

Title of Project:

A Quest to Prepare English Language
Teachers for Diverse Teaching Settings

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Summary:

Fueled by present-day globalization and influx of migration, the unprecedented global demand for English language necessitates the provision of high-quality education for English language learners across the world. This picture places English language teaching at the top of the educational agenda in both English-speaking and non-English-speaking countries. As a result of this critical prominence of the global English language teaching enterprise, the need for preparing *all* language teachers (teacher-learners coming from a range of ethnolinguistic, cultural, racial age, backgrounds with various past teaching, learning and educational experience) for diverse teaching settings in the U.S. and international contexts is more pivotal than ever. The current research study sheds an important light on this need by adopting a TESOL teacher education department and its three MATESOL programs as a research context, and by providing a multifaceted exploration of how program components provide affordances and constraints in developing a knowledge base for ethnolinguistically diverse teacher-learners to work effectively with English language learners in diverse teaching contexts.

More specifically, the current research project is a holistic descriptive case study utilizing quantitative and qualitative analyses to explore the perceptions of

- (a) an ethnolinguistically diverse group of teacher-learners who were enrolled in,
- (b) an ethnolinguistically diverse alumni who graduated from, and
- (c) instructional faculty teaching in three MATESOL teacher education programs

housed in a large, research-intensive university located in a bustling metropolitan area in the mid-Atlantic United States. The data collection sources included questionnaires, a series of semi-structured, in-depth interviews, classroom observations, and programmatic documents. The current study primarily draws upon sociocultural perspectives and more specifically utilizes Activity Theory as an analytical organizing framework to examine the complex interrelations among the participants, and to identify existing institutionalized tensions and contradictions among systemic components in the activity system under scrutiny.

Activity theoretical analysis of individual and programmatic efforts towards preparing teachers for diverse teaching settings in the U.S. and international contexts brought together three interrelated results that highlight an increased need for

- (1) diversification and dynamic re-orchestration of programmatic efforts,
- (2) reimagining distributed agency, and partnerships, and
- (3) developing practicum alternatives.

The study underscores the urgency of embracing the critical need, role and importance of English language teacher education, re-examining the current efforts in our quest to prepare all teachers for diverse teaching settings.

One of the important highlights of the present study is a wider recognition of the heterogeneity of the current and graduated teacher-learners who bring a range of identities, orientations (both at the time of entering, during, and after graduating from their respective programs), and post-program aims. Recognizing such a plethora of orientations was important for several reasons: First, it is absolutely important to acknowledge and embrace the complex and multifaceted image of the MATESOL student. It is accepted that behind any pedagogical decision is an image of prototypical students, also known as imagined audience, which embodies a set of assumptions regarding the profile of students, such as their background, their (lack of) knowledge, their needs and their ultimate aim upon graduation (Matsuda, 2006). This study was important in terms of demonstrating that MATESOL students are not monolithic, and neither are their (sometimes conflicting) perspectives on how teacher education for diverse teaching settings should look. Second, it is also important in terms of understanding the multiplicity of factors and reasons behind teacher-learners' rationale for enrolling in their respective programs, as well as what they would like to attain from their programs. When seen in tandem, the multifaceted picture of MATESOL students, their diverse orientations for enrolling in their programs, and their professional aims upon graduation, necessitate diversification and dynamic re-orchestration of programmatic efforts.

The study presents a series of recommendations for diversifying teacher education practices and developing a shared accountability in teacher preparation for diverse teaching settings and contexts. These recommendations have two-fold importance in shaping teacher education research and policies: first, they showed the consequences and implications of the overemphasis of these three programs on the U.S. teaching context, which stemmed from pressing top-down forces such as the State's influence, the notion of accountability to NCATE/TESOL program standards, and accreditation requirements. It also emerged from bottom-up factors related to the availability of resources to the TESOL Unit, such as staffing, professional expertise, and experience of instructional faculty. The presence and influence of these multiple mechanisms translate into the need for more institutionalized acknowledgment of and preparation for contexts and settings beyond the K-12 public school setting in the United States. Second, building upon teacher-learners' interest in preparation for diverse teaching settings, the present study highlighted the importance and necessity of expanding and diversifying the scope of the programmatic efforts and development.

Significant improvements and developments at curricular and policy levels lie ahead of MATESOL programs for the purposes of transforming preparation practices for a teacher workforce who will strive to meet the culturally, linguistically and academically diverse needs of ELLs in diverse teaching settings in the U.S. and international contexts. These recommendations include

- (1) more rigorous accountability for preparing ESOL teachers for diverse teachings in the U.S. and international contexts,
- (2) diversification of programmatic efforts,
- (3) promotion of distributed agency and partnerships among stakeholders in these programs,
- (4) greater emphasis on field-based experiences interwoven with academic programs, and

(5) community-based professional opportunities to expand the knowledge base of ESOL teachers to encompass effective practices in diverse teaching settings.

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