



Transforming teacher preparation for culturally responsive teaching in Taiwan

Pei-I. Chou ^{a,*}, Meng-Huey Su ^b, Ya-Ting Wang ^b

^a Center for Teacher Education/Institute of Education, National Sun Yat-sen University, No. 70 Lienhai Road, Kaohsiung, 804, Taiwan

^b Institute of Education, National Sun Yat-sen University, No. 70 Lienhai Road, Kaohsiung, 804, Taiwan

HIGHLIGHTS

- Transformation approach is used to modify a teacher-education curriculum.
- Motivation transformed from establishing inclusion to engendering competence.
- Guided practice occurs within an authentic, contextualized learning environment.
- CRT teacher preparation can be effective in the context of Chinese cultural heritage.

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ABSTRACT

This study adopted the transformation approach to modify the structure of curriculum and instruction of a Taiwanese teacher-education program to weave in elements of culturally responsive teaching (CRT). Through observation, interviews, and data collection, the transformation of 15 candidates was analyzed. Their intrinsic motivation progressed from “establishing inclusion” to “developing a positive attitude,” “enhancing meaning,” and finally “engendering competence” through reflection. The findings can serve as the basis for deepening the theories and practices of culturally responsive teacher preparation, particularly in the context of Chinese cultural heritage.

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1. Introduction

Schools are micro societies in which teachers from the dominant culture often teach ethnically diverse students with whom they are unlikely to share a cultural background (Gay, 2013). Researchers have emphasized the imperativeness of preparing educators in this regard. For example, the advocates of culturally responsive teaching (CRT) claim that educators need to recognize and integrate diverse students' cultural identities and experiences, consequently enhancing their learning motivation and performance (Gay, 2000, 2013; Ginsberg & Wlodkowski, 2000; Patchen & Cox-Petersen, 2008; Siwatu, Chesnut, Alejandro, & Young, 2016). However, most research conducted on CRT is developed in western societies. This

study was conducted in Taiwan, where ethnic diversity and cultural traditions differ significantly from those in western countries. Taiwanese share the cultural inheritance of Confucianism, which influences their learning styles and attitudes (Ho, 1998; Hwang, 2005; Kung, 2017). Confucianism has been criticized as ethnocentric (Tan, 2005), which could put it at odds with CRT and make its implementation in Taiwan both more challenging and more necessary.

Recently, more emphasis has been placed on multicultural education in Taiwan. Teacher-preparation programs began to add courses related to multicultural education. While this additive approach could be the first phase in a radical curriculum reform designed to restructure the total curriculum (Banks, 1999), it is seldom comprehensive enough to provide sufficient awareness, knowledge, and skills for effective CRT. Especially in university classrooms in Taiwan, the additive approach may focus on lectures that contribute to candidates' passive learning for preparing

* Corresponding author.

E-mail addresses: pei@mail.nsysu.edu.tw (P.-I. Chou), achso19.tw@yahoo.com.tw (M.-H. Su), wayating@gmail.com (Y.-T. Wang).

teacher accreditation examinations, which marks no significant departure from conventional preservice teacher-preparation programs.

Moving beyond this additive approach, this study looks change the structure of curriculum and instruction of a teacher-preparation program using a two-part special intervention guided by Banks' (1999) transformation approach. The first part involved a three-course sequence focused on CRT that employed a team-teaching approach. The second part involved an elementary school/university collaboration that provided a contextualized teaching and learning opportunity where candidates could apply CRT concepts and strategies. The effects of the intervention were focused on the development of candidates' intrinsic motivation rather than on depositing knowledge into passive learners (Freire, 1996). We believed that the amount of knowledge and skills that can be transmitted in a course is limited, whereas unlimited knowledge and skills could be pursued over the course of a lifetime by candidates with positive intrinsic motivation. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to explore the influence of a transformation-based, CRT-focused preservice teacher-preparation program on the development of candidates' intrinsic motivation and to analyze its theoretical and practical implications. The guiding research questions are as follows:

- (1) How might a preservice teacher-preparation program focused on CRT use the transformation approach to facilitate the development of candidates' intrinsic motivation?
- (2) What is the push and pull of implementing CRT for candidates in Taiwan?

2. Theoretical framework

2.1. CRT in the research area of multicultural education

CRT is a branch of multicultural education. Referring to the conceptual framework of multicultural education research can bring clarity to the location of this study in the research area. According to Gay (2000), CRT is defined as using cultural knowledge, previous experiences, knowledge structures, and performing styles of students from different ethnic groups to make their learning experiences become more relevant and efficient. Therefore, CRT mainly involves two clusters of research genres in multicultural education: equity pedagogy and prejudice reduction (Banks, 1993) or multicultural competence (Bennett, 2001). On the one hand, CRT theorists want to apply the cultures of ethnically diverse students as a bridge to improve their academic achievement and learning efficiency; that was emphasized by equity pedagogy. On the other hand, they want to make students' learning experiences relevant, reduce prejudices, and acquire more democratic racial attitudes; that was stressed by multicultural competence theorists. In short, CRT aims to facilitate diverse students to pursue excellent academic achievement while maintaining cultural integration (Pringle & McLaughlin, 2014).

Equity pedagogy aims at achieving fair and equal educational opportunities for all students, particularly on the part of ethnic minorities and the economically disadvantaged. The theory of cultural deprivation emphasizes that education can help students in low-income families overcome their deficits. Particular emphasis is placed on the hidden curriculum – teachers' attitudes and their expectations for students' learning, grouping of students and instructional strategies, school disciplinary policies and practices, school and community relations, and classroom climates. However, it assumes that students' problems mainly related to their culture of poverty. Their domestic experiences do not transmit the necessary

cultural patterns into the types of learning characteristic in schools and the larger society (Banks, 1993, 2009; 2016; Bennett, 2001; Nieto & Bode, 2010, pp. 394–416).

In opposition to that, the theory of cultural differences acknowledges the rich cultures of low-income and ethnically diverse students. Based on the latter, CRT asserts that membership in an ethnic group is associated with shared values, behaviors, cultural heritage, ancestry, history, homeland, languages, or dialects that affect students' personalities, attitudes, and ways of learning. When students' cultural structures are different from teachers', teachers should adjust curriculum and instruction to respond to students' culture to provide meaningful learning experiences rather than apply only certain immutable teaching models which might make nonmainstream students abandon or resist learning (Banks, 2016; Gay, 2010; Ginsberg & Wlodkowski, 2000; Patchen & Cox-Petersen, 2008; Pringle & McLaughlin, 2014; Tate, Clark, Gallagher, & McLaughlin, 2008).

On the other side, prejudice-reduction (Banks, 1993), multicultural competence (Bennett, 2001), or multicultural social competence (Gay, 1995) emphasize individual competence in a multicultural society. That includes dispositions of open-mindedness and the absence of racial or cultural prejudice; knowledge about the worldviews and funds of knowledge associated with various culture groups; as well as the diversity within and across ethnic groups. Studies in this dimension describe the results of interventions designed to help students acquire more democratic racial attitudes and multicultural competence. They believe that the reduction of racial and cultural prejudice is possible and desirable and individuals can in fact become multicultural; they need not reject their familial worldview and identity to function comfortably in another cultural milieu (Banks, 1993; Bennett, 2001).

Under an initiative for the inclusion of all students (AAAS, 1989; 1993; NRC, 2000; 2012), today's teachers have realized that they have a responsibility to promote the equalization of educational opportunities and improve academic achievement for diverse cultural and ethnic groups. However, the deep-rooted view of cultural deprivation often prevents teachers from seeing the advantages of nonmainstream students and responding to their cultures. To change this situation, this study provided candidates with a lens of CRT based on culture differences to motivate them to rethink and redesign curriculum and instruction for ethnically diverse students.

2.2. Wlodkowski and Ginsberg's model of CRT

Developing teachers' awareness of their students' cultural diversity should start early in their career development. For novice teachers, one of the most essential requirements is intrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation can be defined as a process that is initiated by wonder, a desire to know, and a drive to advance (Reeve, 2015). Teachers with intrinsic motivation will be curious and active and can establish a love for thinking and a willingness to give meaning to their teaching experiences (Ginsberg & Wlodkowski, 2000; Wlodkowski & Ginsberg, 1995, 2017). Therefore, this study used Wlodkowski and Ginsberg's model to frame candidates' development of intrinsic motivation as follows:

- (1) Establish inclusion: create a respectful and connected learning environment.
- (2) Develop a positive attitude: relate learners' experiences or previous knowledge to teaching and learning activities and to encourage them to make choices based on their own experiences, values, needs, and strengths.
- (3) Enhance meaning: create more attractive and challenging learning experiences to facilitate learners' higher-order or

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