

## The Multiple Meanings of Multicultural Teacher Education: A Conceptual Framework

**By Marilyn Cochran-Smith**

Despite the fact that most teacher education programs report that they have thoroughly incorporated diversity perspectives and multicultural content into the curriculum, external examinations often prove to the contrary (Gollnick, 1995). Likewise, synthesizers of the research on teacher education have consistently concluded that despite more than two decades of multicultural reform, little has really changed in the ways teachers are prepared in college- and university-based programs (Grant & Secada, 1990; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Zeichner & Hoefft, 1996). Along related but somewhat different lines, institutional and governmental policies purportedly committed to the same goals of providing all children equal access to highly qualified teachers often turn out to be strikingly different

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from (and sometimes even diametrically opposed to) one another in implementation and ramifications. Discrepancies like these attest to the fact that there are dramatically different takes on “teacher preparation for diversity,” “multicultural teacher education,” and “teaching for social justice” as well as major disparities (sometimes even among people considered like-minded) in notions of “equity,”

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“teacher learning,” “social change,” and “highly qualified” teachers for “all students.”

Given the importance of these issues and the multiple meanings noted above, this article suggests that we need rich conceptual frameworks to help clarify differing underlying assumptions, sort out discrepancies between theory and practice, and analyze the ways they are entangled with competing political agendas. The premise of the framework proposed in this article is that within any research study, any particular teacher preparation program or practice (whether collegiate or otherwise), and any governmental or professional policy that is in some way related to multicultural, diversity, or equity issues in teacher preparation, there are implicit or explicit answers to a series of key questions. These answers are mediated by institutional, community and regulatory forces, all of which are nested within larger social and historical contexts as well as broader agendas for educational reform. To understand the multiple meanings of multicultural teacher education, then, it is necessary to unpack the answers to these questions, analyze the external forces that influence them, and identify the larger contexts and political agendas to which they are attached.

In this article, I propose a conceptual framework designed to accomplish these tasks, building its pieces through a series of interlocking figures and also sketching the “answer” to each of the key questions that is suggested by multicultural teacher education theory. The answers suggested by theory, however, are not necessarily (and sometimes not at all) the ones operating in actual teacher preparation policies, practices, and programs. Thus as I describe the framework, I also illustrate in broad strokes some of the differences between multicultural teacher education theory and practice as well as some aspects of the range and variation among actual examples of policy and programs.

It is important to note that the conceptual framework offered in this article is *not* “a model” for teacher education programs to follow nor a set of assertions about which policies and practices are most desirable (although my own views on teacher education are well known). Rather the elements of the framework are intended to provide a conceptual structure for interrogating the *multiple* meanings of multicultural teacher education—first simply to reveal them and suggest their complexities, but then also to chart their origins and implications as they both shape and are shaped by local and larger political, economic, and social contexts.

### **Understanding the Multiple Meanings of Multicultural Teacher Education:**

#### *A Conceptual Framework*

There are a number of conceptual frameworks already available for understanding general variations in teacher education, including Feiman-Nemser’s (1990) “structural and conceptual alternatives,” Liston and Zeichner’s (1991)

“traditions of practice,” and Cochran-Smith and Lytle’s (1999) “relationships of knowledge and practice in teacher learning communities.” In addition, there are several conceptions and typologies of multicultural education in general that have been applied to teacher education, including Sleeter and Grant’s (1987) typology for classifying multicultural education studies, Banks’ (1993) typology for approaches to multicultural curricular reform, Lynch’s (1986) typology of the ideological orientations to policy options, and Jenks, Lee, and Kanpol’s (2001) “versions” of multiculturalism based on differing political agendas. More specific to the preparation of teachers for diversity, Zeichner and Hoeft (1996) have suggested that all teacher education programs take a position on four issues: infusion versus segregation of related issues in the curriculum, culture-specific versus culture-general study and experience, interacting with versus studying about cultures, and whether or not a program itself is a model of what it espouses.

This article offers a different kind of conceptual framework, at once narrower and broader than others. The framework is narrower in the sense that is intended specifically to enhance understanding of multicultural teacher preparation rather than to explore multiculturalism in general or teacher education in general. The framework is broader, however, in that it can be used to examine research and practice as well as policy, and it accounts for forces both internal and external to teacher education per se.

The framework is intended to be useful in examinations of all sorts of research, practices, and policies that in some way are related to or have an impact on the preparation of teachers for a diverse society, regardless of epistemological or methodological paradigms and regardless of whether these policies and practices themselves would be considered “liberal,” “conservative,” or otherwise. For example, in many states and on a national level, there are major policy disagreements about the advisability of alternate entry routes into teaching, with people on all sides of the debate often linking their arguments to equity issues. The framework described here provides a way to make sense of these differing positions, uncovering the fact that, among other things, they depend on contradictory answers to basic questions about teacher recruitment, knowledge for teaching, and how teachers learn and also that they are tightly braided into two larger agendas for educational reform—professionalization or deregulation of teacher education—that are fundamentally at odds with one another.

In short, the framework offered here is designed as a conceptual tool for educators, policy makers, researchers, and others to make sense of the many instantiations in research, practice, and policy of what it means to recruit, prepare, support, and assess teachers for a multicultural society. In the remainder of this article, each of the pieces of the framework is presented and discussed in terms of brief examples: eight key questions, three external forces, and the larger historical and social contexts related to preparing teachers for diverse populations.

## Multicultural Teacher Education: *Eight Key Questions*

As noted above, any instance of research, practice, or policy related to multicultural teacher education implicitly (or explicitly) answers eight key questions: the diversity question, the ideology or social justice question, the knowledge question, the teacher learning question, the practice question, the outcomes question, the recruitment/selection question, and the coherence question. The first seven of these, represented by Figure 1, are encompassed and surrounded by the eighth, the coherence question, which is represented in Figure 2.

The *diversity question* asks: How should the increasingly diverse student population in American schools be understood as a challenge or “problem” for teaching and teacher education, and what are the desirable “solutions” to this problem? Many multicultural theorists are critical of traditional teacher education, claiming that historically, the diversity question has been answered from a deficit perspective about the education of minority students, rather than regarded as a valuable resource to be extended and preserved. Ladson-Billings (1999) calls this the “perversity of diversity” (p. 216) in teacher education where White is normative

**Figure 1**  
**Multicultural Teacher Education:**  
**Key Questions**



and diversity is equated with depravity, disadvantage, and deficiency. With the problem of diversity regarded as a deficit, it has also been historically assumed that the “inevitable” solution to the problem is assimilation, wherein differences are expected largely to disappear, and a “one size fits all” approach to curriculum, instruction, and assessment is assumed to equate with equity for all.

Any teacher education policy, program, or research study related in any way to multicultural issues includes a stance or a working answer to the diversity question, which is sometimes made explicit but more often remains implicit. One explicit and early example from policy that challenged traditional views was AACTE’s first Commission on Multicultural Education in 1972. This Commission explicitly argued that teacher education should regard diversity as a valuable resource to be preserved and extended rather than merely tolerated or expected to “melt away” (Baptiste & Baptiste, 1980). On the other hand, many recent federal policies such as the “No Child Left Behind Act” (U.S. Department of Education, 2001) and Secretary of Education Rod Paige’s annual report to Congress on teaching quality (U.S. Department of Education, 2002), use the language of equity and high standards, but implicitly answer the diversity question very differently. Underlying these policies is the assumption that assimilation is the answer to the diversity question and that preparing all K-12 students to enter America’s work force is the ultimate purpose of producing high quality teachers.

The *ideology*, or *social justice question*, is closely related to the diversity question and has to do with ideas, ideals, values, and assumptions. The ideology question asks: What is the purpose of schooling, what is the role of public education in a democratic society, and what historically has been the role of schooling in maintaining or changing the economic and social structure of society? In particular, this set of questions has to do with what images of American society (from meritocratic to hegemonic) as well as what notions of social justice (from everybody learning more and achieving to higher standards to redistributing the resources of American society) are assumed in policies, practices, and research. Theorists and researchers who are critical of traditional teacher education have argued that a “seamless ideological web” (Weiner, 2000, p. 381) threads through most traditional programs, taking for granted “the seamless tale of triumph, conquest, and the inevitability of America as a great nation” (Ladson-Billings, 1999, p. 224). Theorists suggest that this ideological web weaves together several key (although faulty) assumptions: American schooling (and indeed most of American life) is meritocratic and thus subtly reinforces the idea that failure for certain individuals or groups is “normal” (Goodwin, 2001); racism and sexism (and other forms of oppression) are old problems that have for the most part been solved (Gay & Howard, 2000); the purpose of schooling is to help all students assimilate into the mainstream and thus produce workers who can help maintain America’s dominance in the global economy (Apple, 2001); and high stakes tests and other standard measures are neutral and objective means of assessing merit.

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An answer to the ideology question that challenges traditional practices is sometimes explicitly stated in a multicultural policy or in a position statement about teacher preparation, such as King and Castenell's (2001) position paper on racism and teacher education. They argue that antiracism must be "front and center" (p. 9) in the teacher education reform agenda. Likewise, a few teacher preparation programs, such as the UCLA's Center X urban teacher education program, are rhetorically as well as conceptually and practically committed to social justice at the program and institutional levels (Oakes, Franke, Quartz, & Rogers, 2002). More often, however, the answer to the ideology question that underlies policy, practice, or research in multicultural teacher preparation is unstated, with the continuation of the status quo more or less presumed either by design or by default.

The *knowledge question* asks: What knowledge, interpretive frameworks, beliefs, and attitudes are necessary to teach diverse populations effectively, particularly knowledge and beliefs about culture and its role in schooling? In multicultural teacher education theory, discussion of the knowledge question is *not* about whether teachers ought to know what is typically included in "the knowledge base" for teacher education. Most of this knowledge, especially deep knowledge of subject matter and of how people learn, is assumed to be essential by multicultural theorists. The theory goes beyond this, however, to ask and answer this question: What do teachers need to know *about* the knowledge base and *what else* do they need to know, including attitudes, knowledge, and beliefs needed to teach diverse groups? Along these lines, a number of multicultural theorists have pointed out that the traditional knowledge base for teacher education concentrates on the canon, omits most of what Luis Moll refers to as cultural "funds of knowledge" (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992), and thus limits what can be known (Grant & Wiczonek, 2002; Haberman, 1996; Sleeter, 2001).

In theory, one of the most important aspects of the knowledge question is what it is assumed teachers need to know about culture itself. Many multicultural theorists and some practitioners argue that teachers need to know the meaning of culture, the impact of culture on learning and schooling, the ways in which schools and classrooms function as "cultures," the nature of ethnic, racial, and urban cultures different from their own, and the role of culture in patterns of socialization, interaction, and communication. They also argue that prospective teachers need to learn about their own cultures and think of themselves as cultural beings at the same time they learn positive attitudes toward students with different cultural backgrounds by developing "critical cultural consciousness" (Gay & Howard, 2000) or "sociocultural consciousness." (Villegas & Lucas, 2002).

As noted above, however, multicultural theory and actual programs and policies are often two quite different things. Some recent teacher preparation policies, for example, such as state-level teacher tests or program approval policies in certain states, explicitly eschew the idea that understandings of culture are needed. These imply an answer to the knowledge question that disregards knowl-

edge of culture. In Colorado, for example, the word “diversity” has been removed from state guidelines for teacher education program approval, and in Massachusetts, teacher certification tests cover only communication/literacy skills and subject matter knowledge while omitting attention to educational foundations, pedagogy, culture, and learning theories (see Cochran-Smith, 2002b, for further discussion of these examples). Pinpointing how the knowledge question is being answered can help to sort out some otherwise confusing differences and similarities among policies and practices supposedly intended to provide quality teachers to all students.

The *teacher learning question* has to do with general assumptions about how, when, and where adults learn to teach. The teacher learning question asks: How do teachers learn to teach diverse populations, and what, in particular, are the pedagogies of teacher preparation (e.g., coursework assignments, readings, field experiences) that make this learning possible? Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1993, 1999) and many others have conceptualized teacher learning in terms of inquiry within learning communities, rather than “training” or other transmission models of teacher education that traditionally prevailed. These theorists suggest that some of the most promising answers to the teacher learning question include conceptualizing inquiry as a way to prepare teachers to be lifelong learners who can work effectively in diverse settings.

In practice, a growing number of teacher education programs are answering the teacher learning question along the lines of inquiry, arranging for prospective teachers to learn in the company of others engaged in learning communities. On the other hand, some alternate routes to certification, such as Teach for America and Troops to Teachers, which received special commendation in Paige’s report to Congress (U.S. Department of Education, 2002), answer the teacher learning question differently. They assume that learning to teach is a matter of learning on the job or learning through trial-and-error experience, explicitly rejecting the value of supervised student teaching as well as courses in pedagogy. These contrasts suggest enormous differences in the way the teacher learning question is answered in actual policy and practice.

The *practice question* is closely related to (and in a certain sense, a subset of) the teacher learning question above. This question asks: What are the competencies and pedagogical skills teachers need to teach diverse populations effectively? This includes teachers’ roles as members of school communities, as school leaders, and as theorizers of practice as well as their responsibilities to families and students.

Questions about how experienced teachers work successfully with diverse groups of students are among the most well-conceptualized and well-researched in the field, with culturally responsive teaching and many related conceptions now well known (see, for example, Gay, 2000; Irvine & Armento, 2001; Ladson-Billings, 1994, 1995; Villegas, 1991). These theories suggest that prospective teachers need to develop cultural competence to work effectively with parents and

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families, draw on community and family resources, and know how to learn about the cultures of their students (Gay, 1993; Goodwin, 2000; Villegas & Lucas, 2002; Zeichner, 1993).

There are many variations in how the practice question is answered in actual policies and practices. Some teacher preparation programs, such as the University of Wisconsin's Teach for Diversity Program (Ladson-Billings, 2001) and teacher education programs at Emory University (Irvine & Armento, 2001), for example, are designed explicitly to prepare teachers to construct culturally responsive curriculum and pedagogy. On the other hand, as noted above, the practices called for in recent government reports on teacher quality explicitly stipulate that teachers do not need knowledge about pedagogy or pedagogical alternatives.

The *outcomes question* asks: What should the consequences or outcomes of teacher preparation be, and how, by whom, and for what purposes should these outcomes be assessed? In the recent theoretical research on multicultural teacher education, it is clear that high expectations, high standards, and high levels of achievement for all K-12 students ought to be explicit outcomes of teacher preparation. This perspective is in keeping with the general shift in the field away from focusing primarily on curriculum- or program-oriented standards to emphasizing instead performance-based standards and the long-term impacts of teacher preparation on K-12 students' learning. However, there is also a strong theme in the theoretical literature that narrow conceptions of outcomes should be rejected. The fear is that defining achievement *only* as higher test scores perpetuates the cycle of failure for students of color, poor students, and students from linguistic minorities while also having a negative impact as well on cultural identity.

In practice, there are many variations in how the outcomes question is answered. A few programs are designed to prepare teachers to work against the grain of common practice, to be agents for social change, and to teach to change the world by raising questions about the ways schooling has systematically failed to serve many students from diverse backgrounds (Cochran-Smith, 1991; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Oakes & Lipton, 1999). The assumption in these programs is that social justice outcomes are important goals in and of themselves because they are fundamental to a democratic society. On the other hand, many current policies and initiatives related to teacher quality—both governmental and those funded by private foundations—answer the outcomes question by focusing almost entirely on K-12 students' increased achievement on standardized tests. Although this kind of outcome is often advocated in the name of equity, the consequences are quite different from those above.

The *recruitment/selection question* asks: What candidates should be recruited and selected for America's teaching force? For some time now, two theoretical arguments have been made about recruiting teachers to meet the needs of diverse populations. One has to do with the value of diversifying the teaching force—to give children of color the opportunity to work with teachers who are like them in

terms of cultural, racial, or linguistic background, to provide role models, and to enrich the learning opportunities of all students. The second has to do with the value of recruiting teachers who are more likely to succeed in high-need areas, particularly in urban centers, because of their previous experiences and/or their maturity.

Some teacher educators work from a very clear answer to the recruitment question. Haberman (1991, 1996), for example, argues that the critical determinant of reform in urban and other high-need areas is the recruitment of teachers who are more likely to succeed—and stay—in urban schools rather than revising curriculum and instruction for young middle-class White women. Haberman's programs in Milwaukee and elsewhere thus jettison the traditional selection criteria associated with a universal approach to teacher preparation and instead recruit older adults who already have the traits and experiences associated with urban success. Recruitment and retention programs sponsored by the Ford Foundation and the Wallace-Readers' Digest Fund answer the recruitment/selection question in a similar way, recruiting from non-traditional pools of minority members and paraprofessionals with the assumption that these teachers enhance the education of all participants and are more likely to stay in the most difficult schools (Clewell & Villegas, 2001; Villegas, Clewell, Anderson, Goertz, Joy, Bruschi, & Irvine, 1995). Along very different lines, however, teacher recruitment programs such as Teach for America recruit liberal arts graduates as teachers for urban and other understaffed schools regardless of the fact that many of them leave teaching after the required two years (Raymond & Fletcher, 2002).<sup>1</sup> The assumption here is that experience makes little difference in teaching quality, and subject matter knowledge trumps life experiences and commitments. These contrasting approaches reflect not only different answers to the recruitment/selection question, but also very different goals and notions of equity.

The *coherence question*, which encompasses the seven questions discussed so far, asks: To what degree are the answers to the first seven questions connected to and coherent with one another in particular policies or programs and how are diversity issues positioned in relation to other issues? (See Figure 2.) As with the previous questions, there are stark differences in answers to the coherence question. Multicultural theorists argue that diversity issues must be central not peripheral to the rest of the curriculum, mandatory rather than optional for all prospective teachers, and infused throughout courses and fieldwork experiences rather than contained in a single course (Nieto, 2000; Villegas & Lucas, 2002; Zeichner, 1993). These advocates of coherent multicultural teacher preparation caution that when one or two courses (often optional) are added on to the curriculum, many students and faculty assume they are not responsible for the issues, and a multicultural focus is ultimately undermined. At many teacher education institutions across the country, however, what the multiculturalists eschew is exactly what is most likely to be the case. In fact, teacher education program surveys indicate that "diversity" is often relegated to a single optional course (Fuller, 1992), and faculty committed

**Figure 2**  
**Multicultural Teacher Education:**  
**The Coherence Question**



to social justice feel like lone rangers in a larger struggle (Gallavan, 2000). In addition, faculty members within the same teacher preparation programs tend to have quite different ideas about what “multicultural” perspectives on teaching and teacher education are and how important they are, so even when these diversity perspectives are infused through a curriculum (by fiat or otherwise), they may not be coherent.

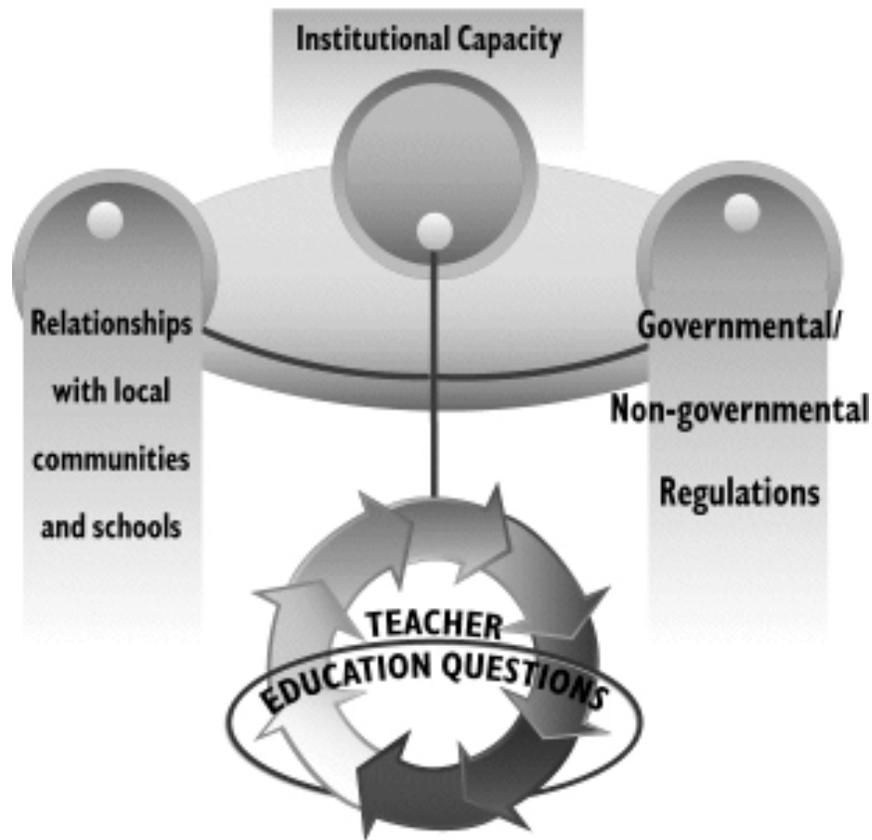
### **Multicultural Teacher Education:**

#### ***External Forces***

In addition to taking a stance on or answering the key questions discussed, any particular teacher preparation policy or practice is shaped by several forces that are somewhat more external but heavily influential: institutional capacity and mission, relationships with local communities, and governmental/non-governmental regulations. Figure 3 represents these forces.

*Institutional capacity and mission* have to do with the nature of the institutions or organizations that sponsor various approaches to teacher preparation and/or various entry routes into the profession in terms of their broader missions or purposes.

**Figure 3**  
**Multicultural Teacher Education:**  
**External Forces**



This includes the institutional/organizational factors that either constrain or support attention to issues of culture and diversity, the ways these issues are defined, and the relationships of projects to larger missions and goals. A number of multicultural theorists and practitioners directly discuss the impact of institutional environment on multicultural teacher education (Melnick & Zeichner, 1997; Villegas & Lucas, 2002; Zeichner & Hoeft, 1996), particularly the need to examine programs in light of larger policies on race and affirmative action as well as larger institutional agendas and

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missions. Specifically with regard to collegiate teacher education, Villegas and Lucas (2002) and Cochran-Smith (in press, a) suggest that department, school, and institutional approaches to faculty development are also part of institutional capacity.

Like the other elements of teacher education that have been discussed so far, there are various ways that institutional capacity supports or constrains actual diversity practice. A few collegiate teacher preparation programs committed to preparing teachers for urban schools or for social justice, for example, build into their programs a process of ongoing faculty development intended to enhance the capacity of their institutions to carry out their goals. For example, faculty at the Center for Urban Educators of the School of Education at Long Island University, Brooklyn Campus, use a process of descriptive inquiry to interrogate their own work as urban teacher educators (Traugh, 2002). Similarly faculty at Boston College engaged in a two-year self-study referred to as “seeking social justice” to examine their mission as a teacher education program (Cochran-Smith, Albert, Dimattia, Freedman, Jackson, Mooney, Neisler, Peck & Zollers, 1999). On the other hand, at many institutions, there is enormous inconsistency in faculty members’ knowledge, information and depth of understanding about issues related to culture and teaching underserved populations (Kitano, Lewis, Lynch & Graves, 1996), and no built-in structures for addressing faculty development along these lines.

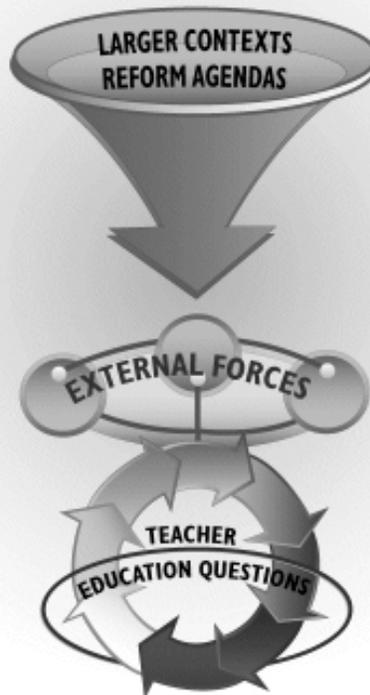
*Relationships with local communities* has to do with the interactions and relationships between a given teacher preparation program or project and local families, neighborhoods, schools, communities, and community agencies, including operating perspectives about the value of community contributions. A number of teacher education reformers have critiqued the lack of connection between teacher preparation programs and their immediate communities, a failing that reflects the universal rather than contextual approach that is dominant in teacher preparation. Increasingly, multicultural advocates argue that community-based experiences are critical but often missing from teacher preparation (Murrell, 2001; Sleeter, 2001; Zeichner & Hoeft, 1996). On the other hand, a few teacher preparation programs such as the program in the Wai’anae community at the University of Hawaii are located directly within a local community and intended to prepare students for that community (Au, 2002).

*Governmental/non-governmental regulations* refers to the requirements regarding teacher preparation stipulated by the agencies that govern and evaluate programs and approaches, either non-voluntarily or voluntarily. As Gollnick (1992, 1995), points out, different approaches to multicultural teacher education are related to the differing larger ideological orientations that legitimize particular governmental and non-governmental regulations at the national and international levels. Governmental and non-governmental regulations are closely linked to larger social, historical, and economic contexts and to various political agendas for educational reform.

*Larger contexts* refers to the conditions of schools and the larger social, historical, economic, and political contexts in which all of the above are embedded, including the

multiple—sometimes competing—agendas for educational reform that are related to particular political positions. The eight key aspects of teacher education described above as well as the external forces that influence how these are played out in research, practice, and policy are embedded within and influenced by these larger contexts and conditions. Figure 4 adds this element to the conceptual framework. A number of scholars have examined teacher preparation in relation to larger historical contexts, linking research, practice and policy in teacher education, to broader social and political movements, and to the conditions of schooling (Liston & Zeichner, 1991; Weiner, 1993, 2000). Along these lines, the future of multicultural teacher education has been analyzed vis a vis market-based educational reform agendas that support the privatization of education (Apple, 2001) and at the same time often undermine the goals of social justice (Cochran-Smith, 2001).

**Figure 4**  
**Multicultural Teacher Education:**  
**Larger Contexts**



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U.S. Secretary of Education Rod Paige's Annual Report on Teaching Quality (U.S. Department of Education, 2002) is the best recent example of policy for teacher preparation that shows the intimate relationships of governmental regulations and the larger political context. The report claims to be based on scientific research evidence about the relationship between teaching quality and teacher qualifications. In fact, however, the report draws heavily on the arguments that have been made by conservative private foundations such as the Fordham Foundation, which favors the deregulation of teacher education, while at the same time ignoring empirical evidence contrary to that position (See Cochran-Smith, 2002a, for a detailed discussion; Darling-Hammond & Youngs, 2002).

### **Conclusion:**

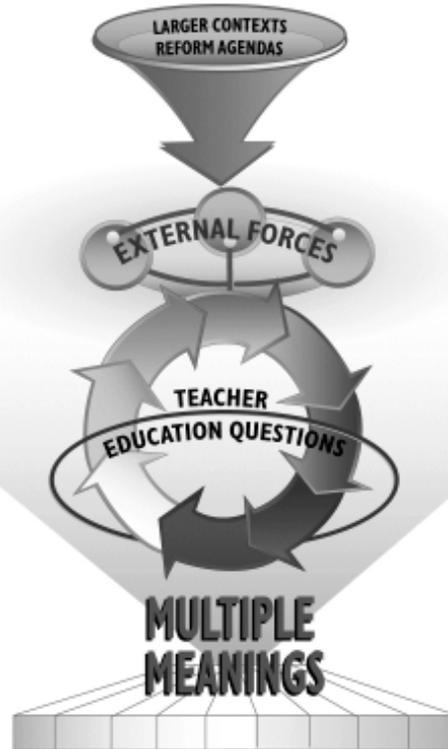
#### *Sorting Out the Multiple Meanings*

Analyzed together, the key questions, external forces, and the larger contexts within which these are embedded, constitute a framework for understanding the multiple meanings of multicultural teacher preparation policy, research, and practice. The complete framework is represented in Figure 5.

It is reasonable to ask what a framework of this kind gets us as an educational community. What does it help us see besides the tremendous complexity of multicultural teacher education policy, research, and practice, and the enormous difficulties inherent in making genuine change? As I have shown with the brief examples mentioned throughout the article, the framework can be used to examine and sort out existing or envisioned teacher preparation approaches by examining the stance taken on the key issues and the way these are influenced by external forces. The framework can also be used as an organizational tool for analyzing the theoretical and/or empirical research related to multicultural teacher education. Further, the framework can provide a structure for analyzing governmental and non-governmental policies related to the preparation of teachers for culturally and linguistically diverse populations. A significant contribution of the framework, then, is that it lets us see not simply *that* there are deep complexities and multiple meanings involved in understanding multicultural teacher education, but also at what critical junctures the major differences and similarities exist as well as which aspects are emphasized and ignored.

Space limitations prevent an in-depth discussion of applications, but a few preliminary comments are warranted. Applying the framework to multicultural teacher education theory (Cochran-Smith, Davis, & Fries, in press) reveals that although there is some divergence in viewpoints, the last decade has seen a fairly consistent call for a "new multicultural teacher education," which would not add on to existing structures and paradigms, but fundamentally reinvent them by challenging traditional ideological underpinnings, placing knowledge about culture and racism front and center, including teaching for social justice as a major outcome, and valuing the cultural knowledge of local communities.

**Figure 5**  
**The Multiple Meanings of Multicultural**  
**Teacher Education: A Conceptual Framework**



There are certainly some exemplary local programs along these lines, and a number of individual teacher educators are strongly committed to preparing teachers for a diverse society. However, the “new multicultural teacher education” envisioned by the theorists does not seem to be in place, at least if we judge by the research about the practice of teacher education. A framework that uncovers differences between theory and practice helps to explain *why* teacher education programs report they have integrated multicultural perspectives and external reviews conclude little has changed.

There are, of course, many teacher preparation programs and practices that have not been researched, so it is difficult to evaluate the actual state of practice. Any program, however, can be examined using the framework to interrogate underlying assumptions and local practices. In a number of places, such as the Department of Early Childhood Education at Georgia State University, teacher education faculty

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are using the framework to examine how their programs answer the key teacher education questions and how external forces influence these. When groups of faculty examine how they are implicitly or explicitly answering the key questions, they are able to pinpoint the strengths in their programs and also see inconsistencies, unintended omissions, and where resources are needed. The framework can also be used for assessing planned but not yet implemented initiatives.

Finally, if we use the framework to look across theory and practice, it is possible to see which elements of multicultural teacher education have not been addressed much at all. Using the framework as an organizing structure, for example, our recent comprehensive analysis of the research (Cochran-Smith, Davis, & Fries, in press) indicated that one element that had received very little attention either theoretically or empirically was the outcomes question. In fact, we argued that a missing program of research in multicultural teacher education was a program designed to explore empirically to what extent and in what ways teacher preparation programs, policies, and practices designed to address issues of diversity and equity are related to evidence about quality teaching and students' learning.

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, there are major debates about teaching quality, teacher preparation, high standards, and high stakes. Carried on in the media, the academy, and local and national policy arenas, these debates are highly visible, often contentious, and enormously consequential for America's schoolchildren. Some of these debaters invoke versions of the "all children can learn" or "leaving no child behind" slogan, emphasizing that all schoolchildren need to have basic skills in literacy and numeracy so they can enter the workforce. Others focus on the quality of academic instruction, emphasizing the importance of high standards-based curriculum and instruction aligned with the newest research and understandings in each disciplinary area. Still others talk about redistributing resources and preparing all citizens to participate in civic discourse and contribute to a democratic society.

Despite their differing positions, it is often the case that the debaters use some of the same language and rhetorical strategies, and nearly all of them claim to be advocates of educational equity. This confirms the fact that the meanings associated with education, particularly with "multicultural," "social justice," or "equity" education are multiple and contested. The framework presented here is designed to interrogate these multiple meanings, probing beneath similarities in language in order to get at fundamentally different answers to critical questions and explore how these both shape and are shaped by larger contexts. At the end of the first few years of the twenty-first century, interrogating the multiple meanings of multicultural teacher education is a challenge we cannot afford *not* to address .

### **Note**

<sup>1</sup> It is important to note that there is some evidence that certain alternate routes are attracting more teachers of color into teaching and that policies that permit alternate entry points may be helping to diversify the teaching force in some areas (Lauer, 2001; Zeichner & Shulte, 2001).

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