Chapter 36
Dismantling Eurocratic Practices in Teacher Education:
A Preservice Program Focused on Culturally Relevant, Humanizing, and Decolonizing Pedagogies

Kamania Wynter-Hoyte
University of South Carolina, USA

Meir Muller
University of South Carolina, USA

Nathaniel Bryan
Miami University, USA

Gloria Swindler Boutte
University of South Carolina, USA

Susi Long
University of South Carolina, USA

ABSTRACT

This chapter provides a profile of an urban education collective that fosters relationships among pre-service teachers, university faculty, and a local school district. The partnership supports preservice and in-service teachers serving marginalized communities using culturally relevant, humanizing, and decolonizing pedagogies. Drawing from decolonizing and humanizing theoretical and pedagogical frameworks, the collective highlights equity, asset-based, and anti-racist teachings. Insights gained from this initiative and recommendations for navigating challenges in equity work are presented. Implications for teacher education programs and future research goals are provided.

INTRODUCTION

Nationally, preservice teachers are entering the field of education with little to no awareness of issues of racism, xenophobia, heteronormativity, ableism, and gender bias (King, 2005; Sleeter, 2001; Swartz, 2005) that continue to dominate pedagogy, policy, and practice in educational institutions. In addition, they join a workforce that has had little opportunity (through their own teacher education programs or inservice professional development) to understand the ongoing effects of colonialism on curriculum, theory, and instruction (Asante, 2017; Au, Brown & Calderon, 2016). This means that Eurocratic (King & Swartz, 2016) curricula, policies, and practices continue to dominate in most educational settings rather than *normalizing* the community cultural wealth (Yosso, 2005) -- the strengths, accomplishments, values, and resources -- of cultural and racial communities that continue to be marginalized, misrepresented, or invisible in schools and in teacher education programs (Baines, Tisdale, & Long, 2018; Paris & Alim, 2017). Further, it is well documented that children of Color are consistently over-referred to special education (Codrington & Fairchild, 2013), under-referred to gifted programs (Ford, 2013), and inequitably disciplined (U.S. Department of Education Office of Civil Rights, 2014) and assessed (Rosner, 2002). As a result, preservice teachers, who may experience a class here or a professor there in their university programs focusing on equity issues or assets-based pedagogies, rarely have the knowledge, experience, confidence, or support necessary to sustain equity ideologies once they enter the teaching profession and we continue to lose students most marginalized in schools to an inequitable pedagogical status quo.

As university faculty, we brought these concerns to the development of an Urban Education Collective which encompasses five schools, their administrators and teachers; five university faculty; and a two-year Urban Education cohort of preservice teachers majoring in early childhood education. The work focuses on issues of equity in early childhood (grades PreK - Grade 3) pedagogy, practice, and policy. Through the work, teachers, preservice teachers, and university faculty engage together in investigating how Eurocratic practice not only disempowers communities and disenfranchises children who are marginalized, but how it communicates the centrality of Whiteness to every student (King & Swartz, 2016). We worked to develop a cohort experience for preservice teachers and a professional development experience for practicing teachers that would help both groups of educators learn realities of inequity as well as humanizing, decolonizing, and culturally relevant pedagogical strategies (Ladson-Billings, 2014, 2017) for change.

The school district in which the Collective takes place is an urban district of about 23,000 students. Seventy-three percent of the students are African American, 19% are European American, and 8% are listed by the school district as "other." A total of 72% of the students receive free/reduced-price lunch. The university's student demographics are approximately 69% European American, 15% African American, 4% Latinx, 3% two or more races, 2% Asian, and 4% of the students did not respond when asked by the university to self-identify according to the categories provided. Three of university professors involved in this collective are African American and two are European American. The 25 university students in the urban cohort involved in this work included five African American students, one Latina student and 19 European American students.

Within and across these contexts, the Urban Education Collective seeks to build a shared knowledge base and a collaborative network to support teachers and preservice teachers in better addressing the strengths and needs of young children. The authors of this chapter are the university faculty engaged in the work. We work toward sustainable pedagogical transformation and document our processes and practices to better understand how and if the development of a network of shared knowledge acts to

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