

Anti-racism, social justice, and civic education: Teacher candidates' pedagogical development in two Canadian teacher education programs

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Introduction & Research Questions

Teacher education must attend to the racialized context of civic engagement:

1. How do teacher candidates conceptualize civic engagement in relation to their own positionalities as the result of education foundations courses?
2. How does anti-racist coursework contribute to teacher candidates' understandings of structural injustice and their future pedagogical choices?

Methodology

Comparative Case Study

Ontario Site

- Large university
- One section of an ed foundations course
- 12 teacher candidates
- First year of after-degree program
- Participants: Average age of 24, 11/12 White; 67% women, 33% men

Saskatchewan Site

- Mid-sized university
- Two sections of an ed foundations course
- 13 teacher candidates
- Second year of direct entry program
- Participants: Average age of 22, 12/13 White; 68% women, 32% men

Findings Highlights

Civic Engagement - When asked to define social justice, teacher candidates at both sites used meritocratic language like 'fairness', 'equal opportunities', 'treating everyone the same' (rather than equity-based language).

Knowledge - Teacher candidates viewed racism and settler colonialism as separate from themselves (both sites), and perceived subject-area restrictions to social justice and anti-racist pedagogy.

Future Pedagogy - Individual-based understandings of racism produced over-confident teacher candidates at both sites. Participants who answered that they were "very confident" or "extremely confident" with anti-racist pedagogy typically defined anti-racism in individual rather than systemic terms.

Resistance - 'White talk' (both sites): Teacher candidates resisted learning about injustice through silence; weaponizing safe space language, evading questions, and dismissing counterarguments. Use of 'diversity discourse' and social justice language (SK) without an accompanying analysis was also pervasive.

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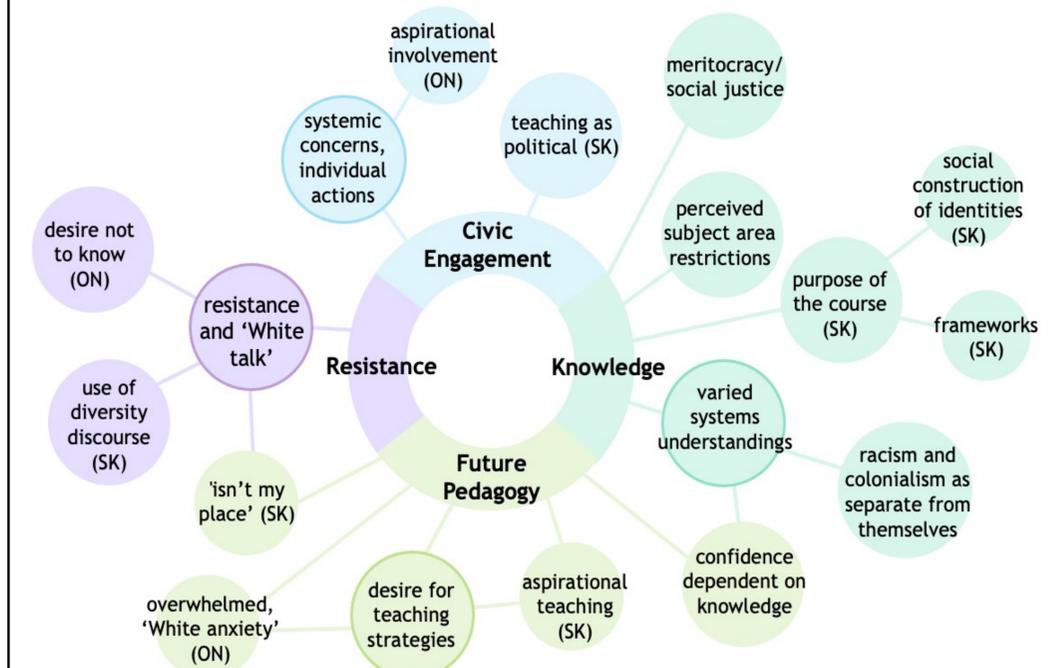


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Relational Findings



Discussion

Discourses of individualism, meritocracy, and whiteness-as-innocent remain pervasive, and should be specifically interrupted in teacher education.

Scaffolded foundations courses are needed for teacher candidates to understand racism as systemic, or programs risk reproducing teachers that hold individualistic views about injustice.

Strategies that had an impact: Learning about the social construction of identities, and applying the cycle of structural determinism (discourses -> policy/practice -> outcomes).