

Educational Research for Social Change (ERSC)

Volume: 2 No. 2, November 2013

pp. 59-75

ersc.nmmu.ac.za

ISSN: 2221-4070

Exploring Pedagogical Choices of Preservice Teachers for Culturally Responsive Teaching

Martyn P. Van der Merwe

University of Johannesburg

martynvdm@uj.ac.za

Tanya Lee-Ann Bekker

University of the Witwatersrand

tanya.bekker@wits.ac.za

Abstract

Teacher dispositions, knowledge, and skills influence decision making and pedagogical choices in the classroom. The various pedagogical choices that teachers make can result in an emphasis on “difference” that excludes rather than includes, and they can be represented as a spectrum of more, or less, culturally responsive teaching. Pedagogical choices are typically informed by underlying belief systems related to beliefs about teaching and learning; dispositions and the knowledge and skills developed as teachers (Yero, 2002). If, as Villegas and Lucas (2002) contended, there are six identifiable characteristics of culturally responsive teachers that lead to culturally responsive pedagogical choices in the classroom, then higher education institutions should be raising the consciousness of preservice teachers in this regard. Student teachers enrolled in South Africa’s Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) programme complete a one-year course after an undergraduate degree in their subject specialisation to qualify as subject specialist teachers. This article intends to explore the beliefs, thinking, and dispositions of a group of PGCE students within the domain of each identified characteristic of culturally responsive teachers before they embarked on an extended period of work-integrated learning (WIL) in their journey to become teachers. An explanatory mixed-method design was implemented by way of an author-designed questionnaire and open-ended scenarios presented to the students. Findings from the research indicated that preservice teachers studying a PGCE appeared to make pedagogical decisions and choices based on culturally responsive, profession-based, or rules-based stances.

Key words: Intercultural Competence; Culturally Responsive Teaching; Pedagogical Choices; Dispositions.

Copyright: © 2013 Martinus Petrus van der Merwe and Tanya Lee-Ann Bekker

This is an open access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution Non-Commercial License, which permits unrestricted non-commercial use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited.

Educational Research for Social Change, November 2013, 2 (2)

Faculty of Education: Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University, Port Elizabeth, South Africa

Introduction

The South African education landscape has seen the emergence of an inclusive education policy that aims to create opportunities for equal and equitable learning opportunities for all learners (Department of Education, 2001). This approach to inclusive education in South Africa intends to create an education system that is responsive to learner diversity and to ensure that all learners have the best possible opportunities to learn. White Paper 6 (Department of Education, 2001) outlines the South African policy on inclusive education and reflects commitment to social justice, human rights values enshrined in the Constitution of South Africa, and a vision of providing all learners with both formal and epistemological access to quality education. Its main aim is to create conditions in schools that value all learners, irrespective of their diverse needs, and to provide equal opportunities, through appropriate teaching and learning strategies and approaches in each of the education phases, for the realisation of development that will equip learners to take their places in society. Teachers in South Africa, and particularly teachers in preservice training, need to become aware of the important role they play in establishing inclusive and equitable environments in classrooms.

The point of departure of this article is that the types of pedagogical choices teachers make in the classroom influence the learning in their classrooms. The aim of the article is to contextualise pedagogical choices within the frameworks of culturally responsive teaching and intercultural competence and to elicit the views of preservice teachers in one South African higher education institution on the pedagogical choices they intended to make in their teaching.

Pedagogical Choices

Shulman (1987) suggested that, in order to be effective, teachers needed to possess what he termed pedagogical content knowledge, because pedagogical content knowledge enables teachers to make ideas accessible to others. According to Shulman (1987), pedagogical content knowledge refers to the intersection of three types of knowledge: knowledge of subject matter, knowledge of how to teach, and knowledge of the learners. When these three elements come together, the teacher is demonstrating pedagogical content knowledge. In terms of knowledge of subject matter, it is suggested that teachers need to understand their subject matter deeply and flexibly. Before they can teach others, teachers need to understand how ideas connect across their subject and to everyday life. In terms of knowledge of how to teach, teachers need to help students create useful examples, analogies, and representations to relate one idea to another and to address misconceptions. In terms of knowledge of learners, teachers need to understand the developmental levels and contexts of their learners as well as come to know their individual strengths and weaknesses. This article posits that it is this third domain of knowledge of learners that may need to be extended to include the ability of teachers to develop relationships with learners that create the conditions for emotional engagement with subject matter.

In order to highlight processes in the teaching and learning cycle, Shulman (1987, p. 8) also presented a model of pedagogical reasoning and action. The fact that the model was named for both reasoning and action speaks to the fact that the model has to do both with the ways in which teachers think and reason as well as with what they do. This implies that teacher actions are guided by reason and pre-thought. Teacher thinking can thus be seen as key to teacher action. The first stage of the model is comprehension; this refers to teachers' understanding and comprehension of the content knowledge. A teacher with a thorough understanding of the subject is easily able to identify the purpose of a particular lesson. Sound comprehension enables the identification of key concepts or main ideas as well as secondary or supporting ideas and interesting facts. The second stage of the model is that of transformation. Based on their comprehension, teachers are able to think about transforming the knowledge to make it accessible for learners. This involves thinking carefully about how to connect the structured, ordered "school knowledge" to the unstructured "everyday knowledge" that learners may have of the topic. This stage requires some combination or ordering of preparation, representation of the key ideas or concepts, instructional

selections of teaching methods and strategies, and adaptation of materials and activities for the group of learners as well as for individual learners. The third stage of the model is that of actual instruction where learners are provided with opportunities to work with the knowledge. The fourth stage is evaluation of learner understanding and effectiveness of instruction. The fifth stage of the model is reflection, when the teacher reflects on the learning and teaching process. The teacher considers what worked and what did not, what the learners understood and what they misunderstood, and how the teaching could be improved in the future. This leads to the final stage of the model, which is new comprehension for both learners and teachers.

As is clear from this model there is always some form of interaction happening in the classroom between the teacher, the learner, and knowledge. This article suggests that the interaction between teacher and learner is based on some form of pedagogical relationship. Greene (1995), Keltchermans (2005) and Korthagen (2001) discussed the importance of the emotional, intuitive, imaginative, engaged, and responsible aspects of the relationships that teachers build with learners. Van Manen (2008, p. 3) focused on this aspect of pedagogy and asserted that “the becoming of self, between who we are and who and what we might become” is possible only within particular, concrete pedagogical relationships. According to Van Manen (2008), sound pedagogical relationships are at the heart of good and effective teaching. We take this to mean that sound pedagogical relationships create conditions for effective learning.

Pedagogy can then be seen as having a relational aspect given that there is always an exchange between teacher and learner. Pedagogy in this sense is not a prescriptive formula or set of techniques to follow for effective teaching. Rather, pedagogy is about creating conditions for positive teaching and learning exchanges between the teacher and the learner. In order to establish positive pedagogical relationships, teachers require tact and sensitivity, the ability to improvise, thoughtfulness, and the ability to exercise judgement. Usher (2002) described five personality traits of teachers who demonstrate pedagogical sensitivity and tact: these teachers show empathy, they have a positive view of others, they have a positive view of self, they show authenticity, they have a meaningful purpose and vision, and they are sensitive and perceptive of the needs of others. These traits can clearly be identified as traits that are likely to support the establishment of positive pedagogical relationships.

The dispositions, knowledge, and skills discussed above will influence decision making and pedagogical choices in the classroom. The various pedagogical choices teachers make provide for more, or less, culturally responsive teaching. Pedagogical choices are also typically informed by underlying belief systems related to beliefs about teaching and learning; dispositions and the knowledge and skills developed as teachers (Yero, 2002). The decision to practice culturally responsive teaching is a pedagogical choice that can facilitate working with knowledge, making knowledge accessible to others from different cultures, and working with the knowledge of others.

Culturally Responsive teaching

Culturally responsive teaching (CRT) makes use of cultural characteristics, experiences, and perspectives of those involved in teaching, to enable more effective teaching. CRT asserts that when learning is situated in the lived experiences and frames of reference of students, learning becomes more meaningful, interesting, appealing, and thorough (Gay, 2002a). CRT constructs education for social justice, access, and equity and nurtures relationships based on care, respect, and responsibility (Gay, 2002a). According to Hayes and Juárez (2012), CRT is aimed at preparing teachers to effectively teach all learners, irrespective of their uniqueness. Gay (2002b) identified the following characteristics of CRT: it is validating, comprehensive, multidimensional, empowering, transformative, and emancipatory. CRT is seen as validating because it uses the cultural knowledge, life experiences, and learning preferences of diverse students to make learning more accessible and effective for all learners. This legitimatises the cultural heritage of learners. CRT is comprehensive because culturally responsive teachers teach holistically and recognise the importance not

only of academic achievement, but also of maintaining a sense of cultural identity. The multidimensionality of CRT is recognised in attention to curriculum content, learning context, classroom environment, learner-teacher relationships, teaching, learning, and assessment strategies (Gay, 2002b). Because CRT enables learners to develop academic competence, self-efficacy, and initiative, it can be seen as empowering. CRT also positions learners for self and social change, which is essentially transformative and emancipatory. According to Banks (1991), CRT enables "students to develop the knowledge, skills, and values needed to become social critics who can make reflective decisions and implement their decisions in effective personal, social, political, and economic action" (p. 131).

Intercultural Competence

Globalisation is a characteristic of the modern world that requires intercultural interactions in economic, technological, social, and educational domains. Intercultural competence is a prerequisite for successful intercultural interactions. Intercultural competence has therefore become increasingly important in our daily lives, and no more so than in educational interactions in schools (Perry & Southwell, 2011). Intercultural competence can be thought of as the ability to act appropriately and sensitively in intercultural situations. Perry and Southwell (2011) described intercultural competence as being underpinned by intercultural understanding. Intercultural understanding relates to cognition (knowledge and awareness of other and own cultures) and affects (attitudes, beliefs, and feelings towards other cultures). Intercultural competence depends on intercultural understanding but extends this to include behaviour, action, and communication. Intercultural understanding as part of this competence requires one to have knowledge about one's own and others' cultures, knowledge about similarities and differences, as well as sensitivity towards other cultures. Intercultural sensitivity alludes to attitudes such as empathy, curiosity, and respect toward other cultures (Perry & Southwell, 2011). Intercultural competence involves interaction with other cultures particularly within the following dimensions: knowledge, attitudes, skills, and behaviours. Developing intercultural competence is seen as a developmental process beginning with attitude and progressing with the acquisition of knowledge, skills, behaviour, and an empathetic worldview. A particular set of skills included in this developing competence is that of intercultural communication that allows for effective and appropriate communication with different cultures. Matveev and Nelson in Perry and Southwell (2011) identified interpersonal skills, team effectiveness, cultural uncertainty, and cultural empathy as key intercultural communication skills. Given that intercultural competence is seen to be developmental, it is important to consider what is being done to support preservice teachers in developing this competence if they are to become culturally responsive teachers.

Villegas and Lucas (2002, p. 21) contended that "six salient characteristics" namely, sociocultural consciousness, affirming views of learners, commitment and skill to act as agent of change, constructivist view of learning, learning about students, and culturally responsive teaching practices define a culturally responsive teacher. It is interesting to note that these characteristics can be related to Usher's (2002) five personality traits of teachers who demonstrate pedagogical sensitivity and tact. This can be seen when considering that teachers who hold a positive view of others could also be described as holding affirming views of learners. Similarly, teachers who have a meaningful purpose and vision are also more likely to act as agents of change. Teachers who are perceptive and sensitive to the needs of others are also likely to be invested in learning about their students.

Sociocultural consciousness refers to the fact that teachers possessing this quality value diversity. Such teachers do not operate from a "deficit" model looking for what learners are "deficient" in, but view difference as enriching and hold high expectations for all learners. Holding affirming views of learners relates to holding high expectations of all learners because every learner is seen to possess potential and the capability for realising that potential. Commitment and skill to act as agent of change is dependant on a teacher view of self as being an advocate for the child and a key actor in the creation of more equitable learning experiences. Holding constructivist views of learning is seen as a salient characteristic (Villegas &

Lucas, 2002) of the culturally responsive teacher because these teachers understand how learners construct knowledge and are able to appropriately scaffold knowledge construction. These teachers understand that learners learn differently and so employ a variety of teaching and learning strategies and culturally responsive strategies that cater for diversity in the classroom in this knowledge construction. They also make the effort to learn about their learners as individuals, both culturally and academically.

The decision to practice culturally responsive teaching is a pedagogical choice that can facilitate working with knowledge, making knowledge accessible to others from different cultures, and working with the knowledge of others. CRT involves paying attention to what and how learners articulate thoughts, ideas, and emotions with the aim of responding in ways that enable epistemological access. The culturally responsive teacher does this in a number of ways (Gay, 2002a). The culturally responsive teacher assists children to expand on and clarify ideas and/or address misconceptions. Activities that include convergent, divergent, and evaluative thinking are incorporated. Creative activities are encouraged rather than rote-learning activities. Activities requiring higher order thinking are presented and links are explicitly made between concepts in a subject. Open-ended questions are used and problem solving is encouraged. Learners are supported in their exploration of ideas and guided in their development of these ideas. Responsive listening implies an ability to respond to what the learner is expressing verbally and non-verbally in order to challenge, support, and build on current thinking. CRT is sensitive to the nuances of learner reactions and emotional engagement.

Student teachers enrolled in South Africa's PGCE programme complete the one-year programme after an undergraduate degree in their subject specialisation to then qualify as subject specialist teachers. During this year of study, PGCE students are expected to acquire the necessary knowledge, skills, and attitudes to allow them to enter the teaching profession and to gain a measure of effectiveness. By implication, to be an effective teacher in South African classrooms requires that teachers be culturally responsive. This article set out to explore the beliefs, thinking, and dispositions of a group of PGCE students within the domain of each identified characteristic of culturally responsive teachers before they embarked on an extended period of work-integrated learning, and after they had completed 6 months of theoretical and pedagogical foundational learning at university. The questions the article aimed to answer were:

- What are the beliefs, thinking, and dispositions of PGCE students that underlie their pedagogical choices in the classroom?
- How are beliefs, thinking, and dispositions of PGCE students likely to affect future culturally responsive pedagogical choices in the classroom?

These questions were addressed by administering a qualitative survey to participating PGCE students that explored the type of pedagogical choices, based on the six identified characteristics of culturally responsive teachers, students would be comfortable making

Methodology

An interpretive, descriptive research tradition was followed for this investigation (Creswell, 2008; Marshall & Rossman, 2006) because the aim was to engage with beliefs of preservice teachers and their intended pedagogical choices. A mixed-method research design, consisting of a single group of PGCE students was implemented in the investigation (Creswell, Plano Clark, & Garrett, 2009). An explanatory design was deemed appropriate because data were collected by way of an author-designed survey based on the six identified characteristics of culturally responsive teachers (see Villegas & Lucas, 2002), that explored the type of pedagogical choices that students would be comfortable making. This was followed by 11 open-ended scenarios relating to the type of pedagogical choices they would possibly make, which they were required to complete. Participants were required to indicate their opinions in the survey on a Likert-type 3-point scale for 28 formulated statements, indicating their levels of agreement with each of the statements. The options *strongly disagree* and *neither agree or disagree* were not included as possibilities. Possible bias

towards a more positive tendency in the data may therefore have been created. Accommodation for this possible bias was accounted for in the analysis by adding the median scores. Participants were purposively selected from students who had completed 6 months of their training, and who would shortly be entering an extended period of work-integrated learning (WIL). Students who were in attendance at a formal contact session during the academic semester before WIL were informed about the focus of the study, voluntary participation and their right to withdraw at any time without repercussion, and about their anonymity and confidentiality. Written consent was obtained from the 161 participants who volunteered to take part in the investigation. Completed surveys and scenarios were checked for completion and 152 of these were eventually used in the analysis of the data. Data on the 28 statements were analysed descriptively for central tendency in the data, making use of arithmetic mean and median as well as for determining the skewness of the distribution. Open-ended statements were analysed qualitatively through conceptual analysis of content to identify broad patterns in the data (Busch et al., 1994–2012).

Discussion of the findings

Pedagogical choices based on agreement with 28 survey statements

Table 1 indicates the arithmetic mean, median, and frequency distribution in percentage of respondents' agreement with each of the 28 statements relating to the salient characteristics for CRT. Although bias was expected in the distribution of the data due to the selected anchor terms, it is interesting to note that pre-service teachers were largely in agreement with these statements. Items 2, 4, 21, 20, 6, 9, 14, 19, 1, 17, 18, 23, 27, 28 and 22 showed evidence of being positively skewed, but not substantially so, with the exception of item 20. In all these cases, the arithmetic means were slightly higher than the medians, indicating the slight positive skews.

Most (76.15%) of the respondents seemed to be comfortable with pedagogical choices relating to the statements on sociocultural consciousness. It is interesting, however, to note that:

- 30.92% of respondents indicated that it was not necessary to understand learners' cultural backgrounds, or for visual materials in class to represent a variety of cultural groups (Items 2 & 8)
- 20.39% of respondents indicated that they would not encourage learners to ask parents to assist with understanding concepts and ideas (Item 21), while
- only 11.84% of respondents disagreed that learners needed to adapt to the cultural norm of the school they attend (Item 4).

When one considers that sociocultural consciousness refers to teachers valuing diversity, not operating from a deficit model, and viewing difference as enriching, then these findings are concerning. Not taking learners' cultural backgrounds into account, and requiring learners to adapt to a different norm in school, may show a lack of understanding of the influence of aspects like ethnicity, gender, social class, and language in learners' lives, and that schools can perpetuate and legitimatise differences. Moffat (2011, p. 20) suggests that teacher attitudes can contribute towards the legitimatising of difference because "dominating attitudes determine practice."

Fewer than half (42.24%) of the respondents disagreed with the stated choices on affirming views of learners, and of learning about learners. The findings indicated that:

- 36.18% of respondents disagreed that it was necessary to know learners' learning styles (Item 3)
- 30.26% of respondents would not accommodate a variety of learning styles (Item 7), and
- 41.45% of respondents disagreed on active involvement of all learners in class (Item 13).

Table 1

Arithmetic mean, median, and frequency distribution of agreement with statements based on salient characteristics of CRT ¹

Item	Statement: Sociocultural consciousness	Arithm. Mean	Median	Frequency distribution in %		
				Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
2	Teachers should understand their learners' cultural backgrounds	2.01	2	30.92	37.50	31.58
4	Learners should adapt to the cultural norm of the school they attend	2.20	2	11.84	55.92	32.24
8	Visual materials in the classroom should represent a variety of cultural groups	1.90	2	30.92	44.08	23.68
21	Learners should be encouraged to ask their parents/guardians to assist with understanding concepts/ideas	2.19	2	20.39	40.13	39.47
Average for sociocultural consciousness		2.08		23.52	44.41	31.74
Item	Statement: Affirming views of learners and learning about learners	Arithm. Mean	Median	Frequency distribution in %		
				Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
3	Teachers should know their learners' learning styles	1.80	2	36.18	43.42	19.08
7	Teachers should accommodate a variety of learning styles	1.93	2	30.26	42.76	25.66
11	Teachers should group learners according to similar ability	1.72	2	39.47	39.47	17.76
13	All learners in class should be actively engaged in learning	1.64	2	41.45	38.82	15.13
20	Teachers should refuse to repeat an explanation because this encourages learners to listen carefully the first time	1.47	1	63.82	21.71	13.16
Average for affirming views of learners and learning about learners		1.71		42.24	37.24	18.16
Item	Statement: Culturally responsive teaching practices	Arithm. Mean	Median	Frequency distribution in %		
				Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
6	Cultural diversity should be accommodated in classrooms with cooperative or collaborative learning strategies	2.08	2	18.54	47.02	31.79
9	Daily routines and schedules should be provided in the classroom	2.02	2	18.42	53.29	25.66
10	Teachers should be well-informed on the different cultural groups in the community	1.88	2	30.92	44.08	23.03
14	Learners should be allowed to assist one another when completing classroom tasks unless it is a formal assessment	2.10	2	19.74	46.71	32.24
19	Choice of examples used to support an explanation should be considered	2.14	2	10.53	57.24	29.61
Average for culturally responsive teaching practices		2.04		19.63	49.67	28.47

¹ Frequency distribution in % includes only actual responses to items. All non-responses were excluded from the frequency calculation.

Item	Statement: Constructivist view of learning	Arithm. Mean	Median	Frequency distribution in %		
				Disagre e	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	Teachers should plan the level of their lessons for the average learners in the class	2.18	2	15.79	48.03	35.53
5	Classroom activities should be mainly learner-centred	2.00	2	16.45	55.26	24.34
12	Teachers should group learners in classroom heterogeneously	1.83	2	23.03	55.26	16.45
15	Assignment tasks for learners should be scaffolded	1.97	2	13.82	65.13	17.76
17	Learners should be allowed opportunities to practice ideas and concepts before being assessed on them	2.18	2	15.13	42.11	39.47
18	Classroom learning should be interactive	2.18	2	11.84	51.97	34.21
23	Teachers should create opportunities for learning engagement in classrooms	2.22	2	11.84	51.97	35.53
24	Planning is essential for effective teaching	2.53	3	6.58	22.37	67.11
26	Learners should learn content in the classroom	1.97	2	17.11	63.16	17.76
27	Learners should be allowed to collaborate in formal assessment tasks	1.61	1	47.37	36.18	13.82
28	Learners should understand key concepts in the classroom	2.03	2	13.82	61.84	21.71
Average for constructivist view of learning		2.06		17.53	50.30	29.43
Item	Statement: Teachers as agents of change	Arithm. Mean	Median	Frequency distribution in %		
				Disagre e	Agree	Strongly Agree
16	Teachers should accommodate a variety of needs in classrooms	1.91	2	22.37	53.95	20.39
22	Teachers should aim to ensure that most learners can cope with the lesson	2.10	2	14.47	53.29	29.61
25	Experienced teachers do not rely on lesson planning, they instinctively know what to do	1.88	2	35.53	28.95	31.58
Average for teachers as agents of change		1.96		24.12	45.40	27.19
AVERAGE for all 28 items		1.99		23.88	46.49	27.33

It would become problematic if teachers did not acknowledge the diversity, potential, and value that every learner can bring to the learning experience in class. Making pedagogical choices that focus on specific learner attributes, and how these attributes may assist in the learning, is crucial to creating a culturally responsive learning space where cultural and individual capital is built on. Fox and Bartholomae (1999, p. 236) discussed the importance of recognising and utilising individual student strengths and learning preferences because this may contribute to “improved quality and effectiveness of teaching, student learning, and academic success.”

In addition, respondents disagreed that:

- learners should be grouped according to similar ability (39.47%, Item 11), and that
- teachers should refuse to repeat an explanation because it would encourage learners to pay attention (63.82%, Item 20).

These two findings clearly indicate that respondents would not be comfortable in making pedagogical choices based on such disaffirming views of learners in their classrooms.

Regarding culturally responsive teaching, 67.83% of the respondents appeared to be comfortable in making pedagogical choices which:

- would accommodate diversity by using cooperative or collaborative learning strategies (78.81%, Item 6)
- would allow learners to assist one another in their learning (78.95%, Item 14), and
- made use of appropriate examples to support the learning and understanding in class (86.85%, Item 19).

Teachers who understand that learners learn differently, will accommodate difference and uniqueness by using culturally responsive strategies such as cooperative learning to support the learning in classrooms. This has additional benefits because “culturally responsive teaching develops a sense of interdependence and feelings of community in which students understand that their lives and destinies are closely intertwined, and feel it is a moral and political obligation to help each other learn” (Gay, 2002, p. 622). Some respondents, however, felt that it was not that necessary to make an effort to learn about their learners as individuals both culturally and academically:

- 30.92% of respondents disagreed that they needed to be well informed about different cultural groups in the community (Item 10), which may indicate a tendency for the pedagogical choices they would be comfortable in making.

This is of concern because responsive teaching is not simply a matter of applying instructional techniques, nor is it primarily a matter of tailoring instruction to incorporate assumed traits or customs of particular cultural groups. According to Gay (2002, p. 625), “the essence of culturally responsive pedagogy for (ethnically) diverse students is using multiple and varied culturally informed techniques.” This demands that teachers pay attention to the creation of classroom environments where learners are encouraged to make sense of new ideas through the use of inquiry projects, action research, or collaborative learning opportunities where, for example, learning is embedded in a meaningful activity.

Holding constructivist views of learning is regarded as an essential quality of a culturally responsive teacher (Gay, 2002). This requires the teacher to understand that knowledge exists in the learner and that learners have the ability to bring new ideas, experiences, and meaning to classroom learning. Respondents in this investigation agreed that:

- classroom activities should be learner-centred (79.60%, Item 5)
- scaffolding of learning should take place (82.89%, Item 15), and
- learners should develop understanding of key concepts (83.55%, Item 28).

Respondents were in strong agreement that:

- learners should be given opportunities to practice ideas before assessment, which also alludes to being culturally responsive in their teaching (81.58%, Item 17, including 39.47% strongly agreed)
- opportunities for learning engagement should be created in classrooms (87.50%, Item 23, including 35.53% strongly agreed), and that

- learning should be interactive (86.18%, Item 18, with 34.21% strongly agreed).

Interesting findings from the data for this characteristic were that, although 71.71% agreed that learners should be grouped heterogeneously in classrooms for constructive learning to take place (Item 12), 23.03% did not agree. These views may be influenced by a sense of affirmation of individual learners found in Item 11. In addition, 47.37% of respondents disagreed that learners should be allowed to collaborate in formal assessment tasks (Item 27), which seems to indicate that nearly half of the respondents may still have adhered to an assessment discourse that focuses on relative individual performance, and would necessarily influence the pedagogical choices they would make.

As agents of change, most of the respondents indicated that:

- they would accommodate a variety of needs in the classroom (74.34%, Item 16), while 22.37% indicated that they disagreed. Accommodating different needs creates more equitable learning experiences, increases access to the learning, and probably enhances success. In this sense 82.90% of respondents agreed that they would ensure that most learners could cope with lessons (Item 22)
- 60.53% agreed they need not rely on planning and would instinctively know what to do (Item 25), while 35.53% clearly disagreed with this statement. This finding seems to indicate that some respondents may not have realised the importance of self-reflection and the teacher's key role in planning and creating equitable learning experiences. Critical self-reflection on own planning and practice is essential for culturally responsive choices. Instinctively knowing what to do may also allude to the "apprenticeship of observation" (Borg, 2004, p. 274) many preservice teachers have at their disposal. Borg further argues that preconceptions held by preservice teachers may be the result of these observations and, because observations are not analysed, they remain "intuitive and imitative" (Lortie, 1975, in Borg, 2004, p. 274). In extreme cases, preservice students may even perpetuate inequalities rather than act as agents of change (Villegas & Lucas, 2002).

Pedagogical choices based on scenarios

Respondents also stated the pedagogical choices they would be comfortable in making in their open-ended answers to certain scenarios. Scenarios were formulated in terms of what respondents would do in their own classrooms, based on practical examples of culturally responsive behaviours. The scenarios were:

- I would like to establish the type of classroom that. . .
- If I became aware of bullying, teasing, or exclusion of learners in my class I would. . .
- When it comes to helping learners with the skills they need to maintain friendships, I think that I. . .
- I would create conditions for academic success by. . .
- When it comes to giving learners responsibility and choice in the classroom, I think. . .
- I would like my learners to think that the lessons I give are. . .
- I would like a visitor walking into my classroom to see. . .
- I would like all learners in my class to feel. . .
- I would like my relationship with learners to be. . .
- I think learners who give the most problems are. . .

- The most important characteristics of a good teacher are. . .

The analysis of these open-ended responses was subjected to content analysis procedures; the responses were analysed using conceptual analysis to determine the presence of most frequent concepts (Busch et al., 1994–2012). Through a process of selective reduction, the following themes were identified in each scenario:

- Theme 1: Culturally responsive pedagogical choices: Culturally responsive pedagogical choices are inclusive and welcoming, value relationships, are engagement centred, and acknowledge learner potential.
- Theme 2: Profession-driven pedagogical choices: Profession-driven pedagogical choices focus on the professional nature of teaching, emphasise planning, subject knowledge, teaching methodology, and learning strategies.
- Theme 3: Rule-based pedagogical choices: Rule-based pedagogical choices are informed by a management orientation, and focus on administration and discipline in classrooms.

Establishing a classroom (I would like to establish the type of classroom that. . .)

- Responses to this scenario indicated that respondents would like to establish classrooms that are inclusive, respecting of diversity, devoid of discrimination, intimidation, and judgement, accommodating, and caring. Respondents also indicated a focus on promotion of teaching and learning in their classrooms with such comments as “interaction,” “engaging,” “conducive to learning,” “motivation to learn,” “vibrant,” “collaboration,” and “learner-centred.” Respondents also felt that strong teacher-learner relationships were important and mentioned “teachers as models of good behaviour,” “active debate,” “trust,” “learners being able to voice opinions,” and “valued communication” in this regard. These responses allude to choices that are culturally responsive in nature.
- Responses to this scenario indicated that choices would be influenced by what may be regarded as professional practices by mentioning “well-managed” a number of times, with “give learners opportunities to do their best in assessment,” and “encourage higher-order thinking.”
- Responses to this scenario focused clearly on rule-based reasons for making pedagogical choices such as “demonstrates morals and values,” “classroom rules,” “a disciplined class,” “a neat learning environment.”

Addressing bullying and exclusionary behaviour (If I became aware of bullying, teasing, or exclusion of learners in my class I would. . .)

Responses were fairly evenly spread amongst the three themes.

- Respondents indicated behaviours such as “intervening,” “speaking to learners involved,” “attempting to understand the learner’s position,” “closely monitor,” “show sensitivity and empathy,” “be patient,” “guide learners, to create awareness of bullying,” “encourage and emphasise mutual respect,” and “encourage reporting of incidents” as their choices in this scenario. These responses indicate a culturally responsive stance towards their teaching.
- Respondents who probably based their choices on what would be professional, mentioned behaviours such as “dealing effectively with the situation,” “using professional ethics to resolve the issue,” “be able to make a decision,” “analyse the situation,” “seek advice,” “collaborate with colleagues,” and “teach a lesson on bullying.”

- Respondents who probably based their choices on rules, mentioned behaviours such as “developing classroom rules and ethics,” “addressing the issue at school assembly,” “send the learner for counselling,” “confront the learner,” “discipline and punish the transgressor,” and “reporting to school authorities and police.” Behaviours that were mostly prevalent were to “call parents,” and to “take the matter to the HOD or principal.”

Assisting with relationship building (When it comes to helping learners with the skills they need to maintain friendships, I think that I. . .)

- Most responses to this scenario indicated that respondents would choose to make pedagogical choices based on a culturally responsive stance. Respondents mentioned that they would encourage and support the learners in developing these skills by “encouraging social interaction,” “caring for others,” and “looking out for others and helping friends in need.” Teachers also indicated that they would act in ways that would support this development by “being tactful,” “acting caringly,” “showing sensitivity and being honest,” “being a role model,” “giving advice,” “creating opportunities in class to build positive relationships” and by “being a good observer in the classroom.”
- Some responses to this scenario indicated that choices would be influenced by more professional practices such as “including this issue as part of the curriculum” (mentioned most), by designing tasks so that “different learners work with broader groups” as well as “more group work” to ensure that learners worked together, which was also mentioned a number of times.
- A total of five responses relating to rule-based reasons for making pedagogical choices were given, and focused on “this is not the teacher’s role” and “teachers should not get involved in learners’ social lives.”

Creating conditions for academic success (I would create conditions for academic success by. . .)

- Respondents, who seemed to favour pedagogical choices based on a culturally responsive stance, indicated that they would mostly “ensure understanding,” “create a learning culture,” “be available,” and “go the extra mile” to create conditions for academic success. Respondents, to a lesser extent, mentioned “respecting and involving learners,” “believing in, and encouraging, learners,” and “encouraging participation.” Respondents also mentioned “caring,” “a non-judgemental environment,” “showing interest in learners,” “encouraging enjoyment in learning,” “creativity and innovation,” and “making work relevant to learners” as choices they would make to create conditions for academic success.
- Choices that seemed to be influenced by a more profession-driven framework, included “being professional and prepared,” “being knowledgeable about the subject,” “answering questions,” “making use of pedagogical content knowledge, and a variety of teaching and learning activities” most. A number of other related choices such as “give time before assessments,” “give practice assessments, open-book assessments, peer assessment,” “learning from my mistakes,” “staying current with changes in education,” “continuous assessment,” and “being a good role model” were evident from the responses.
- A few responses relating to rule-based reasons for making pedagogical choices included choices relating mostly to punishment and reward such as “giving rewards,” “praising learners,” “giving extra lessons,” and “punishing lack of work.” Two other responses to create academic success included “competition” and “being organised”.

Teaching responsibility and accountability (When it comes to giving learners responsibility and choice in the classroom, I think. . .)

- Pedagogical choices based on a culturally responsive stance seemed to mainly focus on issues relating to personal growth, independence, and values. Choices mostly included “allowing learners to grow personally,” “allow learners to develop skills needed for adulthood and independence,” “allowing choice and learning through mistakes,” and “instilling values and demonstrating trust.” Respondents also indicated that “caring and engaging with learners” and “not allowing favouritism” would be important choices to make in this regard.
- Few choices influenced by a more profession-driven framework were indicated by the respondents. Four respondents indicated that giving responsibility and choice to learners should be “appropriate,” whilst “popular opinion” for deciding these responsibilities should not be the reason—they should be “educationally valid.”
- Many responses relating to rule-based reasons for making pedagogical choices were provided for this scenario. Most choices included “involving learners in setting classroom rules” and in using “classroom chores” to achieve this scenario. Mention was also made of “respecting teacher/learner relationships,” of “accepting consequences” for actions, and “promoting leadership.” Respondents did seem to be wary of making certain choices in this regard, such as “too much choice may be problematic,” and “teachers should first see how much intervention they need.” Choices to curb against this included, “learners must follow the teacher” and “guide and direct—do not give too much choice.”

Creating learning experiences (I would like my learners to think that the lessons I give are. . .)

- Choices based on a culturally responsive stance to this scenario mostly included making lessons “interesting and stimulating.” They also indicated that they would, to a large extent, choose to make their lessons “worthwhile, enjoyable” and “important for the future.” Some respondents mentioned making their lessons “essential, exciting, insightful” and “interesting enough to talk about after school” as the choices they would make.
- Choices based on what would be professional, focused mostly on “being informative” and “improving knowledge and skills” in lessons. A number of responses indicated choices related to “challenging, meaningful, relevant, and thought-provoking” lessons as well. Mention was also made of choosing to have “well-prepared” and “easy to understand” lessons.

No responses pertaining to choices based on rules were indicated for this scenario.

The classroom (I would like a visitor walking into my classroom to see. . .)

- Culturally responsive choices for this scenario indicated that one would see “learners actively involved,” “learners having fun,” a “comfortable learning environment,” and “positive interaction between teachers and learners” most in their classroom. They also indicated that one would see “a cheerful/colourful/bright classroom,” a “passionate teacher,” “positive interaction and group work between learners,” “excited and keen learners,” as well as “genuine learning” in their classrooms.
- The few responses pertaining to probable choices based on the profession included “well-delivered lessons,” “constructive deep learning,” and “posters on the walls.”
- Regarding pedagogical choices based on rules, most responses centred around appropriate behaviour such as “respectful and well-behaved learners,” which was mentioned most, and around good organisation and management in the form of “well-managed and well-organised classroom” and “neat-and-tidy classroom.”

Affective learner experience (I would like all learners in my class to feel. . .)

Educational Research for Social Change, November 2013, 2 (2)

Faculty of Education: Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University, Port Elizabeth, South Africa

- As can be expected for a scenario such as this, virtually all responses related to pedagogical choices based on a culturally responsive stance. Most respondents' choices indicated feeling "cared for," feeling "worthwhile," and feeling "safe and secure." Aligned with these, were choices that focused on acknowledgement and democratic practices such as "having a voice," "being themselves," "open to ideas," "understood," "open to disagree," "not scared or shy." Other choices focused on "belonging," "appreciation," "privileged," "a sense of friendship" and on "a sense of achievement," "excitement and motivated," and "willing and enthusiastic."
- The profession-based responses focused on "confidence in the subject" and in "being actively involved in learning."
- No responses pertaining to choices based on rules were indicated for this scenario.

Relationships (I would like my relationship with learners to be. . .)

- A number of value-laden choices were mentioned by respondents who probably based their choices on a culturally responsive stance. A strong sense of relationships being "caring," "open and honest," "interactive," "respectful," and being able to "ask or share anything" were mostly indicated. Being "genuine," "sincere," "friendly," "approachable," and "inspirational" were also mentioned.
- As could probably be expected, respondents who chose to function from a profession-based stance simply indicated that the relationships should be "professional," without any further elaboration.
- Rule-based pedagogical choices included being "aware of boundaries," being "firm, strict, objective" and that teachers were "not friends of parents."

Presuppositions (I think learners who give the most problems are. . .)

It appeared that these responses captured respondents' underlying beliefs about learners who give the most problems.

- Respondents mostly attributed the learner behaviour to "difficult backgrounds and circumstances" and to learners actually "needing attention," "craving or looking for attention." Some choices indicated a sense of commitment to learners because they were "misunderstood," "not bad," "going through crisis," "scared," "need most love," "lack self-confidence," and "crying out for help." A few choices focused on learners "not understanding" the academic work. These choices are in accordance with a culturally responsive stance.
- No profession-based responses were indicated for this scenario.
- Respondents, who probably based their choices on rules, attributed the behaviour to "learning disabilities," "learning disorders," or "behavioural disorders" which need to be managed differently in school. Some responses focused on issues related to development such as "adolescents," "proving a point to a friend," "bored," and "gifted." A number of responses associated with the social context were also mentioned, such as "addiction to drugs," "missing school," "repeating the grade," "sexual abuse," and "domestic violence." In all these responses the main issue was how to manage and organise the classroom to deal with the child.

Teaching excellence (The most important characteristics of a good teacher are. . .)

Responses were fairly evenly spread amongst the three themes.

- Respondents' choices on this scenario that were based on a culturally responsive stance, indicated values and behaviours well-documented in literature on effective teaching. The responses most common were "caring," "approachable," "dedication," "commitment," "involved," "engaging," "inspiring," "passionate," "understanding," "respectful," "patient," and "a love for children." Other responses alluded to teachers being "curious," "reflective," "accountable," "loyal," "dynamic," "proactive," "role models," "consistent," "creative," "intelligent," and "knowing that they do not know everything."
- Profession-based responses focused on methodology ("prepared," "knowledge of teaching and learning skills," "organised," "well planned"), knowledge ("informative," "good content knowledge"), reflection ("are researchers"), and on professional activities such as "being on time" and "being at school daily."
- Respondents, who probably based their choices on rules, stated that good teachers are "stern" and "ambitious."

Conclusion

This article sought to explore the type of pedagogical choices that preservice PGCE teachers would be comfortable making, based on the six characteristics of culturally responsive teachers identified by Villegas and Lucas (2002). From the discussion of the findings, it appears that preservice teachers studying a PGCE made pedagogical decisions and choices based on culturally responsive, profession-based, or rules-based stances. Preservice teachers who operated from a culturally responsive stance clearly based their choices on pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) which includes knowledge of content, of how to teach, and of the learners. In addition, these preservice teachers appeared to take into consideration the affective or relational aspects that contribute to the creation of an environment and relationships that support culturally responsive teaching. Preservice teachers who operated from a profession-based stance, primarily based their decisions and choices on PCK, but had not yet begun to engage with thinking about preconditions that support culturally responsive teaching and learning. Preservice teachers who operated from a rule-based stance appeared to make decisions and choices on one area of PCK—that of knowledge of how to teach. This stance is the least likely to support culturally responsive teaching.

It would not be reasonable to expect preservice teachers to possess all the skills and knowledge associated with culturally responsive teaching, or the expertise at this stage of their careers to teach in a flawlessly responsive manner. It is important, however, that teacher education programmes develop awareness amongst preservice teachers of practices and dispositions that support culturally responsive teaching.

This could be achieved by developing preservice teachers' sociocultural consciousness by exposing them to opportunities that allow them to engage with, and reflect on, their own cultural values and assumptions. If afforded opportunities to become critically aware of the underlying perceptions, values, beliefs, and attitudes they hold, preservice teachers may then be empowered to recognise the influence that this has on their behaviour and actions in the classroom. Preservice teachers should also, as part of their methodology courses, be encouraged to think about both working with subject content as well as about creating conditions for positive teacher/learner relationships. If preservice teachers develop an awareness of the importance of teacher/learner relationships, they will be better positioned to transmit affirming views to all learners in their classrooms. In addition, preservice teachers should be encouraged to pay attention to the physical space of the classroom—ensuring that visual displays reflect diverse cultures, for example. Preservice teachers should be equipped with the skills and knowledge to create communities of learners and to utilise multi-cultural teaching strategies. This would encourage preservice teachers to think

about learning about learners and, in coming to know and understand different cultures, teachers would be better positioned to include rather than exclude. In addition, this might assist those preservice teachers operating from a rules-based or profession-based stance to broaden their thinking about the learner as capable and active in the learning process and in possession of individual capital that can be utilised as a resource in their learning. Developing an awareness of these aspects in methodology classes of preservice teachers could potentially raise levels of consciousness amongst preservice teachers—particularly those who operate from a rules-based stance.

Each of the preservice teachers who participated in this study will be expected, on completion of their course, to take their places as teachers in diverse, multi-cultural South African classrooms. If we wish them to act as positive agents of change, they should be equipped with the skills that will enable them to make pedagogical decisions that support this endeavour.

References

- Banks, J. (1991). A curriculum for empowerment, action, and change. In C. E. Sleeter, (Ed.), *Empowerment through multicultural education*, (pp. 125–141). Albany, USA: State University of New York Press.
- Borg, M. (2004). The apprenticeship of observation. *English Language Teaching Journal*, 58(3), 274–276.
- Busch, C., De Maret, P. S., Flynn, T., Kellum, R., Le, S., Meyers, B., . . . Palmquist, M. (1994–2012). Content analysis. Writing@CSU. Retrieved from <http://writing.colostate.edu/guides/guide.cfm?guideid=61>
- Creswell, J.W. (2008). *Educational research, planning, conducting and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research* (3rd ed.). Upper Saddle River, USA: Pearson.
- Creswell, J.W., Plano Clark, V.L., & Garrett, A.L. (2009). Methodological issues in conducting mixed method research designs. In M.M. Bergmann, (Ed.), *Advances in mixed method research* (pp. 66–83). Los Angeles, USA: Sage.
- Department of Education. (2001). *Education White Paper 6. Special needs education: Building an inclusive education and training system*. Pretoria, South Africa: Department of Education
- Fox, J., & Bartholomane, S. (1999). Student learning style and educational outcomes: Evidence from a family financial management course. *Financial Services Review*, 8, 235 – 251.
- Gay, G. (2002a). Preparing for culturally responsive teaching. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 53(2), 106–116.
- Gay, G. (2002b). Culturally responsive teaching in special education for ethnically diverse students: Setting the stage. *Qualitative Studies in Education*, 15(6), 613 – 629.
- Greene, M. 1995. *Releasing the imagination. Essays on education, the arts, and social change*. San Francisco, USA: Jossey-Bass.
- Hayes, C., & Juárez, B. (2012). There is no culturally responsive teaching spoken here: A critical race perspective. *Democracy & Education*, 20(1), 1–14.
- Kelchtermans, G. (2005, July). Professional commitment beyond contract: Teachers' self-understanding, vulnerability and reflection. Keynote address presented at the bi-annual meeting of the International Study Association on Teachers and Teaching (SATT), Sydney, Australia.
- Korthagen, F.A.J. (2001). *Linking theory and practice: The pedagogy of realistic teacher education*. Mahwah, USA: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Marshall, C. & Rossman, G. B. (2006). *Designing Qualitative research*. (4th ed.). London, UK: Sage.
- Moffat, T.K. (2011). *Inclusion in early childhood settings in Aotearoa/New Zealand* (Unpublished master's thesis). Massey University, New Zealand. Retrieved from http://mro.massey.ac.nz/bitstream/handle/10179/3424/02_whole.pdf?sequence=1

- Perry, L.B., & Southwell, L. (2011). Developing intercultural understanding and skills: Models and approaches. *Intercultural Education*, 22(6), 453–466.
- Shulman, L.S. 1987. Knowledge and teaching: Foundations of the new reform. *Harvard Educational Review*, 57, 1–22.
- Usher, D. (2002, November). Arthur Combs' five dimensions of helper belief reformulated as five dispositions of teacher effectiveness. Paper presented at the first annual symposium on Educator Dispositions, Richmond, USA.
http://mykuhelp.nku.edu/content/dam/coehs/docs/dispositions/symposium_2002/day2/teacherrene wal.pdf
- Van Manen, M., (2008). Pedagogical sensitivity and teachers practical knowing–in–action, *Peking University Education Review*, 1, 1–23.
- Villegas, M., & Lucas, T. (2002). Preparing culturally responsive teachers: Rethinking the curriculum. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 53(1), 20–32.
- Yero, J. (2002). *Teaching in mind: How teacher thinking shapes education*. Hamilton, USA: Mindflight.