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This Was Not on the Syllabus!: An Examination of First-Year Urban Teachers' Self-Efficacy

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Abstract

Many first-year teachers find it difficult to reach the needs of all their students in part, because they feel their college coursework left them ill-prepared for the complexity they face in the classroom. This is particularly true among urban teachers who often face crowded classrooms of diverse students with a wide range of instructional needs. This study is a comparative case study of two University of Connecticut graduates during their first year teaching in urban schools. Using mixed-methods, the study draws on interviews, questionnaires, and videotape data shared as a part of a monthly teacher study group of similar graduates. I also draw on group conversations in which teachers discussed their ability to reach the needs of all of their students as this was related to their preservice coursework. My findings suggest that many first-year teachers feel university coursework failed to help them. One teacher felt it did not help her at all, while the other felt it helped her but she still could not meet all of her students' needs. Many first-year, urban teachers do not feel confident in the classroom as a result of their preparation from coursework. With this lack in confidence, the teachers may be more likely to leave their urban position, and this may contribute to the high turnover of teachers in urban placements.

Introduction

Urban school systems tend to have very diverse student bodies. Because of this, it can be extremely difficult to reach all of the students. These students should, nonetheless, have the same opportunities as their peers in non-urban settings. Some researchers who note the low achievement in urban school systems blame teachers, while others look to the administration as the cause of the problem. Undergraduate programs intend to prepare

teachers for all populations. However, many first-year teachers are left feeling unprepared and ill-advised to meet the needs of all their diverse learners (Worthy, 2005, Realistic section, p. 3). Any classroom is filled with a tremendous diversity of learners. However, urban teachers face a greater challenge of preparing lessons and units to meet students of both diverse learning styles and varying ethnic, socioeconomic and language backgrounds.

Arroyo, Rhoad, & Drew (1999) state that in addition to a less challenging curriculum, urban students may also feel that course material does not relate to them, hence they may lack a desire to learn more. However, with increasing research, there are specific intervention techniques to increase the achievement of students in urban schools. These teaching techniques take years for instructors to develop. New teachers may feel frustrated as they are unable to hold the interest of their students with curricula that does not interest or relate to them. A beginning teacher's self-efficacy level can be defined as the degree of confidence with their teaching or instruction.

Undergraduate programs should prepare pre-teachers for the numerous challenges that emerge while teaching in an urban population. These may include: students that are uninterested in the curriculum or coursework, how to optimally teach in a multicultural classroom, how to address second language learners, and how to meet the needs of all of the diverse learners in a classroom.

Demographic Characteristics of Urban School Systems

The racial composition of the United States is always changing. "Overall, we have witnessed stagnant growth in the non-Hispanic White population (3%), moderate growth in the non-Hispanic Black population (21%), and rapid growth in the Hispanic and Asian

populations (61% and 69%, respectively)" (Zhou, 2003, Changing Racial Composition of the U.S. Population, p.1). The racial patterns across the nation are clearly unevenly distributed in school systems. "In California…there was no ethnic majority in public schools. The total population of non-White students was 50.8 percent and of Whites 49.2 percent" (Warren, 2002, Introduction, p. 2). With no ethnic majority in public schools, teachers claim it is very difficult to relate to such a vastly diverse group of students. Nationwide, with children of color composing forty percent of all students, and such a large majority of these being far below the poverty level, urban school systems underachieve in federal testing and analysis of achievement. (Warren, 2002).

"Three out of ten [city] students achieved at the level they should have, based on federal standards" (Urban Test Scores, 2004, p. 5). However, statistical evidence demonstrates that, "in these urban centers, where large numbers of disadvantaged kids live, students compete well when compared with national peers of the same race, ethnicity or economic level" (Urban Test Scores, 2004, p. 2). These disadvantaged students perform equally on the same level as their peers from areas that differ in their economical and sociallevels. Thus racial groups and economic levels can be compared to discover a number of similarities. With the minority population of the United States continually rising, the underachievement of these urban school systems must gain more focus and attention. It is clearly evident that as minority populations increase, underachievement in regards to student performance will rise as well.

The Educators in Urban Schools

The teachers and administration within school systems contribute to many problems within urban education. Teachers emerge from universities with some amount

of theoretical training to teach a diverse classroom, but are often unable to transfer and engage this knowledge in the actual classroom setting (Bhargava, Hawley, Phelps, Scott, & Stein, 2004, Assessment of Efforts section, p. 3).

If the teacher is unable to relate to the cultural experiences of many of the students within his classroom, he may, in turn, be unable to relate to the students. Further, which preservice teachers feel they understand culture, they often do not attend cultural events that might help develop their cultural understandings. "Fifty-one percent [of teachers] believed that they had considerable or thorough opportunities to participate in varied cultural experiences, but only forty-seven percent engaged in the cultural experience [within the environment they taught in]" (Bhargava et al., 2004, Close-Ended Question Data section, p. 3). Without experiencing and attending cultural events in the area, the majority of teachers will not connect with the students. These experiences can create an understanding of the cultures because"…one must become a multicultural person before one can become a multicultural teacher" (Bhargava et. al, 2004, p. 4). This transformation can also be improved with the linkage of further multicultural education through these experiences for the educators in their training. Educators must create opportunities for students to excel, regardless of their racial or economic background. With greater multicultural training, this practice can be promoted.

"Low-income, low-achieving and non-white students, particularly those in urban areas, find themselves in classes with many of the least skilled teachers" (Lankford, Loeb, Wyckoff, 2002, p.1). Lankford et al. (2002) proposed several reasons for the true source of this problem, and found a variety of possibilities for the lack of quality teachers in urban school systems. One logical reason lies in the fact that educators tend to teach

where they live. Commonly, teachers from the urban area are of the same race and ethnicity of the majority of the students in the area. These same educators tend to be from lower ranking universities and undergraduate institutions, and therefore, often have training that is not up to par with other teachers. Another cause is attributed to the ineffective hiring of teachers in urban districts. Suburban districts often hire earlier, thereby having first choice among new teachers. Without aggressive recruiting or high qualifications, urban districts are left with less desirable educators. A third plausible reason resides in the variance in the power exerted by the school system. Non-urban schools tend to have high parental-input and demands, which places a stress on the school system to hire qualified individuals. The political power and pressure on a district may contribute strongly to the quality of teachers the district hires.

Many teachers commonly leave urban school systems in search of higher salaries and an easier, less diverse classroom. "Thirty-five percent of New York City urban teachers leave the system" (Lankford et. al, 2002, The Teacher Workplace section, p. 19). This shift leaves the urban schools with gaps in positions and often forces them to hire newer, less-experienced teachers. Some schools don't have a single teacher who isn't qualified to teach. In New York, "many schools have no teacher who is new, is teaching out of their certification area, failed a certification exam on their first attempt, or has graduated from the least competitive undergraduate colleges" (Lankford et. al, 2002, The Teacher Workplace section, p. 2). Many teachers in urban settings, especially New York, have failed their General Knowledge or liberal arts exam the first time they took it. In some schools, eighteen percent of teachers are brand new, and half are not qualified in the subject area they teach (Lankford et al., 2002).

New teachers who step into the school system have little practical knowledge of how to employ their theoretical multicultural training. In other instances, pre-teachers lack any multicultural training, and cannot connect with their diverse classrooms or students of different backgrounds. Some teachers have no awareness of the social injustices, racism, or discrimination that their students of a different color or economic background face. Without these considerations incorporated in their pedagogy, urban teachers will be ineffective in presenting an appropriate and challenging curriculum for their students. (Lankford et al., 2002).

College Preparation Programs

Some first year teachers enter the workforce with many ideas regarding diversity and urban populations. Unfortunately, sometimes these techniques and skills are not applicable in the actual classroom. "…There is often a chasm between what they learn in teacher-preparation programs and what faces novice teachers when they enter the classroom. In the vast majority of situations, when teacher preparation is over, the university steps completely out of the picture. Novices are told by their new colleagues to 'forget what you learned in college' and step full force into 'the real world'" (Worthy, 2005, Preparing and Supporting section, p. 2). Teacher preparation programs are clearly ineffectual if their instruction is dismissed as soon as the classroom door closes.

Other than coursework, college preparation programs must expose their prospective teachers to experiences in settings with which they are unfamiliar. These realistic experiences will enable pre-teachers to grow and learn. If teachers are able to understand and learn from other teachers in these settings, they will be better prepared to enter into the workforce. (Worthy, 2005, Realistic section, p. 3). Coursework can provide

pre-teachers with a lot of theoretical knowledge, but it is these realistic experiences that facilitate growth and understanding. "Many teacher preparation programs are increasing the number of field experiences required or offered but more is not always better; rather, 'the crux of the problem lies in finding situations that provide students opportunities to apprentice in excellent practice accompanied by sufficient time and guidance to establish strong pedagogical knowledge foundations'" (Worthy, 2005, Realistic section, section, p. 3). If prospective teachers don't receive a solid clinical setting with intensive guidance and sufficient time, these field experiences will not produce the desired outcomes. There must be a wide variety of clinic placement settings for the student as well as a concentrated time period to learn and grow from the experience. Thus, quality, rather than quantity of experiences is most likely to matter to preservice teachers' learning in urban settings.

One teacher preparation program states, "…A major goal of our program is to help our students become more critically aware. Although we believe that critical awareness is important for all future teachers, we see it as an essential element in developing the next generation of urban teachers" (Leland & Harste, 2005, p. 66). Teacher preparation programs must critically examine their coursework and field experiences to determine the main goals of every class within the syllabus. These main principles should be embodied in every program and experience that preservice teachers undergo in their teacher preparation. Theoretical knowledge may be important, but if teachers cannot connect this to their actual teaching, that knowledge will go unused.

Within Coursework

It is important to examine the material covered within classes relating to urban or multicultural education. Coursework should challenge the ideals that students enter the class with and expose them to a variety of sources that are useful in their future classrooms. "Most? existing teacher education programs do little to free students from the parochial attitudes that they bring with them" (Leland et al., 2005, p. 63). Courses within multicultural and urban education should test the beliefs of preservice teachers. Many textbooks contain information regarding urban settings that are largely difficult social issues instead of matters that may be addressed by a teacher. It is important for teachers to understand that different cultures have been largely marginalized and discriminated against before they teach. However, teachers should learn more about what can be changed for these diverse cultures within modern societal context instead of learning solely about prejudices that existed in the past. Social topics such as current prejudices may be difficult for teachers to talk about, but they shouldn't be ignored (Leland et al., 2005, p. 63). I think you need just a sentence or two here coming back to your point that teachers need to have skills to both notice social inequalities and to do something about those inequalities. This would including knowing how to modify the curriculum so that it better reflects the student body make-up while at the same time challenging students to achieve high standards.

There are four areas that second language researchers identify as critical in teacher preparation for all subject area teachers in culturally diverse settings. These include, "building empathy toward second language learners' language difficulties and cultural differences, increasing understanding of the process of second language acquisition, adapting the curriculum and instruction to these students' cultural and

language needs, and integrating discipline specific language and literacy skills into area of instruction" (Dong, 2004, p. 202). Teacher preparation in these areas establishes a firm sensitivity towards linguistically and culturally diverse students. There are a variety of strategies that may be used to employ these four areas within instruction. Teachers who are unprepared to teach students whose first language is not English will commonly become frustrated with the language barriers. They will likely dilute their course content, won't modify the way they speak, or may exclude the students from the classroom discussions because they are unaware of how to address these sociolinguistic issues. (Dong, 2004, p. 202). Language empathy and the skills with which to handle language diversity must be attended to within teacher preparation programs to prevent the preceding quandaries.

Teacher preparation programs must teach pre-service teachers to set high expectations for their students. The environment of a classroom influences the attitudes and success of both the teachers and students. When students feel there are low expectations set for them, they are less likely to be motivated to challenge themselves. With a lack of role models, low self-esteem, and a sense of hopelessness, an urban community setting is less likely to thrive (Bailey, 2004).

Teacher-student relationships are crucial for educational and social development in the classroom. Educators influence their students; Teachers must understand that their belief systems will be imparted on their students. The interactions between students and teachers will affect the climate and culture of the classroom as well (Warren, 2002). If teachers express motivation to learn, this attitude towards education may become contagious to a previously unmotivated group of students. Papalewis felt that some urban

educators have the "wait and let fail" approach to many students (2004, Purpose section, p. 3). Students will recognize that their teachers are expecting them to fail, rather than providing an optimistic environment in which to learn.

Specific Instructional Techniques

The "wait and let fail" approach may be related to the dearth of skills teachers have for helping students be successful. There are however, instructional techniques that are demonstrated to be effective. Teacher preparation programs should teach their preservice teachers these instructional skills for their future classrooms. One concern that exists in urban schools is the low reading levels of the students. Papalewis (2004) offered alternative teaching techniques for school systems to improve in this specific area. In order to intervene successfully in a classroom, the teacher must consider each individual student's needs, create and implement a model of teaching designed to this specific student, choose materials that fit this model, determine a focus for future accelerated instruction, look for response-oriented assessment, and offer evidence of success from the model of instruction. This design would be effective for not only lower-leveled students, but also more advanced, unchallenged individuals. Most importantly, this program of design looks at the specific needs of the student, offering an intervention in education that is tailored to the individual.

Teachers must redirect their teaching style to address every single student in their classroom. Bailey (2004) suggested that African American youth be offered more enrichment initiatives that are specifically geared towards their race and age group. Currently, this subset of students is more prone to failure in America because many programs do not spotlight?? African American male students. Every age, ethnicity, and

gender should be addressed in the classroom so that students do not feel overlooked or disregarded by their teacher or educational institution.

Blake (1998) stressed that, most often, the content taught within classrooms does not address students of varying backgrounds. Urban African American students often feel the literature they study in school fails to apply to their lives. They do not do well in response-directed activities for they do not feel that the literature responds to their experiences, which are clearly different than those of their white peers. Therefore, they have difficulty understanding why it is important that they think critically about the application of the literature to their world. One suggestion to teachers is to allow students to create their own cultural texts, and share them with other students of the classroom. These "cultural texts" are personal documents of students that examine their own personal experiences. This enables the students not only to learn about a variety of cultures, but to engage and connect with their own text more effectively. Many texts offered to urban students are a mainstreamed white culture, and the creation of cultural texts would allow students to think critically and respond to the differences they may discern between cultures (Blake, 1998). Students become more active in their responses, and thus will become more involved in response-oriented learning, allowing them to think critically about the cultural differences that exist in literature. By having students write cultural texts, teachers are also allowing students to feel as if their personal ethnicities are recognized and not ignored in the classroom.

Chizhik (2003) proposed that students be introspective about their racial identity in the world. This allows for students to look at how they fit in with other cultures. In addition, Chizhik suggested that students look at white privilege and how it exists in

America which will allow them to "use their status and awareness to facilitate a more equitable educational environment for all students in urban schools" (p. 448).

Students should be offered lessons that recognize cultural identity in order for them to not only look at their own race, but to see other cultural identities in the classroom. Laughlin, Sleeter, and Torres (2004) introduced Freire's Problem Posing Pedagogy. This theory proposes a process of decoding in which "people should be able to question why they are facing oppressing conditions and how to stop and transform those conditions toward their liberation" (Freire's Problem Posing Pedagogy section, p. 3). If learning situations are offered to students that enable them to feel they can transform their position in society, they might become more active in their education. Teachers must engage students by recognizing the oppressing situations that many of their students endure. Many teachers feel that they cannot change the bias that exists in society, so they do not offer this opportunity for transformation and reform to their pupils.

Arroyo et al. (1999) recommend that teachers practice specific intervention strategies that stress self-image and respect for students. Teachers in urban classrooms must set realistic goals for students, while still offering challenges. Differentiation is crucial for a successful classroom. Some teachers seem to focus on remedial work to bring up students who are behind, but they should also offer challenging work to groups of students who are advanced in classroom work. This offers a balance in the classroom by analyzing and challenging every single student.

[you could use a sort of summary 2 sentence paragraph here that sums up what you've said about teaching strategies.

Conclusion

Urban school systems are rich in a diversity of racial and socio-economic backgrounds of students and teachers. More often than not, the majority of the educators in urban schools are younger, more inexperienced White teachers. When introduced to such a diverse environment, these educators may have difficulty relating to and involving all of the students within the classroom. Pre-service teachers are often taught how to teach in a multicultural classroom, but have difficulty transforming this theoretical knowledge usefully in the classroom. More research must be done to offer alternatives for pre-service teachers, allowing them to have an easier transition into urban classrooms.

Some researchers offer specific instructional techniques to better engage students of diverse backgrounds, but more research needs to be done to offer a larger variety of techniques available to teachers. Textbooks and teaching materials appear to be one-sided and biased towards a mainstream culture, and therefore, urban schools must work to provide a better array of materials. Students often feel their culture is ignored in the classroom, and this intervention would allow them to feel that the literature applies to them in some way. Therefore, schools should work to provide less of a bias in the curriculum they develop.

Teacher preparation programs need to address these areas of concern within their coursework in order to better prepare their teachers. In addition, there must be an increase of intensive field experiences to expose preservice teachers to all aspects of urban settings. These direct experiences will promote a better understanding of different cultures and issues relating to urban education. "This attitude is not developed overnight or in the safety of a college classroom" (Leland et al., 2005, p. 76). Teacher preparation programs must understand thatteachers slowly develop comprehension of effective

teaching within urban schools. They must foster this growth for preservice teachers with applicable and realistic coursework and direct experiences within urban classrooms. More research must be done to ascertain the genuine level of awareness of beginning teachers in urban settings.

Methods

Several graduates from the University of Connecticut were offered the opportunity to join amonthly teacher study group to discuss their experiences as first-year teachers and work on meeting the needs of all their learners. Of this population, two participants from urban schools were asked to be in this study which seeks to understand how their self-efficacy as beginning teachers. The participants were informed they were selected due to the fact they taught in an urban environment. Karen[1] is a 23-year-old Caucasian female who teaches third grade in East Hartford; Jessica is a 24-year-old Hispanic female who teaches fourth grade in Hartford. Both participants are graduates of the University of Connecticut's Integrated Bachelor's and Master's Program (IB/M).

A mixed methods approach was taken to collect data regarding the participants' level of self-efficacy in their first year of teaching. The group of teachers met monthly to openly discuss their concerns and thoughts regarding teaching and learning. They were all video-taped in their classroom and using a tuning protocol created at the Coalition of Essential Schools, their colleagues in the group gave feedback. The teacher whose video was being discussed nominated a topic or problem she wanted the group to pay attention to. The turning protocol focused the group's attention on giving "warm" and "cool" feedback around the teacher nominated topic. This narrowed the conversation and made the sessions more responsive to particular teachers' needs and concerns. It usually took

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[1] All subject names have been changed for confidentiality.

one hour to watch and discuss a single teacher's video. In addition, the group meetings were videotaped to record responses and discussion.

All of the members of the group meeting were given a survey in December, but only the data from the two participants in urban settings was used. The survey was another method to understand their level of self-efficacy.The survey contained nine statements with five degrees of agreement: Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree, and Strongly Agree. Both participants were then interviewed in a group format with three open-ended questions: 1. How do you think your prior course experiences affect your confidence to meet the needs of all of the diverse students in your classroom? 2. How do you feel your ability or inability to relate to the different backgrounds of your students affects your confidence level? 3. How confident do you feel in your ability to alter assignments to meet the needs of all your students? After the participants were surveyed and interviewed, the results of the close-ended survey questions and open ended verbal responses were analyzed for patterns and themes.

The questions within the survey and interview were divided into three categorical sections. One section was concerned with prior course experience and how that affected the participants' level of confidence. The second section was concerned with the participants' ability to relate to the different backgrounds of students. Finally, the study was concerned with how confident the participants were in their ability to alter assignments to meet the needs of all of the students in the classroom. All three of these give slightly different perspectives on teachers' level of self-efficacy of the participants. In all three sections, the participants were asked a verbal open-ended question and three

written close-ended survey questions. The three sections were allfused to determine the level of self-efficacy of the two participants.

In considering the study's findings, caution is warranted. This is a comparative cases study so the findings should not be generalized either to all first year teachers or all first-year University of Connecticut teachers. Two participants is not a firm sample size of all urban first-year teachers. Further, both of the participants are female and teaching in difficult urban contexts. It is possible that other pre-service teachers (both male and female) from the University of Connecticut are making more and better use of their coursework in part because their school contexts support such efforts.   Future research could measure several teachers across states from several different teacher preparation programs.Finally, both of the participants took similar coursework in multicultural education so their concerns do not stretch across all of the multicultural courses offered to pre-service teachers at the University of Connecticut. Keeping all of these caveats in mind, there is something we can learn from Karen and Jessica. Both had very successful preservice experiences. Both chose urban settings; Hartford and East Hartford were their first choice jobs. Both had either student taught or done their internships in these districts. And both Karen and Jessica participated in the teacher study group enthusiastically. They wanted to get better at teaching and they were willing to have others critique their teaching in order to do so. Thus, is some ways these two teachers are a best case scenario. If anyone would be making use of their preservice courses, we would expect Karen and Jessica to.

Results

Karen

Karen, the third gradeteac her in East Hartford, does not feel the courses she took in college helped her reach the needs of all of her learners. She feels they did not prepare her effectively to teach in the classroom and strongly wishes that the courses had given more useful knowledge and tips about how to reach all of the students in her classroom. She stated, "[The courses] tell you what to do but don't show you. They don't model."

She feels that she can easily relate to all of the students within her classroom. In addition she doesn't feel that teachers who come from backgrounds similar to their students have an easier time relating to their students. Karen is bilingual and was raised with both the French and English languages. She speaks both equally well and this may influence her ability to understand the different cultural backgrounds within her classroom.

Karen doesn't think it is hard to differentiate assignments to meet the needs of all of her students. However, she stated that when she designs assignments she doesn't differentiate with students in mind. She feels that her assignments somewhat meet the needs of all of the learners in her classroom. She stated, "Time-wise, it is hard to challenge those who can do work easily and a lot of times you do it off-the-cuff, spur of the moment, verbally challenge. But this is hard to plan."

Jessica

As a Latina teacher in Hartford, Jessica has a slightly different experience than Karen. She feels that the courses she took helped and prepared her to reach the needs of all of her learners. On the other hand, she wishes the courses she took had given her more useful knowledge and tips about reaching the needs of all of the students in the classroom. When asked about the coursework she said "TESOL helped me understand

the majority of my students ESL-wise." As a person who understands (though interestingly, does not speak) Spanish, she has had more multicultural coursework than Karen and feels this has helped her immensely to understand the students in the class. Jessica has the state's cross-endorsement as an ESL teacher whereas Karen does not.

Like Karen, Jessica feels she can relate to all of the students in her classroom but sometimes finds it difficult to understand why her students act the way they do. Jessica strongly feels that teachers who come from backgrounds similar to their students have an easier time relating to their students. She says, "Since I know how their home-life is, I am too sensitive." Jessica thinks that she sometimes sympathizes too much with several students and "gives them an excuse to not do their work" because she understands their situation at home. Jessica was raised in the Hartford public schools. This factor may also attribute to her sense that she can relate to her students.

She strongly feels it is hard to differentiate assignments to meet the needs of all of her students. She differentiates assignments with students in mind but does not feel she meets the needs of all of her learners. "All of my learners?" She exclaimed, "I definitely don't meet all of their needs." She continued, "I suck, I don't have support in a lot of ways." Jessica wonders aloud how she can challenge and provide support for every student. She isn't always sure if she should grade some students differently.

Discussion

Neither Karen nor Jessica felt fully prepared to teach in an urban environment. Karen outwardly stated that she could not always reach the needs of all of her learners and blamed her coursework as one of the reasons for this. She does not attribute her low level of self-efficacy to the fact that she does not come from the same background as

most of her students. She felt that her coursework didn't model good teaching methods and this is one cause of her low level of confidence in reaching all of the learners of her classroom.

Jessica, who comes from the same background as many of the students in her classroom, feels that this has greatly helped her. However, she still feels she cannot relate to all of her students. She has a different opinion of her teacher preparation program. Jessica feels her coursework has helped her greatly in reaching all of her students. However, she attributes much of this background knowledge in the TESOL program (a set of five courses that very few preservice teachers take). Her experience as a second language learner helped prepare her the most, she says.

While neither of the teachers feel they are completely failing their students, they both are not fully confident they are reaching the needs of all of their learners. When watching video feedback of their teaching, they were both hesitant and openly stated they were having a lot of problems and concerns.

This low level of self-efficacy may not be attributed to the fact that the teachers are in urban classrooms. In fact, they may lack confidence primarily because it is their first year teaching. However, both of the teachers felt that being in an urban setting has made their situation more difficult. Without her experience with the TESOL program, Jessica may have felt even more unconfident and self-doubting than she already does regarding her ability to reach all of her learners.

In discussing the development of the two teachers with the faculty leader of the group, she indicated that Karen pays much more careful attention to what students are actually learning in her classroom. Karen is able to identify where the problems in the

classroom are coming from and she takes responsibility for those problems. Jessica continues to struggle with providing rich learning opportunities for her students and doing the planning necessary to be prepared for class on a daily basis. Jessica also has difficulty seeing how her actions as the teacher influence the learning environment she creates for her students. In contrast, Karen does a great deal more preparation for her lessons and challenges her students with more ambitious instruction. While both are "beginning teachers" Karen is further ahead in attending to the learning needs of her students.

Together these findings suggest that the role of coursework is complicated. Teachers' assessments of the utility of coursework may not map onto their performance (or their students' performance) in the classroom. Though teachers might assess their preservice education differently, this does not necessarily map onto their self-efficacy in meeting the needs of all their learners.

Further research should be done to determine how the participants' level of self-efficacy increases or decreases in their second year of teaching. Teacher preparation programs should also be examined for their worth and merit. Both participants felt that their coursework tended to be too theoretical and not practical for future urban teachers.

There is diversity in all settings, urban or suburban; no school has learners that are all alike. However, urban populations pose additional concerns for teachers regarding not only different styles of learning but also a wide array of different cultural experiences. Teachers must be prepared to meet the needs of every student and background within the classroom. Karen felt she could do this to a certain degree, whereas Jessica (who is from the same background of many of her students) felt ill-prepared for this. It should not be

necessary that the teachers have the same background of their students in order to reach all of their needs. Teachers must be prepared for this in their teacher preparation programs.

The level of self-efficacy of a teacher can have a large implication on their ability to teach within the classroom. If a teacher feels inept in their ability meet the needs of all of their learners they may give up trying to do so. They might fall into a "sink or let swim" theory of teaching. Coursework and preparation must help pre-service teachers feel confident they can and will meet all of their learners' needs. While Karen and Jessica have different levels of self-efficacy, neither feels full confidence in her ability to understand and teach every student in the classroom. Further research might survey the actual students within the classrooms and determine whether they each feel addressed and understood by the teacher. Additionally, future research may determine a way to examine the beginning teachers' achievement. It is very possible that teachers report low self-efficacy but are extremely successful in their work.

The review of literature determined that coursework must provide teachers with realistic situational knowledge. Both teachers felt that all of the knowledge they gained in their preparation program could not be applied into their setting. This must be altered within the program to increase future teachers' experiential knowledge and boost their levels of self-efficacy. With a firmer background knowledge from coursework, first-year teachers will feel more able to understand and alter instruction to meet the needs of all of their learners.

The use of video to record teaching sessions greatly helped the teachers within the group meetings. They reported they learned a lot by seeing themselves on video and

increased their learning experience. They were better able to examine their own instruction critically and watch students' reactions. This is a method that may also be used in teacher preparation programs to help the preservice teachers increase the success of their instruction much more quickly. They would also be able to determine how they apply what they learn in class to real teaching situations.

Urban situations must be a greater concern of teacher preparation programs. This will increase pre-service teachers' confidence levels and could possibly increase their desire to enter into these settings in their first year of teaching. If a teacher feels unable to meet and understand their students, this low level of confidence may push them to leave their setting in their second year. First-year urban teachers should be researched further and teacher preparation programs should address their concerns within their coursework to increase self-efficacy of future pre-service teachers.

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