home lives more than ever before. Teacher candidates and their liaisons were exposed to the inequitable learning conditions that were exacerbated by the pandemic. We recognize that these inequities existed prior to the pandemic. There was already a digital divide that districts were reacting to in different ways, but having every child rely on technology daily made these inequities more visible and impossible to ignore. Liaison two explained it as, “I've been really proud of the way our districts handled it, you know the hot spots, the devices, but then it's like the onion, we've pulled back layers and we’ve found other places where we've just not even recognized that there's an equity problem” (LiR4FG).

As school shutdowns extended across the year, cameras allowed for peeling back layer after layer of the challenges and living conditions that many families were facing. The pandemic exacerbated conditions for families living in or near the poverty line. Staying home was not a choice for some parents, leaving children at home to school themselves. For example, a teacher candidate taught while a committed student from a local refugee family participated in the lesson while holding her baby sibling on her hip. With parents working, she was in charge of the smaller children at the same time she was responsible for her own school work. Another candidate had a student participating alongside his two siblings from his family van. The father has parked the van near a business to get internet so his three children could participate in school. Liaison four commented, "it's helped open their eyes to the world that their students live in and they still come to school, every day, and they still try to do their best. And for some of our staff, I think it puts them in a more loving position for some of their students that they tend to get frustrated with." (LiR4,FG). Focus group data detailed the impact of their teaching experience on their equity stance.

When asked to define equity in the focus groups after being in their clinical placements, candidate four said, "My understanding of it has grown, but also the things that I would include in those descriptions or examples has also gotten way broader. And that could be because, you know, we see things at home and in the class, which is different from other experiences I've had in the program prior to this year" (C4FG).

Qualitative survey data indicated that this experience led to a heightened awareness of challenges students and their families faced on a daily basis and broadened candidates' definitions and conceptual understanding of equity in this hybrid space between their preservice programs and classroom teaching. There was significant growth noted in implementing culturally responsive pedagogy and implementing equity-based instruction. On average, teacher candidates felt significantly more comfortable implementing culturally responsive teaching at the end of the study than before (p=.006) and felt more comfortable implementing equity-based practice (p=.011). Table 2 documents significant changes in dispositions for teacher candidates on the paired sample t-test for the pre-post survey data.

Table 2. Survey Paired Sample t-test Results

	Pre		Post		*t* (7)	*p*	Cohen's *d*
	M	SD	M	SD			
Implement culturally-responsive pedagogy	3	.93	2.13	.64	3.86	.006	.678
Implement equity-based instruction	2	.76	1.38	.52	3.42	.011	.548

Although our analysis provided evidence that candidates had grown in the area of inclusive pedagogy and liaisons noted a heightened sense of awareness of inequities, conversations surfaced more frequently than we would have liked regarding our own desires to "fix kids" and their family situations as opposed to voicing acceptance for diverse family structures that were different from our own. In the focus group interviews, participants talked about pulling back the curtain on their own bias toward family situations and encounters with our own savior and hero complexes. LiR four reflected on his student teacher's experience teaching remotely:

> Some things that were witnessed in virtual and, and just some assumptions that were made, and they were, they weren't necessarily from a …place of malice but there were just some judgments made, and then we … had to have a conversation about, you know, don't let that cloud the way that you treat this student. You got a small picture of it, and yeah, that's definitely something we don't generally, get to see, so it does affect, I think, equity, because if you were someone who could be influenced by it, it's not easy to not be judgmental when you see things and can't put yourself in that place.

There was also a heightened awareness of more systemic issues like the differences in instruction between teachers. Even pre-pandemic there were differences in teacher's ability and willingness to enact culturally responsive pedagogy. Focus group interviews with candidates and liaisons also spoke to inequities created due to the variability in teacher's ability to adjust to teaching in online formats. One liaison said, "ELL students that need more … visuals and things like that, and then online it's hard to tell and they (language learners) just log off if they're frustrated. "I think some teachers …who are phenomenal teachers in the classroom, don't know how to provide that scaffolding when it's online" (LiR3, FG). The focus group conversation went on to consider the larger issue of inequality in instruction during the pandemic between teachers as they struggled to get up to speed with online teaching. Empathy for teachers and students was in the forefront of the discussion as we all recognized the impact the pandemic was having on all teaching and learning.

Awareness led to Action in Localized Collaborative Communities

Although liaisons did not urge candidates to act against systemic issues, a combination of our inquiry stance (Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2020) and collaborative communities led candidates to act for more inclusive practice within the candidate's locus of control. Candidates could see that awareness was only the first step in developing an equity stance toward teaching. Candidate two said, "A really important aspect of having an inquiry stance, it's being able to admit and look for it (inequities) and recognize it... then what's the next step for that equity stance? So not just recognizing it., how are you going to advocate, how are you going to provide those students with the best equity that you have control over?" (C2, FG) Another candidate chimed in, "the equity stance, then becomes when you start wondering why they (experiences) look different. Why, there are those differences across schools and then, what can you do to help with that?"

The positionality of teacher candidates in the system where they are learning is precarious. LiR three recognized that systemic action can be a vulnerable place for teacher candidates looking for work:

> You have to have that professional capital to know that if you put yourself out there it's not going to be a negative for you. And that's where I think there's a systemic issue, because a lot of new teachers are afraid that if they step outside of it and go over and advocate the way they feel they need to, that that might reflect negatively on them (LiR3FG).

However, in collaboration with others, some were able to move into localized action within their own classrooms. One candidate said,

> We have these problems; how can we find solutions? We're noticing that certain students are not able to access, or some of our families need more support. So, like we were able to bring some kids back four days a week...before all the kids came back., just seeing how people can work together to actually make differences has been good. (C3FG)

Along with their mentor teachers and members of their school communities' candidates were able to take actions not sanctioned by districts to make learning more equitable. Candidates made home visits to check in on family needs, brought hands-on manipulatives and hard copies of assignments, and problem solved technology access. They handed out lunches and at one school site candidates on their own volunteered to provide childcare for front line workers and families in need. They were learning to take actions that disrupted inequities in the service of their own local school communities.

Discussion

Findings suggest a continuum from thin equity to the development of a heightened awareness of inequities and even in some cases collaborative action during clinical experiences. However, we did not find that teacher candidates or teacher educators moved into a "thick or strong equity" stance taking a stand against more systemic inequities in their clinical practices.

Despite having a commitment to provide equity-based feedback to candidates we had to recognize our readiness to do so was what Gorski (2019) termed an *equity detour*. There was likely some "pacing for privilege" that occurred due to an overwhelming sense of uncertainty during the pandemic. The context of a global pandemic positioned education as often *inside* the homes of learners and their families. We were faced head on with inequities in p-12 student situations in remote and online learning, and we focused on supporting teacher candidates with inclusive pedagogy and ensuring students had access to the content. Our feedback and candidate responses were contained within the classroom and students' individual homes. It was in relation to daily instruction and student's wellbeing, safety, and access. There was little evidence of suggesting any radical change to systems based on what we saw. However, this view into student's lives became fertile ground for feedback conversations with candidates that helped them identify differences in access to learning opportunities and places to deconstruct attitudes and statements of blame and deficit models of thinking. The result was the scaffolded development of *awareness* of inequalities in our feedback and debriefing conversations and developing more equitable teaching practices. Although overt action against the system may have been limited, candidates did change practice within their locus of control.

Implications

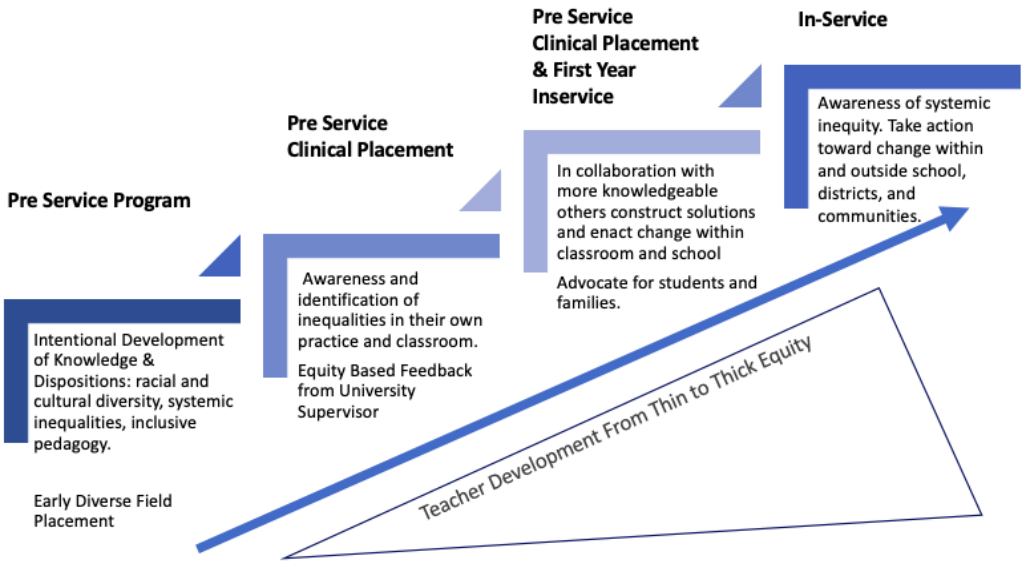
We have uncovered gaps in our teacher preparation program that center on teacher educator preparation and development. As teacher educators, we possessed the desire to do better but lacked the knowledge and skill we needed to help candidates more fully develop an equity stance. Mette (2020) tells those of us that supervise to be patient with ourselves as we "mediate our practice to continually improve instructional outcomes for all students" (p. 3). On the other hand, Gorski (2019) reminds us that students and families suffering inequities cannot wait for "us" to be ready. Instead of starting where people are at, he calls for us to "start where we need to be: Equity is neither optional nor negotiable" (p.58). We agree and are taking steps to support each other in our community in pushing away from where we are and moving into where we need to be. Based on Gorski's work (2019) we are working together intentionally to identify a bank of more pointed equity-based questions during feedback that may move a candidate along the thin/thick equity continuum during feedback sessions like (1) Which students have the most access to higher-order pedagogies and relevant curricula? Why would that be the case? or (2) Which of your students face grinding inequities in and out of school? Why do you think that is? (3) What do trauma-informed practices look like for students whose primary source of trauma is the racism they experience at school? Why might this be experienced as trauma? (p.59). Once questions are developed in liaison communities of practice, we will also engage in professional development in enacting these questioning/feedback strategies to focus on the potential for action in our equity focus.

Our liaisons already engage in professional development through a Teacher Education Liaison Group (TELG) where we discuss logistics, problem-solve, and identify areas for professional development around our practice. We plan to add Yeigh's (2020) practice of *Disruption Conversation Rehearsals* as a professional development tool with our liaisons to improve our collective feedback practices toward helping candidates and liaisons develop an equity stance. Through Yeigh's practice of "disruption," it will be necessary to build from our shared vision of cultivating an inquiry and equity stance in practice. We could use case studies of practice to "rehearse" discussion providing feedback for pushing awareness of inequities and why they occur. What might we as education partners be able to do to address such injustice? Yeigh encourages beginning with a "non-threatening topic," like "mansplaining." Yeigh's next scenario included addressing deficit thinking in meeting student needs, including rehearsing discussions with the candidate and the mentor teacher. Professional development must move beyond the development of questions for feedback sessions with teacher candidates. It should begin with foundations for developing cultural awareness, knowledge, and skills (Gay, 2002), fostering asset-based pedagogy (Paris, 2012), as well as developing supportive conditions for working towards equity (Jacobs et al., 2014). Likewise, this professional development needs to extend beyond clinical practice to include preparation program coursework and post-program through early years of teaching. Shared development with school partners would support elongated practice and development with teachers across the professional life span.

Our findings revealed a very loosely coupled alignment of teaching equity stance that was dependent on teacher educator viewpoints and definitions of equity. We propose that teacher education programs need a common definition and aligned programmatic outcomes for candidates that maps the journey from inclusive pedagogy to awareness to action. This journey

begins in preservice teacher education, and it needs to continue to be nurtured into the early years of teaching. Figure 1 documents goals for supporting the development of equity stance from early program to inservice teaching.

Figure 1. Equity Teacher Development from Inclusive Pedagogy to Awareness to Action



As we grow as liaisons along the same equity continuum, we also recognize the need to balance our feedback and calls to action with our candidates' positionality in schools. As we reflected with mentor teachers and candidates we realized candidate positionality within the system is delicate. The mentor teachers often have more capital in making statements and working toward change. Recognizing this, we are determined to push our equity feedback to focus on what candidates can control first, and then move to the larger system. We will also be more purposeful about including school partners in these feedback cycles. The mentor teachers (LiRs) in this study were more comfortable addressing inequities and discussing them with their teacher candidates than they acknowledged some of their colleagues may be. A focus on mentor teacher development for rehearsing conversations around disruption may also be called for once liaisons are more comfortable as a group modeling this practice.

It is also important to note how educational practice during the pandemic changed - what did educators and teacher educators learn from these experiences? And, how can we build on what was learned from new or heightened awareness of systemic inequities in students' lives that are potentially exacerbated in education systems? It would be a disservice to educators, students, and the education system to continue to revert back to traditional practices in education systems. We acknowledge that communities of practice are important for interrogating privilege and becoming *uncomfortable* with the idea "we just can't do this right now." If not now, when? We must go global in our thinking and consider systems, historic inequities, and the importance of

changing them now. Feedback focused on how to change a system while working within it involves all of the partners in the complexity of teacher education for equity in education.

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