



Provocation to Dialog in a *Third Space*: Helping Teachers Walk Toward Equity Pedagogy

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This study examines the conceptual basis of how teachers learn, including, importantly, how they learn to relate to social concerns of equity in their teaching, and makes this understanding experientially accessible using a live case of the “practical” (Schwab, 1969). The conceptual understanding emerges from questioning the assumptions behind the valorization in teacher education of “theory” over “practice” that has led to the “theory into practice”/“input–output” model of teacher education. An examination of the constraints posed by this monolithic model of teacher education to teacher learning, development, and change has provided the impetus to work toward a more pluralistic view of knowledge and the new understanding of the nature of teacher learning which ensues. This alternative formation, which is informed by insights from the sociocultural perspectives of Lev Vygotsky and Mikhail Bakhtin among others, has helped in constructing a view of teacher learning as taking shape in authentic social interaction in a “third space” through hybridization of diverse voices. Most importantly, the paper considers its implications for teacher education by abstracting from experience the *nature* of mediation that facilitates hybridization.

Keywords: teacher learning, equity pedagogy, dialog, third space, hybridization, Lev Vygotsky, Mikhail Bakhtin

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INTRODUCTION

In the present era of large-scale migration and multiculturalism, the uneven playing fields that exist for the culturally diverse students are gaining increased attention globally. Reforms in teacher education emphasize the need to prepare teachers for diversity by sensitizing them to the differentiated forms of teaching that build on diverse students’ life experiences and languages while introducing them to the expectations of successful participation in school learning (e.g., Melnick and Zeichner, 1995; Darling-Hammond and Bransford, 2005; National Council for Teacher Education [NCTE], 2009; Ladson-Billings, 2014; Yuan, 2018). Such a culture-sensitive pedagogy has organic links to equity in education. It creates space for every student to produce meaning from his/her cultural and experiential location, and for the teacher, the scope to tailor the dialog to help students connect to and make sense of school concepts based on their emerging understanding. However, these curricular expectations are not met in practice. This is because the prevalent traditional script, which rests largely on teacher-centered practices, disregards diversity and subjects all students to a standard uniform teaching. This contradiction has posed an enduring challenge to teacher education in finding ways to help teachers make sense of and assimilate the theoretical insights from research on teaching and learning into their practice (Loughran, 2006, 2019; Zeichner, 2012; Delpit, 2013; Cochran-Smith et al., 2017; Korthagen, 2017; Zeichner and Conklin, 2017).

Although this “problem of *enactment*” (Zeichner, 2012, p. 2,119) in the education provided for teachers has a resonance internationally, the dynamics by which it is played out is situational and differs from one country to another. Unless we strive to understand how these contradictions develop socially and culturally, we cannot get our bearings to negotiate them meaningfully on our journey toward achieving the envisioned goals of reform in teacher education. This is because current reforms are constrained by the legacies of the past: the institutionalized patterns of beliefs and practices that have crystallized from decisions made in the past (Sarason, 1996).

My paper responds to this challenge through its twofold purpose:

1. Discuss what constrains the move toward enacting the culturally sensitive pedagogy advocated by the recently introduced reform process in initial teacher education (ITE) in the specific context of Karnataka, India, where this study is located.
2. Illustrate a possible way to facilitate teacher learning and change in a “third space” (Gutiérrez et al., 1995; Zeichner, 2010) where teacher educators, mentor teachers, and student teachers experience and explore what the theoretical construct of “teaching to diversity” can mean in actual practice and reflect on its implication for their respective roles as teacher educators, mentor teachers, and student teachers.

ITE REFORM IN INDIA

Educational policy in independent India (post 1947) was guided by a strong commitment to provide access to all the children who were up until then excluded from school (Government of India [GOI], 1949, 1986) and ensure that they had realistic opportunities for “social mobility out of poverty” (Lewin, 2011, p. xxii), a right which was denied to generations of their forerunners.¹ The drive toward Education for All (EFA) has yielded very impressive enrolment figures.² However, this encouraging trend in schooling expansion has been counterbalanced by an equally disturbing trend of a high level of school dropouts. This reflects the magnitude of the challenge involved in achieving the goals of EFA. While the enormous size of the Indian national school education system is a management challenge (National University of Education, and Planning [NUEPA], 2014), there is a greater challenge which has to do with the complexities arising out of the changing demography of student population representing linguistic and cultural diversity of the new entrants to formal schooling. The Indian Census of Census of India, 1961 listed 1,652 mother tongues. The complexities associated with diversity are compounded by multiple factors

¹ See Ratnam (2015) for a more detailed account of educational inequality in India and how it is perpetuated.

² For instance, there was a progress from 22.2 million children enrolled in elementary school in 1950–1951 to 184.2 million in 2005–2006 (Government of India [GOI], 2007) constituting about 93% of 6–14-year age group at the national level (Pratham., 2007).

such as poverty, malnutrition, child labor, geographical location, gender discrimination, and children with special needs (Govinda and Bandyopadhyay, 2011).

Concerns with preparing teachers for providing quality education to serve all students have been voiced in the reports of successive national education commissions (e.g., Government of India [GOI], 1949, 1985, 2012) and policy statements (Government of India [GOI], 1968, 1986). The implication of diversity for renewing school curriculum and the need to redesign teacher education in consonance with the renewed school curriculum were articulated with added emphasis in the National Curriculum Framework (NCF) 2005 (National Council of Educational Research and Training [NCERT], 2005) and its sequel, the National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education (NCFTE) 2009 (National Council for Teacher Education [NCTE], 2009). They recommended a paradigm shift from the conventional knowledge delivery model of teaching to a “process model” that viewed knowledge as co-constructed in the social interaction of teachers and learners. There was a strong critique of prevalent teacher education programs that trained teachers to adjust to a system in which education is seen as transmission of information, providing little scope to student teachers to reflect on their experience and develop as empowered agents of change. Both documents stressed the facilitator’s role that teachers need to play in meeting the learning need of every student by bringing his/her experience and community context center stage in the co-construction of knowledge.

The National Council of Teacher Education (NCTE), which is the statutory body responsible for regulating teacher education in India, undertook the task of restructuring ITE in 2014. The duration of the Bachelor of Education (B. Ed) course was increased from 1 to 2 years to provide more time for enhanced theoretical inputs, teaching skills, and field engagement in school and community that could help teachers become reflective practitioners with the ability to integrate theory and practice.

In Karnataka, the 2-year B. Ed. course, which was introduced in 2016, follow the National Council of Teacher Education [NCTE], 2014 curricular recommendations closely in both structure and syllabus (Government of Karnataka [GOK], 2015). Thus, the approach to teaching advocated in the state B. Ed. syllabus, similar to the one already in force in the state’s school curriculum, has a “constructivist” orientation.

Although this new curricular position is widely accepted by teacher educators and teachers in principle, it is seldom reflected in their practice. Class observation of both teacher educators and school teachers shows their practice firmly entrenched in text and tradition.

THE MISSING THIRD SPACE IN ITE REFORM IN INDIA: CONSTRAINTS TO CHANGE

Both teachers and teacher educators seem to be unaware of the inconsistency between what they claim and what they do, or of its

devastating effect on their students and student teachers' learning. To a question about the change, if any, that the recent reforms have made to their role as teachers/teacher educators, the typical pat answer from teacher educators is:

Earlier we used to teach; now we are facilitators. Trainees do everything by themselves. We give them lot of activities. They have to do it and present it in class seminars.

And the typical response from school teachers is:

Children construct their own knowledge; they learn by themselves. We just guide them. Teacher need not explain like before. Students come with a lot of knowledge; they know everything.

Nevertheless, class observation shows their practice going the opposite way and teachers have compelling justification for what they actually do in class:

How can they [students] understand if we don't explain the lesson first? These children don't have any background, no support at home. We have to do everything for them. We have to explain.

There is a need for greater conceptual clarity about the different understanding of knowledge, teaching, learning, and teacher–learner role relationship underlying the new curriculum vision if teacher educators and teachers are to see the limitations posed by a transmissive pedagogy for promoting transformative teacher learning and feel the impulse to change. I analyze the problem with the traditional transmissive approach to teaching and the need for dialogic engagement in a “third space,” using insights from a sociocultural perspective, mainly the works of Vygotsky and Bakhtin.

For teachers and teacher educators, the idea of teaching as “giving knowledge” and learning as mastering the “given” forms part of their enculturation and education process (Lortie, 1975). From this cultural location, it is difficult for them to imagine the epistemological shift involved in seeing teaching as facilitating learning and learning as co-construction of knowledge. These concepts, which are beamed to teacher educators in experiential vacuum (Russell, 1999; Aliusta and Özer, 2017) in brief 2–3-day training programs, are absorbed by them at the level of “word” and not meaning (Vygotsky, 1987). When teacher educators teach the new theoretical principles to student teachers, they do so without much understanding of them (Beck, 2019). So, they are unable to provide support for the development of meaning in student teachers of the concepts they teach. As a result, what student teachers achieve is “a mindless learning of words, an empty verbalism that . . . imitates the presence of concept” in them (Vygotsky, 1987, p. 170). This word, which they acquire through imitation “rather than thought” (ibid.), is insufficient for any meaningful application. The mentor teachers in the schools where student teachers go for internship are also not in a position to provide the experiential assistance to help student teachers make sense of the “theory” they have been given by teacher educators. This is because teachers in school, like the teacher educators, go through training in the new approach where much of what they hear is incomprehensible to them. School teachers use the new jargon to label the traditional practice they model to student teachers and the latter accept

it unquestioningly. So, the discourse of the new approach that the student teachers use in their lesson plans becomes only a cover for their classroom practice which remains highly conventional. The ground reality shows that the new curriculum seems to have increased the theory–practice disconnect instead of bridging them.³

The epistemological divide is buttressed by the distance between researchers/teacher educators and teachers marked by a hierarchical relationship; researchers in the university are seen as engaged in the “production” (Wenger, 1998) of knowledge (theory). This is delivered to the student teachers in the B. Ed. course and teachers in school for its “adoption” (ibid.) in practice. This division of labor comes with a double disadvantage:

1. It exaggerates the theory–practice dualism by placing them in sequential order and grounding them in two different locales: university and schools, respectively (Ratnam, 2015).
2. It leads to a power imbalance by positioning the teacher educators and teachers in a hierarchical relationship.

The traditional behaviorist tendency to split knowledge into theory and practice and the concomitant unequal partnership it sets up between university and school (Dewey, 1904; Schön, 1983; Korthagen and Kessels, 1999; Darling-Hammond, 2009; Zeichner, 2010; Loughran, 2019) fall far short when evaluated against the goals of a culturally sensitive, equity-oriented pedagogy which is inclusive of and responsive to the lived experience of diverse students while helping them to make sense of the knowledge and skills taught in schools. Theory that is “empty of people, feeling and experience” (Willis, 2000, p. xi) misses the flux of the realities of teaching (Hargreaves, 1995), and therefore, it becomes irrelevant to practice. On the other hand, practice that fails to connect with social issues lacks flexibility to respond to the changing needs such as increasing diversity.

Insights emerging from sociocultural perspectives on human learning and development present a radically different view of knowledge and offer tremendous potential for imagining a culturally sensitive pedagogy. In this view, theory and practice are not two separate compartments (e.g., Vygotsky, 1987; Davydov, 1990), but two sides of the same coin (Thompson, 2017). They are mutually constitutive aspects of knowing (coming to know/meaning-making/learning) facilitating its creation in a dialectic interplay set up by reflection.

This integrative epistemology put forth by Vygotsky in the context of child development (see Vygotsky, 1987) has a counterpart in teacher education (see Korthagen and Kessels, 1999). Both suggest the importance of spontaneous concepts (Vygotsky, 1987) or personal experience (Korthagen et al., 2001) for the learner to be able to develop theoretical concepts through reflective appropriation of scaffolded instruction.⁴ It is not useful to impose new theories before teachers are able to gain conscious

³Also, personal communication with Professor Vijayakumari, member, 2-year B. Ed. Syllabus Committee, Karnataka, October 18, 2019.

⁴The “realistic” approach to teacher education proposed by Korthagen et al. (2001) starts with personal experience of teacher learners.

awareness of them and before they can place their unique personal experience within a system of relationships of generality (Vygotsky, 1987). The developmental account provided by Vygotsky as well as Korthagen and Kessels helps us see the insufficiency of meaning resulting from the epistemological divide between theory and practice in a convincing manner.

THE DESIRABLE THIRD SPACE IN TEACHER EDUCATION

What does this understanding mean for teacher educator's "facilitator" role? This is where the idea of a third space becomes important. The notion of "third space" advanced by Bhabha (1994) in the context of postcolonial studies is an oppositional response to the dualistic power relationship between the imperial colonizers and the subordinate colonized subjects. It is about dislodging hierarchies to equalize relationships and overcome oppression. Its democratic and equity-oriented tendencies eschewing binaries and tyranny have found a strong resonance in education (Gutiérrez et al., 1995; Moje et al., 2004; Gutiérrez, 2008; Dantas-Whitney, 2013) and in teacher education (Gannon, 2010; Zeichner, 2010; Lewis, 2012; Klein et al., 2013; Flessner, 2014; Beck, 2016, 2018). In teacher education, it has come to signify equitable collaborative partnership between university and school (including the community which the school serves) to overcome dualities of theory/practice and university professors/teachers (also community) and to help student teachers make the differently oriented university course work cohere with practical teaching in school.⁵

The terms "first" and "second" space in teacher education are seen to allude to physical spaces, viz. schools and university (Flessner, 2014). However, the third space is more symbolic. In this study, the third space is conceived as a metaphoric collective reflective zone for fostering horizontal democratic and dialogic relationship among student teachers, mentor teachers, and teacher educators (including the researcher in the role of a more experienced peer) in order to restore the wholeness of pedagogic knowledge and its meaningful mediation in promoting transformative learning for all. Teacher learning involves the teacher educators, mentor teachers, and student teachers in a collective process of development. This social nature of meaning-making (learning) is well articulated in Bakhtin's notion of the dialogical relationship between the self and the other, where consciousness begins to operate in social interaction: "not that which takes place within, but that which takes place on the *boundary* between one's own and someone else's consciousness, on the threshold" (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 287). The teacher educator, mentor teachers, and learners are constituted mutually through "semiotic mediation" (Vygotsky, 1978) in the third space. This third space is created in joint activities facilitated by teacher educators to promote the co-construction

⁵The third space has been conceived in a variety of ways in ITE programs with initiatives attempting to bring practice/practitioners to campus and/or place methods course in schools (see Zeichner, 2010; Beck, 2018 for different ways of coming together to create a third space). Beneficial effects of such partnership have been reported (e.g., Allsopp et al., 2006; Darling-Hammond, 2006).

of *unique* new hybrid meaning toward "greater and more adaptive complexity" (Moore, 2002, p. 26) from a juxtaposition of contrasting points of view. The notion of third space is loaded with critical emancipatory (Freire, 1993) and subversive potential which aligns with the concerns of promoting equity pedagogy. In the study, the growing awareness in the student teachers of the inconsistency between their democratic values and their action, which was authoritarian, led to questioning and reflections on the antecedents and consequences of their action. Teaching as a subversive act was a way of working around the borders of constraints posed by the dominant institutional authoritarian voice to pursue what they considered as a more valid approach.

HYBRIDIZATION IN THE THIRD SPACE

This social process of learning is a complex recursive one and challenging for all involved in learning in the third space. I use Bakhtin's notion of *languages of heteroglossia* to explain what the formation of hybridity in the third space entails.

Languages of heteroglossia are each "specific points of view on the world, forms of conceptualizing the world in words, specific world views, each characterized by its own objects, meanings and values" (Bakhtin, 1981, pp. 291–292). The diverse voices in heteroglossia can be seen in the different "funds of knowledge" (González et al., 2005) that learners (including school teachers, student teachers, and researchers/teacher educators) draw on to construct meaning from the networks of relationship they are part of in school, college, their community, and the wider world including virtual communities. The diverse constellation of voices from learners' social and cultural world inhere in their consciousness as "inner speech" (Bakhtin, 1984) and "[o]ur thought is born and shaped in the process of interaction and struggle" (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 92) among these divergent voices. The formation of hybridization or the creation of new meaning from these disparate and ununified voices inherent in heteroglossia "demands enormous effort" as it is not "the frivolous, mindless and unsystematic mixing of languages" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 366). It is important to note that these voices need to be *dialogized* so that teachers assume the critical reflective stance with which they regard one point of view through the eyes of another. Otherwise, as Brookfield (1995) asserts, teachers "may be caught within self-fulfilling interpretive frameworks that remain closed to any alternative interpretations" (p. 5). Reflective dialogization leads to the generation of an "interminable" dialog among diverse viewpoints (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 296) both on the social (interpersonal) plane and individual (intrapersonal) plane. Herein lies its emancipatory and subversive potential. When the value systems and worldviews in the voices in heteroglossia "interanimate" (ibid.) each other in dialog, these values and worldviews become open to scrutiny and a possible re-evaluation. Inside the classroom, this opens a legitimate space for diverse ways of knowing that different participants bring to the dialog disrupting the prevalent normative pattern of interaction. In this democratic third space, the dominant institutional voice

ventriloquized in the teacher (educator) monologue does not silence or marginalize authentic student voices. Students and teachers interact with equal rights and this intersubjectivity on the social plane nourishes the inner speech or internal dialog in its effort to form a new hybrid perspective from among diverse intersecting voices. This liminality of hybridity (Bhabha, 1994) renders outcomes ambiguous and opens them to diverse alternative possibilities including rejection or subversion of the dominant homogenizing tendencies and hierarchies to create a new reality, a more democratic equation ushering in a new way of thinking/knowing/understanding and acting/practice.

Reflection has a seminal role to play in interanimating the voices in heteroglossia. Dialogization can be seen to be coterminous with reflection and thus provides an understanding of what it means to help participants engage in deeper reflection. Deep reflection goes beyond a reductive focus on technical efficiency in the preparation of teachers (Dewey, 1933) to encompass the emancipatory and moral dimensions of reflection (Brookfield, 1995; Cochran-Smith and Lytle, 1999; Esau, 2013) which focus on the “origin and consequences” of one’s actions as teachers (Zeichner, 1983, p. 7). Learning, development, and change involve encountering new experiences, which are controversial or uncertain in nature, and consequently, having to make difficult judgments. Creating new understanding entails comparing perspectives on teaching, learning and learners, thinking about contexts of curriculum, schooling and society, weighing evidence, considering the validity of such evidence and, in the light of it, re-evaluating prior knowledge (Ratnam, 2016a). The “facilitative” role of the other lies in making alternative cultural tools/voices experientially accessible to teacher learners and helping them gain a conscious awareness of it whereby it reaches the threshold level (Vygotsky, 1987) to “inundate” teachers’ “inner speech” (already internalized dialogs and voices) (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 238) and intensify the interaction among differently oriented voices on the way to realizing their “self” in new ways. The teacher educator’s facilitative role also involves an empathetic understanding of the intellectual and emotional challenge involved in coping with contradictions/complexities (Perry, 1970) and helps sustain the process through a judicious mix of support and challenge (Ratnam, 2016b).

The following section analyzes an empirical instance of the dialog provoked by new social and epistemological experiences teacher learners encountered in a third space. It shows how in this dialog the student teachers’ point of view and my own were deconstructed and reconstructed to produce new meaning in the metaphoric third space. It illustrates how the ensuing dialogization of voices nudged the participants to think in new ways about issues of equity and its implication for their practice including ways of subverting to achieve their goals.

THE STUDY

The Birth of a Third Space: Participants

This study emerged from my dialogic engagement with a cohort of 10 first year B.Ed. student teachers (ST1–10) and their teacher educator (TE1) at a College of Education (CTE) in

Karnataka, India. This development took place in the course of a larger ongoing study (2018–) I am undertaking into how student teachers and teacher educators make sense of the recently introduced “forces of change” (Fullan, 1993/2000) in ITE, Karnataka described in the earlier sections. The dialogic third space was sparked by a question I raised for consideration when the supervising teacher educator requested feedback on a peer teaching class that I was observing. This question, which was prompted by my genuine concern about acknowledging difference in class, had a very different slant from the feedback that the student teachers were used to giving and receiving from teacher educators and peers. The typical feedback consisted of remarks about how well the student teacher executed the skills/techniques of teaching taught to them: “You could have used TLM (Teaching Learning Material) for showing alternate angle.”; “Blackboard work must be more organized.”; and “Time management—you couldn’t complete the teaching items you have in your lesson plan.”

There was a shift of focus in my question from a critical appraisal of teacher behavior to learners and their perceptions as the following excerpt shows:

Tara: *The instruction you [the student teacher who did the peer teaching] gave the class regarding the drawing you wanted them to do got me thinking. I couldn’t figure out the purpose of asking everyone to do it.*

Rashi: *That was the “engage stage”⁶ - to engage all the students.*

Tara: *That’s a nice goal. But does engaging students mean simply asking of them to do something?*

Rashi: *No, I asked them to give me the answer.*

Tara: *Yes, you did throw the question open to the whole class. But you stopped with the second student who gave you the ‘correct’ answer and you used it for your explanation that followed. I was thinking of other students who had different responses. This student beside me, her drawing showed a very different understanding from the way you explained it. There were others, including me (shows her drawing), who had done different things that made me curious. Do you think it would have been worthwhile to find out how we arrived at these diverse responses, our thinking, our understanding that made us come up with different drawings? Had we got the instruction wrong or were these acceptable, valid alternative viewpoints? Would it be useful to spend a little time on this in class?*

This new dimension of learner perceptions that the above exchange brought into focus seemed to touch a new “ontological” (Matusov, 2011) chord particularly with those student teachers whose diverse response went unnoticed by the teacher. After the class, two other student teachers who had their peer teaching sessions following wanted me to stay on. The teacher educator (TE1) expressed keen interest too and said that it would not only be useful for the student teachers, but also for her. It would provide new angles to view teaching and diversify her feedback. Since then, we have developed as an informal community of

⁶Student teachers are expected to follow the 5Es instructional model (Bybee and Landes, 1990) consisting of Engage, Explore, Explain, Elaborate, and Evaluate in order to promote inquiry-based learning. However, in practice, it is short of this intent and reduced to a ritual.

inquiry learners, sharing “histories and experiences” (Clift et al., 2000) over the past 13 months (since January 2019). We meet twice a month on average in class and once a month outside class hours for 2 h. This is apart from the daily visits I made to observe student teachers during their 2-week microskills teaching and simulation teaching in January 2019. The out of class meetings are attended by a few more participants with whom I have ongoing dialogic relationship in other contexts: two senior students (Sr ST) who attended my invited guest sessions at CTE, another teacher educator (TE2) whom I have interviewed and observed in class as part of the larger study, three school teachers (T1–3), and two faculty from DIET (DT1 and 2) (District Institute of Education and Training).⁷ The participants in the group have developed a sense of belonging to it and refer to it as “our group” (henceforth OG).

The interactions in OG are bilingual. This is largely because it has a mix of student teachers studying B. Ed. in Kannada (regional language) and English medium.

METHODOLOGY

The study recognizes the importance of inquiry on practice stance (Stenhouse, 1975; Cochran-Smith and Donnell, 2006; Cochran-Smith and Lytle, 2009) with an emphasis on reflection (Dewey, 1933; Schön, 1983; Zeichner, 1983, 1987). The aim of this dialogic qualitative research study is to deepen the process of meaning-making through ongoing dialog among its participants rather than the prediction, control, and measurement that characterize positivist research perspectives (Tobin et al., 2009; Matusov et al., 2019). In this sense, it aligns with the self-study method which seeks to “provoke, challenge and illuminate rather than confirm or settle” (Bullough and Pinnegar, 2001, p. 20). The purpose of the study coincides with the way of doing it as both revolve around meaning-making mediated by critical dialog (Matusov et al., 2019). This process involves teacher participants, including the researcher, in raising and addressing questions that are subjectively engaging for them, *regarding* (testing) one point of view through the eyes of the other, and deconstructing beliefs and assumptions held by self and others to creatively “reaccentuate” the scripted meaning beyond the *status quo*. Since this pedagogic (Denzin, 2006) methodology is conceptual (Sawyer and Linggett, 2012) rather than prescriptive, the analysis is focused on “evidence of the reframed thinking and transformed practice” (LaBoskey, 2004, p. 859).

My positionality in this study was one of “in-betweenness” (Tooke, 2000, p. 217); I was an outsider and a purveyor of alternative ideas and, at the same time, an insider with knowledge of and working experience with educating teachers. Our dialogic relationship was built on mutual trust and confidence. It was my genuine interest in listening and

responding to the participants that challenged their taken-for-granted ways of thinking and roused their curiosity in the potential contribution our dialogs could make in raising and addressing their newly emerging questions. The friendly, non-judgmental nature of conversations in the group reduced power imbalance (Scott and Usher, 1999) and created a safe environment for everyone’s self-expression.

Ethics

This study emerged from the voluntary coming together of the participants as a community of learners. However, for the purpose of research and its communication, permission was obtained from the Principal of the College of Education where my research used for this study was located and written consent from all the participants. All the names used in this study, except mine, are pseudonyms based on participants’ preference.

Sources of Data

The “focal activity” (Gutiérrez et al., 1999) for analysis used in this study is the dialogization of voices in the interactions that followed my modeling of a culture-sensitive pedagogy at student teachers’ behest. They wanted some concrete example to understand what they read in theory about “creating a learning environment that addresses children’s diverse needs” (National Council of Educational Research and Training [NCERT], 2005, p. 81). However, this is not to be seen as an isolated activity. This joint activity and ongoing discussions on it are nested within other learning experiences. The histories and experiences shared over months afford a depth of contextualization for profound meaning-making by setting up a dialectical relationship between the past and emerging meaning. This continuing learning provides rich data to trace participants’ developing perceptions to revision and reshape practice. The multiple sources of data that helped capture the multiple perceptions of participants over time include class observation of student teachers’ peer teaching followed by feedback sessions; the inquiry-based activities and discussions in OG to address questions raised by participants (including the researcher); documents (curriculum framework, syllabus statements) that helped in describing the context of the study; other artifacts such as lesson plans made by student teachers and school teachers, checklist for evaluating teaching practice; and reflective conversations with participants individually or in pairs where I shared my data analysis and the emergent patterns of meaning. Although these conversations consumed much time,⁸ they proved valuable. The free flowing and friendly nature of these conversations not only served as a sounding board for my analysis and interpretations, but also provided occasions for gathering nuanced reflective information about the new meanings that participants were developing as they contributed to our dialogic engagements in the group. In addition to cross-checking my interpretations with participants, my journal writing facilitated reflexivity by helping me to examine constantly the values and

⁷The DIET faculty train in-service school teachers. CTE is located in the same campus as the DIET and I am connected to the DIET through a joint project I am carrying out with school teachers. The three school teachers and DIET faculty mentioned above are among the participants of this project.

⁸I have about 19 h of recorded data from these conversations.

assumptions underlying my experiences, thoughts, and feelings (Russell and Kelly, 2002).

Data from class observations and discussions were recorded and transcribed. I have translated the parts in Kannada (used largely by student teachers from Kannada medium) into English to make it accessible to readers.

Analysis

“Thematizing meaning” (Holloway and Todres, 2003, p. 347) from data involved a rigorous iterative dialectic process of reading and rereading transcripts, reflecting and making notes of the emergent topics and, in turn, holding the data against the developing themes to see whether the data really supported it. Built into this thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006) and its interpretation were layers of social checks that enhanced its validity and trustworthiness. My theorizing was aided by social processes that engaged me constantly in discussion with participants and associated reading both of which fed into my inner dialog. Besides, the patterns of meaning were also reviewed by a critical friend who was familiar with the objectives of the study and its dialogic orientation. In writing up an account of the analysis, I lay this socially constructed meaning open to further validation in the resonance it has for the readers (Whitehead, 2004), in the questions and new interpretations they bring to it, and the pedagogical insights it bears for them in their attempt to promote culturally sensitive equity pedagogy.

The conceptions of teaching that participants had imbibed as students (Lortie, 1975) and in the workplace made them see teaching as delivery of ready-made knowledge. In the view that I brought to the group, knowledge was not something out there but co-constructed in inquiry activities undertaken jointly by students and teacher. These two contrasting views presupposed two constellations of voices from the larger social world (Ratnam, 2016c). These can be captured by what Bakhtin (1981) calls, “authoritative discourse” and “heteroglossia,” respectively. They are grounded in different epistemological systems, responsive to different relationships and practices. The authoritative discourse “demands that we acknowledge it, that we make it our own... We encounter it with its authority already fused to it.” (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 342). Pedagogically, the practice of “reciting by heart” (ibid., p. 341) corresponds to authoritarian discourse within a structure of hierarchical relationship. Heteroglossia, as pointed out earlier, is dialogic, open to connect with other voices in a dialog horizontally and thus open to growth and change. The pedagogical goal associated with heteroglossia is “retelling in one’s own words” (ibid.), where the words of others, playing a role in one’s inner speech, gets reaccentuated based on one’s own intent (authorship). This is “innerly persuasive discourse” (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 346) as opposed to “authoritative discourse.” In the analysis below, notions of “authoritative” and “internally persuasive” discourses provide a heuristic in both the critique of the dominant cultural practice in teacher education, where singular “universal” knowledge is privileged, and its reconstruction in the third space created in OG that acknowledges a pluralistic approach to knowledge.

DIALOGIZATION OF VOICES IN THE THIRD SPACE: DECONSTRUCTING MEANING TO REACCENTUATE IT

The episode from my teaching that provided the “grounded dialogic provocation” (Matusov et al., 2019, p. 254) to mediate the concept of culturally sensitive pedagogy was an ESL class I took for 47 grade VIII students who were culturally diverse. In small groups of three, the students were engaged in co-constructing a story from a series of picture panels. In one of the groups, while two boys, Anil and Shashi, were busy in discussion, the third boy, Anand (from a vernacular medium), sat quietly apart staring down at the pictures. As I approached them, Anil and Shashi looked up and sought my help regarding the pictures they were puzzling over. In response, I addressed Anand first. In the course of the conversation that followed, Anand brought to the task his experience and observations from real life and made meaningful connections to offer a perfectly cogent interpretation of the picture story that Anil and Shashi were struggling to find. This contribution from Anand had changed his identity of participation in the group. From being dismissed by Anil and Shashi as that “quiet boy from Kannada medium,” Anand was now acknowledged by them as a more competent peer.

Following is an illustrative excerpt from original data transcripts of the discussion that followed in OG about the class. This will enable readers to relate and respond to the analysis that follows.

1. Shiva (ST5): This [Anand’s experience] is my story; the same thing I went through in that biotic/abiotic class. When Janaki akka⁹ (Sr ST1) asked Mani to write down all the examples we were giving for ‘biotic’ on the board. I said ‘fruits’, but she didn’t hear.
2. Mani (ST4): I heard it, but since akka [Janaki] didn’t pick it up, I thought it wasn’t a suitable example and didn’t write it.
3. Shiva: So, you decided it was not biotic and dropped it and I kept quiet. But I had that doubt in my mind. After class, in the feedback session, ma’am [Tara] said she had some doubts about the way biotic and abiotic were defined and asked us whether we didn’t have any questions. I took my chance to ask my question when it came from her, because she is always patient and listens with interest to what we say.
4. Janaki: I should have taken it up. But I was confused by that example and when we are stuck like that, we just go on. But that day during the after-class discussion when it came up again, I realized that I had made a mistake.
5. Tara: I wouldn’t see it as a mistake. You were following what you have seen as normal practice without giving it any thought. Now because we talk about it, you start seeing things differently perhaps.

⁹It is a cultural practice in CTE to address senior students as akka (elder sister) and anna (elder brother).

6. Janaki: In that class,¹⁰ I was thinking only of carrying out my plan perfectly, especially because I was giving demonstration of a simulation class to the juniors. I wanted them to get a clear idea of the steps. All my classmates, including our teachers [teacher educators] appreciate my class and that left me believing that this is how a good class must be... I am very careful now not to 'silence' students when they say something different.
7. Tara: Do you see any use in creating an environment where students talk, feel free to pose their questions and doubts?
8. Sidda (Sr ST2)¹¹: Certainly. We heard about Shiva's question and in our science pedagogy class, this is still not fully resolved. There are two teams, biotic and abiotic and we are fighting (laughter). It keeps erupting when we find new points to support our argument. We are learning a lot and thinking a lot also.
9. Shiva: Before our group (OG) was formed, we never posed any question during peer teaching; only a few answered teachers' questions and we opened our mouth only when it was our turn to give feedback.
10. Pragna (ST6): Even that because it was compulsory. It was so monotonous. We always went in circles: the comments were all about presentation, use of TLM, examples, voice modulation, board work and interaction.
11. Lakshmi (ST7): My class on Newton's first law, I'll never forget the feedback I got. It was a turning point for all of us. We have become very alert in class. We listen carefully to what the teachers say, what students say. It has raised our level of thinking and questions have started to flash.
12. Kavya (ST10): Thinking produces questions. Now our group is famous in the college for raising questions (laughter).
13. Tara: If we want to view it from a student's point, how did you feel when you got a chance to ask questions? (Shiva makes a gesture to draw attention).
14. Pushya (TE1): Yes Shiva, you have something.
15. Shiva: Yes ma'am, about my story. I want to share how I felt in that class [Janaki's class on biotics and abiotics]. There was a great sense of inner joy. My doubt had led to a very long and serious debate. In B. Ed, teachers and my friends have been very good to me, always encouraging me, giving me chance to participate in activities and telling me what to do because I am from village and lack exposure to many things. But when you ([Tara] took up my question, it was not simply to be nice to me or include me. Everybody listened and got involved, not out of politeness but out of real interest in my ideas. Just like that boy Anand- he was appreciated because of something valuable in him. There was an affirmation (*dridhikarana*) of his language, his experience. Same way, I had that feeling of self-worth (*swayam maulya*) for the first time in my educational life.
16. Sangam (ST9): What made Anand open up was the real interest in him to hear his experience, the same thing we experience in our group that makes us speak. But in school it was the opposite for us. We used to get beaten for wrong answers. We were scared to open our mouth. When we came to high school, also in college, we were always left out. Teachers always chose students with good communication ability for everything. They looked impressive and confident. We were shy and inhibited compared to them. We were quiet and just listened. Teachers thought we had no ability and we also believed it. This was how school was for the likes of us and we accepted it. We learned what we could and our goal was to pass the exams.
17. Tara: Do you think, as teachers, all of us can try to improve the situation for such students, create opportunities to bring out their competence?

Dialogization of Voices in Interaction: Waking Up to the Oppression Hidden in the Authoritative Discourse

The above excerpt shows that the classroom episode was not analyzed by participants in isolation. Their response was not confined to what transpired in that particular modeled class under consideration. Instead, it became a tool for dialogization of voices. The episode evoked and got interwoven with participants' experiences, thoughts and feelings, and their hopes and concerns. As a result, the edifice of the voice of authority was shaken in participants' pursuit of what was internally persuasive for them.

Anand's experience had a special resonance for Shiva as it related to his experience and it is this personal relevance that shaped his narrative: the erasure of his "self" in the oppression born silently (turns 1–3) and the joy of finding his "self" through a release of his suppressed voice (turn 15). Shiva approached Anand's story through the eyes of his own experience, interanimating the voice of authority which constituted a large part of his school and college experience with the more recent liberating languages of heteroglossia he encountered in the new community of learning he was part of. Shiva's story of oppression drew in other voices of heteroglossia (turns 6, 8, 10, 11, and 16) into the dialog. This oppression in the classroom is largely associated with the silencing of students' voice, their subjective perceptions. It happens when the teacher is focused on getting across the dominant curricular meaning to students and neglecting the meaning they bring to class. An example of this ubiquitous practice of unintentional silencing was seen in the peer teaching session where the student teacher, Rashi, accepted the answer that met her expectation and provided no space for students with divergent answers to voice and justify their point of view. A similar silencing occurred in Janaki's class when she failed to acknowledge Shiva's genuine doubt, because it went beyond her script.

In OG interaction (cf. the illustrative transcript provided above), the accepted authority of the unitary institutional voice that implicitly guided teachers' action became open to dispute. As a result, the oppression, which was concealed by the sense of

¹⁰Janaki's first brush with our group was on the day she took the demonstration class. She has been attending our group meetings since then.

¹¹Sidda heard about the discussion on Janaki's class from her and this made him join OG.

equilibrium the participants were ensconced in as they applied the universal norms laid down by the institutional authoritative discourse mechanically in their practice, stood exposed. The participants questioned their held beliefs and practices (turns 6, 10, and 16). They became aware of the multiple sources of oppression they themselves had experienced as students which they had accepted passively as “the way things are done” (Shotter, 1978, p. 70) (e.g., turn 16).

Linking Personal Meaning to Larger Historical Meaning: Reconceptualizing Practice

Dialog in the third space connects individual subjectivity to the social other, expanding personal meaning to the social and historical context of which the individual is a part (Cochran-Smith, 1999). In our dialog, “story begets stories” (Norris, 2008, p. 234). Anand’s story made Shiva recall his past experience. This, in turn, brought forth Sangam’s narrative, attuning to the commonalities in their experiences. These individual narratives came already dialogized connecting them to the larger social and historical context (Bakhtin, 1981). The more general “we” (turn 16) in the story Sangam recounted invokes the collective memory of the historically and socially marginalized and silenced students in India. This dialogization of voices from the past and present opened the space to mean, causing shifts in understanding. The participants became critically conscious of the voices that were being quietened in class thus robbing them of the opportunity to learn by engaging in meaning-making. Their own complicity in this silencing using their authority as teachers was brought home to the participants sharply through the lived experience of Anand, Shiva, and Sangam (e.g., turn 4).

The new understanding made participants sensitive to how inequity is perpetuated in class by the negative impact of their thoughtless actions and interactions with diverse students. It made them look for alternate emancipatory possibilities for future action (turns 6 and 11) that subverted the authoritative voice: e.g., Kavya:

In Sir’s [supervising teacher educator] presence, we follow what is expected. When we are on our own, we try to follow our “heart” (laughter). ‘Trying’, because we are still learning how to do it.

The participants’ contribution to dialog in the third space seems to have allowed them to “achieve a deepening awareness of both the sociocultural reality which shapes their lives and of their capacity to transform that reality through action upon it” (Freire, 1993, p. 27). It is important to note here that the participants were not in pursuit of a Utopian dream in constructing a vision for future action. Their vision was tempered with the voice of reality and the constraints posed to their action by this reality:

Lakshmi: But we must be ready to face a lot of criticism. As Naina ma’am (T3) and Shaila ma’am (T2) say, in school they will expect us to do things in a particular way—explain, give notes and revise answers for exams. We have to learn how to manage both, school goal and our goal. Here, in peer teaching also we are facing the same problem. I was doing sound and gave the example of string instruments for sound produced from vibration. Swathi asked a

question, “Isn’t silent vibration possible? Phone vibrates when it is on silent mode.” Instead of closing it with a ‘yes/no’ as we usually do, I decided to take it up and it led to more questions. The whole class time went in exploring the mechanism of producing sound. In the feedback Sir [supervising teacher educator] said, “You don’t go so deep into the topic, you won’t have time to cover the content then. You didn’t complete what you showed me in the lesson plan.” Then he told the others [peers], “Tarale questions kelbedi.” (Don’t ask unwanted questions).

Learning in the third space is itself constructed within the constraining context of institutional control. In fact, it is an understanding of the constraints posed to action that gave the participants the agency to reconceptualize their practice to work around the restricting borders (Bakhtin, 1986) to “teach in the cracks” (Schultz, 2017).

Teacher Change: Walking Toward Equity Pedagogy

The learning taking place in the third space of OG is equity oriented with transformative potential for all its participants, largely because of the open-ended nature of questions posed for discussion. This openness accommodates diverse languages of heteroglossia based on participants’ diverse cultures, interests, purposes, and values with increased opportunities for dialogization of voices and hybrid meaning construction. The third space is not seen here as an exclusive social space, unconnected to the participants’ work place. The transformative inclusive learning experienced by participants in OG permeates their practice in their workplace. The dialogs in OG activate participants’ thinking and raise further questions with reference to the reality of teaching in their respective contexts and the challenges/dilemmas they experience as they explore new possibilities to personalize learning for all students in the classroom. Teaching for understanding by engaging students in a dialogic meaning-making process involves a pattern of relationship in which the active contribution of students using their diverse funds of knowledge plays an important role. Listening to students to understand their communicative intent and assisting them to progress along intended lines are time consuming. It goes against the institutional ethos of teaching to the test by imparting ready-made knowledge. Both in ITE and in schools, there is a general lack of confidence among stakeholders in the efficacy of a knowledge building pedagogy to achieve the goals of examination. This cynicism could be an alibi for continuing with old and familiar practices. It could also spring from a lack of understanding of the conceptual basis of culturally sensitive constructivist pedagogy. As Lakshmi has demonstrated, there is little tolerance among teacher educators of practices that build on what diverse students bring from their home culture. The time spent on this, according to them, is better utilized covering the syllabus and practicing to the test. Under these circumstances, following a culturally sensitive pedagogy with concerns of equity becomes a subversive act for student teachers and teacher educators who are more reflective and intentional.

The interactions in the third space mediated learning for all of us in unique ways which was reflected in the different

takeaways we each spoke of, each according to his/her needs and interests (space limitation does not allow illustrative excerpts). Teacher educators are learning to redefine their roles by changing the criteria of evaluation to focus more on what learning was promoted and on how student teachers reach out to the learners. Student teachers are learning to change their focus from following the curriculum to following the learners (Korthagen, 2017). School teachers are trying to find space for attending to the needs of the individual child amidst constraints. There is also a marked change in the impatient attitude they usually showed toward student teachers during school internship. Tiny and Seema from the DIET are gaining a better understanding of the teacher's facilitative role and are learning to model it in the in-service training they conduct. The change in participants is marked by the development of empathetic understanding of the students we teach. It urges us to find time to improve the social relations and interactions with our students (McDonald and Messinger, 2011; Makoelle, 2019), even amidst the rush to fulfill the highly demanding institutional directives.

Our dialogs have made us more purposive. They are helping us develop perceptions and practice that are in keeping with the epistemological shift implied in the reformed curriculum for teaching to diversity and play our respective roles more effectively.

In the next section, I share my learning from my personal experience and reflection on how the third space was created and sustained in preparing teachers for culturally sensitive and equity-oriented pedagogy.

OPENING THE SPACE TO MEAN: IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHER EDUCATION

Choice of Meditational Means: Mediating Imitative Behavior and Mediating Reflective Action

The difference in the meditational means used typically in the student teachers' course and the one used in OG reveals how the choice of meditational means makes a difference in promoting "reflective action" (Lampert-Shepel and Murphy, 2018) or meaning-making.

The mediating communication in both the courses that teacher educators teach and the classroom practice of student teachers is characterized by monologic "instructional talk" (Gallimore and Tharp, 1990/1998). In both, the locus of control is in the hands of teacher educators and student teachers, respectively, where "teachers ask questions and students give answers" (Sarason, 1996, p. 362). Teachers' *a priori* expectations make them impervious to learners' zones of development (Vygotsky, 1978). There is an implicit play of power in teachers' control that is reinforced and sustained by the normative practices and expectations in both school and teacher education. These practices and the attendant asymmetrical social relationships are linked to common cultural practices of the wider community and society (Bourdieu et al., 1994; Ratnam, 2013).

These metanarratives, which usually work at a taken-for-granted level, marginalize and silence students' diverse voices without making it visible to consciousness. Janaki's teacher-centered practice, which was referred to in our OG dialog earlier, is an example of how her practice was shaped by her socialization into and acquisition of what was valued in the social and institutional context and which was appreciated by other student teachers and teacher educators alike who seemed uncritically deaf to the voices it muted. The problem with ignoring disruptive/destabilizing voices of students (e.g., Shiva's legitimate question) in the classroom is that it stifles their curiosity and creative expression. It is not as if students stop thinking. The point is that when students' voices are silenced, the opportunity to elaborate on and link them to school knowledge is lost (Gutiérrez et al., 1995). As a result, the potential for promoting learning using students' capacity to think and reason remains unrealized. It restricts co-construction of meaning and the consequent shifts in understanding.

There is a lack of mediation of meaning at all levels of teacher education be it course work, modeling practice by teacher educators and school teachers, or practice teaching by student teachers. As a result, student teachers' practicum becomes an occasion to "demonstrate" the skills of teaching that they learn from teacher educators (Zeichner, 1996) and not an opportunity to promote "inquiry as a stance" (Cochran-Smith and Lytle, 2009) examining how their practice affects the interests of students within larger educational and social contexts. Unreflective action constrains the development of autonomy to subvert the voice of authority and enact practices that are more socially just. There is no nutrient in the feedback student teachers receive from teacher educators or mentor teachers to take them beyond a technically rational practice (Schön, 1983) and the surface level behavioral "action-oriented" reflection (Hoekstra, 2007) involved in it, to the level of transformative "meaning-oriented" reflection (ibid.) that helps in probing the rationale or the "pedagogical reasoning" (Loughran, 2019) behind what teachers do. The criteria sheets for observing student teachers' practice are replete with behavioral components of teaching as if teaching is an activity separate from learning: Teachers "used gestures," "modulated voice," "changed interactional style," "used pausing," "used prompting questions," "re-directed questions," "used examples," "used TLM" and the list goes on. A focus on positive and negative aspects of teacher behavior eclipses learners and learning as the main issue in the after-class discussion. A failure to link the skills student teachers are trained to enact to the purpose they are supposed to serve reduces teacher reflection to focus on perfecting their behavior and "effective delivery" of curriculum content rather than on the "subjective cognizing" world of diverse students (Lobok, 2017; also, Korthagen, 2017) to promote their potential to mean. The latter needs transformative reflective action which is what was mediated in the third space of OG.

Animating Reflective Action in a Horizontal Collective Zone

As opposed to the monologic "instructional talk" that dominates teacher education practice, the OG was suffused with dialogic

“instructional conversation” (Gallimore and Tharp, 1990/1998) where every participant had the democratic and moral right to question, respond, agree, or disagree (Bakhtin, 1981) from his/her unique subjective perceptive location. My role in OG, as a more experienced peer, was to animate this process of reflective dialog among diverse voices both intersubjectively and intrasubjectively in the formation of hybridized knowledge and identity. What sparked the creation of the third space in OG, as previously mentioned, was a question and the ensuing dialog that transported participants from the monotony of dead routines divested of interests and purposes to a world where their lived experience and those of their students were the center of attention. The third space *enabled* their voice to engage in spontaneous conversation breaking with the classic initiation-response-feedback (IRF) (Sinclair and Coulthard, 1975) tradition. The IRF pattern with its focus on knowledge recall questions brings a closure to the meaning-making process, whereas the open-ended questions that I posed on the topic of discussion brought back the flavor of the natural “eventness” of students’ everyday communication (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 88) endorsing their unique subjectivities: their feelings, thoughts, emotions, opinions, and purposes. Open-ended questions thus helped me connect to the participants, activate their thinking, and bring out their voice. Most importantly, it helped participants engage as active agents in the process of their learning. The following excerpt is an example of the questions they posed which emerged from curiosity and interest to gain deeper understanding. It should be noted that this question which had remained latent during the peer teaching class was voiced in the enabling and encouraging environment of the after-class (see turn 15 in the earlier OG discussion transcript):

Shiva: Miss, plants bear fruits, but when you pluck them, do they become non-living and abiotic?

Janaki: No, they can reproduce. When you put a mango in soil, it grows into a plant. The seed gives life.

Shiva: What about banana then? Its seeds don't grow. So, is it biotic or abiotic when plucked?

Questions such as the above and others from other participants fueled further dialog and stimulated everyone to engage in more (re)search. This mutual engagement in the meaning-making process gave me room to foster a *collaborative zone of development* by contributing to it as one of the voices with “equal rights” (Bakhtin, 1981) without seeking to replace participants’ existing perceptions. Valuing students’ unique subjective perceptions as a form of competence meets their affective needs and gives them an identity of participation as full members in the classroom. This is how Shiva experienced his participation in the OG (turn 15).

The alternative perspectives I brought to OG, which were based on “knowledge building” (Scardamalia and Bereiter, 2006) pedagogy as opposed to knowledge transmission pedagogy, put ideas, subjectivity, and meaning-making at the center in a process where teachers and learners engaged together in gaining deeper understanding of the topic or situation under consideration. Ideas of such personalized teaching/learning process collided with the conservative self-contained lay voices (Lortie, 1975;

Nias, 1989; Hargreaves, 1997, 2019) of the participants for whom teaching meant delivering ready-made knowledge given in the textbook for its reproduction by the students. The collision of these perspectives led to a creative disequilibrium (McLaughlin, 1997) or “pedagogic disequilibrium” (Mansfield, 2019) motivating everyone to negotiate anew the histories of meaning existing within the larger communities of practice (Wenger, 1998) of which they were a part.

Mutual Engagement in Meaning Negotiation

The alternative tools afforded in OG, which prompted our reflection, were grounded in concrete experience of participants’ (including researcher) practices, practices which were based both in traditional and alternative perspectives. Modeling proved an effective way of helping teachers experience alternative practices. The asymmetry of views represented in these divergent practices provided tangible material for mutual engagement in negotiation of meaning which included both *production* and *adoption* of meaning. If the experience of teacher learners is not adopted, in other words, when it is not acknowledged as a form of competence, as what happens in mainstream teacher education, it causes a split between production and adoption of meaning and curbs learning. However, teacher learners’ unique personal experiences embraced exclusively and unreflectively, as has been pointed out, also fail to achieve the goals of transformative learning (Hargreaves and Goodson, 1996) or hybridization. Their personal knowledge or subjective perception becomes useful only when developed in suitable contexts in reflective ways enabling them to establish a dialectic move between their experience and understanding. A healthy distance between experience and competence is necessary to create a “generative tension” (Wenger, 1998) where meaning-making toward greater complexity can take place. What creates the discontinuity between the two aspects of knowledge, practice and theory, in teacher education is the teacher educator stance based on a privileged conception of theoretical knowledge. Such a stance does not nurture the interanimation of diverse voices as it undermines the capacity of teachers to reflect, interact, and “produce” proposals. In OG, although I was positioned as a significant other, my interpretive frame, which emanated from an alternative paradigm of thought/theory, was not given to others for adoption as “self-evidently universal” (Dressman, 1998). It was called into question by teacher learners’ experience, their lived reality which was recognized as a legitimate form of competence with “equal rights” in OG’s third space: e.g., Swathi (ST8):

My worry is, if we did this [differentiated teaching] instead of assuming that everyone understood our explanation, we might be going against the system.

Awareness of the Emerging Gaps Between Action and Understanding: Development of Moral Answerability

In the concrete experiences that participants had and the exploratory discussions on them in OG, theoretical perspectives

provided in the course work started to make sense. However, the happiness derived from the gradual increase in conceptual clarity was offset by a disquieting realization that this understanding did not “readily translate into practice” (Russell, 2018, p. 5; also, Ratnam, 2010; Zeichner, 2012):

Swati: ...It [engaging in spontaneous conversation with students to facilitate their self-expression] looks very simple, but it is not easy when we try in class.

Participants had no opportunity to experience this decentering feeling earlier, because formal teacher preparation operates largely with absolute certainty about “what” to teach and “how.” However, in OG, the main focus of discussion was on the challenges experienced in class and the powerful messages underlying their “normal” actions. For example, Janaki’s class, which was initially seen by participants as one of the “best practices,” became a reference point, an eye opener: Rekha (ST3):

It’s the same classroom and the same situation, but we have new eyes now to see what is happening in the classroom, what we are doing and how it affects our students, how harmful it is.

The ability to see oppression concealed in classroom routines they carry out is itself “a form, if not the first seeds of transformative practice” (Leistyna et al., 1996). Teachers’ endeavor to hold their pedagogical act to scrutiny is an act of moral answerability (Redder, 2019). The development of moral sensitivity (Morton et al., 2006) and care (Noddings, 2005; Held, 2006) including empathy spurs their activism and commitment to “make a difference to the lives” of those who they teach (Day, 2012, p. 7) by meeting their needs:

Pragna: That [going back to ritual content covering] will not happen. We won’t have satisfaction if we do that. If we carry on without clarifying students’ doubts, topic will go forward, but students will remain behind.

Awareness of the “Unfinalized” Nature of Teacher/Teacher Educator Learning

The experience of engaging in continual reflection on classroom events and the dilemmas they faced brought home the deliberate, iterative nature of learning to teach (Eisner, 2002), involving cycles of action, reflection, and development (Ramsey, 2006). It exploded the myth of resolving practical challenges faced in teaching with ready-made “theoretical solutions” in one encounter. Participants experienced the third space in OG as an “unfinalized” space where the potential to mean is never closed. It is, in fact, maintained by their emerging dilemmas, questions, and competing voices in conflict:

Janaki: ...Each day is new and each class is different. We have so many questions, so much to discuss, we can go on and on.

The tools of questioning and reflection, which have become part of the participants’ consciousness, will remain with them to nourish their development through their career as teachers.

TENTATIVE CONCLUSION AS PROVOCATION TO FURTHER DIALOG

Preparing teachers for equity and social justice pedagogy in the context of enduring global crisis of socioeconomic polarization and conflict is one of the crucial challenges facing teacher education today. The example provided here of tangible cultural experiences associated with such equity-oriented pedagogy in a particular curricular context helps in gaining deeper insights into how opportunities are created in the third space for shifts in thinking about what counts as knowledge and participants’ role in it.

Restructuring teacher education unaccompanied by reconceptualization (Wideen and Grimmett, 1995), which fails to foster teacher autonomy, makes it tilt toward *status quo* rather than change (e.g., Lo, 2019), fueling the “discourse of derision” about ITE (Furlong, 2019). A loss of credibility in university-led ITE courses is leading to deregulation and marketization of teacher education (Zeichner and Conklin, 2017). Is this a dangerous trend? If teacher education is reduced to a zero-sum game, it can no more produce anything of genuine value (Haque, 2018), least of all, work to create a pedagogy that is sensitive to the concerns of equity and social justice.

The inertia beneath all the movement of structural changes in teacher education points to a denial of reality in the system. The structural reform does not appear to have helped teacher educators and mentor teachers shake off the deceptive sense of stability provided by the “unity and fixity” (Bhabha, 1994, p. 37) of the authoritative discourse that reduces teaching to “sanitized routines” (Eisner, 2002). As Russell (1999) asserts, for teacher education to promote teacher change, the changes have to occur in teacher education first. The reform has not been successful in supporting teacher educators take an active stance, question whose agenda the taken-for-granted ways of teaching serves, and the distorted beliefs implicit in them. Unless they see teaching in a new light, asking new questions, the character of existing traditional paradigm will not change and authoritative teacher-centered practices are all the cultural tools that remain with them to mediate student teachers’ learning. This, in turn, severely curtails student teachers’ voices and their potential to interanimate the institutional authoritative voice and practices, hold them to scrutiny in order to pave the way for practice that is equity centered.

The study shows that student teachers who participated in this study seem to be very pliable and possess the adventurous spirit to subvert institutional authority and reposition themselves vis-à-vis this authority in order to follow what are culturally inclusive practices. Teacher education needs to nurture this spirit by creating an environment where their subjectivity is not erased and where they can realize their unique creative potential. For many student teachers, ITE is a disillusioning experience, because the passion for teaching with which they enter it is tamed by the stifling regimen they are put through that fails to connect to their passion, purposes, experiences, and values including the “moral center” of teaching (Sockett, 2009).

Although the problem of change seems endemic to teacher education, this study strikes a note of optimism in participants’

realization of the “unfinalizability” of meaning and the ongoing movement between action and reflection it has initiated in them. Narratives of success in teacher education programs, which view theory and practice as mutually constitutive in culturally mediated collaborative activities, are on the increase in teacher education literature (e.g., Gorodetsky and Barak, 2008; Ellerbrock et al., 2016; Mauri et al., 2019). “Actionable” illustrations (Brayko, 2018) such as the one presented here show how theories become meaningful when they are mediated as practical tools for teachers to engage with subjectively rather than transmitting them as information unconnected to their phenomenological world. The value of this work lies in stirring up the conceptual thinking that is necessary to breathe meaning into systemic changes. While not being prescriptive, this study adds to the possibility of imagining the creation of a third space where one form of knowledge is not privileged over the other and where the dialogization of voices in heteroglossia helps teacher educators, teachers, and student teachers walk together toward equity pedagogy.

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DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

All datasets presented in this study are included in the article/supplementary material.

ETHICS STATEMENT

Ethical review and approval was not required for the study on human participants in accordance with the local legislation and institutional requirements. The patients/participants provided their written informed consent to participate in this study.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

The author confirms being the sole contributor of this work and has approved it for publication.

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Conflict of Interest: The author declares that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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