



MECHANISMS OF DEVELOPING PROFESSIONAL CULTURE-RELATED COMPETENCE IN FUTURE TEACHERS

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ABSTRACT

In the context of growing cultural diversity and globalization, the development of professional culture-related competence has become a critical objective of pre-service teacher education. This competence enables future teachers to effectively engage with culturally diverse learners and to promote inclusive educational environments. The present article examines key mechanisms for developing professional culture-related competence in future teachers. Drawing on contemporary theoretical frameworks in teacher education and intercultural pedagogy, the study identifies curriculum integration, reflective practice, experiential learning, and intercultural communication training as core mechanisms. The analysis demonstrates that culture-related competence develops most effectively through a systematic and holistic approach embedded across teacher education programs rather than through isolated interventions. The findings highlight the need for institutional support and continuous professional development of teacher educators. The article contributes to the theoretical discourse on teacher professionalism and provides practical implications for improving the quality of pre-service teacher education in multicultural contexts.

1. Introduction

In an increasingly globalized and culturally diverse world, education systems are faced with the challenge of meeting the needs of learners from varied cultural, linguistic, and socio-economic backgrounds. Teachers play a pivotal role in ensuring equity, inclusion, and academic success for all students. As classrooms become more diverse, the ability of teachers to understand, respect, and respond effectively to cultural differences has become a critical professional requirement rather than an optional skill. This ability is commonly referred to as **cultural competence**.

Cultural competence in education encompasses teachers' awareness of their own cultural identities, their understanding of students' cultural backgrounds, and their capacity to adapt pedagogical practices accordingly. Research suggests that culturally competent

teachers are better equipped to create inclusive learning environments, build positive teacher–student relationships, and reduce achievement gaps among culturally diverse learners (Gay, 2018; Banks, 2015). Consequently, cultural competence has gained recognition as a fundamental element of effective teaching and lifelong professional development. Contemporary education systems are increasingly shaped by cultural diversity, mobility, and globalization. As a result, teachers are expected not only to master subject knowledge and pedagogical skills but also to demonstrate professional competence in culturally diverse learning environments. This shift has positioned culture-related competence as a key dimension of teacher professionalism. Professional culture-related competence refers to teachers' ability to understand cultural values, norms, and identities, critically reflect on their own cultural positioning, and apply culturally responsive approaches in pedagogical practice. Previous research emphasizes that culturally competent teachers are more successful in fostering inclusive classrooms, supporting student engagement, and reducing educational inequalities (Banks, 2015; Gay, 2018). Despite its recognized importance, culture-related competence remains insufficiently integrated into many pre-service teacher education programs. Teacher preparation often prioritizes methodological and disciplinary training, while cultural and intercultural dimensions receive limited systematic attention. Therefore, identifying effective mechanisms for developing professional culture-related competence in future teachers is a pressing issue for teacher education research.

This article aims to analyze the mechanisms through which professional culture-related competence can be developed in future teachers and to outline implications for improving pre-service teacher education. This article also aims to examine cultural competence as a key component of professional teacher development. It explores theoretical perspectives on cultural competence, reviews relevant literature on culturally responsive teaching, and discusses the implications for teacher training and continuous professional growth. By emphasizing cultural competence, the study contributes to ongoing discussions on improving teaching quality and promoting inclusive education in diverse societies.

2. Theoretical Framework

The concept of professional competence in teacher education is multidimensional, encompassing cognitive, practical, social, and cultural components. Culture-related competence is closely associated with intercultural competence and culturally responsive pedagogy, which emphasize the ability to function effectively in culturally diverse contexts (Deardorff, 2006). Culturally responsive teaching theory views culture as an integral factor influencing learning processes and educational outcomes. According to Gay (2018), teachers must recognize and utilize students' cultural experiences as resources for learning. Similarly, Banks (2015) highlights the role of teachers' cultural awareness in promoting equity and social justice in education. From this perspective, professional culture-related competence is not a static trait but a dynamic construct developed through continuous learning, reflection, and practice. This understanding underpins the mechanisms analyzed in the present study.

Mechanisms of Developing Professional Culture-Related Competence

1. Curriculum Integration

Curriculum integration is a foundational mechanism for developing culture-related competence. Embedding cultural, ethical, and intercultural perspectives across teacher

education curricula ensures that culture-related competence is treated as a core professional requirement. Courses in multicultural education, global citizenship, and educational ethics contribute to the theoretical grounding of future teachers.

2. Reflective Practice

Reflective practice enables future teachers to critically examine their beliefs, assumptions, and potential biases related to culture and diversity. Reflective journals, guided discussions, and self-assessment tools support the development of cultural self-awareness, which is essential for professional growth and ethical teaching practice.

3. Experiential Learning

Experiential learning mechanisms, such as teaching practicums and community-based placements, provide opportunities for direct engagement with culturally diverse learners. These experiences allow future teachers to apply theoretical knowledge in authentic contexts and to develop intercultural sensitivity, adaptability, and empathy.

4. Intercultural Communication Training

Intercultural communication training focuses on developing skills for effective interaction in multicultural educational settings. Competencies such as active listening, respectful dialogue, and conflict resolution are essential for building positive relationships with students, parents, and colleagues from diverse cultural backgrounds.

Discussion

The analysis indicates that the development of professional culture-related competence requires a systematic and integrated approach. Isolated courses or short-term training initiatives are insufficient for achieving sustainable outcomes. Instead, teacher education programs should adopt a comprehensive model that combines curriculum integration, reflective practice, experiential learning, and communication training.

Moreover, teacher educators play a crucial role in implementing these mechanisms effectively. Their own level of culture-related competence significantly influences the quality of pre-service teacher preparation.

Conclusion

Professional culture-related competence is an essential component of future teachers' professional readiness in multicultural educational contexts. This article has identified key mechanisms for developing this competence and emphasized the importance of a holistic approach within pre-service teacher education. Integrating culture-related competence systematically into teacher education programs enhances teaching quality and supports inclusive education. Future research should focus on empirical validation of these mechanisms and explore context-specific models for developing professional culture-related competence in diverse educational systems.

Cultural competence has emerged as an indispensable component of professional teacher development in contemporary education systems. As student populations continue to diversify, teachers are increasingly required to move beyond traditional pedagogical skills and develop a deep understanding of cultural diversity and intercultural interaction. The literature reviewed in this article demonstrates that culturally competent teachers are more effective in fostering inclusive learning environments, supporting student engagement, and promoting academic equity. The findings suggest that cultural competence should not be

treated as an isolated or supplementary element of teacher education. Instead, it must be systematically embedded within pre-service training and in-service professional development programs. Such integration enables teachers to critically reflect on their beliefs, challenge implicit biases, and adopt culturally responsive pedagogical practices. Moreover, continuous professional development focused on cultural competence supports teachers in adapting to changing classroom demographics and global educational demands.

In conclusion, strengthening cultural competence within professional teacher development is essential for enhancing teaching effectiveness and ensuring inclusive, high-quality education for all learners. Future research should focus on empirical evaluation of cultural competence training models and explore context-specific approaches that address local and global educational challenges. By prioritizing cultural competence, educational institutions can better prepare teachers to meet the complex realities of multicultural classrooms and contribute to more equitable and socially just education systems..

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