

TRANSFORMATIVE PEDAGOGIES FOR TEACHER EDUCATION

Moving Towards Critical Praxis
in an Era of Change



Ann E. Lopez and Elsie Lindy Olan, Editors

A VOLUME IN
TRANSFORMATIVE PEDAGOGIES IN TEACHER EDUCATION

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A Volume in
Transformative Pedagogies in Teacher Education

Series Editors
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University of Toronto
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edited by Ann E. Lopez and Elsie Lindy Olan

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ABOUT THE SERIES

Ann E. Lopez and Elsie Lindy Olan

Transformative Pedagogies for Teacher Education is a book series that feature the work of teacher educators across the globe that are engaging in alternative pedagogies grounded in social justice to meet the needs of students. This series is about praxis—connecting theory to educational practices that practitioners, scholars and activists can draw on as they seek to create meaningful and lasting change in the lives of students. The research, experiences and practices highlighted in this series foreground the voices and experiences of teacher educators who are working with teacher candidates and in classrooms; all on a journey to create more equitable practices no matter their contexts. We live in a world where borders are shrinking and people are on the move. As teacher educators, we must vow to include the richness that this diversity brings to education. Each author is committed to the cause and to the goals of equity, guided by their own experiences and contexts. The teacher educators who contributed to this series are unique in their own way, each sharing narratives and experiences that inform their journey. Their research reflect new and different ways to prepare teacher candidates to enter classrooms and schools that have vastly changed over the last 20 years. It is our hope that this project will encourage not only teacher educators and teacher candidates, but also educational leaders and policymakers to seek out alternative approaches to education to addresses the needs of students who have traditionally been marginalized.

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Transformative pedagogy empowers students to critically examine beliefs, values, and knowledge with the aim of developing new epistemologies, center multiple ways of knowing, and develop a sense of critical consciousness and agency. Singer and Pezone (2000) urge teacher educators not to become pessimistic and overwhelmed by societal and educational challenges, but seek out ways to engage in transformative actions. Grounded in the work of Dewey and Freire, the works in this series take a critical approach to education. Freire (1970) pedagogical aim was to ensure that the oppressed had educational experiences that allowed them to take control over their own lives. It is important for teacher candidates and teacher educators to work keep this at the forefront of their work given the current complexities of schooling. Freire believed that education should be a vehicle for hope for society at large. In this endeavour both educators and students should explicitly challenge social injustice and oppression. According to Freire, knowledge emerges through invention and re-invention, through the restless, impatient, continuing, hopeful inquiry human beings pursue in the world, with the world and with each other. The authors seek to enact teacher education in the traditions of Dewey (1961) who suggests the ideals of democratic education must translate into experiential learning, and pragmatic actions combined with reflective thinking. If we are to advance the education then theory must be connected to practice.

By examining our practices as teacher educators we engage in continuous learning that enables new knowledge to emerge in the hope of creating change in education and society. As Freire (1970) argues the role of the teacher is to ask questions by engaging in problem-posing methodologies, support students to discover new ideas, value their life experiences and include prior experiences as the basis for new academic understanding and social action, a process he refers to as conscientization.

Different and alternative transformative pedagogical approaches weave through this series. Through the frame of liberatory pedagogy (Freire, 1970), that focuses on raising critical consciousness and recognizes that education is political; culturally responsive pedagogy (Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 1995a; Villegas & Lucas, 2008) which argues for the cultural references of students to be represented in all aspects of learning; participatory action research (Reason & Bradbury, 2001) that captures the voices and experiences of urban youths and advances practical knowledge in pursuit of social action; case studies (Merseeth, 1994; Shulman, 1992) that bridge theory to practice divide; the voices of teacher educators working on the border; and disruptive pedagogy (Lee, 2014) authors share narratives, collaborating with the students sharing experiences in pursuit of teacher education to transform education and social change. Teacher educators share not only their aspirations for education, but also their vulnerabilities on the journey of liberatory education.

We hope that different approaches and pedagogies highlighted in this series will advance the work of educators committed to social justice and more equitable outcomes for students who are at the margins, a better society and a more democratic world. Indeed this is the aim of transformative education.

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FOREWORD

Christine Sleeter

Transformative Pedagogies for Teacher Education arrives at a time when such a book is not only welcomed, but also much needed. Currently teacher educators who are committed to social justice face numerous challenges.

For one thing, all over the world student populations continue to diversify as migrants seek economic opportunity and refugees flee violence. As a result, educators struggle to figure out how to teach their increasingly diverse students in countries ranging from Greece and Italy, to South Korea, from Australia and New Zealand, to India. For example, in the United States, by 2013, public school students were 50% of color; as this book went to print, there was no racial/ethnic student majority (National Center for Education Statistics, 2016), and in the context of growing economic inequality, a majority of students came from families living in poverty (Layton, 2015).

The growing diversity of students, often enmeshed within growing economic inequality, presents urgent challenges that go beyond attempts to frame policy. In Greece, for example, the national law promoting cross-cultural education uses vague wording that allows for a wide range of interpretations, while normalizing segregation and obsessing on cultural differences (Mitakidou, 2011). Canada, which national policy frames as bilingual and multicultural, grapples with its foundation in settler colonialism, and its casting of differences in terms of language and culture but not race (Haque, 2014). European Union policies that purport to include

Roma students often fail to impact how students are actually treated in schools and classrooms (Miskovic & Curcic, 2016).

For teachers and teacher educators, multiculturalism as lived out in schools and communities presents urgent challenges, particularly in contexts of backlash against immigration. For example, Eksner and Cheema (2017) report interviews with Muslim youth who grew up in Germany where currently about 5% of the population are members of ethnic communities that identify as majority Muslim. The authors write that,

Youths marked as Muslim experience intersectional “othering” as being marked as (1st, 2nd, 3rd) immigrants, ethnocultural “others” and because of their assumed religious membership. “Othering” of youths marked as Muslim is based on certain visible markers (e.g., phenotype or name) and works via the ascription of both religious membership (i.e., being born into a Muslim family) and religious orientation (i.e., de facto beliefs), both of which are discursively connected to conservative and radical political and cultural beliefs and practices. (p. 169)

Their “othering” is underscored by media representations that stereotype and oversimplify the students’ communities, and implicitly link Islam with terrorism.

For teacher educators, the question becomes: How do we prepare teachers to respond proactively and constructively to their students, given larger contexts of difference and power within which children and youth live? And how do we do this work in contexts where neoliberalism has increased the privatization of education, policies have deprofessionalized teaching and shortened teacher education (e.g., Zeichner, 2008), and testing regimes narrowly constrain what students are to learn?

While this book arrived during a time of challenges and changes, it also arrives at a propitious time of growing knowledge about culturally responsive and social justice teaching, as well as work on behalf of schools as sites for liberation and justice. For example, in the United States, the research on the academic and social impact of ethnic studies on children and youth (Sleeter, 2011) has been instrumental in supporting grassroots mobilizing in numerous school districts to institutionalize ethnic studies teaching in schools. Conferences are regularly held in which teachers and teacher educators share progressive and activist practices and learn from each other. Examples include the National Association for Multicultural Education and the Teacher Activist Groups in the United States, and the Korean Association for Multicultural Education’s annual conference. Indigenous communities in many parts of the world are reconstituting education as tribal-centered and aimed toward cultural reclamation, empowerment, and self-determination (e.g., McCarty & Lee, 2014).

Transformative Pedagogies for Teacher Education resonates well with Milner's (2008) extrapolation of several core principles from social movements to the work of transforming teacher education. First, Milner writes that activists must establish a common agenda and vision. Social justice-minded teacher educators and their collaborators must develop enough conceptual convergence that despite differences, they can work as a unified collective. *Transformative Pedagogies for Teacher Education* represents an important part of that process of developing a common collective vision. Even though the chapters speak to various innovations within different teacher education programs, they are similarly anchored in a vision that values differences, dialog across those differences, critical analysis of unequal power relations, and the potential of teachers learning to work in collaboration with their students.

Second, Milner (2008) argues that social movement work takes account of contexts, realities, and resources. There is no one formula; local work is necessary. This principle is beautifully embodied in this book, in which authors speak from their own work with programs in specific contexts, while sharing insights that others may draw on, learn from, and perhaps adapt.

Third, Milner (2008) points out that movements connect "pro-action, re-action, and prediction" (p. 340) using evidence of impacts of past practices and trends to make a case for changes for the future. Many of the chapters in this book not only describe innovative practices, but also report data on the transformative impact of their work, data that can guide future developments.

Finally, movements involve persistent long-term work. In that sense, the series in which *Transformative Pedagogies for Teacher Education* appears represents numerous teacher educators coming together to dialogue, share strategies, and draw strength and inspiration from each other for the long haul of transforming teacher education. I commend this book to readers, who, by engaging with it, become part of the dialogue and ongoing collective transformational work.

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PREFACE

Faced with an era of change, political uncertainty and demographic shifts that transcend borders, we, teacher educator researchers and practitioners, envisioned a text where teacher educators, teacher leaders, educational activist and teacher candidates would problematize, disrupt and re-envision the current teacher practices. Demographic shift and increasing ethnic and cultural diversity in schools and higher education has created urgencies for educators to prepare students to participate in an increasingly diverse democracy, but also to respond to such diversity within their own sites of learning and teaching (DeMulder & Eby, 1999). Transformative pedagogy is about teaching and learning that critically examines educational structures and systems, posits alternative knowledge, includes multiple perspectives, and supports students in developing critical consciousness and agency to act and bring about change. Transformative pedagogy “engages students as critical thinkers, participatory and active learners, and envisioners of alternative possibilities of social reality (Nagda, Gurin, & Lopez, 2003, p. 167). According to Nagda, Gurin, and Lopez (2003), this requires educators to understand both the practical and political nature of teaching if meaningful change is to occur.

In a period of dramatic technological and social change, educators need to foster a variety of transformative pedagogies to make education relevant to the demands of a new millennium. This must be grounded in critical approaches and as Gay (2010) asserts, requires an ongoing process of changing the environmental, cognitive, and pedagogical contexts in which teaching and learning occurs. Transformative learning has become

a dominant teaching paradigm and approach within the field of adult education and has interested scholars and educators from all areas of education (Mezirow & Taylor, 2011). More specifically, the problem this book attempts to address is how critical educators can create a language that enables teachers to examine the role that schooling plays in joining transformative pedagogies for teacher education. It is undergirded by Freire (1970) notion of dialogic education that challenges what Freire calls the “banking approach to education” in favor of an approach that centers the knowledge, perspectives and experiences of students and teachers in the education process. Our assumptions are that transformative pedagogies and critical praxis are altering every aspect of our society and culture, and that we need to comprehend and make use of them both to understand and transform our worlds. Introducing transformative pedagogies to empower individuals and groups traditionally excluded would require a reconstruction of education to make it more responsive to the challenges of a democratic and multicultural society. Through critical theoretical frameworks we excavate biases and assumptions and see what is possible in our sphere of influence as educators (Lopez, 2016). According to McLaren, (2015) critical educators advocate for social justice, live with the understanding that knowledge is always partial and incomplete. He suggests, “educators must unravel and understand the relationship among schooling, the wider capitalist social relations that inform it and the historically constructed needs and competencies that students bring to school” (p. xxi).

Critical frameworks must be linked to practices and behaviors for change to occur (Montano, Lopez-Torres, DeLissovoy, Pacheco, & Stillman, 2002). This book seeks to create that linkage. It is about praxis, connecting theory to action. Freire (1970) reminds us that educators must take action within a theoretical framework of thought, critical inquiry with others, engage in creative reflection and action in order to change the world. This text draws on the experiences of teacher educators in bridging the theory to practice divide that teacher candidates experience on their journey of learning to teach. By examining dissonance and tensions that teacher candidates and teachers experience, we hope to unite a chorus of voices where dialogue is fostered, experiences and practices are shared, and teachers are challenged to think about, deconstruct and problematize what it means to educate new teachers in forever changing schools and classrooms contexts. When we look at the dynamics that equity, diversity, social justice and sustainability play in our education, it is easy to see why it can be challenging to provide teacher candidates with alternative transformative approaches to learning and teaching. In book one, *Transformative Pedagogies: Moving Towards Critical Praxis in an Era of Change*, we provide a range of empirical and experiential accounts of teacher educators, scholars and educational activists engaging in transformative praxis as they work towards creating

meaningful experiences for both learners and teachers. We had three main goals in writing this text:

- Highlight possibilities for **action** not only in the preparation of teachers for increasingly changing contexts, but schooling as a conduit for global diversity and competence.
- **Support** teacher educators, scholars and educational activist engaging culturally responsive practices that are sustainable.
- **Provide** a platform where teacher educators, scholars and educational activists' empirical and experiential research can better inform the education system (locally and globally) in order to support the whole child and the teaching profession.

APPROACH

The title of book 1, *Transformative Pedagogies: Moving Towards Critical Praxis in an Era of Change*, of our book series, *Transformative Pedagogies in Teacher Education*, speaks to two fundamental components of transformative practices: the critical examination of beliefs, values, and knowledge with the aim of developing new epistemologies, center multiple ways of knowing, and developing a sense of critical consciousness and agency and the discovery of alternative and more authentic ways to engage both “across and within the various ethnic and racial communities” (Howard, 2016). In this text, readers will discover a valuable resource in teacher education courses in both methods and foundation courses examining the social and political context of schools as well as curricular initiative and implementations that impacts both teachers and students. This text is also of great value as a resource for professional development.

As schools become diverse, there is an imminent call for teacher educators to be transformative. Now, more than ever teacher education programs are called upon to prepare teachers and educational activist so that they can respond to the growing needs of diverse students. Increasing diversity in Canadian and American schools is a reality that cannot be ignored and presents significant challenges for teachers and educational leaders (Beauchum & McCray, 2004). Demographic shifts have brought about greater diversity in Western countries. Populations have become more diverse ethnically, racially, socially, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, physical abilities, languages spoken and religion. There still continues to be calls for publications that go beyond theorizing, but also share practices and strategies that others can learn from.

ORGANIZATION

In each chapter, authors draw on current research and literature; examine gaps as well as areas of convergence and divergence. Teacher educators identify, describe, and analyze transformative pedagogies. By presenting dialogic interaction and talk, liberatory pedagogy, and poetic inquiry, authors share teacher narratives about working on the border while disrupting existing pedagogies. They present frameworks that enact transformative pedagogies in teacher preparation programs and school settings. As they engage in advancing practical knowledge in pursuit of social action, authors capture the voices, lived experiences and tensions of youth of color, teachers and those invested in teacher preparation programs. Authors share narratives about collaborating with students and colleagues where notions are framed utilizing not only their aspirations for education, but also their pursuit to transform education and bring social change. It is important for educators to collaborate as they work towards greater justice in society and education, and seek better outcomes for all students, but most importantly for students who are marginalized and oppressed. As Howard (2007) argues educators must move beyond blame and befuddlement and work to transforming not only ourselves, but also our schools so that we can serve all students well. This is what a book and a series about transformative pedagogies in teacher education seek to do.

Ann E. Lopez

Elsie Lindy Olan

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This series represent a vision realized. It is dedicated to teacher educators who work with teacher candidates and in teacher education programs, across the globe to prepare new teachers to enter increasingly diverse schools and communities. The first book in this series would not have been possible without the contributions of dedicated teacher educators, for which we are grateful. Their contributions have made this journey a rich learning experience. It is our hope that they will find this first book in the series useful as they seek to engage in transformative and radical teaching, to improve the learning outcomes for students.

We owe a debt of gratitude to Natalia Ortiz for her artistic vision and design of the book cover, which we hope will capture the imagination of educators everywhere. We acknowledge the helpful suggestions of Dr. Marcus Anthony Vu, Marcelo Julio Maturana and of the many anonymous reviewers. We thank Benjamin Gonzalez and George Johnson from Information Age Publishing for their feedback, patience and guidance throughout this project. Your support has been invaluable.

Thanks to our families for their support throughout this process. Their love and support have kept us going through many hours at the computer and long nights. Ann would like to acknowledge her grandmother who is her inspiration, who taught her to challenge injustice everywhere, and to find joy in learning.

Our hope is that researchers and practitioners will find this first book in the series useful as they seek to connect theory to practice through meaningful and transformative actions. We have collaborated on this project

with a sense of common purpose and conviction as educators seeking to create radical change undergirded by a Freirean philosophy that is learner-centered and liberatory. We hope this book will inspire and enrich the educational process and journey of teacher educators.