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Editorial: Social justice in teacher education: Equity, diversity, inclusion

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Editorial on the Research Topic

[Social justice in teacher education: Equity, diversity, inclusion](#)

This Research Topic, which addresses persisting issues of equity and social justice in teacher education practice, assumes greater importance in light of the COVID-19 pandemic crisis holding implications for post pandemic practice. The pandemic has layered systemic barriers in teacher education such as race, class, ethnicity, gender, sexual identity, and inclusion with new complexities brought on by the sudden shift to remote online teaching and the concomitantly sharpened digital inequities. The articles in the eBook speak to these concerns of equity from diverse contextual, conceptual and methodological vantage points. The subsections weave a framework indicating the various angles from which these issues are examined to question assumptions and reveal new possibilities for change.

Equity and social justice in teacher education practice: New possibilities

[Stetsenko](#) lays a powerful conceptual foundation for such new possibilities by exposing the “residue of passivity” found in the dominant sociocultural perspectives that obstructs the realization of teachers’ activist agentive and “formative” role. Her notion of “radical transformative agency” provides a nuanced understanding of the agentive role of teachers, that speaks to their inner (moral) sense of accountability taking them beyond status quo practices and continuance of social inequities.

[Ratnam’s](#) work embodies the transformative agentive stance in practical terms through an exemplar that conveys the message clearly to teachers and teacher educators. By presenting the case of an equity-oriented pedagogy and unpacking its meaning, the study stirs up the conceptual thinking necessary to breathe meaning into systemic changes in pre-service teacher education. Her dialogic approach reflects new orientations toward post qualitative work.

Are teacher educators and student teachers ill-equipped to address complexities relating to race and gender issues?

Davis uses a mixed-method approach to illuminate the need for critical awareness given especially a reduction of critical spaces in favor of pedagogical approaches. Recommendations from this study reaffirm the urgency for training, (re-)centralization, and on-going professional development.

Goode et al. report a state-wide “Computer Science for All” initiative that aims to make this segregated discipline more inclusive in terms of both race and gender. The study goes beyond technical and pedagogical supports to teachers to engage with systemic reworking of normative and political forces that are part of the fabric of schools.

Coleman-King et al. offer narratives from the perspective of Black women professors in an Urban Teacher Preparation Program at a historically White Institution to illustrate how allyship can be birthed and what roles, responsibilities, and risks are inherent in allyship development and work. They address contentions that allies may face in creating and sustaining inclusive spaces and practices.

How can science education be made more accessible to socioeconomically disadvantaged students?

Dotson et al. introduce a novel evidence-based peer-led and co-learning model, IGNITE, to empower marginalized rural communities globally with STEM design thinking. By establishing partnership with local communities this program is potentially both scalable and sustainable in addressing disparities.

Khan and Van Wynsberghe make a case for Community Service Learning (CSL) experiences for preservice science teachers in the advancement of sensitivity, equity and diversity in classrooms. Various CSL models are explored and benefits, including teaching and assessment strategies, are presented as they relate to science teaching and teacher education.

How do educators grasp the elusive goals of equity, inclusivity and social justice?

Chan’s narrative inquiry examines how ideas of equity and social justice may play out for a high school teacher in the implementation of her English curriculum. She considers ways in which examples of equity and social justice from interactions

between students and teachers, and among students, reveal further complexities of how these issues might be understood and addressed in a school context.

Ross et al. also use narrative inquiry to examine the persisting problem of teacher retention related to schools working for equity. Posing the question, “what do beginning teachers need in order to tell stories of staying?”, they find that the concept of the “best-loved self” seems promising in helping teachers to construct their sense of identity.

Bukko and Liu illuminate how empirical findings from a teaching-coaching-reflection simulation learning experience promote equity consciousness, equity literacy, and transformative learning in a teacher education literacy-based methods course. The chapter calls for educators to go beyond teaching the lesson plan to center their programs on equity knowledge and development as a critical aspect of teacher preparation.

Schlein et al. discuss educators’ experiences of curricular interaction in higher education using narrative inquiry. Their engagement with students in socially just and equitable curriculum leads to reflections on mentoring as an outgrowth of teaching that might serve to sustain curriculum negotiation from an equity and social justice vantage.

Using emergent discourse of teacher candidates, **Whiting and Cutri** examine ways in which teacher candidates grapple with, articulate, and explain their personal privilege. Their findings reveal three distinct but related articulations of the Discourse of Individualism, viz., ideology of meritocracy, ideology of luck and of systemic inequality opening the door for conversations to better understand and enact professional obligations.

Placed in the context of COVID-19 pandemic, the work by **Parker and Conversano** captures the effects of the pandemic on existing systemic barriers and accessibility in schools. They use a narrative inquiry 3R framework to illuminate intensely lived and storied experiences of educators’ teaching during the pandemic. Recommendations for eradicating barriers are presented as a youth strategy, and call for a post-pandemic new normal on teacher education and its relation to poverty, equity, diversity, and inclusion.

Looking ahead

Together, these articles lay bare equity, diversity and inclusion topics as the gateway for reconceptualising a lived curriculum and practice for social justice in school systems. The unique contribution of the eBook lies in the forward thrust it makes in the field of Teacher Education by advancing thinking on:

- the link between awareness and change in practice, and how self-reflexivity mediates in making this connection;

- “diversity” as an indispensable dialogical tool in teaching to equity and social justice and not, as is commonly seen, a problem to be addressed;
- ways of setting up a dialectic between theory and practice to overcome the persisting divide between the two in teacher education.

The pandemic has ushered a sense of urgency forcing us to look anew at barriers to social justice and equity in education in light of greater dependence on digital resources that are unevenly distributed. Complexities associated with climate change which exposes the fragility of humans on earth add new dimensions to issues of inequality. This eBook points to the need for more research to address the seminal existential question of how schooling can prepare students to create a more equitable planet while dissolving barriers to race, socioeconomics, gender, and climate change.

Author contributions

TR wrote the editorial with inputs from DP and EC. All have edited, reviewed the submission approving it for publication, and led the underlying Research Topic.

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The authors declare 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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