

The Experiences of Students of Color in TEP— Implications for Pedagogy

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Introduction

The primary goal of this study directly connects to two Teachers for a New Era principles: 1) Recruitment of underrepresented groups into teaching and 2) cultural considerations in teaching and learning (see TNE prospectus, pp.5-6). The experiences of students of color in TEP along with the responses of representatives of various interested parties (faculty from the College of Education and Arts & Sciences, P-12 educators and leaders, and current and potential TEP students) are being studied.

This project centers around the video testimonies of students of color that Jason and Foxy Davidson created in 2004. As several public showings of these videos have demonstrated, this is a volatile subject for those invested in TEP. As a collection of interview excerpts alone, it is easy to dismiss the critiques raised as the anecdotal experiences of individuals, rather than treating them as problems to be addressed within the program. Through this project, we aim to: (1) gain an understanding of effective and ineffective pedagogical strategies for preservice teachers of color (and, ultimately, all of our students), (2) engage the TEP community in collective inquiry about the experiences of students of color and other TEP students, and (3) develop a survey tool for the continued evaluation of our programs climate.

Study Design

The project is threefold. First, we engaged in a systematic analysis of the testimonies collected from the 2004 graduating cohort. Second, we are in the process of completing focus groups which have examined the implications for pedagogy raised by these videos. Finally, we developed and plan to test a survey measure for monitoring our students' experiences in the program. Together, these strategies would enable us to build a repertoire of evidence-based pedagogical strategies for more inclusive teacher education.

Participants

Students of Color Video: Graduates from the UW TEP 2004 cohort who created videotaped testimonies about their experiences in the program.

Focus Groups: Interested parties in teacher education as identified by the Teachers for a New Era Grant. These groups represent those who hold a stake in the teacher education program including:

1. College of Education faculty who actively participate in TEP
2. Arts and Sciences faculty who actively participate in TEP
3. Students in the program

4. Future employers and those presently in the educational field who work in P-12 schools (Principals, cooperating teachers, etc.)
5. Undergraduate students interested in teaching careers (Zesbaugh Scholars)

Focus Group

The themes that developed from the content analysis of the Students of Color Video were: Environment, Program Content, Recruitment and Retention, and Relationships. From these themes four questions were formulated.

The four focus group questions:

1. "Feeling like the only one" or feeling "isolated" was a reoccurring theme among the different interviews. According to the students' experiences, this inhibited them from sharing their ideas. In smaller groups some felt singled out and even more isolated. How can we create learning environments that are comfortable, where people feel they have a voice and where multiple points of view are valued?
2. A theme running through the videos was a lack of connection with peers and/or faculty. What can be done to improve relationship building in COE and beyond?
3. All students commented on not seeing many students of color in their cohort and many suggested recruiting students of color. How can the COE address these issues of recruitment and retention of students of color?
4. Many students voiced their concern on their lack of preparation for teaching in diverse classrooms. They commented on needing more than one multicultural education course and/or requiring curriculum to encourage students to examine issues "outside of themselves" or expose students to pedagogy that addresses the needs of a diverse student population. One student even commented that multicultural education should not just be one class, but consistent through out the program. How can the college of education begin to address these concerns that students do not feel prepared to teach to a diverse student population?

From the analysis and the formulation of questions, a DVD of video prompts was created which captured clips from the videos that most appropriately framed and supported the questions being asked. This DVD helped to facilitate discussion in the focus groups. The format of the video prompt consists of an introduction where a couple of students share their experiences on what it means to be a 'minority', followed by the four questions, with supporting clips from the testimonies.

Analysis

We are still the process of collecting data from our final focus group. From our preliminary analysis of the data collected one key idea or theme that has

surfaced from the discussions is the importance of close examination of discourse that is going on in the classroom and how classroom discourse impacts the environment and relationship building within the college.