Teacher Education: Prospective Teachers' Expectations of Addressing Indigenous Students' Identities

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Abstract

School board and school administrators, as well as classroom teachers, are invited to re-examine the complex socio-historical outcomes that have had an adverse effect upon Indigenous student engagement and achievement in public schools. Recent policy initiatives in Ontario have focused upon improving the educational experiences of Indigenous students in publicly-funded schools. To better inform policy discussions and the relevant literature, this study examines the perceptions of teacher candidates prior to their teaching assignments in K to 12 public schools in southwestern Ontario. It investigates prospective teachers' expectations of their professional teacher education program in terms of preparing them to address Indigenous students' diverse learning needs, and their own awareness of issues related to identity and social justice as reflected in the goals of the 2007 Policy Framework and the other respective Ontario Ministry of Education documents. The mixed-methods study is in response to a void in the research that too often has not considered preservice teacher perceptions of the relationship between their learning, the professional program of study, and their actual experiences in the classroom as student-teachers. The findings of the study include participants' expectation that there will be significant differences between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students' learning needs and preferences, and that issues of diversity will implicate significantly on their practice. Moreover, prospective teachers expect to be directly supported in facilitating culturally-responsive classrooms.

Keywords: Indigenous education; education policy; mixed-methods; prospective teachers

1.Introduction

The broader issues related to the policy and practice of Indigenous education in Ontario, Canada, continues to gain attention. As more and more Indigenous learners transition from reserve to publicly-funded provincial schools, there has been a noticeable focus on behalf of the Ontario Ministry of Education (OME) to create policies and complementary documents to better support the well-over 64,000 Indigenous students in kindergarten to grade 12 classrooms. Incidentally, provincial schools fall under the jurisdiction of the provinces in Canada, while a delegated authority administers schools on reserves. The OME's focus is in line with the research that cites that relevant and meaningful educationalprogramming for Indigenous students impacts positively upon their attendance and engagement in education (Cherubini, 2014; 2016), as it does Indigenous students' sense of esteem and identity (Cairney, 2002; Kostogriz, 2011; Schwab, 2006). The OME's 2007 *Ontario First Nation, Métis, and Inuit Education Policy Framework* (the Framework) recognizes the unique learning needs and preferences of Indigenous students, and commissions school administrators, principals, and teachers to account for such diversity, recognize the voices of Indigenous communities, and ultimately close the achievement gap between Indigenous and other children in publicly-funded schools.

Since then, the OME has published various complementary reports, including *A Solid Foundation: A Second Progress Report on the Implementation of the Ontario First Nation, Métis, and Inuit Education Policy Framework* (2013), the *Implementation Plan:*

Ontario First Nation, Métis, and Inuit Education Policy Framework (2014), and *Strengthening Our Learning Journey* (2018). These reports point to the success of the 2007 objectives across public school boards and assure the public that the OME's commitment to improving educational outcomes for Indigenous students remains steadfast. The respective documents place a noticeable responsibility upon local boards of education and the educators in provincial schools to be aware of the key historical and contemporary issues and challenges that Indigenous students deal with on a continual basis, including the oppressive and racist post-colonial realities experienced by Indigenous peoples (Gebhard, 2013).In this way, educators at all levels are challenged to reflect critically upon Indigenous epistemologies, cultures, and traditions and engage in a process of decolonization (Hardwick, 2015; Regan, 2010). School board and school administrators, as well as classroom teachers, are invited to re-examine the complex socio-political, socio-cultural and socio-historical outcomes that have had an adverse effect upon Indigenous student engagement and achievement in public schools, and use this knowledge to consider more deeply the potential disparities of their own biases as they might influence the design and planning of their classroom instruction, and particularly the delivery of the provincial curriculum in public school classrooms (Knight, 2001; O'Neill, 2010; Whitley, 2014). This is particularly significant given the fact that across the entire country a majority of teachers are of European and Canadian descent and that the respective provincial curriculums are largely Eurocentric-based (Orlowski, 2011). Educators are expected to be mindful of issues related to Indigenous student diversity, culture, and communities; moreover, by interrogating notions of identity, teachers will be better able to directly engage Indigenous students in the expectations of the standardized curriculum (Cherubini, 2017). In light of these considerations, teachers will be better equipped to establish pedagogical practices that provide Indigenous students with opportunities to generate, discuss, and critically consider content in multiple contexts (Lankshear & Knobel, 2006; Lapp & Fisher, 2010).

1.1 Purpose of the Study

To better inform policy discussions and the relevant literature, this study examines the perceptions of teacher candidates prior to their teaching assignments in K to 12 public schools in southwestern Ontario. It investigates prospective teachers' expectations of their professional teacher education program in terms of preparing them to address Indigenous students' diverse learning needs, and their own awareness of issues related to identity and social justice as reflected in the goals of the 2007 Framework and the other respective OME documents. The study is in response to a void in the research that too often has not considered preservice teacher perceptions of the relationship between their learning, the professional program of study, and their actual experiences in the classroom as student-teachers (Helfirch & Bean, 2011; Roller, 2010; Zeichner & Conklin, 2008). This paper examines the responses to seven of the twenty quantitative statements and one of the four open-ended questions as they were administered to teacher candidates during the first month of the professional teacher education program.

2. Context

The OME policy documents and reports are meant to engage multiple education stakeholders across the province, not the least of which are classroom teachers. For Indigenous students to be most successful and have positive experiences in public schools, teachers must, as part of a larger collective, be committed to and focus on the diverse epistemologies of Indigenous students (Cherubini, 2015; deFrance, 2013). Teachers, as Toulouse (2008) and others suggest, need to be sensitive to Indigenous students' self-image and well-being as Indigenous worldviews are integrated into their pedagogical practices (see also, Paul-Gould, 2012; Preston, 2016). Teachers must also consider the intergenerational feelings of mistrust experienced by Indigenous communities because of their experiences in formal educational institutions (Wotherspoon, 2006; 2008). It is important to note, as Milne (2016) discusses, that educators in Ontario public schools expectstudents' parents/guardians to be informed and active partners with principals and teachers to further their children's' educational experiences and achievement (Aurini, et al., 2016). Moreover, that matters of educational reform, be they at the school board level or in specific schools, need to account for the voices of the families in the respective school communities to more accurately understand the issues that may be specific to those communities (Samaroo et al., 2013; Warren, 2005). In this way, families are not isolated from the conversations that ultimately impact their children's learning.

To better understand Indigenous communities, the literature also suggests that educators, and especially the classroom teachers that have the most direct and consistent contact with students, explore Indigenous worldviews and embrace enthusiastically how their practice can be inclusive of these perspectives.

There is ample research that cites the benefits for all learners, and not just Indigenous students, when teachers incorporate critical considerations of diversity in their classroom and position such difference from a strength-based perspective (Cummins et al., 2006; Marshall & Toohey, 2010). Such an approach, as indicated in the research, illuminates a broader scope of teaching and learning for students, fosters collaborative interaction among student peer-groups, and improves student engagement (Gutierrez, 2008). Community involvement, thus, serves to further these ends (Richards, 2008) since the community voices can contribute to teachers' culturally-relevant pedagogy and to culturally-appropriate outcomes to better engage Indigenous and all learners in public school classrooms.

The research study under discussion is meant to expand the capacity of prospective teachers by developing what Murray-Orr and Mitton-Kukner (2017) describe as their "critical consciousness in ways that are mindful of and committed to understanding the complex social conditions" of the school communities (p. 72). The survey encourages prospective teachers to examine their perceptions and expectations of teaching through gender, socio-economic status, race and identity lenses in advance of their teaching practicum assignments (see also, Olson, 2008). The Truth and Reconciliation Commission's (2015) Calls to Action cite the need for a more respectful integration of Indigenous students' worldviews in provincial curriculum and in teachers' pedagogy, due in some part to "settler-teachers [that] have not been adequately prepared for this mission, nor are well-prepared to teach Indigenous students" (Bissell & Korteweg, 2016, p. 1). Well-intentioned but unprepared teachers have historically not created culturally-appropriate learning spaces for Indigenous learners, and instead adopt systematic pedagogical approaches based predominantly upon western epistemologies whereby the assumption of post-colonial privilege is largely not disputed. Such practices marginalize Indigenous students, as their cultures, worldviews, and identities are typically reduced to stereotypical and inaccurate representations (Nakata, 2007; Pearson, 2009). Among the perils of such practices is the fact that the students in these classrooms are in fact not enhancing their knowledge of Indigenous perspectives, but conversely, are made privy to the meta-narrative about Indigenous worldviews as told by the teacher (Harrison & Greenfeld, 2011; Tuhiwai Smith, 1999). In response, this study considers teacher candidates' perceptions and expectations related to Indigenous student engagement and learning, including the awareness of their own identities as prospective teachers as they relate to social justice teaching. Asking prospective teachers to engage in such critical considerations aims to enhance their ability to work with Indigenous learners in diverse and culturally-appropriate ways (McInnes, 2017; Nieto, 2013).

3. Methodology

All teacher candidates enrolled in the professional teacher education program at a university in Ontario were invited to participate in an on-line survey in September (2017), prior to any teaching practice assignments. The survey was completed by 212 teacher candidates. Each survey respondent was asked to identify the demographic to which they identified, their gender, socio-economic class, and program of study (as explained below). The respective demographic data allowed for a comparison between groups and a discussion of interpretations, especially given the fact that many respondents identified as White-Canadian (71.7%), female (79.7%), and middle-class (82.1%).

The professional teacher education course of study consists of two programs. The Concurrent Education program includes students that have already completed the first four of a five-year program of study. The fifth year consists solely of teacher-education courses. The Consecutive Education program includes students that have already earned an undergraduate degree and have been admitted to the first of a two-year Bachelor of Education program. Both the concurrent and consecutive programs offer qualification in one of the primary/junior (kindergarten to grade 3), junior/intermediate (grades 4 to 6), and intermediate/senior (grades 7 to 12) streams.

The survey consisted of 20 Likert-scale statements (ranging from Strongly Disagree – 1 to Strongly Agree – 5) and four open-ended questions. Participants could choose "indifferent" if their response to the statement resulted in neither a sense of agreement nor disagreement. This study focuses on prospective teachers' responses to the following seven quantitative statements, and to one of the open-ended questions. The Likert-scale statements include:

1. I anticipate that diversity will be celebrated daily in the schools where I will be practice-teaching.
2. I anticipate that there will be physical spaces that reflect Aboriginal culture in the schools where I will be practice teaching.

3. I anticipate that Aboriginal community leaders will have an established presence in the schools where I will be practice teaching.
4. I have an awareness of the complex identities (for example, race, class, gender, sexuality, language, ability, ethnic origin, to name a few) that influence how I think about teaching.
5. I have an awareness of the complex identities (for example, race, class, gender, sexuality, language, ability, ethnic origin, to name a few) that influence how I think about social justice.
6. I believe that the curriculum expectations will make it difficult for engaging with issues related to Aboriginal education in my classroom during my practice teaching.
7. I believe that the demands of "accountability" will make it difficult to engage with issues related to Aboriginal education in my classroom during my practice teaching.

The responses to the following open-ended question were also examined: What supports / interventions do you believe will be offered to you during your practice teaching that will assist you in helping Aboriginal students reach their full academic potential?

Participants demographic data were analyzed by frequency. The quantitative responses to the seven statements were analyzed by frequency and mean and compared across categories. The qualitative responses were analyzed and coded using Grounded Theory (Corbin, 1990). Each response was considered initially as a complete text and coded on a line-by-line basis. The principal investigator and an independent researcher examined the patterns grounded in the data and coded them according to themes. The data and initial findings were then subjected to comparison across groups. The researchers triangulated their findings by comparing their record of key words, phrases and themes. The properties of descriptors were further compared, and the complete text of responses considered a second time. The emerging findings were coded by category. The categories that theoretically saturated the data were identified (Charmaz, 2006).

A mixed-methods design was used for this research (Creswell & Clark, 2017). Likert-scale survey responses were used to analyze participants' perceptions; however, the unidimensional results can be challenging to interpret accurately (Ho, 2017). In order to address this limitation, participants' open-ended responses provided a more comprehensive understanding of participants' perceptions and the opportunity to examine the emerging trends that may not be readily apparent in numerical responses (Creswell, Plano Clark, Gutmann, & Hanson, 2003).

4. Results

Most respondents (72%) identified as Canadian White, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1 Frequency by Category to Which the Participants Identify Themselves

Category	***Frequency***	***%***	***Valid %***	***Cumulative%***
Aboriginal	1	0,5	0,5	0,5
Canadian - Black	2	0,9	0,9	1,4
Canadian - White	152	71,7	72,0	73,5
European	21	9,9	10,0	83,4
Caribbean	1	0,5	0,5	83,9
Middle Eastern	6	2,8	2,8	86,7
South Asian	7	3,3	3,3	90,0
East Asian	7	3,3	3,3	93,4
Southeast Asian	2	0,9	0,9	94,3
South and Central American	4	1,9	1,9	96,2
Other	8	3,8	3,8	100,0
Total	211	99,5	100,0	
Missing	1	0,5		
Total	212	100,0		

In terms of gender, 169 participants identified as female (80%). See Table 2.

Table 2 Frequency by Gender to Which the Participants Identify Themselves

Gender	***Frequency***	***%***	***Valid %***	***Cumulative %***
Female	169	79,7	80,1	80,1
Male	41	19,3	19,4	99,5
Other (please specify)	1	0,5	0,5	100,0
Total	211	99,5	100,0	
System	1	0,5		
Total	212	100,0		

Over 80% of participants (82.5%) identified as belonging to the middle-class SES. (Table 3).

Table 3 Frequency *by Socio-Economic Class in Which the Participants Identify Themselves*

Socio-economic class	***Frequency***	***%***	***Valid %***	***Cumulative%***
Lower socio-economic	16	7,5	7,6	7,6
Middle socio-economic	174	82,1	82,5	90,0
Upper socio-economic	19	9,0	9,0	99,1
Other	2	0,9	0,9	100,0
Total	211	99,5	100,0	
Missing	1	0,5		
Total	212	100,0		

According to program enrolment, the highest number of participants were in the Consecutive Education - Primary/Junior (P/J) (32%) stream followed by the Concurrent Education (I/S) stream with almost 20 percent of the total. See Table 4.

Table 4 Frequency by Program in Which the Participants are Enrolled

Program of study	***Frequency***	***%***	***Valid %***	***Cumulative%***
Consecutive Education - Primary/Junior (P/J)	68	32,1	32,2	54,5
Concurrent Education (I/S)	42	19,8	19,9	74,4
Concurrent Education (P/J)	30	14,2	14,2	100,0
Consecutive Education - Junior/Intermediate (J/I)	26	12,3	12,3	22,3
Concurrent Education (J/I)	24	11,3	11,4	85,8
Consecutive Education - Intermediate/Senior (I/S)	21	9,9	10	10
Total	211	99,5	100,0	
Missing	1	0,5		
Total	212	100,0		

As illustrated in Table 5, there was a near equal distribution between Year 1 and Concurrent Education (Year 5) prospective teacher participants, being slightly higher for the former (48.8% and 51.2% for the latter).

Table 5 Frequency by Current Year of Study

Year of study	***Frequency***	***%***	***Valid %***	***Cumulative%***
Year 1	108	50,9	51,2	51,2
Concurrent Education (Year 5)	103	48,6	48,8	100,0
Total	211	99,5	100,0	
Missing	1	0,5		
Total	212	100,0		

Many respondents either agreed (54 of N – 30.2%) or strongly agreed (68 of N and 38%) that they anticipated diversity to be celebrated daily in the schools where they will be practice-teaching. (See Table 6).

Table 6 Frequency by Answer (I anticipate that diversity will be celebrated daily in the schools where I will be practice-teaching.)

Statement	***Frequency***	***%***	***Valid %***	***Cumulative%***
Strongly Agree	68	32,1	38,0	100,0
Agree	54	25,5	30,2	62,0
Indifferent	29	13,7	16,2	31,8
Disagree	20	9,4	11,2	15,6
Strongly Disagree	8	3,8	4,5	4,5
Total	179	84,4	100,0	
Missing	33	15,6		
Total	212	100,0		

This response rate is more than twice the total frequency of responses indicating their indifference, disagreement, and strong disagreement to the statement. In terms of participants' responses to the statement about their anticipation that there will be physical spaces that reflect Indigenous culture in the schools where they will practice-teach, 56% of the total sample were either indifferent (31.1%; N=56) or disagreed (25%; N=45). Apart from those respondents that self-identified as Black Canadian (N=2) and East Asian (N=7) (that were mostly indifferent) the largest number of those surveyed across all other categories reported agreeing or strongly agreeing with the first statement. The sole Indigenous participant and 56% of European participants (N=21) agreed with the second statement, while the Black-Canadian, majority of South Asians (N=7) and approximately 50% of Southeast Asian (N=2) reported disagreeing with the second statement. See Table 7.

Table 7 Frequency by Answer (I anticipate that there will be physical spaces that reflect Aboriginal culture in the schools where I will be practice teaching.)

Statement	***Frequency***	***%***	***Valid %***	***Cumulative%***
Strongly Agree	20	9,4	11,1	100,0
Agree	44	20,8	24,4	88,9
Indifferent	56	26,4	31,1	64,4
Disagree	45	21,2	25,0	33,3
Strongly Disagree	15	7,1	8,3	8,3
Total	180	84,9	100,0	
Missing	32	15,1		
Total	212	100,0		

56%

Given the significantly high frequency of agreement to the first statement, the vast majority of male and female respondents agreed with the question; however, the results were not significantly conclusive across gender. Participants that identified as upper SES (N=19) presented the highest percentage of agreement with the first statement, as they did for the second. The respondents that identified as lower and middle SES (16 and 174 respectively) tended to be indifferent to the statement. Of note, 50% of participants from the Concurrent I/S program of study (N=42) reported their disagreement and strong disagreement to the second statement. Approximately 50% of the Concurrent J/I (N=24), Consecutive J/I (N=26) and Consecutive I/S (N=21) agreed or strongly agreed with the second statement.

The highest frequency of responses for the third statement (inquiring about participants' anticipation that Indigenous community leaders will have an established presence in schools) reported disagreeing (27.8%) and strongly disagreeing (18.9%), accounting for 46.7% of responses. See Table 8.

Table 8 Frequency by Answer (I anticipate that Aboriginal community leaders will have an established presence in the schools where I will be practice teaching.)

Statement	*Frequency*	*%*	*Valid %*	*Cumulative%*
Strongly Agree	17	8,0	9,4	100,0
Agree	33	15,6	18,3	90,6
Indifferent	46	21,7	25,6	72,2
Disagree	50	23,6	27,8	46,7
Strongly Disagree	34	16,0	18,9	18,9
Total	180	84,9	100,0	
Missing	32	15,1		
Total	212	100,0		

46,7%

In comparison, 27.7% of the total responses agreed (18.3%) and strongly agreed (9.4%) with the statement. When the data for this statement was analyzed across categories, it was found that the Canadian Black participants (N=2), the majority of South Asian (N=7), Middle Eastern (N=6) and East Asian (N=7) participants disagreed or strongly disagreed. Approximately 50% of the respondents from the upper SES category (N=19) agreed or strongly agreed with the same statement, but nearly 50% of respondents that identified as middle SES (N=174) tended to disagree and strongly disagree. Most of the students enrolled in the concurrent I/S (N=42) and concurrent P/J (N=30) reported disagreeing and strongly disagreeing.

Most respondents agreed and strongly agreed with the fourth and fifth statements (91.1% and 91.6% respectively) that asked participants to evaluate their awareness of the complex identities that influence how they think about teaching and about social justice. See Tables 9 and 10.

Table 9 Frequency by Answer (I have an awareness of the complex identities (for example, race, class, gender, sexuality, language, ability, ethnic origin, to name a few) that influence how I think about teaching.)

Statement	*Frequency*	*%*	*Valid %*	*Cumulative %*
Strongly Agree	87	41,0	48,6	100,0
Agree	76	35,8	42,5	51,4
Indifferent	11	5,2	6,1	8,9
Disagree	1	0,5	0,6	2,8
Strongly Disagree	4	1,9	2,2	2,2
Total	179	84,4	100,0	
Missing	33	15,6		
Total	212	100,0		

91,1%

Table 10 Frequency by Answer (I have an awareness of the complex identities (for example, race, class, gender, sexuality, language, ability, ethnic origin, to name a few) that influence how I think about social justice.)

Statement	*Frequency*	*%*	*Valid %*	*Cumulative %*
Strongly Agree	87	41,0	48,3	100,0
Agree	78	36,8	43,3	51,7
Indifferent	10	4,7	5,6	8,3
Disagree	1	0,5	0,6	2,8
Strongly Disagree	4	1,9	2,2	2,2
Total	180	84,9	100,0	
Missing	32	15,1		
Total	212	100,0		

91,6%

Less than 1% of the total percentage disagreed with the fourth and fifth statement. Female respondents showed more agreement in their responses to both statements.

The sixth and seventh statements asked participants to indicate the extent to which they believe that the expectations from the provincial curriculum and the demands of accountability will make it difficult to engage with issues related to Indigenous education in their classroom. While the highest frequency of response to both statements was indifferent (36.1% and 40.4%), the frequency for the other four responses was essentially very comparable. See Tables 11 and 12.

Table 11 Frequency by Answer (I believe that the curriculum expectations will make it difficult for engaging with issues related to Aboriginal education in my classroom during my practice teaching.)

Statement	***Frequency***	***%***	***Valid %***	***Cumulative %***
Strongly Agree	15	7,1	8,3	100,0
Agree	48	22,6	26,7	91,7
Indifferent	65	30,7	36,1	65,0
Disagree	41	19,3	22,8	28,9
Strongly Disagree	11	5,2	6,1	6,1
Total	180	84,9	100,0	
Missing	32	15,1		
Total	212	100,0		

Table 12 Frequency by Answer (I believe that the demands of 'accountability' will make it difficult to engage with issues related to Aboriginal education in my classroom during my practice teaching.)

Statement	***Frequency***	***%***	***Valid %***	***Cumulative %***
Strongly Agree	7	3,3	3,9	100,0
Agree	48	22,6	27,0	96,1
Indifferent	72	34,0	40,4	69,1
Disagree	43	20,3	24,2	28,7
Strongly Disagree	8	3,8	4,5	4,5
Total	178	84,0	100,0	
Missing	34	16,0		
Total	212	100,0		

For the sixth statement, 35% of participants agreed (26.7%) and strongly agreed (8.3%) and 28.9% either disagreed (22.8%) or strongly disagreed (6.1%). The same pattern is true for the responses to the seventh statement, where 30.9% of the total N agreed (27%) and strongly agreed (3.9%) and 28.7% of the total N either disagreed (24.2%) and strongly disagreed (4.5%). Indifferent was the most popular response for White-Canadians (N=152), European (N=21), Middle Eastern (N=6) and Southeast Asian (N=2) participants for the sixth statement, as it was for South and Central American (N=4) respondents on the seventh statement. Also, regarding the seventh statement, the sole Indigenous participant, approximately 50% of the Black-Canadian participants (N=2), and the majority of South Asian (N=7) and East Asian (N=7) respondents reported their agreement and strong agreement with this item. Approximately 60% of the participants enrolled in the Concurrent education program – J/I (N=24) and Concurrent education – P/J (N=30) agreed and strongly agreed with the sixth statement, and nearly 50% of the students in the Consecutive education – I/S (N=21) disagreed and strongly disagreed with this statement. However, only those students enrolled in the Concurrent – J/I (N=24) tended to agree with the sixth statement.

In terms of the qualitative responses to the open-ended question that asked respondents to describe the supports they anticipate being offered to them during their practicum teaching assignment to assist them with helping Indigenous students reach their full academic potential, two core categories were grounded in the data. The categories were analyzed in consideration of race, gender, SES, and participants' program of study. The categories were identified as the following: (1) Resources related to Literacy and, (2) Pedagogical Support. The greatest number of respondents to this question were enrolled in the Consecutive – P/J program of study (N=32) and the fewest replies were from students studying in the Consecutive – I/S program (N=6). Significantly more female participants replied to the question, including the two largest ratios of 16 to 1 (Concurrent P/J) and 28 to 4 (Consecutive P/J).

5. Findings and Significance

The results from the first and second statements yield some noteworthy findings. For many of the survey participants, the very strong agreement responses point to the expectations that diversity will be celebrated daily in public schools. The perception exists that issues related to diversity to be will be priorities in the schools where they will practice-teach and have an independent focus from other issues. This may be interpreted as an encouraging finding, since it suggests that prospective teachers perceive diversity to be a prominent topic in the practices of public schools. Such a finding may attest to the importance that research has placed on issues related to diversity in public schools (see Ty-Ron Douglas et al., 2015), as scholars and practitioners alike have gone to great lengths to examine more thoroughly how issues related to identity and race positively influence school cultures and the learning environment of classrooms (Douglas & Peck, 2013; Matthews, 2003). The literature discusses the process by which diverse students feel more empowered to express themselves in mainstream schools that honor their unique perspectives (Manning, 2016), and in turn, foster new and innovative spaces of possibility for the marginalized voices that have been historically disadvantaged in public education (Gilyard, 2013). Weinstein (2010) and Ginwright (2010) suggest that investing attention in teachers' pedagogy and programming is instrumental towards developing the distinct identities of diverse students.

It is, however, somewhat disconcerting that the two participants that identified as Black-Canadian did not indicate their agreement with neither the first or second statement. Yet, the small sample size makes it inappropriate to infer generalizations. Participants' SES did not skew the favorable responses to the first statement, suggesting that participants' class had little to no impact on their expectations related to diversity, and thus, the respective topic transcended class structure. This suggests that there may be assumed understandings, on the part of the survey participants, that diversity is a topic that has cross-sector significance for school-aged students. It will be telling to compare these findings of participants' expectations prior to their teaching practicum with the data from the post-survey (when the survey participants will report on their actual experiences in various schools and classrooms during their teacher education program) to investigate if indeed the practice of celebrating diversity matched their expectations.

It is also interesting to consider why a significant percentage of the participants from the Concurrent I/S program did not have favorable responses to the first and second statements. Unlike the P/J and J/I program, students enrolled in the I/S course of study are required to have qualifications in two subject-areas and thus typically have a higher concentration of subject-specific courses during the teacher education program. Perhaps the more general level undergraduate courses invested more time and attention to issues related to diversity and cultural differences, or maybe the expectations of the I/S cohort participants are based more on their experiences in secondary school where such issues may have been less prominent than their experiences as students in K to 8 schools. Relatedly, most of these same students (Consecutive I/S) disagreed and strongly disagreed with the third statement about the presence of Indigenous community leaders in public schools. In this instance, students enrolled in the Concurrent P/J program reported similar levels of disagreement. Students in the Concurrent program had significantly less expectations in this regard. Here, too, the comparative analysis of data from the post-survey responses may set the groundwork for a more substantial discussion as it relates to program differences and participants' experiences in the field.

The findings from the fourth and fifth statements were far more conclusive both within and across categories. Over 90% of the total N expressed their (strong) awareness of complex identities that influence how they think about teaching. Clearly, participants have a strong self-impression and broad-recognition of identity-related issues. The highly favorable responses suggest their progressive views and heightened levels of awareness around the complexities of race, class, gender, sexuality, language, and ability, and that they expect these complexities to have implications upon their approach to teaching and learning during their practicum assignments. The findings represent what Deer (2013) refers to as "professional sensitivity" and serves as an indication of teacher-candidates' "confidence in their ability to deliver" culturally-appropriate pedagogy in their classroom (p. 181). All participants seem to have a better understanding of issues related to identity and the implications on their future practice. They seemed to more easily accept the notion that identity is multifaceted and will play a meaningful role in their students' educative experiences.

It will be especially interesting to compare findings to these statements with those on the post-survey and analyze the impact that professional learning and actual field experiences in public schools have on respondents' sense of awareness. It can be inferred that the prospective teacher participants will further engage in considerations of such complexities as they prepare for their practice-teaching assignments. The same holds true for the responses to the fifth statement, as participants expressed a slightly even stronger agreement (91.1% in the fourth and 91.6% in the fifth statement) to being aware of the complex identities that influence how they think about social justice. Participants perceive their awareness of issues related to identity as influencing how they think about social justice and suggest that their understanding of identity has implications upon their perceptions of equity and fairness (Daiute, 2010; Janks, 2010: Medira, 2010). This may be related, in many respects, to respondents' perceptions of how social justice serves to illuminate possibilities and new alternatives for marginalized students by underscoring and analyzing the embodied understandings of education, hegemony, and nationality (see, for example, Enciso, 2011). The responses suggest that survey participants have an embedded understanding of what is important considering the relationship between identity and concepts of social justice. Participants perceive their awareness from a strength-based perspective. Their responses suggest that they are well-informed of the respective complexities and can extend their understanding to further considerations of social justice.

Of note, the high frequency of participants who reported being indifferent to the expectation that the provincial curriculum will make it difficult for engaging with issues related to Indigenous education (statement six) and the expectation that the demands of accountability will do the same, may be more readily inferred. Since the survey was administered prior to participants' field-based experiences in classrooms and prior to completing a substantial amount of coursework in the teacher education program, teacher-candidates would not necessarily be even familiar with the expectations listed in the provincial curriculum documents. Prospective teacher participants would not have yet studied issues related to assessment and evaluation, special education, education law, and professional roles and responsibilities associated to teaching, and thus wouldlikely not have a solid grounding in how these topics relate directly to being accountable to administrators, students, parents and others. It might be expected that the post-test data, after having varied experiences in classrooms and completed course work, will significantly change these results.

Equally noteworthy findings were grounded in participants' responses to the open-ended question asking about their expectation of the specific supports they will be offered during their practicum assignments that will assist them in helping Indigenous students reach their full academic potential. Two categories were grounded in the data, including: Resources Related to Literacy and Pedagogical Support.

5.1 Resources Related to Literacy

A significant number of participants cited various resources related specifically to literacy instruction. Some anticipate receiving "storybooks" (concurrent P/J), "resources for paper texts" (concurrent I/S), "textbooks" (concurrent I/S), and "Aboriginal literature" (concurrent J/I), to name a few. There are numerous responses to these specific types of resources that are indicative of what participants perceive to be targeted interventions to support the curriculum expectations. The value of these supports, one might infer based on the pre-survey data, rests in the value they bring to knowledge-production. In some respects, this may be interpreted as an expectation on the part of survey respondents that such resources are meant to create the proper knowledge framework that will enhance student learning. The resources may, in turn, assist prospective teachers to buffer their instruction considering their attempt to best relate to Indigenous students' learning styles. Quite a high number of participants expect and perhaps prefer to be provided with resources that they themselves were not necessarily responsible for creating, or even finding. The resources are perceived by participants as valid and culturally-appropriate pedagogical tools to meet the academic needs of a student demographic to which they may not be readily familiar.

This finding reflects the literature that draws attention to how teachers discuss and teach about Indigenous people and worldviews (see Harrison & Greenfield, 2011) to avoid representing them in stereotypes or framing their uniqueness in generalizations. It is precisely for these reasons that Gay and Howard (2000) and Nieto (2013), among others, encourage teacher education programs to introduce prospective teachers to various cultures and ethnicities, and develop their proficiency to adopt diverse pedagogies into their practice.

Prospective teachers need to embrace pedagogical approaches that are culturally rich, authentic, and rooted in Indigenous communities, with the understanding that Indigenous peoples are a defined entity in Canadian law with linguistic and cultural traditions that are unique to the immigrants that call Canada home (Grande, 2004; Reyhner & Eder, 2004).

It is interesting that the overwhelming majority of responses that identified the various resources related to literacy may imply a priority that participants themselves place on academic rational knowledge. They expect print and other resources to provide Indigenous students with varied tasks to develop their proficiency in literacy. Survey respondents expect "school board resources" (consecutive P/J), "lesson plans" (concurrent J/I), and "websites talking about literacy" (concurrent P/J) to enable them to more successfully decipher the literacy-related skills and needs that appeal to the Indigenous learners in their classroom. There is an implied recognition on their part that literacy instruction has underserved Indigenous students, and that because of their cultural and epistemic differences, there is the expectation that specific resources related to literacy will reframe their pedagogy and infuse more culturally-sensitive interventions in their teaching practice. In addition, these resources might be considered as tools to mediate any of the differences and discomfort prospective teachers themselves may have in assisting Indigenous students to reach their full potential in literacy education. This attests to why some participants reported, typical of these responses, that "hopefully [the] resources will help us approach situations to do with cultural differences" (consecutive P/J) and that the resources will deal with "information on culture" (concurrent I/S) to make "texts more accessible for Aboriginal students" (concurrent I/S). Others cited the expectation of receiving resources to improve their "knowledge for the differences of the Aboriginal kids in my classes" (concurrent P/J) and as this individual stated, as did many others, "texts to bridge the gap and increase Aboriginal student interaction" (concurrent I/S). Respondents expected receiving these and other resources, including "contextual worksheets" (consecutive J/I) to bridge the conceptual spaces between them and the Indigenous students in their classrooms. Inherent in these expectations, too, is the strong sense of difference that respondents distinguish between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students' learning, and even their own. There may be an internalized notion that they will require external resources to facilitate the sense of difference that will be produced and enacted between Indigenous students, their mainstream peers, and themselves. This may present further and potentially far-reaching implications on the social dynamics of the learning environment in their classroom, especially if this sense of participants' internalized difference remains unchallenged.

5.2.Pedagogical Support

To a large extent some of the properties belonging to both core categories share some similarities. As prospective teachers expect resources to address Indigenous students' literacy, due in some measure to the difference between Indigenous and non-Indigenous student needs, they also expect direct interventions and assistance on how to modify their pedagogy. Participants cited their expectation of being "assisted to develop and deliver lessons that Aboriginal students can identify with" (concurrent I/S), "supported within the classroom" (concurrent I/S) and be provided with "suggestions and support from other teachers" (consecutive P/J). The survey respondents expect to learn about and be privy to pedagogical approaches that will cater to the sense of difference represented by Indigenous students. The prospective teachers welcome their associate teachers, as well as other experienced teachers, to offer their direct support in this regard. Hence, prior to having any experience to field-related practicums, prospective teachers perceive themselves as being less successful, as classroom instructors, in engaging Indigenous learners. The expectation that their pedagogy will be supported directly by experienced educators suggests that they anticipate being less effective delivering the curriculum to the Indigenous students in their classrooms. Perhaps this is a reason why Calderon (2014), Bhattacharya (2011), and others call upon teacher educators to create opportunities for teacher candidates to self-examine their identities and epistemologies, particularly those prospective teachers whose worldviews and ways of knowing stem from colonial paradigms. This may be significant in terms of unsettling teacher candidates' beliefs around race and privilege, even if it means having to engage in difficult and uncomfortable processes of self-reflection (Liggett, 2009; Motha, 2014).

An unintended consequence of these perceptions is the challenge for prospective teachers of having to first negotiate the development of a pedagogical style that is conducive for themselves, and second, having to tailor it so that it resonates with Indigenous and non-Indigenous students by compensating for the epistemic and cultural degrees of differences that exist.

This is not an easy task and would certainly only add to the challenges of having a successful teaching practicum assignment for prospective teachers aiming to make a strong impression on students and their associate teachers. Several survey participants identified the expectation of "professional learning opportunities [and] professional development workshops that revolve around how to create a classroom environment that helps serve the needs of Indigenous students" (concurrent P/J), while others anticipated instructional sessions to develop "different prompts for encouraging student behavior" (concurrent I/S). Some participants expect "best practice opportunities" (consecutive P/J) that include "different teaching strategies that fit [Indigenous students'] needs" (consecutive P/J). Participants expressed their desire to develop a fluent pedagogy that addresses Indigenous students' skills and dispositions. They acknowledge the importance of embodying readily-accessible instructional strategies that are favorable to Indigenous learners implying a recognition of the fact that Indigenous students have historically not benefitted from more traditional and western-based practices. They expect, presumably, assistance with implementing a pedagogical style that recognizes and reinforces the identities of Indigenous learners in mainstream classrooms. Through such pedagogical support, teacher candidates perceive that they will more readily carry-out their obligations to what they alluded to be a marginalized demographic of students. They perceive very different fundamental pedagogical principles at play between these different groups of learners. Some even call for "clubs [and] holidays" (concurrent J/I) and "special strategies" (consecutive P/J) to further their understanding of Indigenous student difference.

Also noteworthy were the many responses that cited the expectation that Indigenous community leaders will support prospective teachers' pedagogy by providing culturally-relevant and appropriate information and strategies. Throughout the data were responses that cited "local Aboriginal figures" (concurrent I/S), "representatives from the Indigenous community" (consecutive I/S), "access to Aboriginal leaders who can be a reference for students as well" (concurrent I/S), and the "hope [that] the school is connected with leaders from Aboriginal groups" (concurrent J/I). Participants expect representatives from Indigenous communities to infuse culturally-informed perspectives into their pedagogy. They discern that these community voices are well-versed in traditional Indigenous knowledge-bases and can supplement their classroom practice. As one participant stated, typical of others, "I believe I will have access to various resources and community support that can help [Indigenous students] adapt to unfamiliar or historically oppressive environment (concurrent I/S). In these instances, participants expect Indigenous community members to also directly support the students themselves, and presumably, help to solidify the connections between their pedagogy as classroom teachers and the diverse needs of Indigenous students. Participants drew upon the multiple connections that they expect the Indigenous community voices will make in their classrooms. In this way, the community members will fulfill multiple roles between Indigenous and mainstream students and bridge the necessary pedagogical connections to create opportunities for learning.

Clear across most responses is the fact that the prospective teacher participants want to make informed decisions about the implementation of their pedagogy in culturally-diverse classrooms. Implied across the data is prospective teachers' awareness of the potential embarrassment and frustration of misrepresenting Indigenous perspectives in their teaching. They are cautious about implementing distorted and inaccurate representations of Indigenous peoples' worldviews, and thus, welcome both print and human resources to guide them in their instructional planning.

6. Conclusion

Both the quantitative and qualitative survey responses reflect participants' expectation that there will be conceptual differences between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students in the learning spaces of their classrooms. Across all variables of gender, race, and SES, participants reported that the concepts of difference and diversity will have genuine implications on their practice as prospective teachers. Responses attested to the fact that participants have specific expectations of how Indigenous student identity relates to issues of social justice. Participants recognize and expect that specific resources related to the literacy education of Indigenous students will be necessary to address what they perceive to be unique needs. Similarly, they expect tailored and direct pedagogical support during their practicum to facilitate culturally-responsive classrooms.

Across both the quantitative and qualitative data is the strong impression that the prospective teacher participants will strive to make a genuine effort to be culturally-responsive practitioners. Equally clear, though, is their reliance on resource-support and assistance from colleagues to cultivate a better understanding of Indigenous students' needs and interests so as not to compromise their students' experiences in the classroom.

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