Preparing Teacher Educators for Diversity: Competencies and Challenges

Victoria Chou, University of Illinois at Chicago
OECD International Seminar on Teacher Education for Diversity
Brussels, Belgium, 25/26 October 2010
Review of OECD background paper

- Minimal oversight on who can become teacher educators
- Required course of study minimal
- Teacher educators tasked with preparing teachers for classrooms with which they themselves may have had no experience
- Potential to decrease fragmentation of teacher educator background and preparation by establishing a set of competencies and standards
Resonances from the US context

- “Cracks in the Ivory Tower” Fordham Institute 2010 survey of education school professoriate
  - Change agents, not disciplinarians or those working in the real world of today’s schools; “philosophers and evangelists, not as master craftsmen sharing tradecraft with apprentices and journeymen”
  - 42% of education professors have not taught K-12 or have not taught in more than 20 years (and significant number are involved in teacher preparation)
  - “Reformers” vs. “Defenders”

- Learning on the job

- Education schools disciplinary silos that mimic A&S schools: Fosters program incoherence and fragmentation

- Education schools and university reward system privilege research over program development
COMPETENCIES FOR TEACHER EDUCATORS:
Frame 1 (European Commission)

- Teaching learners
- Teaching about teaching
- Knowledge development/research
- System competencies
- Transversal competencies
- Leadership competencies

→ Augmented by diversity competencies
Frame 2 (Task Force on the Education of the Professoriate*)

- Learning about learning in P-12 and HE contexts
- Learning about teaching in P-12 and HE contexts
- Learning to teach *others* how to learn to teach over time
- Pathways to effective teaching
- Models of teacher preparation
- Social, family, community, and reform contexts
- Collaborative work
Effective teaching
Application of knowledge
Creative responses to adversity

Each tenet is associated with content foci, core experiences and activities, and expected teacher educator outcomes

Idea of a strong teacher education minor or completion of a teacher education doctorate, as well as induction of new teacher educators

Frame 3 (Educating teacher educators as analogous to educating teachers)

- Recruitment and selection
  - Including dispositions

- Preparation
  - General education: How to work with A&S faculty
  - Professional education, including teaching adult learners and supporting clinical experiences

- Induction

- Continuing professional development

→ Must also include training related to research, policy-making, and leadership roles of teacher educators
CHALLENGES OF PREPARING TEACHER EDUCATORS FOR DIVERSITY—Claim 1: Competencies are necessary but not sufficient

- Most programs claim to be standards-based; useful policy but insufficient at the ground level to ensure adequate preparation of teacher educators for diversity.

- Competencies tend to be at such a 30,000-foot level that people can and will escape responsibility for ensuring that all teachers and teacher educators truly teach for diversity.

- Tendency to reproduce and maintain the status quo is too powerful: More than 8 of 10 US teachers are White middle-class (usually female); same goes for majority of faculty who identify as teacher educators and who frequently teach as they were taught.
Claim 1: Competencies are necessary but not sufficient (cont.)

- Dysconscious racism a la Joyce King: Deficit thinking and deficit practices regarding non-mainstream students
- Language tells a story: “Best and the brightest,” “best practice” sites, “differentiated academic instruction that nevertheless is not culturally responsive
- Blind to tension between serving “our” teacher candidates vs. serving teacher candidates’ PreK-12 students who are “other people’s children”
Claim 2: Local context *must* inform local practice

- But also need to ask what aspects of diversity are missing from local conversation or are conflated with other diversities
  - Example: Disproportionality of Black males labeled “special needs” in US
  - Example: Disproportionality of students of color in high-poverty communities
Claim 3: Preparing teacher educators for diversity must be undertaken *intentionally* and *institutionally* or it won’t happen

- Leadership matters
  - Evolution of UIC College of Education mission and vision to ensure “walk” enacts “talk”

- Necessary for teacher educators to be informed and engaged citizens in the world
  - Social sciences background or relevant experiences helpful

- Use of data on teacher educator program and teacher candidate outcomes as accountability measures
Claim 3: Preparing teacher educators for diversity must be undertaken *intentionally* and *institutionally* or it won’t happen (cont).

- Use of clinical work to drive change: Low-stakes internships in diverse communities, teacher educator residencies in schools
- Cooperating teachers, school leaders, and third-party critical friends as essential partners who help hold us accountable
- Goes without saying that the work is difficult, challenging, time-consuming, resource-intensive, humbling, and absolutely necessary to ensure quality education for all students