**A Critical Multicultural Critique
of Teacher Education National Accreditation Standards**

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The adjective *diverse* historically holds a rather neutral dictionary definition: "of a different kind, form, character, etc.; unlike" ("Diverse," 2001, p. 574). In general congruence with the use of the term in national education standards, *diversity* is more specifically used in this paper in its common 21st century form in referencing differences among racial and ethnic identification, gender, sexuality, and class (Harper, 2013). This contemporary use leads to such expressions as *diverse students* and *cultural diversity*, both of which imply that, for individuals identified as socially, politically, or economically different from mainstream populations, diversity is also a lived experience.

National teacher education standards help set expectations for teachers and teacher educators in learning about and mediating issues related to diversity. This paper examines how normative diversity discourse affects teacher education and institutional practices that serve as evidence for meeting diversity standards. Specifically, I analyze national teacher education standards in relation to diversity and multicultural requirements as articulated for national accreditation by the National Association for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) (2007; 2008a; 2008b), the Council for Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP) (2013; 2015b), and the Council of Chief State School Officers (1992; 2011; n.d.). The latter group is associated with educator preparation expectations articulated in Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC)

documents and authored collectively by the chief educational officers from each of the 50 state departments of education.

In 2012 NCATE began a process of merging into the new CAEP.[*] A stated purpose was to develop uniform data collection available for more rapid program feedback and adjustments and to increase communication between higher education preparation programs and school districts, a process that would be mandatory by 2016 (Cibulka, 2015). The new organization is in part a response to external political pressures that believe higher education requirements should be more demanding and accountable for the teachers who graduate from their education programs (Basu, 2012).

Methodological Approach

Standpoint theory situates this investigation within a critical multicultural orientation (Au, 2012; May, 2012). Because critical multiculturalism works to counter hegemonic positions both inside and outside school districts and higher education, this orientation examines interpretations and operationalization of diversity expectations and standards for their potential effects on historically marginalized children and youth. In order to understand the implications of teacher education accreditation standards for diverse students, a qualitative investigative method into diversity expectations was used. Qualitative comparisons were conducted between NCATE and CAEP by using primary documents from both organizations along with related INTASC publications.

A content or "*categorical* analysis" (Elliott, 2005, p. 38) sought to determine the extent of diversity and multicultural teacher education expectations in NCATE, CAEP, and INTASC documents. The following search word were primarily used in this analysis:

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[*] Cibulka (2015) provides a concise summary of this transition.

diverse, diversity, multicultural, culture, cultural, race, racial, ethnic, gender, sexual orientation, class, socio-economic status, discrimination, equity, and *justice*.

A Critical Multicultural Analysis of NCATE

By the use of the term *diversity* in the absence of any mention of *multicultural*, turn-of-the-century NCATE (2001) standards advanced an assimilationist assessment ideology upon state-level accrediting requirements that drive higher education teacher education practices. A critique of those standards and accompanying assessment rubrics revealed an absence of transformative knowledge grounded in historical foundations of white privilege, property rights, and color blindness (Vavrus, 2002). Seven years later NCATE (2008b) tinkered with diversity expectations.

Just one use of the term multicultural was found in the primary text of NCATE teacher education accreditation standards (2008b) by mentioning the importance of "educators who can reflect *multicultural* and *global perspectives* that draw on the histories, experiences, and representations of students and families from diverse populations" (p. 36, emphasis added). NCATE's glossary defined a "multicultural perspective" as "an understanding of the social, political, economic, academic, and historical constructs of ethnicity, race, socioeconomic status, gender, exceptionalities, language, religion, sexual orientation, and geographical area" (p. 87). Nevertheless, the language of this NCATE definition was not incorporated into rubric assessments that determine acceptable higher education institutional practices for future teachers.

NCATE's (2008b) definition of "global perspective" was "an understanding of the interdependency of nations and peoples and the political, economic, ecological, and social concepts and values that affect lives within and across national boundaries" (p. 87). Again,

this expectation lacked a clear rubric assessment and overlooked interlocking elements of

discrimination against marginalized populations, profit accruement on the backs of such

groups, the prioritizing of military expenditures, and the decline of public funds for schools

and other fundamental human needs as witnessed under globalized neoliberal policies.

NCATE (2008a) announced the addition of "linguistic diversity to the rubrics" (para.

7). NCATE's ahistorical approach to linguistic diversity, however, failed to help higher

education institutions (a) to incorporate a critique of the neo-colonial determination of a

nation's acceptable languages and (b) to examine the origins of contemporary "English-

only" movements by nativist monocultural, anti-immigration groups. This is a particular

concern in which linguistic diversity is in decline globally and English remains privileged

(Harmon & Loh, 2010; Romaine, 2009).

To its diversity standard NCATE (2008a) inserted the statement "*Candidates are*

helped to understand the potential impact of discrimination based on race, class, gender,

disability, sexual orientation, and language on students and their learning" (para. 7). Despite

naming commonly recognized categories of oppression, NCATE did not guide higher

education to explicitly incorporate into their practices historical legacies as to how and

why those in economical and politically privileged positions (a) develop exclusionary

practices and policies, (b) targeted specifically identified populations, and (c) permit

manifestations of this legacy of discrimination in contemporary school settings.

NCATE (2007) explained that acknowledgment of social justice was new for this

higher education accrediting organization. That social justice was "well understood by

NCATE's institutions" (para. 11) is merely asserted and lacks definition and any

documented validity. Granted that *individual* critical multicultural educators are located in

some institutions, this cannot simply be equated with *institutional* programmatic incorporation of social justice discourse except for a few noteworthy exceptions. Problematic for diverse children is a social justice assertion that exists as floating signifier without a grounded context. For social justice to be operational, it would need to be grounded in concrete, lived experiences that can lead to a reduction or elimination of oppressive conditions for diverse populations of children and youth. Mere assertions of social justice can neglect actual sources of material inequality and the role that dominant groups play in defining what is justice.

Under NCATE (2008b) standards, colleges and universities defaulted to the 50-state leadership of the Council of Chief State School Officers (1992) in the Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC) standards to articulate teacher dispositions. In these standards, INTASC (1992) employed abstracted references to "cultural sensitivity," "cultural norms," "cultural differences," and "human diversity" (pp. 14-15, 21-22). Indeterminate and disconnected from social justice, INTASC standards are said to "represent a shared view among the states and within the profession of what constitutes competent beginning teaching" (Council of Chief State School Officers, n.d., para. 2).

A Critical Multicultural Analysis of CAEP

In 2013 CAEP issued new standards that accept "in their entirety" (p. 29) revamped INTASC standards (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2011). Diversity was highlighted in both of the CAEP and INTASC standards. For the well-being of diverse student populations this potentially provides a welcomed step. There is no question that the intent of CAEP is to focus on diversity issues throughout all of its standards, in part by its

alignment with the latest version of INTASC standards. By the early 2020s a representative

sample from institutional self-studies may indicate how well these new standards are

working in practice.

Most encouraging from a critical multicultural standpoint was CAEP's (2013) clear

insistence that "[d]iversity must be a pervasive characteristic of any quality preparation

program" (p. 29). Furthermore, programs must make certain "that candidates develop

proficiencies in specific aspects of diversity" in accordance to CAEP's standards by

"embed[ding] diversity issues throughout all aspects of preparation programs" (p. 29).

Examples provided of expected proficiencies for institutions that CAEP accepts include

- Incorporation of multiple perspectives to the discussion of content, including attention to learners' personal, family, and community experiences and cultural norms.

- A commitment to deepening awareness and understanding the strengths and needs of diverse learners when planning and adjusting instruction that incorporates the histories, experiences and representations of students and families from diverse populations…

- An understanding of their own frames of reference (e.g., culture, gender, language, abilities, ways of knowing), the potential biases in these frames, the relationship of privilege and power in schools, and the impact of these frames on educators' expectations for and relationships with learners and their families. (p. 29)

These noteworthy changes in the 2011 INTASC standards are a recognition for the

necessity of culturally relevant or responsive teaching (see Gay, 2010).

Definitional and operational challenges in addressing diversity

Compared to its previous version from 1992, the new INTASC standards focused

more clearly on diversity. The document *INTASC Model Core Teaching Standards* expands

on liberal definitions that only consider *individual* differences and incorporates critical

"*group* differences" such as "race, ethnicity, ability, gender identity, gender expression,

sexual orientation, nationality, language, religion, political affiliation, and socio-economic

background" (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2011, p. 21, emphasis added).

Nevertheless, nearly all expressions of diversity in the actual INTASC standards focus on

the individual as isolated from the effects of group experiences of discrimination.

　　The INTASC standards preface their definition of diversity by claiming that there

exists "an explosion of learner diversity" (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2011, p. 3).

Acknowledging an increase in second-language children and the proportional population

decline in the percentage of Whites, CAEP (2015b) awkwardly states, "From race and

ethnicity to poverty, language, disabilities, giftedness, religion, sexual orientation, and

gender, America *is* diversity" (p. 20, emphasis in original). This asserted "explosion" of

diversity along with equating diversity with the U.S. overlooks a long history of politically

suppressed expressions of diversity. Additionally, national accreditation documents are

silent on the ideological tensions that are foundational to historical claims over the

importance and value of diversity in our current era (see Vavrus, 2015, chap. 2).

　　Too often standards default to the descriptor "cultural" in performance and

knowledge expectations to capture the range of diversity from their stated definitions (for

example, Council of Chief State School Officers, 2011, pp. 10, 11, 16). It remains unclear if

both CAEP and INTASC assumed that diversity falls under an umbrella of culture since

nowhere in either document were expectations spelled out for knowledge, skills, and

dispositions related to specifically addressing race, ethnicity, sexuality, gender, and

religion. This was reminiscent of NCATE's (2008b) glossary terms as discussed above that

did not appear in rubric evaluations. By defaulting to culture when considering, for

example, socio-economic status or racial discrimination assumes that the problem resides

in some notion of culture rather than as a function of existing political and economic

structures that can reproduce inequality in schools. This shortcoming exists despite

CAEP's (2013) desire, as noted earlier, to have institution address "the relationship of

power and privilege in schools" (p. 29).

      Outside of history.   The ahistorical nature of both of these documents leaves out

that diversity as a lived experience places arguments over concepts of liberty, freedom, and

equality as foundational in accounting for tensions over diversity – broad societal issues

that should be made impossible for future teachers and their teacher educators to ignore

when assessing candidate performances and overall knowledge. In other words, a change

of the status quo through an expansion of freedom and equality is implicit when diverse

groups call for *recognition of identities* and *redistribution of societal opportunities and*

material outcomes. Identity recognition can be inferred from INTASC standards with such

"critical dispositions" as "The teacher respects learners as individuals with differing

personal and family backgrounds and various skills, abilities, perspectives, talents, and

interests" and "The teacher values diverse languages and dialects and seeks to integrate

them into his/her instructional practice to engage students in learning" (Council of Chief

State School Officers, 2011, p. 11). Full expression of a critical aspect of diversity that

involves the equitable redistribution of opportunities and resources is not overtly

addressed by CAEP and INTASC documents.

      Economically neoliberal.   A place in the standards where the diversity issue of

redistribution could be addressed is in the expectation that teachers must know how to

design curriculum "to engage learners in critical thinking, creativity, and collaborative

problem solving related to *authentic local and global issues*" (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2011, p. 8, emphasis added). *Global* as used in these documents remains indeterminate except for CAEP's (2013) statement that the ultimate goal is for teachers to prepare their students "to compete in today's global economy" (p. 5). Once again, the trope that education is responsible for making U.S. citizens economically competitive ignores the most recent economic debacle of the Great Recession of 2007-09 and the racial and class disparities of income and wealth created under neoliberalism that have continued.

From a critical multicultural standpoint, such a promise of economic competitiveness by CAEP is disingenuous and a mere repetition of the same neoliberal phrasing from the 1992 INTASC standards (Council of Chief State School Officers, 1992, p. 8). Without teachers understanding schooling in relation to the historical roots of discrimination in jobs and housing that affect the life opportunities for many students of color, females, and sexual minorities, CAEP standards for diversity become a tacit reiteration of a master narrative premised on the U.S. as a land of equal opportunity. Contextual critical knowledge is imperative for teachers to seriously meet the expectation that a "teacher understands schools as organizations within a historical, cultural, political, and social context and knows how to work with others across the system to support learners" (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2011, p. 19).

Judging an educator preparation program

CAEP (2015a) defaults exclusively to "peer judgment" (p. 33) as to how to determine if institutions are meeting qualitative standards that "have embedded aspects of diversity within them" (p. 21). In an appendix CAEP acknowledges that institutional "evidence needs review by trained evaluators and that CAEP would construct clear rubrics

to guide a consistent interpretation" (p. 33). Unlike NCATE, CAEP nevertheless appears to be moving ahead without rubrics that can help give clearer guidance to institutions for meeting qualitative expectations for diversity. Furthermore, for external evaluators to judge how institutions determine the adequacy of their future teachers, according to CAEP's (2015a) *Evidence Guide*, institutions are assumed to supply "a rubric or scoring guide" (p. 23). This suggests that each institution is creating its own idiosyncratic scoring tools which currently leaves to CAEP evaluators to determine the validity and reliability of such measures. CAEP appears to recognize the effect this can have on fairness by noting concern about "the limited perspective of an untrained observer undertaking a classroom observation or applying a rubric" (p. 20).

Without explicit guidance for those responsible for preservice and inservice teacher education, attention to contested diversity features of race, ethnicity, sexuality, gender, and religion are likely to remain problematic for the best interests of diverse groups of students. Any of these contested differences portend volatile ideology clashes. Critically, nevertheless, CAEP (2013) does acknowledge how, as cited above, that various "frames" of diversity categories impact "educators' expectations for and relationships with learners and their families" in the context of a "relationship of privilege and power in schools" (p. 29). What are labeled *frames* are *ideologies* that can help teachers understand why diversity is a contested concept. Assessment criteria, however, would need to explicitly include attention to such frames or ideologies, currently a missing CAEP benchmark and INTASC essential knowledge.

From the standpoint of a critical multicultural orientation, the content analysis revealed a questionable absence of any reference to the word *multicultural* in either of the

new CAEP or INTASC documents. Teachers, administrators, and teacher education

programs do not suffer from a lack of information on how to incorporate diversity issues

into the operations of schools and preparation programs through multicultural education

(for example, Banks, 2012). Despite an abundance of resources based in theory, research,

and practice, the relevancy and legitimacy of multicultural education varies in accordance

with ideological orientations (Vavrus, 2015). Substantial resistance apparently remains to

inclusion of a *multicultural perspectives* or *social justice*, concepts that NCATE (2007,

2008a) had at least defined but were eliminated in the creation of CAEP.

Conclusion

The standpoint taken in this paper is aware of long-standing forces that wish to

dismantle university-based teacher education programs. Most recently the president of

CAEP warned about "efforts to dismantle teacher licensure and to bypass the institution of

accreditation" and added that such "threats…should not be underestimated" (Cibulka,

2015, para. 1). This attack is not new, however.

Fifteen years ago a front page *New York Times* headline "Less Training, More

Teachers: New Math for Staffing Classes" observed efforts where teacher preparation was

enthusiastically being by-passed at the college level in favor of local school districts with

"their own crash courses that put teachers in the classroom after as little as three weeks"

that claimed superiority of this approach over existing higher education models (Zernike,

2000, p. 1). The privatized fast-track entry to teaching, Teach for America (TFA), remains

popular with various liberal and conservative groups interested in educational reform

despite research that "certified teachers consistently produce stronger student

achievement gains than do uncertified teachers" (Darling-Hammond, Holtzman, Gatlin, &

Heilig, 2005, p. 2). Additionally, the authors note, "These findings hold for TFA recruits as well as others" (p. 2). Even when fast-tracked teachers gain certification, "nearly all of them leave within three years" (p. 2).

Despite these perennial attacks on university-based teacher education, CAEP still has an opportunity to give diversity expectations a critical grounding. Critical multicultural education posits the importance for educators to enact instruction in ways that rupture naturalized and privileged exclusionary practices of schooling (Vavrus, 2015). Assessment rubrics with a critical orientation are necessary to meet this objective, but neither the Council of Chief State School Officers nor CAEP have yet to take that important next step. Drafts of critical rubrics devoted to deepening commitments to diversity exist and could serve as a basis for eventual creation of such measures. The Appendices to this paper contains two previously published examples of transformative rubrics, Appendix A, "Multicultural Historical Foundations" and Appendix B, "Multicultural Design, Implementation, and Evaluation of Curriculum and Experiences."

Most problematic is the lack of acknowledgment in national teacher education expectations as to how the political economy of white supremacy, patriarchy, and class disparities directly impact diverse students and their families and communities. In tacit support of a unified image of a common culture that assimilates diverse perspectives, policy makers suppress or cautiously manage diversity and multiculturalism. One explanation is the perception that multicultural education is too ideologically contentious for 50 state superintendents and a broad spectrum of educators to find agreement in a consensus documents that would significantly incorporate diverse identity recognition and support for redistribution of resources and opportunities for diverse learners. (cf. Cochran-

Smith & Fries, 2011). Hence, scholars and educational activists with a critical multicultural commitment can advance this work by assessing revisions to educator standards and researching institutional reports based on CAEP standards as they become available.

Regardless of current standards, we can anticipate that contested diversity issues will continue to surface in public schools with critical multicultural advocates challenging a status quo that has historically been detrimental to the interests of diverse groups of children. Although critically knowledgeable teachers and teacher educators can actively participate in making a political climate that best serves all students, they can face challenges when going against the grain of teacher education national policy. For CAEP to fend off attacks on teacher preparation and to operationalize diversity expectations, CAEP will need to reach out to civil rights organizations and community groups struggling against monocultural hegemony to gain both public support and assistance in advancing critically informed assessment expectations that can find their way into valid and reliable rubrics.

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Appendix A: Multicultural Historical Foundations

Elements of Standard	Unacceptable	Acceptable	Target
Multicultural historical foundation knowledge for Teacher Candidates	Candidates are not familiar with a US historical foundation of white privilege and property rights and its manifestation in contemporary political, economic, and educational systems through various forms of biases and racism. Candidates do not know how this foundation influences both the curriculum plans they design and the educational & life opportunities for students of color and other diverse populations. They are unaware of a US history of oppression of and subsequent opposition and resistance by people of color to racism, especially as pertains to the schooling process.	Candidates articulate how a US historical foundation of white privilege and property rights manifests itself in contemporary political, economic, and educational systems through various forms of biases and racism, including color-blindness. Candidates understand how this foundation can negatively influence both the curriculum plans they design and the educational & life opportunities for students of color and other diverse populations. They are aware of a US history of oppression of and subsequent opposition and resistance by people of color to racism, especially as pertains to the schooling process.	Candidates demonstrate in their curriculum plans learner goals, activities, and assessments designed to redress the negative impact of a US historical foundation of white privilege and property rights and its manifestation in contemporary political, economic, and educational systems through various forms of biases and racism, including color-blindness. Candidates understand how transformative multicultural education can serve to benefit all students, especially children of color, in a pluralistic democracy. They are aware of a contemporary transformative multicultural challenge inherent in the US history of oppression of and subsequent opposition and resistance by people of color to racism, especially as pertains to the schooling process.

Source: Vavrus (2002, p. 61). Note: *This is a transformative addition to existing NCATE standards.* The descriptors of the assessment column headings are the same as those used by NCATE (2001). The descriptors of "elements of standard" column and the grammatical discourse in the columns of performance are parallel to NCATE's usage.

Appendix B:
Multicultural Design, Implementation, and Evaluation of Curriculum and Experiences: Transforming a NCATE Diversity Standard

Elements of Standard	Unacceptable	Acceptable	Target
Multicultural Design, Implementa-tion, and Evaluation of Curriculum and Experiences	…The curriculum and field experiences for the preparation of educators is not designed to prepare candidates to work effectively with diverse-populations, including persons with exceptionalities *and those of color. The curriculum and field experiences do not attend to the exclusionary effects of white privilege and color-blindness on multicultural understandings in a diverse society.* Candidates do not have an understanding of the importance of diversity *and the harmful impact of historical and contemporary exclusions* in teaching and learning. They are not developing skills for incorporating diversity *and transformative multicultural knowledge* into their teaching and are not able to establish a classroom and school climate that values diversity *by opposing color-blindness in an effort to overcome exclusions.* Assessments of candidate proficiencies do not provide data on candidates' ability to help all students learn *in a transformative multicultural curriculum….*	…Curriculum and accompanying field experiences are designed to help candidates understand the importance of diversity *and multicultural challenges of white privilege and color-blindness* in teaching and student learning *in a diverse society.* Candidates learn to develop and teach lessons that incorporate diversity *and transformative multicultural knowledge* and develop a classroom and school climate that values diversity *by opposing color-blindness in an effort to overcome exclusions.* Candidates become aware of different learning styles shaped by cultural influences, *including those influenced by multicultural challenges of white privilege and color-blindness,* and are able to adapt instruction and services appropriately for all student, including students with exceptionalities *and those of color.* They demonstrate dispositions that value fairness and learning by all students *through inclusiveness while consciously avoiding perspectives influenced by white privilege and color-blindness.* Assessments of candidate proficiencies provide data on the ability to help all students learn *in a transformative multicultural curriculum….*	Curriculum, field experiences, and clinical practice help candidates demonstrate knowledge, skills, and dispositions related to diversity *and multicultural challenges of white privilege and color-blindness.* They are based on well-developed knowledge bases for and conceptualizations of, diversity…*that prioritizes transformative multicultural knowledge* so that candidates can apply them effectively in schools. Candidates learn to contextualize teaching and to draw upon representations from the students' own experiences and knowledge*, including those historically excluded due to white privilege and color-blindness.* They learn how to challenge students toward cognitive complexity and engage all students, including students with exceptionalities *and those of color*, through instructional conversation *mindful of historical and contemporary exclusions and student degrees of cultural encapsulation.* Candidates and faculty review assessment data that provide information about candidates' ability *(a)* to work with all students*, including children of color, and (b) to provide a transformative multicultural curriculum….*

Source: Vavrus (2002, p. 66). Note: Italics represents transformative revisions to an existing NCATE (2001) assessment expectations (p. 29).