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Teacher Education for High Poverty Schools

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You Teach Who You Are: The Experiences and Pedagogies of Literacy/English Teacher Educators Who Have a Critical Stance

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Abstract This study involved 28 literacy/English teacher educators in four countries: Canada, U.S., UK, and Australia. The goal of the study was to examine their backgrounds, pedagogies, research activities, identity, and turning points in their lives. Eight of the participants self-identified as having a critical stance which they actualized through specific pedagogical choices. Their broad goals for schooling are to support pupils who are traditionally underserved. Data analysis (using NVivo) revealed commonalities across the participants; each participant had a pivotal experience in early childhood (e.g., marginalized as English Language Learners) that continues to influence their current pedagogy. Each participant provided experiences beyond the confines of the course for student teachers to work with children in high needs situations. In some cases, student teachers embraced the opportunity (and commitment to social justice), while others, would have preferred a much greater focus on practical skills and resources.

1 Introduction

Those of us who have the privilege and responsibility of teaching literacy teachers are charged with designing learning experiences that support their development of the knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed to work confidently with culturally and linguistically diverse children and families, especially those from economically disadvantaged backgrounds. This charge has never been more pressing (Rogers 2013).

Literacy is the currency of schooling, and some would say, of life. The Toronto District School Board (TDSB) (2011) argues: "Language is the most powerful tool

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learners have for developing ideas and insights, for giving shape to their experiences, and for making sense of their world and their possibilities in it" (p. 1).

As Rogers notes above, there is an urgency to prepare student teachers to be effective literacy teachers. With approximately 50 % of the nation's unemployed youth (age 16–21) deemed functionally illiterate, with virtually no prospects of obtaining good jobs (Literacy Company 2014), we need sustained and creative efforts now.

Teacher educators who prepare student teachers, offer inservice courses, and do research on literacy theory and practice, are central to our collective efforts to support the literacy development of children and adolescents. Yet our understanding of the work of teacher educators is limited (Kosnik et al. 2013, 2014; Murray and Male 2005). To address this gap, we conducted a large-scale study of 28 literacy/ English teacher educators (LTEs) in four countries: Canada, United States, England, and Australia. Our overall goal was to study in-depth the backgrounds and practices of a specific group of teacher educators: those who educate literacy/English teachers. We focused specifically on this subgroup because each discipline places different demands on teacher educators (Boyd and Harris 2010); for example, student teachers had expectations and external credentialing bodies imposed standards. In this chapter, we considered eight LTEs who had a critical stance; drawing on a subset from the larger sample allowed us to go into depth on their backgrounds and pedagogies. We begin this chapter with information regarding literacy achievement followed by a description of a critical stance framework.

2 Impact of Poor Literacy Skills

Being able to fully participate in society requires strong literacy skills. For example the "17 % of Canadians [who] scored at Level 1 or below … have skills that enable them to undertake tasks of limited complexity, such as locating single pieces of information in short texts in the absence of other distracting information" (Literacy Company 2014). With such limited literacy skills, employment opportunities would be scarce and even accessing support to improve one's literacy skills could be a challenge. Although we drew from a number of sources regarding literacy achievement, we recognize that statistics are open to interpretation because different measures are used, definitions of literate achievement vary, and standardized tests only measure certain skills (e.g., simple decoding skills).

Not surprisingly, literacy achievement and poverty are often linked. For those living in poverty, their situation is not simply a result of low literacy skills; an array of factors (e.g., limited access to healthcare) can create a difficult web of limiting factors. We have provided these statistics because LTEs must be mindful of the context in which student teachers work: schools are often heavily influenced/ controlled by performance on standardized tests, and the prevailing discourse of accountability as measured by test scores cannot be ignored. While statistical measures of literacy can at times oversimplify and decontextualize, the situation it is worth considering the restrictive consequences often associated with limited literacy proficiency.

In the American context:

- More than 20 % of adults read at or below a fifth-grade level—far below the level needed to earn a living wage.
- More than three out of four of those on welfare, 85 % of unwed mothers, and 68 % of those arrested are illiterate. About three in five of America's prison inmates are illiterate.
- 44 million adults in the U.S. cannot read well enough to read a simple story to a child.
- 60 % of America's prison inmates are illiterate and 85 % of all juvenile offenders have reading problems (Literacy Company 2014).

These statistics on specific segments of the population that have limited literacy skills were alarming and sobering.

3 Preparing Inclusive Teachers: A Call to Action

In order to prepare pupils for full participation in society, student teachers need to acquire a repertoire of pedagogies, as well as a disposition that includes a commitment to teaching all learners. LTEs play a key role in their student teachers' development because they help them to acquire the skills to teach effectively, introduce them to new ideas about teaching and learning, and encourage them to unpack their own assumptions and embrace practices they may have not encountered in their own schools (Williamson 2013; Yandell 2012). When student teachers come to their literacy methods courses their own backgrounds and views influence how they respond to the material and engage in the learning opportunities offered. For example, Ghiso et al. (2013) "showcases pedagogies within her courses that invite pre- and in-service teachers to disrupt deficit assumptions about students' languages and literacies, and to view these as connected to their own varied histories and identities" (p. 52).

All LTEs in this study conceptualized and delivered their courses in a unique manner by making choices and prioritizing topics. Their own experiences as readers and writers, their work as classroom teachers, their research activities, and their life experiences influenced how they structured their courses, the goals they set for themselves and their student teachers, and the messages (both subtle and overt) they sent.

4 Critical Stance

There is a growing trend for teacher educators to adopt a critical stance. This includes attitudes and dispositions that link "individuals to larger groups and social movements intended to challenge the inequities perpetuated by the educational status quo" (Cochran-Smith and Lytle 2009, p. vii). In *Creating Critical Classrooms: K–8 Reading and Writing with an Edge*, Lewison et al. (2008) identified four dimensions of a critical stance:

1. consciously engaging;
2. entertaining alternate ways of being;
3. taking responsibility to inquire; and
4. being reflexive.

These dimensions should not be considered linear; rather they are cyclical in nature. Since they are interactive and recurring they lead "to renaming (Freire 1970) and [re-theorizing], which reactivates the critical stance cycle" (p. 13). Assuming a critical stance is a deliberate choice that is "intended to be a lifelong and constant pursuit" (Cochran-Smith and Lytle 2009, p. 28). The four dimensions of a critical stance (Lewison et al. 2008) are outlined in more detail next; although presented separately they are interrelated.

4.1 Consciously Engaging

To adopt and develop a critical stance, educators must consciously engage by monitoring their use and interpretation of language and actions to see how they maintain or disrupt the status quo. They not only respond to events but they also decide how to respond to them (Lewison et al. 2008, p. 13). This includes developing a mindfulness and awareness of social issues. For instance, Skerrett (2009) responded to neighborhood inequalities by having her student teachers examine "how social class was constructed in relation to race and gender and how social class was evidenced in the infrastructures and political capital of their neighborhoods" (p. 58).

4.2 Entertaining Alternate Ways of Being

Lewison et al. (2008) describe entertaining alternate ways of being as "creating and trying on new discourses" (p. 16). Educators modify their teaching when they realize what they believe about teaching, learning, and curriculum is not working. "Tension" is used as a resource (e.g., analyzing the discrepancies in topics covered in teacher-education courses vs. practice-teaching placements) to support alternate ways of being. Ghiso et al. (2013), for example, aimed to "foster an orientation that values students' languages, identities, and histories as resources" (p. 57).

4.3 Taking Responsibility to Inquire

Developing a critical stance includes the responsibility to inquire. This means placing inquiry, interrogation, and investigation at the forefront. Lewison et al. (2008) explain that taking responsibility to inquire means "we push our beliefs out of their

resting positions and engage in a cycle where new knowledge provokes new questions and where new questions generate new knowledge" (p. 17). Cochran-Smith and Lytle (2009), who coined the term *inquiry as stance*, argue that "working from and with an inquiry stance involves a continual process of making current arrangements problematic ... [and] ... questioning the ways knowledge and practice are constructed, evaluated, and used" (p. 121).

4.4 Being Reflexive

Being reflexive means "being aware of our own complicity in maintaining the status quo or systems of injustice" (Lewison et al. 2008, p. 18). Kamler (1999, p. 191) noted: "catching ourselves in incongruent and contradictory behavior is hopeful. It is a sign that we are engaged in the struggle of trying on new identities and discourses" (as cited in Lewison et al. 2008, p. 18). Many teacher educators require their student teachers to write an autobiography to help them increase their awareness of their involvement in current systems of injustice (Sleeter 2013, p. 154). By actively questioning "who was present and absent in communities where they grew up, core values they learned in their families, beliefs they hold about people who differ from themselves, and their conceptions of what 'good teaching' looks like" (Sleeter 2013, p. 154), student teachers can begin to "outgrow" themselves.

5 Methodology

The eight LTEs we focused on in this chapter were clearly in line with a critical stance as described above. In selecting them, we considered three sources of information. First, their pedagogical practices exemplified the four dimensions of a critical stance. Second, their research and publications often considered issues such as marginalized students, the hidden values of language, and issues of equity and social justice. And third, the theorists who resonated with them (e.g., Freire, Delpit, Luke, Gaye, Ladson-Billings, Kress, and Genishi) come from a critical perspective.

We interviewed participants twice over the period April 2012 to August 2013. Each semi-structured interview took approximately 60–90 min. We asked the same questions of all participants, but added probe questions and welcomed additional comments. Most of the questions were open-ended in that they sought more than a yes/no responses or simple factual answers.

The first interview had five parts:

- background experiences
- qualities (in their view) of an effective literacy educator

- identity (e.g., their academic community)
- turning points in their career (personal and professional)
- and research activities.

The second interview had four parts:

- framework and goals for their literacy course(s)
- pedagogies used and reasons for using them
- assignments and readings
- how and why their views and practices have changed over the years.

Interviews were done either face to face or on Skype and were audio-recorded and transcribed.

Much of our methodology was qualitative, as defined by Merriam (2009) and Punch (2009). Qualitative inquiry was justified as it provided a depth of understanding and enabled the exploration of questions that did not on the whole lend themselves to quantitative inquiry (Guyton and McIntyre 1990; Merriam 2009). Qualitative inquiry opened the way to gaining entirely unexpected ideas and information from participants, in addition to finding out their opinions on simple pre-set matters. We used a modified grounded theory approach: not beginning with a fixed theory, but generating theory inductively from the data using a set of techniques and procedures for collection and analysis (Punch 2009). As the analysis progressed, we identified key themes and refined them—adding some and deleting or merging others—through "constant comparison" with the interview transcripts. As Strauss (2003) stated: "The basic question facing us is how to capture the complexity of the reality (phenomena) we study, and how to make convincing sense of it" (p. 16). For data analysis, we used NVivo, and went through a number of steps, which included coding the interviews and analyzing course outlines.

Our eight participants have a range of experience as both classroom teachers and instructors in higher education (see Table 1).

Table 1 Background of participants

Name	Years at the university	Years as a classroom teacher
Pietro	5	7
Maya	3	4
Giovanni	10	10
Melissa	7	6
Justin	10	20+
Sara	13	10
Dominique	4	8
Misa	5	7

5.1 Influence of Personal Experience

Data analysis revealed that all participants had key formative experiences (e.g., in childhood) that heavily influenced their views and practices as both teachers and teacher educators. This strong link between early life experiences and their current views and practices revealed that their philosophy was not driven by abstract theory; rather, personal experiences seemed to be the impetus for their critical stance.

Maya experienced first-hand the stigma of being an English Language Learner (ELL), which led to her emphasizing in her teacher-education courses the needs of ELL students who are often marginalized in school.

> I became very aware of the stratification [in school]. I was a very successful student on Saturday [Spanish class] but I was the same student [in elementary class] where I was not recognized. My lack of English was really [seen as] a lack of intelligence—I just got a sense of how school structures perceive and label students and give very unequal types of educational opportunities.

Pietro's own traumatic elementary schooling experiences set him on a lifelong mission to recognize the potential in each student:

> I was a rotten student. I flunked second grade. I was considered to be learning disabled ... I was diagnosed with all sorts of things, including dyslexia. I was branded as someone who would never read and write. And obviously, as a PhD from Stanford, that was an inaccurate diagnosis, which is infuriating ... I had some very well-intentioned teachers who tried to fix the problem, but the truth is that that was a life-shaping experience.

Events in adulthood also proved to be powerful. Pietro, as a beginning teacher, worked with incarcerated youth, while Giovanni as a graduate student interviewed his grandfather for a course assignment only to discover the marginalization he had experienced as an immigrant. These experiences had a profound influence on them as teacher educators: Pietro had his student teachers visit a jail for young offenders, while Giovanni involved his student teachers in a church-based program for the local immigrant community. As a secondary school teacher, Justin's school received a failing grade by the Office of Standards in Education, Children's Services, and Skills (OFSTED), which then required the teachers to implement a draconian curriculum. Justin described the consequence of the inspectors' intervention as catastrophic. "It turned a school that was a challenging place to work into a school that was impossible, and it closed ... that was a kind of very traumatic turning point." As an LTE, Justin encouraged his student teachers to consider the impact of political decisions on schooling. Melissa identified a host of life experiences that affected her work as a teacher educator:

> I think being a mother influences me, but also being a woman, a woman of color, being a speaker of English as another language, being someone who has been barred from entering my place of work because of the way I look. [They] tried to buy me out of baby-sitting my own child in the upper west side. So those are experiences that I bring to my classroom.

When each of our eight LTEs was considered holistically, we could appreciate that they teach who they are. Life experiences greatly influenced their work as LTEs. Giovanni felt that "my own narratives and memories ... are very much a resource for my teaching and pedagogy."

6 Critical Stance Pedagogy

Across our participants, we found a number of commonalities regarding their pedagogy: commitment to their student teachers, a willingness to be flexible, a thoughtful approach to course development, and creative ways to fully involve student teachers in courses. We now describe in more detail how our eight participants actualized the four aspects of a critical stance.

6.1 Consciously Engaging

The first dimension of the framework focused on mindfulness, intentionality, and awareness of social issues (beyond basic teaching and learning skills). Our participants actualized this dimension by establishing clear goals for their courses and by providing *space* for working through difficult topics. Because the LTEs believed in walking their talk, they modeled many of the innovative and inclusive practices they advocate.

6.1.1 Goals of Literacy Course

All eight LTEs set clear and expansive goals for their courses, which gave student teachers opportunities to think critically and creatively about issues of power and privilege in teaching. Maya said, "the goal is for [student teachers] to understand that literacy isn't neutral ... And for them to disrupt some of the hierarchies." Justin explained that his goal was to "prepare beginning teachers for a life-time of teaching [which] involves them being able to be both critical of initiatives that are thrust upon them and creative in their approaches." Pietro wanted his "student teachers to problematize ... [and] to think about literacy as being broader than traditional views about reading, writing, and speaking."

All LTEs used a critical lens to frame the content of their courses. Dominique included "a lot about teaching diverse learners particularly and diverse communities and multi-lingual communities but with a twenty-first century literacies perspective." Melissa involved her student teachers in a school-based tutoring project. As part of this work, "student teachers must get to know [a] child" and were required to "to document the child's interests" while being "culturally responsive." Her overall goal was for her student teachers to understand the lived experience of the children.

6.1.2 Exploring Difficult Topics Through Class Discussions

Exploring difficult issues in a deliberate manner was a strategy to help student teachers appreciate the complexity of education. For example, Giovanni aimed to have student teachers recognize how social injustices and power imbalances can manifest themselves in teaching. Class discussions addressed "issues of power or racism or

class ... it could also be related to the erosion of the public education system." To understand the complexity and long-term impact of these systemic issues, student teachers were encouraged to draw on experiences (both personal and from their practice-teaching placements), which they shared in class discussions. Because their reflections/comments were rooted in their lived experiences, the discussions were often intense. Giovanni noted: "When you take a socio-cultural perspective and you address the politics of literacy and identity and culture and power, it's really intense." Dominique acknowledged the difficulty her student teachers faced because the issues cannot be easily resolved. She described the process of taking up difficult topics as "nerve racking." Pietro described a powerful learning moment:

> [Initially] I talk a lot about English Language Arts without talking about race and culture ... the identity of your students is very likely not your identity, particularly in urban schools. And then we [use the] Delpit [framework to guide our discussion]. It is a hard conversation every year. They are scared, they feel vulnerable. I try to broker this conversation. I'm a White, gay man in front of you talking about all of this stuff. How do we position ourselves in the classroom? How do our own identities inform our teaching practices? Some of them are terrified. I've had a class where ironically, here we are, talking about race and identity in the classroom and all of the people of color in my class did not talk. So we are reading the silence ... Even in our class where we have all this safe space there is stuff going on. And then I have to say what's that? What just happened here?

By creating a space to address difficult issues, our LTEs modelled the language and dispositions of consciously engaged teachers and demonstrated the courage required to recognize and address social inequities.

6.2 Entertaining Alternate Ways of Being

This dimension of a critical stance focused on "creating and trying on new discourses" (Lewison et al. 2008, p. 16). By first helping student teachers to expand narrow conceptualizations of literacy and then acquire more inclusive literacy practices, the LTEs created new discourses about literacy.

6.2.1 Helping Student Teachers Unlearn

When asked about goals for their course, many of our LTEs stated that having student teachers *unlearn* what they knew about literacy was a priority because many came to the teacher certification program with a narrow understanding of literacy. The LTEs often had to disrupt the notions student teachers had about literacy because they often viewed literacy as a discreet set of autonomous skills (e.g., reading, writing) separate from a pupil's social, cultural, and historical contexts. Many student teachers understood literacy in the same way it had been presented to them as school-aged children. Misa described her motivations for having her students "detach" from their previous school-based experiences, or in other words, unlearn:

You have to unlearn what it means to be a school student ... they've been in schools for years with a certain type of culture and norms, so they know how to do school, they know how to be good students. I don't care about that. Now you've got to learn, you are a teacher, you are part of a learning community...

To help them unlearn, the LTEs created space for new discourses in their classrooms. Melissa and Justin discussed at length the challenge of having student teachers who held very traditional views of literacy, views that were inadequate for effectively teaching those students who were most vulnerable. Melissa created several opportunities for student teachers "to really appreciate young children" and in turn "to realize that they are already [literate] regardless of whether they are doing [literacy] in traditional ways."

Five of eight LTE asked their student teachers to do a literacy autobiography as a way for them to understand their own relationships to literacy and schooling. This in turn often led to them expanding their narrow view of literacy. Justin believed that writing a literacy autobiography provided an opportunity to "create and try on new discourses." He shared the reaction of one of his student teachers who came from a multi-lingual background: "It was the first time in the whole of her educational career that she had been encouraged to take a positive view of her bilingualism or of her culture." Justin was able to create a new discourse around language in his classroom. By drawing on his student teachers' diverse backgrounds, he challenged English as the dominant language of power.

6.2.2 Using Alternate Texts and Forms of Expression

To help student teachers gain an expansive view of literacy (beyond traditional print-based text), the LTEs accessed alternative texts, and alternative forms of expression. These were a way to *unsettle* their student teachers from the dominant discourses about literacy. These included slam poetry, greeting cards, Twitter, Facebook, Boalian theater, graphic novels, and hands-on art projects. The LTEs noted that after engaging with an alternative text, student teachers commented that some pupils who were not successful with traditional paper and pencil may be able to excel in multimedia and multimodal environments.

Using non-traditional literacy texts provided examples of literacy beyond the course textbook and helped student teachers unpack issues related to equity. Maya included graphic novels to "purposefully unsettle the reader." She used "*American Born Chinese* (Yang 2006), which raised a lot of issues around identity and language, ethnicity ... and also has some uncomfortable stereotypes." By using alternative texts (not traditional academic readings), Maya encouraged student teachers to question their own reading practices and asked: "What position do you read from?" This, in turn, raised their awareness of the multiplicity of literacy practices required by teachers and that should be available to students. Both form and content of course readings proved to be powerful tools.

Videos were often used in very creative ways. After showing a video about a mother and son's experience as sweatshop workers, Giovanni and his student

teachers identified and discussed the literacies enacted by the mother and son in their challenging work environment. Alternatively, Dominique had her student teachers create, rather than analyze, videos based on inquiry questions (that they generated from their practice-teaching placements). She described the assignment along with its outcomes:

> They create a video case. They go into a classroom to document the ways that kids are taking those ideas up in small groups and then they share those with each other and talk about practice and relate it back to some of the theories they've been learning about in the class ... new understandings we have, things that don't make sense at all ... any of those types of questions.

6.3 Taking Responsibility to Inquire

Taking responsibility to inquire, the third dimension of the critical stance framework, encouraged educators to question how knowledge was constructed, to consider how students are positioned within educational contexts, and to investigate the multiple perspectives that impact teaching and learning (Lewison et al. 2008). An inquiry stance challenged student teachers to "push [their] beliefs out of their resting positions and engage in a cycle where new knowledge provokes new questions and where new questions generate new knowledge" (Lewison et al. 2008, p. 17). The eight LTEs adopted an inquiry stance as a central component in their pedagogy of literacy-teacher education.

6.3.1 Viewing Teachers as Intellectuals

The LTEs encouraged student teachers to see teaching as an intellectual practice, rather than a technical act focused on the rigid application of a scripted curriculum. Justin, for example, described his goal for teacher education "as being about the development of teachers as public intellectuals." His aim "is not simply to prepare beginning teachers for whatever the particular curricular or pedagogic demands of policy here now are, but for a lifetime in teaching." Similarly, Misa set high expectations for student teachers in an effort to motivate them to see themselves as teachers who were part of an intellectual "learning community." She used an inquiry approach to urge student teachers to critically probe the assumptions about schooling they brought with them to their teacher-education studies. Accordingly, she noted: "I don't want [them] to enact the same types of pedagogies that [they] brought to this space of just consuming what somebody wants"; rather, she encouraged student teachers to be "generative" and "creative thinkers." She wanted student teachers to consider how literacy practices function to marginalize students within school contexts. She explained:

> I want to engage the student [teachers] in inquiry ... I want them to discover some things about how literacy works to position people or to exert power through their own inquiring into text. So I see my role as a facilitating conversations between the readings and then providing particular examples and scaffolds so that we can inquire together and they can arrive at different understandings.

One of the ways Maya enacted this goal was by using the schoolwork of children as a tool to disrupt student teachers' assumptions of what counts as legitimate knowledge within school spaces:

> So, rather than say language learners are really smart, even though the ways that they are assessed in schools doesn't necessarily show that, instead I just bring in a lot of student work. We talk about it together and they [student teachers] think about it in relationship to the [course] readings. We were talking about the idea of who counts as literate in school and whose knowledge counts.

6.3.2   Considering Multiple Perspectives

The LTEs employed an inquiry stance to encourage student teachers to consider how the inclusion of multiple perspectives can enrich their understanding of teaching and learning. For example, Maya complicated the notion of expertise through the use of dual language texts to "trouble dominant assumptions" about "whose knowledge counts." She used a text "partly written in Spanish" in her literacy class to prompt student teachers to question the teacher's role as "expert" within the classroom. The activity provoked varying responses from student teachers and raised provocative questions. She explained:

> Some [student teachers] feel uncomfortable. Some people might feel indignant that it's not English so they turn to Google translate. It makes us ask a lot of questions like: Are you the primary audience for this? What was the purpose of structuring the book in this particular way? Whose perspectives are included, excluded, who's privileged?

Sara recognized that her knowledge of a topic relevant to the surrounding community was limited, and so she invited community-based members into her university class to share their experience. This practice allowed the student teachers to gain valuable insight into the community. She explained:

> We've been working with the Somalian population. So we would have someone from the community come in to provide cultural [and] linguistic background about traditions [and] stories.

An inquiry approach encouraged student teachers to base their teaching practice around the needs of the community and the issues relevant to the lives of their pupils. Misa suggested that an integral part of her literacy pedagogy was "maintaining an ongoing dialogue that extends beyond the classroom." Correspondingly, she encouraged student teachers to actively engage with the community. Misa was "always inviting [her] students to volunteer or participate in [community] activities because you've got to make what you are talking about in class real." Engagement with the community can motivate student teachers to situate their pedagogical

practice around issues important to their pupils' lives, rather than strictly adhere to a decontextualized curriculum.

6.4 Being Reflexive

The fourth dimension of a critical stance required LTEs to investigate themselves and allow their student teachers to do the same. This included looking at "beliefs they hold about people who differ from themselves, and their conceptions of what 'good teaching' looks like" (Lewison et al. 2008, p. 154). Through this process, both LTEs and student teachers could *outgrow* themselves. To this end, our LTEs adopted an organic and flexible structure for their literacy courses.

6.4.1 An Organic and Flexible Course Structure

When asked if their courses were pre-set or organic, all eight LTEs responded that their courses were flexible and evolved according to the needs and responses of their student teachers. Maya explained that her student teachers "bring in things from the field, and based on what they give us or what kinds of questions they have, we move things around or I plan the activities based off that for the course." Her flexibility allowed her student teachers time to question what they had noted during practice teaching and then compare their observations to critical perspectives advocated in the literacy course. Maya's student teachers were constantly reflecting, which in turn helped them to grow as educators.

By Misa not tightly scripting her individual classes, she and her student teachers engaged in "conversational dialogue." She admitted that at times this felt like a "digression," but "sometimes those digressions [were] where some of the most powerful learning happen[ed]." Misa's organic approach allowed her student teachers to discuss topics that mattered to them and engage "in the struggle of trying on [the] new identities and discourses" that were needed to develop a critical stance (Kamler 1999). Yet, this flexible approach was demanding in many ways, especially on personal time. Misa explained:

> In terms of being inclusive, you have to be so present and in the moment to know if different students have different needs. [S]tudents seem to have no problem emailing me all hours of the night [with] questions, concerns, pleads for an extension or combinations. I think I try to be a human professor, in terms of just understanding that we are all human and things happen.

Misa's enactment of a critical stance involved sacrificing her personal time. By being readily available to her student teachers, she showed them that teachers must attend to their pupils' needs beyond formal class time. She was willing to do whatever it took to prepare her student teachers to work in schools where demands on their personal time were often extraordinary.

In addition to sacrificing personal time, an organic approach was challenging for our LTEs because many were still required to address a formal curriculum (e.g., cover specific topics). In order to address the mandated topics and help student teachers think more broadly, they carefully selected readings, which often considered wider political-cultural contexts (e.g., readings by Delpit). Giovanni explained how topics "arise organically in the [university] classroom" and as a result, "this year we devoted more time than usual to mental health issues ... and that was very different than last year." Because these discussions were important to his student teachers, he provided the time they needed to grapple with the issues not on the official course syllabus.

By using a flexible pedagogy our LTEs offered courses that challenged student teachers to *outgrow* themselves; they addressed pertinent and relevant issues and met the student teachers as individuals.

6.4.2 Providing Authentic Learning Experiences

A second strategy our LTEs used to develop reflexivity was to provide student teachers with *authentic* learning experiences. To achieve this, they often connected with local communities and schools.

Sara felt that it was necessary to keep "[the] community–school–university partnership" thriving. By being actively involved in schools, her student teachers had opportunities to work with struggling children on a regular basis. This gave them first-hand experience with teaching literacy; because of her particular model, the student teachers were accountable for the children's learning. Similarly, Melissa's student teachers were responsible for the children they were tutoring:

> Initially, they are little bit overwhelmed because they realize that they do have a responsibility ... that they have a responsibility to an elementary school child and there are specific expectations that they need to fulfill because that child is waiting for them. So there is a relationship instead of just being about the content of the course. Working with the children, they are really responsible and responsive.

Although challenging and at times frightening for the student teachers, they acquired skills for effectively teaching literacy to struggling/marginalized children.

It was not sufficient for these LTEs to teach their student teachers *about* children; rather, as Misa noted, they wanted their student teachers to "get to know children and plan around their interests and get to know their cultural backgrounds." Only in this way could the student teachers recognize how they needed to adapt and grow in order to be effective agents of social change.

6.5 *Student Teacher Response*

As the findings above show, our eight LTEs used a rich and thoughtful pedagogy. Yet some student teachers were *resistant* to the ideas and practices presented. There were a number of reasons for the opposition. Some believed there was a standard

pedagogy that should be used with all children. Dominique felt her student teachers just wanted her "to tell [them] how to do it right, like what's the right way." Similarly, Sara's student teachers did not understand why she did not have "the right answer ... they see it as complicated, well it is complicated, complex. So it's been a life struggle." Other student teachers drew heavily on the pedagogies used in their childhood and could not see why these would not work with all children. Dominique found it was difficult for some student teachers to embrace a more critical stance because "throughout their whole career they have had a path of how to do it well and how to do it right." When they came into her class she said "we are going to think differently about literacy instruction because each of your kids is different" This was hard for them. She noted that the "whole time they were skeptical"; for some, it was fear of the unknown, while for others it was the narrowness of their vision of literacy that filtered their response to the course.

Another reason for student teacher resistance was not ideological, but logistical. The courses developed by our eight participants often included an off-site experience (e.g., tutoring children in high-needs schools) that required student teachers to travel. Some felt this inconvenience was unnecessary, believing everything they needed to learn could be taught on the university campus. Sara, who set up a tutoring program, felt that "even though I believe it's a great model, there is a lot of resistance ... Some of them want to go to a lecture and want to go to a tutorial and want to have a textbook and want to have all of my knowledge ... want it laid out for [them]."

Of course, some of our participants described student teachers who found their courses very helpful because they opened up a whole new dimension of teaching. One of Justin's students commented at the end of the course that "it took me quite a while to realize that what you do with us in the seminar on Friday is modeling the kind of practice you'd like us to adopt in school." Nevertheless, the resistance from student teachers, who were often very vocal, was troubling for our LTEs.

7 Discussion

The eight LTEs presented in this chapter adopted a critical stance. They are remarkable individuals who worked tirelessly for their students and the wider community. Having been formed by their personal and professional experiences, they teach who they are. It was not simply their advanced academic studies (e.g., completion of a PhD) that influenced their views; rather, their lived experiences shaped them as individuals, which influenced their specific goals for schooling. These were thoughtfully determined and were matched with appropriate pedagogies in order to help student teachers think differently about schooling. The teacher educators modelled a critical stance, provided readings, and set assignments consistent with their stance, yet they were realistic about the context in which they worked. Misa described her situation:

> I want to cultivate their confidence as teachers, I also have to be confident in what I'm doing and clear about my goals and my teaching objectives so that when I'm faced with this kind of resistance, disrespect, disregard, in the classroom by students that I don't let it thwart me off my mission and where I'm going.

Our eight LTEs often had to *soldier on* in difficult conditions: restrictive government mandates, lack of university support, resistant student teachers, and unsympathetic colleagues. Their efforts need to be recognized, yet we wonder to what extent they can continue these extraordinary efforts over the long term. In order for them to provide such a dynamic pedagogy and rich learning opportunities, they need more institutional support. For example, setting up and running tutoring programs should not be the sole responsibility of a course instructor.

It is very difficult for a single course to expand and/or shift student teachers' entrenched deficit views of children, expand narrow goals for schooling, and challenge a belief in a limited set of teaching practices. If schools of education are truly committed to helping all children thrive, they must move beyond rhetoric to practice, so that student teachers are immersed in a teacher-education program with a consistent and overriding philosophy. If student teachers are to truly grasp the complexity of education, each course must enact similar practices (e.g., authentic learning experiences). In the case of our LTEs a program-wide approach may have lessened the resistance from student teachers because the message of what needs to be learned would have been reinforced by all instructors. Further, schools of education in the future need to select teacher educators not based simply on their publication records and grants secured, but should look at them as individuals. What lived experiences do they bring to their courses?

Looking forward schools of education need to take a leadership role in countering the prevailing discourse, which focuses on test scores as a sign of achievement and a for a more expansive curriculum. Pietro believed that we need to "prepare [student teaches] for the schools that we have while simultaneously preparing them for the schools that we want." Yes, this will all take time, but time is not a luxury for many children who are wallowing in poverty or are offered a substandard education because of the color of their skin or where they live. As Rogers (2013) noted in the opening quote to this chapter, their needs have "never been more pressing" (p. 7). Individually, and as a society, we need thoughtful re-visioning of education now.

We believe these eight outstanding LTEs will influence the views and practices of their student teachers. When these student teachers begin their role as teachers, we hope that they will enact what they have learned about an inclusive and dynamic pedagogy. In turn, this may help their pupils to acquire literacy skills that will allow them to see themselves as literate, and may provide their pupils with the skills to secure a decent-paying job, which may eventually lift them from poverty.

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