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The far reaching impact of transformative curriculum: A narrative critical ethnographic case study

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ABSTRACT

Throughout the curriculum history in the United States, attempts to improve the educational outcomes have been challenging. Nonetheless, dealing with systems of curricular which have never delivered the highest quality of education to diverse body of students, let alone immigrants and English Language Learners (ELLs) has been even more problematic. Consequently, scholars and educators have increasingly been faced with dilemma of implementing robust transformative curriculum in schools for these particular students. This case study is based on narrative critical ethnography. The researcher collected data of seven students from five non-English speaking nations (immigrants) and ELLs within the high school setting for a year. Through observations, interviews, and focus groups, the findings suggest that the curriculum transformed them to believe more in their dignity and worth, achieve academic excellence, and the commitment to advocacy. The study concludes with the analysis of the transformative curriculum as the renaissance of the curriculum theory and practice and made recommendations for future research.

KEYWORDS

Transformative curriculum; English language learning; immigrant pedagogy; United States.

INTRODUCTION

To many critics and reformers alike, the history of the curriculum in the United States has been challenging (Dewey, 1964; Kliebard, 2004; Sleeter, 2017; Tyack, 1974). This is because among others many issues raised in the society especially where unequal power is contested and reproduced has something to do with the curriculum and its theory in practice (Apple, 2019). For that reason, since the beginning of the U.S history, scholars and practitioners have attempted to improve the educational outcomes of this nation through a strategic curriculum

in all education levels (Kliebard, 2004, Pinar, 2019; Priestly, 2011). For example, according to Pinar (2004), the Herbartians developed a curricular theory around 1892 in reaction to the classism of the faculty psychology. For the Herbatians, the curriculum must essentially include a lesson plan which should be both scientific and systematic to be effective to the mental and emotional visualization of students. However, this did not sit well with other scholars because by 1918s, the curriculum took another shape due to the reaction to the prevalent industrial revolution. The social efficiency movement was born led by Bobbit and Thorndyke [1924] who expressed that schools should devise a curriculum by identifying specific activities and abilities in various occupation, family, and social roles (Pinar, 2019). That signifies that the school experiences be constructed to enable children attain industry age objectives. Furthermore, social efficiency advocated that the curriculum be differentiated into a number of specialized vocational tracks to fit one's abilities. Thus, schools should assign children to these specialized curricular tracks based on the assessment of their intellectual abilities tailored to their destinies (Kliebard, 2004).

Then the third group of curricular reformers, the progressive movement (Tyack, 1974). These reformers felt that the curriculum must be child driven and hence meet the present capacity level of the children. Led by icons, John Dewey and Lester Ward, they envisioned the curriculum that is arranged and is an orderly view of the previous experiences of a child which serve as a guide to the future experiences, gives direction, facilitates, and prevent useless wandering of children's path (Dewey, 1964; Kliebard, 2004).

Nevertheless, from 1958, the curriculum again took a different turn after the launch of Sputnik in 1957 by the Soviet Union (Priestly, 2011). The United States government started providing funds for curriculum reforms at all levels focusing on Science and Mathematics. That embodied rigorous intellectual preparation of students' mind to think clearly, logically, and independently through classical thoughts in the competitive age, thus going back to classism (Pinar, 2019).

However from 1960s, curricular reforms took a different note through the Multicultural Education Movement (Banks, 2019). This was a reaction to the racial crisis in the United States which was exacerbated by the huge widening gap between the rich and the poor. Led by several scholars like Banks (2019), Gay (2018), and Sleeter (2017), the curriculum needed a paradigm shift to acknowledge the plurality and diversity of students which was perceived to be the obstacle to integration and upbringing the socioeconomic life of everybody. In fact, they lamented the increasingly disparate levels of the lack of progress on the quality of education and overall experiences that was being provided to the minorities and the poor students.

Then again from 1970s, another group of curricular theorists and reformers emerged known as the Reconceptualists (Kliebard, 2004). Lead by Schwab, Pinar, and Apple (2019), the Reconceptualists devised a curriculum in terms of thinking beyond the traditional approach. Their main focus was the understanding which may have occurred and the process of that ongoing understanding of the curriculum that is unique to every learner (Kliebard, 2004). They actually sought to drive wedge between theory and practice by suspending the instrumentalism intention of the curriculum.

Rationale

As seen above, scholars' critique of the U.S curriculum is not new. In fact, this has been a long standing issue since the early beginning of America (actually since the reconstruction era). Surprisingly till recently, the body of curricular reforms were not at the fore front to the issues of race, class, gender, or other forms of differences which was contrary to the original purpose

of public educational system, thus giving everybody an opportunity for a fair short at participating in social and economic welfare of the American democracy (Kliebard, 2004). Instead, the curriculum and its theory continued to disseminate hegemonic tendencies, alienating and privileging other folks and harming others especially minorities (Sleeter, 2017). However, although recent curricular trends of multiculturalism and reconceptualism have addressed the plight of minorities and poor students by thinking beyond the traditional approach, the plight for urban students, students at risk especially English language learners (ELLs) and immigrants has been explored in a more general and undifferentiated way (Lee, 2012, Goodwin, 2002 &Noguera, 2006). Thus why scholars, educators, and policy makers have been looking for a standard robust transformative curriculum for these particular student population (Sleeter, 2017; Lee, 2012; Darling & Hammond, 2005). Nonetheless, the call for complex and ambitions goals for curricular reforms and models which are transformative and pragmatic for 21st century students is crystal clear (Ball and Forzani, 2011; Banks, 2019; Sleeter, 2017).

Research Questions

This study seeks to contribute the body of research on the curriculum based on the narrative critical ethnography on which the researcher analyzed the transformative curriculum and how it was taught for a period of one full academic year in a high school setup. The study addresses the following research questions:

1. How did the Curriculum look like at Thomas Aquinas tenth grade Language Arts class over one school year?

2. What teaching support was implemented and how did it affect their overall learning outcomes?

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Relevant Immigrant Pedagogy as the Conceptual Framework

This research study is guided by the term "relevant immigrant pedagogy" as an umbrella concept which encompasses three educational theories: identity theory (Kroger, 2007; Taylor, 2002), sociocultural theory (Vygotsky, 1978) and self-efficacy theory (Bandura, 1977). These theories have informed my thinking about relevant pedagogy for immigrants and ELLs. They informed how I observed, analyzed, and conceptualized the curriculum, teacher-student interactions, student-student interactions, and the climate of the school. Together, they explained the essence of what relevant immigrant pedagogy was in this research study. By definition, relevant immigrant pedagogy serves as a vehicle linking curriculum, schooling, and culture for prompting students to engage in inquiry and reflectiveness (Berghoff, Blackwell &Wisehart, 2011). This is because their voices and the nature of their experiences are distinctively different from other students.

Identity Theory

Identity theory contends that each human being is unique because upon being born we are endowed with the ego, the id, and the superego. The ego is oriented externally, the id is oriented internally (intrapsychic), and the superego is neither externally nor internally oriented, thus has its own genetic roots and energy. These three balance one another and form who we are (identity). They are characterized by their unique process, they have their own pattern of development, and their own energy (epigenetic principle) (Kroger, 2007). In other words, all these form the self which is reflective and can take itself as a subject. The self can make meaning in many ways in relation to others, thus the process of self- identification (Kroger & Marcia,

2011; Taylor, 2002). Ultimately, the core of identity theory is the categorization of the self as an occupant of a position, the incorporation into the self of the meanings and expectations associated with that position and its performance (Kroger, 2007; Taylor, 2002).

Given this conception of identity, individuals neither solely adapt to the society nor does the society mold a human being (the self) into its pattern, but rather the society and the individual form a unity within which a mutual regulation takes place (Kroger & Marcia, 2011). For example, during growth, the ego goes through self-reconstructive processes to make itself strong for handling the tasks of development from within and outside itself, thus reformulating its essence. This means the person's identity is the same but a new self at the same time (Kroger, 2007).

This study is framed using identity theory because the self which is the essence of identity has four key components, "personal identity, personal esteem, collective identity and collective esteem" (Taylor, 2002, p. 11). These provide important foundations for the urban teachers and the curriculum prepared today in order to be effective. Inherent in this identity theory are conceptions that all teachers must be effective in teaching ELLs and immigrant students. Furthermore, understanding identity formation propels teachers to grapple with themselves as a cultural beings. As professionals, they also develop knowledge of their students, their strengths, their weaknesses, and their challenges and how they interact with the curriculum in order to connect well with their home situations (Banks, 2019). In other words, self-knowledge is the foundation of being a great teacher in a diverse urban environment because unexamined life could be a danger not only to students taught but also to individual growth and the profession (Taylor, 2002). Nonetheless, self-knowledge can broaden and deepen teachers understanding of other cultures, allow them to 'go inside themselves' and look at their preconceived notions and come to understand the cross-cultural experiences of the immigrants, the marginalized ethnic minorities, and realize their invisibility in the curriculum and ultimately become agents of change (Cavan, 2008). Similarly, through the underpinnings of identity theory, teachers will genuinely search for their authenticity which can enhance the development of their personal integrity and faithfulness to their call as teachers (Sleeter, 2017). In fact, teachers will come to know that teaching is not only an academic obligation, but also a moral one, since self-knowledge and self-awareness will help them to connect well with their personal and interpersonal wellbeing which in turn will have great effects on the way they build relationships with diverse students including immigrants (Delpit, 2006).

I believe that identity formation of teachers deepens their development of their own identity, culture, and how they interact with the curriculum thus, modeling their sense of belonging which is needed to be effective in their classroom. Correspondingly, teachers with a positive identity of themselves will transfer that to students who really need it in order to have the best educational experience. In the classroom, students care deeply about learning when they are confident that their contributions matter and the curriculum speaks to and about them (Taylor, 2002). I selected identity theory for this study as part of the definition of relevant immigrant pedagogy because the curriculum, classroom instructions, and interactions with dominant discourses perpetuate the status quo, thus oppressing the marginalized ELLs and immigrants which results in negative self-perceptions (Cavan, 2008).

Sociocultural Theory

Vygotsky's sociocultural theory contends that learning is a social process because it comes about through interaction with society and culture. That means social interaction is very critical for the development of cognition (Vygotsky, 1978). For this reason, sociocultural theory provide

an important framework in this inquiry because the external social world of teachers and the curriculum have impacted how they see the world and see students. Moreover, all human activities take place in cultural contexts, mediated by language, beliefs, values, and symbols, which must be systematically understood. In this way, it is imperative for the curriculum and its implementation be critical and display students' own sociocultural identities so that they come to realize the deep seated connection between the school systems and the society and how the curriculum continues to reproduce the social inequities that are alienating the marginalized low income students stratified in urban environments (Sleeter, 2017).

Furthermore, using Vygotsky's zones of proximal development (ZPD), urban teachers interaction with the curriculum could be inspired to provide the marginalized urban learners/immigrants/ELLs with scaffolding to support their evolving understanding of knowledge domains and development of complex skills (Sleeter, 2017). In other words, these teachers will learn to be experts in grasping that children learn from their interactions with the curriculum, society, and their culture and with proper assistance (scaffolding), they can learn even more. They will come to know that their roles are not to make students fit into the curriculum, but for the curriculum to fit into their culture, thus helping them connect the curriculum to their daily lived experiences outside the school environment (Cavan, 2008).

Self-efficacy Theory

The third theory incorporated into the definition of relevant immigrant pedagogy is the theory of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977). According to Bandura, self-efficacy connotes one's belief in his/her capabilities to organize and execute a planned action to manage prospective situations. This signifies that it is these personal beliefs, attitudes, and cognitive skills that determine how individuals behave, feel, and think. According to Bandura, it is not about a systematic planning for an action which matters but how goals, tasks, and challenges are approached. Individuals with a strong sense of self-efficacy look at difficult and challenging problems as mere tasks to be mastered and implemented. This attitude encourages them to develop a deeper interest and eventually form a stronger sense of commitment to get the job done. Additionally, when people with a stronger sense of self-efficacy meet adversities and disappointments, they usually recover quickly and keep progressing. However, the opposite is true for those with a weaker sense of self-efficacy. They tend to avoid difficult tasks, focus on their failures, and eventually lose confidence in their personhood and their abilities.

The researcher selected Bandura's self-efficacy theory as part of a larger definition of relevant immigrant pedagogy because hegemony operates through the control of the meaning and manipulation of ideas (Apple, 2019). Thus, the dominant ideologies in the curriculum which are considered real knowledge advance the same agenda, manipulating people's minds, hence recreating the same problems and yet expect a different result. So teachers' self-efficacy and their interaction with the curriculum matter. This is because their strong sense of self-efficacy will transfer their abilities, skills, and knowledge to urban students especially ELLs and immigrants. They have abilities to perform at a high level and may adopt new strategies to perform better and get a more positive outcome from their classes. In other words, teachers with a very high-self efficacy will incorporate the most effective ways of creating a strong sense of self-efficacy to their students through their mastery experiences (Bandura, 1977). In that way, it follows that students in their class develop and build robust beliefs in their personal efficacy and become academically successful.

An Overview of the Transformative Curriculum

The yearlong curriculum was arranged in four categories i.e., the civil rights movement from August to October end; Discussion on the American values from November to January end; District language acquisition prompts from February to April; and cultural artifacts and identity building activities to the end of the academic year. All these were typically explored in a form of short stories, essays, writing genres, drawing, movies, and writing about different characters.

The Civil Rights Movement

The first three months included short stories and essays about the Civil Rights Movement and Dr. Martin Luther King. Students were introduced to the concepts of civil rights and human rights, and explored why these are the essential components of being a human in a global social and economic society. To get started, students were provided selections of abstracts of the speech by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.at Washington D.C in 1963 from an online collection. They read and reflected on this and this is significant to them today. Additionally, they also read a text about the myths about enrolling immigrants from a book by Samway and McKeon (2007). Students discussed the myth: "Schools should ask for proof of citizenship, resident visas or social security numbers when enrolling second language (L2) students" (p. 9). Students debated this topic and then were asked to read the views of the 1982 Supreme Court ruling, Plyler v. Doe, 457 U.S. 202, that prohibited public schools from asking for documentation of any student's legal status. Then apart from other writing prompts given, students also had a chance to debate about the Syrian refugee crisis and how the world at large including the United States could do more to help. Apart from the essays written and put on the class walls, students also did a play to show to the public on their views and activism stand.

Discussions on the American Values

The second theme in the curriculum began with discussions of American values and reflecting on the following questions:

- How do literature and nonfiction texts reflect American values?
- What is the American Dream and how has it changed over time?
- In what ways does the American Dream mean different things for different people, and is it an achievable dream?

During the course of three months, students read the stories of among them the one on, The Uprooting of a Japanese-American Family by Yoshiko Uchida from the prescribed textbook (Hall, p. 536-544). They discussed reflected and wrote essays about this book. Additionally, students also read about the Japanese Internment camps in the 1940s and compared that experience with the Holocaust. Using these stories, students were able to develop critical views of American life, and have a sense of the historical social political nature of this nation.

District Language Acquisition Prompts

The school district provided prompts sporadically for schools to follow which are in line with the state testing board. However, much of the prompts were focused during the months before the final academic year. At the beginning of the Month of February, the curriculum focused on preparing students to take standardized tests. Students spent more than a week in training to respond to the district's writing prompts which included writing four to five paragraph essays with an introduction, body, and conclusion. They also were being prepared for the standardized assessments from the state. Then as month went by, students were encouraged to focus on writing, specifically writing to district prompts, including introductions and examples of figurative language. Students also completed a climate study project which was

embedded within their development of literacy skills. Then the curriculum emphasized on personification, characterization, and career explorations. For each of these topics, the teachers introduced essential vocabulary terms and explained the significance of the various literary devices and their appeal. Students were later asked to read passages and identify personifications, figurative languages, and characterizations. All these were to help students develop and grow in their literacy skills, able to communicate, and pass the standardized exams well.

Curriculum Based on Cultural Artifacts and Identity Building

The last two and half months of the academic year were dedicated teaching ethnic diversity and identity building. This was done through to plays, the elements of plays, and their significance as cultural artifacts. Teachers put forward three essential questions:

- What are the elements of a play?
- How can little decisions have big consequences?
- What evidence does the author use to convey tone? How does this affect the mood of the reader?

Teachers shared with students the different elements of the play like drama, comedy, theatre, stage authors, characters, settings, plot, dialogue, monologue, soliloquy, plot, and settings. Students watched a video biography of William Shakespeare and used their phones and computers to do a scavenger hunt page. They also did the same with Romeo and Juliet Scene 1 Act 1. Additionally, each and every lesson throughout was constructed to examine the influence of biases, experiences and perception of historians and researchers, thus how history was interpreted. Furthermore, on identity building, students were given a chance to do a research project about their culture, ethnicity, race and their values, and beliefs. They were given a chance to relate it to their experience in class and also what they are reading in class by pulling evidence from the texts. Then each of them was able to do a presentation to the whole class.

METHODS

Design

The researcher used a narrative critical ethnographic case study methodologies to investigate the impact of a newly implemented curriculum. Firstly, narrative inquiry captures the voices of those vulnerable people like ELLs and immigrants which have not been represented in historical writing (Clark, 2007). This research captured narratives of these participants who belong to the marginalized groups and provided a rare in depth understanding of their experiences and challenges and how their association with ahistorical nature of the curriculum was perceived to have an impact. At the same time, the study is based on critical ethnography because this type of ethnography is founded on a compelling sense of duty and commitment on principles of human dignity, social justice, compassion, and the well-being of others (Madison, 2012).

According to Carpecken (1996), critical ethnography deals with power structures thus exploring system relations by careful conceptualizing the curriculum, home life, schools life including the national mood. And lastly, it is a case study because according to Merriam (2012), a case study “is an intensive, holistic description, and analysis of a bounded phenomenon such as a program, an institution, a person, a process, or a social unit” (p. X). This study is specific to seven students from non-English speaking nations (immigrants) and struggling Ells and how the curriculum transformed them within a year in an urban high school setting.

Study Context and Data Sources

This research study took place during a full year academic cycle in a large urban high school tenth grade that followed a traditional calendar. The school was within five miles of downtown of a large Midwestern city. It was one of several high schools in the school district which spans a large urban geographical area. The population in this school district was very urban, with huge housing disparities, mostly low-income people with very few upscale apartments. The southern and northern boundaries of the district are bordered with more affluent wealthy suburban districts. At the time of this study, the school served students from grades 7 to 12 with an enrollment of 1,210 students. Of these, 60 percent identified as Black, 20 percent identified as Hispanic, 13 percent identified as White, 4 percent identified as Multiracial, and 3 percent identified as Asian. Among this group of students, 13 percent identified as English Language Learners (ELLs), with 71 percent of students participating in a free or reduced-price lunch program (State Department of Education, 2015).

For many years, this urban high school has been trying to cope with typical urban problems like excessive indiscipline, a high dropout rate, bullying, and very low academic performance especially for English language learners and immigrants. According to the State Department of Education (2015), the school's overall performance grade in 2014-2015 was a low D. Only 37 percent of students from the school enrolled in college immediately after high school graduation compared to the state average of 64 percent. Additionally, this school had 69 percent of graduates who needed remediation or help in strengthening basic skills, while the state average was 31 percent. It was a requirement for every student at the school to take a test after completing English 10. Students had to pass this end-of-course test required by the state to graduate from high school. In the four years before this study, as few as one out of ten students passed this end-of-course test and the pass rate was even worse for English Language Learners and immigrants ([State] Department of Education, 2015). The school district administration tried to disrupt this pattern of failure by implementing a pacing guide, prescribed curriculum, and multiple practice tests, but these measures had been largely ineffective. At the beginning of the school-year of this study, the school administration decided to try something new, a co-teaching arrangement for English language arts 10 with a more critical and robust curriculum.

English language arts grade 10 was special to the researcher because it had more 40 students who were from different nations (non-English immigrants) and some ELLs (native born but speak one or two languages at home), and general urban students. This class had students from Iraq, Africa, Mexico, Burma, Vietnam, and many more, which touched the core of this project. Seven students were chosen for this study along with their two classroom teachers. These two teachers were both in their third year at this school, and were graduates from a mid-western urban university. One teacher was highly qualified with English as a Second Language (ESL) and foreign language expertise with a master's degree and the other one was English/Language Arts (ELA) certified with a bachelor's degree. The two teachers were applying a more robust curriculum newly recommended in this tenth grade which was required for graduation.

Therefore, data for this study included curriculum documents like the resources, and physical artifacts obtained from the school district and also the two participating teachers. They included lesson plans, progress grades, and teacher's journal reflections. Additionally, the researcher had fifteen classroom observations with audio recording and field notes. Furthermore, the researcher had in depth seven semi-structured open interviews with the two participating teachers which lasted approximately 90 minutes that were audio-recorded and

transcribed within 24 hours. And lastly, the researcher did four preset focus-group interviews with students involved on separate dates that were transcribed so they could be coded and analyzed.

Data Analysis

The bulk of data analysis was conducted using the interactive model by Miles and Huberman (1994) and the research questions. Data was analyzed from the original documents, transcribed audiotapes, interviews, and focus groups developed themes and coded.

Miles and Huberman (1994) developed a comprehensive interactive model of analyzing data that assists the researcher to reflect and explore a visual reference on how data can be safeguarded, tracked, and tackled. These components were data collection, data reduction, data display, and verification and conclusion drawing. For example, following the components of the interactive model, the analysis of each collected data followed the process of data reduction, data display, and verifying and drawing conclusions. The data reduction phase from the interviews and all other sources were simplified and organized into more easily manageable components over three phases. In the first phase, thus level one, the interview was transcribed (Merriam, 2009). In this phase, significant information was noted (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Then each sentence or group of sentences were examined and given a label with a descriptive name.

Next data was simplified further through phase two or second level coding process. In this aspect, the first level descriptive codes were merged into similar coded units and form categories, and these categories were given another pertinent label (Merriam, 2009; Miles & Huberman, 1994). In this sense, the researcher did line by line coding and clustering the themes together. Then eventually sought to further simplify the data with the third level, or phase three, coding in which similar conceptual themes are further merged and given a more abstract conceptual label (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).

Miles and Huberman's data display embodies mapping out phase two and phase three categories on a chart in a simplified form. This chart displays how the categories are situated and show their relationships to each other (Merriam, 2009). Then, key themes were identified from each data, developed patterns, and merged them. The concluding phase of coding drew merged concluding themes from interviews, focus groups, documents and compared them across (triangulated), and offered propositions from the themes that emerged (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Then, the researcher also used NVivo (version 9) to organize and synthesize emerging themes.

FINDINGS

Utilizing the robust transformative curricular concepts presented and teaching support students received over the course of the academic school year, the researcher considered three patterns emerging from the data: a) curriculum which led to tremendous growth in their construction of self and identity, b) critical robust curriculum which made their progress to being fully effective and future community members, c) the teaching with effective language support, technology integration, and proper mentoring made space for student thinking.

Curriculum Led to Tremendous Growth in Students' Construction of Self and Identity

In general, the curriculum had tremendous impact on the growth of students over the course of the year. They grew in their construction of self and identity. They developed a set of beliefs and values and saw their environment in a new way with new prospects (sociocultural understanding). Students also grew in their self-esteem and came to believe more in

themselves, their dignity and worth, and became determined visionaries (self-efficacy). As evidenced during the third focus group interview, one student expressed the following sentiment which was a general impression for all of them:

I feel like that I have grown and I am different this time. I am a dynamic individual. I have changed in my thinking about life, I have grown in knowledge and I now know that I have power to contribute something in this class, this school, the community around and even beyond. I think I now know myself better than before. My classmate, my teachers, and the school community and learning prompts have made me grow and believe more in myself. I was shy at the beginning of this year and had very few friends but now I have many friends and I feel happy. (Focus group Transcript, January, 2016).

Critical Robust Curriculum which Made Their Progress to Being Fully Effective and Future Community Members

The English 10 class also became a community of learners because each one of them did their part. The curriculum and instruction included sharing stories about problems immigrants and ELLs face. At the beginning of the year, there were sporadic tensions between nonimmigrants and immigrants in the class, but it was significant to note how students eventually began to champion for their classmates. Through sharing, students realized that it requires great personal sacrifice to leave ones native home. They developed empathy for one another, care, and social action awareness for community activism in order to give back to the community. The climate and overall learning experiences transformed the students not to fear diversity but embrace it with dignity, confidence, and pride. As the result, they came to be dedicated to value sociocultural differences and developed a class project of advocacy for others.

Academically, students' learning growth became evident virtually across the spectrum through bumps on their grades. They discovered that education was the key to their lives and worked hard and achieved good grades. They became open to scaffolding by their teachers and help from others in class. For example, Arturo, who was an ELL-Second Generation Immigrant Student acknowledged that despite his struggles and disability status, he was progressing well. He worked hard and was determined. With his job and ambition to go for heating, ventilation and air cooling (HVAC) training, he knew that he needed to work hard and obtain a high school diploma. From mid semester, he began attending tutoring twice a week in order to improve his grades. He even stopped playing soccer which he liked so that he could do well. His progress report showed improvement. He had an F in September, C- in October, C+ in November, B in December and ended up in B+ at the end of the year. This was a good sign which was the fruit of his hard work and resilience.

Teaching with Effective Language Support, Technology Integration, and Proper Mentoring Made Space for Student Thinking

As individuals, students made progress toward being fully effective students and future community members. With effective language support, technology integration, and proper mentoring embedded into the curriculum, students became engaged and motivated. They became critical thinkers and developed from less confident individuals to confident people capable of being successful and becoming self-reliant. For example, the18 year old Julissa who emigrated from Honduras was very shy and withdrawn during our first focus group interview. By then, she expressed that she was not sure of going to college and wanted to work at the amusement park as an attendant. Nevertheless, after learning about the civil rights and the tough text units in the curriculum, she seemed to be animated and increasingly became more

assertive. During the fourth focus group interview, I asked her how she thought the curriculum was helping her self-esteem, and self-concept and she replied, “Yes, she was growing”. She related most to the units on characterization; speeches of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and the civil rights movement. And this is what she actually said:

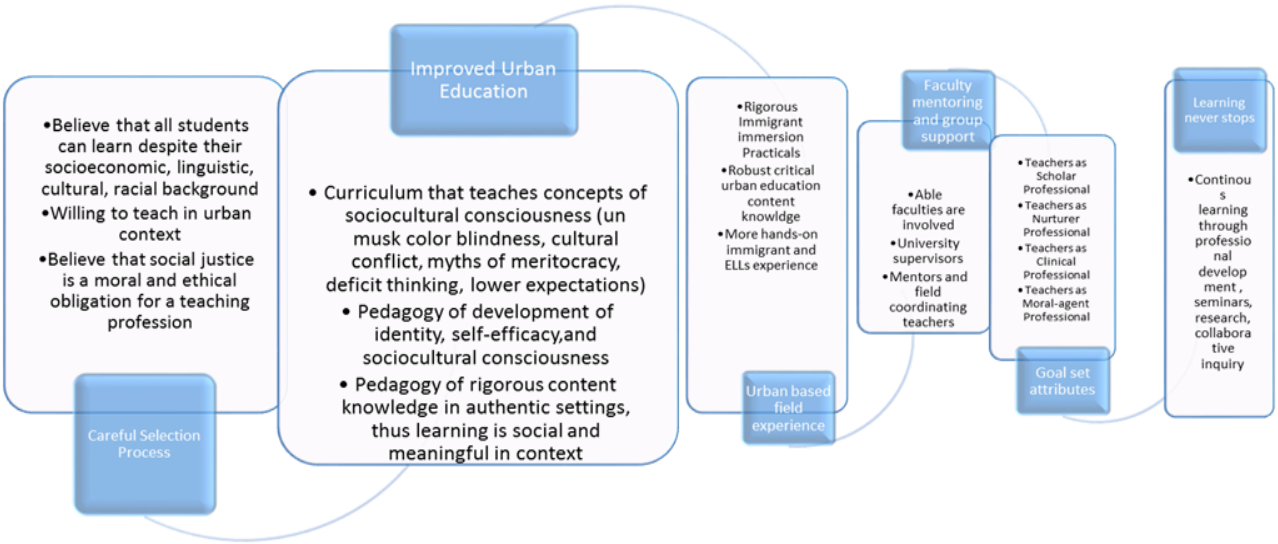
I learned more about what I can do as a human being, my dignity, my human rights, my civil rights, and how I can step up for myself and for others. I gotten a new perspective on how to get what I want which I felt was not possible before. I have grown and would like go to college and become a psychologist so that I can help people with mental illness. I have learned more from my teachers who are calm, compassionate, and confident in their abilities in dealing with me, sharing these values through personal reflections and assignment. I have learned more about American politics, values, and even world politics which have opened my eyes. (Focus group transcript, March, 2016).

DISCUSSION

The results show how transformative this curriculum has been to students within one academic year. Based on narrative critical ethnography, the study captured the voices and narratives of the marginalized groups and provided a rare in-depth understanding of their experiences and challenges. Ultimately, their voices here became the source of social power bearing in mind that critical ethnography is founded on a compelling sense of duty and commitment on principles of human dignity, social justice, compassion and the well-being of others (Madison, 2012). Through observation and analysis for patterns in relation to internal and external influences, listening to their voices in focus groups, and teacher interviews, the findings suggest that the curriculum transformed them to believe more in their dignity and worth (construction of identity and self), became determined to achieve excellency in their lives (academic resiliency), and were drawn to the commitment of advocacy and activism.

Based on their narrative critical analysis, students were transformed not only emotionally, technologically, or in their linguistic abilities, but broadened their inner and outer concept of what it means to be successful in the United States today despite the social political upheavals. The curriculum which included effective language support, technology integration, and proper mentoring, motivated them to be more engaged community members. They developed from less confident individuals to confident people capable of being successful and becoming self-reliant. They understood the need to be aware that they were active agents in the learning process who should be eager to shape their own learning experiences and overall growth. That meant the knowledge, skills, and experiences they obtained needed to be used to educate others and the community as well. Of special significance is that all students had their grades trending upward from September to the end of the school academic year and hence all passed their high school diploma.

Figure 1: Toward a Transformative Curriculum Model for 21st Century Teaching and Learning



Careful Selection Process

I agree with Apple (2019) who said that effective curriculum should be rethought in terms of unequal relations of power in larger society and conflicts that are generated by these relations. Moreover, rather than asking whether students have mastered concepts, the curriculum should reconceptualize and critically ask: Whose knowledge is more worth? How did this knowledge become official or legitimate? Who is the beneficially of this and who is not? And of course, how can we transform the landscape and create a more socially just and transformative curriculum? As a researcher, my answers are careful selection process.

That means, effective transformative curriculum should follow Milner's views (2010) that include relevant conceptual repertoires of diversity. The curriculum must unmask the assertion of color blindness, cultural conflict, myths of meritocracy, deficient thinking, and low expectations which are prevalent. The curriculum should emphasize the belief that all students are capable learners and at the same time, social justice is a moral and ethical obligation in a teaching profession.

Improved Urban Education

Many scholars throughout the U.S history have a peculiar view of the curriculum and its theory in practice. They envisioned the curriculum as a black box where one calculates the input and output and what happens when entering the black box is of no concern (Apple, 2019; Sleeter, 2017). For the progressive educators, this aspect was known as the problem of indoctrination. (Apple, 2019, p. 27). This curriculum model would analyze inside the box by embodying two aspects of pedagogy: pedagogy of formation of identity, self-efficacy, and sociocultural development; and pedagogy of enactment in authentic settings and rigorous content knowledge (Dewey, 1964; McDonald, Kazemi, & Kavanagh, 2013). I believe that programs must help students develop self-awareness, self-esteem, and confidence, including their sociocultural development as future citizens (Danielewicz, 2014). Furthermore, programs should be built on rigorous relevant content area knowledge and the ability to transfer those skills and aspirations to workplaces (McDonald, Kazemi& Kavanagh, 2013).

Urban Based Field Experiences

Relevant Immigrant Pedagogy embodies Critical Race Theory because it aligns with race as a way of understanding social inequities that exist in the society (Delpit, 2006; Noguera, 2006). Urban oriented curriculum is the most viable vehicle to challenge dominant ideologies that allow students with traditionally marginalized social group membership as well as those with dominant membership expand their understanding of reality (Apple, 2019). In order to bridge this gap, urban based field experiences matter. Research has revealed that field experiences have successfully been able to build bridges between theory and practice for recent graduating teachers who have become more effective in their practices (Sleeter, 2017). Moreover, according to Milner (2012), field experiences have become more effective and developmental when aligned to course content. That means, the more the curriculum exposes students to a rigorous practicum immigrant preparatory experience, the better they have been transformed as individuals.

Faculty Mentoring and Group Support Net-work

The fourth component of the model involves a comprehensive support network from faculty mentors. Literature has revealed the correlation between being an effective urban teacher for the first five years and continued mentoring and professional support throughout (Garret & Holcomb, 2005). The notion of mentoring denotes the ongoing affair where teachers are assisted to reach out to others, gain knowledge and experience of how to work with diverse students especially immigrants in theory and practice. The two teachers in this study had a mentoring program as part of the transformative curriculum to help them get the job done. Through mentoring program curricular model, teachers realized that teaching is a public good which prepare diverse generations to live in a socially just society. Mentors help impart special skills to teachers through ongoing support, follow-ups, and refine their relationship skills, attitudes, and rapport to students (Milner, 2010).

Ideal Teacher Goal-set Attributes

Banks (2019) made a distinction between curriculum infusion and curriculum transformation whereby in infusion, students view the experiences of other cultural groups as outsiders thus mainly through Eurocentric eyes, while transformative curriculum occurs when students and teachers make a paradigm shift and view the world and American values from a different perspective. Thus in line with my model. The ideal curriculum should prepare teachers who are well prepared as scholars' professional, nurturer professional, the clinician professional and moral agent-professionals (Dewey, 1964; Sockett, 2009). As scholar professionals, urban teachers are prepared with robust urban educational principles of both pedagogical knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge (Cavan, 2008).

As nurturer professionals, teachers are there to care, nurture, and bring rapport to the vulnerable and disfranchised urban students, immigrants, and ELLs and know that their role is also to advocate (Villegas, 2007). As a clinical professional, urban teachers understand that public teachers in a democratic society must work toward critical reflectivity and social justice. Their ideal character is founded on their strong belief that knowledge assumptions, truths, beliefs and integrity must be based and guarded through rigorous collaborative research (Sockett, 2009). And lastly as moral agents, the curriculum should model teachers as well-prepared individuals who are defenders of moral integrity and integrate academic and moral virtues in class for exemplary development and growth of kids in class as good citizens of the globe. And lastly, the curriculum should display to both teachers and students that learning never stops (Berghoff, Blackwell &Wisehart, 2011).

CONCLUSION

This research on the "Far Reaching Impact of Transformative Curriculum" is a humble beginning which has so far been productive. Many scholars, educators, and policy makers have been looking for a standard robust transformative curriculum for these particular student population for a century, perhaps since the reconstruction era (Dewey, 1964, Sleeter, 2017). Above all, teacher educators are challenged to prepare candidates to learn to enact responsive teaching practices. The proposed transformative curriculum would equip new urban teachers with appropriate tools, skills, and best practices for supporting immigrants, ELLs, and the marginalized urban students in their unique learning challenges in order to function well in the American social, economic, and political environment.

Limitations and Future Recommendations

In this study, I would like to emphasize that this narrative critical ethnography case study was not designed to generalize all immigrants from non-English speaking countries and ELLs, nor to exemplify them against all other minority groups. However, it was intended to provide a snapshot of these students were transformed not only emotionally, technologically, or in their linguistic abilities, but broadened their inner and outer concept of what it means to be successful in the United States today despite the political upheavals through a very strategic and scientifically curriculum. However, further exploration is needed to see if the same could be true to one specific immigrant group like Asians or Africans in the another location other than the Midwestern urban context in which this research was conducted. Finally, while this study was specific to immigrants and ELLs, the author did not specify their immigrant statuses like refugee, HB-1 visa, etc. The researcher was warned at the research site not to disclose or explore students' immigration status. Therefore, any analysis of the impact of student's immigration status was not in this study, even though such information might have added insight into ways to improve the curriculum for these at-risk students and reduce disparities in school systems.

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