Teaching Across Cultures: Navigating Teacher Candidates' Perceptions of Multicultural Education in China

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Introduction

The People's Republic of China is a multiethnic, multilingual, and multicultural country, which is governed by a single party government, the Communist Party (Leibold and Chen 2014). China is also the world's most populous country with 56 different ethnic groups (Leibold and Chen 2014). It claims to advocate "diversity in unity of the Chinese nation" (Wang 2004, p. 358). Hans are the dominant ethnic group. The other 55 ethnic groups are regarded as minorities (Leibold and Chen 2014). Han culture is the mainstream of the society and Mandarin is the official language and required for all groups in China (Wang 2004). Historically, most minority groups live on the frontiers of mainland China (Zhao 2007). The majority of minority areas are underpopulated in comparison to the residential areas of the Hans. Along with the social transformation and urbanization processes, the number of minorities has been increasing, especially in metropolitan cities since the Chinese government started enabling the migration movement of people for both economic development and the improvement of individual living standards (Iredale and Guo 2003).

China's ethnic policy holds that the country is composed of 56 ethnic groups, with emphasis on both political integration and cultural diversification (Postiglione 2000). From the foundation of The People's Republic of China, various policies and reforms were implemented to improve national minority education quality. Despite the central government's concerns ethnic minorities are still often linked to biased cultural representation and stereotypical images in mainstream society (Zhao 2007). Many Hans hold deficit attitudes toward non-Han groups and "label them as barbarians" (Zhao 2007, p.4). As David Hansen (1999) points out that instead of correcting Han biased and negative images of minority groups, the Chinese central government and state education play a role in "reproducing notions of cultural inequity in the process of unifying the whole nation" (p.159). The national policy of assimilating minority groups into Han culture magnifies Han dominance and neglects non-Han cultures in teaching multiethnic students (Zhao 2007). While minority songs, clothing, and dances are celebrated and ethnic artifacts are preserved, the prescription for modernization includes education as cultural assimilation. This historically rooted stereotype has negative influences on cultural representations and educational experiences of minorities and their cultures in mainstream society, while the ethnic majority Han culture is represented as valued, modern, and normal.

The changing student populations and diverse cultural backgrounds in mainstream classrooms pose questions for teachers to rethink how to bridge cultural gaps between ethnic minority students and their peers, and teachers from the majority cultural and ethnic group. Recognizing multiple cultural differences among student culture, school culture, and teachers' culture may contribute to reducing cultural clashes. In any discussion of reducing cultural mismatch, teachers' competence in diversity is essential to better facilitating multicultural student learning. But so is determining how to multiculturalize the content of teacher education programs. When these elements are absent in the process of educating prospective teachers, a teaching training and teaching practice gap will be created and result in teachers misreading students' learning abilities.

Challenges of Teaching Multicultural and Multiethnic Students

The increasing diverse student population, the homogeneous teaching force and the declining enrollments of ethnic minority students in teacher education programs worldwide expands the "demographic divide" (Gay 2000). The racial and ethnic makeup of the teaching population in China is homogeneous, middle class, female, and Han dominant (Wang 2004). The decline of minority participation in the teaching force and teacher education programs at colleges and universities decreases prospective teachers' cultural sensitivity and awareness towards students from multicultural backgrounds. Teachers tend not to have the same cultural frames of reference and points of view as their students because, as Geneva Gay (2018) suggested, those teachers live in different existential worlds. Consequently, these preservice teachers often have difficulty functioning as effective role models for diverse students (Villegas and Lucas 2002), or serving as cultural brokers and cultural agents (Gay 2018) who can assist students bridging home-school differences and cultural gaps. They also often have difficulty constructing curriculum, instruction, and interactional patterns that are culturally responsive, which indicates that the students in the greatest academic need are least likely to have access to educational opportunities congruent with their life experiences and cultural heritages (Cochran-Smith 2004). According to Gerard Postiglione (2007, p. 94), "the demand by ethnic minorities for schools and teachers to elevate the status of their home culture within the national education framework has become an urgent issue with the increasing minority student population in schools." As Postiglione (2007) argued, the lack of cultural recognition and representation of ethnic minority students in schools limits meaningful access to education in China for its ethnic minorities, thereby sustaining their patterns of underachievement.

The lack of multicultural knowledge, attitudes, and skills about cultural and racial dimensions of learning can lead to inequitable instructional practices. A chain reaction of consequences broadens the pedagogical gap between teaching preparation and practice, and the learning outcomes of minority students. Yangbin Chen (2014) recounted her experience in observing an inland Tibetan class in Sichuan Province, where the Han majority teachers had very little knowledge of their Tibetan students' culture traditions, values, learning styles, and home languages and the impact of these on second language (Mandarin Chinese) learning processes and academic outcomes. The majority Han teachers had lower expectations for Tibetan students, some even kept a respectful distance from these students due to their low academic performance, and the misinterpretation of their ethnic and cultural origins as barbarous and backward.

Ethnic minority education in China is an integral part of the education system (Chapman, Chen, and Postiglione 2000). The number of ethnic minority students attending all levels of the education system has increased in recent years. Based on research conducted by Chapman and his colleagues, the proportion of ethnic minority students equals or exceeds their proportion in the national population in primary schools and in normal schools. As Mistilina Sato (2014) pointed out, China has experienced a history of concentrating resources in the eastern part of the country so that its education system is also experiencing an unbalanced growth in urban centers and the rural west. In recent years, many ethnic minority students move for the purpose of getting better education and this desire for high quality education in urban cities leads to a higher rate of migration from rural minority regions to urban Han residency areas (Iredale, Bilik, and Guo 2003). With the rapid urbanization and social transformation in China, there is a frequent flow of labor migration which increases interactions and contacts among people from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds. For example, ethnic minority workers from the western border migrate to the more affluent eastern coast provinces to work and live among the majority Hans. Schools in urban cities such as Beijing and Shanghai now have more ethnic minority students than before. Having experienced little encounter with and knowledge of minority people's cultures, values, and learning styles, Han teachers may hold stereotypes and prejudices about their minority students (Ma 2007).

Many teacher candidates from majority cultural and racial groups in different countries are often not well prepared professional to effectively work with culturally diverse students. They do not obtain the necessary multicultural knowledge base through their studies in teacher education programs. Yu (2014) investigated the lack of ethnic and cultural knowledge and course preparation for Han teacher candidates in his study of 120 colleges and normal universities from over 30 inland provinces in China. His findings showed that most of Han teachers and teacher candidates do not know how to deal with multiple issues regarding cultural and ethnic diversity and differences especially in urban cities. In working with increasing diverse student populations in urban cities in China, a critical question the dominant Han teachers must ask is, "what teaching perceptions and educational practices are in place to effectively communicate and teach multicultural and multiethnic students?" Inequitable educational practices for ethnic minority students have been documented in the United States and China, but the gap has been less fully investigated in association with culture and ethnic majority teachers' inequitable multicultural awareness, knowledgebase, and pedagogy especially in China's context. Further research is needed to explore how it operates in multicultural classrooms, such as for students from a variety of minority backgrounds and their dominant Han teachers. Ethnic minority students in urban cities in China are facing struggles over cultural and linguistic pluralism, ethnic and cultural hierarch in the mainstream society, continuing large-scale migration, unequal distribution of educational resources, and inequitable teaching preparation and practice especially for Han teachers and teacher candidates.

Theoretical Framework

Competent teachers are essential to improving the quality of education for students. Becoming a culturally responsive Han teacher is a multi-dimensional process. Based on related research, essential components of dimensions include the six identified components: Teacher attitudes, cultural knowledge base, culturally responsive pedagogy, instructional material, positive interactions, and relationships with community. This study is guided by the theory of culturally responsive pedagogy (Gay 2018). Gay (2018) mentioned that teaching practices can play an essential role in reducing institutional racism and achievement gaps, as well as improving minority students' self-esteem, identities, and learning engagements and academic outcomes. Culturally responsive pedagogy involves informing teaching content with diversity; equips dynamic instructional methods with academic rigor; develops equity within the mainstream and students' cultural contexts; focuses on improving academic outcomes for minority students (Banks and McGee Banks 2004; Gay 2018).

Culturally responsive pedagogy provides guidelines for teachers to become "cultural mediators" (Sleeter and Cornbleth 2011) or brokers who can demonstrate respect and caring for students as well as make subject matter content more accessible and meaningful for minority students (Gay 2018; Sleeter and Cornbleth 2011). As such, culturally responsive teachers can and should be as cultural brokers (Lipka 1998), cultural translators (Lomawaima 2004), and warm demanders (Gay 2018). As Gay (2000, p. 29) indicated, culturally responsive teaching teaches to and through strengths of multicultural students; it is "culturally validating and affirming." It is more than a means to improve minority students' standardized test scores. Most importantly, it can improve instructional quality by inspiring teachers from the majority group to be critically reflective about what they know about their students' knowledge backgrounds and cultural heritages, and what conflicts might exist between their cultural knowledge and their students. According to Yang Lv (2004, p. 91), "this is especially important in China's educational context, where teaching materials and practices still do not fully embody and reflect the cultural diversity and needs of minority students." More scholars in China start to concern about the effects of negative stereotypes about minority students' cultures and the lack of minority representations and knowledge in school curricula and textbooks (Leibold and Chen 2014). Wang (2013) noted that Han Chinese-centered culture and knowledge constitute the content of the National College Entrance

Examination. Little attention has been giving to the culture and knowledge of minority groups in this national examination, which implies that the mastery of Han culture and knowledge equals to a good university to attend, a well-paid job after graduation, and a better life and bright future (Wang 2013).

In addition to recognizing that minority students bring rich funds of knowledge to their learning experiences, teachers can do much to modify their approaches to instruction. Educational equity and excellence for students from all ethnic, racial and cultural backgrounds are unattainable without the incorporation of cultural and racial pluralism in all aspects of the educational system (Yuan 2017). The purpose of this article is to explore preservice Han teachers' perspectives of multicultural education in order to enhance institutional quality and effectively prepare culturally responsive Han teachers for multicultural and multiethnic students in China. This study navigated this research purpose through a qualitative approach to answer the research question "What are preservice Han teachers' perceptions of multiculturalism and of their teacher education programs in addressing and preparing them to be culturally responsive teachers for diverse students in China?"

Methodology

This study used a qualitative research approach, followed a basic interpretive format (Merriam 2009). Qualitative research is a useful way to explore Han preservice teachers' views of their professional preparation and fieldwork experiences with respect to teaching ethnically and culturally diverse students; their understanding of ethnic and cultural effects on minority students' learning; and how their teacher education programs incorporate knowledge, attitudes, and skills for culturally responsive teaching. Based on the research purpose of identifying preservice Han teachers' perceptions of their teacher education programs in addressing and preparing them to be culturally responsive teachers, the targeted study participants were Han teacher education students (who are called normal students) in a normal university in Beijing.

Participants were five Han teacher candidates enrolled in the teacher education programs at a major teacher education institution in China: Central Normal University, who will become K-12 school teachers after graduation. There were three females and two males. Participants were either 22 or 23 years old. All were in the fourth year of college studies and four of the five participants taught in middle schools. These preservice teachers were selected from a range of different compulsory subjects taught in schools, including Math, Chinese, English, Science, and Social Science. It was important to have variation in the subjects preservice teachers teach, while selecting disciplines that mostly needed a culturally responsive pedagogy that could connect with students' daily lives. Therefore Liberal Arts and Social Science subjects were targeted for identifying participants. Interviews were the major source of data for this study. They were helpful in capturing participants' perspectives, attitudes, strategies, and reflections. Interviews lasted for 45-60 minutes and were designed for in-depth exploration of the experience of the researched individuals (Charmaz 2006). The interview questions were all semi-structured, following the general flow of opening questions, intermediate questions, and ending questions to gradually address the three primary research questions of this study. All interviews were audio recorded on a digital device and subsequently transcribed, analyzed, and coded to search for common themes and sub-themes. During the interview, field notes also were taken to provide descriptions of the interview settings and the researcher's comments or reflections. Field notes also were taken during the coding process. Digital recordings were used for the interviews which were later transcribed by the researcher. As suggested by Erickson (1986, p. 149), transcripts of interviews were read multiple times to achieve "a more holistic conception of the content." The transcripts were carefully analyzed, using open coding and focused coding to develop themes according to the patterns derived from the hand-coded data (Strauss and Corbin 1998).

Findings

Puzzling Attitudes towards Multiculturalism and Diversity

All teacher candidates' impressions and conceptions of multiculturalism consisted mainly of Western (especially US) culture and Chinese culture. Participant A said, "When we talk about multiculturalism, it is not 'multi' as it is supposed to be. In most cases it is more like biculturalism---Western and Chinese cultures." Most of the other teacher candidate participants agreed with the wide spread "biculturalism" and the binary diversity created by this cultural paradigm. As she declared further, "I think the concept of multiculturalism is imported from the West, especially from the United States. This leads to the pervasive impact of Western culture on our conceptions and knowledge construction of diversity." Participant B agreed in that, "We [do not] have a clear understanding of multiculturalism in China, because the concept of cultural diversity we are so familiar with is closely tied to the Western context."

Participant C was confused about diversity because of cultural encounters in her daily life and schooling experience. She said, "When I think of diversity, I connect it to difference. Obviously Western culture is very different from Chinese culture. This difference is so visible because we learn English and Western history at school. Diversity within our Chinese society seems invisible." The cultural confusion in the context of globalization resulted in an imbalance of cultural recognition and appreciation. Western culture (especially US culture) has been central to the Chinese experience of diversity and modernity. This conception limits diversity in China to the five ethnic autonomous regions, where indigenous diversities are visible and distinctive. Therefore, there was a perception gap of diversity and multiculturalism between Western culture, Chinese majority culture, and ethnic minority Chinese culture. The ambiguous perception and vague definition of multiculturalism narrowed the concepts of diversity and culture to visible diversity and distinctive culture, which created a visibility gap within China's context of multicultural education. Consequently, the split conceptions of diversity divided the content of multicultural education and converted multicultural education in China into multi-ethnic education in ethnic autonomous regions. This cultural and diversity conception affected the diversity awareness and formation of cultural knowledge of prospective Han teachers in China.

Popularizing Western Culture

The five teacher candidates were concerned about the overemphasis on Western culture in Chinese schools and in daily life. Participant D mentioned the excessive promotion of US culture and the global impact of English. According to him, "People are intensely curious about Western developed countries especially the United States. We are eagerly interested in knowing and learning from America because it becomes the shining beacon of civilization and modernization." He also recalled that during his K-12 experience learning English and how it was pervasive and fundamental over other cultural and linguistic diversities. He commented that, "We learn English from kindergarten to university, because mastering English represents higher social status. Although we have hundreds of indigenous languages and dialects, few people are willing to master them."

Participant E described one of his onsite observation experiences in Urumqi, where the promotion of trilingual education (Mandarin, English, and Uygur) encountered resistance from local Uygur students and parents. He recalled, "Uygur parents concerned about the overemphasis on English and some of them considered this as 'cultural invasion'." Popularizing Western culture not only formally impacted school education, but also informally shaped people's diversity awareness and cultural appreciation between Westernized culture and indigenous Chinese culture. The value attached to English and Western culture leads to an unequal distribution of cross-cultural courses in schools, and an unbalanced focus between Western culture and Chinese culture.

Unifying Chinese Culture

All participants mentioned the significance of maintaining China's national unity and social stability. Developing a solid understanding of Han Chinese culture played an essential role in the moral, civic, and national education experiences of all participants. Since

Han is the dominant ethnic group, the pervasiveness of Han culture and social capital hold a significant position. This ethnic-cultural hierarchy also reinforced the construction of a unified Chinese culture and society based on Han ideologies and social capital. As participant E admitted,

> Although we acknowledge we have 56 ethnicities and non-Han ethnic groups bring their cultures into our society through attending schools and engaging in social activities, the mainstream culture, such as academic culture, economic culture, and political culture are still based on Han-centric culture.

The ethnic-cultural hierarchy was notably present in teacher candidates' volunteering in remoted ethnic regions. For example, participant A recalled from her volunteer teaching experience in Liangshan, that the Yi students there had a strong desire to leave the area because their hometown was synonymous with underdevelopment, and their ethnicity and culture were usually portrayed as benign and uncivilized. She explained,

> One of my students told me that he hoped to attend a Han-led school. Compared to local school, Han-led schools have more qualified teachers and a much better learning environment. But some inland public schools have stereotyped impressions of us. He expressed a common sentiment shared by many of my Yi students that if he were a Han, he would be more likely to succeed, such as to attend a prestigious university and get a decent job.

Participant D linked his personal experience to the formation of the unified Chinese (Han) culture and social ideology. He mentioned that, "When we talk about Chinese culture, we simultaneously think of the traditional Chinese culture which is based on Confucianism. Within the one single unified cultural concept of 'traditional Chinese culture', figures and voices of other groups seem to be silenced." Participant B stated further that, "Because we always say 'One China', the image of 'being the One' is deeply rooted in our minds. Sometimes we tend to ignore who makes up the 'One', and how we are different from each other during the process of making up the 'One'."

Blurring Minority Cultures and Ethnic Diversity

"We are all Chinese people." This was a frequently mentioned statement during the interviews with teacher candidates. "I cannot differentiate ethnic minorities from Han. We all look the same, except for Uygur and Tibetan people." Participant C described her previous experience and understanding of ethnic diversity as a blank paper in stating that, "Our understandings of minority groups are very limited. We can name major ethnic groups, but that is all I know about them. Moreover, like many Hans who grow up in Beijing, we lack a living sense of ethnic diversity." Participant E attributed this monotonous ethnic awareness to unclear ethnic distinctions, and the missing indigenous language heritage of minority groups. He elaborated,

> Generally speaking, the impact of ethnic minority culture and language is very limited compared to Han culture and the official status of Mandarin. Ethnic minorities have already been assimilated into Han. Although I experienced ethnic diversity due to the influence of my living community [Hui], most of Hui in Beijing no longer speak Hui language. I used to have ethnic minority classmates from Manchu, Mongolian, Oroqen, Xibes, and Hui ethnicities. No more than three of them could speak their indigenous languages. The rest of them no longer speak their indigenous languages for several generations. They told me they inherited nothing but the name of their ethnicities---just like wearing an ethnic hat.

The five teacher candidates also indicated that although ethnic minority cultures contributed to the rich context of diversity in China, the social impact, public awareness, and recognition of ethnic diversity were diminished. The national process and policy of ethnic integration and cultural assimilation homogenized ethnic minority cultures and languages, and reduced ethnic diversity awareness in urban Han-led cities. The diminishing minority presence in daily life created cultural distance from ethnic minority people and resulted in "ethnic blindness" among Hans in urban cities. Participant B summarized this process and the challenges within it, "Ethnic diversity is among us, but it is far away from us. People take for granted that there are no cross-ethnicity barriers because we imagine that

minorities are always happily adapting to our society. However the reality tells a different story."

Symbolized Cultural Representation and Knowledge of Minority Groups

All teacher candidates mentioned that geographic distance from minority groups limited multicultural living experiences, caused ethnic-blindness towards indigenous diversity, and created cultural and conceptual gaps between Hans and people from other ethnic and cultural backgrounds. The potential for cultural dissonance between majority Han teachers and their future multicultural students necessitated preservice teachers developing multicultural awareness, knowledge base, and instructional practice to achieve educational equity and excellence for students from diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds. Unfortunately, the preservice teachers in this study reported limited knowledge of others. Their knowledge construction of others occurred primarily through K-12 education, informal learning in life through mass media, and social interactions with minority peers.

The academic knowledge of minority groups tended to be general, descriptive, and symbolized conceptions. Teacher candidates indicated that they learned about ethnic minority groups from courses in Chinese, morality and society, moral and education life, and history and politics. Although there were many course options to learn about other ethnicities, the knowledge received by students was mainly superficial. Participant B described the background knowledge of ethnic minority groups as "based on numbers [55 ethnic minority groups] and national slogans such as 'we are a big harmonious family'." Participant A added that, "The text and paragraphs of ethnic minority people can be summarized as 'happy and extroverted others'. My knowledge base and impressions of minority groups are still linked to the pictures of dancing and singing people who are wearing ethnic costumes." In addition to limited cultural knowledge and formal education of ethnic minority groups, social media transmit stereotypical impressions of cultural others. Participant C mentioned her hesitance to do volunteer teaching in Liangshan and Xinjiang because the media portrayed indigenous people in those regions as backwards.

Through reconsidering the definition of diversity, its significance in building relationships with others, and how to better understand students from historically marginalized ethnicities, teacher candidates and teacher educators in this study thought preservice education should reduce stereotypic beliefs of ethnic minority students, build cross-cultural skills, and obtain a broaden cultural knowledge base. However, most teacher education students in inland cities of China have limited awareness of cultural diversity and ethnic pluralism due to the superficial level of multiethnic and multicultural education in K-12 schools and postsecondary education.

Inadequate Academic Preparation in Teaching for Diversity

The traditional university-based teacher education curricula in China follow the Han-centric perspectives and focus on subject content knowledge and pedagogy (Zhang 2002; Bai 2005; Jin and Jin 2016). The curricula for pre-service teacher training at Central Normal University included: general education, subject-content education, teacher education, and field-work education. The teacher candidates mentioned the overemphasis on subject knowledge and how it limited the importance of sociocultural contexts of teaching. Participant D said, "I don't think our programs address the issue of diversity and sociocultural context of teaching."

Due to the commonly defined teacher competence as subject competence, the sociocultural impacts on teaching are usually ignored. Participant E added, "The majority of teacher candidates and teacher educators rarely pay attention to the issue of diversity and preparing teachers for diversity. They lack cultural or ethnic connections to minority groups and living experiences in diverse communities and cross-cultural environments." The limited presence of multicultural education in teacher education curricula and courses, along with teacher education students' insufficient pedagogical skills training and limited practical experiences in diverse placements created another fundamental problem. This was a growing cultural mismatch between prospective teachers and their multicultural students.

Discussion and Recommendations

A variety of studies that focused on multicultural education theory in China raised large amount of concerns, many of which are similar to those expressed by the participants in this study. For example, Geng (2013) questioned how to convert the multicultural theory into practice under the Chinese educational system. Jin (2009) noted that despite attention to situating multicultural education into China's context, theoretical and conceptual ideas have not been implemented very well in preservice and in-service teacher development. Most Han teachers do not understand cultural influences on teaching and learning, and they do not know how to respond to the needs of diverse students in multicultural schooling environments. These claims were confirmed by the results of this study and suggested that it is important to raise the multicultural awareness of teacher candidates in China. While teacher candidates in this study acknowledged the significance of ethnic minority culture and western culture, they stressed that their acceptance of the existence of various cultural heritages and ethnic diversities was not transformed into teaching strategies before and after entering in teacher education programs.

The findings of this study also revealed that conceptions of multiculturalism in China tend to be rather narrow in substantive focus, and limited to ethnic minority groups within minority autonomous regions in China. While this is quite common, it is contrary to much of current theoretical characterizations of multicultural education in both China and other countries such as the United States. As Wang (2012) pointed out cultural diversity and cultural sensitivity should not be limited to ethnically diverse groups in ethnic minority regions. In doing so, multicultural awareness and cultural competence will be neglected in urban cities and urban teacher education institutions. Wang and Gou (2012) suggested that the development of multicultural competence need to include both regional characteristics and national emphases. The teacher candidates and teacher educators in this study endorsed these ideas.

Teacher candidate participants also attributed their ambiguous conceptions and insufficient multicultural knowledge to limited exposure to diversity and inadequate academic training. The knowledge and skills they did have were acquired primarily from social interactions and volunteer teaching experiences rather than academic education and professional development. Consequently, their perceptions, knowledge, and pedagogy were often inconsistent with multicultural education academic theory, research, and scholarship. Their understandings of the scope of multicultural education and culturally responsive pedagogy needed more specificity and clarity to be appropriately applied in multicultural and multiethnic schools.

Ethnic and cultural diversity in China has been increased and enriched by globalization and urbanization. The unbalanced economic development and the unequal distribution of quality educational resources and opportunities have made improving rural education, ethnic minority education, and education for all Chinese students significant and urgent. Increasingly teachers are facing students from diverse socioeconomic, ethnic, cultural, and racial backgrounds. Previous research in other nations on improving teacher qualities and classroom practices with historically marginalized rural, migrant, immigrant, and ethnic minority students have identified teachers' cultural diversity competence as a major contributing factor. However, as Wang and Gou (2012) reported, both ethnic minority teacher education and teacher education in general in China largely ignores the significance of social and cultural impacts on teaching and learning. Scholarship on eliminating educational inequalities in China's educational systems mainly focuses on training ethnic minority and rural teachers for ethnic minority and rural students in ethnic autonomous and rural regions. This study symbolized both continuity and change in addressing these issues. Its orientation and results are consistent with the findings of previous scholarship on the importance and manifestations of teacher education for and about cultural diversity, and with the potential change that could result from better preparing Han preservice teachers in mainstream teacher education institutions for teaching ethnic and

cultural minority students in different contexts throughout China.

Teachers need much more training in how to value, affirm, and maximize the rich cultural heritages their multicultural students bring to classrooms. In this regard, prospective teachers should be educated to differentiate curriculum, instruction, interaction, and assessment to better facilitate success in minority students' learning at schools. Since teacher education programs play a crucial role in determining teachers' attitudes and actions toward diversity and their preparation programs should be much more explicit and comprehensive in developing dispositions and skills for culturally relevant teaching for ethnic minority, rural, and immigrant students in different living and learning contexts. The application of these competences may vary somewhat by location, ethnic group, teachers, and subjects being taught, but these different variations do not invalidate the necessity for multicultural teaching and learning.

Regarding the increasing diversity of the student population in China, teacher education institutions attempt to reduce the demographic divide and cultural mismatch by recruiting ethnic minority and international students through free normal education programs, and diversifying the faculty population. Zhou and Liu (2013) also demonstrated the importance of increasing cultural and ethnic diversities in urban teacher education institutions. They associated this demographic diversity with the improvement of cultural sensitivity and multicultural representation in dominant ethnic and cultural environment. However it is also important to improve majority Han teacher candidates' cultural awareness, knowledge, sensitivity, and skills. Both areas of growth should be pursued aggressively in the future.

In order for new teachers to translate their knowledge of culturally responsive teaching into practice with multicultural students, they need to connect to and be trained in diverse learning communities. Field experiences contribute to the preparation of culturally responsive teachers in a number of ways through offering prospective teachers opportunities to build a contextualized understanding of culturally responsive teaching and multicultural education by getting them out of the university classroom and into schools and communities. Based on preservice teachers' demands for more cross-cultural and cross-ethnic teaching placements, more research is needed to explore how diverse teacher education programs implement practicum training and volunteer-teaching placements, and how these clinical experiences in diverse communities can be better integrated into teacher candidates' multicultural competences and practices.

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