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Abstract

The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 requires public schools in the United States to test students in grades 3-8. The author argues that this mandate has been supported by the public, in part, because of the "availability heuristic," a phenomenon which occurs when people assess the probability of an event by the ease with which instances or occurrences can be brought to mind. These "mental short cuts," which tend to oversimplify complex issues, are being employed by policy-makers in promoting standardized testing as the panacea for the problems of the public school system. The premises of this campaign include the "good intentions" to "leave no child behind," the promise of improved accountability through high-stakes testing and the purported worthiness of test results. The author claims these premises are specious and examines their harmful potential for diverting resources, distracting educators and alarming children.

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Heuristics and NCLB Standardized Tests: A Convenient Lie

There is always an easy solution to every human problem – neat, plausible and wrong

~ H.L. Mencken

The film, "An Inconvenient Truth," is so compelling because of the message it conveys. Global warming – arguably a "truth" – is hard to imagine. How can we accept a catastrophic scenario - despite the scientific evidence - as inevitable? We can't fathom this apocalyptic vision - an inconvenient notion to say the least.

We have, in education circles today, a 180-degree turn of the global warming scenario - a convenient lie. We find it easy to believe that nationally mandated testing serves the public weal. How can we argue with the simple logic of testing students for accountability purposes? The approach appears to address our education woes. Appearances can be deceiving.

The No Child Left Behind Act (2001) which mandates that all public school students in grades 3-8 be tested in math and English (and most recently in science) produces a single score for each subject for each student in the country (Standards, assessment and accountability, 2008). Numbers on standardized tests seem to satisfy the public thirst for the simple and the chartable. No need to follow the messy and complicated developmental changes that children undergo nor, for that matter, attend to their creative, artistic and emotional growth, when there are standardized test scores which can be aggregated, disaggregated, archived and published on a graph in a newspaper. Many of us who have toiled in the public schools in the teaching and administrative ranks are nonplused at this turn of events. How could a literate and informed society become so smitten with such a limited measure of success for their schools and for their children? One answer may found in the phenomenon known as heuristics.

Heuristics

Broadly, a heuristic can be defined as a mental "short cut." Tversky and Kahneman (1974) may have been the first researchers to systematically examine this construct. They investigated how and why people rely on simplified operations to explain complex phenomena. While "heuristics" as an approach to explain things can be quite useful, it can also lead to "severe and systematic errors" (Tversky & Kahneman, 1974). The "availability heuristic" seems especially appropriate in its relationship to the public's perceptions of standardized testing as a measure of school and student success.

The availability heuristic occurs when people assess the probability of an event by the ease with which instances or occurrences can be brought to mind (Tversky & Kahneman, 1974). The availability heuristic is "an oversimplified rule of thumb which occurs when people estimate the probability of an outcome based on how easy that outcome is to imagine. As such, vividly described, emotionally-charged possibilities will be perceived as being more likely than those that are harder to picture or are difficult to understand, resulting in a corresponding cognitive bias" (Economic Expert, n.d.). ChangingMinds.org, an Internet site devoted to

understanding "all aspects of how we change what others think, believe and feel," offers this bit of advice on the utility value of the availability heuristic: "Make those things which you want the person to use for decision-making (perhaps at a later date) vivid and very easy to bring to mind, for example with repetition and visual language. Make those things that you do not want them to use, vague, abstract, complex or uncomfortable" (Changing Minds, n.d.).

The availability heuristic formula seems to be working on the public's perception of our schools. In a paean to using the business model for schools, Hallinger and Snidvongs (2008) developed a laundry list of items that promote good customer relations in business, including relevance of products and services, pricing, customer loyalty, etc. They conclude that these concepts and practices are relevant to schools, especially in an "era of accountability" (Hallinger & Snidvongs, 2008). Rowan (1982) noted that the accountability of schools is fundamentally based upon the extent to which they satisfy the public's perception of legitimacy. Here, then, is a prime example of how the availability heuristic shapes the logic of school improvement: If we can find criteria that the public perceive as legitimate, then we can use these criteria to measure the success of our schools. (Never mind that the criteria may not truly reflect improvement in learning. As long as the factors are perceived as legitimate, we have measures of accountability that will be accepted.)

Heuristics are woven into the fabric of the standardized testing milieu. The average citizen may be overwhelmed by the nuanced, organic, multi-faceted, and non-linear nature of a student's educational development. To the rescue is a simpler and more convenient answer to fill the void. Politicians, the business community and the media encourage the trade off of complexity for simplicity so that school and student progress can be reduced to "understandable" numbers that appear "legitimate." Those who advocate and support the one-size-fits-all testing mandated by the federal government call upon an array of strategies to support the simplified approach. Three premises which drive the public image of NCLB as a panacea for what ails the public schools are identified in this paper. Each relies and ultimately depends on the public's needs for short cuts (i.e., heuristics) to understand school and student progress.

- NCLB is framed with the good intentions to "leave no child behind"
- Accountability is based on high-stakes testing
- Standardized tests yield results that matter

Each claim is specious when regarded in light of the deep, rich and supportive experiences children need for healthy development. What follows are examples of what happens when schools focus on standardized testing in an attempt to provide simple answers to complicated issues. In order to see through the haze of "heuristics and biases" (Tversky & Kahneman, 1974), I enlist the support of perspectives from the trenches and from those who have studied the developmental needs of youngsters.

Paving the Road with Good Intentions

There exist today a host of "good-intentioned" programs in the public schools that attempt to ready students for the rigors of testing. These initiatives are designed to *help students focus on academics*; what they appear to be doing is *getting students ready for tests.* It starts with kindergarten.

The original kindergarten (first established in 1837 in Germany) was created for children ages 3-7 years as a way to develop mentally, socially and emotionally through interactions with the outdoors and with opportunities for growth through movement, music and play. Friedrich Froebel, who coined the term and developed the first kindergarten class, based his program on the notion that "children need to have play time in order to learn. Kindergarten should be a place for children to grow and learn from their social interaction with other children" (Richie-Sharp, 2003, para. 2).

Kindergarten is no longer the "children's garden" that was once envisioned. The focus recently has been on academics (Shepard, 1989), specifically reading readiness. Charts and graphs that detail letter and sound recognition growth, tests to determine spatial and temporal awareness, tests in math and reading (Gonen, 2008), and language experiences that deconstruct stories for literary elements are de rigueur for the kindergarten classroom. Kindergarten has become the academic farm team for the big leagues, aka first and second grade. In many schools recess has been reduced or eliminated for kindergartners (Nussbaum, 2006). This is a particularly ironic shift in that young children need "play" time to improve "think" time. Olga Jarrett, a professor at Georgia State University, has done extensive research on the importance of play and has found that on days that children had recess they were less fidgety and more on-task, with hyperactive children reaping the most benefit (Jarrett, 2002). To provide even more time for instruction, schools are lengthening the day for some kindergarten students. New York City Schools recently extended kindergarten hours for students who need extra help so that a typical school day can run over seven hours for these youngsters (Lucadamo, 2006).

Changes to the experience of the youngest denizens of the public schools are to ensure that no kindergartner is left behind. How can one argue with increased academic time in our schools? It seems so simple and well-intentioned. However, when five year olds are asked to put in overtime and when their play time is reduced, "good intentions" seem more like poor judgment. As Daniel Pink notes, we may be turning our young children into "automatots" (McCaw, 2007, p. 36).

As the curriculum gets more involved in the upper grades, the distortions continue. Reading education in some places takes a lethal dose of well-intentioned policy and practice. Teachers, pressured to increase reading scores to improve their schools' NCLB profile, are spending inordinate amounts of time prepping for reading exams (Nichols & Berliner, 2008). At the same time, a study by the National Endowment for the Arts reported on a decline of daily pleasure reading among young people as they progress from elementary to high school. The decline appears to continue through college (Rich, 2007). The absurdity of conflating reading education with test prep is pointed out by a parent comment in a *New York Times* letter to the editor: "My son attends arguably the best public middle-school program in Baltimore, and the language arts teachers there have been told not to teach novels until the spring, after the state testing is over" (Myers, 2007). Another parent, on the same page, writes: "When classrooms are turned into test-preparation factories, reading scores may eventually rise, but those gains constitute a Pyrrhic victory because reading for pure enjoyment is destroyed" (Gardner, 2007).

In a stunning example of test prep undermining reading improvement, McNeil and Valenzuela report on the Texas version of NCLB accountability tests known as the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS):

> High school teachers report that although practice tests and classroom drills have raised the rate of passing for the reading section of the TAAS at their school, many of their students are unable to use those same skills for actual reading. These students are passing the TAAS reading section by being able to select among answers given. But they are not able to read assignments, to make meaning of literature, to complete reading assignments outside of class, or to connect reading assignments to other parts of the course such as discussion and writing. Middle school teachers report that the TAAS emphasis on reading short passages, then selecting answers to questions based on those short passages, has made it very difficult for students to handle a sustained reading assignment. After children spend several years in classes where "reading" assignments were increasingly TAAS practice materials, the middle school teachers in more than one district reported that (students) were unable to read a novel even two years below grade level. (as cited in Nichols & Berliner, 2007, p. 130)

A focus on reading and math test results – since this is where a district's NCLB fortunes rise and fall – has wrought additional casualties in other disciplines. A Council for Basic Education study surveyed 956 elementary and secondary school principals in Illinois, Maryland, New York and New Mexico and found that there was a decreased emphasis on the arts and foreign language (Perkins-Gough, 2004). These subjects in many places seem to be regarded as vestigial, perhaps owing to the lack of value that NCLB assigns them. Hear the lament of a (former) elementary school teacher regarding mandated test prep and the disenfranchised subjects:

> From my experience of being an elementary school teacher at a low-performing urban school in Los Angeles, I can say that the pressure became so intense that we had to show how every single lesson we taught connected to a standard that was going to be tested. This meant that art, music, and even science and social studies were not a priority and were hardly ever taught. We were forced to spend ninety percent of the instructional time on reading and math. This made teaching boring for me and was a huge part of why I decided to leave the profession. (as cited in Rothstein & Jacobsen, 2006)

Other promotions and initiatives to improve test scores are equally distressing – and sometimes expensive. In another putatively well-intentioned initiative under the NCLB banner, schools in which too many students fail math or reading exams must use federal funds to offer tutoring programs to low-income families. In the 2006-2007 school year, $595 million went to the for-profit and non-profit tutoring industry. What are the results? Studies in Tennessee, Alabama, Georgia, Michigan and Kentucky showed that "supplemental educational services" did not improve test scores (Glod, 2008, para. 4). In a pay-for-performance plan, schools in New York City have adopted a plan to pay teachers and students who make improvements in test scores (Farley & Rosario, 2008). Preliminary results from the program are being reviewed by the State Education Department (Gonen & Soltis, 2008). The very notion of payment for improved test results – an idea that cynically offers the profit motive

as an available heuristic for public consumption – may be palatable to some business folks and politicians, but should be anathema to every committed educator and every parent who is concerned about instilling the love of learning in their children. And for those who need more evidence about the paucity of results from external rewards for learning, Nichols and Berliner (2008) opine:

> A system of rewards, punishment, and pressures on self-esteem sounds like a logical way to motivate teachers and students, and some psychologists support this approach. But it doesn't work very well. Motivational researchers Richard Ryan and Kirk Brown present evidence strongly suggesting the opposite. They claim that it is the more autonomous motives, such as intrinsic motivation (e.g., I do it for *me*, not for *you*) or a well-internalized value system (e.g., I am guided by my own goals, not ones set by someone else), that result in higher quality of learning, persistence in the face of difficulty in learning, and greater enjoyment of the learning process. These are not the motivational systems elicited by high-stakes testing. (Nichols & Berliner, 2008, p. 149)

What has happened throughout the school systems of the United States, by and large, is that the voices of thoughtful educators who understand the richness of child development have been eclipsed by the hypnotizing drumbeat of those claiming to have a simpler answer: *if we can test each child, we can help each child*. This powerful short cut has hijacked the public's imagination. Those advocates of standardized tests hold up high-stakes accountability as the stick that is finally shaking up the educational establishment. The insistence that tests must be high stakes if they are to be worthwhile is another convenient lie that needs debunking.

High Stakes are for Gamblers

Competitive yoga. As foolish as the term sounds, it represents a movement to make yoga into a competitive sport. There is actually an organized group lobbying to make yoga into an Olympic event (ABC OF YOGA, 2006). The mentality that would drive a spiritual experience into a high-stakes competitive environment is the same mentality that thinks that a child's learning progress should be under the klieg lights while judges hold up signs with numbers. Therein resides another available short cut to fire the public imagination. Pressure to perform seems like an appropriate ethos within which to achieve optimal results from our students and teachers. After all, the conventional wisdom goes, when the going gets tough, the tough get going. And don't we all want to toughen up our schools to meet the demands of the 21st century?

The pressure to perform may suit those who voluntarily choose such venues, but to foist this arrangement onto a captive audience of youngsters is beyond the pale. High-stakes testing in the NCLB environment uses a threat of publicly announced failure to modify behavior. The former assistant secretary for elementary and secondary education during NCLB's inauguration weighs in on the "shame" factor: "The impetus for change built into NCLB was to effectively 'shame' schools into improvement. We now see that the shame game is flawed . . . The rhetoric of leaving no child behind has trumped reality" (Neuman, 2008, para. 5).

High-stakes testing - with its attendant threats and pressures - will not service us as an accurate accountability tool. Those who advocate for such an approach ignore the counterproductive effects of stress on performance.

Selye (1907-1982) pioneered research on the reaction of the body to stress. Selye's General Adaptation Syndrome outlines three stages of the body's adaptation to stress: ". . . an initial brief alarm reaction, followed by a prolonged period of resistance and a terminal stage of exhaustion and death" (Neylan, 1998, p.230). While citing these stages may seem overly dramatic in a discussion of reactions to school testing programs, there exists a similar trajectory that can be more easily applied to everyday stress and performance issues. The Yerkes-Dodson law (1908) provides a model to advance the conversation:

> Arousal is a major aspect of many learning theories and is closely related to other concepts such as anxiety, attention, agitation, stress, and motivation. The arousal level can be thought of as how much capacity you have available to work with. One finding with respect to arousal is the Yerkes-Dodson law (1908) [which] predicts an inverted U-shaped function between arousal and performance. A certain amount of arousal can be a motivator toward change (with change in this discussion being learning). But too much or too little will certainly work against the learner. You want some mid-level of arousal to provide the motivation to change (learn). Too little arousal has an inert affect on the learner, while too much has a hyperactive affect. (Clark, 1999, para.1)

Goleman's description of the U-shaped curve is offered in a larger context of finding the "sweet spot" for optimal achievement:

> An upside-down U graphs the relationship between levels of stress and mental performance such as learning or decision-making. Stress varies with challenge: at the low end, too little breeds disinterest and boredom, while as challenge increases it boosts interest, attention, and motivation – which at their optimal level produce maximum cognitive efficiency and achievement. As challenges continue to rise beyond our skill to handle them, stress intensifies; at its extreme, our performance and learning collapse. (Goleman, 2007, p. 271)

The climate surrounding the testing regime is highly charged and unforgiving – a breeding ground for intensifying stress. Students are primed for months before a test as if they were getting ready for battle. Reports of student anxiety are prevalent (Nichols & Berliner, 2008). But beyond the stress-laden climate, how does anxiety play into the significance of test results? A well-known critic of competition in schools, Kohn (2000), has studied the ill effects of pressures on children as they learn:

> . . . test anxiety has grown into a subfield of educational psychology, and its prevalence means that the tests producing this reaction are not giving us a good picture of what many students really know and can do. The more a test is made to "count"– in terms of being the basis for promoting or retaining students, for funding or closing down schools – the more that anxiety is likely to rise and *the less valid the scores become*. (author's emphasis) (Kohn, 2000, p 5)

Stories about marching orders and pressures around test prep are legion. In many places the emphasis on test prep leaves a wake of missed opportunities. A teacher complains that the district's focus on reading, writing, and mathematics has precluded interesting experiences in hatching baby chicks or going on field trips or participating in community outreach (Rothstein and Jacobsen, 2006). A music director bemoans the fact that classroom teachers pressured to prep for tests no longer support the music program, some going to the extreme of sabotaging music lessons so that students do not leave the classroom. Teachers, this director says, will tell parents that music instruction "interferes with learning" (Seewald, 2007, p. 15). Some orders sound like triage protocols in an understaffed emergency room: A principal who told teachers ". . . to cross off the names of students who had virtually no chance of passing and those certain to pass. Those who remained, children on the cusp between success and failure, [should] receive 45 minutes of intensive test preparation four days a week, until further notice" (de Vise, 2007 para. 2).

It is perhaps easy to understand why the public is so enamored of high-stakes experiences. Sporting events, TV talent contests, food cooking competitions, etc. are the steady diet offered by the American popular culture. We want to be part of a winning team and we revere those who get the winning results. It is easy, then, to make the leap to want the same for our children. The simple proposition that high-stakes events lead to improved performance is another example of the availability heuristic at work. High-stakes tests and the results they yield are digestible information. What may turn the public's stomach, however, is an honest look at the tests themselves.

"The Mismeasure of Man"

In his seminal work, "The Mismeasure of Man," Stephen Jay Gould (1981) takes on the measurement community. In a wide-ranging assault on everything from craniometry to IQ tests, Gould lays out the argument that humans have a long and infamous history of mismeasuring one another. He stakes his claim on two fallacies: reification and rank. According to Gould, reification is

> . . . our tendency to convert abstract concepts into entities (from the Latin *res*, or thing). We recognize the importance of mentality in our lives and wish to characterize it, in part so that we can make the divisions and distinctions among people that our cultural and political systems dictate. We therefore give the word 'intelligence' to this wondrously complex and multifaceted set of human capabilities. This shorthand symbol is then reified and intelligence achieves its dubious status as a unitary thing. (Gould, 1981, p. 24)

The second fallacy, ranking, Gould defines as

> . . . our propensity for ordering complex variation as a gradual ascending scale . . . ranking requires a criterion for assigning all individuals to their proper status in the single series. And what better criterion than an objective number? Thus, the common style embodying both fallacies of thought has been quantification, or the measurement of intelligence as a single number for each person. (Gould, 1981, p. 24)

The designers of NCLB's high-stakes testing programs must have been channeling Gould when they thought up the idea of assigning numbers to student performance. Reification and ranking, as described by Gould, appear to fit conveniently under the availability heuristic umbrella. We can imagine a number and an order associated with our respective intelligence potential; anything more "wondrously" complex does not compute. How fitting then for policy makers to design a system that quantifies and ranks such ineffable and mysterious human skills as literacy and numeracy.

In a modern day version of "fool's gold" we believe that standardized testing is a system that gives us a data rich collection of student performance that accurately reflects each child's potential. With this mother lode of comparative statistics, we can evaluate and rank our students. Who would dare to question a state-sponsored regime that includes official uniform booklets for all students, directions for administration, guidelines for scoring, and score reports that quantify and order student performance? The program seems (a) efficient, (b) egalitarian, and most of all, (c) useful. In this author's opinion it is (d) none of the above.

On the issue of efficiency, there are examples of mismanaged administration and scoring throughout the country. Education Sector, a Washington-based think tank, surveyed 23 states in 2006 and found that 35% of testing offices had experienced "significant" errors in scoring and 20% didn't get results back "in a timely fashion" ("Testing Companies Struggle," 2007, para.6). The latter problem - not returning scores in a reasonable timeframe - is an egregious error in the effective use of test results. In New York, where grade 3-8 tests are administered to approximately 300,000 students a year, the English Language Arts test is given in January and the math test is given in March. Results are not scheduled for release until the end of the school year. As one Regent put it: "Is this information really valid for instructional planning when you take a test in January and get results six months later?" (Saunders, 2008, p. 4). Given the volatile nature of cognitive development in children through their early teen years (Elkind, 1981), test scores that are not returned for months are not only meaningless, but can be counterproductive. Scores on any exam have a shelf life; once expired, results that are used for diagnostic purposes can lead to poor instructional choices. Imagine receiving the results from a test for a medical condition months after the onset of the problem. By then the patient would have died, the condition worsened, or perhaps the more fortunate would have spontaneously recovered. Certainly, the nostrums that might have worked based on a timely diagnosis would be useless after the problem had run its course.

In his assessment of No Child Left Behind, Hursh (2008) uses New York's testing program as an example of NCLB-mandated test deficiencies:

> . . . almost every recent standardized exam in New York has been criticized for having poorly constructed, misleading or erroneous questions or for using a grading scale that either over- or understates students' learning. Critics argue that an exam's degree of difficulty has varied depending on whether the State Education Department (SED) wants to increase the graduation rate (and therefore make the exams easier) or wants to appear rigorous and tough (and therefore makes the exam more difficult). (Hursh, 2008, p. 504)

Arenson suggests that incompetence may be a factor in high failure rates in some NewYork high school exam results:

> Furthermore, sometimes an unusually low or high failure rate may not be intentional but the result of incompetence. The June 2003 Regents 'Math A' exam… was so poorly constructed that the test scores had to be discarded. Only 37% of the students passed statewide. (as cited in Hursh, 2008, p.505)

In an event sponsored by the National Academy of Sciences Committee on Incentives and Test-Based Accountability, a representative from the Educational Testing Service made these sweeping charges against NCLB tests:

> . . .federally mandated education accountability systems [are] psychometrically weak, and predicated on mistrust between the actors and the system. We spend too much time . . . on outcomes, and not enough time on process, or collective human judgment. . . . he acknowledged that we had no idea what it meant, really, to be "proficient." In the absence of wisdom, we rely on single-number or composite-number metrics. (Flanagan, 2008, para. 7)

But what about the equality issue? Surely one can't quibble with a design that requires that the same measuring device be used for all children. In an odd version of noblesse oblige, those fortunate enough to have college educations, i.e., the policy makers, have designed a system, they believe, that will raise up those who have been educationally neglected by using the *same standard of measurement for all*. This notion seems eminently fair. Here is an argument that may be the mother of all oversimplifications.

The extraordinary differences in background, resources, and home environments that our students present to us each day across the country affect the way they perform in our schools. The skeptics can go to any school district's socio-economic status (SES) indicators and make a prediction regarding test score results. What they will find is that the correlation between SES and academic achievement is astonishingly strong (Hayes, 2004). The policy makers insist that we will leave no child behind if we test all children with the *same* instrument - a solution that fits the definition of an available heuristic quite neatly. What they don't focus on are the glaring inequities in home life that children bring to the schoolhouse and which ultimately affect their academic standing. All the high-stakes testing plans that can be mustered in state education departments and testing corporation headquarters, will not overcome the crushing effects of poverty in neighborhoods that are not equipped to support young, developing minds. (We should be cautious of temporary gains that are sometimes posted in inner-city elementary schools and hailed by NCLB advocates as signs that the testing juggernaut is working. These gains are often the result of "test-preparation regimens" and have little impact on secondary school performance) (Sanacore, 2007,p. 35). Neuman (2008), the erstwhile assistant secretary of education, is eloquent on the subject of poverty and schooling:

> A child born poor will likely stay poor, likely live in an unsafe neighborhood, landscaped with little hope, with more security bars than quality day care or after school programs. This highly vulnerable community will have higher proportions of very young children, higher rates of single parenting, and fewer

> educated adults. The child will likely find dilapidated schools, abandoned playgrounds, and teachers, though earnest, ready to throw in the towel. The child will drop further behind, with increasingly narrow options. (Neuman, 2008, para. 7)

As an ironic aside, many high-performing districts may be unfairly reaping the rewards of high-stakes testing results in the real estate sweepstakes. In a piece on the relationship between home values and test scores, the following is noted:

> . . . overall test scores may reflect more on parental advantage than school quality. A student from a privileged background, in a high-income school district, may arrive at school well-prepared and start out scoring well on standardized tests. Years of schooling may not improve that student's scores. . . . On the other hand, a disadvantaged student in a different school district could end up improving his test scores more than the privileged student, all because he went to a high-quality school. But in the end, if his test scores are not as high as that of the privileged student, the school will not get as much credit, at least in terms of house prices. (Ascribe newswire, 2006, paras. 13,14)

Finally, the issue of the usefulness of the tests – i.e., are the test results giving us information that will help us to predict future success - is taken as an article of faith by an unwitting public. If it's a reading test, it must be useful in indicating how skillful students are in reading, and how they will perform in real-life situations when asked to read. Surely the tests must be valid instruments to guide us in our plans for the next generation. Read on.

Hear what Berliner and Nichols (2007) have to say about construct validity, the validity that tells us whether a test measures the abstract attribute or characteristic it claims to measure:

> We found numerous examples from schools across the country that had dedicated hours upon hours preparing students for the test – drilling, emphasizing rote memorization, teaching students how to take tests, reviewing over and over again the concepts that will be represented on the test, and giving multiple practice tests, all at the expense of other content, ideas, and curricula that may not be represented on the test. At some point a line is crossed, and it messes up the interpretation of what a test score means. Construct validity is compromised when that line is crossed. No longer are we measuring real-world math or reading skills. Instead, it becomes a test of how well students memorized math content or how adept students are at filling in test-booklet bubbles. In these instances, it isn't content mastery that matters but how well (or efficiently) students can memorize information that is rewarded. (Nichols & Berliner, 2007, p. 122.)

Buttressing the test-prep/validity problem is the huge disparity that is being discovered between nationally administered NAEP exams and state administered NCLB tests. Michael Petrilli, a researcher at the Thomas B.

Fordham Institute in Washington poses this question in a report analyzing the differences between state and national tests: "The question is, why are the students making so much more progress on the state tests? What is likely to be happening is that schools are teaching students to that particular test" (Medina, 2007, p.B5).

Generally, the question of whether standardized tests measure what matters is troublesome. The real world calls for using knowledge in context, for the most part. Results from a measurement derived from an artificial testing environment will only tell us about how the test taker will do in an artificial testing environment, not how he or she will fare in the world, presumably the criterion that really matters.

Vygotsky, who studied how children learn and grow in groundbreaking work done during the early part of the 20th century, argued

> . . . against standard intelligence and achievement testing procedures and against the view of development and education that emerges from the use of such tests. . . . He regarded the traditional tests of intellectual functioning of his time . . . as extremely limited because they only assessed "static" or "fossilized" abilities, leaving out the dynamic and ever-changing quality of human cognition (Berk & Winsler, 1995, p. 26)

Wineburg (1997) refers to the difference between Vygotsky's approach and the more traditional view:

> In contrast to traditional psychometric approaches, which seek to minimize variations in context to create uniform testing conditions, Vygotsky argues that human beings draw heavily on the specific features of their environment to structure and support mental activity. In other words, understanding how people think requires serious attention to the context in which their thought occurs. (Wineburg, 1997, p.4)

Perhaps most fundamental of all with regard to testing's usefulness is whether what we are teaching is worth testing. With the emphasis on the tests themselves, there has been little time left to examine the curriculum. If we can believe Daniel Pink (2005), we are teaching 'left brain' skills to our children who are entering a 'right brain' world. Issues involving creativity, imagination, empathy, etc. are largely being ignored in the curriculum.

> Routines and right answers are commodities. They are essentially free, anybody can do them, therefore they have zero or almost zero economic value. Whereas the ability to think, being able to be creative, to empathize with others, to tell a story, to listen to other people's story; being adept at design, at connecting the dots, at recognizing patterns, at pursuing a life of purpose – those are not just the things that are going to enrich young people as human beings, but those are the types of things that our children are going to be doing for

> a living. So there is a sort of a double whammy flaw in this routines and right answers obsession being used right now by many public school regimes. (Pink as cited in McCaw, 2007 pp. 35-36)

So while we trot out the ubiquitous comparative statistic tables that number and rank our children and our schools we become sanguine in our belief that the job is getting done. With a number and a rank, we are 'locked and loaded' with accountability information. No need to complicate matters with stories of test abnormalities or children's differing readiness to take on school tasks or whether or not the tests measure anything useful for the long term. Sir Kenneth Robinson, an internationally recognized author and lecturer on the subject of creativity, has this to say about the current state of public education:

> Our education system has mined our minds in the way that we strip mine the earth for a particular commodity – and for the future it won't service . . . Our only hope for the future is to adopt a new conception of human ecology, one in which we start to reconstitute our conception of the richness of human capacity. (Robinson, 2007)

Snowflakes or Widgets?

What we have here is a failure to communicate. Those who believe that children need space and time and freedom to make mistakes, to exercise their imaginations as well as their bodies, to grow in fits and starts and on their own timetables, and to be understood as the complex organisms that they are, seem to be at odds with those who believe in packaging, promoting, distributing, codifying and simplifying school assessments. In short, some seem to believe that children are like snowflakes, unique and delicate. Others seem to believe that children are like widgets, uniform and shatter proof. The factory model approach is protected by those who claim to be offended by the "soft bigotry of low expectations" (Terkel, 2007). Like junkyard dogs, these barking voices protect the myth that shallow and often misleading data gleaned from one-size-fits-all testing can improve America's schools. While the public may "buy" these simplifications because they are available and appear reasonable, we may all need to take a collective breath and ask ourselves whether we are "buying" a convenient lie.

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Preparing White Student Teachers through a Critical Consultative Interaction Model

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Abstract
Demographic trends suggest that most Latino and Black schoolchildren attending city schools will have White classroom teachers. Consequently, the potential for cultural mismatches may impede meaningful teaching. In response, many teacher educators mull over approaches to prepare student teachers to effectively instruct all schoolchildren, especially Latino and Black youngsters. While many approaches, particularly methods pertinent to multicultural education, have become commonplace throughout teacher education programs, purposeful consultations between student teachers and schoolchildren about teaching and learning, are rare. This paper presents a "critical consultative interaction" model, comprising "the three r's" of: (a) regarding Black and Latino schoolchildren as resources, (b) raising the right questions of them, and, (c) reflecting on schoolchildren's responses, as an additional approach to prepare student teachers for city classrooms. Implementing this model positions future teachers to obtain pedagogical information from schools' primary constituents—schoolchildren. Doing so exemplifies democratic practice in a political yet public place called school.

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Introduction

The 21st century has ushered in a shift in the demographics of United States' public schools. Prior to the 1954 Brown vs Board of Education of Topeka, KS decision, the likelihood of Black youngsters having Black teachers was highly probable. Yet, since that time the probability of Black and now Latino schoolchildren having teachers unlike them is almost certain (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2001; U.S. Department of Education, 2003). While the pupil population in large city classrooms is approximately 42% Black and Latino (Nieto, 2004; Scarpa, 2005) statistics show that nearly 90% of the K-12 teaching force is White (National Education Association, 2003), female, and middle class (Zumwalt & Craig, 2008). Because this demographic divide creates a cultural mismatch that may impede meaningful teaching (Nieto, 2004), teacher educators continue to debate best-practice approaches in preparing student teachers to effectively teach all schoolchildren, especially Black and Latino youngsters. This paper offers an alternative approach called the "critical consultative interaction" model—explained later in this paper—in response to the teacher preparation debate.

The Cultural Mismatch

Even with the current explosion of technological advances along with the real and virtual mobility that commerce affords, many people in the United States still reside in segregated communities, having had no intimate friends and significant social interactions primarily with people unlike them (Delgado & Stefanic, 2001; Nieto & Bode, 2008). Most prospective teachers are White, female, and come from middle class backgrounds. As a result, they have minimal authentic understanding, if not a skewed perspective, of what life is like for youngsters who live and learn amid economic challenges (Orfield & Lee, 2005). National trends suggest that on average, Black and Latino schoolchildren attend high poverty schools (Orfield, & Lee) and are more likely to experience greater economic hardships than their White counterparts (Nieto & Bode, 2008; Sherman, 2006). According to the National Assessment of Educational Progress report (2004), one-third to one-half of all schoolchildren do not match the conventional values and practices that are pervasive throughout U.S. schools. In addition, school district curricular mandates and procedures usually reflect the viewpoints of policy makers, politicians, and high level administrators, who have long been privileged individuals and influential groups (Kumashiro, 2004). Student teachers have limited first-hand, relevant and prior experiences with diverse groups and "other people's children" (Delpit, 1995/2006) to draw from and inform their instruction (Howard, 2006). Any cultural gap between instruction and student achievement is more a corollary than a cause (Villegas & Davis, 2008), and a "cultural mismatch" can interfere with the learning process (Harding, 2005; Gay & Howard, 2000).

A cultural mismatch in the classroom refers to an unawareness of the tacit rules, nuances, and idiosyncrasies that exist between teachers and their students principally due to racial and ethnic differences (Harding, 2005; Irvine, 2003). When teachers are unaware of students' identities or misperceive their academic histories, it is difficult to create, and provide pupils with appropriate learning opportunities (Irvine, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). Appropriate pedagogy is academically and developmentally relevant, and socially meaningful to

learners. Pedagogy that is irrelevant, inaccessible, and out of synch with students illustrates teaching that is intolerable, unjust and supports a deficit oriented standpoint that is grounded in a positivist paradigm, which undergirds conventional educational legislation (Bejoian & Reid, 2005) and mainstream practice (Gallagher, Heshusius, Iano & Skrtic, 2004).

To minimize cultural mismatches, teacher educators infuse multicultural education via cultural seminars, diversity workshops, innovative field experiences, and special lectures and conversations about race (Cochran-Smith, Davis, & Fries, 2004; Banks & Banks, 2003). Teacher educators also introduce theories and practices that are referred to as "culturally synchronous" (Irvine, 2003), culturally relevant (Ladson-Billings, 1995) and responsive (Gay, 2000; Villegas & Lucas, 2002) and recognize the "funds of knowledge" that all pupils bring to school (Gonzalez, Moll, & Amanti, 2005). Irrespective of the name, each approach is designed to assist student teachers in the discovery of instructional practices that fittingly meet pupils' academic needs and increase their intellectual development. Furthermore, many teacher education programs strive to help student teachers to learn to position school-age children to think and act in ways that are critical for their present and future lives—which is or should be the outcome for all schoolchildren enrolled in public schools (Meier, 1995/2002, Cook-Sather, 2002; 2007). Still, these practices rarely emphasize that an additional way for student teachers to learn about teaching is to purposefully engage, confer, and consult schoolchildren, especially youngsters with a history of being poorly served and undereducated. Perhaps this lack of emphasis stems from a societal perception that Black and Latino youngsters are deficient (Shields, Bishop, & Mazawi, 2005).

Consulting Schoolchildren

Conferring with Black and Latino schoolchildren counters deficit ideologies (Gallagher et al., 2004). Historically, deficiency notions prevail when members of one group, often in the majority, think other groups, usually in the minority, are biologically inferior and physiologically deficient (Shields et al, 2005;Valencia, 1997). Within the context of education, deficit thinking typically manifests when school personnel, the majority of whom reflect mainstream culture, assume that schoolchildren primarily living and learning in the city—customarily referred to as "minorities" (Davis, 2009)—have "limited intellectual abilities, linguistic shortcomings, lack of motivation to learn, and immoral behavior," (Valencia, 1997, p. 2) or that their families are disinterested in their child's education (Garcia & Guerra, 2004; Skrla & Scheurich, 2001). There is a belief in the intellectual and motivational inferiority of certain youngsters that silences and ignores their voices which is oppressive. Yet, conversely there are affirming perspectives that encompass consulting schoolchildren.

In recent decades, Julia Flutter and Jean Rudduck of the U.K. and Alison Cook-Sather of the U.S. have been advancing the idea of consulting schoolchildren. These scholars have put forth the notion that talking with and listening to youngsters about their schooling experiences becomes a progressive practice that allows youngsters to actively participate in their own academic development and improvement of school life (Shultz & Cook-Sather, 2001; Flutter, 2007; Flutter & Rudduck, 2004), and shapes policy and school reform (Cook-Sather, 2002; 2007;

Thiessen & Cook-Sather, 2007). They, along with other scholars, note the logical and intuitive aspects of talking with schoolchildren about teaching and learning, including learners who are in early childhood (Duckworth, 2001; Dockett & Perry, 2003; Stafford, Laybourn, Hill, & Walker, 2003), bilingual (Ballenger, 2004; Gonzalez, et al., 2005), and with disabilities (Cook-Sather, 2003).

Literally and figuratively from where they sit, schoolchildren have an up-close vantage point of the curriculum, the classroom, and teachers (Cook-Sather, 2002; Flutter & Rudduck, 2004). While elementary schoolchildren have access to intricate classroom details, due in part to the 7-9 hours that they spend in one classroom with one teacher, and middle and high school pupils having more than twelve teachers by their high school graduation, it is reasonable and equitable to expect that student teachers will learn to obtain potentially useful instructional information from pupils. The information and feedback that is available positions student teachers to correct ideas and clarify misconceptions directly from schoolchildren and begin to develop new understandings about teaching (Bransford, 2000).

To be effective, the consultation has to be genuine and classroom teachers must assure pupils that their views will be heard; that their ideas and perspectives will be given careful consideration; and that pupils will hear back on their comments and explanations of decisions made because of the consultation (Flutter & Rudduck, 2004; Quicke, 2003). However, establishing this open consultative climate does not happen without support. Classroom teachers and school personnel must work together to create a trusting environment that will support such exchanges. In this way, educators are empowered and simultaneously empower schoolchildren with opportunities to critique, challenge, and work toward changing practices that are oppressive, ineffective, and fail to support worthwhile teaching and learning (Kumashiro, 2004). As early as the second grade, Black schoolchildren can recognize good teaching and are willing to "tell their side of the story" (Howard, 2001, p.132). While instances of teachers conferring with school-age children who are Latino (see Gonzalez, et al., 2005) and African American (Ladson-Billings, 1995; 2001) occur, more illustrations are needed (Howard, 2001; Meier, 1995/2002).

Unfortunately, the lure of quick fixes via commercial curricula, the overemphasis on high stakes testing at the expense of exemplary pedagogy, and the fear of relinquished power, particularly to Latino and African American youngsters (Cook-Sather, 2002) competes heavily with consulting schoolchildren to help student teachers learn their craft. All educators have a need and responsibility to learn from schoolchildren (Cook-Sather, 2007; Meier, 1995/2002). Teacher educators must learn to view pupils as a call to service; to find ways to listen and assist schoolchildren who are underrepresented, and work towards eradicating the many hegemonic strictures against them in education and the world (hooks, 2003). It is useful and important to listen intently to multiple perspectives and to use the voice—or note the silence—of typically marginalized learners. Such attentiveness is useful and important in critiquing one's own pedagogy and improving the learning opportunities for all schoolchildren. Non-oppressive pedagogy is innovative and empowering. It is "education for the practice of freedom" (hooks, 1994)—nurturing pupils' minds to become intellectuals and counter-hegemonic. "All [schoolchildren] are indeed capable of generating powerful ideas" (Meier, 2002, p. 4). Unfortunately, some educators continue to embrace the "pedagogy of poverty" (Haberman, 1996) that

includes authoritative and didactic practices believed best suited for Black and Latino learners (Cook-Sather, 2002; Cushman & Rogers, 2005). This dominating perspective in big city classrooms means that schoolchildren will rarely have the opportunity to provide direct information to teachers about the learning process. There is an insidious and long standing practice of not listening to the voices of or requesting critical input from city children, many of whom are of color. Consequently, this prevents reciprocal opportunities for schoolchildren and teachers to receive and reflect upon information obtained from each other (Kozol, 2005).Consulting such schoolchildren about pedagogical matters is contrary to the conventional capitalist and oppressive schooling notions.

Clearly, a democratic teaching stance values everyone equally (Glickman, 1998; Ladson-Billings, 2000; Noguera, 2003). Equitable classrooms are democratic classrooms because they give all children, regardless of color or circumstances, the opportunity to achieve academically. Progressive teaching values the ideas of others, and uses that information to influence, shape, and improve practice (hooks, 2003; Nieto, 2004). True, consulting schoolchildren is a radical undertaking but has merit in that it views children as sources of knowledge and as co-developers of the curriculum which illustrates sensible, democratic practice (Shor & Pari, 1999). When teachers seek and use students' comments and ideas to inform instruction, it conveys a message of egalitarianism and a shared responsibility for the learning experience in a community known as the public school. Despite its political nature due in part to its access, origins and evolution, maintenance, and perpetuation, public schools are inherently democratic spaces for the greater good (Giroux, 2003). Democratic practices include developing pupil's capacity to think, discern, and function in today's world, as well as to operate in ways that are responsive to the growing and expanding diversity in United States public schools.

The "critical consultative interaction model" proposes an additional way to consider preparing student teachers, especially White student teachers, to aptly respond to the growing diversity in big city classrooms. It is a model that involves student teachers seeing every pupil, regardless of their circumstance, as a useful resource to understand teaching, talking with pupils in ways that they will understand what is being asked of them, and finally, once the information is obtained, reflecting on the methods used and data to begin shaping student teachers' nascent pedagogy.

Methods

As a research perspective phenomenology explores what it means for human beings to undergo an event (Van Manen, 1990), as they attend to and define the event (Gubrium & Holstein, 2000). To that end, the study focused on the participants' interpretation of what they were learning about teaching from the schoolchildren via the consultations. The goal is not to speculate or solve problems—outcomes often associated with natural science. Instead, the objective is to "generate rather than test theory" (Flowerday & Schraw, 2000, p. 634) and offer a "template for understanding" (Gonzalez, et al., p. 95) capable of informing, shaping, and enriching the non-participants grasp of the event (Van Manen, 1990).

It is hermeneutic or interpretive phenomenology that "describes how [the 'insider'] interprets the 'texts' of life" (Van Manen, 1990, p. 4) or their lived

experience. It might be helpful to think of lived experience in three parts. One part refers to a human being and her or his lifeworld. With regard to this study, the human beings were the student teachers and their lifeworlds were their classrooms in the city. The second part of lived experience refers to the ways in which human beings encounter, describe, and understand aspects of their lifeworlds. In this instance, lifeworld is the encounters, events, and happenings student teachers had while in those classrooms. The third part of lived experience refers to the ways in which preservice teachers made sense, interpreted, and understood lifeworld happenings.

Although rooted in philosophical perspectives, phenomenology is fitting when examining life in classrooms including teachers' professional practice and their pedagogical concerns (deMarrais & LeCompte, 1994), which made it appropriate to examine the city based practicum experiences of these eight student teachers.

Participants

Boris, Carmella, Kameron, Jacqueline, Lisa, Matilda, Mary and Terri[1] were the eight White student teacher participants. "Five to twenty-five" is an appropriate participant number for qualitative inquiry grounded in phenomenology (Polkinghorne, 1989). They revealed anecdotes of growing up in working-class homes, traveling to international and national destinations beyond their local community, commuting to middle-class suburban communities to attend school, along with having gay and closeted peers, classmates of color, and best friends of varying religious beliefs. Such experiences diverge from the prevailing notion of "White teachers as homogeneous" (Nieto, 2003, p. 25) and culturally encapsulated (Howard, 2006).

Setting

The study took place in a large, New England city school district. City is used to contrast the terms urban and inner city—expressions that are pervasive code words and euphemisms to suggest twisted and skewed existences of certain people rather than note the goodness of their humanity and vibrancy of their community (Davis, 2008). During the study, the city's website revealed a thriving downtown shopping area, a financial district home to a branch of the US Federal Reserve Bank, and entrenched cultural arts reflective of myriad ethnicities comprising its 21 neighborhoods. Despite the 36 colleges and universities, and world-renowned medical area, providing unskilled, skilled, and professional employment, the city posted 4.8% unemployment and 23% violent crime rates. The pupil racial demographic of the city's school district was 15% White, 48% Non-Hispanic Black, 28% Hispanic, 9% Asian/Pacific Islander.

Jacqueline and Lisa were placed in 9th grade remedial English/literacy classrooms in the same school while Matilda and Terri were in 11th grade classrooms in another school, with Matilda in general education World History and Terri in a remedial English classroom. Boris and Kameron worked at a magnet middle school with 6th, 7th, and 8th grade youngsters in advanced and general education curriculum

[1] Participants selected pseudonyms to shield identity.

tracks as well as with learners with IEPs. Carmella and Mary were in separate 4th and 5th grade general education classrooms in the same elementary school.

Data Collection

Interviews. Except for Boris, all participants underwent four 1-1.5 hour semi-structured face-to-face interviews. Because of a scheduling error, Boris underwent three interviews. All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed into 12 to 23 page documents. The first interview obtained biographical information and presented the focus of the study. The second and third interviews occurred after two separate classroom observations—discussed in the next subsection. Both of these interviews allowed each participant to debrief following their teaching event and to help her or him reflect upon what might have been learned from the schoolchildren about teaching. The fourth interview occurred at the end of the practicum and was designed to obtain participants' overall perspective on their 14 week student teaching experience. Participants were also asked to discuss and interpret new pedagogical insights and concerns stemming from their consultative interactions with the schoolchildren.

Observations and School Visits. Except for a single visit with Boris, all participants were visited twice. Each visit lasted 2 to 4 hours and comprised an observation of a classroom teaching event and a meeting which served as the second and third interview previously referenced. An observation log was used to record participants' words and actions during their teaching event. Since pupil assent was not obtained, the observation notes focused on the student teachers' responses and reactions to pupils rather than on the pupils' behaviors.

Reaction papers and Journals. Each participant was asked to write a reaction paper following their teaching event. Participants were asked to note new insights about teaching and learning, resulting from their interactions with the youngsters. All participants maintained a reflection journal, but the frequency of writing and submission varied from daily to weekly, while the volume ranged from one paragraph to several pages per entry.

Data Analysis

Van Manen's (1990) thematic analysis approach was used to analyze across the corpus of data and within each case using a detailed or line-by-line manner. Thematic analysis is the reduction of salient features of the data usually comprising turn of phrases, metaphoric and unique expressions, and other extraordinary terms to locate meaning units and themes. Examples of salient features are participants' words of "getting at the root" of things and keeping their "finger on the pulse of the class," "Heart-to-Heart conversations" and "next year when I am a teacher." Unique expressions became in vivo codes while isolated phrases, sentences, and sentence clusters served as natural meaning units. This thematic analysis process led to the three themes of (a) regarding Black and Latino schoolchildren as resources, (b) raising the right questions of them, and, (c) reflecting on methods used and data obtained which comprise the model.

Findings

Regarding Black and Latino Schoolchildren as Resources

Given the historical marginalization and under education of Black and Latino schoolchildren in the United States, the first step in the "critical consultative interaction model" requires regarding schoolchildren as useful resources (Howard, 2001). Student teachers must view youngsters as having ideas and suggestions for teachers to consider and draw on to inform teaching and learning. Among the eight participants in this study, such regard is implicit in their metaphors that suggest schoolchildren can be a resource. Participants felt schoolchildren could help to "get at the root of what's going on," "keep [their] finger on the pulse of the class," and help reveal "what's on their radar." Moreover, student teachers made explicit reference to schoolchildren as resources. Lisa considered the primarily Latino and Black pupils in her setting as resources.

> You learn from everything in your environment and that includes children deprived or not. Children are not just here to learn from you but also to teach you. Teachers can always learn from them. Children's experiences are part of teachers' education. We need to learn from them [the experiences] and be able to incorporate that [information] into the lesson.

Lisa acknowledged that people learn from their environment and because hers as a student teacher is the classroom, that it, along with the schoolchildren, provided her with worthwhile information. She also recognized that children bring their experiences to school and that those experiences should be a part of a teacher's education. She indicates that teachers and children should learn from each other and that the information that teachers gather should be incorporated into their instruction. Lisa's perception of Black and Latino pupils as resources whether "deprived or not" is of note because she makes no distinction among pupils. From Lisa's point of view, all schoolchildren, regardless of circumstance, are useful to teachers.

Jacqueline acknowledged the value in schoolchildren's ideas and feedback.

> I think I am the fortuitous one because the last semester I taught I didn't open myself up to learning. I was trying to survive and figure out what the hell I was doing. This time around it took me a few weeks to realize like the [children] had a lot to offer to me. Their feedback was very important….

Jacqueline felt fortunate to learn from schoolchildren, although by her own admission, the appreciation developed over time.

Boris felt that schoolchildren's feedback supplemented textbook learning.

> You don't learn from books only but from the kids and their reactions and what they say…. When I am out there by myself, and you say the wrong thing, they let you know. You don't say the right thing they give you more feedback and that's how I think you really learn how to teach.

Boris acknowledged that he could learn from the reactions and statements of schoolchildren. He credited them with correcting teachers' misstatements and

providing instructive advice. Boris sees schoolchildren as an additional resource for his professional development.

The metaphorical and explicit regard that the student teachers have for Latino and Black schoolchildren as resources is in contrast to the deficit thinking that Latino and Black schoolchildren are substandard and intellectually inferior (Sheilds, Bishop, &Mazawi, 2005; Valencia, 1997). Despite participants' White middle class background which greatly influences mainstream and majority culture in the U.S., their views of schoolchildren as resources is contrary to deficit thinking and progressive. Progressive thinking is advancing, groundbreaking, and democratic—not oppressive. The learning experience is not a teacher-centered, adult led hierarchy, but rather values the ideas of everyone (Cook-Sather, 2002; Meier 1995/2002). Recognizing "[children] as sources of knowledge and as codevelopers of the curriculum is a democratic choice" (Shor & Pari, 2000, p. 7).

Student teachers agree that school-age children are situated to teach teachers, and provide them with potentially useful data. Through their metaphors and detailed explanations, participants revealed that the perspectives of Black and Latino schoolchildren can and will be beneficial to them as teachers. Participants were able to see beyond the all too often negative identity and circumstance projected onto Latino and Black schoolchildren, by mainstream culture, and considered them as resources on professional growth.

Raising the Right Questions of Schoolchildren

The second step in the critical consultative interaction model is raising the right questions of schoolchildren. Participants demonstrated this by asking schoolchildren about pedagogical matters in a manner that was developmentally appropriate for their age and comprehension level. An example of this occurred when Mary talked with 4th graders about their experiences in the literacy center. This understanding arose after first asking a 4th grader a close-ended question about her favorite aspect of school. In response, Mary received a simple, yet specific two-word response, "center time." Recognizing the limitations of the answer, Mary quickly realized the need to delve into the youngster's mindset for details. Mary followed-up with probing questions that directed the schoolchild to first, describe and detail center time, and then to explain her likes about it.

> One thing I learned was to probe for deeper responses when talking to students. When I did this, she seemed to tell a lot more. For example, when I asked her to tell me her favorite thing about school, she simply answered "center time." Then I said, "Tell me about center time. Why do you like center time?," she said that she gets to spend time with her friends. She also told me that she likes painting with her friends, using building blocks, writing, drawing, and doing puzzles. I learned that children need probing for clarification.

Incomprehensible questions will undoubtedly yield erroneous or unarticulated responses—a situation Boris realized when he said "if teachers don't say the right thing, [children] don't give feedback." Mary felt saying the right thing included "first discussing what constitutes serious feedback and advice," while Kameron indicated

the classroom had to be "organized" and "classroom order had to be maintained" in order to consult schoolchildren. Student teachers felt youngsters had to be able to grasp the questions asked of them and that having an orderly process was necessary.

Another example of raising the right questions involved student teachers presenting themselves as novice teachers in the process of becoming teachers. They indicated being "a student teacher" and "new to teaching." Mary prefaced some of her requests for information by "tell[ing] them I am a new teacher and that I had not done this before and if you have any suggestions for me…" Lisa stated, "I tell them that I am brand new at this and I want to know what they think [and ask w]hat they think I can do to make it better." Along related lines, Terri compared herself to the children when she told them that she needed information because she was "just learning like you guys…."

While racial and socioeconomic mismatches between the teachers and schoolchildren have the potential to impede meaningful learning experiences, the student teachers in this study used developmentally appropriate practices to raise appropriate questions. By positioning themselves as learners and pupils, student teachers established genuine parallels with the schoolchildren that they could understand. The method was practical and given the significant amount of time that schoolchildren spend in schools. Establishing similarities between themselves and the schoolchildren exemplifies a progressive stance and democratic practice. Student teachers who see themselves comparably as students, disrupts the ingrained conventional teacher/adult-centered, hierarchical nature of schools. This repositioning of power shifts the purview of teacher as dominant knower and pupil as lowly learner to a place where they are co-developers who share the responsibility for teaching.

Raising the right questions also included using oral and written methods for formative and evaluative purposes. Questions were raised during the course of instruction and school hours. Expressing oral questions that were raised for formative purposes were apparent in student teachers' requests for help and guidance as a novice suggests a desire to build upon information that is received. Indicating that one is new to a situation or a pupil of something implies budding development; it signals that a person is in the process of growing.

Carmella provides another example of raising oral questions during school hours for formative purposes. She interviewed 5th graders as the first step in her inquiry project about the influence of culturally relevant children's literature on the learning process. In particular, Carmella hoped that the "initial interview with each child [would] hopefully shed some light on how [best] to support their academic growth."

> During my interview with Ofelia…I was surprised to hear… she clearly considered her "culture" Salvadoran, not Latino. She said Eve Bunting's *Going Home* was most enjoyable because the pictures kind of reminded her of her own culture, but the pictures from her culture were different. She pointed out that the pictures representing El Salvador are different from the ones in this book about Mexicans. When asked if she thought of her culture as Salvadoran, or Latino/Spanish-speaking, she quite firmly told me, "Salvador."

> My interview with Armando offered a slightly different slant on how he defined his culture. He indicated that last year's social studies unit on Central America was the one time he's felt like his culture was represented in the classroom. When asked if he considered his culture as Central American, from Honduran, (where his family comes from), or Latino/Spanish-speaking, he told me Central American. Culturally relevant texts that *really* get at the heart of how students identify their culture seems a necessary to engage them.

Carmella's interaction with the schoolchildren is a significant example of the role that teacher educators can play in facilitating student teachers' consultations with schoolchildren to obtain meaningful pedagogical information. An inquiry project assigned through Carmella's graduate course led her to seek input from the 5th graders in her practicum site. Such encouragement aligns with Flutter, Rudduck, and Cook-Sather's acknowledgement of the underuse of consulting school-age children about teaching and learning. Positioning student teachers to ask schoolchildren about teaching is a practical approach to obtain information and foster new ideas to develop meaningful classroom practices (Bransford, et al., 2000). By these examples, raising the right questions happened orally and for formative purposes. Participants wanted pupils to provide them with information that could be used for planning instruction or improving future practice.

Student teachers also raised oral questions of schoolchildren for evaluative purposes. Usually at the end of a lesson or learning experience, student teachers sought youngsters' thoughts and feedback about the delivery and quality of a lesson. Mary's queries of "How did that work? Was that interesting to you? Do you think you learned something?" along with Matilda's questions of "Do you think this works, not work, should we trash it? and "What do you guys think about…?" evinced participants raising oral questions for evaluative purposes. Terri consulted 11th graders about the implementation of her integrated English and drama lesson.

> After I taught the lesson, I talked to a few of the kids regarding their thinking and I received lots of positive feedback. Many kids said that it was one of the best lessons I had taught because it was something new. The students also said they liked that they had the freedom to do whatever they wanted within reason of course. Other kids commented that they enjoyed [the activity because] it helped them learn the book a little better. One kid said that if he were the principal, he would give me an A for the day. Other kids who are more quiet or shy commented that they did not like it as much because they felt uncomfortable….

Terri received evaluative information about pupils' experience of her English and drama lesson. On one hand, pupils expressed their appreciation of the lesson because it was new, non-restraining, and fun. They enjoyed the opportunity to process the text in a unique way and if required to grade her, would assign Terri an A. Evaluative feedback was also critical, such as the time Terri learned that shy and introverted schoolchildren felt uncomfortable about having to read aloud or role-play characters.

On another occasion, Terri planned a "candid heart-to-heart talk" with pupils. She wanted to question them about their poor performance on a writing assignment.

She spent an entire week planning lessons and leading activities to help children compose essays about *The Great Gatsby*. On the Friday prior to the Monday due date, she asked the children if they needed extra time and made herself available after school for extra help. The children assured Terri that things were in order and they promised to submit essays on time. They did. However, to Terri's surprise and disappointment, the bulk of the essays were poorly written. After consulting her university supervisor, she decided that, instead of blaming the schoolchildren, she would engage them in a meaningful conversation to understand the situation.

> Yesterday we had a big Heart-to-Heart. I had to really think about how I want to teach writing and the actual unit because a couple of my students, who worked really hard, seemed to shut down after I gave them their paper back. I thought of [the Heart-to-Heart] myself…. I knew that I wanted to talk with them. I was really frustrated so my supervisor helped me come up with a plan for how to use a Heart-to-Heart to approach [the situation]. Yesterday I put Heart-to-Heart on the agenda and asked the [children] if they had ever had a Heart-to-Heart…. We talked about what it means and then about the paper. I only gave them a week to do the assignment and they told me that was not enough time. Then they were like, "Oh, you are not trying to be like, 'your papers were terrible, and 'cause you think you know everything.' I think that I learned that they appreciated having the talk. After I finished talking, one of my students said, "Thank you."

As a result of the Heart-to-Heart with the pupils, Terri realized new things about teaching. First, she realized that the pupils needed sufficient time to compose a paper. Even with class activities and class time to write, one week was an insufficient amount of time to successfully complete the assignment. Second, frustrated, Terri realized that giving children a chance to provide evaluative information was a better way to handle her frustration than being confrontational with them. She sought support and advice from her university supervisor/mentor to devise a plan for raising evaluative questions of the youngsters about her teaching and their learning during the school day. Such outreach suggests that teacher educators can play a positive role in positioning student teachers to consult schoolchildren. A third lesson for Terri was discovering her pupils' appreciation of the opportunity to share their ideas. Apparently, they appreciated the chance to debrief and analyze the situation. In another instance, Matilda had a similar discovery about youngsters' responsiveness to her oral queries. Matilda indicated that the, "children seemed to appreciate the fact that someone…allowed them to voice their opinions on schooling."

The appreciation that Terri and Matilda noted for the schoolchildren is in contrast with the idea of deficit thinking often attributed to Latino and Black schoolchildren (Valencia, 1997; Shields, Bishop, & Mazawi, 2005). The pupils' responsiveness counters the notion that Latino and Black youngsters are best suited for authoritarian and oppressive teaching practices. The fact that schoolchildren provided useful information to Terri and were welcoming of the opportunity to answer questions suggests that progressive, democratic practices are fitting with Black and Latino schoolchildren.

Student teachers also raised oral questions of the schoolchildren after school, primarily for formative purposes of school time teaching events. Boris often consulted middle school pupils who were serving after school detention, with his cooperating teacher for late school arrival or inappropriate class behavior, or while they were "hanging around because they didn't want to go home," as was the case with a 7th grader. Matilda had similar after school encounters with 11th graders.

> It was after school and I needed to ask someone and he was there so I said, "Do you have a minute? Can you come and talk to me for five minutes?" Then with another girl it was the same thing when she was around after school so I asked her. Then another time…I did it another kid was hanging around and so he ended up joining in on the interview. But that was good to get different people.

Whether during or after school, for formative or evaluative purposes, elementary, middle, and high school student teachers raised oral questions of schoolchildren.

Raising the right questions in writing happened through letters and journal entries. Lisa's use of writing comprised a weekly letter activity with 9th graders that developed from an idea she had at the start of the semester. Originally used as a strategy to introduce herself to the schoolchildren, Lisa later thought, "It would really be cool to get them to respond. I thought they would rather write a letter than just to talk about…what they want from this class. I would have them [write] on Friday and then we could start fresh on Monday." Schoolchildren wrote about "What they didn't like and how things were going." Many of the letters included positive comments and suggestions for Lisa's instruction.

> [They made] many like positive comments…like "this is really cool"…. They would write to me…. Sometimes if…they wanted to see more of something or wanted to see less of something, I would get a whole bunch of letters like that. It was really good for me because I'd think, "OK well maybe we should change the way we're doing this." I remember quite a number of letters… that said, "We want more time to read." I'm never gonna argue with that. The newspaper articles kind of went by the wayside as a result of the kids… They said it [current events articles] was something that was discussed during the history class…. So, I kind of changed that as well….

Although not a prevalent practice in teacher education, Cook-Sather (2002) uses a "weekly exchange of letters between student teachers…and [children] who attend a local public high school" (p. 8). Cook-Sather acknowledges the difficulty for student teachers to entrust schoolchildren with the authority and realize children's capacity to contribute to the professional practice. Yet, Lisa was willing and enthusiastic about having pupils respond in writing to her questions about her teaching—a practice that she shared with Jackie who decided to invite her pupils to provide her with evaluative information about her remedial English/language arts course. Jacqueline's use of daily journal writing to obtain written information from the 9th graders in her classroom originated through her collaboration with Lisa. In an attempt to encourage writing, Jacqueline occasionally prompted students to provide her with evaluative information about her course.

> In another effort to analyze my effectiveness in the classroom, and to highlight areas that need change, I provided the students with an opportunity to write me a letter. The prompt for this letter, which I provided for the students, was, "Please write me a letter about your experience in our class. Include things that you enjoy, things, that, you dislike, things that you want to change and things that you would like to see remain the same."

This collaboration between Lisa and Jacqueline illustrates why student teachers are often paired and grouped in the same practicum site (Bullough et al, 2002). As members of the same teacher education program designed to prepare teachers to work in city classrooms, Lisa and Jacqueline were placed in the same high school and worked with some of the same 9th graders.

Raising the right questions meant asking school-age youngsters to speak and write about their schooling experiences. Both Lisa and Jacqueline expected useful information about teaching from the 9th graders. As is the case elsewhere in the data, what is significant about this student teacher-pupil interaction is the use of developmentally appropriate behaviors implemented by student teachers that enabled Latino and Black schoolchildren to provide student teachers with useful information.

Reflecting on Schoolchildren's Responses

Reflecting on schoolchildren's responses is the third step in the critical consultative interaction model. Many interpretations of reflection exist (Reagan, Case, & Brubacher, 2000; Valli, 1997), including the careful consideration of important matters, along with being "open to the voices, opinions, and advice of others" (p. 68). Primarily through their journals and reflection papers, and sometimes during their interviews, each student teacher recognized the opinions and advice from the schoolchildren. In general, student teachers reflected on the use of oral or written methods to consult the schoolchildren. Participants also thought about the oral written information received, whether they considered it useful for current or future use "next year" when they are teachers.

Reflecting on oral methods included thinking about questions raised by pupils. Carmella was intrigued that 5th graders raised questions.

> I thought about how incredibly interesting to me their questions were. Ynis told me about some of the things she had learned. It was one of the first times that I remember her acting like an expert. What an important way for her to feel! Now, I wonder how I can encourage a change among the whole class toward this questioning behavior. I really have to think about how I might do this.

Student teachers also reflected on the fact that the youngsters made statements and comments during classroom interactions. Mary noted her "interactions [that] occurred during reading as a successful discussion with Aaron," a 4th grader whom she taught. Jacqueline thought about a 9th grader who "informed [Jacqueline] that the literary terms confused [the pupil] and that she would just rather read the entire chapter through, then discuss the important points and several others chimed in and agreed with her comments." Terri thoughts focused on what her pupils said about "note

taking not being easy…." and her hope of "turning them on to note taking and not turned off." Matilda recalled how pupils' "use of open-ended questions got them thinking and helped to get their brains active," while Mary recognized that pupils' oral questions were for "trying to get a little bit into their thinking," which eventually allowed her to become inspired by the schoolchildren's advice. "The [pupil's] comments inspired me to try to examine more closely my patterns of which [pupil] I call on." Conversely, in one instance Kameron was annoyed by pupils' oral suggestions.

> I remember one time when I got really annoyed, not annoyed, but I had planned on doing poetry the last three weeks and then they tell me that they want to do something else which is fine. I guess that's what I got for asking them, right? So instead of writing poetry we did more reading.

Participants also reflected on the written methods that they used to consult the primarily Latino and Black schoolchildren about their opinions regarding the teaching and learning that they were experiencing. Noting the letters received from the schoolchildren and their willingness to offer advice, Lisa piled the "good and constructive responses," and admitted feeling "fortunate enough to receive useful feedback from the students regarding their classroom experiences and their learning styles."

> Those letters I am going to keep and reflect on them because I really saw myself through their eyes. I think that was a major thing that made me change my approach…. I find it very positive and encouraging to get feedback from them. I have been fortunate enough to receive useful feedback from the [schoolchildren] in regards to their classroom experiences.

In these instances, student teachers note the way in which they obtained information from Black and Latino pupils. The student teachers reflected upon the use of non-oppressive pedagogy, which is empowering because it recognizes the intellect of schoolchildren and that they have insight. Thinking about the use of oral and written means to receive advice and information from schoolchildren, especially youngsters who have long been marginalized and perceived as deficient, is a counter-hegemonic stance. All schoolchildren have opinions about their schooling experiences and therefore they should be welcome to and play a collective role in shaping and informing learning.

Student teachers also considered the utility of the information for implementation during their current practicum or in the future when they have their own classrooms. Lisa thought she could use her pupils' oral feedback during her practicum.

> I think that it is really important for them to be able to express their thoughts…Hearing their reactions, I really enjoyed that because it makes me see who they are as a students and I find that it is important because that helps me teach them.

For Matilda, teaching the schoolchildren meant "modify[ing] the lesson so it could be more manageable tomorrow," while Carmella contemplated using the information

during her "next take over week." Terri acknowledged the need to be open and willing to try new ideas at any time.

> I think that this experimenting will continually enhance my teaching. By being willing to try out different things I will learn what works for the [schoolchildren]. I also think that changing instructional and delivery methods can keep the content fresh and exciting for them.

Participants also reflected on using the information when they were teachers in the future. Mary noted that the information from her 4th graders would be "something to take in the classroom" and Boris considered his plan to consult schoolchildren in the future because their advice helped him understand their willingness to work collaboratively.

> I plan to implement this in the future, there are a lot of things that I have to do but I will use this in the future…to see how much time [pupils] to do a project…how well they work together; how do they get along."

Reflecting on the use of oral and written methods to obtain information from schoolchildren positions student teachers to acknowledge their embrace of equality and belief in the idea that schoolchildren, historically viewed as unable, are indeed capable of speaking and writing about information pertaining to their learning within the context of school.

Conclusion

Collectively, the White student teachers in this study illustrate the critical consultative interaction model. Student teachers' statements and actions demonstrate their ability to regard Black and Latino schoolchildren as useful resources; raise the right questions; and reflect on the ideas and feedback from the schoolchildren. Through oral and written methods used during class time or after school, student teachers were able to obtain information for formative and evaluative purposes that can be immediately implemented or used in the future. This critical consultative interaction model offers teacher educators an additional or alternative approach to preparing White student teachers to effectively teach Latino and Black schoolchildren, and to consider how that information might shape a teacher's instructional repertoire for current or future implementation. To help student teachers aptly understand and implement the critical consultative interaction model requires new considerations for teacher educators and teacher education.

Recommendations

First, teacher educators must work to eradicate deficit thinking, particularly regarding Black and Latino schoolchildren. All too often, youngsters who live and learn in the city are blamed and featured as causing the problem, rather than recognized and celebrated as part of the solutions. The perpetual labelling of the lives of Black and Latino schoolchildren as marginalized and their experiences as minimal, rarely gives them significant opportunities to have a direct influence on teaching and learning, especially their own. Any schoolchild who regularly attends school is certain to see a range teaching. One way to obtain such data is by believing that all youngsters, regardless of their race and socioeconomic background, have the capacity

to inform pedagogy. In fact, attending to the ideas and feedback from the schoolchildren themselves, rather than student teacher's interpretations of youngster's advice, is a limitation of this study. However, student teachers' experiences were the focus of this study.

Second, teacher educators must be willing to reexamine the prevailing approaches of preparing White student teachers to teach Latino and Black schoolchildren living and learning in the city. There are calls for innovative methods and new approaches to reconfigure the field experience as an option (Bullough, Jr, et al., 2002.) If the predominant use of top-down, hierarchical approaches still has teacher educators calling for ways to effectively prepare student teachers, particularly those intending to teach in the city, perhaps it is time to begin working from the base up. A productive farmer knows that an overworked ground will not yield a bountiful harvest. What must be added to the old ground is fresh soil full of rich nutrients to remake the earth useful. The critical consultative interaction model is an approach intended to rework the current, top-down approach of preparing student teachers to a method that positions student teachers to learn about pedagogy from the ground-up.

Third, teacher educators must understand the nexus of critical pedagogy, democracy, and education. As a societal concept, American democracy espouses equal regard for each of its members. Relative to schools and classrooms, its members include schoolchildren—all of whom should have the chance for full participation and parallel representation in every facet of the learning experience (Ladson-Billings, 2001; Meier, 1995/2002; Noguera, 2003; Shor & Pari, 1999). If American schools are believed to be places where democracy thrives, schoolchildren must have the opportunity to contribute to its existence and improvement.

Public schools are common spaces where all of its members should share and benefit equally. Preparing White student teachers in particular, to talk with and listen to Latino and Black schoolchildren about teaching and learning within public spaces, is right and just. Given the demographic changes in big city classrooms, perhaps it is time to consider how the youngsters in those classrooms might aid in methods of preparing future teachers to teach.

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Educational Policy vs. Culturally Sensitive Programs in Turkish Educational System

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to examine the perceptions of elementary school teachers about the sensitiveness of principals, teachers, and curriculum on multicultural education. Education provides the transmission and the advancement of its culture while it is developing and enhancing the common values, the integrity and the progress of multicultural society (Sahin, 2006). If the society has multi-ethnic culture, the educational policy should cover all kinds of multi-ethnic cultures to exchange cultural values each other. The findings of this study indicate that Turkish educational system ignores multiculturalism in their schools. Curriculum does not cover cultural differences. Principals and teachers performing their responsibility relatively show respect different cultures even if it is not at the expected level.

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Introduction

Educational policy needs to create a culture of mutual interest and respect, and a belief of being valued among all ethnic groups to build multicultural schools. For educational policies, being more effective and a desire to share are important. Placing value and respect in individuals and groups can be more effective to encourage participation and sharing than all the glossy terms.

Policy makers and educators should address and embrace multicultural structure, and educate their students about other cultures and the importance or learning about those cultures. This approach in diversity has caused many educators to recognize the need to expand their knowledge of multicultural education within public schools (Nagel, 1995).

Historical Background

Turks has a long history in multicultural structure. After Turks have come to Anatolia since 1071, they have lived with the different ethnic groups. The policy of Seljuk and Ottoman governments is not segregation and discrimination to the ethnic groups. Each ethnic group in the time of Ottoman Empire opened their own schools and followed their own curriculum. However, after the establishment of the Republic of Turkey, all minorities and foreign schools were closed down in 1924 due to the reasons of national security. Later, there has been one national education policy and does not care of ethnic differences. According to Akyüz (2001), there were thousands of minorities and foreign schools in the territory of the late Ottoman Empire. After the collapsing of Ottoman Empire including different ethnical and cultural groups, a new state called Turkish Republic was founded in 1923. In Turkish Republic only one and unique national identity became a matter of primary importance by the effect of official ideology. However, religious and ethnical components were thought of minor importance in the new state. In the following years, due to the new historical view affected by pluralist thoughts, ethnical, religious and cultural identities have begun to appeal again and the ethnical consciousness have become more widespread (İnalcık, 2006).

Turkish educational policy does not care about the differences of ethnic, racial, and religious backgrounds; it seems that the Turkish educational system has the operative melting pot whatever their ethnic, racial, or religious backgrounds although there is no officially announced policy about melting pot. The population of Turkey is now more than 70 millions. 86 percent of the population (60 millions) is Turks and 14 percent of the population (10 millions) is ethnic groups. There have been many ethnic groups and different religious backgrounds in Turkish society (İnalcık, 2006). According to Andrews (1992), there are at least 21 ethnic groups and 10 religious backgrounds. Within the larger macroculture in the Turkey are many smaller subsocieties or subcultures known as microcultures. According to Chinn (2002), microculture share cultural patterns of the macroculture but also they have their own identity sets of cultural patterns. Students from the microcultural groups share their traits and values that bind them together as a group.

The Turkish educational system does not care of culturally diverse students even if the structure of the republic has culturally harmonic structure. There is a high respect and equity in constitution and political statements about culturally diverse structure. The government sees this structure as national richness which has not been reflected to the national educational policy and curriculum. The Ministry of Education supervises and controls all educational institutions in the country. The ministry of national education has almost absolute power over decisions affecting the administration of all schools (Sahin, 2006).

In Turkey, education is a uniform for people in all parts of the country, and the transmission and advancement of the dominant Turkish culture is an integral part of this education. The presence of any sub-societies and subcultures, their historical existence, their values, norms, and ways of life are ignored in the formal school system. Neither the values, norms, nor any other cultural element of the people culturally or ethnically different or the labels referring the ethnic or cultural differences are mentioned in the school curriculum or in textbooks (Sahin, 2006). Textbooks do not consist of different culture, religion, language, history of ethnic groups. There is only one dominant Turkish culture in the school curriculum.

Cultural differences were seen as the prosperity of the overall culture in Turkey (SHP Report, 1990). The importance of these cultural differences in forming a new policy of education was emphasized in the report. Ergil (1995) stated that the republic was based on a multicultural structure of the population and aimed to be equal toward all religious and ethnic subgroups with the rules of secularism and populism. But, unfortunately, it failed to balance the equal development of subgroups in different geographical districts and the author indicated this inequality to be the source of problems.

The teachers and schools can only use the textbooks and teaching materials approved to be suitable by the Ministry. A prerequisite for approval of a textbook or teaching material by the Ministry of Education is that it must reflect or possess qualities of the curriculum. If cultural differences are empirically apparent and the qualities of school curriculum and textbooks are assessed to be significantly different, it may be concluded that the school curriculum is culturally unresponsive (Sahin and Gulmez, 2000).

Culture in which ethnicity is maintained is difficult to analyze as a whole, but ethnic diversity may be considered as the source for cultural diversity. Even though the presence of different ethnic origins is often pronounced, there are no recent official reports or documents to determine the number or size of different ethnic groups in Turkey, other than for some religious minorities and immigrants.

Culture and Multicultural Education

Multicultural education incorporates the idea that all students, regardless of their social-class, racial, ethnic, or gender characteristics, should have an equal opportunity to learn. Multicultural education implies that teachers should carefully examine their own racial and ethnic attitudes—as well as the culture and structure of classrooms and schools (Banks, 1992).

Culture provides a general design for living and patterns for interpreting reality and it consists of behavior, ideas, attitudes, habits, customs, beliefs, values, language, rituals, and ceremonies (Nobles, 1993). Culture is a way of life which includes knowledge, belief, art, customs and other capabilities and habits (Seckinger, 1976). In any large society, there are usually a number of communities or sub-societies that regard themselves as distinct and those sub-societies develop certain values and practices and so possess their own subculture. They may have professional, economic, geographical, political, religious, racial, ethnic, or language differences that form a particular background (Kneller, 1971).

Education transfers all ideas, beliefs, values, rituals, and ceremonies from one generation to another. Wyman (1993) states that all aspects of education are cultural therefore, schools can potentially support the development of multi-cultural identities by students of color, and the acceptance of such individuals by the majority population. Researchers, Cardenas and Zamora (1993), recognized the importance of the relationship between a student's culture and an education program.

Wyman (1993) defined culturally different students as students at risk because their chance of experiencing success in public schools is less. He indicated the chief factor causing these students to be at risk was the dominant culture that is reflected in schools. The maintenance of one's community, history, language, talents, and skills is of paramount importance to any group of people (Hidalgo, McDowell, & Siddle, 1993). The dominant group thus determines how minority education is structured and how minorities are treated in school.

Multicultural curriculum refers the ways in which we differ from each other, including ethnicity, race, religion (Tileston, 2004). Some of these differences are highly visible at one extreme, while others are completely invisible at the other extreme (Greene, 2003). But, it does not make sense to focus on visible site of differences. The important point is to understand and accept differences either visible or invisible.

Teachers meet the needs of diverse children in schools they must understand the concept of multicultural education, show sensitivity toward cultural diversity, capitalize on strengths, and avoid accentuating any weaknesses of culturally diverse groups (Irwin, 2001). Teachers should examine their own beliefs about teaching and determine how effective they are in accommodating their students' different cultures, lifestyles, and learning styles.

A principal's support alone is not sufficient in the teacher's multicultural education efforts. However educational policy must support multicultural education and educational programmes must include of multicultural sensitiveness. Otherwise, principals` and teachers` efforts are not sufficient to integrate diverse student structure in schools.

Multicultural curriculum provides a lens to understand their own culture and the others and connects to a larger global community. It is important to teach multiculturalism at the all school levels not only understand their society but also the world cultures. Post-modern curriculum is open and places a high value on human thought (Bruner, 1986).

Irwin (2001) states that multicultural education is an equitable education for all students regardless of ethnic and cultural background, religious affilation. From this perspective, multicultural education is implemented to enhance tolerance, respect, understanding, awareness, and acceptance of self and others in the diversity of their cultures.

People live in a more complex society in which diversities have to be together (Akyol, 2006). Schools are thought to have an important function to establish a social integration, to perceive the diversities as richness not the reason of separation and to make this opinion prevalent in the society. The policy of multiculturalism helps teachers realize harmonium in the schools (Banks, 2002, English, 2003). Certainly, it is important for children to learn about different cultures, races, and religious and to study different histories, languages, and modes of life. Pupils having different lifestyles and cultures have an opportunity to meet each other at the same place and they are affected by the others' lifestyles and cultures. The multicultural curriculum helps students to understand the real goal of multiculturalism. Emphasizing differences help children value them (Elrich, 1994).

A culturally diverse school is generally defined as one that honors, respects, and values diversity in theory and in practice and where teaching and learning are made relevant and meaningful to students of various cultures (NCATE, 2002). If there is a diversity among school children that is very hard to say having a society without diverse structure, the challenges and opportunities this diversity presents, and the need to teach all students to high standards while providing a common set of core values. Diversity carries cultural richness to schools to learn about each other's different values, beliefs, and ethnic (Elkind, 1997, Fullan, 1993). The organization of the school includes the administrative structure and the way it handle to diversity. School policies and procedures refer to practices that affect the delivery of services to students from diverse backgrounds. Principals of culturally diverse schools encourage understanding and respect for individual differences and strive for high educational standards and levels of achievements for all students.

Multicultural education not only prevents the prejudices, but also provides the people to appreciate the diversities. School managers have also essential responsibilities and important roles about that topic. They should emphasize all the students can learn and focus on the special curriculum for the marginal students and appreciate the students in the minorities who do satisfying works (Beswick, 1990).

Educational system should attempt at bridging diverse and segregated class groups together in some sense of understanding and respect for one another through a restructured, reconceptualized, multicultural curriculum and need to develop the skills to foster multicultural tolerance among their own schools.

Culturally Sensitive Curriculum

Culturally sensitive education requires an understanding and recognition of the values of the diverse groups (Hodgkinson, 2000), the issue of 'whose values' gains central significance, posing challenges to leadership and wisdom. Riley et al. (1995) engage with the issue by discussing the extent to which the leader's values and

beliefs, the school's values and beliefs and the community's values and beliefs can be harmonized for effectiveness.

To create culturally sensitive educational education, educational policy must be set goals for culturally diverse students. These goals for culturally diverse schools are to establish settings where all students are made to feel welcome; are engaged in learning; and are induded in the full range of activities, curricula, and services. As the leaders of their schools, principals must work collaboratively with school staff members, parents, and the community to accomplish goals. The benefits of culturally diverse schools are numerous and include preventing academic failure, reducing drop-out rates (Richards, Brown, & Forde, 2004).

Culturally sensitive schools must be addressed to ensure that a school is responsive. Principals and teachers in the culturally sensitive schools should encourage understanding and respect for individual differences and strive for high educational standards and levels of achievement for all students (Richards, Brown, & Forde, 2004). Schools must be places were students and teachers learn, are valued, and develop capacities to care for each other and the greater society.

Multicultural curriculum should help students recognize and understand the values and experiences of ones' own ethnic cultural heritage; to promote sensitivity to diverse ethnicities and cultures through exposure to other cultural perspectives; to develop an awareness and respect for the similarities and differences among diverse groups and to identify, challenge and dispel ethnic/cultural stereotyping, prejudice, and discrimination in behavior, textbooks and other instructional materials .

Educational leaders` sensitive behaviors integrate not only peaceful classrooms but peaceful society. A value dimension of educational leader highlights the moral and ethical imperatives of school administration (Riley et al., 1995). Multicultural values of leaders contribute successive administration in diverse schools (Benett, 1990).

Methodology for Research

This is a descriptive study. A quantitative method was used to understand the teachers' perceptions of multicultural education. The purpose of this study is to determine elementary school teachers' perceptions of multiculturalism.

A questionnaire developed by the researcher and based on a five-point likert was selected to measure teachers` perceptions of multicultural education. The questionnaire consists of 55 statements in three dimensions. The first dimension, 21 statements, asks teachers how much the school administration is sensitive to the multicultural issues in the school. The second dimension, 22 statements, focuses on teachers' perceptions about teachers' responsibility and sensitivity to multicultural issues while teaching in the classroom. The third dimension, 12 statements, asks the sensitiveness of curriculum to multicultural education. Respondents indicate their choice of responses on the five-point likert scale, thus eliminating neutral or undecided responses. During the study, the data were collected through a 5-point Likert type scale, (ranging from completely disagree (1) to completely agree (5)). During the development of the scale, the literature in relation to the subject area was

reviewed in multi-ethnic and multicultural education and the feedback received from subject specialists was taken into account. While the items of the scale were being written, the literature in relation to the subject area was taken as a base.

One multiple choice question based on Banks`(2004) levels of integration of ethnic content is included on the instrument to determine how teachers perceive that they implement multicultural education.

This study seeks to answer the question: "what are the perceptions of primary school teachers in relation to the multicultural. The answer was sought to the below questions: what are the perceptions of elementary school teachers about the sensitiveness of principals, teachers, and curriculum on multicultural education? Is there any significant difference related to teachers' perceptions on gender, age subject.

The subject of this study was primary school teachers (n=375) who were teaching at twenty different elementary schools, selected randomly for this study located in the city center of Kocaeli, Turkey. When the subjects were analyzed in terms of their gender, 55 % (n=206) were male. When the years of experience in teaching is concerned, 27 % (n=101) were teaching between 0-5 years and/or more. When the faculty they graduated from is examined, 57 % (n=214) were graduates of education faculties. 63 % (n=236) of them were classroom teachers and 37 % (n=139) of them were subject teachers.

The internal consistency of the scale (Cronbach alpha) was .95. The content validity of the scale was examined through the feedback received from subject specialists and by the revision of the literature in relation to the subject area. A pilot study was implemented in an elementary school. Feedbacks from the teachers were considered to provide a better understanding of the scale. The internal consistency of dimensions ranged from .96 to .84.

To analyze the data, the percentages, the frequencies, the mean, the standard deviation scores of each item in the scale were calculated. In addition, t-test and one-way ANOVA were used in order to examine the effects of variables on the perceptions of primary school teachers.

The Findings

Results show that the sensitiveness of multicultural education differentiates among the dimensions of scale (Table I). The highest mean score was found in school administration. Even if the sensitiveness of multicultural education is not enough level in administration, the mean score of school administration (mean=3,55) is higher than the dimensions of teachers and curriculum. However, the score of 3.55 tells us that the school administration has some knowledge and sensitiveness to the multicultural education. The lowest score was taken from the sensitiveness of curriculum. This result indicates that the curriculum mostly does not encourage multiculturalism in classrooms. If we think that teachers do not know exactly what the multicultural curriculum is, the score of 3.03 should be considered as moderate. The mean score of teachers' perceptions about the other teachers is 3,33. It seems that teachers have some part of multicultural approach in their classroom but it is not enough to teach mutual respect among students.

Table I.
The Perceptions of Teachers about the Sensitiveness of Principals, Teachers, and Curriculum on Multicultural Education

Dimensions	N	Mean	SS
School Administration	363	3,55	0,55
Teachers	368	3,33	0,51
Curriculum	361	3,03	0,50

As looking at pearson correlation it seems that there is a significant positive correlation among the dimensions. While the correlation between school administration and teachers is r=0.632 (sig. 0.00 < 0.01), the correlation between school administration and curriculum is r=0.471. It seems that the school administrators are more concern to the teachers rather than curriculum. On contrary to the relation between the administrators and curriculum (0.471), the pearson correlation between teacher and curriculum is r=0.658 which is higher than that of administrators. From this result, it is inferred that teachers are more concerned with the curriculum that they say the curriculum does not cover enough multicultural education (Table 2)

Table 2

The Correlations of the Perceptions of Teachers about the Sensitiveness of Principals, Teachers, and Curriculum on Multicultural Education

Dimensions		administration	teachers	curriculum
administration	Pearson Correlation	1	,632(**)	,471(**)
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	,000	,000
	N	363	360	354
teachers	Pearson Correlation	,632(**)	1	,658(**)
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000	.	,000
	N	360	368	360
curriculum	Pearson Correlation	,471(**)	,658(**)	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000	,000	.
	N	354	360	361

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The first sub-question was “is there any statistically significant difference between the mean scores of males and females in terms of sensitiveness of principals, teachers, and curriculum on multicultural education?”

After testing dimensions of cultural sensitiveness by using t-test at a significance level of 0.05, as seen table III, there is statistically significant difference between the mean scores of males and females in terms of perceptions about school administration and teachers. Female teachers have lower mean score than male of

that. They perceive that school administration has lower sensitivity than males to multicultural education. In addition to this significant difference, female teachers have higher mean score than males of that on the dimension of teacher. However, no statistically significant difference between the mean score of males and females in terms of perceptions about curriculum (Table 3).

Table 3
The Comparisons of Mean Scores of Males and Females in terms of dimensions of cultural sensitiveness

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	df	t	P
School Administration	Female	154	3.63	,55977	349	2,71	0,007
	Male	197	3.46	,59742			
Teachers	Female	157	3.39	,44975	354	1,97	0,049
	Male	199	3.28	,56458			
Curriculum	Female	154	3.07	,43037	349	1,34	0,181
	Male	197	3.00	,55832			

Variance of analysis (one-way) was conducted to determine whether there is a significant difference among the dimensions of scale in terms of age factor. There is only one significant difference at the dimension of administration. Tukey test explains that the younger teachers think that administration has lower sensitivity to multicultural education than that of older teachers. The result tells us that younger teacher have more sensitivity to the multicultural education. However, it was not found any significant difference in the dimensions of teachers and curriculum in terms of age (Table 4).

Table 4.
One-Way ANOVA Results between Teachers' perceptions in terms of age

Dimension		Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	P
Administration	Between Groups	2,481	1	2,481	7,345	.007
	Within Groups	117,896	349	.338		
	Total	120,377	350			
Teachers	Between Groups	1,047	1	1,047	3,917	.314
	Within Groups	94,688	354	.021		
	Total	95,715	355			
Curriculum	Between Groups	.461	1	.461	1,800	.955
	Within Groups	89,435	349	.079		
	Total	89,896	350			

It was found that the sinificant difference at the dimensions of administation and teachers in terms of teachers' subject. In terms of Tukey test, branch Teachers are

more sensitive to multicultural education than elementary school Teachers. However, there is no significant difference in the dimension of curriculum (Table 5).

Tablo 5
One-Way ANOVA Results between Teachers' perceptions in terms of subject

Dimension		Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	P
Administration	Between Groups	2,427	1	2,427	7,247	.002
	Within Groups	115,875	349	.338		
	Total	118,302	350			
Teachers	Between Groups	,986	1	,986	2,624	.043
	Within Groups	92,326	354	.021		
	Total	93,312	355			
Curriculum	Between Groups	.392	1	.392	1,437	.455
	Within Groups	84,264	349	.079		
	Total	84,656	350			

Discussion and Conclusion

Common values are one of the important factors that keep individuals together in a society. Education is expected to develop common values to enhance the progress of the society. Curriculum is the agenda that we follow to develop common values (Nobles, 1993).

With this increase in diversity among Turkish student populations comes an increased responsibility to better prepare future educators to deal with the complex issues and needs of such diverse student groups. Although the Ministry of Turkish Education has no official policy of multicultural education in spite of multicultural structure of the society, administrators and teachers have some kind of sensitiveness to the multicultural education. Principals performing their responsibility relatively show respect different cultures even if it is not at the expected level. However, principals ignore the importance of curriculum in forming of multicultural environment in school. It seems that they care of communicative relations with students, teachers and parents.

Teachers play more important roles in forming multi-cultural schools in the educational systems. They have significant effectiveness on students and administration. If they believe the needs of responsive classrooms, they will do their best to support the multicultural education. Survey results indicate that they have medium concern on multicultural education and see principals' endeavor more than theirs on multicultural education. Younger and female teachers have more concern multicultural education than older and male ones. These findings indicate that next generations would contribute to develop the sensitiveness of multicultural education

and enforce the ministry to improve the multicultural educational policy. If the younger teachers would have lower points than older ones, it would be chaotic for the future of multicultural education. There is no doubt that curriculum does not cover multicultural issues.

Curriculum shows the perspectives of the ministry on multicultural education. The curriculum is prepared and provided to teachers by the Ministry. The teachers have no authority to revise the curriculum or to develop a new one. In order to meet the goals and objectives of the curriculum, the textbooks or related materials, which were approved by the Ministry of National Education, are selected each year by committees for each subject area in each school (Sahin, 2006). Research results show that curriculum has the lowest sensitiveness of multicultural education in terms of teachers' perceptions. If the curriculum is dominated by the culture of an ethnic majority, the students of the same origin perceive that the behaviors, ideas, customs, and values of others are illegitimate or unimportant. Nobles (1993) noted the need for a core curriculum that addresses various cultural differences. The curriculum should take into account the cultural realities of all the students in the school. Others agree that the cultural backgrounds of all students must be reflected in the curriculum (Assante, 1993; Banks, 2004; Gay, 1993; Nobles, 1993; Wyman, 1993).

It is clear that one of the most essential requirements of integrating with the society, learning its culture and obtaining educational and professional opportunities is to learn and use the widespread and common values in the society (Corson, 1992 & Choumak, 2002). It was inferred that the important role of the school principals and teachers to prevent racial bias and provide integration at school (Choumak, 2002; Gilbert, 2004). It can be seen that school teachers and administrators try to help the students integrate culturally and they do not discriminate on the basis of ethnicity. Even some teachers spend extra effort for the pupils in ethnic minorities. On the other hand, we cannot say that all the teachers are sensitive and voluntary enough about that topic. Besides, it is obvious that the contents of the lessons are not satisfactory for ethnic cultural integration. However we know from Bruner (1986) that multicultural curriculum is a device to understand their own culture and the others and connects to a larger global community. Teaching multiculturalism at the all school levels is not only to understand their society but also the world cultures.

It can be inferred from the research that it seems that one of the more important obstacles is not to have multicultural educational programs. Political statements about accepting culturally diverse structure should be reflected on educational programs. In order to provide that, school principal who has to be tolerant towards the ethnic diversity and well-experienced to encourage the teamwork among the teachers and the students. However, the struggles of principals and teachers are not sufficient to remove the ethnical problems. Because the existing educational policy keeps ethnical discrimination in schools. Principals and teachers do not have any rights to change curriculum, the constitutional rights do not make sense for children. The government should accept and implement multicultural educational policy.

Schools are not teaching other cultures in our classrooms. Students who are starting from the first grade and learning how to read and write but do not hear any ethnic name, culture, different religion etc. So they do not know that some of their friends have different ethnicities, religions, languages and cultures. After the

graduation from their school, they become Turkish nationalist due to educational policy.

Higher education must enable teachers to learn and practice this concept. Teacher candidates must be prepared to be culturally responsive teachers (Kroeger & Bauner, 2004). Higher Education Institutions should teach the prospective students and the existing teachers how to teach the multicultural characteristics in schools. Because higher education institutions should be models for the primary, secondary, high schools and, the community in reflecting respect for cultural differences. Schooling can provide the knowledge, skills, and dispositions, for redistribution of power and income among diverse groups of people (Ameny-Dixon, 2004). Principals must work collaboratively with school staff members, parents, and the community to built multicultural society.

The Ministry of National Education should be revised curriculum and care of different ethnics, religions and languages on the programmes. The programme should be sensitive to multicultural education. For ethnical and cultural integration, the contents of the lessons should be examined seriously and ethnic and cultural components of different ethnic minorities should be added to the contents of the lessons. Otherwise, the Ministry would feed cultural biases in the society that can be the causes of many social problems.

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Miscellany

Scope of the IJPE

International Journal of Progressive Education (IJPE) (ISSN 1554-5210) is a peer reviewed interactive electronic journal sponsored by the International Association of Educators and in part by the Graduate School of Library and Information Science at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. IJPE is a core partner of the Community Informatics Initiative and a major user/developer of the Community Inquiry Laboratories. IJPE takes an interdisciplinary approach to its general aim of promoting an open and continuing dialogue about the current educational issues and future conceptions of educational theory and practice in an international context. In order to achieve that aim, IJPE seeks to publish thoughtful articles that present empirical research, theoretical statements, and philosophical arguments on the issues of educational theory, policy, and practice. IJPE is published three times a year in four different languages; Chinese, Turkish, Spanish and English.

The IJPE welcomes diverse disciplinary, theoretical, and methodological perspectives. Manuscripts should focus critical pedagogy, multicultural education, new literacies, cross-cultural issues in education, theory and practice in educational evaluation and policy, communication technologies in education, postmodernism and globalization education. In addition, the *Journal* publishes book reviews, editorials, guest articles, comprehensive literature reviews, and reactions to previously published articles.

Editorial/Review Process

All submissions will be reviewed initially by the editors for appropriateness to IJPE. If the editor considers the manuscript to be appropriate, it will then be sent for anonymous review. Final decision will be made by the editors based on the reviewers' recommendations. All process -submission, review, and revision- is carried out by electronic mail. The submissions should be written using MS-DOS or compatible word processors and sent to the e-mail addresses given below.

Manuscript Submission Guidelines

All manuscripts should be prepared in accordance with the form and style as outlined in the American Psychological Association Publication Manual (5th ed.). Manuscripts should be double-spaced, including references, notes, abstracts, quotations, and tables. The title page should include, for each author, name, institutional affiliation, mailing address, telephone number, e-mail address and a brief biographical statement. The title page should be followed by an abstract of 100 to 150 words. Tables and references should follow APA style and be double-spaced. Normally, manuscripts should not exceed 30 pages (double-spaced), including tables, figures, and references. Manuscripts should not be simultaneously submitted to another journal, nor should they have been published elsewhere in considerably similar form or with considerably similar content.

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International Association of Educators is open to all educators including undergraduate and graduate students at a college of education who have an interest in communicating with other educators from different countries and nationalities. All candidates of membership must submit a membership application form to the executive committee. E-mail address for requesting a membership form and submission is: members@inased.org

*There are two kinds of members - voting members and nonvoting members. Only the members who pay their dues before the election call are called Voting Members and can vote in all elections and meetings and be candidate for Executive Committee in the elections. Other members are called Nonvoting Members.

*Dues will be determined and assessed at the first week of April of each year by the Executive Committee.

*Only members of the association can use the University of Illinois Community Inquiry Lab. In order to log into the forum page, each member needs to get an user ID and password from the association. If you are a member, and if you do not have an user ID and password, please send an e-mail to the secretary: secretary@inased.org .

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