

Introduction

Patrick J. Finn and Mary E. Finn

TEACHER EDUCATORS USUALLY ESCAPE THE intense public scrutiny and criticism to which classroom teachers, principals, school board members, parents, and students are subjected when high-stakes test results are announced. Free-market ideologues, however, continue their maneuvers to reduce the power and influence of traditional routes to teacher certification through teacher education programs in colleges and universities. Conservatives call for more liberal arts and science involvement in teacher education programs, which in itself is not a bad idea. But the old saw that all one needs to be a good teacher is a good grounding in one of the arts or sciences continues to be floated, even though traditionally certified teachers who have graduated from higher education-based programs consistently outperform those who are on emergency certificates, or who have gone through alternative programs (Darling-Hammond 2000; Wayne & Young, 2003).

Teacher education critics on the left complain about the emphasis many teacher education programs place on subject area methods courses; however, they would replace them with cultural studies, social theory, and courses on multiculturalism, antiracism, and social class (Giroux, 1997). These subjects have much to recommend them, but they are not always well received by school practitioners who are looking for more immediate ways to cope with extraordinary challenges, and whose efforts are being graded F and labeled underperforming, or worse, on the front pages of local newspapers and in state and national reports.

Some urban districts with many underperforming schools, desperate for better test scores and the funding tied to them, are developing their own teacher preparation programs. Others, frustrated with the inability of graduates of teacher education programs to provide the desired results, are looking outside traditional university-based programs altogether for the help their teachers need. Textbook companies are only too happy to supply professional development for teachers in districts that buy their books. Their practical how-to workshops make it relatively easy for teachers to use the teacher-proof materials that program developers and publishers promise will improve students' test results. Charter and voucher-supported schools often hire people to teach who have had none of the above training, frequently with discouraging results.

Teacher educators, however, can't be held accountable for the products of their programs without some sense of the standards by which parents, students, school districts, and taxpayers can evaluate their efforts. For the authors of articles in this volume, whether they prepare teachers in undergraduate or graduate programs or through professional development activities, that standard is how well teacher educators prepare teachers to educate working-class students in their collective self-interest. The students to whom we refer are usually found in urban, rural, and first-ring working-class suburban schools. Their parents, guardians, and families may be the working poor; they may be consistently under- or unemployed, or they may have moved up economically as a result of labor union benefits, but they still identify culturally as working class. They may be native, white, black, Hispanic, or from a multitude of immigrant groups.

Preparing social justice teachers for these classrooms is a challenging job, given the difficult time economically under-resourced families have in supporting their children's education, as well as the social class, ethnic, racial, linguistic, geographical, and cultural differences between many urban teachers and their students. The racial and social class achievement gap is often attributed to these differences, and many education reforms, such as standards and high-stakes testing, claim to address them. These reforms have only illuminated the problems, however; they have not solved them.

DEMOCRACY AND EDUCATION: DEWEY AND FREIRE

We believe that not enough attention has been paid to the advice John Dewey (1933) gave educators seventy years ago, when he argued that the educator's relation to the social problems of the day, the "crisis in education" produced by the Great Depression, was not that of an outsider. He warned teachers they needed to remove "the illusion many of them have entertained—that their vocation and vocational interests are so distinctive, so separated from that of other wage earners and salaried persons as to justify them in an attitude of aloofness" (Dewey, 1933, p. 386). Solving the crisis in education, he said, requires seeing an identity of interest between educators, farmers, and factory workers. Teachers are workers who must recognize their part in the community of interest they share with other workers, all of whom are "genuine producers of social necessities." Once this community of interest is recognized, he urged educators to form "an alliance in sympathy and action" to break down the "moral barriers which now divide teachers from members of other groups and make the latter more or less suspicious of them" (Dewey, 1933, p. 388).

Finding solutions to the problems of economic imbalance must be done by people "who understand one another and sympathize with one another," according to Dewey (1933, p. 389). Educators will not have a share in solving social problems unless they break down "personal remoteness and indifference as to the things they have in common [with other workers] . . . and have ceased to think of their interest being separate or exclusively linked with those

of purely professional groups” (p. 390). To closely connect “with actual social responsibility” in solving social problems, educators must start with their work in their schools:

Teachers [need] to assert themselves more directly about educational affairs . . . in both the internal conduct of the schools by introducing a greater amount of teacher responsibility in administration, and outside in relation to the public and the community. The present dictation of policies for schools by bankers and other outside pecuniary groups is more than harmful to the cause of education. It is also a pathetic and tragic commentary on the lack of social power by the teaching force. (Dewey, 1933, p. 390)

Social justice teacher educators, whose ideas and experiences are included in this volume, strive in various ways to prepare teachers with social power and social responsibility. They are aware that their views and their acts will cause some to accuse them of politicizing education. But in rebuttal, they argue that education is inherently political; it either reinforces the status quo by reproducing the existing hierarchy of social and economic relationships, or it offers a new vision of society, a revitalized democratic vision (Singer & Pezone, 2003, p. 1). They know education either domesticates students or liberates them.

Social justice teacher educators prepare teachers to strengthen democracy through education by helping them develop “critical consciousness,” Freire’s (1973) term for the will to address society’s injustices and inequities. Freire, like Dewey, wants “students to become ‘agents of curiosity’ in a ‘quest for . . . the why of things,’” but Freire is more direct than Dewey in stating that this educational goal “can only be achieved when students are engaged in explicitly critiquing social injustice and actively organizing to challenge oppression . . .” (Singer & Pezone, 2003, pp. 2–3). This translates into education for understanding and challenging the government’s social, political, and economic policy decisions that have such a negative impact on working families. At least one urban district superintendent believes that achievement scores would go up if the minimum wage were raised, a major goal of organized labor today.

The potential role in teacher preparation of organized labor, historically the most potent force in challenging the hierarchical social structure and championing the cause of working families, however, has largely been ignored, even by those who acknowledge that American schools continue to reproduce society’s social and economic status quo. One basis for collaboration between progressive teacher educators and progressive labor is the fact that many in both camps consider themselves either to be disciples of Paulo Freire or at least are interested in incorporating aspects of his ideas, such as the role of critical consciousness, into their educational work.

The road to critical consciousness follows various paths, and each author in this volume has taken his or her own route based on a variety of experiences

and inspirations. Not all use the language of Freire and Dewey. Some are more comfortable with Vygotsky (1978), Dorothy Day (1952), or Saul Alinsky (1946, 1971), but these different roads lead to the same end task: preparing critical teachers; that is, teachers who understand, and help their students understand, the inequities and injustices of the social and economic power structure, and who actively collaborate with their students and others to change the economic and educational policies that keep the hierarchical structure in place.

Social justice teacher educators know this understanding cannot be derived from lectures or readings alone. They also provide experiences that help teachers acquire new information and test old theories, and they offer opportunities to reflect on the experiences, individually and in groups, that build a sense of community and allow for dialogue among equals. Providing teachers with opportunities to experience inquiry, reflection, community, and dialogue around issues of social justice makes explicit the powerful analytic/critical thinking and literacy skills their students need “to read the word and to read the world” (Freire, 1970). These experiences also help teachers recognize they have a social responsibility to act on their new knowledge and understanding—to connect their practice to their theory. Social justice teachers prepared in the undergraduate and graduate teacher education and professional development programs, described in this volume, develop their own educational and political power and agency alongside their students. They see schools as sites of struggle for democracy and urge their students to direct their attitude toward outcomes that are in their collective self-interest.

SOCIAL CLASS IN AMERICA: IS OUR DEMOCRACY IN DANGER?

Forty-five percent of Americans identify as working class, a larger percentage than might be expected in a society that has historically downplayed social class distinctions (Linkon, 1999, 2003; Russo & Linkon, 2005). This self-identified social group no doubt includes a fairly wide range of incomes and net worth, and probably an even wider range of definitions of working class. Michael Zweig (2004), an economist at SUNY Stony Brook, defines class as based on power, the power to make decisions on the job, and not on income alone. So “a truck driver is working class but a truck driver who owns his own rig is an independent contractor and is therefore middle class. By this measure . . . 62 percent of the country’s workforce is actually working class” (Cunningham, 2004, p. 3).

Janet Zandy (2001), a cultural studies professor at the University of Rochester, defines class more collectively, as “seeing individual identities in relation to others. . . . Class defined in collective terms as shared economic circumstances and shared social and cultural practices in relation to positions of power means more than the absence or presence of things.” She urges educators to “decloak” class and make it visible in “Disney-saturated America.” As a working-class professor in an institution of higher education, Zandy claims that even if “we’ve climbed a bit, we may still inherit certain values,

attitudes, shared histories, uses of language and even bodily postures” that separate working-class professors from the middle-class sensibilities that pervade institutions of higher education. As a result, working-class faculty seldom call attention to or celebrate their working-class backgrounds (Zandy, 2001, pp. 247–279).

This tendency to ignore class affects the education received by the students in these institutions, including those preparing to become teachers. Ignoring class means that what is valued as academic knowledge is determined “by the interests of the ruling white elite”—corporate leaders who define what students “need to learn to get jobs in the new technological world order so they can become part of the global ‘knowledge elite.’” Business interests are represented “as an all pervasive reality”; labor stories don’t count. Zandy urges progressives and working-class educators to fight for the power to “construct, reconstruct, remember, reinvent, rediscover, reconnect, and struggle for the knowledge that belongs to the majority of people, the working class” (Zandy, 2001, p. 249).

Bill Fletcher, a labor activist in Chicago, says class is ignored in K–12 schools as well as in institutions of higher education. “Class is generally not discussed in schools. If it comes up, it is brief, and usually in the context of comments such as, ‘Oh yea, by the way, there’s a labor movement.’ But there is rarely any discussion of the psychological impact of class” (Peterson, 1999a, p. 119). For Fletcher, a good way to get the subject of social class on the table in schools is for teachers unions “to demand regular training programs or institutes” in these issues:

Teachers help to shape the minds of the future generation. One important role is [to] help build awareness about unions and the labor movement. Some teachers don’t want to talk to their students about unions; they see it as somehow unethical and misusing their position. That’s ridiculous. Teachers need to help sow the seeds of the future of unionism. (Peterson, 1999a, p. 119)

Social class historian Howard Zinn agrees: “The history of labor struggles in this country is one of the most dramatic of any country in the world . . . [but] the history of working people and the labor movement is not taught in this country. It’s not in the school books and it’s not in the mass media. So workers are unaware of past labor struggles, and this can have a debilitating effect” (Peterson, 1999b, p. 73). “If teacher unions want to be strong and well-supported it’s essential that they not only be *teacher unionists* but *teachers of unionism*” (p. 76) (emphasis mine).

To those who ask if all this talk of class will lead to class war, Bill Moyers answers: “Class war was declared a generation ago . . . [when] William Simon, who was soon to be Secretary of the Treasury . . . called on the financial and business class, in effect, to take back the power and privilege they had lost in

the depression and the New Deal.” This class answered Simon’s call “to trash the social contract” and to “starve the beast,” that is, the government and what remains of the New Deal programs such as Social Security. According to Warren Buffet: “My class won” the class war, with the result that the gap in wealth between the top 20 percent and the bottom 20 percent, which in 1960 was 30-fold, by 2000 was 75-fold (Moyers, 2004).

Jean Anyon (2002, 2005) argues that educators may have more success in the classroom if they focus on developing a “new civil rights movement,” one that demands changes in the federal government’s economic policy that, over the past thirty years, has created the enormous number of urban families in poverty, while at the same time, drastically increased the wealth of the ruling elites. One of her examples is the minimum wage, which was “higher between 1940 and 1970 than it was in 2000 (all in 2000 dollars)” (Anyon, 2005, p. 30).

Other recent economic statistics reinforce Anyon’s point. To put the Bush tax breaks into perspective, the average worker takes home \$517 a week and gets about \$400 a year in tax breaks. The average CEO takes home \$155,769 a week (United for a Fair Economy, 2004) and in 2003 alone received well over \$50,000 in new tax breaks (Citizens for Tax Justice, 2003). In 1980, the ratio of CEO pay to average worker compensation was 41:1; in 2002 it was 531:1, a situation New York’s Attorney General Eliot Spitzer calls “insane” (Buffalo News, 5/27/04).

The decades-long connection between economic status and education has been well documented (Bowles and Gintis, 1976). What demands attention today, and what verifies Moyer’s account of the current class warfare, is indicated in these 1999 statistics:

If you are in the top economic quarter of the population, your children have a 76 percent chance of getting through college and graduating by age 24. . . . If you’re in the bottom quarter, however, the figure is 4 percent. . . . In 1979, it was 27 percent. . . . (Howey and Post, 2002, p. 267)

In addition, in 2003, 35 percent of students from families with less than \$25,000 annual income attended college, while 80 percent of those from families with more than \$75,000 annual income did. Even among top achievers, “only 78 percent from low-income families [with high test scores] . . . attend college—about the same as the 77 percent of rich kids who rank at the bottom academically” (Symonds, 2003, p. 68). This means that if you have high test scores and are poor you have about the same chance of attending college as if you have low test scores but are wealthy.

We conclude that teachers being prepared to educate children in urban public schools should receive instruction in topics such as tax and wage policy, its impact on their students’ families, and on their ability to increase their

students' academic achievement. Not much has changed in teacher preparation on this topic, however, since 1941 when Counts and Brameld said:

The evidence is conclusive that most teachers are not themselves informed, consistent, or clear-minded about the crucial issues of social, economic, and political life. Their views, too largely, are the reflection of [individualist] folkways and mores which are wholly incompatible with the realities of the present [interdependent] world. (Counts and Brameld, 1941, p. 257)

While this discussion focuses on the impact of class on education, it is also important to acknowledge the way class intersects with race and ethnicity in educational outcomes. Howey and Post (2002) note: "Contemporary American schools remain sharply segregated not only by race but also by social class. Unfortunately, these factors are too often highly correlated." They cite Orfield's (1997) study, which shows that 5 percent of segregated white schools "face conditions of concentrated poverty contrasted with an astounding 80 percent of segregated black and Latino schools" (Howey and Post, 2002, p. 256). While African-American and Hispanic minorities represent 28 percent of all 18-year-olds, only "12 percent of freshmen classes at the nation's top 146 colleges" are from this group (Symonds, 2003, p. 68). If the other top colleges are like Harvard, a large proportion of the African-American minorities will be blacks from Africa or the Caribbean, not products of the U.S. schools with concentrated poverty that Orfield studied (New York Times, 2004, p. 1).

However, class trumps race in nearly every statistic that Rothstein (2004) cites to describe the racial achievement gap; that is, poverty explains almost all of the difference in test scores between majority and minority students. It does not mean that the prejudice and discrimination of racism experienced by African-Americans and other minorities is any less devastating. There are numerous advantages to being white in this society, no matter what one's social class. But when it comes to statistically teasing out the factors that contribute to school success in terms of scores on standardized tests, social class accounts for most of the differences between white and black students; that is, poor students are at the bottom of this heap no matter what their race (Rothstein, 2004, pp. 51–56).

Social class and race clearly matter to educators, but there has been a profound disconnect between the desire to remedy the negative social and educational consequences of these differences and the development of practices that might really address the problem. Teacher educators must accept responsibility for their role in this continuing failure by putting social, political, and especially economic policy topics high on their teacher preparation agenda. Without direct intervention at this higher education level, schools will continue to reproduce the social and economic status quo. If we are to honor our

democratic heritage, then the remedy is preparing social justice teachers whose attitude is that the social and economic power structure is unjust and needs to be changed.

While each chapter in this volume is based in theory, at our request, each author has limited the amount of space devoted to theory in order to make their findings, their experiences, and what they have learned, as accessible to the reader as possible. The papers are organized into four parts: (1) Addressing Issues of Class, Race, and Culture; (2) Social Justice Teacher Education in Undergraduate Courses; (3) Social Justice Teacher Education in Graduate School; and (4) Social Justice Teacher Education through Professional Development. The title of the concluding chapter is For Further Thought.

PART I. ADDRESSING ISSUES OF CLASS, RACE, AND CULTURE

To prepare teachers who understand that their personal and professional self-interest is intimately tied to the well-being of the families whose children they teach, teacher education programs need to acknowledge that in today's highly interrelated society, everyone's self-interest is best served when the well-being of the whole society is considered. "An owie to one is an owie to all."¹ For teachers who are being prepared to teach in urban schools, this translates into understanding the way the government's social, political, and economic policies impact children of working families, and why Freirean pedagogy is a good cure for what ails urban schools and society.

Teachers can acquire the social power to make government policies more democratic through closer connections with the families of their students and with the communities in which they teach. Preparing teachers with social responsibility and the skills to form powerful connections and alliances in the interest of their students, requires a type of teacher preparation that is different from what is most typical today. The following discussions of social class, culture, race, and labor and community organizing offer several possibilities for such preparation. They also provide background for the chapters in the rest of this volume.

Patrick Finn provides an overview of his earlier book, *Literacy with an Attitude: Educating Working-Class Children in Their Own Self-Interest* (1999) and describes the sort of teacher education program he believes can prepare teachers with the attitude that all children can acquire powerful literacy in their collective self-interest. Many of the papers in this volume refer to Finn's (1999) book, and all of them contain ideas and suggestions consistent with the need to consider the role of social class and culture in teachers' education. Susan Schurman explains the Frierean, popular education foundations of the National Labor College that strives to develop critical consciousness in labor educators and organizers and suggests a model for preparing social justice teachers. Alex Caputo-Pearl, Kahllid Al-Alim, and Frances Martin describe how to translate social justice theory into practice through the Coalition for Educational Justice, where students, parents, and teachers organize social change campaigns to address the inequities they face.

PART II. SOCIAL JUSTICE TEACHER EDUCATION
IN UNDERGRADUATE COURSES

With few exceptions, we can say confidently that teachers do not want to domesticate their students. The problem is that far too many prospective teachers don't know what that means, or that it's possible to teach differently from what they personally experienced. So social justice teacher educators emphasize the social, political, and cultural contexts of teaching and learning, topics that are too often slighted in the rush to prepare new teachers with methods of covering content. And they provide hands-on experiences to contextualize the new learning. Combined with reflection through journals and dialogue in groups, these experiences help prospective teachers learn how to bring down the barriers between them and their students, and to recognize and value their differences of class, culture, and race. They can then act to counter the inequities built into the social and economic power structure by replacing domesticating education with powerful education.

Gillian Richardson and Rosemary Murray lead their undergraduate students from middle-class suburbs through a "research theory, experience, dialogue, action cycle" in order to help them develop critical reflection about themselves and their role as urban educators. Dennis Shirley describes the difficulties and rewards of organizing diverse communities to demand school reform. The teacher education programs that participate in the Massachusetts Coalition for Teacher Quality and Student Achievement, which he directs, prepare teachers to engage in their students' communities in an effort to promote such organizing. Rosalie Romano's undergraduate students, typically underinformed about the political, economic, and social class nature of educational reality, learn to see their students and their role as teachers differently through their experiences in a service learning course that includes Freirean theater exercises.

PART III. SOCIAL JUSTICE TEACHER EDUCATION
IN GRADUATE SCHOOL

Social justice teacher education prepares teachers who challenge the domesticating education found in most U.S. schools through new views of what constitutes literacy and social justice curricula, as well as powerful teaching methods such as inquiry, critical literacy, and intercultural dialogue. To become critical teachers who provide students with powerful education, teachers need experiences that help them connect what they learn about social justice in university classes to their own lives and their classrooms.

Reading the world as well as the word means having the power of structural analysis, that is, the skill to analyze, synthesize, theorize, think critically, and inquire into the structure of society and the nature of social, political, and economic relationships. Social justice teacher educators devise methods of

teaching these skills so their students can adapt and translate them into their own classrooms and explore their political implications with their students. Inevitably these skills are developed through experiences—often of research or inquiry, and inevitably in conjunction or community with others—with the end goal of developing praxis, that is, combining theory with action consciously aimed at social justice or democratic outcomes.

Suzanne Miller and Suzanne Borowicz broaden teachers' views of what constitutes literacy through experiences with digital video production in studio-like classes where students actively direct their learning through engagement with others. Diane Zigo realizes her desire to prepare social justice teachers by structuring her classes around the framework of inquiry that gives students the experience of powerful literacy that is necessary to differentiate it from less powerful forms of literacy. Peter Hoffman-Kipp and Brad Olsen work with new teachers who struggle to translate the social justice theory of their graduate university preparation into social justice practices in their classrooms. Vladimir Ageyev cites the need to prepare teachers to conduct intercultural dialogues in their classrooms to bridge the cultural gap between American teachers and newly arrived students from Russia and Eastern Europe. His analysis of the culture gap applies equally well to minority and working-class U.S. students.

PART IV. SOCIAL JUSTICE TEACHER EDUCATION THROUGH PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Social justice teacher educators recognize and take steps to reduce the isolation social justice teachers often face. Professional development opportunities for critical dialogue and reflection help teachers change the world by bringing social justice into the classroom and into the school and wider educational system through collaboration with peers, parents, and students. Such thoughtful, purposeful actions, by social justice teachers who combine dialogue and reflection on theory with practice, produce the praxis that can replace the dominant banking model of education with culturally relevant content and pedagogy.

Jeff Duncan-Andrade conducts inquiry groups with teachers striving to replace domesticating practices with methods that reflect more closely their desire to contribute to their students' educational, economic, and social well-being. John Otterness challenges teachers and administrators to see beyond a narrow conception of education based in transmitting subject matter, and through readings, observations, reflection, and dialogue, to broaden their views of what constitutes effective educational practice. Linda Tubach conducts role-plays that simulate trade union negotiations to engage students in learning that brings issues of equity and justice into the curriculum and models popular education methods for classroom teachers. Lauri Johnson provides a history of a social justice teachers union in New York City between the two world wars that actively promoted social justice professional development. She suggests

teacher education programs include preparation for teachers' nearly inevitable participation in teachers unions.

In the concluding chapter, "For Further Thought," Mary Finn offers a rationale for Freirean teacher educators to collaborate with Freirean popular-worker educators.

NOTE

1. Slogan on children's tee-shirts for sale at the National Labor College in Silver Springs, MD.

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