

# Do We Live in a Box of Crayons?

## Looking at Multicultural Metaphors Written by Teachers

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### Introduction

As today's classrooms become more diverse reflecting the changing demographics of the United States (see U.S. Census Bureau News, 2008), teachers must be prepared to teach students who come from diverse backgrounds of race, culture, language, and social class. This is a responsibility of teacher education programs that must be accepted and addressed.

How a teacher conceptualizes and approaches multicultural education can greatly affect a student's psychological and social adjustment (e.g., Godina & Choi, 2009). Additionally, teacher conceptions, sometimes called beliefs or practical theories, also impact student performance in how they influence curricular decisions such as *what* teachers think their students should learn and *how* they should be taught (Borko & Putnam, 1996; Calderhead, 1996; Pajares, 1992; see also Cornett, Yeotis, & Tersilliger, 1990; Goodman, 1988; Short & Short, 1989).

Consequently, it is essential for teachers and teacher educators alike to understand how teachers conceptualize multicultural education. It is such understandings that will help a teacher education program meet the real needs of both the teachers and their students. After all, it is the teacher who works with diversity in the classroom and who must make informed decisions about all students' learning.

In this study, we attempt to understand how language teachers and literacy teachers conceptualize multicultural education by analyzing their writings, and specifically looking at their use of multicultural metaphors. We believe that language, literacy, and culture are intertwined, and

therefore it is important to understand how language teachers view the role of different cultures in teaching and learning.

We asked graduate students, most of whom were already teachers, in two teacher-education programs—Teaching Literacy and TESOL—to create a metaphor that portrays the multicultural characteristics of American culture and the important aspects which they believe constitute multicultural education. In short essays, the teachers were asked to explain why they chose the metaphor they did to describe our culture and multicultural education. We thought it would be interesting to compare these two groups of teachers, because we assumed that teachers who teach speakers of other languages, in the TESOL program, might have different beliefs about multicultural education than those in the Teaching Literacy program.

Lakoff and Johnson's (1980, 1999) theory of metaphor as well as Gee's (2002, 2005, 2008) notion of cultural models were used as our working theories for this study. It was our research assumption that by making an effort to create a metaphor, the teachers would reflect on what they have experienced as learners and teachers, as well as on what they hope for as educators—hence they would conceptualize an ideal of multicultural education as they wrote these responses (see Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Moser, 2000; Schmit, 2005).

Another research assumption we had in asking the teachers to write these metaphors and essays was that what people conceptualize will be influenced by their own social and cultural conditions (Gee, 2002, 2005, 2008; also see Heath, 1983; Nieto, 2002). Given the fact that the institution where these teachers were enrolled serves a metropolitan area, we expected that their exposure to diversity might have influenced their cultural models. From the analysis of the teacher writings, we were able to categorize five different conceptualizations of multicultural education, which are dis-

cussed below and considered in comparison with other theoretical models.

### Theoretical Models of Multicultural Education

Multicultural education is an umbrella term that can mean many different things to different people, and how a person defines multicultural education will affect how that person approaches it. In other words, how a teacher enacts multicultural education in the classroom may depend on how that teacher understands and conceptualizes multicultural education.

While there have been different attempts to explain what multicultural education is and how it can be taught, in this study we used three theoretical models to compare and contrast various types and levels of multicultural education. They include Banks' (2008) model of four levels of approaches to multicultural education; Sleeter and Grant's (2007) model of five approaches to diversity; and Nieto's (2002) model of four levels of multicultural practices in schools. The three models acknowledge the complexity of multicultural education and the challenges which teachers face in schools, and seek to provide various approaches for differing purposes and outcomes.

### Banks

Banks' (2008) model examines four different levels of approach to multicultural education in schools. Banks criticizes "Americanization as Anglicization" which has been widespread in our society and schools, and calls for re-conceptualizing American society and culture in the school curriculum. Specifically, Banks proposes that we should view history, literature, art, music, and culture from diverse perspectives rather than only from an Anglo-American point of view.

The four approaches in Banks' model describe how multicultural content has

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been taught in the past and how it should be taught in the future. The lowest level of these approaches is the *contributions approach*, in which ethnic cultural components such as holidays are simply added to the existing curriculum. The drawback of this approach, while it is the easiest approach for teachers, is that it may result in a superficial understanding of ethnic cultures and reinforce stereotypes and misconceptions about race.

The second level of approach, the *additive approach*, adds ethnic concepts, themes, and perspectives to the curriculum in the form of a separate course or unit of study. However, this approach does not change the existing curriculum substantially and still views ethnic history and culture from Eurocentric perspectives. Therefore, it fails to help students understand how the dominant and ethnic cultures are interconnected and interrelated.

The third level of approach, the *transformative approach*, transforms the curriculum to encourage students to view concepts, events, issues, problems, and themes from the perspectives of diverse cultural, ethnic, and racial groups. The main challenge of the transformative approach is that it requires a substantial change of the curriculum, and therefore, teachers must be willing to critically reflect on their own knowledge and explore alternative perspectives.

The *social action approach* aims to enable and empower students to make decisions on social issues and take action to resolve social problems. The challenges with this approach may include time restrictions, as well as some resistance from the students and the community. In particular, this approach requires a considerable amount of time in curriculum planning, and some may find it inappropriate to confront students with socially controversial issues.

#### **Sleeter and Grant**

Sleeter and Grant (2007) set forth five approaches to race, class, and gender in multicultural education as they reviewed various multicultural studies in the history and context of the United States. This typological model clarifies what “doing multicultural education” means to different people. In the first approach, *teaching the exceptional and culturally different*, teachers aim to help students of color, low-income students, and/or special education students achieve, assimilate, and “make it” in society as it currently exists.

In the second approach, the *human*

*relations* approach, teachers attempt to foster positive interpersonal relationships among members of diverse groups in the classroom and to strengthen each student’s self-concept.

The third approach, *single group studies*, is an umbrella term for studies that focus on particular groups, such as ethnic studies, working-class studies, or women’s studies. Teachers who take this approach would seek to raise consciousness about a particular group by teaching its history, culture, and contributions, and how it has worked with or been oppressed by the dominant society.

In the fourth approach, *multicultural education*, teachers reconstruct the entire educational process in order to realize equality and cultural pluralism in school and society.

Finally, the fifth approach, *multicultural and social justice*, can be viewed as the ultimate educational reform because it will pave the way to social reform. In this approach teachers want their students to analyze social inequality and oppression in society and help the students to develop skills for social action, a process intended to eventually lead to building a more just and multicultural society.

#### **Nieto**

Nieto (2002) discusses monocultural education and a model with four levels of multicultural education, with the examples of five schools where school policies and practices are implemented in varied ways. First, Nieto warns us that monocultural education, in which none of the contributions or perspectives of minorities are discussed and only European-American male views are prevalent, still too often exists in our culture and in our schools.

An actual multicultural education starts with the level of *tolerance*, in which schools develop an awareness of cultural diversity. But the ultimate goal of schooling is still assimilation. In this level, differences are accepted, but not necessarily embraced.

The next level of multicultural education, *acceptance*, acknowledges the value of diverse cultures. At this level of support for multicultural education, there are likely to be changes in school policies and practices in order to deal with the issues stemming from the cultural diversity in the school.

Nieto’s third multicultural level, *respect*, involves admiration and high esteem for diversity, and in the schools differences are respected and diversity is appreciated.

The last level of multicultural education is *affirmation, solidarity, and critique*. At this level, students’ diverse experiences become a basis and resource for their learning as they reflect on and assess their own cultures and those of others. They are encouraged to develop their own perspectives and to construct knowledge from multicultural education.

## **Method**

### **Background of the Study and Participants**

This study has evolved from our teaching experiences in a teacher education institution that serves a metropolitan area. Over the years, as part of the two graduate courses that have multicultural education as a component, we asked the teachers in our classes to create a metaphor that represents our current society and what they believe to be an ideal multicultural education for the society. These two courses were mid-level, not introductory or cumulative courses in these programs.

We believed that everyday metaphors make it possible to uncover both individual and collective patterns of thought and action in real life, based on the work of Lakoff and Johnson (1980). More importantly, with the help of metaphors, we thought we could assess these teachers’ tacit knowledge and beliefs, as Moser (2000) has proposed. As we reviewed their responses, we became more aware of the importance of systematic analysis of teachers’ writings to understand their needs.

We therefore decided to select the most recent seven classes we taught for this analysis. This involved three classes of the course in the literacy program and four classes of the course in the TESOL program. All the graduate students in these classes were already teachers or had had teaching experiences. The teachers in the literacy program were pursuing careers as literacy specialists, and the teachers in the TESOL program were preparing to be teachers of English-language learners.

### **Beyond What We Already Know**

According to Lakoff and Johnson (1980, 1999) and other studies using this method (e.g., Brown, Parsons, & Worley, 2005; Schmit, 2005), metaphor is not only an analytical tool, but also a means by which we think beyond what we already know. The first use of metaphor can be as an analytical tool to look into people’s minds. By examining metaphors that

people use in describing their beliefs, we can understand people through more than what they say, because the metaphors reflect what they have experienced and what they believe to be true.

The second use of metaphor, the one we consider even more important for educational purposes, is as a means to direct people in constructing future meaning and thus in guiding their own future behaviors. According to Wilson (1977, 1979), "image-making" is one of the essential characteristics of human sense-making. Wilson argues that human beings do not only create images but are also shaped by them, because people use the images associated with people, things, places, or experiences as a guide for understanding phenomena as well as for creating new images.

Additionally, using metaphors for the purpose of teacher reflection is especially helpful. Korthagen (1993) argues that both the conventional way of reflection using explicit knowledge and alternative methods of reflection using tacit knowledge can play a critical role in our reflection. He hence proposes that metaphors, fantasies, and drawings should be used more extensively in teacher reflection efforts.

Therefore, we asked the teachers in our courses to construct a metaphor in order for them to conceptualize real meaning in their minds, and we hoped that this process would actually cause them to take action in their teaching practices. First, the teachers were asked to read an essay entitled "The Myth of the Melting Pot," an excerpt from the book *Multicultural Teaching* by Pamela L. Tiedt and Iris M. Tiedt (2005). Those authors refuse to use the old metaphor of a "melting pot" and call for a new metaphor. In their essay, the metaphor "melting pot" is criticized because it makes people look away from the cases where assimilation is not possible but is still forced on ethnic minority groups. A new metaphor, "tossed salad," is proposed as a substitute for the old "melting pot" metaphor. This is seen to be more appropriate for today's multicultural society, because the American people are trying to achieve new goals and ways of life while also keeping their old traditions.

After reading the essay, the teachers were asked to write a short essay of about 300 words using the following guidelines:

Tiedt and Tiedt compare and contrast two metaphors for American culture: "melting pot" and "tossed salad." However, to some, these two metaphors might not best describe what their thoughts and beliefs on multicultural education in our society are.

By reflecting on your learning experiences and teaching practices, by imagining an ideal form of multicultural education in our society, try to come up with a metaphor for multicultural education for our society. In your essay, please discuss (1) What is your metaphor? (2) How does it portray our current society and the ideal form of multicultural education for it? and (3) How does your metaphor describe some of the most important aspects or elements of multicultural education?

A total of 104 essays were collected and examined by three researchers; two of us taught the courses in which the teachers were enrolled and also collected the data, and one was from outside of the university and was able to provide a third perspective. All of us were teacher educators, but each with a different specialty: literacy, TESOL, and curriculum development.

When analyzing the teachers' essays, we read one essay at a time, line by line, to identify the metaphors that the teachers created and to attempt to understand what those metaphors meant. We discussed how each of us interpreted each metaphor and tried to reach the same interpretation by debating whether the supporting part of the essay was consistent with what we understood or not. In short, we continually compared the actual words the teachers used in the essays to the interpretations of the metaphors that we initially made.

### **Cultural Models and Discourse Analysis**

Throughout the process, we used Gee's (2002, 2005, 2008) discourse analysis method as a guide to uncovering the cultural models the teachers had at the time they wrote the essays. Cultural models are our "first thoughts" or taken-for-granted assumptions or beliefs about a phenomenon (2005, p. 59). In discourse analysis, cultural models are an important tool of inquiry for understanding one's mind, because words reflect what we unconsciously think and believe. By examining people's everyday language, we could get a glimpse into their cultural beliefs or cultural models. The reason that we chose to make the participants write a short essay (rather than a lengthy one) was to collect their "first thoughts," which would more likely reflect their everyday theories or taken-for-granted assumptions.

As we reviewed the teacher writings, we postulated that the same metaphor used by two individuals might have different meanings, and thus people using identical metaphors might still have a different cultural model regarding multi-

cultural education. For example, when two people use the same metaphor, "rainbow," to describe what our current society looks like, there is a chance that one person believed in assimilation, emphasizing the beauty of the unity of the rainbow colors, whereas the other believed in individualism, focusing on the uniqueness of the different colors in the rainbow.

Therefore, it was essential for us to examine the rest of the language in each essay to see if all three reviewers could agree on the meaning of the metaphor. Once we had read all of the essays from one class, we divided the metaphors into categories. Next, following the same procedure of analysis, we moved on to reading the essays from the other classes and categorizing the metaphors in the essays. In the end, we were able to categorize five conceptualizations of a multicultural society through the analysis of the essays (see Table 1). These five categories were then given to some participants for them to see if they also agreed that what they had written belonged to the determined category, as a way of member-check.

### **What We Found**

Several interesting findings emerged from the analysis of the teachers' writings. As described previously, we were able to categorize five different teacher conceptualizations of a multicultural society and its relationship with its members (see Table 1). We also counted the number of responses in each category and computed the percentage of the categories in order to examine what types of metaphors and cultural models predominated and what were minority views.

Additionally, we calculated the percentages of each category for the two different programs in an attempt to compare and contrast the similarities or differences among the responses from each program. In the following discussion, teacher cultural models belonging to these five conceptualizations are compared to the theoretical models by Banks (2008), Sleeter and Grant (2007), and Nieto (2002), respectively.

### **Society Seen as a Whole with Parts**

First, we noticed that about 16% of the teachers, according to their metaphors and essays, conceptualize our multicultural society as a whole that is infused with different parts. These teachers seem to accept diversity at some level, but recognize assimilation as an important goal of education. In their writings, metaphors



like a puzzle, a collage, baking a cake, and mosaic tiles are commonly used in this conceptualization for describing a multicultural society or multicultural education. The essays that support these metaphors tend to stress the overall society more than individuals or groups.

We think that this conceptualization is comparable to the “teaching the exceptional and culturally different” approach, which mainly aims to help minority students assimilate to the dominant culture, as discussed by Sleeter and Grant (2007). The following essays use a mosaic or a cake as a metaphor to depict multicultural education and hence show their cultural models:

*A mosaic describes multicultural education in many ways. The small pieces of glass, tile, and pottery depict the different ethnic groups, cultures, and languages that co-exist together to make up a stunning and absolute image. Each piece, important in its own way, brings an element that contributes to its ultimate beauty.*

My metaphor for describing multicultural education is “*Baking a Cake.*” I think this metaphor describes the importance of each

*ingredient to create the final product—a cake. The students are the ingredients, the teacher is the baker, and the classroom is the cake....It is the teacher’s job to take all the unique qualities or ingredients from her students and mix them together to create a well-blended classroom.*

We find this type of conceptualization, although found in a relatively small number of teacher essays, to be quite troubling. The teachers who wrote this kind of metaphor seem to conceptualize multicultural education in the same way as the old “melting pot” metaphor, one that sacrifices the individuality or uniqueness of a cultural group in favor of one dominant culture.

We think that teachers who embrace this type of metaphors need to be exposed to a wider variety of theoretical models and various levels of approaches so that they can start constructing new knowledge of multicultural education. As we discussed in the introduction, we believe that teachers are the front line of multicultural education, and therefore must have a sound instructional approach based on at least one of the theories we reviewed.

### Society as a Sum of Different Groups

Second, we found that over 30% of the teacher metaphors and essays conceptualize our multicultural society as a mere sum of different groups, existing independently of one another. The representative metaphors, such as a box of crayons, a rainbow, a fruit basket, and a box of chocolates, simply acknowledge that our society is composed of different groups. These metaphors view society through something colorful and beautiful, but seem to fail to recognize interactions among different groups.

The supporting essays focus more on cultural elements, such as costumes and foods, not necessarily integrating them into the curriculum. Therefore, the metaphors and essays that they wrote are comparable to the contributions approach (Banks, 2008), and tolerance (Nieto, 2002), both of which are a very basic approach to multicultural education. The following excerpts are from the teacher essays that illustrate this type of conceptualization:

I think that teaching multicultural children is like a *rainbow*. In a rainbow, there

**Table 1**  
**Metaphors and Conceptualizations of a Multicultural Society and Multicultural Education by Teachers**

Representative Metaphors	Conceptualizations	Literacy major	TESOL major	All major
Puzzle Collage Mosaic art work	A multicultural society is a whole that is infused with different parts. Each part may not function before becoming the whole. Diversity is accepted at some level, but assimilation is the ultimate goal of education.	18.6%	10/5%	16.1%
Box of crayons Rainbow Fruit basket Box of chocolates	A multicultural society is the sum of different groups. However, each group can function without interaction with another. Diversity is accepted in schools but not necessarily embraced in the curriculum.	32.6%	31.6%	32.3%
Garden of life Forest Flowerbed	A multicultural society consists of different groups. Each group shares the social foundation with other groups. Diversity is embraced and nurtured in schools.	7%	10.5%	8%
Orchestra Salad bowl Gemstones in piece of jewelry Prism	A multicultural society is more than the sum of different groups. Different groups contribute to making a better society, but each one can stand alone and hence does not lose its independence or uniqueness. Diversity is acknowledged and respected in schools.	25.6%	15.8%	22.6%
Pot of paella Computer motherboard Notes of a song	A multicultural society is made through the integration of different parts. Each group contributes to making a better society without losing its identity. Diversity is a resource to transform the curriculum or education.	16.3%	26.3%	19.4%
Total		100%	100%	100%

are different colors. Some are bright, others are light/smooth, some are loud, some are pretty, some are interesting, others catch the eye and we enjoy looking at it. On the other hand, there are colors that are not so pretty and catchy but we must appreciate the color because of what it is. Also in a rainbow, all the colors are near each other and when you look at it from far they all blend in together... There are some children that are bright and fun to talk to. Their customs are interesting. *As a teacher we might want to discuss these interesting customs. Then there are children whose customs are not catchy and are somewhat awkward. However we must accept them and for who they are and treat them like everyone else.*

I choose to think of multiculturalism as a *gift basket*. Each part of the gift basket is important to the whole. *The gift basket is much more wonderful with all its different components.* Each component brings something new and different to the basket and makes it better.

We were surprised upon seeing these results—the largest number of writings supporting the lowest level of multicultural education—because this kind of approach is quite rudimentary, not necessarily supported by well-established theories or philosophies. We believe that teachers who serve culturally and linguistically diverse student must learn to demonstrate more refined approaches to multicultural education.

#### **Society as a Garden or Flowerbed**

Thirdly, we found that about 8% of the teachers' essays portray a multicultural society as a garden or a flowerbed in which different types of life-forms thrive. The teachers who wrote these metaphors emphasized that all different groups of people share a common ground or social foundation, while still acknowledging the differences among people. This conceptualization can be compared to Banks' additive approach, because it not only recognizes diversity as part of who we are but also fosters some unity by interconnecting different groups with one another by seeking common ground.

The low frequency of metaphors in this category was a somewhat unexpected result, because Banks' additive approach, where ethnic content is added to the curriculum, is the one most commonly seen in the field of education (Banks, 2008). Additionally, we saw that Sleeter and Grant's human relations approach can be related to this type of conceptualization, because the metaphors and teachers' essays tend to promote the affective dimensions of the

classroom by embracing differences and focusing on the benefits of collaboration. The garden was a common metaphor used by the participants to describe this orientation, as seen in the following excerpts:

*"The Garden of life." I thought about this and thought this term best represented America....It's the different plants and flowers that make our gardens stand out. Also, some flowers and vegetables benefit each other.*

I envision my classroom as a big and beautiful garden. Each student is like a different vegetable in a garden.... Each student is like an individual vegetable with its own color, value, characteristics, and a special need....*The goal is to foster unity within diversity.*

Multiculturalism in America is more complicated than a tossed salad. Rather, children and adults from different countries are more like potted flowers from different nurseries that are transplanted into the garden of America. *Care needs to be taken that each potted flower is transplanted and cared for according to its individual needs.* Some flowers need shade and some do not. Some flowers need acid soil, and some do not....*The goal is to create one big beautiful garden, which is America....The relationship between different flowers can be symbolic; taller flowers needing more sun can provide shade to smaller flowers that find too much sun harmful.*

#### **More than Sum of Different Groups**

Fourthly, about 22.6% of the teachers conceptualized our multicultural society as more than the sum of different groups, where different groups contribute to making a better society while not losing their independence or uniqueness. We also noticed that 25.6% of the essays from the teachers in the literacy graduate program supported this kind of conceptualization, which was the second highest percentage in the group of literacy teacher candidates.

Combined with the fifth result that will be discussed later, this finding might show the need of more emphasis on multicultural education in all teacher education programs, since this level of multicultural education may be the highest that teachers can reach by relying on their own personal experiences.

In this category, the teachers used metaphors such as a salad bowl, an orchestra, and gemstones in a necklace or another piece of jewelry to portray the individual independence of a group, while at the same time emphasizing the importance of collaboration.

*In an orchestra, each instrument has its*

*own unique, beautiful sound.* However, when the instruments blend together in harmony, they create a melody that touches the audience. American society is comprised of many cultures with different languages, modes of dress, religious practices, foods, etc. *Each culture is special and has its own history. However, the cultures work together and respect each other to make a society much more rich and colorful.*

*In a multiple gemstone piece of jewelry the stones are semiprecious, and make up a variety of colors.* Also, they each possess various properties that define them, and each stone is beautiful both on its own and together with the other stones in a piece of jewelry, because every stone together is significant to the piece of jewelry. As humans, we are very much like these gemstones.

This type of conceptualization is somewhat similar to Nieto's acceptance, because each part can stand alone but is still willing to accept and respect another.

#### **Integration of Different Parts**

Lastly, 19.4% of the teachers used metaphors that define a multicultural society as one that is created through the integration of different parts, with each group having an important function in the overall society. Examples of metaphors used include a car, a motherboard, a pot of paella, and notes of a song. In this conceptualization, we found another noticeable difference between the literacy and TESOL teachers: over 26% of the teachers in the TESOL program used this kind of metaphor, whereas only 16% of the teachers in literacy fell in this category.

This was an encouraging result, because we had originally expected that teachers in the TESOL program would be more culturally sensitive and hence conceptualize multicultural education at this higher level. Indeed, this type of conceptualization can be compared to Banks' transformation approach, Sleeter and Grant's multicultural education approach, and Nieto's respect, because it not only emphasizes keeping the identity of different cultural groups but also sees the possibility of transforming school or society through teacher collaboration.

A metaphor that can be used to describe our rich and multicultural society is a "Motherboard," i.e., the main circuit board of the computer. I chose this metaphor to fit with the computer age we live in. Each culture contributes to the power of our nation. Each ethnicity adds another component, the keyboard, mouse, printer,

*etc....The key is that without various components, the motherboard may actually work but it lacks its capability. The potential for it to be a great system is not realized without all of the unique parts and contributions to the whole.*

I decided to use the metaphor of "notes of a song." In every song there is a combination of many notes put together. Each and every note plays a crucial role in the production of a song....When all notes are combined together, a beautiful song is composed. Diversity is just like [the] notes of a song. *Each and every person and all cultures play a certain key role in the world. In order for the world to exist and to be a successful growing place, we need to have everyone's input and ideas.* If one person or culture group is not able to give something that helps the world continue, the world will not run the same as when everyone's abilities and input are combined....The world is a culmination of diverse backgrounds, in which everyone is capable of giving of themselves and making a difference in the world.

### Conclusion

In this study, we examined language and literacy teachers' metaphors and essays in order to understand what their *taken-for-granted* notions of multicultural education are. We believed that it was the first step needed for us to become better prepared for teaching diverse student populations. The procedure that we followed for this study provided us with insights into the language teacher candidates' awareness of multicultural education, their own social, cultural, and educational experiences with diversity, and their pedagogical and curricular practices in schools.

In the findings, although we noticed a few minor differences between the teachers from the two different classes, the overall results from the two groups were similar. Many from both groups still seemed to believe at a rudimentary level of multicultural education while few seemed to embrace higher level of multicultural education in their writings.

Because of this result, we want to propose re-examination of teacher education programs, at least at the curricular level. We feel a language or literacy teacher education program must help its candidates acquire the knowledge and skills of multicultural education, as these will be essential in teaching culturally and linguistically diverse students.

While it is hard to generalize our study from one institution to other institutions and areas across the United States, we

know from our experiences as teacher educators that currently not all language or literacy teacher programs require a multicultural education course for graduation. In some language and literacy teacher education programs, multicultural theories are intertwined in content-based courses (e.g., Multicultural Literature; Teaching English for Diverse Learners, and so forth), whereas other programs allow candidates to take a separate multicultural education course, in many cases as an elective.

We are not against these existing curricular approaches, but we think that within its basic structure a teacher education program must ensure that its candidates develop a theoretical perspective of multicultural education. In other words, a course curriculum has to support deeper exploration of theories and also extensive experience with diversity.

In addition to what we previously discussed as findings, several issues emerged from this study that could be important for the future direction of teacher education programs. First, despite the fact that the teachers in our study were enrolled in two different programs, we did not find major differences between the two groups in their metaphors or in their cultural models. Since there has been generally more emphasis on multiculturalism in the field of TESOL, whose goal is to prepare the teachers to work with diverse student populations of English-language learners, we had expected that the metaphors and accounts of the candidates in the TESOL course would reflect much greater knowledge and awareness of multiculturalism than those in the other group. This was not the case.

Secondly, it was our assessment that many teachers seemed to lack theoretical perspectives in their approach to multicultural education, despite their personal experiences with diversity. Given the fact that about one third of the teacher candidates studied here reside in a metropolitan area, and the rest of them also lived close to a city where cultural and linguistic diversity has existed for a long time, we had expected them to be more open to diversity.

In many of the essays, teachers indeed shared their personal experiences related to diversity or multicultural education:

I encounter myriads of people, cultures, accents, and languages each day. The immense diversity is electrifying and exciting; I love encountering it everywhere I look.

I remember being in high school when the term "melting pot" was used by my Social

Studies teacher. We were discussing immigrants and their passage to America. The teacher asked how many of us had immigrated here or had parents that were from different countries and more than half of the class raised their hands.

However, people who mentioned these experiences did not necessarily articulate cultural models that could be connected to a higher level of conceptualization, such as the transformative approach (Banks, 2008). We believe that it is important for a teacher education program to not only provide its teachers with experiences in diversity (see Taylor & Whittaker, 2003), but also to directly teach sound theories and approaches of multicultural education, so that teachers can construct multicultural knowledge using both theories and their own experiences.

Moreover, there was little or no evidence to indicate that any teachers in this study possessed cultural models that would help them to conceptualize and reach the highest levels of multicultural understanding, such as social action (Banks, 2008), multicultural and social justice (Sleeter & Grant, 2007), and affirmation, solidarity, and critique (Nieto, 2002). This result suggests that teachers are not able to reach these high levels without more effective teacher education programs.

It may also be that these higher approaches were actually introduced in the courses. If that is true, then this result has more to do with the difficulty of changing teachers' beliefs. It has been said that teacher beliefs are hard to transform in a teacher education program because teachers and teacher candidates screen what they are taught and choose what they wish to learn (see Pajares, 1992).

However, we still believe that teachers can change if they are invited into a process of dismantling their pre-existing beliefs by being questioned and being invited to alternative experiences, theories, and perspectives. As Nieto (2002) states, to become good teachers of all students, educators must undergo a profound shift in their beliefs about differences.

[H]ow one views learning leads to dramatically different curricular decisions, pedagogical approaches, expectations of learning, relationships among students, teachers and families, and indeed, educational outcomes. (Nieto, 2002, p. 5)

And we must not forget that a teacher is an irreplaceable resource for the multicultural education of the students. After all, change is what education is all about.



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