



RESEARCH ARTICLE

An examination of cross-cultural experiences on developing culturally responsive teacher candidates [version 1; peer review: 3 approved]

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Abstract

As the P-12 student landscape continues to grow in cultural and linguistic diversity, teacher preparation programs have yet to adequately prepare teacher candidates' teaching and learning skills in meeting the academic and socio-emotional needs of diverse student demographics. This article examines teacher candidates' cultural competence and cultural responsiveness to enhance candidates' educator preparation and stimulate candidates' personal growth development as developing culturally and linguistically responsive new teachers. While many teacher preparation programs require one multicultural or diversity education course, the authors examine a Minority Serving Institution's integration of a cultural immersion experience for teacher candidates as one way of supporting their development as culturally and linguistically sustaining pedagogues. This paper aims at supporting school districts' need of culturally competent new teachers who have the content knowledge and pedagogy to teach and support culturally and linguistically diverse children. Recognizing this need, this qualitative analysis highlights the importance of and a need for cultural and linguistic competence among teacher candidates. Findings from this study provides a means by which universities can implement cross-cultural coursework and field-based experiences to prepare culturally responsive teacher candidates.

Keywords

teacher preparation, cultural competence, culturally responsive pedagogy

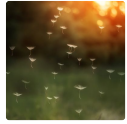
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Introduction

It is widely documented that our educator preparation programs have a daunting task of effectively preparing a teaching force for classrooms that are increasingly more racially, ethnically, and linguistically diverse (Allen *et al.*, 2017). The ever-increasing population of culturally and linguistically diverse learners has become an emergent frustration of teaching and learning that has encroached both students, teachers, and teacher candidates. Subsequently, there continues to be a persistent need to develop new teachers' skills, dispositions, and frame for teaching P-12 learners from diverse backgrounds (Gay, 2013). As such, the National Center for Culturally Responsive Educational Systems (2011) indicated that a change in pedagogical praxis in a system that is failing culturally diverse students is direly needed (Ford, 2012; Ford & Kea, 2009).

Equally important, developing a strong sense of cultural competence is most essential in the field of education. Yet, many teacher preparation programs fail to adequately prepare teacher candidates to effectively teach culturally and linguistically diverse students, integrate culturally and linguistically diverse teaching praxis, communicate with culturally diverse families, and thrive in culturally and linguistically diverse communities. Teacher candidates' cultural and intercultural competence is "increasingly necessary in our multicultural and globalized world" (Perry & Southwell, 2011, p. 453). While educator preparation programs have integrated a diversity or multicultural education course within their programs of study, these teacher candidates continue to "lack the depth of understanding needed to design, develop, and implement high impact cultural diversity education" (Vaughn, 2007, p. 1). Educator preparation programs must become culturally and linguistically responsive to teacher candidates' preparation as new teachers (Kea & Trent, 2013; Trent *et al.*, 2008). According to Gay (2000), general education teachers' ability to address culturally responsive teaching and learning helps to strengthen and support learning experiences and content knowledge for all learners.

Linguistically responsive pedagogy

Linguistically responsive best teaching practices is an integral component of culturally responsive teaching (Gay, 2002). Research indicates that non-white students in U.S. public schools will outnumber white students and students of color are projected to be the majority by 2022 (Krogstad & Fry, 2014). This has increased the burden for schools to accommodate for a growing linguistically diverse student population which is known as demographic imperative (Cole *et al.*, 2016). This cultural shift in demographics opens the dialogue for critically identifying how schools can meet the demands of linguistically diverse students. As such, there is a growing population of English learners in U.S. public schools and an increase of criterion for linguistically responsive pedagogy (Ramanayake & Williams, 2017). Yet, teacher education and pre-service programs have inadequately prepared teacher candidates for linguistically diverse students. Ramanayake's study indicates a correlation between course content and lack of connection to clinical teaching experiences. When teacher candidates are not given specific connections between course content and best

teaching practices, it negatively impacts the teacher candidates' ability to teach linguistically diverse students. (Ramanayake & Williams, 2017). Research also indicates that it takes educators a long time to cultivate the capability to comprehend the intricate aptitude and skill to confidently teach linguistically diverse students (Lucas & Villegas, 2013). This development is initiated during preservice teacher preparation and must remain during the teacher's tenure. Teacher preparation programs need to develop a structure for teacher candidates to be taught how to educate culturally and linguistically diverse learners. Additionally, this development needs to be scaffolded over a period of time (Lucas & Villegas, 2013).

Linguistically diverse students in U.S. public schools must undertake the responsibility of learning their academic content, new cultural principles, and a new language (Linan-Thompson *et al.*, 2018). Linguistically responsive practices connect the student's language and learning demands through evidence-based pedagogy. Linan-Thompson *et al.* (2018) study identified four linguistic and cultural best practices: a) Consistent use of evidence-based instructional practices for students who are English learners, b) integration of culturally responsive pedagogy with evidence-based instructional practices, c) use of relational interaction strategies that build practices, and d) vignettes of actual observation data contrast typical practice and culturally and linguistically responsive practice (Linan-Thompson *et al.*, 2018).

At times, there is negative dialogue concerning the way the student's home language is used in education (Harvey & Myint, 2014). However, this study indicates a positive link between incorporating home language and student academic success, especially for refugee children. Incorporating a student's home language has the potential to create a confident relationship between teachers and students and also allows the classroom to become a safe and supportive space (Harvey & Myint, 2014).

Minority teacher cultural and intercultural competence

Research has also cited the benefits of providing cross-cultural experiences for preservice teachers through cross-cultural partnerships (Keengwe, 2010). Keengwe's research recommends that teacher educators simulate and incorporate applicable cultural competencies that are essential to the diverse classroom. Teachers can also grow in their competence through collaborative conversations about critical intercultural occurrences within the school setting (MacPherson, 2010). Self-regulation competencies are also significant for educators in culturally diverse contexts (Blagica *et al.*, 2017). According to this study, self-regulatory skills help educators sustain their professional commitment. Yet, self-regulatory abilities are often omitted when teacher education focuses on teacher candidates and teachers' development of intercultural skills.

One challenge in preparing teacher candidates to work effectively with diverse student populations is found in settings where teacher candidates are primarily exposed to other teacher candidates with the same demographics as themselves. In such cases, it is important for educator preparation programs to provide teacher candidates with opportunities to examine their

understandings of “constructs such as privilege, social justice, inequality, difference, and diversity” (Brady *et al.*, 2015, p. 389) through intergroup dialogue with equal sized groups comprised of members of different backgrounds (Zuniga *et al.*, 2007). In other words, it is important to involve teacher candidates in heterogeneous groupings to engage in critical intergroup dialogue as one way of supporting their development of cultural awareness and culturally responsive pedagogy.

Though a dearth of literature examines teacher candidates’ cultural competence, there exists a deficit in examining and understanding minority teacher candidates’ cultural and intercultural competence as developing culturally and linguistically responsive new teachers. Acknowledging this void, this study examined ten undergraduate teacher candidates’ perspectives and experiences from an urban minority serving institution (MSI) who participated in a week-long rural education exchange program at a predominately white institution (PWI) to support the candidates’ development as culturally responsive new teachers. The exchange experience provided teacher candidates with a week-long experience of visiting high-need and high-impact schools, sharing cultural experiences with heterogeneous teacher candidate peers, attending university classes, and interacting with their teacher candidate counterparts from a rural PWI located in the southeast. Additionally, this experience also provided teacher candidates with opportunities to examine their understanding of “constructs such as privilege, social justice, inequality, difference, and diversity” (Brady *et al.*, 2015, p. 389) through intergroup dialogue with equal sized groups comprised of members of different backgrounds.

Specifically, this study focused on Minority Serving Institution teacher candidates’ cultural competence and cultural responsiveness to enhance candidates’ educator preparation, increase cultural and intercultural awareness, and stimulate candidates’ personal growth. In framing our study, we conceptualize culturally responsive teaching through a review of extant literature. Our analysis uses culturally responsive teaching as an analytical tool to examine strategies that teacher candidates use to cultivate cultural competence and cultural responsiveness.

From this lens, this research seeks to contribute to the extent body of literature on preparing culturally and linguistically responsive new teachers by examining and providing examples of the developing pedagogues’ conceptual meaning of cultural knowledge, prior experiences, and frames of references. To that point, Ladson-Billings (1995) calls for teachers to examine their own cultural contexts while also becoming increasingly aware of their students’ home cultures. In turn, culturally responsive teaching is not solely about teachers’ actions in meeting the needs of their culturally and linguistically diverse students, but rather what (and how) teachers think (Ladson-Billings, 2006); teaching is seated in contexts far wider than just the classroom.

Recognizing the value of providing a variety of diverse experiences for teacher candidates, the elementary education faculty at a Minority Serving Institution expressed a desire to create a more integrated approach to prepare teacher candidates as culturally responsive educators. This study examines how teacher

candidates from a Minority Serving Institution employ cultural and intercultural competence learned in their coursework through their cross-cultural experience at a rural Predominately White Institution in the southeast. For the purposes of this study, the researchers define rural as all population, housing, and territory not included within an urbanized area or urban cluster including a wide variety of settlements, from densely settled small towns and “large-lot” housing subdivisions on the fringes of urban areas, to more sparsely populated and remote areas” (Ratcliffe *et al.*, 2016, p.3). Hence, the research questions that guided this study were: how does an inter-cultural rural exchange program support teacher candidates from a minority serving institution and what are teacher candidates’ perceptions of a week-long rural education exchange program at a PWI?

Literature Review

This study proposes a holistic, culturally responsive multi-modal approach in addressing the complex and overlapping challenges faced by high-need students in urban and rural schools. This model not only embraces the tenets of culturally responsive instructional strategies, it also attends to students’ social-emotional learning needs as well while increasing parent engagement by bridging school culture and family culture both in and out of the classroom. Many researchers have established the efficacy of using culturally responsive instruction and curriculum in K-12 schools (Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Milner, 2012).

The integration of such practices extends to the development of meaningful relationships between the school and families. Furthermore, culturally responsive classroom and teaching practices create spaces for teacher critical reflection, inquiry, and mutual support around issues of cultural differences (Ladson-Billings, 1994). Moreover, practitioners thrive and are better able to support student effort and generate improved teacher candidates when they support and encourage cultural responsiveness through systems of leadership that also meet standards of culturally responsive practice (Miramontes *et al.*, 1997). Culturally responsive teachers attempt to combat educational inequities that induce student failure (Chen *et al.*, 2009), forge meaningful connections between students’ home and school culture (Gunn, 2010), and require students to attain high levels of academic success (Ladson-Billings, 2011). More specifically, culturally responsive teachers recognize the cultural capital and expertise that students bring to the classroom, hold students accountable for their own success, and provide space for students to share their knowledge with others (Worthy *et al.*, 2012). By acknowledging the fund of knowledge that students bring to the classroom, educators can bridge the gap between a student’s home and school culture.

The academic success of students from diverse backgrounds is heavily dependent upon the inclusion of culturally responsive pedagogy, attention to biased instructional materials, and awareness of differences between students’ lived experiences and the curricular mandates and societal norms students encounter in school. Specific professional development in culturally responsive pedagogy and ways to implement in instructional practices, curriculum, and classroom environment is the first

strategy to be implemented in this project. When teachers build cultural competence, students and families are more engaged, build academic and global confidence, and learn and achieve (Gay, 2000; Milner, 2010).

As teachers receive training and ongoing professional development in culturally responsive pedagogy and learn to integrate these strategies in their teaching praxis, disproportionate disciplinary rates should lessen, more minority and low-income students should be identified for gifted and talented programs, academic attainment of low-income and minority students should increase, and school dropout rates should decrease (Milner, 2010). The climate created by a culturally competent teachers innately promotes diversity, supports academic attainment, and engages students and parents. Likewise, benefits of culturally responsive pedagogy include empowering students, building student self- and academic confidence, students see their culture in curriculum and instruction, bridging the gap between home and school, challenge students through learning opportunities, and support students' pro-social behaviors (Ladson-Billings, 1994; Milner, 2010).

Methods

Study subjects and location

This exploratory study took place in the southeastern region of the United States between February and April, 2017. It focused on ten male and female teacher candidates, ages 19 to 22, from a Minority Serving Institution who participated in a week-long intercultural rural education exchange program at a Predominately White Institution. For the purposes of this study, Minority Serving Institution is defined as an institution of higher education whose predominate student enrollment population is that of racial and ethnic minorities. Further, Predominately White Institution is defined by the researchers as a predominately white institution located in a rural southeastern region. Additionally, rural is classified using the U.S. Census Bureau Urban Area and Rural Area Criteria Population (2010) as population and territory outside of cities and towns with 2,500 or more people were considered rural. This study collected information regarding the teacher candidates' perceptions and experiences about the intercultural rural education exchange experience over the course of one week. During the one-week experience, teacher candidates visited and observed classrooms at three public schools (elementary, middle, and high school) located in rural areas, sat in on university classes at the Predominately White Institution, and participated in social events in the community and on the university campus. Thematic analysis was used to analyze the data (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). The goal of organizing the data was to conduct an inductive analysis in which participants' descriptions represent their understanding of events that have meaning to them. Purposeful recruiting techniques were used to select ten participants who met inclusionary criteria.

Ethical considerations

This study was approved by the Institution's IRB Board. The IRB approval number is 17-0024. It was determined that the IRB was to be exempt from further review according to the regulatory category cited above under 45 CFR 46.101(b). Each

participant provided written informed consent to participate in the study.

Data collection

The data collection for this study was a three-step process. Data collection included one semi-structured, 1-hour individual audio-recorded interview; participation in one semi-structured, one-hour audio-recorded focus group; and the collection of journals throughout the week-long exchange program. Follow-up interviews lasting from 30 to 45 minutes were also conducted with participants to gather additional information pertaining to the study. Pseudonyms were used for participants to maintain confidentiality of the participants in the study. The data gathered during the interviews, focus groups, and journaling sought to uncover the individual and shared experiences in which the participants had throughout the week-long experience.

Consensual qualitative research analysis (CQR) was performed in this study. There was no qualitative software used to analyze the data. As the name implies, a team of three researchers arrived at a consensus on the meaning of the data collected (Patten, 2009). In the first step of the CQR method, data was segmented into groups according to the topics covered in the focus group. In short, the data was coded into domains. Once this was done, all researchers met to discuss and refine the domains until a unanimous agreement was reached. Next, each researcher identified core ideas within the established domains. This step reduced the original ideas of participants into fewer words. Lastly, a cross analysis was performed to group the core ideas into categories based on similarities. This resulted in a higher level of generalization. Through this inductive process, themes emerged from the analysis of data.

Results

De-identified transcripts for this study are available on Open Science Framework (Williams *et al.*, 2019).

Themes

Cultural competence and cultural responsiveness were the major themes that emerged from the data. More specifically, participant assertions highlighted the importance of and a need for cultural competence. "Cultural competence refers to the ability to help students appreciate and celebrate their cultures of origin while gaining knowledge of and fluency in at least one other culture" (Ladson-Billings, 2014, p.75). In regard to cultural responsiveness, varied meanings among the participants were prevalent in the data. The concept's meaning has been documented as using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, and frames of reference of ethnically diverse students to maximize learning (Gay, 2010). This section will further magnify participant perspectives in the scope of their Rural Urban Exchange program experience. Table 1 provides the thematic analysis procedure used by the researchers and Table 2 highlights the major themes identified from the study.

Cultural competence

The importance of cultural competence emerged as a major theme. Needless to say, this experience pushed the participants out of their comfort zones and allowed them to expand their cultural

Table 1. Thematic Analysis Procedure.

Thematic Analysis	
Phase	Description
1	Become Familiar with the Data
2	Generate Initial Codes
3	Search for Themes
4	Review Themes
5	Define and Name Themes
6	Produce the Report

Table 2. Major themes identified.

Major Themes	
A Need for Cultural Competence	Varied Meanings of Cultural Responsiveness
Honestly, this trip has been just what I imagined it to be. I imagined it not being a high population of African Americans here, which it is not. I imagined the grown-ups...I imagined them acting the way they act because they don't have exposure to people like us all the time.	I asked about the Black demographics and she didn't have nothing to give me. I can understand slim to none, but if you know you have an urban community school coming, you should have this stuff ready for us. There may be zero Black people, but you could say if there was this is how we would react to it or in the past...She had nothing to tell us. I have a problem with that. They need to learn about everything. That's the problem. I know they are not culturally relevant.
When we walked in they were talking to us, trying to get to know us. I guess that changed my perspective and you can't go off of what people tell you.	We also have to think that the minorities may not be Black. They have to address the minority students. We can't come in and say it's going to be all about Black students. They might have one Black kid. Ya'll want to know about one Black kid? We want to learn about the minority in that school.
You can tell when someone is trying to be harmful or negative. I don't think people were trying to be rude. They said what they know and what they were used to.	I feel like at both schools we got the feeling of how the principals and teachers thought of their students as individuals. Even though we didn't get the direct answer about culturally responsive teaching, that kind of implies these students are taken care of because they are seen as their own individual. That's how I think they approach culturally responsive teaching. It might not be like how we are used to seeing, but that's their way of incorporating it. They might not even know that's what they are doing.
It allowed me to further my perspective on different people, particularly when it comes to putting myself in situations that I wouldn't normally be in to make me uncomfortable.	When we say culturally responsive teaching, we are not just talking about minorities. When we say culturally responsive teaching, we are talking about learning how to teach all students and you have to let them know that too.
I was able to build relationships with people that I typically wouldn't build relationships with.	
The experience really forced us to go outside of our comfort zones to understand that we learn a lot from different people. As a result, we become better and stronger people because of that.	
It first seemed like the people were scared of us because we're Black and it's not a lot of Blacks around here. When we started talking to them, it seemed so different. Like, you know, we had a lot in common.	

awareness. When speaking about the experience, one participant said,

“...it allowed me to further my perspective on different people, particularly when it comes to putting myself in situations that I wouldn't normally be in to make me uncomfortable.”

Another participant echoed the same sentiments. She said,

“I was able to build relationships with people that I typically wouldn't build relationships with.”

Most of the participants, in some fashion, alluded to their own cultural comfort as a hinderance to gaining a deeper

understanding of others. It was voiced that the exchange experience brought about necessary reflection to get students to think beyond themselves, expanding their views of and openness to unknown cultures. One participant voiced,

"...the experience really forced us to go outside of our comfort zones to understand that we learn a lot from different people. As a result, we become better and stronger people because of that."

The students, in fact, did become better and stronger people because of their interactions with diverse cultures.

The data highlights a gradual shift in mindset as students gained more insight from their cultural counterparts. One participant conveyed,

"It first seemed like the people were scared of us because we're Black and it's not a lot of Blacks around here."

However, as he opened himself up to the students of the PWI, he found out he was wrong. He went on to say,

"When we started talking to them, it seemed so different. Like, you know, we had a lot in common."

The participants, as they progressed through the program, realized the moments of discomfort during the program were not rooted in malice, but because each group did not have a foundational understanding of the other. One participant explained that the exchange experience was exactly what she imagined. She said,

"I imagined them acting the way they act because they don't have exposure to people like us all the time."

Another participant communicated,

"I don't think people were trying to be rude. They said what they know and what they are used to."

The voices of the participants highlight the imperativeness of cultural competence and its importance for a) personal growth and b) educator preparation.

Cultural responsiveness

In addition to cultural competence, several assertions about the participants' experience uncovered a theme of cultural responsiveness. More specifically, the individual narratives from the participants revealed varied interpretations of the concept. The lens at which cultural responsiveness was understood differed from student to student, showing little alignment in understanding. Responses on cultural responsiveness included varied interpretations. One student associated cultural responsiveness with a demographic understanding. She said,

"I asked about the Black demographics and the teacher didn't have nothing to give me."

At this moment, the participant insisted this was a problem that had implications for cultural responsiveness. She voiced,

"That's the problem. I know they are not culturally relevant."

While this participant's understanding was primarily on the demographic knowledge of Black students within the school she visited, other participants had a more expansive, yet different, view of cultural responsiveness. For example, another participant disagreed with the notion that cultural responsiveness centered primarily on Black students. Her view of the concept was based on school minorities. She explained,

"We also have to think that the minorities may not be Black. They have to address the minority students. We want to learn about the minority in that school."

However, this assertion was confronted by another understanding of cultural responsiveness. As a direct response, one participant said,

"When we are talking about cultural responsiveness, we are not just talking about minorities. But when we say cultural responsiveness, we are talking about learning how to teach all students."

While some participants agreed with this definition, there was another layer to their understanding of the concept.

One participant associated the school's cultural responsiveness with its ability to build relationships with students and families. This idea derived from an observation of how the principals interacted with students. These school leaders were said to understand every student's situation and background. In a recollection of an interaction with one principal, a participant said,

"She thinks about all of the backgrounds these kids are coming from and she offers help to their parents even if they deny it."

This example was not an academic example, but how this participant viewed an act of cultural responsiveness. It was added,

"These students are taken care of because they are seen as their own individual. That's how I think the school approaches cultural responsiveness. It may not be how we are used to seeing, but that's their way of incorporating it."

The varied interpretations of cultural responsiveness were rooted in each participant's understanding of the concept. Some responses were in alignment with common definitions of the term and others deviated from what is taught in traditional educator preparation programs.

Discussion

This study provides a means by which universities can implement cross-cultural coursework and field-based experiences

to prepare culturally responsive teacher candidates. As public school classrooms become more diverse, there exists an increased urgency for educators to be equipped to efficiently teach cultural and linguistically diverse students. This study depicts an exchange experience plagued by cultural assumptions and uncertainty. While the MSI teacher candidates were knowledgeable about their own cultures, their knowledge about the cultural context they embarked on at a PWI was minimal. It was evident that teacher candidates' cultural competence and cultural responsiveness is an ongoing developmental process beyond one multicultural education course in an educator preparation program, yet it is also shaped by the experiences of teacher candidates. When teacher candidates are confronted with intercultural decisions during clinical experiences, it allows the teacher to reflect on their own practices.

Teacher candidates' reflection practices provided greater access to their insight regarding their experiences throughout the week-long exchange. The intentional reflective practices after each day stimulated candidates' personal growth as developing culturally responsive new teachers. Additionally, teacher candidates' view of cultural responsiveness beyond Black towards the inclusion of all students was a significant aspect of this study. While some candidates conceptualized culturally responsive as race, others understood it to be inclusive of all students.

Candidates' cultural knowledge, prior experiences from coursework, frames of reference, and early field experience contributed to what their understanding of operationalizing cultural responsiveness in schools when referencing the importance of building relationships with students and families. The candidates' high-needs, high-impact school visitation supported their further understanding of cultural responsiveness as they were able to engage in diverse interactions with P-5 students and teachers in rural areas who experience similar challenges faced by urban students and teachers. These rural school observations expanded teacher candidates' ideas of diversity beyond the context of race and ethnicity where their insight on poverty extended beyond geographic classrooms and communities.

The candidates' interactions with their PWI counterparts pushed candidates' outside out of their affinity group and self-proclaimed levels of comfort. These intercultural experiences

provided teacher candidates with opportunities to examine their understandings of "constructs such as privilege, social justice, inequality, difference, and diversity" (Brady *et al.*, 2015, p. 389) through intergroup dialogue with equal sized groups comprised of members of different backgrounds. These cross-cultural experiences of teacher candidates have the potential to affect teaching and learning and how best to educate students of diverse backgrounds beyond the context or race and ethnicity, but also consider the similar geographic challenges in which teachers, students, and families navigate in both rural and urban settings.

The implications of this research include increasing P-12 school, campus, and community impact through cultural immersion experiences by teacher candidates as there is extremely limited evidence of collaborative partnerships between MSIs and PWIs in the literature. In addition, to our knowledge no research exists in the field of educator preparation about the impact of a joint exchange program on the perceptions and practices of teacher candidates in universities. Furthermore, the impact of this research supports greater depth of change in the educator preparation programs in preparing culturally and linguistically responsive new teachers, which this research suggests is needed. Lastly, this research allows teacher candidates to engage their peers outside of their university program about issues related to race, equity, and cultural awareness.

Data availability

Open Science Framework: The Influence of Cross-Cultural Experiences on Developing Culturally Responsive Teacher Candidates. <https://doi.org/10.17605/OSF.IO/4GZBH> (Williams *et al.*, 2019).

Data are available under the terms of the [Creative Commons Zero "No rights reserved" data waiver](#) (CC0 1.0 Public domain dedication).

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Nicole Anthony

Fayetteville State University, Fayetteville, NC, United States

First, thank you for asking me to review the manuscript, "An examination of cross-cultural experiences on developing culturally responsive teacher candidates." I appreciated the authors' work on this topic. I believe a research article of this nature can contribute to the extant literature by emphasizing the need for educator preparation programs to prepare culturally and linguistically responsive new teachers. As the cultural landscape shifts in public school classrooms, teacher candidates must be prepared to educate such a diverse group of learners.

Article Review

The authors presented a sound introduction and review of the literature that laid the groundwork for the current research. The data collection procedures are robust; however, there is a need for a detailed description of the participant inclusion criteria in the methods section. A detailed description of the participant inclusion criteria could help other researchers replicate the study. On that note, participants could have been assigned an identifier so that readers can attribute comments in the findings section. I would have also liked to see how participants' initial definitions of cultural responsiveness and cultural competence changed based on their experiences during the study. Maybe the authors could have used a pre and post-survey to determine if assumptions and behaviors of teacher candidates changed over the course of the study. Connections to the research literature could have strengthened the discussion section.

Is the work clearly and accurately presented and does it cite the current literature?

Yes

Is the study design appropriate and is the work technically sound?

Yes

Are sufficient details of methods and analysis provided to allow replication by others?

Partly

If applicable, is the statistical analysis and its interpretation appropriate?

Yes

Are all the source data underlying the results available to ensure full reproducibility?

Yes

Are the conclusions drawn adequately supported by the results?

Partly

Is the argument information presented in such a way that it can be understood by a non-academic audience?

Partly

Does the piece present solutions to actual real world challenges?

Partly

Is real-world evidence provided to support any conclusions made?

Partly

Could any solutions being offered be effectively implemented in practice?

Partly

Competing Interests: No competing interests were disclosed.

Reviewer Expertise: Special education teacher preparation.

I confirm that I have read this submission and believe that I have an appropriate level of expertise to confirm that it is of an acceptable scientific standard.

Reviewer Report 03 December 2019

<https://doi.org/10.21956/emeraldopenres.13918.r26569>

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Hiawatha Smith

University of Wisconsin-River Falls, River Falls, WI, United States

Summary

I appreciated the opportunity to review this article and to reflect on the implications this experience might have on my pre-service teacher candidates. The article highlights findings from a research study that analyzes the benefits of a rural (cross-cultural) exchange experience for their educator preparation programs. As their literature review highlighted, our k-12 classrooms continue to grow in diversity and the educators we are preparing must be adequately prepared to provide culturally relevant experiences.

The research highlighted two themes based on the experiences of the participants of the study, cultural competence and cultural responsiveness. Both of these themes provide support for benefits of this experience for candidates at this specific institution. The research has a positive benefit on the field of educator preparation as it adds literature about the impact of alternative experiences in the preparation of teacher candidates who are culturally and linguistically prepared for 21st century learners.

Review

From my inferences I believe this study actually adds to the research about CRP in that it places an emphasis on the "majority" cultural experiences for teacher candidates of color. I think the article would have benefited from placing a strong emphasis on adding these unique experiences to the body of literature about CRP.

A concern that I have is the authors use the term minority serving institution. This umbrella term is one that is being used within literature recently. Under the umbrella term are seven unique categories which better define individual IHE's. I think the use of one of the seven categories would provide a better context that is required of qualitative research.

P 4 - paragraphs three and four would fit better within the literature review as a means to highlight the theoretical frame that guided the research.

Methods section:

The study design is structurally sound with triangulation of the data to validate findings. (1) I think the inclusion of citations to support the methodology used for data collection would have strengthened support for this section. (2) With the potential impact of the research, I think providing more information about the subjects would have strengthened the research. This would have allowed the researchers to highlight subjects in the results and discussion sections. Additionally, it would have allowed for more interpretation of the research findings based on the subjects. Some candidates might have had unique backgrounds that impacted the way they processed the experiences versus others. Lastly, just knowing the ethnicity of the participants would have helped...as these all ethnic minority candidates? (3) Why CQR? a justification of why this method was used would have helped.

Findings

Since the participants aren't fully identified, we cannot make many inferences about the findings. As a reader, I see many responses of "participant." Just using psudeonames and knowing some background might help to really understand how these findings impact the candidate.

There are only two themes identified. I think these are too general based on the quotations added to the findings. I think the data analysis methods indirectly led to these limited findings versus an open coding model that would allow each researcher the opportunity to look for patterns/themes among the data and then come together to agree on themes.

What exactly do the themes connect to from the experience? This further analysis would help to better understand candidates reflection the experience.

Discussion of the findings are sufficient but not strongly embedded within current research. How does this research connect to other literature in the field? I think discussion of how it is different

Specifically, what are the implications of this research for those in higher education and for teachers in general? I think there are more implications that would provide a great benefit to the literature.

Is the work clearly and accurately presented and does it cite the current literature?

Yes

Is the study design appropriate and is the work technically sound?

Yes

Are sufficient details of methods and analysis provided to allow replication by others?

Partly

If applicable, is the statistical analysis and its interpretation appropriate?

Partly

Are all the source data underlying the results available to ensure full reproducibility?

Yes

Are the conclusions drawn adequately supported by the results?

Partly

Is the argument information presented in such a way that it can be understood by a non-academic audience?

Partly

Does the piece present solutions to actual real world challenges?

Partly

Is real-world evidence provided to support any conclusions made?

Partly

Could any solutions being offered be effectively implemented in practice?

Partly

Competing Interests: No competing interests were disclosed.

Reviewer Expertise: p-20 curriculum and instruction, field based experiences for teacher candidates, diverse perspectives in literature, non-proficient readers, reading motivation

I confirm that I have read this submission and believe that I have an appropriate level of expertise to confirm that it is of an acceptable scientific standard.

Reviewer Report 08 July 2019

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Derrick Robinson 

University of Memphis, Memphis, TN, United States

Is the work clearly and accurately presented and does it cite the current literature?

This work presents an adequate balance of recent and seminal literature. While the intro and literature review are well-sourced, there was not an over-dependence on research literature, or a loose coupling of personal claims and with limited supporting citations.

Is the study design appropriate and is the work technically sound?

The approach and design of this study are sound and clearly explained. Data appears to be procedurally collected and triangulated (interviews, focus groups, and observations) to ensure quality.

Are sufficient details of methods and analysis provided to allow replication by others?

The methods and procedures well-constructed and detailed. The study can be easily replicated

If applicable, is the statistical analysis and its interpretation appropriate?

While the interpretation of data was well-done, I am questioning if the two themes are too broad. The broad themes of cultural competence and cultural responsiveness affirm the literature rather than expand our understanding of it. I think the researchers can, with deeper analysis, break greater ground in the findings.

Are all the source data underlying the results available to ensure full reproducibility?

Data sourcing information was made available.

Are the conclusions drawn adequately supported by the results?

The conclusions of the study are adequate. However, the discussion section would have been greater with deeper integration of the findings to the literature.

Is the work clearly and accurately presented and does it cite the current literature?

Yes

Is the study design appropriate and is the work technically sound?

Yes

Are sufficient details of methods and analysis provided to allow replication by others?

Yes

If applicable, is the statistical analysis and its interpretation appropriate?

Partly

Are all the source data underlying the results available to ensure full reproducibility?

Yes

Are the conclusions drawn adequately supported by the results?

Partly

Is the argument information presented in such a way that it can be understood by a non-academic audience?

Partly

Does the piece present solutions to actual real world challenges?

Partly

Is real-world evidence provided to support any conclusions made?

Partly

Could any solutions being offered be effectively implemented in practice?

Partly

Competing Interests: No competing interests were disclosed.

Reviewer Expertise: P-20 School Culture and practices; Teacher and leadership effectiveness in urban school settings.

I confirm that I have read this submission and believe that I have an appropriate level of expertise to confirm that it is of an acceptable scientific standard.
