Preface

The population demographic in American schools is constantly changing. The number of immigrants, for instance, has increased tremendously contributing to the growth of the resident population of the USA and the nation’s student diversity. The cultural composition of American public schools’ student bodies has also changed; more students from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds have populated American public schools leading to a critical need to prepare and equip teacher educators with appropriate cross-cultural competences required to effectively teach diverse students.

We are moving toward a society in which individuality is retained and valued, a cultural mosaic created from millions of unique diversity pieces. Although three-quarters of the American population is white, there is evidence to suggest that the nation has become very diverse in the 21st century (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000). Further, the U.S. Census Bureau projects that by the year 2100, the U.S. minority population will become the majority with non-Hispanic whites making up only 40% of the U.S. population. All this underscores the urgent need for teacher educators to establish appropriate and effective strategies to meet the needs of a very diverse student population as well as to ensure that all students can achieve to their highest academic potential.

Today’s classrooms require teachers to teach students with different cultures, languages, abilities, and many other characteristics (Gollnick & Chinn, 2002). Even so, for many teachers, the struggle is to teach students with backgrounds different from their own (Sadker, Sadker, & Zittleman, 2008). When teachers ignore or reject different cultural expressions of development that are normal and adequate and on which school skills and knowledge can be built, conflicts can occur which may lead to student failure (Nieto & Bode, 2008). Therefore, understanding the differences in culture and language and how these differences affect children’s learning can help teachers understand what they can do to improve the academic achievement of their students.

Some programs, such as bilingual projects, have demonstrated that student learning can improve remarkably when students are not required to renounce their cultural heritage (Nieto & Bode, 2008). However, given that diversity programs are not uniform across states, and for limited funding to sustain the few existing programs (Nieto & Bode, 2008), teaching in diverse classrooms still remains a big challenge in many public schools. Teaching culturally and linguistically diverse students requires a multifaceted approach; there is more than one approach to responding to cultural diversity in the classroom. Irrespective of the approach used, teachers should attempt to “even the playing field” so that the languages and cultures of individual students are perceived as equally valued and powerful. In practice, teachers must be willing and ready to create sound pedagogical strategies that recognize diverse learners. Further, teachers should strive to create a culture where all students can achieve, and are provided with the best opportunities and diversity tools to learn.
Similarly, a great majority of teacher educators who wish to teach in diverse racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic settings are unprepared for the diversity they will face in those schools because they have learned little or nothing about it (Ladson-Billings, 2001). Thus, teachers fail to appreciate real similarities and differences between their understanding of the “world” and that of their students who come from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Most programs offered for teacher educators focus more on special education, bilingual education or English as a Second Language (ESL). Teacher education programs continue to teach as if diversity were either non-existent or annoying problems to be overcome (Beykont, 2002). Therefore, it is critical for teacher educators to acknowledge that diversity is an important element in education. Diversity has a great impact on classroom atmosphere as well as student achievement (Nieto & Bode, 2008).

Diversity is valuable because: it empowers teachers and students; decreases stereotypes, prejudice, and racism in America and the world; and generally promotes equity and social justice (Nieto & Bode, 2008). Consequently, affirming diversity must go beyond the numbers. In other words, the challenge to teacher educators is clear: it is not enough to integrate by numbers, because diversity does not guarantee equal expectations for all students. We cannot lump groups of students together; we have to transform their minds. If we subscribe to the idea that all students can achieve, our actions and expectations must reflect that belief. Transforming our own minds is painful but necessary if we want diversity to mean something.

When teachers ignore or reject different cultural expressions of development that are normal and adequate and on which school skills and knowledge can be built, conflicts can occur which might lead to student failure (Nieto & Bode, 2008). To this end, teacher education programs must strive to prepare teachers who are able to interact more effectively with diverse students and enhance students’ academic achievement. Additionally, for students to apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that foster cross-cultural competence, it is critical for teachers to model the knowledge, skills, and attitudes of culturally competent professionals. Therefore, Handbook of Research on Promoting Cross-Cultural Competence and Social Justice in Teacher Education provides peer-reviewed essays and research reports on benefits, challenges, and strategies to promote cross-cultural competence and social justice in education contributed by scholars and practitioners in the field of teacher education and other related education programs.

Chapter 1 examines the importance of culturally responsive relationships-focused pedagogical approaches in engaging Aboriginal students in their learning and the significance of this to improving their educational outcomes.

Chapter 2 examines a model to help educators, administrators, and policy makers to (1) comprehend current policies, practices, experiences as well as strategies in global classrooms; (2) understand how instructors can help ESL learners adjust to the U.S. academic language and culture and how this support could affect learners’ effectiveness, attitudes and confidence; and (3) acquire the knowledge of how to integrate technology into the curriculum and consider technology as meaningful learning environments that could support not only language but also intercultural and global literacy skills.

Chapter 3 suggests that teacher preparation programs, regardless of geographic location and demographics of their teacher candidates, model a spirit of inclusivity and be intentional in offering an integrated approach to preparing teacher candidates to be highly-effective in working with all students regardless of diversity represented.

Chapter 4 explores a research study based on the Cultural Self-Study method with a specific example used to illustrate how the tool and its application look in real life, and the recommendations for the use of self-study in pre-service teacher training.
Chapter 5 examines the demand, struggle, and recruitment of minority teacher candidates in teacher education. The main goals of this chapter are to: (1) survey the impact of teacher demographics on student learning processes and academic achievements; (2) identify the promise and pitfalls of diversifying teacher candidates in preparation programs; and (3) provide a scholarly basis for future developments.

Chapter 6 examines both conceptual and empirical reviews and studies conducted in this millennium to bring about digital equity. This chapter informs teacher education programs, researchers, school administrators, policymakers, teachers, and other stakeholders about evidences and recommendations to bring about digital equity in US K-12 and teacher education.

Chapter 7 explores technology through issues of social justice. This chapter examines pedagogy and practice highlighting the integration of culturally relevant pedagogy and cultural relevant teaching into a computer science course focused on current events and issues of social justice.

Chapter 8 discusses the notion of developing high quality teachers in the light of education reform using a Case Study of teachers in Haiti. This chapter validates previous research that suggests that high quality in-service teacher professional development leads to improved instruction, student learning, and ultimately promotes social equity.

Chapter 9 presents research on how Culturally Responsive Mathematics Teaching (CRMT) and a critical hope framework can be used as learning tools in the alternative high school classroom.

Chapter 10 highlights the application of the equity literacy framework as a curricular approach to infusing diverse and multiple perspectives in PK-12 school curriculum, and presents a rationale for developing equity literacy in PK-12 students.

Chapter 11 engages educators in considering how the key ideas in Critical Race Theory may be applicable in their own settings. This chapter includes vignettes that highlight the processes of calling in and being called in as a means to work towards greater equity and reduced oppression in educational and social settings.

Chapter 12 explores the development and subconscious expressions of microaggressive behaviors and language that are embodied throughout life. This chapter also provides strategies for teacher educators to build upon the framework of “care” (Pang, Stein, Gomez, Matas & Shimogori, 2011) that often underlies teacher candidates’ desire to enter the profession in order to help them recognize and deal with embodied values that result in microaggressive acts in the classroom.

Chapter 13 examines the development of social justice dispositions in early childhood preservice teachers. This chapter elicits a critical debate to help teacher educators explore areas of the early childhood program that need revisions to equip relevant preservice teachers with multiple opportunities and field placement.

Chapter 14 engages the reality of the university classroom that includes Heritage-Learners (HL) and second-language learners (L2) of Spanish. This chapter discusses how implementation of progressive assignment design and targeted learning skills development supported L2 students and transitional bilinguals in a mixed classroom.

Chapter 15 examines resiliency theory, as an expanding ideology attempting to provide supportive resources with suggestions for how education practitioners might function, as positive social change agents in organizations and institutions.

Chapter 16 provides a review of the common issues that international faculty face in U.S. higher education institutions. Also, recommendations of the types of support systems that institutional administrators can implement to support their international faculty members are provided.
Chapter 17 focuses on ways that teacher educators can foster English Language Development using a multimodal and multiple literacies approach (e.g., Gee, 2003). Also, specific methods and digital tools that prepare educators to use technology to foster English Language Development are described and specific resources that can be used are identified.

Chapter 18 provides an overview of the policies regarding education of English language Leaners (ELLs), examines different ethnic groups represented within ELL subgroups including basic demographic information across the different states in the U.S. Also, it examines challenges hindering school success and effective instructional support and strategies that facilitate language development and academic literacy.

Chapter 19 describes the practices of identifying and labeling gifted boys, from the perspective of gifted boys attending high school and from the perspectives of a school system. The authors use Wilber’s (2000, 2006) Integral model as a conceptual framework to framework for understanding the multiple factors impacting gifted students’ daily experiences, engagement and achievement.

Chapter 20 explores multicultural education in the context of special education. Multicultural education as an effective intervention in urban schools and culturally responsive teaching to enhance meaningful student learning are also examined.

In summary, the National Council of Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) states that teacher education programs’ conceptual framework should clearly state an intent to prepare teacher candidates to provide instruction based on the needs of students as well as there must be a demonstration of knowledge, dispositions, and skills related to diversity, integrated across the curriculum, instruction, field experience, clinical practice, assessments, and evaluations (NCATE, 2010). Additionally, teacher preparation programs should strive to model a spirit of inclusivity and educate culturally responsive teachers to address the diverse issues affecting ethnically diverse students of the 21st century (Villegas & Lucas, 2002). To this end, this handbook offers research-based practices and perspectives that can help teacher educators make the connection between cross-cultural competence and social justice to maximize teaching and learning.

Finally, this handbook examines the need to prepare teachers for diversity – to prepare teachers who are able to interact more effectively with diverse learners – to also identify various strategies to enhance student academic achievement in diverse classrooms. Therefore, understanding cross-cultural differences and how these differences affect student learning can help teacher educators to evaluate and incorporate effective pedagogical strategies to improve the social and academic achievement of their students (Keengwe, 2010). Additionally, teachers who are successful in the classroom generally possess cultural competence that entails “mastering complex awarenesses and sensitivities, various bodies of knowledge, and a set of skills that taken together, underlie effective cross cultural teaching” (Diller & Moule, 2005, p. 5).

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REFERENCES

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