

# **Social Foundations and Multicultural Education Course Requirements in Teacher Preparation Programs in the United States:**

**By Richard Neumann**

Teacher quality has been a central issue in discourse on improvement of schooling outcomes. While the importance of teacher quality is widely acknowledged, there is considerable dispute regarding necessary skills, knowledge, and dispositions of a highly qualified teacher, as well as the methods for producing such teachers. Indeed, even the definition of teacher effectiveness is contested. One area of teacher preparation that has been marginalized in the debate on teacher quality is the social foundations of education (SFE), a critical, interdisciplinary area of study that examines education and schooling through lenses of history, philosophy, and the social sciences (Tozar & Miretsky, 2000). In recent years, and particularly since the onset of the new century, the value of skills, knowledge, and dispositions promoted in teacher preparation SFE courses and the subsumed or related knowledge domain of multicultural education (ME), have been largely ignored in policy documents

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on teacher quality. Whether disregard of these knowledge and skill areas has had or will have an impact on course requirements in this domain in teacher preparation programs is an important question that should be of interest to those who value the content and goals of SFE/ME.

Although limitations of extant data preclude comparison of current course requirements in SFE/ME with those in teacher education programs of the past, establishment of a benchmark on course requirements in this area will help clarify the status of SFE/ME in the field and enable future assessments of trends. This study examined the question of course requirements in SFE and ME in university-based teacher preparation programs in the United States that lead to an initial credential.

### Context

Teacher education has long been under siege from many quarters. As David F. Labaree (2004) explains, schools of education are commonly perceived as low-status members of the university academic community, where many professors outside the field regard the discipline as intellectually impoverished. Teachers and teaching-credential candidates often complain of onerous assignments and too much attention to theory in education courses, which they perceive to have little practical value to their work in the real world of schools and classrooms. Policymakers frequently identify teacher education programs as a fundamental cause of bad teaching and poor schooling outcomes. These criticisms and others contributed to the assault on teacher education in the 1990s (Kramer, 1991; Sowell, 1993; Hirsch, 1996), which even included a harsh attack from within by deans of university-based education schools (Holmes Group, 1995).

As assessment of public school effectiveness became increasingly tied to standardized test scores in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and a mandate for “highly qualified teachers” in the No Child Left Behind Act focused attention on the relationship between teacher quality and student achievement, the critique of teacher education sharpened its focus on value-added measures of student achievement. The question of which specific elements of teacher preparation produce the greatest student achievement gains became central. At the same time, a downturn in the economy resurrected educational crisis rhetoric of the early 1980s and an economic rationale for reforming teacher preparation began to appear in government reports and other policy documents on the subject—saving a nation at risk of losing its economic competitiveness.

Secretary of Education Rodney Paige (United States Department of Education, 2002) entered the fray with his first report to Congress on teacher quality, wherein he asserted, “there is little evidence that education school coursework leads to improved student achievement” (p. 19). According to Paige much of teacher education is unnecessary.

The data show that many states mandate a shocking number of education courses to qualify for certification . . . These burdensome requirements are the Achilles heel

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of the certification system. They scare off talented individuals while adding little value. Certainly, some of the required courses might be helpful, but scant research exists to justify these mandates. (p. 31)

In a speech to the National Press Club, Paige (2003) warned of dire economic consequences if student achievement in public schools was not improved. “Unless improvements are made, American students will not be competitive with students in other countries, dooming future generations to less opportunity, greater levels of poverty, and further disparities in health status.”

Subsequent policy documents on teacher quality and teacher preparation reiterated themes of needless requirements in teacher preparation, reduction of achievement gaps, assessment of teacher effectiveness using students’ standardized test scores, the need for research-based teaching methods and teacher education curricula, and schooling for a competitive workforce (Educational Testing Service, 2004; Education Commission of the States, 2003; Leigh & Mead, 2005; National Council on Teacher Quality, 2004). Conspicuously absent in many policy documents published during the Bush administration was development of teachers’ ability to engage the institution and process of education through critical dialogue, analysis, and comprehension, and fostering of teachers’ appreciation of the social, democratic purposes of schooling, which are primarily addressed in SFE courses in teacher preparation programs. In a review of major educational policy documents focused on teacher quality disseminated between January 2003 and April 2005, Dan W. Butin (2005a) found “an almost complete lack of attention to SFE...perhaps not surprisingly, [it] is not on the policy radar” (p. 287). Attention given to multiculturalism, issues of diversity and culture, was “perfunctory” (p. 287).

Successive policy documents on teacher quality repeated the goal of reforming teacher education to better meet the needs of the economy. The case made in The Teaching Commission’s (2006) final report is representative.

A fiercely competitive global information economy, powered as never before by innovation and intellect, demands that America’s young people be well educated. It is not only their potential that hangs in the balance; it is the nation’s economic future. (p. 12)

The commission’s report did not mention cultivation of teachers’ analytical abilities as described in standards for SFE by the Council of Learned Societies in Education (1996), which also call for development of normative and interpretive perspectives on schooling. Ability to prepare young people for democratic citizenship was not mentioned as a factor of teacher effectiveness. Like other policy documents on teacher quality that discuss students and schooling outcomes in terms of human capital, the commission’s report reflects an ideology that subordinates democratic values to market values and prioritizes economic purposes of schooling; an ideology that has pervaded discourse on public K-12 education for decades.

The economic utility rationale for improving teacher preparation was reiterated in annual reports to Congress on teacher quality from Secretary of Education

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Margaret Spellings (United States Department of Education, 2005, 2006). *The Secretary's Fourth Annual Report on Teacher Quality* asserted "[t]he international economy of the 21st century is competitive and, as our children become young adults, they must have the skills developed through a strong education to keep our nation competitive" (p. xii). *The Secretary's Fifth Annual Report on Teacher Quality* repeated the call to strengthen teacher education so that "every child...[can] succeed in the modern workforce and a global economy. In this era of global competitiveness, what teachers know and how they affect student achievement are of critical importance to the future of America" (p. 48). Neither report made reference to knowledge, skills, or dispositions addressed in SFE, nor did they mention teachers' qualifications to prepare democratic citizens or promote social justice.

While omission of social, democratic purposes of education and other goals of teacher preparation associated with SFE in policy documents on teacher quality may be perceived as tacit disregard for this skill and knowledge domain, a recent study of teacher education that received considerable attention in the field includes a statement that is explicit in its devaluation of the field. In *Educating School Teachers*, Arthur E. Levine (2006), former president of Teachers College, Columbia University states "[t]he content of the curriculum [in teacher preparation] is too often a grab bag of courses, ranging across the various subfields of teacher education from methods to the philosophy and history of education, rather than the focused preparation needed for real classrooms" (p. 107).

As Levine's study suggests, in addition to prevailing ideological influences, one factor that may be contributing to marginalization of SFE is a dearth of research on schooling outcomes associated with teacher preparation in this field. Indeed, the most comprehensive review of research on teacher education, the American Educational Research Association's *Studying Teacher Education* (Cochran-Smith & Zeichner, 2005), does not include a single study related to the impact of social foundations courses—history of schooling, sociology of education, philosophy of education. Only five foundations-related studies were identified in the review—four from educational psychology and one concerning the use of a psychological test in the context of a general foundations course. It may be that complexities of research in SFE as it relates to student outcomes in public schools are too enormous, or professors in the field believe the rightness of their work is obvious and does not require substantiation—for instance, cultivation of teachers' critical thinking skills about educational issues, policies, and practices, or the preparation of teachers to develop skills, values, knowledge, and dispositions for political participation in their students.

Whatever the case, in a political context that demands evidence for sustaining programs and practices, the SFE field is likely to experience challenges. Although some theorists and practitioners in the field are working to develop rationales for its indispensability that are consistent with the rhetoric of contemporary debate on teacher quality and teacher preparation (Bredo, 2005; Butin, 2005b; Liston, Whitcomb & Borko, 2009; Tozer & Miretsky, 2005; Sanger, 2007), these efforts are not likely to preclude expectations for data on effects of SFE coursework on

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teacher performance and ultimately, student outcomes. The longevity of the SFE field, however, attests to its resilience.

As Donald Warren (1998) explains, history of education and philosophy of education were taught to teachers and prospective teachers during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The multidisciplinary SFE field, which includes history and philosophy of education, has been part of teacher education in the United States since its inception at Teachers College, Columbia University in the 1930s. Over the years, the field has endured considerable controversy and direct attacks from other subject areas in teacher education, disciplines within the university, and politicians. Controversy and assaults notwithstanding, the field has persevered and continues to contribute to the preparation of educators. In recent decades, inclusion of SFE in teacher preparation programs has been supported by the leading professional accreditation organization, the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE).

In *Professional Standards for the Accreditation of Teacher Preparation Institutions*, NCATE (2008) clearly specifies a requirement that teacher candidates have the ability to apply knowledge from SFE and ME.

Candidates preparing to work in schools as teachers or other school professionals need a sound professional knowledge base to understand learning and the context of schools, families, and communities. They understand and are able to apply knowledge related to the social, historical, and philosophical foundations of education, professional ethics, law, and policy...They understand language acquisition; cultural influences on learning; exceptionalities; diversity of student populations, families, and communities; and inclusion and equity in classrooms and schools. (p. 22)

A footnote in the preceding passage directs institutional personnel to standards promulgated by the Council for Social Foundations of Education (CSFE) for information about what teacher candidates should understand and be able to apply. The CSFE (2008) promotes the Standards for Academic and Professional Instruction in Foundations of Education, Educational Studies, and Educational Policy Studies, originally developed in 1978 by a Task Force of the American Educational Studies Association. These standards, referenced above, were revised by the Council of Learned Societies in Education, which became CSFE through name change in 2000.

Although teacher preparation programs are required to cultivate knowledge and skills in program candidates related to SFE/ME to obtain accreditation from NCATE, the requirement does not oblige programs to implement specific courses dedicated to these broad domains. Apparently, NCATE skill and knowledge requirements related to SFE/ME may be embedded in courses that do not include reference to these knowledge domains in the university catalog course description. This situation is indicative of the uncertain status of SFE/ME in many teacher preparation programs, which is noted in a recent study on course enrollment in these areas. Adelman (2004), using data from The National Longitudinal Study of 1988, found that of 12<sup>th</sup> graders in 1992 who prepared to become school teachers and were employed as school teachers in 1999, and enrolled for post-baccalaureate

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course work, only 15.8% of them took one or more courses in social/philosophical/historical foundations of education; 17% took one or more courses in pluralistic/diverse classroom, a course category that could be classified under the domain of multicultural education.

Not only does it appear that few teachers are taking courses in SFE and ME, a study of course syllabi (N=212) in these areas by Butin (2007) found many courses do not adequately address goals identified by leading theorists in the field.

[T]here is an overwhelming preponderance of evidence that foundations of education and multicultural education courses are divorced from the cultures they study and teach about, and do not practice what they preach. The courses just cited have no collaborative group work, little self-initiated learning, and no field experience, much less field experiences that engage issues of diversity or social justice. What this research finds is that most students in most courses are provided with miseducative forms of socialization towards cultural diversity. This is not a phenomenon occurring just to a few groups in a few places. These patterns are consistent and widespread across institutions, courses, demographics and geography.

Adelman's and Butin's findings and the marginalization of SFE/ME in discourse on teacher quality argued above underscore the question of SFE/ME representation in teacher education programs in the United States: What proportion of programs require candidates to complete courses defined as SFE and ME in the university catalog?

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### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine the extent to which university-based teacher preparation programs in the United States leading to an initial credential require courses in social foundations and multicultural education. This data should improve understanding of programmatic opportunities for prospective teachers to gain knowledge and skills related to SFE and ME, help clarify the status of SFE/ME in the field, and establish a benchmark for future assessments of trends in course requirements.

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### Method

This study examined course requirements and course descriptions for elementary level and secondary level teacher preparation programs leading to an initial credential at 302 universities in the United States to determine the extent to which courses in the social foundations of education (SFE) and multicultural education (ME) are required in these programs. A systematic sample was developed from institutional listings in the American Council on Education's (2004) *Teacher Education Programs in the United States: A Guide*, prepared with participation of the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education. The *Guide* states there are approximately 1400 teacher preparation programs operating in the United States. To obtain a sample of 302, which assumes a 95% confidence level with a 5% mar-

gin of error, the 872 listings in the *Guide* were divided by 302 yielding a rounded quotient of 3. Beginning with a random number generated as a starting point, every third entry in the *Guide* was selected until a sample of 302 was obtained. Since institutions are listed in the *Guide* alphabetically by state, the threat of periodicity, or patterns in the ordering is minimized (Conrad & Serlin, 2006). Program course requirements and course descriptions were obtained via the Internet from university catalogs provided on institutional websites from June to September 2008.

Most states issue elementary (K-6) and secondary (7-12) teaching credentials that are awarded upon successful completion of a state approved teacher preparation program corresponding to the grade range of instruction. Some states, however, have different credentials and different approved preparation programs for elementary grades K-3 and grades 4-6. In these states and others that distinguish secondary preparation programs and credentials for middle grades (6-8) and high school, teacher preparation programs and course requirements were combined for examination. If either the K-3 or grade 4-6 teacher preparation program required a SFE or ME course it was recorded as an elementary program requirement; if both the K-3 and 4-6 programs required the same course or a very similar course it was recorded only once for the combined programs. The same method of examination and recording was applied to tiered secondary teacher preparation programs.

Some universities offer undergraduate degree programs in education that include eligibility and recommendation for an initial teaching credential upon successful completion of degree requirements. Other institutions have post-baccalaureate teacher education programs, and some offer masters degree programs that meet requirements for an initial teaching credential. In this study, for institutions where a range of teacher preparation programs is offered—undergraduate to masters degree—the university’s undergraduate program was selected for examination of course requirements; the university’s other programs were excluded from the study. Similarly, for institutions that offer both post-baccalaureate and masters degree programs that lead to an initial teaching credential, the post-baccalaureate program was selected for examination and the masters program was excluded. If a masters degree program was the institution’s only program leading to an initial teaching credential it was included in the study. “Alternatives” to an institution’s conventional teacher preparation programs leading to a credential were not included in the study.

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### Definitions

According to Warren (1998), the social foundations of education has multiple roots and diverse forms; “pre-emergent versions” can be identified in the curricula of early teacher preparation programs that commonly included study of history of education and philosophy of education (p. 119). Emergent versions of the field may be found in the work of George S. Counts (1934) who conceptualized it as “bringing the findings of social science to bear upon this difficult problem [of enlightening educators who have] the heavy responsibility [of public schooling,

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which has] become a significant factor in shaping the future of the nation” (p.5). According to Counts:

A college for the preparation of teachers should first of all be a center for liberal learning—a center through which would run the main currents of modern thought. It should be a place for the study of American culture in its historic and world connections, but for a type of study that would not be purely academic in character. In the halls of any institution devoted to teacher training, the past and the future should meet; the most profound questions of national policy should be debated and understood. And this should be done, not as an intellectual exercise, but for the purpose of shaping educational programs. (p. 558)

From these early conceptualizations and formation at Teachers College, Columbia University, the social foundations of education evolved “relying mainly on the humanities and social sciences” (Warren, 1998, p. 121). The leading organization in the field, the Council for Social Foundations of Education, subscribes to a definition of the field promulgated in standards developed by the Council of Learned Societies in Education (1996): “[T]hese Standards address the Social Foundations of Education, which rely heavily on the disciplines and methodologies of the humanities, particularly history and philosophy, and the social sciences, such as sociology and political science.”

In this study, a SFE course was defined as including historical perspectives on schooling or education in the university catalog course description and at least one other perspective on schooling from the social sciences, or combination perspectives such as socioeconomic or sociopolitical, or philosophy of education. A SFE course that also included cultural diversity and its implications for schooling was classified as a combination social foundations, multicultural education course. A course that focused on philosophy of education and excluded other disciplines associated with social foundations was classified as a philosophy of education course. Some SFE courses that meet the definition above include additional topics and perhaps one additional disciplinary focus outside the SFE domain. Recognizing that a range in magnitude of focus on SFE exists among courses, a course designated as SFE per criteria described above was classified as having 50% to 100% SFE content. Courses that satisfied the SFE definition but included two or three foci outside the area of social foundations—psychological foundations, human development, classroom management, core curriculum standards, lesson planning, portfolio development, parent relationships, school procedures, school finance, school administration, teaching as a career, etceteras—were classified as 25% to 49% SFE content. Courses with more than three foci outside social foundations were considered to have less than 25% SFE content and not classified as a course in the knowledge domain.

The literature on multicultural education reveals a “variety of typologies, conceptual schemes, and perspectives within the field [that] reflects its emergent status and the fact that complete agreement about its aims and boundaries has not been attained” (Banks, 1993, p.4). In her review of literature on conceptual frameworks in multicultural education, Donna M. Gollnick (2008) offers the fol-

lowing synthesizing statement: “Not only must educators teach accurately about cultural diversity in this country and the world, they must also be aware of cultural differences among students to build an educational environment that will help all students reach their potential” (p. 42). Banks (1993) identifies five dimensions of multicultural education: content integration, the knowledge construction process, prejudice reduction, equity pedagogy, and an empowering school culture and social structure. Considering the diverse social science lenses through which multicultural education is examined and its concern with social structure and the cultural context of school, the field is clearly related to the social foundations of education and perhaps could be reasonably subsumed within it; several programs examined in this study combine SFE and ME in a single course.

In an attempt to address the conceptual variance and dimensions of multicultural education, a ME course was defined broadly in this study as having a focus on cultural diversity and its implications for schooling. A catalog course description that included the terms ethnic or racial diversity and their implications for schooling was classified as a ME course. Course descriptions that simply mentioned examination of student diversity or diversity issues, or that included language, gender, sexual or other types of differences or diversity but did not include ethnic or racial or cultural diversity or difference were not classified as a ME course. Some ME courses that meet the definition above include additional topics and perhaps one additional disciplinary focus outside the ME domain. Recognizing that a range in magnitude of focus on ME exists among courses, a course designated ME per criteria described above was classified as having 50% to 100% ME content. Courses that satisfied the ME definition but included two or three foci not central to or outside multicultural education—special health care needs, children with disabilities, special education, developmental needs of children, classroom organization, development of action plans for parents, etceteras—were classified as having 25% to 49% ME content. Courses with more than three foci outside ME were considered to have less than 25% ME content and not classified as course in the knowledge domain.

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## Results

Of the 302 universities examined in this study, 301 offer a program leading to an elementary grade-level teaching credential, 296 offer a program leading to a secondary grade-level credential. Among the elementary programs, 207 (69%) require at least one course in the social foundations of education (SFE), 136 (45%) require at least one course in multicultural education (ME). For secondary programs, 200 (68%) require at least one SFE course, 132 (45%) require at least one ME course. The credit value of SFE and ME courses and the extent to which SFE and ME content is addressed in these courses is not consistent across programs. In many programs, the sole course in which SFE is examined is often an amalgamation that includes topics such as portfolio development, professional standards, curriculum planning, and school procedures, among other things. Still, most courses in this

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study classified as having 50% to 100% SFE content are decidedly in the higher end of this range.

Table 1 below shows that 66% of elementary programs at public institutions require a SFE course and nearly half (48%) require a course that contains 50%-100% SFE content, though only 44% of programs require a SFE course with 3 or more units credit value in this content range. As for ME in elementary programs at public universities, 47% require a course in this area and 29% require a course having 50%-100% ME content. Among secondary programs at public institutions, 65% require a SFE course and 45% require a course with 50%-100% SFE content. With regard to ME in secondary level programs at public universities, 49% require a course in this area and 34% require a course that contains 50%-100% ME content, though only 31% of programs require a course with 3 or more units of credit value in this content range. Approximately 10% of elementary and secondary programs at public institutions have a combination SFE/ME course. The percentage of programs at private institutions that require SFE and ME courses is also presented.

Table 1 also shows differences between the proportion of public universities and private institutions that require SFE and ME courses in their elementary level and secondary level teacher preparation programs. A greater proportion of elementary and secondary programs at private universities require a SFE course than elementary and secondary programs at public universities, but a higher proportion of public university programs require a ME course than programs at private institutions. Differences in SFE and ME course requirements between public and private universities are not significant.

Table 2 below compares requirements for SFE and ME courses in NCATE accredited and non-accredited elementary level and secondary level teacher preparation programs at public and private institutions. Since NCATE accreditation is a nationally recognized indicator of program quality, it might be assumed that SFE/ME course requirements would be greater in NCATE accredited programs. A z-test, however, indicates no significant difference between the proportion of

**Table 1**  
Social Foundations and Multicultural Education Course Requirements  
in University-Based Teacher Preparation Programs in the United States

National Sample	Control	Sample <sup>a</sup>	Percent NCATE	Program Type	% Requiring SFE Course	% Requiring ME Course	Percentage of Programs Requiring SFE, ME, PE Courses by Course Type and Credit Value <sup>1</sup>																							
							SFE Courses										ME Courses										SFE/ME Combo <sup>2</sup>		PE Courses	
							50-100% SFE Content					25-49% SFE Content					50-100% ME Content					25-49% ME Content					50-100% SFE/ME Content		50-100% PE Content	
							Credit Value					Credit Value					Credit Value					Credit Value					Credit Value		Credit Value	
	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5					
302	Public	163	87	Elem	66	37	4	42	1	1	2	6	1	2	24	1	1	9	9	2	1	1								
	Second	65	49		3	40	1	1	2	8	2	1	30	1	6	8	2	1	1											
Private	139	54	Elem	72	43	3	46	4	1	1	9	1	4	20	3	1	18	1	3	4	4	1								
	Second	70	39		3	46	4	1	1	7	1	2	17	3	1	7	1	3	3	3	1									

<sup>1</sup>SFE = Social Foundations of Education, ME = Multicultural Education, PE = Philosophy of Education. Percentages rounded to the nearest whole number.

<sup>2</sup>SFE/ME Combo refers to a social foundations course that includes cultural diversity and its implications for schooling.

<sup>3</sup>Of the 163 public institutions sampled, all had an elementary program. 162 had a secondary program. Of the 139 private institutions sampled, 138 had an elementary program, 134 had a secondary program.

**Table 2**  
**Social Foundations and Multicultural Education Course Requirements**  
**in NCATE Accredited and Nonaccredited University-Based**  
**Teacher Education Programs in the United States**

National Sample	NCATE Status	Sample	Program Type	% Requiring SFE Course	% Requiring ME Course	Percentage of Programs Requiring SFE, ME, PE Courses by Course Type and Credit Value <sup>1</sup>																			
						SFE Courses					ME Courses				SFE/ME Combo <sup>2</sup>		PE Courses								
						50-100% SFE Content		25-49% SFE Content			50-100% ME Content		25-49% ME Content		50-100% SFE/ME Content		50-100% PE Content								
						Credit Value		Credit Value			Credit Value		Credit Value		Credit Value		Credit Value								
1 2 3 4 5		1 2 3 4 5			1 2 3 4 5		1 2 3 4 5		1 2 3 4 5		1 2 3 4 5														
302	Accredited	717	Elem	67	46	5	39	1	1	2	8	1	3	22	1	1	1	9	1	7	2	1	1	1	
			Second	66	45	4	38	1	1	2	9	2	2	26	1	1	7	1	7	2	1	1	1	1	1
	Nonaccredited	85	Elem	74	43	55	4	1	6	1	24	4	7	4	6	5									
			Second	71	43	55	4	1	5	1	23	4	1	6	4	5	4								

<sup>1</sup>SFE = Social Foundations of Education, ME = Multicultural Education, PE = Philosophy of Education. Percentages rounded to the nearest whole number.

<sup>2</sup>SFE/ME Combo refers to a social foundations course that includes cultural diversity and its implications for schooling.

NCATE accredited and non-accredited elementary and secondary programs that require a SFE or ME course.

Data from the sample also reveal that in 9 states, 50% or fewer of elementary and secondary programs at public and private institutions require a SFE course. In 20 states, 50% or fewer of elementary and secondary programs at public and private institutions require a ME course. Nationally, 3% of programs require a course dedicated to philosophy of education; these programs are distributed among nine states.

## Discussion and Limitations

Whether or not the findings presented here are problematic depends on one's perspective regarding priorities of K-12 schooling and the role of teachers. If one believes that social, democratic purposes of schooling and preparation of young people for political participation should be the first and primary goals of public education then the finding that nearly half of university-based teacher preparation programs do not require a SFE course or combination SFE/ME course of 3 units or more in the 50% to 100% content range may be problematic. Those who think teachers should ideally be professionals who engage the institution and process of education critically are also likely to be dissatisfied with SFE requirements in many programs. If goals of equal educational opportunity and social justice are considered high priorities, then the finding that approximately 75% of programs do not require a distinct ME course of 3 units or more in the 50% to 100% content range may be troubling.

Alternatively, if one believes the primary goal of public education is to prepare a competitive workforce and that teachers should ideally function as technicians who implement programs designed by others and emphasize the instrumental, workplace value of their subjects, then existing course requirements for SFE may seem appropriate or perhaps excessive in some programs. If the present condition of educational opportunity and social justice are not seen as problematic, and the relationship between culture and learning is not perceived to be particularly sig-

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nificant, then current course requirements for ME may not be exceptionable. The appropriate extent of SFE/ME in teacher preparation curriculum is an eminently ideological question.

With regard to similarities in SFE/ME course requirements at public and private institutions, the connection between teacher licensure and state approval of teacher preparation programs helps explain much of the consistency among programs. Differences between states, particularly with respect to ME course requirements, may be related to perceived needs associated with racial and cultural demographics and, again, prevailing ideology in a given state.

The finding that nationally, the percentage of programs accredited by NCATE that require a SFE or ME course is not different from the percentage of non-NCATE-accredited programs that require a course in these respective areas suggests that SFE/ME content may be embedded in courses that do not mention SFE/ME in the catalog course description. It may be that course descriptions written decades ago have not been revised to reflect actual course content, but required SFE/ME content is evident to accreditation reviewers. This possibility underscores a limitation of this study.

Determining the extent of SFE/ME in a program through analysis of course descriptions has limitations. For instance, instructors of courses where SFE/ME is not included in the catalog description may actually address this content. Alternatively, a course where topics in SFE/ME appear to be secondary in the catalog description may, in actuality, constitute the central focus. Similarly, a course description that mentions diversity issues and was not classified as ME in this study because of the vagueness of the description may actually be a course that focuses on ME content. Despite limitations, a national overview of SFE/ME course requirements formally represented in program and course descriptions adds to understanding of the scope and status of these knowledge and skills domains in teacher education and provides a benchmark for future assessment of trends. It contributes to appreciation of the programmatic opportunities pre-service teachers have to obtain knowledge and skills associated with SFE/ME.

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## **Conclusion and Recommendations**

This study indicates that SFE and ME in particular are not strongly represented in course requirements in university-based teacher preparation programs leading to an initial credential. It suggests that many new teachers are beginning practice with little understanding of social, democratic purposes of education, and cultural diversity and its implications for schooling. Many may also have not adequately developed critical, normative, and interpretive perspectives on education to enable effective participation in a process of ongoing renewal at the schools where they work. Indeed, some programs do not have a single course that addresses SFE/ME per catalog descriptions. Although SFE/ME content appears to be embedded in courses that do not mention these knowledge domains in the university catalog

course description, no data is available on the extent to which SFE/ME knowledge and skills are addressed in these courses nationally; an assessment that may be exceedingly difficult to conduct. Moreover, the embedded approach to SFE/ME seems precarious given the marginalization of these knowledge and skill domains in recent policy documents on teacher quality. This situation and findings presented here imply that advancement of SFE/ME goals will require teacher education policy that acknowledges the indispensability of SFE/ME and ensures commensurate inclusion in teacher preparation programs. In any case, reassessment of SFE/ME course requirements and course content appears to be needed in many programs if goals associated with these knowledge and skill domains are to be realized.

However much this study may contribute to understanding the scope of SFE and ME course requirements in teacher education and the status of SFE/ME in the field, additional research is needed for fuller appreciation of programmatic opportunities for prospective teachers to gain knowledge and skills related to SFE and ME. Studies of SFE/ME course syllabi similar to Butin's (2007) investigation referenced above would improve understanding of credential candidate's opportunities for development of critical perspectives on schooling and comprehension of social, democratic purposes of education. Inquiry into the ways NCATE accredited programs without SFE and ME courses meet accreditation standards in these areas, and data on qualifications of SFE/ME course instructors would also enhance understanding of learning opportunities for prospective teachers. Assessment of the scope and status of SFE/ME in the field will likewise benefit from data on SFE/ME course requirements in the wide range of alternative teacher preparation programs not examined in this study.

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