

## Equity-Oriented Teacher Education: Introduction to the Special Issue

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A severe and persisting challenge facing many education systems around the world is how to provide relevant and powerful education to all students. As globalization continues, a large and growing number of students has been crossing regional, national, linguistic, and socio-cultural borders to seek new possibilities in education. As a result, students' backgrounds, needs, and learning practices in classrooms are getting increasingly diverse. But unfortunately, many classroom teachers are under-prepared to provide powerful learning experiences to the diversifying body of students. Teachers' lack of preparation in diversity, inclusiveness, and equity has contributed to a series of problems, such as further marginalizing disadvantaged students in schooling, widening achievement gaps among students from different social groups, and perpetuating or even exacerbating structural inequities.

As a "cornerstone" of the education enterprise, teacher education has the potential and a moral call to tackle inequity in and outside of schools (Liao & Zhou, 2020). The existing research in teacher education has capitalized on theories from multiple disciplines to understand the complex phenomenon of equity-oriented teacher education. Scholars have also proposed several influential equity-focused pedagogies, such as differentiated instruction, culturally responsive/relevant/sustaining teaching, and asset-based pedagogy (e.g., Gay, 2018; López, 2017). This thread of literature has laid out a crucial but still premature knowledge base for the continuing efforts at preparing teachers to care and be able to enhance educational and social equity in their professional practices. Recent reviews (e.g., Cochran-Smith, 2020; Mills & Ballantyne, 2016) have pointed out several much-needed lines of research on equity-oriented teacher education. In particular, given the contested, interdisciplinary, and complex natures of equity, teaching, and teacher education,

scholars need to pluralize their perspectives of viewing equity-oriented teacher education. Furthermore, most previous studies on equity-oriented teacher education were conducted in the United States. More empirical studies in different national and socio-cultural contexts are needed to identify culturally embedded practices of equity-oriented teacher education.

Informed by the previous research and reviews, this special issue gathers together a collection of recent studies on equity-oriented teacher education. These studies draw on plural theoretical perspectives (e.g., decolonizing, transformative learning), examine crucial aspects of teacher education (e.g., curriculum, teaching, teacher educators), and cover five different socio-cultural contexts (i.e., United States, Canada, New Zealand, South Korea, China). Qin's study points out linguistic imperialism, Western-centered pedagogies, and epistemological racism in English language teacher education, and then advocates for an equity-oriented approach to English educator preparation which supports student teachers to disrupt racism, (neo)colonialism, and inequality. In a similar vein of inquiry, Tu employs a critical transformative perspective to conceptualize teacher learning as working with difficult knowledge and cognitive dissonance. Tu's critical analysis of relevant theories and literature with a particular reference to the North American context suggests that teacher education programs should develop equitable pedagogical practices (e.g., fostering authentic dialogues) to advance student teachers' transformative learning.

Five other studies in this special issue empirically examine equity-oriented teacher education practices in various settings. Grudnoff and colleagues investigate the effect of a one-year, master's level, equity-oriented teacher education program in New Zealand. The analysis of participating student teachers' experiences highlights the power of inquiry in enhancing student teachers' awareness of and practice for educational equity. Yoon's study examines how she supports monolingual teachers to engage in equity-based pedagogy in a U.S. context as a teacher educator. A five-staged model is introduced and advocated for preparing linguistically and culturally relevant teachers. Bian's study investigates language teacher preparation in a U.S. context as well, but the analytical focus is on the teacher education curriculum. The systemic and critical examination of a selection of methods course readings reveals an overall restricted focus and a between-subject discrepancy in the curricular contents for supporting bilingual students. These issues lead Bian to call for a reconstruction of the teacher education curriculum to be focused on equity more explicitly, coherently, and systemically.

Woo and Cho's study narratively explores the lived experiences of a primary school teacher and a secondary school teacher in South Korea. The comparative analysis of the two teachers' experiences reveals context-specific tensions

and dilemmas in promoting equity and social justice in teaching. The analysis results also shed light on the complex political negotiations inevitably involved in equity- and social-justice-oriented teaching. Li and Gao's study explores how a teacher education program in China prepares teachers of Chinese to speakers of other languages. The analysis of program students' experiences identifies several programmatic issues, such as disproportionate curricular contents, insufficient presence of international students, and disconnection between theory and practice. The authors suggest practical implications for addressing these issues and call for an equity-focused approach to preparing Chinese language teachers for diverse local and global contexts.

Looking across this collection of studies, we are reassured that equity can and should be a core value for guiding teacher education research and practice. These studies have enriched the perspectives of viewing equity-oriented teacher education with theories on decolonizing, transformative learning, and linguistically and culturally relevant pedagogy. They have also pinpointed a series of empirically testified effective strategies of equity-oriented teacher education that focus on the curriculum, instruction, teacher educator, and overarching design of teacher education programs. As we continue to live in a fast-changing, increasingly diverse, and deeply interconnected world, we hope this special issue will catalyze more theoretical, empirical, and review studies on how to support pre-service and in-service teachers to make schooling a more inclusive, equitable, and empowering experience for all students.

## References

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