Chapter 14
Through the Looking Glass to Ourselves:
Developing Self-Understanding in the Online Multicultural and Bilingual Teacher Education Classroom

Gwen Stowers
National University, USA

Mark Brimhall-Vargas
University of Maryland, College Park, USA

Kenneth Fasching-Varner
Louisiana State University, USA

Christine Clark
University of Nevada, Las Vegas, USA

ABSTRACT

This chapter describes the project of developing online multicultural and bilingual teacher educational curricula in a manner that encourages particular intellectual and behavioral learning outcomes for teacher education students. The pedagogical process by which these outcomes are achieved—facilitation of e-dialogue—acts as the project's management approach. The goal of the project is the development of transformational respect for and among all learners (both teacher education students as well as their largely public school PK-12 students), and sustenance of faculty (both teacher education and PK-12) hope and possibility through progressive e-education; resultantly, systems of oppression in schools and the broader society can be dismantled.

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, we discuss the development of online multicultural and bilingual teacher educational curricula (our 'project') that cultivate and promote student progressive self-understanding and, from there, motivation to participate in progressive social change efforts. These curricula are centered on the idea of student self-reflective e-dialogue. While this kind of dialogue is time-consuming to learn to actualize well, in so doing, students develop the disposition and related skills for making meaningful connections with their teacher education classmates as well as their own PK-12 students. In turn, this propels them toward the personal and shared intellectual and behavioral growth necessary to realize democratic citizenry.

Central in these curricula is students learning to: 1) break the e-silence often associated with true or honest conversation on complex and controversial diversity issues in e-course discussion boards; and then, 2) act on the ethical imperatives that arise from that conversation in executing their course projects and, ultimately, in their work as PK-12 teachers, especially in public schools. Online teacher education faculty model this learning through their facilitation of student self-reflective e-dialogue and mentoring-oriented feedback on student projects (our 'management approach').

These curricula also provide opportunities for students to e-connect with peers as "equals" (as opposed to as "selves" and "others"). E-connecting as peers allows students to develop personal insight into, and sociopolitical understanding of, systems of oppression operating in society and, therefore, manifest in PK-12 schools. Accordingly, students come to understand diversity content through diversity e-pedagogy (e-'walking the talk'), the goal of which is their development of transformational respect for all learners—their academic peers, and their PK-12 students—in building democratic classroom communities and, in turn, fostering lifelong democratic citizenship. In facilitating student self-reflective e-dialogue, faculty develop a sense of hope and possibility that systemic oppression in schools and society can be eradicated, because they e-see student change over the course of an academic term and, therefore, project the cascading positive impact of that change over these students' lifetimes, especially in their work as PK-12 teachers.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter draws from, and builds on, four conceptual points of entry. These points are cultural (inclusive of language) learning, dialogue and systemic oppression, honest and open self-examination and self-critique, and the public school-to-prison pipeline.

This chapter engages Krashen's (1983 & 1996) ideas on language learning and expands these ideas in discussing learning about e-racism, e-classism, and the other e-isms that manifest in the online multicultural and bilingual educational learning environment. Accordingly, the chapter describes the processes by which knowledge beyond the students' initial capabilities is cultivated, not only through connection to prior knowledge, but also within an e-learning context that lowers the students' *affective filters* or resistance to learning usually brought on by anxiety or fear.

This chapter connects to Freire's work (1993) on dialogue and systemic oppression in facilitating all students' understanding that they have the ability and the right to interact in, and with, the world and, in so doing, can change it if they choose. Specifically, this chapter embraces Freire's notion that educational resistance to systems of oppression helps both the teacher and learner achieve the liberatory goal of becoming *more fully human*.

This chapter is buoyed by Lorde's (1984) commitment to confront her worst personal and political realities in order to become free to express her best personal and political realities, and to be open to the same from others. Lorde's commitment was borne of her decision to overcome her silence about all of whom she was, in particular to 'come out' as lesbian. In deciding to speak out about her true, complex identity, Lorde was catapulted into action against myriad injustices in the world. In engaging online multicultural and bilingual teacher education students in confronting their and others' worst so they can express their and experience others' best, the hope is that they will, in turn, do the same with and for their PK-12 students.

Finally, this chapter borrows from the perspectives of Galeano (1999). Prior to the "free trade" era, Galeano describes the international division of labor as between countries that specialize in *gaining* (first and second world countries) and those that specialize in *losing* (second and third world countries). Post the free trade era, this divi-

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