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RESPONDING TO CHANGING STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS IN FINLAND: A STUDY OF TEACHERS' DEVELOPING CULTURAL COMPETENCE

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Dedicated to Charlotta and MacKenzie

ABSTRACT

The aim of this dissertation was to examine the skills and knowledge that pre-service teachers and teachers have and need about working with multilingual and multicultural students from immigrant backgrounds. The specific goals were to identify pre-service teachers' and practising teachers' current knowledge and awareness of culturally and linguistically responsive teaching, identify a profile of their strengths and needs, and devise appropriate professional development support and ways to prepare teachers to become equitable culturally responsive practitioners. To investigate these issues, the dissertation reports on six original empirical studies within two groups of teachers: international pre-service teacher education students from over 25 different countries as well as pre-service and practising Finnish teachers. The international pre-service teacher sample consisted of (n = 38, study I; and n = 45, studies II-IV) and the pre-service and practising Finnish teachers sample encompassed (n = 89, study V; and n = 380, study VI). The data used were multi-source including both qualitative (students' written work from the course including journals, final reflections, pre- and post-definition of key terms, as well as course evaluation and focus group transcripts) and quantitative (multi-item questionnaires with open-ended options), which enhanced the credibility of the findings resulting in the triangulation of data. Cluster analytic procedures, multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA), and qualitative analyses mostly Constant Comparative Approach were used to understand pre-service teachers' and practising teachers' developing cultural understandings.

The results revealed that the mainly white / mainstream teacher candidates in teacher education programmes bring limited background experiences, prior socialisation, and skills about diversity. Taking a multicultural education course where identity development was a focus, positively influenced teacher candidates' knowledge and attitudes toward diversity. The results revealed approaches and strategies that matter most in preparing teachers for culturally responsive teaching, including but not exclusively, small group activities and discussions, critical reflection, and field immersion. This suggests that there are already some tools to address the need for the support needed to teach successfully a diversity of pupils and provide in-service training for those already practising the teaching profession. The results provide insight into aspects of teachers' knowledge about both the linguistic and cultural needs of their students, as well as what constitutes a repertoire of approaches and strategies to assure students' academic success. Teachers' knowledge of diversity can be categorised into sound awareness, average awareness, and low awareness. Knowledge of diversity was important in teachers' abilities to use students' language and culture to enhance acquisition of academic content, work effectively with multilingual learners' parents/guardians, learn about the cultural backgrounds of multilingual learners, link multilingual learners' prior knowledge and experience to instruction, and modify classroom instruction for multilingual learners. These findings support the development of a competency based model and can be used to frame the studies of pre-service teachers, as well as the professional development of practising teachers in increasingly diverse contexts.

The present set of studies take on new significance in the current context of increasing waves of migration to Europe in general and Finland in particular. They suggest that teacher education programmes can equip teachers with the necessary attitudes, skills, and knowledge to enable them work effectively with students from different ethnic and language backgrounds as they enter the teaching profession. The findings also help to refine the tools and approaches to measuring the competencies of teachers teaching in mainstream classrooms and candidates in preparation.

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The teacher... expounds on a topic completely alien to the existential experience of the students. His task is to “fill” the students with the contents of his narration – contents which are detached from reality, disconnected from the totality that engendered them and could give them significance. (Paulo Freire, 1970, p.71, reprinted 2012)

1. INTRODUCTION

The creation of the story of culturally responsive teaching begins with a story of an immigrant student’s transition into high school life in Finland. This story sets the stage for understanding cultural diversity within the broader education context and helps highlight the implications of this context for students of different cultural backgrounds. It gives meaning to the message of this dissertation and somewhat contextualises the message of this study. As well, it attempts to identify the constituent issues and individuals for whom culturally responsive teaching is a necessity. This beginning story might be entitled “the two worlds of an immigrant teenager.” While this is a true story, the character’s name is a pseudonym.

Tom was a recent arrival from Rwanda where he attended school until middle school. His family immigrated to Finland in 1992 during the Rwandan civil war in search of safety, hope and a better life. He grew up in a modest family with little formal education (neither parent had attained secondary education), and there were no educational resources such as books to read and computers at home. The first time he actually used a computer was at his new high school in Finland.

As a learner, Tom is a study in contradiction. Outside of school, Tom showed some qualities typically associated with giftedness, but in school his performance was below average. Tom was a motivated, caring, respectful, and easy going person. He interacted easily, confidently, and effectively with all kinds of people regardless of age, gender, ethnicity, race, and social class – qualities that endeared him to many of his peers. Tom knew how to ask thoughtful and probing questions, think critically, and had good problem solving skills. He often challenged himself to take on a difficult task and was very interested in exploring a wide range of issues and topics including evolutionary theory, robotics and the world wars. Tom could skilfully conceptualise, analyse, synthesise, and evaluate information to reach an answer or conclusion. He was also adept in rationalising and finding solutions to challenges. For example, he taught himself how to read maps to be able to navigate his way around their new

home city. Reading maps and finding new places can be challenging for some immigrant students from Africa as map reading is not often taught as a regular part of the school curriculum.

With all of these qualities, one would expect Tom to excel in school. But this was not the case. In fact, he struggled academically right from the time he entered high school in Finland. He complained about not being able to understand what the teachers were talking about, about the different teaching and learning styles, about teachers who didn't seem to care about or show interest in him, about his contribution during class not being given sufficient attention and follow-up by teachers and by peers, about his classmates staring at him when he could not figure out how to use the computer during lessons, and about not having time to get everything done that school and classes required. These were agonising and disturbing concerns for Tom.

Against his growing discomfort, Tom's teachers were increasingly worried about his behaviour and performance in class. The teachers were concerned that Tom didn't pay attention in class, didn't contribute to class discussions, lacked initiative, and was not independent. Whenever an assignment involved a formal oral presentation or even just informal question and answer, Tom would sit quietly. On the few occasions that he spoke, he waited until everyone had made their point. Too often, he raised issues that didn't exactly fit into the topic being discussed. It was obvious that he never took a stand. He simply agreed with what the majority said. His teachers were afraid that his behaviour might be a sign of cognitive deficit, lack of maturity, inability to make independent decisions, and lack of self-confidence. They thought that a referral to the school counsellor was in order.

Tom may have lacked maturity, decision making skills, and confidence. However, it is equally plausible that his behaviour reflected not a cognitive deficit or lack of confidence and maturity, but rather a different set of values and beliefs of what constitutes appropriate interaction and communication in the classroom. These teachers failed to recognise, understand, and appreciate the pervasive influence of culture on Tom's behaviour. They failed to realise that attributes such as attentiveness, assertiveness, decisiveness, and independence are socially constructed ideas of a particular culture. While these ideas are important, they are not the values and experiences of all people and therefore cannot be viewed as the only "norm" and valued standard of ideal academic engagement and social behaviour. Teachers' own values and expectations about what constitutes proper communication and behaviour patterns in class interfered with their understanding of Tom's behaviour. If these teachers would step outside their cultural frames, they would have realised that Tom was using an appropriate form of communication and social exchange; one that reflects his culture and values system.

Our cultural heritage and practices influence our lives in many ways. No aspect of our life is unaffected and unchanged by culture. Gay (2010) notes that, “Even without our being consciously aware of it, culture determines how we think, believe, and behave, and these, in turn, affect how we teach and learn” (p.9). It is extremely important for teachers to begin to understand the cultural values of their students and increase their awareness of the values, beliefs, and experiences that shape their own lives. However, many teachers from mainstream backgrounds often are not aware of the influence of culture on their own and their students’ attitudes, values and behaviours, nor are they aware of the effects of culture on teaching and learning (Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 2009; Ukpokodu, 2011). Teachers must be helped to acquire greater knowledge of multicultural processes, skills and content in the classroom.

Accepting the validity of the cultural heritages, abilities, and performance styles of students from diverse cultural backgrounds and incorporating these in the instructional process has been shown to improve school performance and achievement for culturally and linguistically diverse students (Bishop, Berryman, Cavanagh, & Teddy, 2009; Boykin, 2002; Gay, 2010, Ladson-Billings, 2001, 2009; McCarthy, 2002). Whereas, rejecting and ignoring these dimensions leads to academic underachievement and failure (Ladson-Billings, 2001; Valenzuela, 1999). Both of these realities suggest a need to stop this disempowerment that continues to be shaped by existing school programmes and practices and put in place strategies to ensure that it does. To realise this change, teachers need to learn to understand the cultural heritages of their students and capitalise on them as a resource to teach students rather than ignore them. At the same time, teachers must analyse their own cultural attitudes, assumptions, values, and beliefs that have made it difficult for them to teach these students successfully (Banks, 2010; Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 2009).

This dissertation focuses on understanding teacher development (from pre-service through in-service) that embraces culturally and linguistically responsive teaching practices. Specifically, it aims to identify teachers’ current knowledge and awareness of culturally and linguistically responsive teaching, identify a profile of their strengths and needs, and determine ways to prepare teachers to become more confident, competent, and equitable culturally responsive practitioners. The dissertation thus strives to shed light on how to overcome the many challenges currently faced in supporting the development of culturally and linguistically responsive practices in teachers of diverse learners.

The dissertation is divided into four sections: introduction, methods, a summary of the individual studies, and discussion. The introduction discusses the demographic shift in population (Europe, global, and Finland), diversity, diversity and importance of context, diversity and the teaching profession, responses to diversity, and pre-service teacher education in Finland. The methodology of the studies is then presented, followed by a summary of the six original empirical studies. Finally, a discussion of the main findings, implications for teacher education, curricula and practice is presented.

1.1. Demographic Shift

Today's society is more diverse than ever. This rapid population shift is driven primarily by migration either for economic advancement or to escape war, oppression or political persecution. Characterised by diversity in all its facets, be it racial, ethnic, cultural, gender-related, socioeconomic, of or relating to sexual orientation, and religious, many cities in highly developed economies are a varied and sometimes volatile mix of people. These changes in the larger society are reflected in school classrooms. To successfully educate our children for the future means to embrace the diversity that these children bring with them into our schools and classrooms. The following section will go further in depth regarding the demographic transformations in Europe and in particular, Finland.

1.1.1 Europe

Europe's population is fast changing as ethnic, racial, religious and economic diversity increases due to global economic forces and migration. In 2011, there were 33.3 million foreign citizens residing in the EU-27, representing 6.6% of the total population (Eurostat, 2012). The majority, 20.5 million, were citizens of non-EU countries, while the remaining 12.8 million were citizens of other EU Member States. According to Eurostat projections, Europe's population will decline by 3% by 2050, pointing to a gloomy demographic future for Europe. This change in Europe's population structure is attributable primarily to the declining native birth rates and the aging population. With the population aging and people having fewer children, there will not be enough people to do the work needed to keep the economies strong, or simply to take care of an ever increasing number of old and very old citizens. One key response area, identified by the European commission (2007) as offering opportunities for coping with its future demographic challenge (i.e., the aging society and lower birth rates), is receiving and integrating immigrants into the Europe-zone. The implementation of this policy has implications for demographic transformation in the Europe-zone in the coming years. This means that, over the coming decades, Europe's demographic make-up will change dramatically; in effect there will be unprecedented increases in the number of diverse students in European schools. The latest OECD report (2015) suggests that in 2012, 11% of 15-year-old students had an immigrant background, on average across OECD countries. Of this number, 6% were born in the country of residence and 5% were students who had moved with their parents to their new country of residence. This rapid demographic shift has, and will continue to have, significant impact on the curriculum, teachers, students, and all aspects of education systems.

1.1.2 Finland

Data on Finland's population structure indicate that the population of Finland in 2013 was 5,426,674, of whom 2,666,622 were men and 2,760,052 women (Statistics Finland, 2013). In the course of 2012, Finland's population grew by 25,407 persons. The

number of people whose native language is a foreign language grew by 22,122, which represented 87% of the population growth. The number of people whose native language is Finnish grew by 3,497, those with Swedish as their native language decreased by 242 and the number of people who speak Sami as their native language grew by 30 (Statistics Finland, 2013). Furthermore, in 2012, 31,280 persons immigrated to Finland from foreign countries and this number is the highest in the history of independent Finland. The largest numbers of non-European immigrants were from Russia, Somalia, China, Iraq, Thailand, Turkey, and India (Statistics Finland, 2013).

These statistics demonstrate that the number of diverse learners in Finnish schools is fast growing and all indicators point to continual growth. One implication of the rapid demographic shift in Finland and in Europe in general is that all teachers, both within Finland and across Europe, regardless of their own cultural identities and experiences need to be prepared to effectively teach students of all backgrounds.

1.2. Defining Diversity

The concept of diversity is multifaceted and is comprised of many aspects and levels. It is therefore important to begin with a discussion of what it means from the outset. Diversity may be broadly defined as the differences between social identity groups based on social categories including but not limited to race, ethnicity, gender, class, age, religion, sexual orientation, physical ability, educational background, geographical location, marital status, parental status, and work experiences. Given the broad and multidimensional nature of the concept, it is extremely important to constrain the present discussion to fit the aims of this research and the specific focus on education. Thus, as used here, diversity refers to social attributes that can affect the specific ways in which teaching and learning are realised, including cultural and linguistic differences. Building on that definition for the purposes of the set of studies that constitute this dissertation, diverse learners or students refers to children who are racially, ethnically, culturally, and linguistically different from the native Finnish speaking students along with their dominant/traditional Finnish culture.

1.3. Diversity and the Importance of Context

The challenges of increased diversity are shared by almost all European countries, albeit the contexts in which they are addressed and the attention accorded these issues vary from one country to the other. National responses to diversity and the priority given to diversity issues in teacher education programmes have depended to a large extent on the history and tradition of these countries. However, more recently, this has also been determined by their perceived challenge and relevance of the topic at any given time (OECD, 2010).

In European countries with colonial histories such as United Kingdom, France, and the Netherlands, and countries with post war labour recruitment such as Germany, Sweden, and Switzerland, classroom diversity has been strongly linked to international migration dating back to the 1960s and 1970s. In these countries, systematic educational responses began with the mass exodus of immigrants from former colonies and later, temporary workers who subsequently settled either as long term immigrants or short term immigrants. In some of these countries, efforts have been made to help schools adjust to diversity caused by migratory movements. However, despite immigrants being a part of the societal mix for a long time, national discourse around diversity issues still revolves around the “we” and “them” feeling in many of these countries. These feelings, attitudes, and reactions tend to be reflected in classroom practices. An exception is the United Kingdom, which has developed a more defined curriculum for multicultural education (DfES, 1999).

In other countries, for example France, immigrants were welcomed freely into the society in the hope that they and their descendants would assimilate into the French society and culture. For this reason, there apparently has not been a perceived need nor will to change school systems and curricula to reflect the demographic shift in student populations. Thus, to date, classroom practices continue along culturally homogeneous lines. This perspective excludes the experiences and beliefs that these diverse students bring with them to class.

In European countries with emigration histories and where immigration is a relatively recent phenomenon like Finland, Ireland, and Spain, classroom diversity has been linked to more recent international migration. In these countries, school systems have just begun developing programmes in response to diversity. Thus the rapid pace of change in student demographics has posed an additional challenge for schools and teachers who have had to keep up with the changes in student population. Some of these countries are now facing debates regarding whether national core values should be changed to accommodate these demographic transformations. A case in point is Finland which is currently going through this phase as it undertakes curriculum reforms. Finland’s new curriculum reform 2016 addresses diversity and equity issues in a more comprehensive, substantial, and definitive way than before. The reformulated curriculum that comes into force in 2016 requires that schools and teachers cooperate with students’ parents and guardians in matters regarding students’ learning and include parents’ views in school programme planning. For example, it states under the sub-section on cooperation between home and school that:

Education providers are required to cooperate with pupils’ parents and guardians. Instruction and education must be provided in cooperation with homes and parents and guardians, so that each pupil receives instruction, guidance, and support according to his or her own needs and developmental level. (*Finnish National Board of Education [FNBE], 2014, p.28, [Unofficial translation]*).

While this appears to be an important step toward pluralistic and inclusive education in Finland, the actual implementation and success of this reform will depend to a large extent on how well teachers in mainstream content classrooms are prepared to work with culturally and linguistically diverse students and their families. This points to a greater need for professional development programmes for teachers in Finland in the coming years. Such training is urgently needed as up until now neither language awareness nor culturally teaching pedagogy has been an explicit part of teacher preparation; mere interaction with people from very diverse backgrounds is unusual, especially outside of the bigger urban areas. Furthermore, there are indications that increasing diversity through immigration is beginning to result in some achievement gaps between immigrant and mainstream Finnish students (discussed in depth below). Finnish teachers need to acquire more knowledge and skills about culturally and linguistically responsive teaching. Without this education, teachers are likely to rely on assimilationist teaching strategies which up until now remain a common practice in many Finnish schools. It is in the light of this that the present dissertation is timely and important. In addition, the present set of studies is important because most of the research on preparing teachers for work with multilingual learners in content classrooms has been conducted in the U.S. Given the demographic shifts aforementioned in Europe and Finland, it is time to understand the Finnish context in particular and not make assumptions that everything will be the same.

1.4. Diversity and the Teaching Profession

Students entering classrooms today are increasingly diverse while our teachers are not. The cultural gap between children in schools and their teachers is large and ever-growing (Acquah & Commins, 2013; Clarke & Drudy, 2006; Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 2009; Larzen-Östermark, 2009; Mansikka & Holm, 2011; Sleeter & Owuor, 2011). Data from the US suggests that eighty to ninety percent of the teaching population is white, female, and monolingual (Lowenstein, 2009). The Census data projection indicate that by 2026, 95% of elementary school teachers will be white, middle class, females who have had little interaction with people different from themselves. In Finland, the OECD (2003) country background report on attracting, developing, and retaining effective teachers shows that in 2002, there were about 66,000 Finnish-and Swedish-speaking teachers (indicative of a predominately white / Eurocentric teaching force) working in basic education and upper secondary educational institutions across the country. Women accounted for 72% of all comprehensive school teachers and 65% of upper secondary school teachers (indicative of a predominately female teaching force).

Current statistics on the structure of the teaching force show that in 2012, there were about 120,000 members of the Teachers' Union (representing 95% of teachers in Finland) of which 74% were women (Trade Union of Education in Finland [OAJ], 2015). Many of

these teachers, especially those in the largest cities (hubs for immigrants), have students with immigrant background in their classrooms. However, relatively very few of these teachers have received training in issues related to diversity and teaching diverse students.

There is unsettling potential for a cultural mismatch between teachers and students (Darling-Harmond, 2005). Such cultural disjunction between teachers and students brings about inconsistencies that influence the teaching and learning that takes place in the classroom and creates an atmosphere of mistrust. Spindler and Spindler (1994) make this point even more emphatic explaining that:

Teachers carry into the classroom their personal cultural backgrounds. They perceive students, all of whom are cultural agents, with inevitable prejudice and preconception. Students likewise come to school with personal cultural backgrounds that influence their perceptions of teachers, other students, and the school itself. Together students and teachers construct, mostly without being conscious of doing it, an environment of meanings enacted in individual and group behaviours, of conflict and accommodation, rejection and acceptance, alienation and withdrawal” (p. xii).

Shirley Brice Heath’s (1983) classic ethnographic study of the language of children from three different communities (black children, working class white and middle class white) who attended the same school demonstrates how lack of congruence between home and school cultures may cause problems for students from culturally different backgrounds. Heath (1983) found that different ways of using language resulted in tensions between ethnically and culturally diverse students and their mostly white teachers in the classroom. For example, the African American children were not used to answering questions about the attributes of objects such as colour, size, shape and did not know how to answer *why* questions. And as Heath explains, this was because these children were not used to answering *why* questions as a normal part of their day to day conversation at home:

When I asked them *why* or *how* questions about their sorting procedures or games, they usually answered “I dunno.” Trackton children have almost no practice in having *why* questions addressed to them, and when adults use *why* questions among themselves, there are often no clues in the situation to the referents of answers: “Why she don’t throw dat man out?” Furthermore, since Trackton adults do not engage their children in dialogues in which they specifically monitor questions and answers for them, the children have no experience with answering *why* questions. Trackton pre-schoolers ask *why* questions, but they do not answer them with substantive responses (p.109).

The result was a communication breakdown, with teachers believing that many of these children were slow learners, and the children perceiving a lack of care and support from

their teachers. Heath's (1983) historical and ground-breaking study illuminates how teaching and learning are sociocultural processes, and that teachers and students bring their own language, values, and beliefs to the teaching and learning process. Numerous researchers (Friere, 2012; Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 2009; Lucas & Villegas, 2013; Nieto & Bode, 2011) have established a link between home language, culture, and prior experiences with teaching and learning. These studies suggest that to support students' learning, teachers must build upon the knowledge that students already have. Gay (2010) and Ladson-Billings (2009) suggest that teachers must learn to know the cultures of their students and their families well and link these characteristics to their instructional process. The educational community needs to question whether teachers have acquired the necessary knowledge and skills to incorporate culturally responsive teaching skills, strategies, and materials into their classroom. In addition, it is important to understand whether and how teachers are being helped to acquire the skills and competencies needed to ensure that they are able to work effectively with culturally and linguistically diverse students. This is the focus of the following sections.

1.5. Teachers Knowledge about Diversity

Teaching has been found to be most effective when the cultural heritages, prior experience, and performance styles of students are incorporated into the instructional process (Banks, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 2009; Spradlin & Parsons, 2008). But these dimensions are often ignored in the instructional process (Gay, 2010) and teaching and learning continue along Eurocentric frameworks. This practice/attitude of treating students as culturally homogenous groups stems from several sources discussed here under two broad topics: teachers' beliefs about teaching and the socio-political context of schooling.

1.5.1 Teachers' Beliefs about Teaching

One view of teaching (teaching as transmission) tied theoretically to a behavioural view of learner as passive recipient of transmitted information (Pritchard, 2014; Salisbury-Glennon & Stevens, 1999) suggests that teaching is about the imparting of a particular set of skills and ways of imparting knowledge to students. This perspective perceives teaching to be all about teaching intellectual, vocational, and civic skills and thus culturally neutral; teaching does not need to change depending on students' culture and prior experiences. Students who do not perform well, especially linguistically and culturally different students need to work on their motivation, develop their language skills, and aspire to meet high standards of academic excellence. The majority of people who subscribe to this way of thinking attribute school failure largely to individual "deficits"; that is, individual students fail in education because of their own deficiencies (perceived lack of ability, linguistics inferiority, and family dysfunction) not because of unfair school policies or differential treatment from teachers (Valencia, 2012).

According to the literature, very few teachers have adequate knowledge about how conventional teaching practices reflect European cultural values (Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 2009; Lucas & Villegas, 2013; Spradlin & Parsons, 2008). Even fewer are aware that the foundations of how they work/teach have been laid in their autobiographies as learner. A fine example to illustrate this point regards the protocols of attentiveness and the emphasis placed on them in classrooms. For many teachers, appropriate attending behaviour in the classroom includes cues such as gaze, direct eye contact, body posture, making decisions independently, and speaking up about those decisions. When these cues are not exhibited by a learner, the student is judged to be uninvolved, distracted, and having attention problems, just as Tom's behaviour (described at the beginning of this chapter) was judged. Gay (2010) and Pai, Adler, and Shadiow (2006) suggest that teachers schooled in a system that valued certain standards of "appropriate attending behaviour", may not be able to see that they are culturally determined and that these structures, assumptions, and values of conventional educational praxis are Eurocentric cultural icons

Gay and Kirkland (2003) and Gay (2010) have explored the problem with having a singular notion of good teaching, being, "good teaching anywhere is good teaching everywhere" (p.182). This perspective suggests that what is labelled 'good teaching' is equally effective for all students regardless of individual differences such as culture, ethnicity, age, gender etc., and contextual factors such as the setting and circumstances. Individuals who accede to this belief find it hard to overcome this belief and to accept teaching as a highly contextualised process. They also see education as an effective way to assimilate into the mainstream culture. This attitude takes the great influence of culture in teachers and their students' lives for granted and fails to recognise the harm that culturally hegemonic teaching practices does to culturally and linguistically diverse students.

Case studies conducted with mainstream teachers in the U.S. (Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billing, 2009; Nieto & Bode, 2011) show that most teachers are sincerely concerned about their students and want to do the very best for all of them, but their own limited experiences and education limits how far they are able to go to help them. For example, many teachers who have limited experiences with, and exposure to, diversity hold the belief that treating students differently because of the cultural backgrounds is racial discrimination. This result in what Bolinna-Silva (2003) calls "colour-blind" racism. This belief causes teachers not to see that race, especially skin colour, has consequences for a person's status in society (Rosenberg, 2004) thus overlooking the need to implement curricula that provides options for supportive, flexible, and differentiated learning opportunities related to students areas of potential needs that builds on their strengths.

These beliefs can cause teachers and prospective teachers to deny the fact that existing educational practices reproduce inequalities and discount the effects of culture and prior experiences in the teaching and learning process (Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings,

2009; Lucas & Villegas, 2013; Nieto & Bode, 2011). The work of Hollins and Guzman (2005), Sleeter (2001, 2008) and Sleeter and Owuor (2011) suggests that teachers and prospective teachers need to increase their awareness of the sociocultural context of schooling and the role of culture in education so that they can appreciate and learn from the differences between them and the students they teach.

1.5.2 The Sociopolitical Context of Education

Schools are a part of the communities they serve and reflect the context in which they are established. Any oppressive forces that operate and limit opportunities in the larger society will therefore be present in schools. Teachers from the dominant culture, as a part of this system may not be aware of how existing policies and decisions about school are tied to the social, political, economic structures that frame and shape the society or how these structures privilege mainstream students. Teachers and preservice teachers may be oblivious to the social stratification that exists in the society. Causey, Thomas, and Armento (2000) suggest that naïve egalitarianism is prevalent among preservice teachers in the US. That is, they hold idealistic beliefs about their society. For example, the belief that everyone is born equal, has access to equal resources, and is treated equally. As a result of their lack of awareness, many teachers unknowingly perpetuate policies and approaches that may be harmful to many of their students.

McIntosh (1997) also contends that the majority culture is often not aware of the social privileges they enjoy. This is because their social privilege as part of the dominant culture limits their ability to understand the challenges that people from minority or non-dominant cultures face on daily basis. Johnson (2013) argues that many privileged people do not know or do not understand it when they hear such things as “white privilege” or “male privilege” and react defensively or angrily to what they do get, perhaps due to the fact many do not see or may not feel particularly dominant. For others it is a way to overlook the power, authority, and dominance bestowed upon them by virtue of the social category they belong to. These researchers argue that teachers need to develop their awareness of the social inequalities and injustices present in the society and begin to tackle inequality and promote access to an equal education.

Egalitarian beliefs can cause preservice teachers to inadvertently deny the privileges they have inherited due to their social class, ethnicity, and linguistic background and discount how inequality and injustice are institutionalised in schools. As Lucas and Villegas (2002) explain, “Built into the fabric of schools are curricular, pedagogical, and evaluative practices that privilege the affluent, White, and male segments of the society” (p. 24). Teachers and preservice teachers need to confront the inequalities and injustices inherent in the education system and admit that something is seriously wrong with existing structures. They need to rethink traditional assumptions of cultural universality and neutrality in teaching, and use this knowledge to pursue comprehensive and pedagogical practices that supports all students.

1.6. The Achievement Gap

Social, ethnic, and socioeconomic disparities found in academic performance have been referred to as ‘the achievement gap’ (Anderson, Medrich, & Fowler, 2007; Cohen, Garcia, Apfel, & Master, 2006; Ladson-Billings, 2006; Lavin-Loucks, 2006). Across OECD countries, PISA data have consistently shown a performance gap between students with immigrant background and native students in mathematics, literacy, and science (OECD, 2010; 2013; 2015). The term immigrant is very broad and represents different populations: highly educated, skilled workers for the technology industry; unskilled and unschooled labourers seeking work; and traumatized refugees escaping famine, persecution and or oppression.

Students with an immigrant background face numerous challenges at school. They need to adjust to new ways of teaching and learning, adjust to different academic expectations, learn in a new language, and contend with building an identity that incorporates both their cultural background and that of the new country. These challenges can pose considerable difficulties for students and impede their academic achievement. It should thus come as no surprise that many students from non-mainstream backgrounds or cultures, different from their teachers, are not performing as well as they should in school.

According to the latest statistics (OECD, 2015) the performance gap in mathematics between students with an immigrant background (both first and second generation immigrants) and students without an immigrant background is 37 score points, representing a 10 score point decrease from 2003 to 2012. While this is important and suggests that immigrant students have the potential to do well in school, this difference is still large and points to a need for countries to do more to support immigrant integration and education.

In some member countries, particularly Italy, the gap between immigrants and non-immigrant students widened over this period. A possible explanation for this is the ever increasing number of disadvantaged immigrant students entering its classrooms. In other member states like Canada, Australia, and Ireland immigrant and non-immigrant students scored equally well (OECD, 2015). This can be explained by the origin and skills of immigrants entering these countries. Countries with stringent skilled based immigration policies like Australia and New Zealand appear to close the performance gap at rapid pace. Australia in recent years has attracted immigrants from India and China, and immigrant students from India and China in Australia score 61 and 94 points higher in mathematics, respectively, than native Australian students. In Finland, mathematics performance deteriorated for both immigrants and non-immigrant students over this period 2003 to 2012 (meaning that the performance gap did not widen between these two groups). Nonetheless the existing performance gap between immigrants and native Finnish students, which is 85 score points, is above

the OECD average and among the highest in the OECD countries. This may have something to do with the particular challenge of achieving academic proficiency in the Finnish language.

These statistics suggest that more needs to be done to ensure that immigrant students make the most of the opportunities schools offer. Countries need to strengthen the capacity of their education system by providing support and training in culturally and linguistically responsive teaching to teachers (Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 2009; Lucas & Villegas, 2013). More and more instructional interventions need to occur to unleash the potential of all multilingual and immigrant students.

1.7. Responses to Increasing Diversity

Given the persistent achievement gap between students of different backgrounds, it is absolutely imperative that teachers are prepared to effectively teach these students and improve academic outcomes for them. Around the globe, teachers in mainstream content classrooms, for the most part, are not prepared to work with students from varying cultural and linguistic backgrounds (Acquah, Tandon, & Lempinen, 2015; Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 2009; Lucas & Villegas, 2013). These teachers have not undergone the needed transformation in their minds and attitudes, nor have they acquired the pedagogical paradigm needed to improve the performance of culturally and linguistically diverse students. Scholars have identified two main ways for improving the academic outcomes of culturally diverse students: culturally and linguistically responsive teaching (Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 2009; Lucas & Villegas, 2011; Lucas, Villegas, & Freedman-Gonzalez, 2008), and multicultural preservice teacher education (Artiles & Trent, 1997, Trent & Artiles, 1998; Banks, 2009; Diaz, 1992; Sleeter, 2001; Sleeter & Owuor, 2011). These are developed in greater detail in the subsequent sections.

1.7.1 Linguistically Responsive Teaching

Increasing numbers of students learn academic content through their second (or third) language. Lucas, Villegas, and Freedson-Gonzalez (2008) note that “language is the medium through which students gain access to the curriculum and through which they display – and are assessed for – what they have learned” (p. 362). Mainstream teachers need to learn about the language background of linguistically diverse students to be able to anticipate aspects of instruction that are likely to pose challenges for them and provide the necessary support. To help linguistically diverse students to succeed teachers must take into account both the linguistic needs of the learners and the language demands of their content. Mainstream teacher education must prepare teachers to teach students who learn academic content through their second (or third) language. Lucas and Villegas’ (2011) propose the following theoretical framework:

1. Orientations of Linguistically Responsive Teachers
 - a. Sociolinguistic consciousness:
 - i. Understanding of the connection between language, culture, and identity
 - ii. Awareness of the sociopolitical dimensions of language use and language education
 - b. Value for linguistic diversity
 - c. Inclination to advocate for English Language Learner (ELL) students
2. Knowledge and skills of linguistically responsive teachers
 - a. Learning about ELL students' language backgrounds, experiences, and proficiencies
 - b. Identifying the language demands of classroom tasks
 - c. Applying key principles of second language learning
 - d. Scaffolding instruction to promote ELL students' learning (p. 57).

Fostering practicing and preservice teachers' language awareness must be tied with preparation in culturally responsive teaching, which is discussed in-depth in the following.

1.7.2 Culturally Responsive Teaching

Culturally responsive teaching is based on the view that culture plays an important role in teaching and learning and teacher-student relationships are of primary concern. Gay (2010) defined culturally responsive teaching "as using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant to and effective for them" (p. 31). It teaches to and through the strengths of these students. She also defines culturally responsive teaching as the behavioural expressions of knowledge, beliefs, and values that recognise the importance of racial and cultural diversity in learning. Culturally responsive pedagogy is based in the acknowledgment that students from diverse cultural backgrounds come to school having mastered many cultural skills and ways of knowing; if teaching builds on these capabilities, academic outcomes will be improved. Gay's (2010) approach to pedagogy is based on the assumption that when academic knowledge and skills are situated within the lived experiences and frames of reference of the learners, they will have an increased interest and will learn more easily and thoroughly. Academic outcomes will be improved for these students when they are learning through content that actively incorporates their own cultural and social experiences (Camarrota & Romero, 2009; Gay, 2010).

Ladson-Billings (2001, 2009) defined culturally responsive teaching as an empowering approach that engages students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using known cultural references to enhance learning and outcomes. She

proposed three dimensions of culturally responsive teaching as follows: holding high academic expectations and offering appropriate support such as scaffolding; acting on cultural competence by reshaping curriculum, building on students' funds of knowledge, and establishing relationships with students and their homes; and cultivating students' critical consciousness regarding power relations. In her ethnographic work, Ladson-Billings (2001, 2009) suggests that although a teacher's aptitude, credentials, and experience are important factors in determining their success with diverse students, all of these factors will be meaningless if the teacher lacks cultural competence.

A culturally responsive approach requires teachers to explore their beliefs about people from culturally different backgrounds, learn about their students' culture, and develop strategies for educational equity. If teachers are culturally and linguistically competent and engage in culturally responsive pedagogy, students' academic success will be improved and the achievement gap bridged (Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 2009; Lucas & Villegas, 2013). This is evidenced by several studies that connect culturally responsive teaching with student academic achievement and engagement (Cammarota & Romero, 2009; Hill, 2009; Thomas & Williams, 2008). Bryk, Sebring, Allensworth, Luppescue, and Easton (2010) studied 22 elementary schools in socio-economically disadvantaged communities in Chicago that served mainly ethnically diverse students over a six year period and found that culturally responsive teaching was an important part of school reform. Schools that improved their students' achievement reached out to parents, used a student centred learning approach, organised curriculum to build grade-level competence, and engaged in teacher's continuous professional development. They also found that teacher's cultural competence was important in their abilities to cooperate with parents, communities, tap into students prior knowledge, and design curriculum that met the needs of students.

McCarty (2002) found that when the cultural experiences, language, and performance styles of Navajo students were incorporated into the curriculum, they became motivated, intellectually engaged, and verbally fluent in class. Similarly, Cammarota and Romero (2009) found a strong impact on achievement, persistence, and graduation of low SES Latino students when their social experiences were included into the curriculum and instruction. Gay's (2010) review of research linking culturally responsive teaching with student achievement found that curricula with even minimal culturally relevant content improves students' achievement regardless of ethnic background, grade level, and subject or skill area.

As the studies above demonstrate, when instructional processes are congruent with the cultural orientations, experiences, and learning styles of culturally different students, school achievement improves significantly. This inclusive orientation approaches students as cultural beings with resources and strengths that they have nurtured since birth within their homes, families, and communities, providing a pedagogy that values their knowledge is appropriate.

Culturally responsive teaching is contingent on a number of competencies. Teel and Obidah (2008) have summarised some of them:

- Seeing cultural differences as assets.
- Creating caring learning communities where culturally different individuals and heritages are valued.
- Using cultural knowledge of ethnically diverse cultures, families, and communities to guide curriculum development, classroom climates, instructional strategies, and relationships with students.
- Challenging racial and cultural stereotypes, prejudices, racism, and other forms of intolerance, injustice, and oppression.
- Being change agents for social justice and academic equity.
- Mediating power imbalances in classrooms based on race, culture, ethnicity, and class.
- Accepting cultural responsiveness as endemic to educational effectiveness in all areas of learning for students from all ethnic groups.

Gay (2010) identified five characteristics for culturally responsive teaching: acknowledging the legitimacy of the cultural heritages of different ethnic groups, both as legacies that affect students' dispositions, attitudes, and approaches to learning, and as worthy content to be taught in formal curriculum; building bridges of meaningfulness between home and school experiences as well as between academic abstractions and lived sociocultural realities; using a wide variety of instructional strategies that are connected to different learning styles; teaching students to know and praise their own and one another's cultural heritages; and incorporating multicultural information, resources, and materials in all the subjects and skills routinely taught in schools.

Culturally responsive teaching is praxis (theory applied to practice), for teaching and learning, where students are engaged as they see their histories, communities and experiences reflected in content and curriculum. Teachers who know about the lives of their students and their families are able to begin the practice of bridging students' prior experiences with classroom instruction (Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 2009).

Developing this type of knowledge and skills begins with teachers' critical reflection on their own tacit assumption, value systems, and beliefs, as well as the cultures of their students. Courses that introduce teachers to topics such as Multicultural Education and identity development in multicultural settings may become a channel for preservice teachers and teachers to valuing culturally responsive teaching.

1.8. Multicultural Education

Changing preservice teachers' prior beliefs and attitudes about diversity is challenging and requires systematic, deliberate, and explicit effort and strategies. Multicultural education coursework, often connected with field immersion and reflective components, has proven to be effective in changing preservice teachers' attitudes, beliefs and levels of cultural awareness in order to embrace inclusive and pluralistic education (Acquah & Commins, 2013; Hollins & Guzman, 2005; Sleeter, 2001, 2008; Sleeter & Owuor, 2011). When teacher educators provide experiences and opportunities for prospective teachers to engage in critical self-analysis and examine their own cultural attitudes, assumptions, and values, it can help transform their assumptions, prior beliefs, and attitudes (Acquah & Commins, 2013; Acquah & Commins, Submitted; Lehtomäki, Moate, & Posti-Ahokas, 2015; Trent & Artiles, 1998; Gay, 2010; Ukpokodu, 2011).

Multicultural education, as it was originally conceived, was the direct outgrowth of the civil rights movements in the 1960s in the US (Banks, 1993). It developed in response to racism, ethnocentrism, and linguicism. It was originally orchestrated for the most part, but not exclusively by, African Americans who wanted the same education that was available to whites (Ogbu, 1992) in protest against inferior and segregated education for minority groups. In 1977, the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) revised its standards and recommended that multicultural education be incorporated into all phases of teacher education programs. Consequently, comprehensive guidelines and a broad definition for multicultural education were developed. The NCATE defined multiculturalism in a broad sense encompassing, racial, ethnic, gender, social justice, political, and instructional issues;

Multicultural education could include but not be limited to experiences which: (1) promote analytical and evaluative abilities to confront issues such as participatory democracy, racism and sexism, and the parity of power; (2) develop skills for values clarification, including the study of the manifest and latent transmission of values; (3) examine the dynamics of diverse cultures and the implications for developing teaching strategies; and (4) examine linguistic variations and diverse learning styles as a basis for the development of appropriate teaching strategies. (As cited in Trent & Artiles, 1997, p. 2).

As a result of this initiative, teacher educators in the US took steps to include multicultural curriculum and content into their programmes. Over the past four decades, curricula have gradually changed to embrace culturally responsive teaching pedagogy. Today, teacher education programmes and educators in many countries, and in many institutions, have added multicultural coursework (both obligatory and non-obligatory) and field experiences in the curriculum as a way to develop prospective

teachers' cultural competence (Acquah & Commins, 2013; Sleeter & Owuor, 2011; Ukpokodu, 2011).

A review of the research conducted mainly in the U.S., suggests that multicultural education can change both practicing and preservice teachers' cultural attitudes (Hollins & Guzman, 2005; Sleeter, 2008; Sleeter & Owuor, 2011). Reviews have cited evidence from studies that reported positive changes of attitudes and beliefs. Courses that demonstrated positive results provided real opportunities for teachers and candidates to engage in critical self-analysis and examine their own tacit assumptions, rethink their notions of race, ethnicity, and culture, and confront issues of social inequalities and injustices rampant in the society. Such self-examination and experience promotes developing cultural awareness, enables teachers to respond to bridging home and school culture, and challenges the status quo by both changing school curricula to address diversity, and building honest relationships with students (Acquah & Commins, 2013; Acquah & Commins, 2015; Banks, 2010; Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 2009).

These courses also use multiple strategies including critical reflection, writing autobiographies, structured field experiences combined with post experience reflection, preparing individualised action plan for implementing multicultural education, case study analysis, and discussions around issues of diversity (Lehtomäki, et al., 2015; Sleeter & Owuor, 2011). The research represented in this dissertation over the past years has confirmed the effectiveness of some of these strategies in transforming preservice teachers perspectives and attitudes about culturally different students (Acquah & Commins, 2013, 2015), culminating in the development of a conceptual model for transforming beliefs and understanding of preservice teachers in relation to multicultural classrooms (see Figure 1). The conceptual model encourages the use of a series of in-class activities and out-of-class assignments including readings, lectures, student-led seminars, field immersion, group and paired discussions, and critical reflection. Details, along with theoretical underpinnings are presented in study 4.

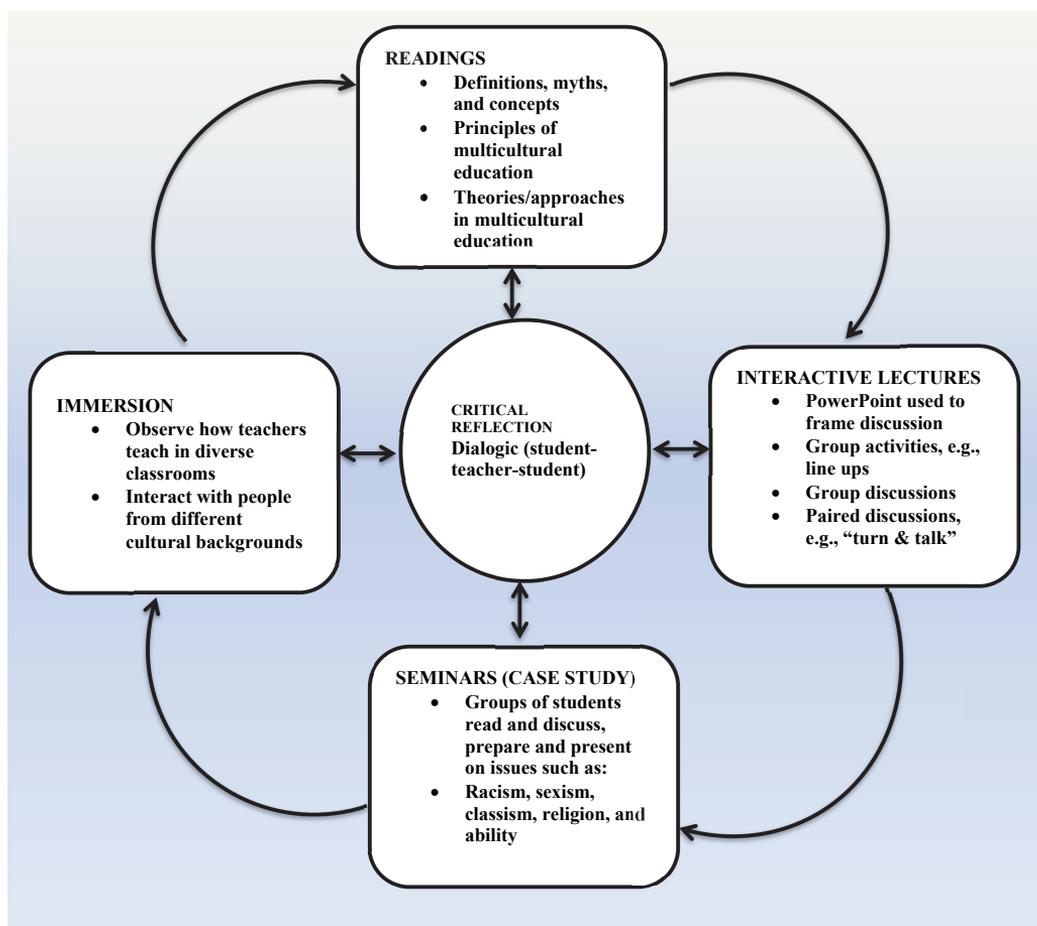


Figure 1. Elements of a model for transforming beliefs and understanding of teacher candidates in relation to Multicultural Classrooms

1.9. Preservice teacher education in Finland

Three aspects of Finnish teacher education distinguish it from teacher education in most parts of the world. First, a rigorous graduate degree and at least five years of study serve as the foundation of the teaching profession in Finland. Second, knowledge of research is integral to an academic graduate degree. Teacher training systematically integrates scientific education knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge, and practice. The training fosters teachers’ pedagogical thinking, evidence-based decision-making, and engagement in the professional community of educators (Sahlberg, 2011). This knowledge informs the decisions teachers make teaching and learning in the classroom. Third, teacher trainee students have access to a safe and rigorous academic environment. All teacher education has its own department in Finnish universities and teacher training

schools. This guarantees that students have a place to do practical training under the supervision of faculty who has advanced credentials in education.

In Finland, teacher education is provided mainly by faculties of education at eleven institutions, including one Swedish university. Every university with a Faculty of Teacher Education has a teacher training school that is administratively part of the faculties of education. School operations are governed & financed by the Ministry of Education and Culture. Universities provide teacher education for the following groups of teachers:

- Class teachers, who teach all subjects in forms 1–6 of basic education (primary level) and who may also work in pre-school education.
- Kindergarten teachers, who may work in pre-school education as well as in early childhood education and care.
- Subject teachers, who teach one or more subjects in forms 7-9 of basic education (lower secondary level), in general upper secondary education, in vocational education and training or in adult education and training.
- Special needs teachers, special class teachers and special kindergarten teachers, who teach students/pupils requiring special education.
- Pupil/student counsellors, who provide educational guidance and careers counselling in basic education and at upper secondary schools (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2014).

Students in class teacher education obtain a master's degree (300 credits), with education as their main subject (see Table 1 for details on areas of qualification and study modules). The studies can be completed in five years. The premise of the training is for students to familiarise themselves with holistic human development, teacher/learner interaction, as well as with scientific theories concerning education, learning and development and their applications to practical educational and teaching work. The objective is for students to become capable of independently analysing and solving problems in education and teaching and of developing their work through research. Those who have completed such a degree are eligible for postgraduate education in educational subjects.

Subject teachers have a master's degree with a scope of 240 credits, which may be completed in 4 years. The main subject for students aiming to become subject teachers is the subject that they intend to teach (e.g., mother tongue and literature, foreign languages, religion, history, social studies, biology, geography). In addition to this, they have to complete pedagogical studies (60 ects) for teachers as part of their degree or as a separate study module (Table 1).

Special education teachers must have a master's degree including special pedagogy as the main subject, the teachers' pedagogical studies either as part of the degree or as a separate study module, and studies in special education (35 credits). The scope of special education studies may also be 50 credits, depending on assignment-specific orientation. Those aiming to become special class teachers also complete multidisciplinary studies in the subjects taught in basic education.

Table 1. Teacher education in Finland

Area of qualification	Studies	Example of study modules
Class Teacher Education	Bachelor degree (180 ects)	Language and communication studies Studies in the main subject, Pedagogical studies Multidisciplinary studies in the subjects taught in basic education Studies in 1–2 subsidiary subjects Elective studies.
	Master's degree (120 ects)	
Subject Teacher Education	Subject studies (240 ects) Pedagogical studies (40 ects)	History, Social studies, Biology, Geography etc. Didactics, General pedagogy qualification
	Practicum (teacher training school) 20 ects	Orientation/practice, minor practice, major practice

If the potential of culturally responsive teaching is to be realised, then Finnish teachers must be prepared for work with culturally different students. Such preparation is urgent as students entering Finnish classroom are becoming more and more diverse. As Sleeter and Owuor (2011) explain “subject matter preparation, though crucial, cannot alone adequately prepare prospective teachers who are predominantly White and who bring limited knowledge, skills and experience with diverse students (p. 526).

Essentially missing from the teacher education in Finland, are pedagogical studies in culturally and linguistically responsive teaching. Neither language/literacy pedagogy, nor culturally teaching pedagogy, is included in teacher preparation. Finnish teachers have little to no preparation in culturally and linguistically responsive teaching. It is acknowledged that things are changing and faculty in several universities in Finland have taken steps to incorporate issues of diversity into their preparation programmes, however, the pace of development is slow. Additionally, in other observations and interactions that the researcher has had with the staff and teachers in various schools, they know somewhere we are still falling short in our development. There is an urgent need for research on multicultural curriculum and culturally teaching pedagogy in Finland. This need is particularly so because of how little research on this topic has been done in Europe and particularly in Finland. Most of the teacher preparation for work in multicultural classroom settings has been done in the U.S. and, given the demographic

shifts described in the beginning of this chapter in Europe, it is time to understand the Finnish context in particular and not make assumptions that everything will be the same. This dissertation presents a number of studies that examine pre-service teacher and in-service teacher development that embraces culturally and linguistically responsive teaching practices.

2. AIMS AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The primary goal of multicultural education is to ensure that all students receive an equitable education. The educational preparation that preservice teachers receive for work with culturally and linguistically different students is crucial if this goal can be met. The discrepancy between the backgrounds of the majority of preservice teachers and realities of public schools creates challenges to teacher education programmes. Research is needed to understand how teacher preparation programmes in Finland and around the globe can equip practicing teachers and preservice teachers with the necessary skills, attitudes, and knowledge to enable them to teach students from different cultural backgrounds. The set of studies presented here aims to:

1. Investigate preservice teachers and currently practising teachers' knowledge, attitudes, and skills about culturally and linguistically responsive teaching
2. Identify a repertoire of approaches and strategies that matter most in preparing teachers for culturally responsive teaching pedagogy and
3. Discover distinct profiles that might emerge and become the basis for creating appropriate professional development opportunities for teachers to become more culturally and linguistically responsive.

The research conducted for this dissertation explored the above questions within two groups of teachers: international preservice teacher education students from over 25 different countries (studies I – IV) and Finnish teachers who are currently teaching in schools (studies V-VI). Study I explored preservice teachers beliefs, attitudes, and knowledge about cultural diversity. The aim was to determine growth or change in multicultural attitudes by comparing their attitudes before and after a multicultural education course. Study II investigated critical reflection as a key tool in promoting preservice teachers' awareness of cultural pedagogy. It attempted to compare the changes experienced by participants before (pre-test) and after (post-test) attendance in a course by hypothesizing a relationship between critical reflection and a change in cultural awareness. Study III examined instructional strategies that matter most in transforming preservice teachers' cultural attitudes. The study sought to identify the kinds of strategies and experiences that greatly enrich students' learning during a multicultural education course. An outcome of this study was the development of a model for teaching a multicultural education to preservice teachers. Study IV explored international students' perspectives of a diverse class on multiculturalism. This study aimed to determine the added value in terms of cultural competence of taking multicultural education class in a foreign country. Study V investigated practicing teachers' awareness of and knowledge

of cultural diversity and how to address increasing linguistic and cultural diversity in classroom. The aim was to gain an understanding of what teachers already knew from their experiences about teaching diverse learners in their classrooms, what strategies they currently use to address cultural and linguistic diversity, and to pinpoint where they were lacking. Additionally, the research sought to discover if there were any distinct profiles that might emerge and could form the basis for creating appropriate professional development opportunities for teachers to become more culturally and linguistically responsive.

Study VI examined notions of diversity and diverse learners among practicing and beginning teachers in 3 contexts in Finland: an ethnically and culturally diverse teacher training school, 5 other schools in the municipality; and teacher trainees at the beginning of their studies. This study aimed to, along with reporting the data, compare and contrast the patterns in the data among the three groups.

3. METHODS

The six studies presented in this dissertation all employed mixed-methods research design gathering both quantitative and qualitative data. Table 2 provides an overview of data sources by study. The quantitative aspect for study I – IV used a quasi-experimental pre-post-test design without a control group. Qualitative data was based on a case study of participants' journals, pre and post definitions of key terms, and focus group discussions. Study V and VI used self-report questionnaire data that consisted of open and closed-ended questions. The following section provides a more detailed discussion the participants of each study, the measurement of the study variables, and statistical analysis conducted for all the studies.

All the studies were conducted at the Department of Teacher Education, University of Turku, Finland as a part of the multicultural preservice teacher education project. The present dissertation was funded by the Finnish Graduate School in Education and Learning (FiGSEL).

Table 2. Participants, Design, and Statistical Analysis Used in Different Studies

Study	Participants	Data sources	Statistical Analysis
Study 1	38	Questionnaire: pre and post-test design; Case studies: students' learning journals, focus group discussions, course evaluation, and pre and post definitions of key terms	Paired t-test; Graphic analysis/ Frequencies; Thematic analysis
Studies 2, 3, and 4	45	Questionnaire: pre and post-test design; Case studies: students' learning journals, focus group discussions, and course evaluation	Paired t-test; Descriptive statistics; Content Analysis/ Constant Comparative Approach
Study 5	89	Questionnaire	Descriptive statistics; Cluster Analysis; Analysis of variance (ANOVA); Multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) Content Analysis
Study 6	380	Questionnaire	Descriptive statistics; Analysis of variance (ANOVA) Content Analysis

3.1. Participants

Study I

Participants in this study were recruited from a multicultural education course at an urban university in Southwestern Finland during the autumn semester of the 2011 – 2012 academic year. There were 38 students (Males = 3, Females = 35) who enrolled in the course: 19 degree students (15= international master's degree students, 4 Finnish degree students) and 19 exchange students from the ERASMUS students network. The age of the students ranged from 20 – 32 years. The class itself was very diverse in population with students from 17 different countries across the globe. Students consented that quotes from their definition of key terms, journals, final reflections and focus group dialogues be used as data this study. Participants were promised anonymity and confidentiality.

Studies II, III, and IV

The data analysed for these studies include responses from forty-five students (Male = 4, Female = 41) from 22 countries during the Autumn 2014 semester. 12 were degree students (10= international master's degree students, 2 Finnish degree students), and 33 exchange students from the ERASMUS students network. The students ranged in age from 19 to 41, and some of the master's level students had already had diverse learning and teaching experiences themselves. Because of the varied cultural, socioeconomic, educational, and professional experiences of these graduate and bachelor students, there were varied beliefs, opinions, and perspectives on culture and identity that emerged throughout the course. This created many possibilities for authentic cross cultural interactions among students. All students consented to participate in the study and agreed that quotes from their coursework could be used as data for analysis. Participants were promised anonymity and confidentiality.

Study V

This case study of teachers at an ethnically and culturally diverse teacher training school included 104 participants. The survey was administered by one of the researchers to all the teachers present during an end of semester staff meeting. Participants consented to participate in the research. They were promised anonymity and confidentiality. Of the 104 teachers who were given the survey, 98 respondents (representing 94%) of teachers present at this meeting completed the survey. Six participants who could not finish answering the survey were allowed to take it home and return it later but none of these were returned. Of this number (98), 9 responses were incomplete so their results were excluded from the analysis. Thus, a total sample of 89 complete surveys (N=89, Male= 26, Female= 63) were analysed. Of this sample, 86 teachers (97%) self-identified as Finnish and 3 teachers (2.7%) were non-Finnish.

Study VI

All together 380 participants completed questionnaires with both open and closed-ended questions regarding their awareness of and ability to use strategies for teaching students learning content and literacy through their second (or third) languages. Of the total participants, 89 were from a multicultural teacher training school (Male = 26, Female = 63), 75 were from the 5 schools in the municipality (Male = 14, Female = 61; mean age = 44), and 216 were beginning teachers (Male = 55, Female = 158; mean age = 25). Between 97% and 99% of our sample of teachers self-identified as Finnish. The main subjects taught by the participants are presented in Table 1. All teachers and student teachers consented to participating in the study. Participants were promised anonymity and confidentiality.

3.2. Assessment of Cultural Attitudes, Knowledge, and Skills

The present dissertation assessed beliefs, attitudes, knowledge, and skills of cultural diversity using multiple sources of data (see Table 2). Teacher education scholars (Hollins & Guzman, 2005; Sleeter & Owuor, 2011) recommend the use of multiple data sources or mixed-methods (quantitative and qualitative) when investigating teachers' beliefs and attitude about cultural diversity. This is because probing teachers' thoughts produces various forms of self-report data, which in these sensitive matters induced self-perception/reflection and socially desirable answers can play a major role. Creswell (2007) and Corbin and Strauss (2008) suggest that extensive data collection in the field ensures rigor and validity of research findings, especially when several of these data sources are used to provide evidence in support of findings. Mixed-methods designs provide different perspectives and ways in which to look at the same subject. This can provide in-depth understanding of teachers' dispositions and attitude, as well as programme impact.

Therefore, the present dissertation used both qualitative and quantitative data. An extensive description of the measures and procedures used in the data collection are detailed in studies I-IV (for preservice teachers) and IV-VI (practicing teachers). Briefly, in studies I-IV, the qualitative data comprised students' written work from the course including journals, final reflections, pre- and post-definition of key terms, as well as course evaluation and focus group transcripts. For example, students were asked to keep learning journals detailing their developing understandings from specific aspects of the course (e.g., readings, lectures, observations, and the seminars) and to reflect on their learning process throughout the semester. These written responses were analysed and the outcome used to make judgements about preservice teachers' cultural understandings, as well as to determine how significantly the coursework and field experiences had influenced their cultural understandings.

The quantitative data were the pre- and post-scores from the cultural diversity awareness inventory CDAI (Henry, 1986, 1995). The CDAI was used ONLY in studies II, III. The CDAI measures pre-service teachers' attitudes about multiculturalism. It probes teachers' cultural awareness in five sub areas which are clearly defined by the instrument items: diversity awareness, classroom environment, family/school interaction, cross-cultural communication, and alternative assessment, and have been identified as important in multicultural teacher preparation. Minor modifications in wording and expressions were made to suit the international background of the participants. In study I, a researcher-developed instrument was used, the development of which was deeply informed by previous studies (Henry, 1995; Milner et al., 2003; Sleeter, 2001). Prior to the data collection, the scale was pilot-tested using a sample of international students in the department of teacher education who were not enrolled on the multicultural education course. In study IV, students were given an evaluation in the form of a survey that asked them to comment on the aspects of the course (lectures, field experience, case studies, learning journals and reflections, group activities, readings, and the multicultural nature of the class) that they considered most and least helpful to their learning. The evaluation / survey included seventeen questions, eight were Likert-type questions and nine were open-ended.

In studies V and IV, the participants' (mainly teachers, but in study IV, a subset of the participants were beginning teachers) responded to two different questionnaires, one on awareness of cultural diversity and another on knowledge of strategies for teaching a diverse student. Both questionnaires elicited responses from teachers regarding how they perceived their awareness and knowledge about culturally relevant teaching. There were both closed-ended and open-ended questions. The open-ended questions solicited information about the teachers' experiences and interactions with people from diverse backgrounds in their own journeys as students in Finnish schools and in what areas they felt they would need support. This information was included to determine if the participants had academic and/or social contact with non-Finnish students as peers and classmates thus making them aware of differences in teaching, learning and academic outcomes.

3.3. Statistical analysis

Table 2 presents the different statistical analyses that were used in this dissertation. Data analyses occurred in two stages. First, for quantitative data, the majority of the analysis was conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics 20. Second, qualitative data was analysed using Constant Comparative Approach (Corbin & Strauss, 2008) or Content Analysis (CA) (Krippendorff, 1980). Except study IV in which the software NVivo 10 (QSR International 2014) was used to assist the analysis, all other analyses were completed by the researcher.

Frequencies and descriptive statistic. In view of the exploratory nature of the majority of the studies in the present dissertation, descriptive statistics were conducted to describe in a meaningful way what the data shows; for example, patterns that might emerge from the data. These were complemented with simple graphical analysis.

Analysis of variance. After testing for the normality of the data, paired t-tests were used in studies I, II, and III to determine if there was a significant difference in pre-service teachers' cultural awareness and attitudes before, and after, taking a multicultural education course. ANOVA was used to test for significant differences between the means of various clusters for each variable in studies V and VI. Multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was used in study V, mostly to examine whether teachers' awareness levels of issues related to diversity would predict their knowledge of strategies for teaching a diverse student. Post-hoc analyses (Fisher's LCD) were used in study V to examine specific awareness and knowledge differences between clusters.

Cluster analysis. Cluster analytic procedures were used in study V to determine competency profiles of teachers. In other words, to classify teachers into subgroups based on comparable knowledge levels of issues related to diversity. Ward's cluster method was selected as it has shown to be quite effective in recovering dimensionality of item response data (Fraley & Raftery, 1998; Kafman & Rousseeuw, 1990, 2005; Tay-Lim & Stone, 2000). Squared Euclidean distance was used in order to place progressively greater weight on objects that are further apart.

Constant Comparative Approach and Content Analysis. To deepen our understanding regarding how the course (components and contents) positively impacted teachers' beliefs and cultural attitudes, subsequent qualitative analyses were conducted to explore this in more depth. The qualitative analyses used either a Constant Comparative Approach or Content Analysis. While these analytic approaches are different theoretically, they are similar analytically. In both cases, analyses follow a three step process: open coding, axial coding, and selective coding.

- Open coding- the process of reading each of the responses (text). The data were approached in a holistic and open way, seeking to identify words, phrases and/or sentences and determine how to label them. Analytic ideas that emerged from the text and are written in the margins for example.
- Axial coding- During and after open coding data is systematically related so that categories are linked with subcategories. Related labels are then sorted to similar codes identified. New codes are checked to see if they fit with any of the previous codes. Next, categories were highlighted throughout all data.

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- Selective coding- data is pulled together to form an explanation of the whole phenomenon by deciding on a central category or if none captured it completely, a conceptual idea under which all categories could be organized. Data within each of the categories were combined to develop more structured evidence.

In studies V and VI, the analyses of the open-ended responses followed a process similar to the one outlined above.

4. OVERVIEW OF THE EMPIRICAL STUDIES

Study I: Acquah, E. O., & Commins, L. N. (2013). Pre-service teachers' beliefs and knowledge about multiculturalism. *European Journal of Teacher Education*, 445-463. doi: 10.1080/02619768.2013.787593

Helping pre-service teachers to become culturally responsive practitioners must be a continuous priority of teacher preparation programmes. The purpose of this study was to examine the effectiveness of a multicultural education course and its efforts to provide pre-service teachers with knowledge about and experiences with issues related to diversity and multicultural education. In particular, this study sought to compare pre-service teachers' entry and exit point knowledge in a multicultural education course.

Participants were 38 students (Males = 3, Females = 35) who enrolled in a multicultural education course at an urban university in Southwestern Finland during the autumn semester of the 2011 – 2012 academic year. There were 19 degree students (15= international master's degree students, 4 Finnish degree students) and 19 exchange students from the ERASMUS students network. The age of the students ranged from 20 – 32 years. Preservice teachers' cultural beliefs and attitudes were assessed through the use of a pre and post survey, pre- and post-definition of key terms, learning journals, course evaluation, and focus group discussions.

This study suggested that the course made significant contribution towards students' cultural awareness and new learning. Evidence from the different data sources demonstrated that the course fostered change of attitudes and gains in cultural consciousness, with prospective teachers showing more willingness and confidence about teaching a diverse student population. Some aspects of the course contributed more significantly to preservice teachers' new learning than others. Group activities were cited as the most helpful (n = 18), followed by lectures (n=12) and the case study and learning journals.

Finally, the study revealed that preservice teachers restructured their diversity schema (most conspicuous from students' final reflections and focus group discussions) after taking the course, although the level of change varied between students. The results highlight factors that led to gains in knowledge including the use of multiple instructional methods and the diverse nature of the students enrolled on the course. Thus, an analysis of how particular instructional methods facilitated students learning and changing cultural attitudes were conducted (Studies II and III).

Study II: Acquah, E. O., & Commins, L. N. (2015). Critical reflection as a key component in promoting pre-service teachers' awareness of cultural diversity. *Reflective Practice*. doi:10.1080/14623943.2015.1095729

Critical reflection goes beyond simply thinking about our actions and motivations. It is situated within the moral, political, and ethical context of teaching by directly addressing questions pertaining to equity, access, and social justice and recognises how these concepts shape the learning experience for many students (Brookfield, 1995, 2002; Habermas, 1981; Mezirow, 1990, 2003). Given the evidence that the mainly White pre-service teachers in teacher education programmes bring limited background knowledge, skills and experience of diversity (Gay, 2010; Lucas & Villegas, 2013; Sleeter & Owuor, 2011), while at the same time student populations around the globe are becoming more diverse, critical reflection becomes an important consideration in multicultural pre-service teacher education. The aim of this study was to explore in more depth how engaging in critical reflection during a multicultural education course facilitated growing cultural awareness within a sample of international students.

The participants were forty-five students (Male = 4, Female = 41) enrolled in a multicultural education course during the Autumn semester 2014 at a medium sized university in the Southwest of Finland. There were 12 degree students (10= international master's degree students, 2 Finnish degree students) and 33 exchange students from the ERASMUS students network. The age range of participants was 19 to 41 (Mean age = 24). The class was diverse with students from 22 different countries. This study employed mixed-methods research design gathering both quantitative and qualitative data. The quantitative aspect was a quasi-experimental pre-post-test design using the cultural diversity awareness inventory CDAI (Henry, 1986, 1995). The pre-post-test of the instrument was administered at the beginning and end of the semester. Qualitative data was based on a case study of participants' learning journals, final reflection, focus group discussions, and course evaluation (seventeen questions of which nine were open ended).

The results demonstrated that students were critically reflective about culture and teaching. The act of writing down their thoughts facilitated preservice teachers' developing awareness of themselves as cultural beings and the implications for working with a diverse student population. It provided an avenue for students to re-evaluate their life experiences and ponder the role that culture played in education. The evidence suggested that students' understandings had changed with regard to issues such as culture, power, privilege, and educational equity and the role that these concepts play in students' learning.

The data revealed that many pre-service teachers' experienced cognitive dissonance when confronted with issues such as racism, privilege, power, oppression, and educational equity. There was evidence to suggest that the space and opportunities

provided for reflection were effective in helping them think deeply about these issues, resolve the dissonance and reconstruct their knowledge. A paired samples t-test of beginning and ending knowledge of diversity revealed a statistically significant difference in knowledge at the end of the course ($M = 103.02$, $SD = 10.13$) than at the beginning of the course ($M = 98.88$, $SD = 7.13$); $t(41) = -2.169$, $p < .05$, further confirming the evidence that emerged from students' written data.

Finally, that they were critically reflective, and moreover, that they considered such thinking critical for their professional development and ability to teach diverse student populations effectively attests to the effectiveness of critical reflection in transforming beliefs and attitudes.

Study III: Acquah, E. O., & Commins, L. N. (submitted). Addressing cultural diversity with teacher candidates: A multi-method approach to teaching. Higher Education

This study reported on the same sample of 45 international degree and exchange students as in study II. The purpose was to investigate the components of a model for a multicultural education course and its impact on students' development of knowledge, skills, and awareness to address the needs of learners from diverse backgrounds. The methods were similar to those used in study II. An additional analysis was conducted to compute descriptive statistics for students' closed-ended responses to the course evaluation.

The results demonstrated that all components of the model significantly contributed to students' developing cultural awareness. Participants' views on the lectures, small group activities, course content and readings, reflective journals, and seminars were overwhelmingly positive. An exception was students' views on preparing the seminars (case study presentation) where about 7% of participants responded that it was not helpful. Students' comments suggest that the case study was least helpful, either because some presentations were uninteresting, or they would have preferred to conduct similar interviews themselves. According to the analysis, the aspects of the course that most impacted students were the lectures and the small group activities and discussions embedded within them, as well as the case study analysis, presentation, and discussions. Approximately 95% of the teacher candidates in the class found the lectures and activities to be powerful and an eye-opening experience. The results revealed that teacher candidates found the opportunity to reflect extremely useful in supporting their continuous exploration of issues of diversity and in shaping their thinking about diversity. In addition, students found the observation at a diverse school to be quite useful in developing understandings of diversity. Many indicated that the school experience gave them first-hand experience of diversity in a school context where they could see theory put into practice.

Content analysis revealed three main themes that point to the ways in which the instructional methods employed in this class impacted candidates' developing cultural awareness including small group activities and opportunities for dialogue, learning through reflection, and field experiences. Finally, an important outcome of this study was the development of a model for teaching multicultural education to preservice teachers.

Study IV: Acquah, E. O., & Commins, L. N. (submitted). International students' perspectives of a diverse class on multiculturalism. *Journal of Further and Higher Education*

This fourth study investigated international students' experiences of and perspectives regarding their participation in a diverse class focused on multiculturalism. The purpose of the study was to understand the benefits (the added value) of studying abroad, particularly in a course focused on multicultural education as it relates to the development of cultural competence.

This study used the same sample and methods as studies II and III. Specifically, only the data from students course evaluation, learning journals, and focus group discussions were analysed due to the particular focus of this study. The analysis of students' course evaluation suggested that students perceived the multicultural nature of the students in the class as being the most helpful aspect in promoting their developing cultural understandings. Four themes emerged from the analysis of students' open-ended responses that point to how the diversity among students in the class influenced their developing cultural understandings:

- appreciation of the views and culture of others and the role that culture plays in teaching and learning
- insight into what a multicultural setting looks like
- benefits for professional practice – teaching
- opportunities for growth and understanding of cultural diversity

To better understand how the course context enhanced students' cultural understandings, their written work (journals, final course reflections, and focus group discussion transcript) was analysed. The data revealed six important ways in which the multicultural background of students in the class promoted their cultural understandings:

- opportunity to work with and learn from students with a variety of background
- recognizing the limitations of existing understanding and changing prior assumptions,

- engaging in critical self-examination
- conflict and tension as mediums for questioning worldviews
- linguistic challenges as basis for understanding what linguistically diverse students go through
- understanding what it means to build a classroom environment that respects and affirms students' culture

The results demonstrated a connection between students' lives as foreigners, the focus of the class, and their developing cultural understandings. This topic was explored more in depth through the experiences of one student over the course of the semester. This student's experiences, as documented in their learning journal, and articulated by other students as well, suggested that they experienced cultural change and challenges on a lot of levels. These included the different teaching styles in Finnish university, class schedules and locations, and cultural and socio-economic differences. These experiences appear to have helped them developed a new sense of understanding, respect, and empathy for immigrant students who like them had little social and cultural capital in a foreign country.

Finally, the study suggested that living in a country where one is an outsider, and where one lacks knowledge of and access to, many aspects of dominant cultural practice, including the language, can be a perfect context for challenging students' values, beliefs and assumptions. Thus, opportunities inherent in the rapidly increasing student mobility can be harnessed for developing intercultural competence. Engaging students in intercultural learning in a conducive, cross-cultural context can be transformative; leading them on a path toward culturally responsive teaching practices.

Study V: Acquah E. O., Tandon, M., & Lempinen, S. (2015). Teacher diversity awareness in the context of changing demographics. *European Educational Research Journal*.

The purpose of this study was to examine the changing demographics in Finland and teacher education focused on culturally responsive pedagogy. The aim was to gain an understanding of what teachers already knew from their experiences about teaching diverse learners in their classrooms, what strategies they currently used to address cultural and linguistic diversity, and to pinpoint where they were lacking. Additionally, the research sought to discover if there were any distinct profiles that might emerge that could become the basis for creating appropriate professional development opportunities for teachers to become more culturally and linguistically responsive.

This study used a mix of open and closed ended questions to gather data from ($N=89$) in-service teachers in a Finnish school that served over 1200 students in 1st

through 12th grade. About 54% of pupils in basic education and 19% in upper secondary spoke a home language other than Finnish or Swedish and were learning through Finnish as a second language. All the participants work with diverse learners during the school year. The questions gathered data about the teachers' knowledge about diverse learners, connections between multilingualism and learning, strategies for teaching diverse learners, and teachers' experiences and interactions with racially and ethnically diverse people in their own K-12 journeys. Data analyses proceeded through the use of SPSS Statistics 20 for descriptive statistics and qualitative analysis of participants' responses (Corbin & Strauss, 2008).

The research sample demonstrated an awareness of the existence of links between language, culture, and learning but did not have in-depth knowledge about strategies that could help them work successfully with this population by using learners' prior knowledge and experiences. Furthermore, participants in this study had little to no exposure to diversity during their years as students in Finnish schools and displayed limited knowledge about multilingual learners' culture and individual life circumstances. They have expressed a need to learn about the lives and cultures of diverse students and effective strategies to work with them.

A hierarchical cluster analysis using Ward's method produced three clusters for awareness (sound awareness cluster, average awareness cluster, and low awareness cluster), between which the variables were significantly different in the main. ANOVA test revealed statistically significant differences between the means of various clusters for each variable. This suggests that participants in each cluster had comparable levels of awareness that differed from the two other clusters. Post-hoc (Tukey) comparisons revealed that all variables reliably differentiated the three clusters through their cluster means except for the nature of academic Finnish and the challenges it poses for multilingual learners, which only significantly differentiated between clusters 2 and 1, and 3 and 1, but not clusters 2 and 3. It also revealed how culture influences learning, which only significantly differentiated between clusters 2 and 1 and 3 and 1 but not clusters 2 and 3.

Finally, a one-way multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) revealed that teachers' level of awareness of issues related to diversity (clusters) predicted their knowledge of strategies that they could use to teach these students.

Study VI: Acquah, E. O., Alisaari, J. & Commins, L. N. (Forthcoming). Finnish Teachers' Knowledge about Linguistically and Culturally Responsive Teaching. In S. Hammer & K. M. Viesca (Eds.). *Multilingual learners: What teachers should, do and will know - an international comparison*, submitted to Routledge Publishing.

Study VI investigated notions of diversity and diverse learners among practicing and beginning teachers in 3 contexts in Finland: an ethnically and culturally diverse teacher

training school, 5 other schools in the municipality; and teacher trainees at the beginning of their studies. The study aimed to compare and contrast the patterns in the data among the three groups.

In three different contexts, 380 participants completed questionnaires with both open and closed-ended questions regarding their awareness of and ability to use strategies for teaching students learning content and literacy through their second (or third) languages. Informants were asked to rate their levels of knowledge and skill on a six-point Likert-type scale as follows: 1= extremely low to 6= extremely high. Open-ended questions solicited teachers' understanding of how to support multilingual learners and in what areas they felt they would need support. Quantitative data were analysed using SPSS Statistics for descriptive statistics and frequencies. Qualitative data were analysed by coding and creating categories based on participants' responses (Corbin & Strauss, 2008).

The results suggested that the participants from the teacher training school demonstrated the highest level of awareness regarding how factors such as language, culture, race, and ethnicity influence the academic outcomes of their diverse learners. Beginning teachers reported relatively lower levels of awareness despite having what appeared to be a positive attitude toward culturally responsive pedagogy. Teachers in the broader municipality had demonstrably the lowest levels of awareness regarding how these factors affect education of multilingual learners. This relatively low awareness may be explained by their limited experience with any diversity in their childhood or adolescent years and about learners from foreign countries.

Regarding strategies for teaching a diverse student population, the results generally suggest that the participants had low knowledge of strategies that they could use to teach linguistically and culturally different students. Even veteran teachers did not have in-depth knowledge about strategies that could help them work successfully with this population. In particular, teachers were unfamiliar with ways to use learners' prior knowledge and experiences or the linguistic resources the students brought with them. The teachers from the multicultural training school demonstrated relatively higher knowledge with regards to strategies for teaching diverse students. The beginning teachers showed comparatively lower knowledge of strategies and teachers from the municipality schools demonstrated the lowest knowledge of strategies that they could use in a multicultural classroom setting.

The findings provided insight into aspects of teachers' knowledge about both the linguistic and cultural needs of their students, as well as what constitutes a repertoire of approaches and strategies to assure students' academic success. The salient ones are summarised in the following:

- Knowledge about different cultures

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- Relevant teaching methods to teach multilingual learners or knowledge how to support their learning
 - Information of or skills to teach Finnish as a second language or more knowledge of Finnish language and its challenging traits
 - Knowledge of how to encounter with multilingual learners' parents and engage them

These findings supports the development of the Competency Based model and can be used to frame the studies of pre-service teachers, as well as the professional development of practicing teachers in increasingly diverse contexts.

5. MAIN FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section begins with a summary of the broader aims of this dissertation. The main findings from the six sets of empirical studies will be summarised and their implications discussed. The limitations of the studies will be presented and then considerations for future research outlined.

The present dissertation had three main aims. The first aim was to investigate preservice teachers and practicing teachers' knowledge, attitudes, and skills about culturally and linguistically responsive teaching in order to devise best ways to prepare them to become equitable and culturally responsive practitioners. The second aim of this dissertation was to identify a repertoire of approaches and strategies that matter most in preparing teachers for culturally teaching pedagogy. The third aim of the present dissertation was to discover distinct profiles that might emerge and could become the basis in creating appropriate professional development opportunities for teachers to become more culturally and linguistically responsive. The theoretical framework was based on culturally and linguistically responsive teaching, critical cultural consciousness and transformative learning all of which articulate a vision of teaching and learning in a diverse society. These theoretical approaches provide fine theoretical frameworks and instructional approaches that can be used to ensure that teacher candidates are provided experiences of other cultures, the chance to examine their tacit assumptions and biases, and change their attitudes. Thus, a number of these theories and instructional approaches were used in an effort to help move teachers along culturally responsive teaching trajectories. Multiple data sources were used to enhance the credibility of the findings resulting in the triangulation of data. Cluster analytic procedures, multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA), and qualitative analyses, mostly Constant Comparative Approach, were used to understand teachers' and preservice teachers' developing cultural understandings.

The findings from the studies conducted as part of this dissertation supports the conclusion that the mainly White / mainstream teacher candidates in teacher education programmes bring limited background experiences, prior socialisation, and skills about diversity. In addition, the evidence supports the conclusion that taking a multicultural education course where identity development is a focus, can positively influence preservice teachers' knowledge and attitudes toward diversity. They point to approaches and strategies that matter most in preparing teachers for culturally responsive teaching including but not exclusively, small group activities and discussions, reflection, and field immersion. These results led to the development of a model for teaching a multicultural education course to preservice teachers.

The evidence demonstrated that the multiple instructional methods employed in this class, including the small group activities, readings, reflective journals, field

immersion, and case studies, influenced teacher candidates' development of cultural competence. Particularly important was the role that critical reflection (guided) can play in moving teachers along culturally responsive teaching trajectories. The results thus demonstrate that there are already some tools to address the necessary support needed to teach successfully a diversity of pupils and provide in-service training for those already practicing the teaching profession.

A goal of the present studies was to discover distinct profiles that might emerge and could become the basis for creating appropriate professional development opportunities for teachers to become more culturally and linguistically responsive. The results from studies V and VI provide insight into aspects of teachers' knowledge about both the linguistic and cultural needs of their students, as well as what constitutes a repertoire of approaches and strategies to assure students' academic success. Findings from study V revealed that teachers' knowledge of diversity can be categorized into sound awareness, average awareness, and low awareness. Knowledge of diversity was important in teachers' abilities to use students' language and culture to enhance acquisition of academic content; work effectively with multilingual learners' parents/guardians; learn about the cultural backgrounds of multilingual learners; link multilingual learners' prior knowledge and experience to instruction; and modify classroom instruction for multilingual learners. These findings support the development of a competency based model and can be used to frame the studies of pre-service teachers, as well as the professional development of practicing teachers in increasingly diverse contexts.

Study VI demonstrated that Finnish teachers across the three different contexts (an ethnically and linguistically diverse school, municipal schools, and beginning teachers) all had some general awareness of cultural diversity but did not have in-depth understanding of strategies that could help them work successfully with this population neither did they have knowledge about how to use learners' prior knowledge and experiences to enhance instruction. There were differences between teachers with regard to awareness of and knowledge of specific instructional strategies for teaching a diverse student. Teachers from the multicultural training school demonstrated relatively higher awareness of, and knowledge of, strategies for teaching a diverse student population than beginning teachers and the municipality teachers. It might be that the pedagogic repertoire of teachers has been responsive to the cultural diverse school environment (one hopes so), but when one works in isolation with minimal training or support available, certainly the scope for development is limited.

In summary, the present set of studies is among the first in Finland to attempt to investigate how teacher education programmes can equip teachers with the necessary attitudes, skills, and knowledge to enable them to work effectively with students from different ethnic and language backgrounds as they enter the teaching profession, determine aspects of multicultural teacher training that matter most, and develop a model for multicultural preservice teacher education. It is also among the few of its kind

to employ a mixed-method design thus illuminating practices and strategies that can be effective in preparing teachers for teaching in multicultural settings. The studies help to refine the tools and approaches to measuring the competencies of teachers teaching in mainstream classrooms and candidates in preparation. The studies also provide insight into where teachers currently are in their knowledge regarding culturally and linguistically responsive teaching by characterising their diversity competence and specific needs. It is acknowledged that the studies reported here are pioneering work in Finland and therefore are provisional; however, they provide an important window into the current situation in Finland, point to appropriate professional development supports for teachers, as well as provide direction for future research.

5.1. Theoretical Implications

Finding adequate responses to the diversity in our school classrooms is among the most pressing concerns of teacher education programmes across the globe. The present set of studies has several implications for existing theories on multicultural teacher education. First, the present work provides evidence to suggest that cultural heritage and prior experiences influence beliefs and attitudes in many ways. Importantly, the findings confirmed the well-established conclusion that the mainly White mainstream teacher candidates in teacher education programmes and practicing teachers bring limited background experiences, prior socialisation, and skills about diversity. Teacher educators must be careful not to view their teachers and candidates as deficient in culture and experiences. Teacher and candidates in preparation use their culture, perspectives, and dispositions as frames of reference when viewing information and people from a different cultural background (Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, Sleeter & Owuor, 2011; Ukpokodu, 2011). The present studies conducted with preservice teachers from over 25 different countries suggest that many students enter a multicultural foundations course with prejudices and stereotypic beliefs about people different from themselves and readily admit to holding preconceived beliefs and ideas a result that has consistently emerged across studies I to IV over the past four years. Reading through students' narratives (learning journals) helped to understand the basis of these beliefs; many of these preservice teachers who come from a variety of backgrounds, mostly representing more rural roots, have lived comfortably in their communities where they did not have to interact with diverse others. So when preservice teachers enroll in a diversity course, that is when a litmus tests of their cultural competence occurs when they interact with other people with different worldviews and with people from different cultural and ethnic backgrounds.

A second implication for theory development concerns the integration of coursework on multicultural education into teacher preparation. Studies I to IV highlight the design, integration, and implementation of a multicultural education course into a

teacher preparation programme and its impact on preservice teachers awareness and practices. Preservice teachers' reports about their learning and how their own thinking and knowledge evolved as a result of taking this course over the past four years can lead to the conclusion that multicultural foundation courses can indeed transform preservice teachers' cultural attitudes and beliefs. This result is particularly important for two main reasons. First, the mixed evidence regarding the impact of diversity courses on preservice teachers' attitudes. Review studies have consistently reported mixed results (Hollins & Guzman, 2005; Sleeter, 2008; Sleeter & Owuor, 2011). These reviews all cited evidence of studies that reported positive impact on teachers' cultural attitudes, beliefs and awareness and others that did not. The present findings thus help to clarify the confusion over the impact of multicultural education by suggesting that multicultural coursework can be relevant to developing cultural competence. A second reason why this finding is encouraging is the several criticisms levelled against multicultural education (see Cochran-Smith, 1995; Hollins & Guzman, 2005). The present work thus offer some hope that there are already some tools to address the need for support to teach a diversity of pupils successfully and provide in-service training for those already practicing the teaching profession. An additional implication regards how instructional strategies influence students learning. All studies focused on the integration of coursework on multicultural education into teacher preparation and its impact on students' awareness and practices (studies I – IV) highlight the importance of using multiple instructional methods and activities when addressing diversity with preservice teachers. These studies empirically support the conclusion that courses that incorporate a variety of teaching methods, create opportunities for interaction, encourage critical social perspectives, and provide opportunities for field experiences and reflection on all aspects of the coursework, can contribute to transforming teachers' cultural attitudes (Sleeter & Owuor, 2011).

The present work challenges the existing notions about preservice teachers' unwillingness or ability to engage in critical reflection that is considered the ethical, moral, and political dimensions of educational practice. There is a widely held view that critical reflection may be beyond the pale of a preservice teachers' capabilities (Calderhead & Gates, 1993; Hatton & Smith, 1994). Cochran-Smith (1991) argues that critically reflective teaching can only be learned by beginning teachers working in schools with experienced teachers who themselves value critical reflection. Berliner (1988) and Kagan (1992) contend that critical reflection is best thought of as a trait that is acquired by teachers who have several years of classroom experience. This elusive view of critical reflection has been supported by the fact that studies that have attempted to promote critical reflection have reported limited success (Dinkelman, 2000). The present work challenges these assumptions by showing that preservice teachers from 22 countries, on 4 different continents, who lived in unique socio-political contexts with divergent histories, all engaged in and most benefitted from the opportunity to participate in critical reflection. Given these widely held beliefs

about critical reflection, the presence of critical reflection in this study is of no small consequence.

Furthermore, teacher education research investigating critical reflection among preservice teachers has used single data sources, for example, student teacher action research (Gore & Zeichner, 1991), student teachers' report of their experiences (Hatton & Smith, 1994), and student-written case investigations (LaBoskey, 1994). An exception is Dinkelman (2000) who used interviews, participant observation, and reflective materials. Similar to Dinkelman, the present study (II) used multiple data sources including reflective journals, final reflection, focus group discussions, and course evaluation to investigate how critical reflection promoted students' learning. Related closely to this is the dearth of relevant theory and empirical research on how critically reflective teaching is promoted among preservice teachers (Dinkelman, 2000; Sparks-Langer & Colton, 1991). The present work thus contributes to theory development on promoting reflective teaching with preservice teachers.

Finally, there is a growing body of research highlighting the importance of international cultural experiences in teacher education. This work suggests that teacher education study abroad, ("immersion experience" or "sojourn" programmes) which are short-term (from a few weeks to a semester) and where the goal is specifically intercultural development, can foster developing cultural competence (Engle & Engle, 2003; Marx & Moss, 2011; Jackson, 2008). Despite the important benefits of international cultural experiences, there is only a paucity of comparable research reflecting how international degree-seeking students' and the nature of their experiences foster developing cultural competence. In addition, very little is known about how learning within an international student group on a course focused on multicultural education promotes intercultural development. The present work provides some theoretical and empirical approaches that can be used to examine how international preservice teachers' knowledge, beliefs, and awareness evolve in the context of a coursework designed to help them enhance their views about diversity and pedagogical practices. It is thus a profound development to the field by illuminating both theoretical and empirical approaches necessary for understanding how international degree-seeking students' and the nature of their experiences facilitate developing cultural competence.

5.2. Practical Implications

The present set of studies has implications for preparing teachers and candidates to embrace culturally and linguistically responsive perspectives and practices. Most important is the creation of a model for teaching multicultural education to preservice teachers. The model outlined previously and detailed in the study I provides a powerful example of how teacher educators can successfully address the increasing diversity in public schools in Europe by challenging teacher candidates' prejudices and beliefs through instructional

strategies and empowering them to engage in transformative experiences as they acquire cultural competence. The conceptual model encourages the use of a series of in-class activities and out-of-class assignments including readings, lectures, student led seminars, field immersion, group and paired discussions, and critical reflection. These varied and principally interactive teaching strategies are not necessarily new in teacher education – they have long been used in teacher preparation. What is unique and different about the present model is that it provides both a conceptual and pedagogical framework to teaching a multicultural foundations coursework. Conceptually, the model integrates strategies previously identified in the literature to be effective in transforming teachers' beliefs and attitudes (Hollins & Guzman, 2005; Sleeter & Owuor, 2011) and shows how they can be implemented by illuminating the interrelationship and interdependence of all the strategies used and their synergy effects. From a pedagogical perspective, the model employs a constructivist approach to instruction (Brooks & Brooks, 1993; von Glaserfeld, 1987). Thus, not only does it describe how these strategies can be translated and implemented in real classroom situations, but through its very delivery can demonstrate to preservice teachers how they can transform curriculum and classroom instruction to meet the needs of all students. While it is not intended to prescribe a set of strategies for multicultural teacher education, the model has been shown to be effective with both diverse student groups (e.g., international students) and a more homogeneous group (Finnish student teachers).

The present set of studies informs how teacher education programmes in general, and culturally and linguistically responsive education, in particular could be improved. The studies that investigated the integration of coursework on multicultural education into teacher preparation demonstrate that rather than solely planning the content of and the frequency of which multicultural education courses are taught, teacher education programmes should focus attention as well on how to teach such courses. Courses should be organised interactively to encourage critical social perspectives while providing opportunities for field experiences and reflection on all aspects of the coursework. An additional implication regards how critical reflection can be used to help teachers become equitable and culturally responsive pedagogical practitioners (Howard, 2003; Mezirow, 1990, 2003). Surprisingly, up until now not much is known about how to promote critical reflection among preservice teachers although it is a goal of numerous teacher preparation programmes (Dinkelman, 2000; Spark-Langers & Colton, 1991). Among the few studies that have attempted, relatively little success has been reported. So far, only one study has produced some evidence of critical reflection and subsequent effects on teaching practice (Dinkelman, 2000). However, this study was limited by the fact that it did not describe or illuminate how (the step by step processes) critical reflection was used to promote students' learning, thus limiting replicability and understanding of how it can be accomplished. The present work is therefore among the first to successfully show how critical reflection can be used with preservice teachers and demonstrates evidence of its transformative impact

on teachers' beliefs and attitudes. The results documented in study III illuminate how preservice teachers can be encouraged to critically reflect on issues of race, culture, privilege and equity and the implications for their own practice as teachers. This is important as classrooms across the globe are in need of teachers who have developed some expertise in reaching out and effectively teaching culturally and linguistically different students. Understanding how teacher education programmes can equip teachers with the necessary knowledge, skills, and attitudes to enable them to successfully teach students as they enter the teaching profession remains a top priority of many teacher education programmes (Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 2009; Lucas & Villegas, 2013).

The present work has implications for internationalisation in higher education. Study IV demonstrated that one of the most promising practices for challenging prospective teachers' beliefs and tacit assumption is placement in situations where they become the cultural "other" while at the same time, taking a coursework on diversity with a reflection component. Teacher educators can learn from the findings of this study as they design curricula for preparing teacher candidates for diversity and push forward practice. Teacher education programs can capitalise on the increasing mobility of students across national borders to promote students' intercultural competence. In situations where student groups are homogenous, placement in a different cultural context where they are the cultural outsiders becomes imperative. Immersion experiences need to be combined with coursework on diversity that engages the students in critical reflection about what they are learning and what they are experiencing, and what it means for their actions as teachers. Teacher educators must find ways to integrate coursework that makes explicit the study of culture and they must provide support for students to connect their experiences with the issues of diversity, thereby increasing understanding and motivation to act on them.

The present research helped to refine the tools and approaches to measuring the competencies of teachers teaching in mainstream classrooms. Studies V and VI provide insight into where teachers currently are in their knowledge regarding culturally and linguistically responsive teaching by characterising their diversity competence and specific needs. Educator training and intervention, especially those already in place in teacher education programmes, need to be streamlined to provide teachers with the opportunities for learning as equitable, culturally and linguistically responsive teachers and provide support and differentiated learning opportunities that meet their specific needs. While better training of teacher candidates is certainly needed, there is also need for in-service professional development in Finland where teachers typically continue in their careers for 25 – 30 years. Given the changing student demographic and projections, and the appearance of gaps in achievement between diverse students (mainly immigrants) and native Finnish students (Itkonen & Jahnukainen, 2007), teachers and candidates in preparation both in Finland and in other Scandinavian and European countries need to know more about culturally responsive teaching.

5.3. Directions for Future Research

The studies that comprise this dissertation represent initial work in Finland that attempted to identify the skills and knowledge teachers and student teachers have, and need to have, about working with multilingual and multicultural students from immigrant backgrounds. More replication of the studies, specifically studies I – IV with preservice teachers in different cultural contexts and student groups are needed to fully understand the impact of multicultural coursework on students' cultural attitudes. There is also a need for continuous refinement of the measures used in studies V and VI to fully understand teachers' current knowledge about culturally and linguistically responsive teaching in order to create teacher training and professional development opportunities. It would also be beneficial to document the effects of such training on the classroom practice of teachers and outcomes of learners. The results and the limitations of the set of studies that make up the present dissertation suggest possibilities for future research.

The design of studies I – IV was intended to allow an investigation of the manner in which multicultural coursework impacted preservice teachers' beliefs, attitudes, and awareness of diversity. While the results demonstrated that the course components positively impacted preservice teachers' cultural attitudes, the cross-sectional nature of the design, the small-scale, and short duration of the course limits the conclusions that can be drawn. Any progress reported on changes in preservice teachers' cultural attitudes, knowledge, and skills cannot be assumed with certainty to be sustainable over a long period of time. This situation makes it difficult to report that the findings, emanating from the present studies with preservice teachers while they are enrolled in teacher preparation, can predict their abilities to form relationships with students from different cultural and ethnic backgrounds, build bridges between school and home cultures, and incorporate the cultural characteristics, experiences, and learning styles of diverse students into the curriculum. Further research is needed that follows teachers through their teacher preparation and into their first years of teaching to determine the extent to which multicultural coursework and interventions help them become better teachers.

Investigation of the impact of the multicultural coursework was carried out using a quasi-experimental pre-post-test design without a control group. While this approach allows researchers to make inferences on the effect of an intervention by looking at the difference in the pre-test and post-test results, it limits interpretation of the results since the pre-test and post-test differences cannot be causally related to the intervention. Future research should construct studies with mixed methods approach and longitudinal designs that can yield predictor long-term results, which in turn would inform best practices for moving teachers along culturally and linguistically responsive teaching trajectories.

The course in foci was optional and the students involved in the research spontaneously decided to apply to the course, which means they were probably highly

interested in the topic. The positive and significant learning experiences reported here must be interpreted in the context of motivated students who are interested in the issues of diversity and, as a result, are keen to learn and more prone to reconsider, and eventually change, their prior knowledge. Furthermore, because the present samples of preservice teachers were very heterogeneous, consisting of many international students, the generalisability of the findings are limited. Applying these teaching strategies to other samples (a more homogenous group for example) will most definitely yield further interesting results. Finally, because this study focused on teacher candidates in only this course and there was not a controlled group, claims about causality cannot be made. Areas for further research include investigation of other samples, for example, a more homogenous group would yield further insight about the efficacy of these methods. Further investigation of whether the findings would generalise to other settings, for example, the ways in which implementation in different settings influence outcomes, and whether the multiple instructional methods can be effective in different cultural settings, warrant further research.

Another issue regarding the present work pertains to the measurement of the skills and knowledge that teachers have and need about working with multilingual and multicultural students from immigrant backgrounds. The measures used in studies V and VI asked teachers about their perceptions regarding these issues which yielded self-reported data. A major methodological problem with self-reported data concerns the extent to which these methods yield reliable and valid information about teachers' beliefs. In studying sensitive matters such as diversity, self-reported data may yield to socially desirable responses. This bias interferes with the interpretation of average tendencies as well as individual differences. Because the assessment did not include actual classroom observation of the teachers in action, responses may reflect what ideally would be done rather than the reality in actual instructional settings. Future research may use alternative methods such as classroom observations of teachers in action, teacher reflections, and autobiography. Such studies should lead to improved understanding of the relationship between personal experience, beliefs and practices.

At the end of this introductory chapter, let us return to the story described at the beginning and see how Tom's story ended. Despite all the painful experiences, Tom continued to go to school, found some moments of value and intellectual stimulation in the classes, and did not internalise his academic difficulties as negative statements about his personal capabilities. Tom graduated successfully from High School, and pursued a degree in a Finnish university in a field that even many of his Finnish colleagues drop out of. Currently, he is completing a doctorate degree in Molecular Process and Material Technology.

Tom attributes his success, in part, to those teachers who did reach out to him and helped reshape his attitude toward school and engagement with learning, particularly his Finnish as second Language teacher. Tom was full of gratitude for these teachers' support

throughout his academic journey in Finland. He noted “without their support I would not be where I am today”. Tom’s story highlights the potential for teachers, who are not the members of the same racial, ethnic, and linguistic group as that of their students, to become connected to their students and transcend their differences. This assures us that the proposals contained in this dissertation for reversing the underachievement of students of a minority background are attainable.

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