Equity, democracy, and neoliberal assaults on teacher education

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ABSTRACT

Although in the long run, neoliberalism has a track record of undermining equity and democracy, in the short run it has directed attention to education needs that have been inadequately addressed. This article sketches what teacher education in the US can do to advance equity and democracy in five areas: recruitment and admission, early fieldwork, professional coursework, student teaching, and on-going professional development. The article then examines three neoliberal pressures teacher education: (1) away from explicit equity-oriented teacher preparation, and toward preparing teachers as technicians; (2) away from defining teacher quality in terms of professional knowledge, and toward defining it terms testable content knowledge; and (3) toward shortening university-based teacher education or by-passing it altogether. It concludes by emphasizing the importance of collaborating with underserved communities as a way of pushing back against neoliberalism.

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1. Introduction

Teacher education in the US is under siege. Strong criticisms from within the field focus on shortcomings such as disconnections from schools and a fragmented research base. For example, Levine (2006) charged that teacher education is doing too little to prepare teachers for realities of public schools, arguing that programmes lack curricular coherence, are too disconnected from schools, have low admission standards, and offer too little quality control. While internal criticisms can serve to strengthen teacher education, external assaults that have their origins in global economic and political restructuring aim not only to deprofessionalize teaching by devaluing professional preparation of teachers, but also to undermine equity and democracy by restructuring education around corporate needs. Under a marriage between neoliberalism and neoconservatism, education is being tightly harnessed to the service of corporate expansion, in the context of downsizing of public services and sub-

stantial narrowing of the meaning of democracy (Gabbard & Atkinson, 2007; Hursh & Martina, 2003; Torres, 2002).

Harvey (2005) defines neoliberalism as "a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade" (p. 2). Neoliberalism re-works liberalism to support global capitalist expansion (Torres, 2002). Liberalism is predicated on individual rights, individual freedoms, and private property, within the rule of law. Liberal political policies generally emphasize opportunity and competition, moderated by protections against discrimination and market excesses, including provision of some level of common welfare. Under neoliberalism, the role of government shifts from regulating markets to enabling them, and replacing public services with private enterprise, in the process, weakening the nation-state and public political participation. The state becomes a handmaiden to the creation and defense of markets and the monetary system on which they are based.

In the US, by the mid-1980s, neoliberal pressures on education, becoming quite visible, were grounded in the assertion that student achievement was eroding partly

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because of progressive approaches to teaching and federal interventions to protect minorities. In an incisive critique of that assertion, Berliner and Biddle (1995) pointed out the degree to which it manufactured a sense of crisis to persuade adoption of neoliberal reforms. As Hursh (2005) explained, although education in the US has historically been a local responsibility, corporate and government leaders pressured states to develop curriculum standards and tests, and ultimately to pass *No Child Left Behind*. By converging with neoconservatism, neoliberalism became a tool for restoration of elite power in which education serves as a resource for global competition and private wealth accumulation (Gabbard & Atkinson, 2007; Harvey, 2005).

What does this have to do with teacher education? Writing with reference to Chile, where neoliberalism has a longer history than in the US, Avalos (2001) noted two competing agendas impinging on teacher education: improving the quality of teaching in poor communities, versus training teachers to prepare children for participation in a competitive globalized economy. Many people in poor and historically underserved communities see neoliberal education policies, such as school choice and accountability, as offering potential solutions to long unmet needs. However, over the long run, neoliberalism's press to increase competition for wealth and to shift from public to private ownership has a track record of benefiting mainly already-powerful communities (Harvey, 2005).

I will argue that shifts from public to private investment, and from preparation partially for citizenship to preparation for work, have escalated doubts in the US about the need to invest in university-based teacher education. Teacher education's generally weak response to the urgent need to improve the quality of teaching in historically underserved communities—who stand to benefit most from strengthened teaching—greatly contributes to the irrelevance with which it is increasingly seen in the US. I will sketch what teacher education could be doing much more strongly to advance equity and democracy, then examine countervailing pressures of neoliberalism.

2. Teacher education for equity and democracy

Nations around the world are grappling with how to prepare teachers more effectively for diversity, democracy, and equity (e.g., Ball, 2000; Gordon, 2006; Harber & Serf, 2006; Santos Rego & Nieto, 2000; Solomon & Sekayi, 2007). I suggest that teacher education for equity and democracy rests on three pillars: preparation for everyday realities and complexities of schools and classrooms; content knowledge and professional theoretical knowledge that universities can provide; and dialog with communities in which schools are situated, a crucial pillar that too often is ignored (Solomon, Allen, & Campbell, 2007). Building on those pillars, I will consider two broad strands of equity and democracy: affording all children access to excellent teachers who can build academic learning on their cultural and linguistic back-

Table 1
Teacher education for equity and democracy

	Build equitable access to high-quality, intellectually rich, culturally affirming teaching	Build democratic participation and advocacy on behalf of equity
Recruit, admit	More diverse teacher candidates	Candidates committed to multicultural democracy and equity
Early fieldwork	In multiple classrooms, Inquiry-based to disrupt deficit theorizing, In communities to learn culture of students	Inquiry into school and community patterns of inequity
Professional coursework that includes	Self-analysis, Socio-cultural framework for teaching and learning Teaching strategies linking what students bring to academics	Strategies for building multicultural democracy in classroom Nature of institutional discrimination in society and schools
Student teaching	In culturally diverse and/or low-income schools, with plenty of time and support	In classrooms that support democratic decision-making With teachers that model advocacy stance
On-going professional development	Practice-based inquiry with support	Activist teacher networks

grounds, and preparing teachers to develop democratic participation in the context of diversity, as well as to advocate effectively for children and youth. These two broad strands appear in Table 1, in relationship to five areas of teacher education I will examine briefly: recruitment and admission, early fieldwork, professional coursework, student teaching, and on-going professional development. I chose these five areas because most research in the US on preparation for teaching diverse populations investigates directly at least one of them.

2.1. Recruitment and admission

All students, and particularly those in historically underserved communities, should have equitable access to high-quality teachers who believe in them, are committed to working with them, are convinced that they bring cultural and linguistic resources on which academic learning and democratic participation can be built, and know how to facilitate that learning. Although providing such teachers is in part a teacher preparation challenge, it is also a recruitment and admission challenge. Neither race, ethnicity, language, or religion

determines teacher quality, but a diverse teaching force is more likely than a homogeneous one to bring knowledge of diverse students' backgrounds, families, and communities, and commitment to serving diverse students. In the US, while enrolment public schools is only a little over half white, and a little under half students of colour, with almost one-fifth speaking a language other than English at home (National Center for Education Statistics, 2006), the teaching force remains about five-sixths white.

Most programmes in the US admit those who traditionally opt to enter teaching, screened primarily on academic ability, an admissions process that perpetuates an overwhelmingly white teaching force. Many studies have consistently found that most white teacher candidates in the US bring deficit-oriented stereotypes but very little cross-cultural background, knowledge and experience (Sleeter, 2008), or what Mueller and O'Connor (2007) referred to as "an unwavering ethnocentrism" (p. 853). However, candidates are rarely denied admission into teacher education on the basis of unwillingness to learn to teach diverse students. Studies in the US have found preservice teachers of colour to bring a richer multicultural knowledge base, more commitment to providing children of colour with an academically challenging curriculum (Dee & Henkin, 2002; Knight, 2004; Rios & Montecinos, 1999; Su, 1997), and more likelihood to remain in the teaching profession (Guarino, Santibañez, & Daley, 2006) than their white counterparts. It is possible to interrupt the continued overwhelmingly white stream of potential teacher candidates, although not as a substitute for strong teacher preparation, nor as a replacement for all white teachers. Diversifying the teaching force requires rethinking recruitment and admission. We can learn from examples of programmes that have done so.[1]

During the 1990s, 27 Pathways into teaching programmes[2] were established in the US, involving collaborations between colleges of education and urban school districts to prepare mainly teachers of colour who worked as paraprofessionals or emergency non-credentialled teachers. As of 1997, Pathways programmes had recruited 1854 participants; attrition rates were low, and supervisors rated programme completers very favourably (Villegas & Clewell, 1998). For example, the Pathways programme at Armstrong Atlantic State University, which certified about 90 African American teachers, screened candidates carefully, then prepared them in a rigorous university-based programme that was tailored to their needs, including providing various forms of financial, social, and academic support (Lau, Dandy, & Hoffman, 2007). "Project 29" at the University of Illinois at Chicago, designed to prepare bilingual teachers for Chicago Public Schools, had produced 145 teachers as of 2006, three-fourths of whom are Latino (Sakash & Chou, 2007). Other programmes have different origins. At Sacramento State University in California, the Bilingual/Multicultural De-

partment, consisting primarily of faculty members of colour, established a programme "to prepare teachers to be change agents actively working towards social justice in low-income and culturally and linguistically diverse classrooms, schools, and communities" (Wong et al., 2007). About 75% of its candidates are of colour and most are bilingual, a mix it attracts because of its focus, its faculty, and its commitment to working with communities of colour.

These examples represent possibilities for making teacher education much more relevant to schools in historically underserved communities. While dynamics of race, language, and ethnicity in the US are not the same as those in many other countries, the principle of recruiting a teaching force that brings perspectives and experiences of underserved and/or immigrant communities into the profession is relevant. US programmes that have worked actively with this principle illustrate strategies. Some programmes work with secondary schools to build a pipeline of potential teacher candidates; others work with community colleges and/or school districts that employ paraprofessionals. They often adopt an admission process that focuses on academic ability "plus," which may include dispositions, prior experiences, and bicultural/bilingual competence. When done well, such programmes do not short-change the professional preparation of teachers from underserved communities, but rather build such preparation on experiences and knowledge they bring.

2.2. Early field experiences

While field experiences are essential, often they encourage replication rather than critical questioning and transformation mainly by involving teacher candidates in helping out with routine classroom instruction (Feiman-Nemser, 2001). State or national policies directed toward test scores and compliance with curriculum mandates appear to reinforce this pattern, discouraging potential cooperating teachers from wanting to accept teacher candidates into their classroom, and directing attention away from student diversity when candidates are there (Margolis, 2006). As a nod toward preparing teachers for diverse students, many teacher education programmes in the US require one field experience with students of low-income and/or cultural or language minority backgrounds. However, case studies find a single such experience as likely to reinforce deficit perspectives about students (Marx, 2000; Tiezzi & Cross, 1997; Wiggins & Follo, 1999) as to challenge them (Chance, Morris, & Rakes, 1996; Fry & McKinney, 1997; Lazar, 1998).

Having multiple, rather than single, field experiences in historically underserved areas, in both classrooms and communities, using guided inquiry, has a reasonable research track record for disrupting stereotypes, helping teacher candidates learn about students' cultural backgrounds, and helping them learn to connect student behaviour and learning with what teachers do. For example, when Lazar (1998) directed candidates interview children in urban classrooms about home literacy activities, most candidates discovered much more literacy and

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value for literacy in students' homes than they had been aware of, causing many to rethink deficit assumptions about urban students' home environment (see also Armaline, 1995; Brookhart, 1997). Through practitioner research, candidates can learn to pose systematic questions about student learning, then gather and analyse evidence of learning, in order to identify what helps a given class of students learn best (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1992). By comparing teaching and learning in multiple classrooms serving diverse learners, using guided inquiry— even if some of the teaching is poor—teacher candidates can learn to connect student behaviour and learning with what teachers do (Richards, Moore, & Gipe, 1996; Ross & Smith, 1992).

Cross-cultural community-based field experiences, although not part of most teacher education programmes, have tremendous potential. In classrooms, candidates see students reacting to school, but often attribute their reactions to students' lives outside school. In cross-cultural community-based field experiences, candidates are guided in learning how to learn about students' community-based lives, using strategies such as active listening and non-judgmental observation. By doing this, candidates can gain a much better understanding of students' capabilities, strengths, and interests. Experiences may take the form of long-term immersion (Mahan & Stachowski, 1993–94) or less-intensive visits to neighbourhoods or communities in which candidates work in a community center, ethnic club, church, or homeless shelter, in connection with coursework (e.g., Boyle-Baise, 2002).

Although the research basis for cross-cultural community-based learning in teacher education currently consists largely of small-scale case studies, studies illustrate powerfully how this kind of learning provides a basis for constructing culturally relevant teaching in the classroom (Aguilar & Pohan, 1998; Boyle-Baise, 2002; Bondy & Davis, 2000; James & Haig-Brown, 2002; Melnick & Zeichner, 1996; Moule, 2004; Olmedo, 1997). For example, Noordhoff and Kleinfeld (1993) studied of the impact of a semester-long immersion experience in a small indigenous Alaskan community in which teacher candidates lived in the community and became involved in community activities. The researchers videotaped them student teaching over the semester, documenting a shift from teaching as telling, to teaching as engaging children with culturally relevant knowledge that connected with academic knowledge. Seidl and Friend's (2002) case study of interns working for an entire academic year in partnership with an African American church demonstrates deep learning about culture, teaching, and expectations. Studies of the impact of substantive and extended community-based learning that is connected with coursework focusing on diversity have found a powerful impact on teacher candidates (Brown, 2004; Wiggins, Follo, & Eberly, 2007). As Téllez (2004/2005) points out, however, it is not the cultural learning in isolation that matters, but rather the extent to which teacher candidates learn to relate with people who differ from themselves and are helped to connect what they learn with classroom teaching.

2.3. Professional coursework

Professional pedagogical knowledge serves as a complement to content knowledge. There is a fair amount of agreement about the nature of professional knowledge related to diversity and equity. According to Zeichner (1996, p. 159), for example, it includes development of clearer ethnic and cultural self-identity; self-examination of ethnocentrism; dynamics of prejudice and racism, including implications for teachers; dynamics of privilege and economic oppression, and how schools contribute to these inequities; multicultural curriculum development; the promise and potential dangers of learning styles; relationships between language, culture, and learning; and culturally appropriate teaching and assessments. Teacher candidates' prior life experiences, beliefs and assumptions, which act as powerful filters through which they interpret teaching, students and communities, can be examined through strategies such as guided autobiography (Kumashiro, 2004; Lea, 1994) or shared journaling (Milner, 2003; Pewewardy, 2005).

Analyses of US professional teacher education programmes that have been planned to prepare teachers for diverse learners show how equity and diversity can be woven meaningfully through the programme as a whole (Darling-Hammond, 2006; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). Darling-Hammond and Bransford (2005) conceptualized professional knowledge in three overlapping domains. Knowledge of learners includes the learning process and how learning is prompted, guided, and transferred; the child developmental process; and the language development process, including building on an array of linguistic skills and non-standard English usage students may bring. Knowledge of curriculum includes learning to design and plan curriculum for one's students, as well as envisioning curriculum in relationship to broad societal goals for schools. Knowledge of teaching encompasses a range of knowledge and skill through which teachers organize learning, including the teaching of subject matter, shaping teaching processes to build on cultural repertoires, linguistic skills, and varying abilities of students in any given classroom, assessment of learning to guide everyday instruction, classroom management, and collaboration with other professionals and parents.

In short, there exists a considerable professional knowledge base for equity and democracy related to teaching. While numerous studies have found that single multicultural or equity courses usually make a positive, though very small, impact on candidates' attitudes, it is likely that such professional coursework can make a greater impact on candidates when woven intentionally throughout a programme (Sleeter, 2008). With a few exceptions (Darling-Hammond, 2006; Ladson-Billings, 2001; Solomon et al., 2007), however, so far fairly little research shows how to build this knowledge into a well-conceived programme, and research is only beginning to examine the impact of such programmes on classroom teaching.

2.4. Student teaching

Student teaching, an essential part of teacher preparation, too often is not intentionally planned to address the

developmental process of learning to teach diverse students well. Many student teachers are not placed in challenging settings, even though they are being certified to teach all students. Those placed in a cultural context that is different from their own and/or in a high-poverty school often experience culture shock (Rushton, 2000), and if not helped to move through it, may well complete student teaching with deficit perspectives about students confirmed. Schools in historically underserved communities experience relatively high rates of teacher attrition (Frankenburg, 2006; Strunk & Robinson, 2006), probably due at least partially to new teachers not having been helped through culture shock.

Rushton's (2000) study suggests that candidates who work with students from historically underserved communities long enough and with enough support can shift their concern from themselves to their students' learning. He studied interns' experiences in a year-long internship that was part of a programme for urban teaching. The full year allowed for support through culture shock, so that by the end of the year, interns were able to focus on students' needs more than their own personal struggles. Had student teaching lasted only a semester, it would have ended while they were still navigating culture shock. Multiple, systematically designed field experiences in schools in historically underserved communities provide an alternative to a year-long experience. Teacher candidates who work with students who are diverse, culturally different from themselves, and/or in poverty, and who are actively helped and supported through culture shock, are more likely to want to teach such students, than those who are not (Cook & Van Cleaf, 2000; Cooper, Beare, & Thorman, 1990).

Cooperating teachers are particularly important for student teachers' development of efficacy in teaching historically underserved students (Knoblauch & Hoy, 2008). For example, Téllez (2008) explored teaching processes that five expert cooperating teachers of Mexican American students used, and commitments they brought to teaching, highlighting the moral underpinnings of their work and their value as educators of teacher candidates. Programmes that are able to provide mentors who can support inquiry-based, democratic, inclusive practice generally involve close collaboration between schools, universities, and communities (Wong et al., 2007).

2.5. On-going professional development

On-going professional development includes supporting new teachers as well as working with experienced teachers. One-shot workshops, still common in multicultural education, have little if any effect, and didactic presentations about groups tend to teach stereotypes (McDiarmid, 1992). Short presentations of teaching strategies do little to get at assumptions about diversity and equity that underlie teaching; staff development projects that attempt to re-work teachers' worldviews are too broad to have much impact (Leistyna, 2001; Sleeter, 1992).

Professional development programmes with the most promise combine on-going practice-based inquiry with classroom-based learning. The venue appears to be less important than the extent to which it supportively stretches teachers beyond their existing beliefs and understandings, is facilitated by someone with a deep commitment to and knowledge about equity in teaching, and maintains a clear and consistent focus on helping teachers meet the intellectual needs of their students. Various venues include beginning teacher induction, professional development schools, teacher networks, school reform projects, and university coursework linked with classroom-embedded work (Exposito & Favela, 2003; Jennings & Smith, 2002; Johnson & Kean, 1992). For example, in New York, Tobin and Roth (2005) developed a model to prepare urban science teachers through coteaching and cogenerative dialogues. Coteaching involves two or more teachers, including new teachers, teaching collaboratively; cogenerative dialogues engage multiple parties, including students, in discussion of specific incidents with a focus on improving the learning environment. Studies of this model are very encouraging, finding participants to become successful teachers who remain in the classroom. Working in both the US and South Africa, Ball (2000) prompted teachers to broaden their conceptions of literacy among students who differ culturally and linguistically from themselves by using discussions and activities designed that made them struggle conceptually with their beliefs in relationship to theory. In New Zealand, Bishop, Berryman, Tiakiwai, and Richardson (2006) report on a model of professional development—Te Kotahitanga—designed to improve the learning environment for Maori students in mainstream secondary schools. Te Kotahitanga engages teachers in learning from student narratives in a non-confrontational environment, followed by professional training, classroom-based coaching, and teacher-led classroom-based inquiry. The project is documenting a pattern of improvements in Maori students' achievement and other indicators of school experiences.

3. Assaults on teacher education

A growing repertoire of practices and programmes show how teacher education can help to recruit and prepare teachers equipped to teach well in historically underserved communities, as well as prepare students for democratic participation in a diverse society. As a field, however, teacher education in the US has been slow to take up these practices, particularly those that go beyond adding topics to course syllabi. Although many teacher educators have worked tirelessly and creatively to build programmes for equity and democracy as I have described them, and although diversity and social justice are no longer uncommon topics of study or mission descriptors (Zeichner, 2006), the field as a whole in the US has remained fairly traditional, mainly oriented toward preparing young white women for established missions and practices of schools. In addition, teacher education faculty in the US are overwhelmingly white, most with little experience teaching in diverse populations (Zeichner, 2003).

Teacher education now finds itself under assault in the context of neoliberal pressures on education and society more broadly. I will briefly examine three related neoliberal/neoconservative pressures teacher education in the US: (1) away from explicit multicultural, equity-oriented teacher preparation, and toward preparing teachers as technicians to implement measures school districts are taking to raise student test scores; (2) away from defining teacher quality in terms of professional knowledge, and toward defining it terms testable content knowledge; and (3) toward shortening university-based teacher education or by-passing it altogether. Although my discussion focuses on conditions in the US, similar pressures of neoliberalism recur globally (Avalos, 2001; Compton & Weiner, 2008; Hibbert, Haydon, & Rich, 2008; Openshaw, 1999; Puiggrós, 1997; Tomlinson, 2007).

3.1. Teacher education as technical support for raising student test scores

At their best, teacher education programmes and schools collaborate to develop high-quality teaching and strengthen democratic participation (Darling-Hammond, 2006; Solomon & Sekayi, 2007). But as schools are being pushed away from both democracy and rich conceptions of teaching, so too is teacher education. In response to government-mandated testing, school districts across the US have adopted increasingly prescribed curricula that are aligned with state curriculum standards and tests. Districts serving low-income and/or culturally diverse students tend to adopt the most controlled and scripted curricula,[3] in which not only content but also pedagogy is specified (Achinstein, Ogawa, & Speiglman, 2004; Margolis, 2006), and which teachers are expected to implement "with fidelity."[4] In this context, teacher education programmes are being compelled to jettison not only explicit equity-oriented teacher preparation, but also learner-centered teaching, in order to prepare technicians who can implement curriculum packages. All of this is occurring in a marketized context that is poised to replace public schools that crumble under pressure with private schooling (Nelson & Jones, 2007; for an analysis of similar processes in the UK, see Gillborn & Youdell, 2000).

Some of this pressure has taken the form of revisions to standards for teacher preparation, reducing or eliminating reference to social justice, multicultural education, or bilingual education. During the late 1990s, a survey of programmes in the US that prepare specialists in bilingual education, ESL, and/or multicultural education found tension in most states between goals of teacher education programmes and those of states' reform measures (Walton, Baca, & Escamilla, 2002). Many states that used to require preparation for diversity have reduced or

eliminated such requirements. For example, between 1985 and 2003, California offered certification for general education teachers emphasizing culture, language and academic development, and bilingual education. Its revised teacher education standards documents, however, "make clear repeatedly that the role of teacher education is to prepare teachers to teach the state-adopted content standards using state adopted materials" (Sleeter, 2003, p. 20). While the documents repeat the phrase "state-adopted academic content standards" throughout, and coursework on English language development is required, the term "culture" appears only a few times, "bilingual" appears once, and the phrases "culturally relevant" and "multicultural" are entirely absent. As a result of these changes, a recent survey in California found that content addressing culture and language, formerly taught in designated courses, had been "infused" or reduced (Montaño, Ulanoff, Quintanar-Sarellana, & Aoki, 2006). In June 2006, following the National Association of Scholars' complaint that the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) infringed on teacher candidates' first amendment rights, NCATE withdrew the term "social justice" as a possible desirable teacher disposition.

School districts also exert pressure directly on teacher education programmes. For example, Selwyn (2007) commented that it is increasingly difficult to find classroom field placements serving low-income students that model anything except scripted teaching, and some schools have threatened to stop working with schools of education that question requirements of *No Child Left Behind* federal legislation. New teachers who resist routinized, scripted teaching in order to teach in student-centered ways are sometimes pushed out, even when their students score well on tests (Achinstein & Ogawa, 2006). An increase in top-down dissemination of technical knowledge that diminishes the value of teacher professional knowledge is not limited to the US; Hibbert et al. (2008) provide a clear example from Canada.

Pressure toward technical training reinforces an ideological shift away from education as preparation for democratic participation, firmly nailing down education as work preparation. It also reflects a narrowing in how equity is discussed, away from the need to address high-poverty communities' chronic lack of basic resources, including education resources (Anyon, 2005; Berliner, 2005; Gándara, Rumberger, Maxwell-Jolly, & Callahan, 2003; Lipman, 2004), and toward conceptualizing gaps in academic achievement among various racial and social class communities in terms of standardized test scores only. Teacher education programmes that build awareness of a larger view of equity disrupt attempts to address a much narrower, test-score driven conception of it.

3.2. Teacher professional knowledge and teacher quality

Teacher quality has been re-defined in a way that renders professional knowledge questionable and even unnecessary. Zeichner (2003) distinguished among three conceptions of teacher quality: professional, social justice, and deregulation. A professional conception, reflected in

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[3] Scripted curricula specify exactly what teachers should say or do, in a step-by-step fashion. Teachers using them are literally expected to teach by following a published script.

[4] For example, referring to a set of science curricula, the Center for Science Education (2002)af0 defines implementation fidelity as "the degree of adherence to the content, sequencing, and pedagogy presented in the materials."

the work of professional organizations in the US such as the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, NCATE, and the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, emphasizes teachers' professional pedagogical knowledge base and ability to use that knowledge in the classroom. A social justice conception, reflected in the work of organizations such as the National Association for Multicultural Education, emphasizes teachers' knowledge of and ability to use culturally responsive instructional strategies. These two conceptions, although they differ in emphasis, see teachers' professional pedagogical knowledge as a complement to subject-matter knowledge.

A deregulation conception of teacher quality, reflected in the US in reports by organizations such as the Fordham and Abell Foundations and the Heritage Institute, defines teacher quality in terms of academic ability only, arguing that little or no professional pedagogical knowledge of value can be learned other than through experience. As Weiner (2007) points out, deregulation de-professionalizes the work of teachers. Arguments for deregulation have been supported by correlation studies that link increases in students' test scores with teachers' verbal ability and subject-matter knowledge (Johnson, 2000; Monk, 1994; Strauss & Sawyer, 1986). Some also argue that teacher education programmes, by their length, conceptual simplicity, and liberal ideology, discourage many bright people from becoming teachers (Hess, Rotherham, & Walsh, 2004). *No Child Left Behind* substantially bolstered the deregulation conception by defining a highly qualified teacher as: "one who has full state certification as a teacher (including certification through alternative routes); or passed a state teacher licensing exam and holds a license in that state" (Norfolk Public Schools, n.d.). The law places a premium on teachers' demonstrated subject-matter knowledge aligned to the state's content standards. It requires new elementary teachers to pass "a rigorous state test on subject knowledge and teaching skills in reading and language arts, writing, math and other areas of the basic elementary school curriculum," and states to use an "objective" and uniformly applied system for assessing the subject-matter competence of experienced teachers (US Department of Education, 2004).

But correlation studies that support deregulation do not warrant disinvesting in teacher education. For one thing, correlation research does not establish a cause–effect relationship, even though its results are often taken as if it did. For another, in a refutation of research linking verbal ability with teaching effectiveness, Andrew, Cobb, and Giampietro (2005) found measured verbal ability significant only in identifying weak teachers. Further, in a review of teacher quality factors associated with teacher learning, Darling-Hammond (2000) found teacher preparation to be at least as significant as other teacher variables.

Defining teacher quality in terms of traditional measures of academic content knowledge, however, enables any agency to certify teachers as long as it tests them according to certification standards, a point I will take up in the next section. Emphasis on testing as a way of determining teacher quality also reduces the significance of that which is not testable, such as racial dispositions,

expectations for student learning, or ability to connect academics with culturally diverse students. The shift toward defining teacher quality through testing undercuts attempts to diversify the teacher population (Flippo, 2003; Guarino et al., 2006). This shift ignores the history of tests washing out prospective teachers of colour through factors such as biases in whose knowledge tests value (Alberts, 2002; Epstein, 2005), the arbitrariness of cutoff scores and their relationship to the racial composition of who passes and who does not (Memory, Coleman, & Watkins, 2003), connections between testing and perception of stereotype threat (Bennett, McWhorter, & Kuykendall, 2006; Steele & Aronson, 1995), and technical problems in test construction and scoring (Fowler, 2001).

Emphasis on testing also brings teacher education into the larger tent of learning regulated by government and companies that produce and market tests. Testing serves as a means to oversee and control what is taught, reduces local control over curriculum in primary and second schools as well as university-based teacher education, and turns large profits for major test-producing companies. As long as teacher candidates are subject to testing in order to become teachers, and the tests themselves are selected at the governmental level, teacher educators find themselves pushed to align their curriculum to the test so their students will pass, just as schoolteachers do. For example, based on an analysis of science teacher testing in Texas, Harrell and Jackson (2006) noted that although higher education was still expected to provide content knowledge, it was "the state legislature partnered with test companies" that defined what teachers should know; the greatest beneficiary of this system appeared to be test companies.[5] The move toward testing shifts power to determine what it means to learn and teach away from educators, and toward legislatures and corporations that produce and sell tests.

3.3. Shrinking university-based professional teacher education

Reconfiguring teaching as delivery of specified content to children and youth, and defining highly qualified teachers in terms of tested subject-matter knowledge, establishes processes by which university-based teacher education programmes can be pressured to downsize or can be by-passed entirely. While a few large school districts in the US have prepared some of their own teachers for years, only relatively recently has the need for university-based teacher education been so roundly questioned (Zeichner, 2006). In many other countries, however, neoliberal policies have already been pressing teacher education to shorten (see, for example, Avalos, 2001; Openshaw, 1999; Puiggrós, 1997).

Preservice teacher education programmes in the US had gradually lengthened between the 1970s and the

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[5] In this context, it is worth noting that the Bush family has long-standing ties to McGraw-Hill, and thus has a vested interest in pressing toward test-based systems for judging quality. For a description of Bush–McGraw-Hill ties, see Trelease (2006).

Table 2
Teacher education semester hours required

	1999	1983	1976	1973
General studies				
Elementary	51	62	41	41
Secondary	52	64	49	48
Special education	52	55	N/A	N/A
Professional studies				
Elementary	31	36	38	35
Secondary	28	25	25	24
Special education	30	34	N/A	N/A
Clinical experiences				
Elementary	15	17	12	10
Secondary	14	15	11	9
Special education	16	14	N/A	N/A

Feistrizter (1999).

early 1990s, as shown in Table 2, when required semester hours in general studies and clinical experiences increased. During that time, programmes developed more intentional series of field experiences and added coursework that reflected changes in schools, such as inclusion of exceptional children, working with technology, and teaching diverse learners. Increasingly too, the process of learning to teach was seen as developmental, requiring different kinds of support at different stages (Feiman-Nemser, 2001). In the early 1990s, average programme length began to be reduced (Feistritzer, 1999). Ironically, general studies, where teachers gain content knowledge, has been reduced most drastically. Keep in mind while teacher education programmes were shrinking, student diversity was growing rapidly; for example, it was becoming increasingly likely that teachers would be expected to know how to teach the English language learners in their classrooms.

Teacher education programmes have been pressured to reduce time to degree in the wave of financial pressures on US university budgets. Lyall and Sell (2006) show in detail how reduction in taxes along with rising costs of public services in most states has reduced public expenditures on higher education. As it has lost public funding, higher education has pressured programmes, including teacher education, to become shorter. For example, the Minnesota Higher Education Coordinating Board (2003) made several recommendations aimed at reducing costs; among them was that teacher education programmes set benchmarks for increased efficiency and cost-reduction.

Non-university-based alternate route certification programmes offer a way to by-pass university-based teacher education entirely. The term "alternative teacher certification" refers to a wide variety of programmes, ranging from field-based university programmes with well-designed professional education, to test-based programmes with minimal professional preparation and no contact with a college of education. The American Board for Certification of Teacher Excellence (ABCTE) programme Passport to Teaching, the most direct challenge to university-based

teacher education, is a test-based system in which holders of a bachelor's degree can complete certification exams on-line, to teach in states that accept this form of teacher certification.

Teacher professional development after certification is being driven increasingly by demands of No Child Left Behind. For many teachers—particularly those in districts with low test scores—a large proportion of professional development is structured around learning to use commercially produced curriculum packages (Achinstein et al., 2004). This occurs despite research demonstrating that focusing professional development on improvement of the quality of classroom teaching makes a demonstrable improvement in student learning (Skrla, Scheurich, & McKenzie, 2007). For-profit professional development ventures are also growing rapidly. Morey (2001) points out that they often offer only bare-bones curricula that meet state certification standards but add little else. Many such programmes also separate course-design from course-delivery, shifting course-design to profit-making corporations and delivery to instructors who are hired cheaply on an ad-hoc basis, and need fairly low levels of academic expertise since the curriculum is already packaged.

4. Conclusion

Universities have potential to strengthen the intellectual and research basis on which teachers learn to teach. Particularly for students in historically underserved communities, being taught by teachers who know how to engage them in rigorous and meaningful intellectual work is of greater value than being taught to follow directions and regurgitate rote learning. However, by remaining removed from such communities, universities have too often participated in neglect rather than reversing it.

As I noted earlier, although in the long run, socio-political restructuring under neoliberalism is probably detrimental to historically underserved communities, in the short run, neoliberal policies have directed in the US attention to education needs that have been inadequately addressed by too many teacher education programmes, leaving teacher education without alliances it could have built. The best way for US teacher education to move forward is to shift the centre of gravity from the university to the field and from preparing teachers for "generic" children to preparing them well for the most diverse and challenging contexts. This entails learning to collaborate not only with schools, but also with historically underserved communities. But often when I suggest this, teacher educators object that collaborating with schools in such communities would mean bowing to pressure to use the scripted curriculum packages that are used prevalently there to teach basic skills. However, most parents in such communities want far more than that for their children. There is a long history in the US of African American and Mexican parents caring deeply about, and fighting for, the education of their children (e.g., Auerbach, 2001; Donato, 1997; Thompson, 2003). Shifting the centre of gravity from the university to the field in a way that includes dialog and collaboration with parents and

community members can invigorate a vision that includes but goes beyond basic skills.

Dialog and collaboration means strengthening emphasis on democracy as a central education value. Zeichner (2006) maintains that, "The goal of greater social justice is a fundamental part of teacher education in democratic societies and we should never compromise on the opportunity to make progress toward its realization" (p. 337). Democracy has taken a back seat in teacher education, in the US as well as elsewhere. Based on research in England and South Africa, for example, Harber and Serf (2006) note that so far, teacher education's role in promoting and working with democracy is "patchy at best" (p. 996).

Teacher educators must become much more aware of what neoliberalism is and how it is impacting on a range of social institutions, in order to mount what Weiner (2007) refers to as "a political defense of teacher education's value as a public good." Generally teacher educators have only a vague idea (or no idea) of what neoliberalism is, not recognizing it as project for restoring class power by dismantling public services. There is a connection between erosion of public funding for higher education, for example, and erosion of funding for other public services such as health care and libraries. More broadly, the white working class—particularly men—tend to view their own declining fortunes as a result of unfair advantages going to immigrants and people of colour, rather than economic shifts that are eroding working class jobs (Weis & Fine, 1996). Writing about the impact of neoliberalism on the UK, Tomlinson (2007) points out that, "over the years, principles of a welfare state that cared for all its citizens has been eroded. The country could now be described as a post-welfare market society" (p. 185). Teacher educators must become more aware of linkages between macro-level shifts in power and local realities, to engage in the long-term work of pushing back collectively (Hursh, 2005).

Well-prepared teachers are critically important to the well-being of children and youth as they become adults, and particularly for those in underserved communities, for whom an excellent education can be a lifeline. Preparing teachers well means engaging actively with those communities, breathing life into democracy as a moral purpose of education. In the US, doing so is not only a moral imperative, but may, in the long run, be necessary to the survival of teacher education.

Acknowledgements

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