

Preparing Culturally Responsive Han Teachers in China: A Case study of One Teacher  
Education Program

Huanshu Yuan

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Reading Committee:

Geneva Gay, Chair

Kenneth Zeichner

Dixie Massey

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Huanshu Yuan

University of Washington

**Abstract**

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Huanshu Yuan

Chair of the Supervisory Committee:

Professor Geneva Gay

College of Education

The People's Republic of China is a multiethnic, multilingual, and multicultural country, with 56 different ethnic groups. From the foundation of The People's Republic of China, various policies and reforms were implemented to improve national education quality. Despite the central government's concerns about promoting education equity and quality for ethnic minority, rural, and migrant students, they are still often criticized to be biased and stereotypical representation in mainstream Han society. In working with an increasingly diverse student populations, a critical question majority Han teachers and teacher educators must ask themselves is what teaching strategies and educational practices are in place to enhance instructional quality to effectively teach multicultural and multiethnic students.

This qualitative case study addressed this issue by examining teacher education programs from a target normal university in Beijing. Qualitative research analyses of data generated from semi-structured interviews, narrative stories, and documents produced five major findings. These were: Ambiguous perceptions of diversity; inadequate academic preparation in teaching for diversity; disparity between academic training and teaching practice; transformative pedagogy through multicultural teaching experiences; and institutional lack of commitment to preparing teachers for diversity. Based on the findings, several recommendations for future research and practice were suggested. These included promoting multicultural awareness, redefining multicultural knowledge and competence, refining university-based teacher education for preparing culturally responsive teachers, connecting teacher education to living communities, and reinforcing policy implementation regarding programmatic efforts to prepare teachers for cultural, ethnic, and regional diversity. The results of such research could contribute to the improvement of ethnic minority education, rural education, and education for all Chinese students.

## **DEDICATION**

For my parents, who love me unconditionally and support me wholeheartedly.

For my grandparents, who encourage me to always follow my heart.

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## Chapter I: Introduction

The People's Republic of China is a multiethnic, multilingual, and multicultural country, which is governed by a single party government, the Communist Party (Leibold & Chen, 2014). China is also the world's most populous country with 56 different ethnic groups (Leibold & Chen, 2014). It claims to advocate "diversity in unity of the Chinese nation" (Fei, 1999 as cited in Wang, 2004, p.358). Hans are the dominant ethnic group. The other 55 ethnic groups are regarded as minorities (Shaoshu Minzu 少数民族) (National Census Bulletin of Statistics of China, 2010; Leibold & Chen, 2014). Han culture is the mainstream of the society, and Mandarin is the official language and required for all groups in China (Wang, 2004). Historically, most minority groups live on the frontiers of mainland China (Zhao, 2007). The majority of minority areas are underpopulated in comparison to the residential areas of the Hans. Along with the social transformation and urbanization processes, the number of minorities has been increasing, especially in metropolitan cities since the Chinese government started enabling the migration movement of people for both economic development and the improvement of individual living standards (Iredale & Guo, 2003).

China's ethnic policy holds that the country is composed of 56 ethnic groups (minzu 民族), with emphasis on both political integration and cultural diversification (Postiglione, 2000). From the foundation of The People's Republic of China, various policies and reforms were implemented to improve national minority education quality. Despite the central government's concerns ethnic minorities are still often linked to biased cultural representation and stereotypical images in mainstream society (Zhao, 2007). Many Hans hold deficit attitudes toward non-Han groups and "label them as barbarians" (Gladney, 1994; Postiglione, 1995 as cited in Zhao, 2007, p.4). This historically rooted stereotype has negative influences on cultural representations and

educational experiences of minorities and their cultures in mainstream society, while the ethnic majority Han culture is represented as valued, modern, and normal.

Hansen (1999) points out that instead of correcting Han biased and negative images of minority groups, the Chinese central government and state education play a role in “reproducing notions of cultural inequity in the process of unifying the whole nation” (p.159). The national policy of assimilating minority groups into Han culture magnifies Han dominance and neglects non-Han cultures in teaching multiethnic students (Zhao, 2007). Thus, the message received by many ethnic minority and majority populations is to be Han is to be modern. While minority songs, clothing, and dances are celebrated and ethnic artifacts are preserved, the prescription for modernization includes education as cultural assimilation. Not surprisingly, as Postiglione (2014) suggested, this is reflected in China’s contemporary education and schooling practices.

### **The Building of a Unified-multiethnic Country**

Ethnic minorities in China account for about 8% of the national population, but they live in the boundary areas which occupy almost 60% of the national landmass (Gladney, 1994 as cited in Zhao, 2007). Therefore, as Zhao (2007) indicated, promote ethnic unity has been one of the central government’s major concerns. Its purpose is to unify ethnic groups while maintaining ethnic harmony and political stability by emphasizing Han dominant ideology, social and cultural capital, and Mandarin instruction and learning (Mackerras, 1998; Yu, 2014; Leibold & Chen, 2014).

Under the influence of balancing national unity and ethnic diversity, the state education system seeks to transform its goal of achieving ethnic harmony into a more “complex reality” (Mackerras, 1998; Leibold & Chen, 2014). Educational curricula and policies are designed to cultivate feelings of shared national belonging through establishing specially designed programs

which target both ethnic minority and Han majority citizens (Leibold & Chen, 2014). They include “history and geography courses that emphasize national unity; civic lessons address the national ethnic policies and systems of regional autonomy for ethnic minorities; schools and boarding schools in inland cities created for ethnic minority students education; and a series of preferential treatment policies that promote equal educational opportunities for minority students” (Postiglione, 2014, as cited in Leibold & Chen, 2014, p.6). Thus, state education is considered a process of achieving the “gradual fusion (融合) of the Han majority and the fifty-five minority groups into a single great unity” (Leibold & Chen, 2014, p.6). It also represents the ultimate goal of ethnic education which “Sun Yat-sen and Liang Qichao described as the fusing together in a single furnace” (融而入于一炉) (Leibold & Chen, 2014, p.6), and is today idealized as “a uniquely Chinese version of the ethnic melting pot” (民族大熔炉) (Leibold & Chen, 2014, p.6).

In addition to state education policies and practices, ethnic minority groups develop their own education systems and ideologies based on local religions. This is especially so in China’s five ethnic autonomous regions of Tibet, Xinjiang, Inner Mongolia, Ningxia, and Guangxi (Leibold, 2014). For example, minority education in Tibet is comprised mainly of Tibetan and Buddhism education which is carried out in the monasteries (Mackerras, 1998, Leibold, 2014). Teachers in these minority schools are mainly from the local ethnic group and live in the local communities. Moreover, the curriculum and learning materials used, and local knowledge taught in these ethnic minority schools, are very different from what Han and other ethnic minority students are taught outside the autonomous regions (Mackerras, 1998; Leibold & Chen, 2014). These minority schools in ethnic autonomous regions and the state schools outside autonomous regions create a “dual structure” that results in separate cultural spaces and teaching beliefs for

Han and minority students. They also create challenges for minority students who study with Han students in state schools. The cultural, ethnic, religious and educational differences produce multiple barriers for minority students in integrating into the mainstream Han society.

### **Education of Ethnic Minority Groups**

According to Postiglione (2007), most ethnic minority groups still “have levels of literacy and educational attainment that are below the national level” (p.93). A number of studies provided evidence of gaps in educational access and resources created by socio-economic status, culture, language, ethnicity, and geography differences (Hannum, 1999, 2002, 2005; Connelly & Zhang, 2003; Hannum & Park, 2007). Hannum and Park (2007) mentioned in their study that “minority students disproportionately reside in remote western inland areas that lack the resources to fund high-quality schools and hire qualified teachers” (p.11). This socioeconomic reality contributes heavily to the educational disadvantage of minority children, especially in ethnic autonomous regions.

According to Leibold and Chen (2014), since the 1990s, several anthropological case studies of Mongol, Tibetan, Uyghur, and Naxi, minority groups have been conducted that illustrate the themes of education and national integration. Postiglione (2014) indicated in his study that a common concern in all of these studies is how cultural pluralism is addressed in education, including how state schooling aims to promote unity from diversity; how minorities become marginalized by a lack of cultural recognition at all school levels in mainstream society; how minority students balance ethnic and national identities; and how Han teachers, Han students, and minority students respond to stereotypes about ethnic minority students’ lower academic achievements in schools. Zhao’s (2010) study examined how minority cultures and students are marginalized from primary schools to the university campus by their Han

counterparts and teachers. According to Leibold and Chen (2014), despite China's recent reforms and policies to enhance equal access to quality education by offering preferential admission policies for ethnic minority students, most schools and universities in mainstream society do not recognize minority culture and its impact on students' learning and interactions. Ethnic minority students are still marginalized within the Han dominant context of school life.

Other studies suggest that ethnic groups developed "unfavorable attitudes" toward education if they perceive the school system as incompatible with aspects of their own cultures and traditions (Hansen, 1999; Harrell & Ma, 1999). For example, Hannum and Park (2007) indicated in their research that what minority students study in public state schools can be vastly different from their experiences in everyday life. Yu (2010) examined Naxi secondary school students' experiences in Han-led schools. The result of her study demonstrated that stereotypes from their Han peers and teachers actually reinforce the "cultural deficiency argument about the academic failure of minorities" (Gao, 2008, p.65), silenced the disadvantages suffered by ethnic minority students, and prevented active intervention to remedy them. In such cases, Postiglione (2007) suggested that developing educational content relevant to the culture of minority students, as well as equipping schools with culturally responsive Han teachers, were important for maximizing minority students' learning processes and outcomes.

In seeking solutions to the underrepresentation of minority culture and underachievement among ethnic minority students in China, Chapman, Chen, and Postiglione (2000) indicated the importance of recruitment, preparation, and retention of more non-Han teachers especially in ethnic minority regions. Their study in ethnic autonomous regions found that teachers' ethnicity and cultural background were closely related to minority student learning experience and outcomes. The results suggested that teachers with training in teaching diverse student

populations make better use of teaching materials and strategies in multiethnic classrooms (Chapman, Chen, & Postiglione, 2000).

Additionally, research conducted by Chapman and his colleagues indicated that teachers who shared the same ethnicity with their students gave more attention and care to their students, and exhibited more of a student-development orientation in their use of discipline in the classroom (Chapman, Chen, & Postiglione, 2000). In interpreting their findings, Chapman and his colleagues reported that preservice teacher training in cultural and ethnic diversity and teachers' own cultural and ethnic backgrounds made significant difference in their teaching attitudes and subsequent instructional practice towards ethnic minority students. Based on their research, recruiting more qualified ethnic minority teachers can maximize the use of effective pedagogical strategies that could better enhance minority students' learning by connecting teaching materials and strategies to students' cultural backgrounds and living communities (Chapman, Chen, & Postiglione, 2000).

According to Postiglione (2007), "the demand by ethnic minorities for schools and teachers to elevate the status of their home culture within the national education framework has become an urgent issue with the increasing minority student population in schools" (p.94). As Postiglione (2007) argued, China's state schools and Han dominant teaching force are challenged by the responsibility to include "ethnic minority cultures within a national context that places a premium on Han Chinese cultural capital" (Heberes, 1989; Gladney, 1991; Mackerras, 1994, 1995; Harrell, 1996; Liu & Faure, 1996, as cited in Postiglione, 2007, p.94). The lack of cultural recognition and representation of ethnic minority students in schools limits meaningful access to education in China for its ethnic minorities, thereby sustaining their patterns of underachievement.

The supply of adequately trained teachers is crucial to successful educational outcomes for ethnic minority students. Sato (2014) pointed out that China has experienced a history of concentrating resources in the eastern part of the country so that its education system is also experiencing an unbalanced growth in urban centers and the rural west. Generally speaking, high quality teachers and sufficient educational resources are much better in eastern coastal regions, and distributed to big cities such as Beijing, Shanghai, and Guangdong (Wang, 2004). According to Ming's (2013) research, they have also become the top three destinations for the ethnic minority and Han migrants for many years, especially Beijing. The population distribution in focus on these cities is presented in Table 1.

**Table 1: Ethnic minority and Han population in major cities 2010**

Region	Han		Ethnic Minorities	
	N	%	N	%
Beijing	18811154	95.91%	801214	4.09%
Tianjin	12607276	97.44%	331417	2.56%
Shanghai	22743033	98.80%	276163	1.20%
Chongqing	26909061	93.28%	1937109	6.72%

Source: National Census Bulletin of Statistics of China, 2010.

Similar to the allocation of other state resources under China's rural-urban and western inland-eastern coastal divide, the allocation of educational resources reflects a preference for urbanities (Fu & Ren, 2010). In recent years, many ethnic minority students move for the purpose of getting better education. This desire for high quality education in urban cities leads to a higher rate of migration from rural minority regions to urban Han residency areas (Iredale, Bilik, & Guo, 2003).

In research conducted by Iredale, Bilik, and Guo (2003) on the migration of ethnic minorities in China, the majority of people interviewed in their Beijing ethnic minority group sample indicated that they migrated to Beijing with their families to pursue better education

opportunities. This educational migration is part of the government's strategy of providing opportunities for students from outlying areas in the hope that they will return to their hometowns and put their skills to use in the socioeconomic development of their original residency regions (Iredale, Bilik, & Guo, 2003). Increasingly, research shows that most of these migrants do not return to their home regions but seek employment and settlement in Beijing, or in other coastal urban cities (Iredale, Bilik, & Guo, 2003; Leibold & Chen, 2014).

In addition to the many ethnic minority students moving for the purposes of education throughout the whole of China, particular groups of ethnic minority secondary school students also move to cities, such as Beijing and Shanghai, to study outside their underdeveloped residency regions (Iredale & Guo, 2003). This is particularly the case for Tibetan and Uyghur students who migrate to Beijing to attend higher quality schools. The "Inland Tibetan Class" (Neidi Xizang Ban 内地西藏班) and "Xinjiang Class" (Neidi Xinjiang Ban 内地新疆班) have been established to accept more Tibetan and Uyghur students from middle school level to post-secondary education (Iredale, Bilik, & Guo, 2003). The mass scale of migration from rural western inland to urban eastern coastal cities changes the current ethnic demographics in education in China. The influx of migrant ethnic minority students and increasing second generation ethnic minorities in urban cities create challenges for majority Han teachers who are used to having only Han students in their classrooms.

To a certain extent, the Chinese national education system also creates an environment for minority students that results in cultural and linguistic discontinuity (Gladney, 1991; Hansen, 1999; Leibold & Chen, 2014). Minority students might be raised in a community with a specific cultural background but within a large community of different cultural inputs (Leibold & Chen, 2014). They go to schools where they meet and interact with majority Han teachers, peers, and

school administrators, and they have to adjust their learning processes and beliefs if they enroll in schools with a national curriculum based on Han cultural and social capital. However, as Postiglione (2007) argued, little research examines the cultural discontinuity impact, “or the idea that poor academic performance among some minority groups is largely due to cultural and linguistic differences between minority students’ socio-cultural environments and the school socio-cultural environment in which they are expected to learn the values of the dominant Han” (p.98). Instead, scholarship tends to “attribute the comparatively lower academic performance to minority students’ low cultural levels” (Postiglione, 2007, p.98).

Gladney (1999) reported that the Han general public and teachers often “view minority culture as backward, and traditional minority religious education as lacking value” (as cited in Postiglione, 2007, p.99). These biased perceptions result in the “marginalization of minorities” (Postiglione, 2007, p.99). For example, in their research in Yi, Harrell and Ma (1999) highlighted the negative influences done by the mission of an education system that views ethnic minority culture as backward, and illustrated the important role of ethnic minority teachers in helping Yi students to achieve academic success in schools. Research has been done on the importance of funding minority schools for minority students in ethnic minority regions, supporting ethnic minority teacher training, and demonstrating the importance of scaffolding in educating minority students (Harrell & Ma, 1999; Postiglione, 2007). However, very few studies have been done to address the existing cultural diversity and mismatch between ethnic minority students and their Han teachers in developed urban cities such as Beijing, Shanghai, and Guangzhou. Many of the previous studies indicate the significance of ethnic minority schools for ethnic minority students, but less attention has been given to preparing Han teachers to effectively work with ethnic and cultural minority students in urban schools.

## **Challenges of Teaching Multicultural and Multiethnic Students**

The increasing diverse student population, “the homogeneous teaching force and the declining enrollments of ethnic minority students in teacher education programs in the U.S. expands the demographic divide” (Gay, 2000, as cited in Howard, 2010, p.40). The decline of minority participation in the teaching force in U.S. higher education, and the declining enrollments among Asian, Black, and Latino students in teacher education programs means the teaching force is overwhelming European American and female (Gay, 2000; Cochran-Smith, 2004). Information about who is currently preparing to teach indicates a pattern that is generally similar to that of the current teaching force, with White students representing the vast majority of students enrolled in collegiate education programs. In China’s context, “the racial and ethnic makeup of the teaching population in China also is also middle class, female, and Han dominant” (Wang, 2004, as cited in Yuan, 2017, p. 86). Minority teachers “only account for 4.93% in the total teaching force” (National Report of Multicultural Education in China, 2010, as cited in Yuan, 2017, p,86).

The decline of minority participation in the teaching force and teacher education programs at colleges and universities decreases prospective teachers’ cultural sensitivity and awareness towards students from multicultural backgrounds. Teachers tend not to have the same cultural frames of reference and points of view as their students because, as Gay (1993) suggested, “they live in different existential worlds” (p. 287). Consequently, these preservice teachers often have difficulty functioning as effective role models for diverse students (Villegas & Lucas, 2002), or serving as “cultural brokers” and “cultural agents” (Gay, 1993; Goodwin, 2000) who can assist students bridging home-school differences and cultural gaps. They also often have difficulty constructing curriculum, instruction, and communication patterns that are

culturally responsive, which indicates that the students in the greatest academic need are least likely to have access to educational opportunities congruent with their life experiences and cultural heritages (Gay, 2000; Cochran-Smith, 2004). In China's context, according to the data in 2015, ethnic minority teacher candidates only account for 9% out of the total population, while ethnic minority in-service teachers account for 8% of the total teaching force.

Traditional conceptions of teaching are defined and addressed in teacher education program in colleges and universities (Cochran-Smith, 2004). Concern about teachers' expertise on subject content they teach overshadow the diversity and complexity embedded in the context of teaching in actual culturally and ethnically diverse school settings (Cochran-Smith, 2004). Much of the scholarship and materials on preparing teachers for cultural diversity are not readily available to pre-service and in-service teachers especially those who are from the majority culture and ethnic group (Villegas & Lucas, 2002; Cochran-Smith, 2004). Future teachers will need to be well prepared to effectively and appropriately deal with issues of race, culture, social class, ethnicity, and language differences. The education systems, including teacher preparation programs, need to be more responsive to the needs of these growing segments of the diverse student population in various countries.

### **Rationale of the Study**

Schools in both the United States and China are becoming more diverse. Language, ethnic, and cultural diversity are enriching the demographic variety in student population, and challenging instructional methods and teaching effectiveness. More teachers now in schools and in teacher education programs are likely to have more and more students from diverse ethnic, racial, linguistic, and cultural groups in their classrooms (Dilg, 2003; Gay, 2010). These multicultural students are shifting between degrees of comfort and discomfort with their own

culture and identity, and the school culture intertwined with cultural backgrounds and identities of teachers and their majority culture counterparts (Dilg, 2003; Gay, 2010). Under this situation, teaching is not a job that “looks deceptively simple” (Grossman, Hammerness & McDonald, 2008, p.273).

Research on minority student learning and achievement gaps has greatly increased over the past years (Schofield, 1991; 2004). However, “much of it leaves open the question of the empirical links found among minority students’ racial and cultural backgrounds, academic performance and achievement, and reforms of policies and practices in educational systems” (Yuan, 2017, p.35). More concerns have been placed on the racial and cultural influences on the low academic preparation, participation, and achievement of minority students compared to their majority culture peers, than on investigating ways to reframe teaching attitudes and modify preparation and practice for diversity in academic environments. Yet, current teacher preparation and practice may not proportionately match the growth in student diversities, suggesting that the gap in academic achievement between ethnic minority and majority students will continue to expand (Villegas & Lucas, 2002; Vavrus, 2002).

The changing student populations and diverse cultural backgrounds in mainstream classrooms pose questions for teachers to rethink how to bridge cultural gaps between ethnic minority students and their peers, and teachers from the majority cultural and ethnic group. Recognizing multiple cultural differences among student culture, school culture, and teachers’ culture may contribute to reducing cultural clashes (Villegas, 2008). In any discussion of reducing cultural mismatch, teachers’ competence in diversity is essential to better facilitating multicultural student learning (Gay, 2002; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). But so is determining how to multiculturalize the content of teacher education programs. When these elements are absent in

the process of educating prospective teachers, a teaching training and teaching practice gap will be created and result in teachers misreading students' learning abilities. Such misdiagnoses can expand the academic achievement gap among ethnic minority and majority students (Delpit, 1995; Dilg, 2003; Cochran-Smith, 2004).

It is necessary to prepare teachers to become responsive to cultural and ethnic diversity. As Delpit (1995) pointed out, those who share the ethnic and cultural backgrounds and multicultural knowledge base of "increasingly diverse student bodies may serve, along with parents and other community members, to provide insights that might otherwise remain hidden" (p.181). But teachers from other ethnic groups need to learn to be culturally responsive, too. Teaching efforts should be situated in a culturally recognizable format to assist minoritized students in developing academic skills (Howard, 2010), and the way teachers are educated need to be constructed and accomplished in a multicultural context.

### **Research Purpose and Questions**

In working with increasing diverse student populations in urban cities in China, a critical question the dominant Han teachers and teacher educators must ask is, "what teaching strategies and educational practices are in place to effectively teach multicultural and multiethnic students?" Inequitable educational practices for ethnic minority students have been documented extensively in the United States and China. But the achievement gap has been less fully investigated in association with culture and ethnic majority teachers' inequitable teaching practices and preservice preparation especially in China's context. Further research is needed to explore the dimensions of this academic encounter in education, and to determine how it operates in multicultural classrooms, such as for students from a variety of minority backgrounds and their dominant Han teachers. Qualitative research is especially appropriate for studying these

issues. Qualitative research can contribute to identifying how ethnic minority students and Han teachers interpret their learning and teaching experiences, how they construct their worlds of learning or teaching, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences (Merriam, 2009).

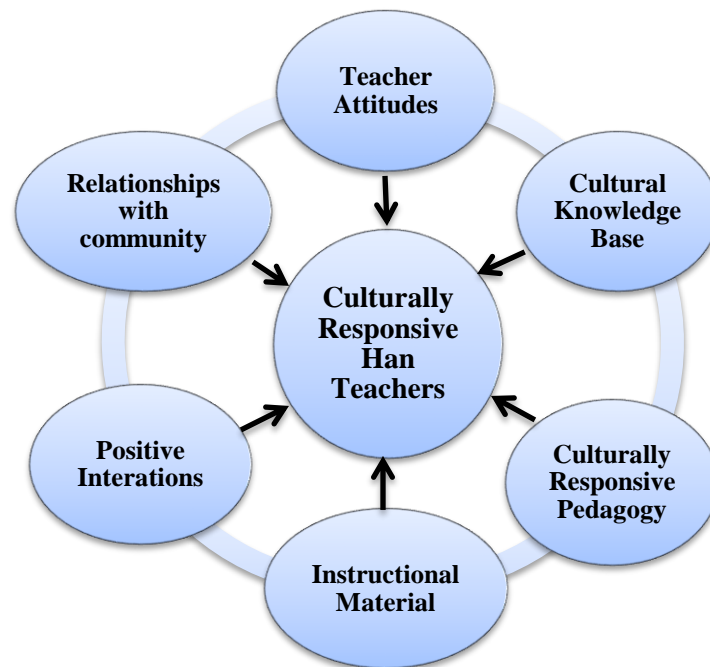
This study addressed this knowledge gap by examining a teacher education program in Beijing by using a qualitative case study. The schooling of ethnic minority students and developing culturally responsive teachers hold substantial significance in education all over the world. Ethnic minority students in urban cities in China are facing struggles over cultural and linguistic pluralism, ethnic and cultural hierarchy in the mainstream society, continuing large-scale migration, unequal distribution of educational resources, inequitable teaching preparation and practices, and institutional racism. Research on cultural and racial impacts on minority students' learning and culturally responsive teacher preparation may illuminate interactive relationships among teaching attitudes, knowledge base, curriculum and materials, pedagogical skills, interactions, and learning achievements. Consequently this study explored the following research questions:

- 1) What are preservice Han teachers' perceptions of their teacher education programs in addressing and preparing them to be culturally responsive teachers for ethnic minority students?
- 2) What is actually being done in the teacher education programs they enroll in to meet the goals of preparing culturally responsive teachers?
- 3) How is the success of the teacher education program in preparing culturally responsive Han teachers determined?

### **Conceptual framework**

Competent teachers are essential to improving the quality of education for students. An important goal of their professional teacher education is to prepare teachers to better serve diverse student populations (Guyton & Wesche, 2005). Inadequate training in students' cultures, learning styles, and communication patterns may result in negative assumptions and expectations, use of culturally inappropriate or insensitive materials, and negative student-teacher interactions (Wallace, 2000). Teacher educators have a responsibility to improve preservice teachers' knowledge bases and teaching strategies, and to help them develop pedagogical skills and positive attitudes that create empowering and inclusive classroom relationships with diverse students (Phillion & He, 2004; Guyton & Wesche, 2005). Six bodies of research and theory inform this study, that offer different but related perspectives on preparing teachers to be culturally responsive to ethnically and racially diverse students. These elements and relationships are depicted in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework



Becoming a culturally responsive Han teacher is a multi-dimensional process. Based on related research, essential components of dimensions include the six identified in Figure 1. Teacher education programs in China should include all of these interactive dimensions. They constitute the substantive filters used to answer the research question examined in this study. Each dimension is explained in more detail.

### **Teacher Attitudes**

Teacher attitudes towards students are enacted in academic environments, teaching practice, curriculum designs, and interpersonal relationships. An important factor that results in minority students' lower academic achievements is negative teaching attitudes and stereotypical expectations towards their cultural and racial identities. Critical race theory argues that racism in the U.S. is "normal" and teaching attitudes, expectations, and practices are "racialized and selectively offered to students according to the setting" (Ladson-Billings, 2008, p.60). Research evidence indicates that teaching attitudes and classroom climates have significant influences on the success or failure of students of color in schools (Bennett, 2004). Research grounded in critical race theory also indicates that reducing academic achievement gaps depends on the degree to which the cultural and racial identities of members of different ethnic groups are valued and respected, and their heritages and perspectives are included in educational programs and teaching practices. There is strong evidence that students of color in White dominant schools and universities in the U.S. feel more alienated than their White peers, and less satisfied with many aspects of academic life and learning experiences (Fleming, 1984; Sedlacek et al, 1997; Bennett, 2004). For example, research conducted by Allen and associates (1987) revealed that African and Asian American students experience more alienation and dissatisfaction than White students, and lower expectations from their teachers from the dominant group. Teachers'

negative attitudes and beliefs are also contributing factors to the high drop-out and non-degree completion rates of certain groups of racial minority students (Schofield, 2004).

A related set of ideas focuses more specifically on how cultures are implicated in overt and covert racism present in preK-12 schools. This, too, influences how minority students encounter and engage with academic learning environments. Cultural racism in the U.S. (sometimes referred to as hegemony) refers to the “elevation of the White Anglo-Saxon Protestant cultural heritage to a position of superiority over the cultural experiences of ethnic minority groups” (Gay, 1973, p.33). The legacy of cultural racism is found in formal mainstream curricula, textbooks, mass media, and course offering. It also is embedded in hidden, informal curricula such as racial myths and stereotypes held by students and teachers (Gay, 2004). An unfamiliar, unsupportive, and unfriendly academic environment is indicative of negative teacher attitudes and beliefs toward racial minority students, and reduces academic motivations and demeans their self-esteem and cultural identity.

Research from scholars in China also indicates that teachers’ attitudes and beliefs are significantly associated with minority students’ self-confidence, identity construction, and academic outcomes. For example, findings by Liu (2007) and Zhu (2008) indicated that many Han teachers complained that minority students were too slow to learn reading and writing in Mandarin, and their parents did not provide sufficient help to their children’s education. In a study of an urban primary school, Qian (2007) reported that minority parents complained about the local school and the teachers. The study concluded with the observation of one participation that, “Minority children aren’t being well taught in school, and they’re losing their self-confidence because teachers think they are not smart enough. Our kid has never been considered as a good learner, and the minority language our kid speaks is also considered as too backward”

(Qian, 2007, p.66). Thus, understanding and respecting racial, ethnic, and cultural diversity should be an essential component of teacher preparation.

### **Cultural Knowledge Base**

Culturally responsive competence involves teachers acquiring and using culturally diverse knowledge to design culturally relevant curricula, instructional strategies, and learning environments (Kunjufu, 2002; Brown, 2003; Curran, 2003). According to Feiman-Nemser (2008), teachers need different kinds of knowledge for teaching effectiveness, including knowledge they generate in practice. They need solid knowledge of:

Subject matter and how to teach it to diverse learners; they need to understand how diverse students grow and learn and how culture and race influence their learning; they need to know about curriculum, pedagogy, classroom organization and assessment, as well as understand the broad purposes of schooling and how those purposes affect their work (Feiman-Nemser, 2008, p.699).

In addition to these knowledge bases, teachers need other information that can only be gained from the cultural contexts of their work. Since culture is essential to student learning, teachers must become knowledgeable about their diverse students' distinctive cultural backgrounds so they can effectively translate that knowledge into more appropriate instruction techniques and curricula designs (Goodwin, 1997; Gay, 2000).

Cochran-Smith (2004) explained that, in order to learn to teach in multicultural school settings, prospective teachers, experienced teachers, and teacher educators need to "examine much of what is usually unexamined in the tightly braided relationships of language, culture, and power in schools and schooling" (Cochran-Smith, 2004, p. 49). This kind of examination should begin with teachers' own cultural and educational backgrounds. It also should include "what

knowledge, interpretive frameworks, beliefs, and attitudes are necessary to teach diverse populations effectively, particularly knowledge and beliefs about culture and its role in schooling” (Cochran-Smith, 2004, p.145), and “the realization that teacher education emphasizes the Western canon or cultural funds of knowledge and thus limits what can be known about other cultural heritages, experiences, perspectives, and contributions (Cochran-Smith, 2004, p.145).

Howard and Aleman (2008) emphasized the importance of pedagogical content knowledge in teacher education programs. Teachers-in-training need to understand how content is delivered or made accessible to culturally and linguistically diverse learners. Conceptions of teaching capacity for diverse students must include attention to pedagogical content knowledge, including the complexity in student learning, especially with regard to knowledge and cultural heritages (Howard & Aleman, 2008).

Larkin and Sleeter (1995) indicated that teaching requires knowledge of both subject matter and students. Developing knowledge of the cultures students bring to the classroom is indispensable to effective teaching. Larkin and Sleeter (1995) indicated that addressing this issue is more complicated than simply offering relevant courses in which preservice teachers learn about the various ethnic minority groups. Rather, Larkin (1995) recommended that the broad area of cultural knowledge should be divided into three categories of “knowledge of the nature, functions, and processes of culture itself; knowledge of the cultural foundations of schools, teaching, learning, and subject matter; and content, language, and process knowledge relating to particular cultural groups” (Larkin, 1995, p. 7).

To achieve the goal of acquiring cultural knowledge, Larkin (1995) also proposed creating a “multicultural frame of mind” (p. 8) to assist teacher education students in developing a broader understanding of the cultural foundations of education and schooling. According to

Larkin's (1995) research, most teacher candidates' knowledge about schools is grounded directly in their personal experiences, but this knowledge provides a very limited perspective from which to analyze and understand much that goes on in and around multicultural schools. Cultural knowledge should enable preservice students to comprehend social diversity, and "move them beyond their common habit of thinking about schools towards an understanding of schools as social institutions with embedded structures, norms, and recurrent practices which can and do systematically obstruct the educational development of some groups of students" (Larkin, 1995, p. 8).

Obtaining this knowledge could help prospective teachers understand how culture and language influence the processes of learning, communication, and student-teacher interaction styles which powerfully affect classroom climate and teaching effectiveness (Garcia, 1988; Shade 1989; Larkin, 1995). Moreover, multicultural education theorists argued that teacher education programs need to employ a wide range of strategies to assist prospective teachers in developing cross-cultural content knowledge (Garcia, 1988; Vavrus, 2002; Villegas, 2008). These efforts could "focus on the study of one particular group at a time in order to better understand the depth and richness of diverse cultural patterns" (Larkin, 1995, p. 9).

Developing cultural knowledge also involves reducing prejudice and creating cross-cultural awareness. Melnick and Zeichner (1997) explained how cultural and historical knowledge can help prospective teachers to overcome their "cultural ignorance of groups different from their own" (p. 29), and avoid stereotypic responses to diverse cultural groups. As their research findings indicate, it is important to assist teacher education students in learning how to learn about the students and the cultural communities in which their students come from and in which they will teach in the future (Melnick & Zeichner, 1997).

Hollins (1997) pointed out the importance of prospective teachers understanding relationships between students' home culture and school learning, valued curriculum content, and supportive social situations for learning. The call for enriching teachers' knowledge base involves "students' lives outside school; students' perceptions of school knowledge and belief in the potential of schooling to improve their lives in the future; students' relationships to subject matter; and community life" (Hollins, 1997, p. 81). Murrel and Diez (1997) also addressed the significance of constructing a multilayer cultural knowledge base in teacher education programs to improve pedagogical skills and teaching attitudes by starting with a solid, comprehensive, and culturally responsive framework. Acquiring this culturally sensitive knowledge base could assist teachers in reducing conventional cultural deficit thinking, along with improving their cultural competence to effectively work with students from minority groups (Murrel & Diez, 1997).

### **Culturally Responsive Pedagogy**

According to Yuan (2017), "in addition to recognizing that minority students bring rich funds of knowledge to their learning experiences, teachers can do much to modify their approaches to instruction. Educational equity and excellence for students from all ethnic, racial and cultural backgrounds are unattainable without the incorporation of cultural and racial pluralism in all aspects of the educational system" (p.37). Gay (2004) mentioned that teaching practices can play an essential role in reducing institutional racism and achievement gaps, as well as improving minority students' self-esteem, identities, and learning engagements and academic outcomes. "Culturally responsive pedagogy exists when teachers use the cultural heritages and background experiences to facilitate diverse students' academic achievement" (Gay, 2010, as cited in Yuan, 2017, p.37). According to Gay (2010), it also involves "mutual understandings between minority students and teachers, valuing diverse cultural and racial heritages, and

enabling diverse students to realize their potentials” (as cited in Yuan, 2017, p.37). Culturally responsive pedagogy involves informing teaching content with diversity; equips dynamic instructional methods with academic rigor; develops equity within the mainstream and students’ cultural contexts; focuses on improving academic outcomes for minority students (Banks, 2004; Gay, 2010).

Culturally responsive pedagogy provides guidelines for teachers to become “cultural mediators” (Sleeter & Cornbleth, 2011) or brokers who can demonstrate respect and caring for students as well as make subject matter content more accessible and meaningful for minority students (Gay, 2010; Sleeter & Cornbleth, 2011). As such, culturally responsive teachers can and should be as cultural brokers (Lipka, 1998), cultural translators (Lomawaima, 2004), and warm demanders (Gay, 2010). As Gay (2000) indicated, culturally responsive teaching teaches to and through strengths of multicultural students; it is “culturally validating and affirming” (p.29). It is more than a means to improve minority students’ standardized test scores. Most importantly, it can improve instructional quality by inspiring teachers from the majority group to be critically reflective about what they know about their students’ knowledge backgrounds and cultural heritages, and what conflicts might exist between their cultural knowledge and their students. According to Lu (2004), “this is especially important in China’s educational context, where teaching materials and practices still do not fully embody and reflect the cultural diversity and needs of minority students” (as cited in Yuan, 2017, p. 91).

### **Instructional Materials**

Content integration is one of the essential components of multicultural education. According to Banks (2004), it “deals with the extent to which teachers use examples, materials, data, and information from a variety of cultures and groups to illustrate key academic concepts,

principles, generalizations, and theories in their subject areas or disciplines” (as cited in Yuan, 2017, p.37). Gay (2004) broaden the notion of institutional reform in instructional content and materials by providing important way of including culturally relevant components in curriculum design and learning materials. These include “designing curricula that develop understanding of ethnic groups’ cultures, histories, and contributions; teachers becoming multicultural in their attitudes, values, beliefs, and behaviors; and using action strategies for combating racism and other forms of oppression and exploitation” (as cited in Yuan, 2017, p.37).

Moll and Gonzalez (2004) recommended using diverse students’ funds of knowledge to improve their academic performance. This is the “knowledge base that underlines the productive and exchange activities of households” (p.700). The concept can broaden to university curricula and learning environments for prospective teachers. It also provides important pedagogical implications for changing current methods of teaching, and altering the perceptions of diversity held by teachers in schools. It is important for teachers, teacher educators, and administrators to modify their perceptions of working with minority students, and address ethnic, racial, and cultural diversity in multicultural classrooms. Embracing minority cultural and racial knowledge and backgrounds of students can improve teachers’ understanding of and intentions with learning and engaging characteristics, as well as reduce socially constructed racial biases and unequal educational opportunities (Moll & Gonzalez, 2004). By doing so, teachers from both the majority culture and ethnic minority cultures can better respond to diverse students’ needs and reduce achievement gaps among them and their peers from the dominant group.

More scholars in China are increasingly concerned about the effects of negative stereotypes about minority students’ cultures and the lack of minority representations and knowledge in school curricula and textbooks (Hansen, 1999; Gladney, 1991; Leibold & Chen,

2014). For example, Hansen (1999) reported that for most Dai in Yunnan Province, state education has very little space on their ethnic identity, traditional values and knowledge, and culture. Thus, they called for greater inclusion of minority cultures in the curriculum and instructional materials, to combat feelings of cultural inferiority and to develop pride in unique aspects of minority culture (Hansen, 1999). Wang (2013) noted that Han Chinese-centered culture and knowledge constitute the content of the National College Entrance Examination. Little attention has been given to the culture and knowledge of minority groups in this national examination, which implies that the mastery of Han culture and knowledge equals to a good university to attend, a well-paid job after graduation, and a better life and bright future (Wang, 2013).

Moreover, Nima (2001) found that some local Han officials in minority regions consider minority languages and cultures as backward, and Han language and culture as modern. Discriminatory practice is also demonstrated in the treatment of minority languages. For example, as Zhou (2004) mentioned in his study, the promotion of Mandarin Chinese as the official language, and the recognition of minority languages such as Tibetan, Mongolian, Uyghur, Kazakh, and other minority language writing systems as incomplete (Zhou, 2004). Minority students who belong to the same minority language are usually put in one school (Xing, 2003). In this case, school segregation and cultural divide is unavoidable. Research on respecting and valuing minority students' language and culture is important for building understanding about why minority students are labelled as underperformance, and how the process of schooling can be "demystified" for them (Bahry, Darkhor, & Luo, 2013). Minority students need to learn about mainstream language and culture, but mainstream Han students and teachers also need to learn more about the languages and cultures of various minority groups in China as well.

## **Positive Interactions**

According to Yuan (2017), “effective learning for students needs to include active interactions among culturally diverse peers, and between students and teachers” (p. 36).

Otherwise inequities are likely to develop. For example, new migrant ethnic minorities arrive in Han-dominant classrooms in urban cities in China with varied educational experiences and Mandarin proficiencies, which lead to variation in their academic skills and performances.

Allport (1954) suggested that “the support of authorities, and positive equal-status relationships and interactions among students of all ethnic and racial groups are vital to producing academic achievement” (as cited in Yuan, 2017, p.36). This finding has important implications for enhancing positive and inclusive classroom interactions. According to Schofield (2004), “teachers are important authority figures, who can facilitate positive interactions among minority students and their majority peers by using cooperative learning and alternative grouping strategies” (as cited in Yuan, 2017, p.37). Cooperative learning is a central feature of an equitable classroom, as well as a well-documented and highly recommended strategy for improving academic, cognitive, social, and attitudinal outcomes for students (Cohen & Lotan, 2004). It can also promote linguistic and cultural pluralism in academic learning environments, and the identity development of minority students. When minority students engage in cooperative group activities and positive interactions, they may pose interesting questions, exchange ideas, negotiate strategies on how to accomplish tasks, learn to resolve conflicts, and possibly reduce the achievement gap with their majority counterparts (Cohen & Lotan, 2004).

## **Relationships with communities**

Teaching in culturally responsive ways is both conceptual and practical and encompasses ideologies, strategies, and relationships that teachers “enact in classrooms as they strive to

accommodate the needs of students and challenge them intellectually, with rigorous content” (Grossman et al, 2008, p.245). In order for preservice teachers to translate their knowledge of culturally responsive teaching into classroom practices they need guidance and opportunities to do so under the tutelage of teacher educators. Specific learning experiences need to be designed especially for developing these skills. Yet, most White teacher candidates in the U.S. “have lived their lives within White communities and have lacked opportunities to learn firsthand about the cultures of people of color” (Villegas & Lucas, 2002, p.154). Similar observations can be made about majority groups in other countries, such as the Han in China.

Increasing participation in field experiences within minority communities is one way to fill these experiential voids. These experiences should be carefully planned in advance (Villegas & Lucas, 2002), and be guided by a clearly defined theoretical framework and pedagogical purposes (Grant, 1997). Zeichner and Payne (2013) argued that “While the role of school-based expertise is essential in teacher preparation, the role of expertise based in local communities is also important” (p.11). They suggested that preservice teachers need to engage with diverse communities so that they can truly learn and apply knowledge of working effectively with diverse students. To effectively educate diverse children in diverse settings, teachers must learn about and engage in the communities of their students, and view communities as a valuable resource to facilitate their understanding of students (Zeicher & Payne, 2013).

Noel (2013) described the concept of community strengths and urged teachers to “go into the community, meeting and partnering with community members and agencies, to learn about the important community strengths that can then be utilized in a more culturally relevant education” (p.137). Valuing and utilizing community strengths to facilitate students’ learning also relates to the concept of “funds of knowledge” introduced by Moll and his colleagues

(1992). They urged prospective teachers to develop contextualized understandings of culturally diverse families and communities to develop more authentic strategies for teaching ethnically diverse students. In doing so prospective teachers can “begin to see students from those settings as members of family, community, and cultural groups and become more knowledgeable of and sensitive to values, lifestyles, and cultures other than their own” (Zeichner & Melnick, 2002, p.137). In fieldwork conducted by Bahry, Darkhor, and Luo (2013) in a minority district of China, there was broad support among parents and teachers, regardless of ethnicity, for greater local minority cultural content studied in schools.

### **Summary**

This chapter introduced China’s ethnic education policies and practices based on the goal of achieving national unity while maintaining ethnic and cultural pluralism. In the beginning of the new era, the combination of domestic issues regarding multiethnic relations and globalization has complicated China’s existing social and ethnic issues. Conflicts between national unification and ethnic and cultural pluralism are joined by new challenges caused by urbanization and globalization (Teng, 2001; Qian, 2010). Current conceptions of ethnic education cannot adequately address the arising challenges regarding cultural discontinuity and conflicts among diverse ethnic students and majority Han teachers and classmates. Building on the conceptual framework of preparing culturally responsive Han teachers, the purpose of this study was to identify appropriate ways to bridge cultural and instructional gaps between the majority Han teaching force and the increasing ethnically and culturally diverse student population in China, and to do so with an emphasis on preservice teacher preparation.

## **Chapter II: Review of Related Research and Scholarship**

Changing educational demographics in the areas of race, ethnicity, and culture demand more diversity in curriculum design, instructional materials, and teaching practices. It also challenges ethnic and cultural majority teachers' teaching effectiveness and equity for minority students. The long existing academic achievement gap between ethnic minority and majority students prompts concerns for providing more understanding of and better supports for minority students' academic engagements and learning outcomes.

### **Situating learning and teaching in cultural context**

Many researchers have re-conceptualized the academic gap as an opportunity gap, resource gap, and service gap or education debt (Banks, 2004; Ladson-Billings, 2004) based on socioeconomic status, cultural stereotyping, and racial segregation. These gaps cannot be fully explained by minority students' internal features such as cultural and racial group identities and personal abilities. Instead, the misconnections between students' internal cultural and racial backgrounds and external academic environments, teacher preparation, and instructional practice, need further investigation to provide improvements in academic developments, and reduce cultural and racial discontinuities in different educational contexts (Steele, 2004).

Moreover, racial and cultural stereotyping towards minority students can lead to categorize them as "low academic performing groups," and predetermine how well they will actually achieve (Steele, 2004). This creates obstacles for minority students to achieve academic success, and increases the difficulty of diversifying the composition of teacher candidates and teacher education practice. That is, how to debunk structural and cultural threats and biases toward minority students, in order to redistribute educational opportunities and resources, reduce achievement gaps, and facilitate learning in culturally diverse educational contexts.

The lack of multicultural knowledge, attitudes, and skills about cultural and racial dimensions of learning can lead to inequitable instructional practices. A chain reaction of consequences broadens the pedagogical gap between teaching preparation and practice, and the learning outcomes of minority students. According to Flores (2007), passive teaching attitudes create lower teaching expectations that lead to lower level cognitive learning activities for minority students. Chen (2014) recounted her experience in observing an inland Tibetan class in Sichuan Province, where the Han majority teachers had very little knowledge of their Tibetan students' culture traditions, values, learning styles, and home languages and the impact of these on second language (Mandarin Chinese) learning processes and academic outcomes. The majority Han teachers had lower expectations for Tibetan students, some even kept a "respectful distance" from these students due to their low academic outcomes, and the misinterpretation of their ethnic and cultural origins as "barbarous and backward" (Chen, 2014).

Prior research and scholarship in the U.S. have examined influences of cultural and racial experiences and identities on teachers' beliefs, goals, expectations, and practices towards minority students from various non-White backgrounds (Valenzuela, 2005). As Weis and Fine (1993) pointed out, inappropriate teaching expectations and practices can negatively affect minority students' cultural identities, self-esteems, and prevent them from successfully engaging in learning processes. The dynamics of the achievement gap may differ by ethnic identities, but the students in question are likely to encounter academic learning environments that do not facilitate their learning most effectively. For example, Suzuki (1994) argued against common misconceptions about Asian Americans as a monolithic model minority. He urged colleges and universities to address Asian students' preparation, access, academic development, and achievement, as well as their experiences relate to the college curriculum and pedagogy, the

socio-cultural environment, and returns received for their higher education investments (Suzuki, 1994).

Fleming (1984) explored the importance of race, culture, and individual differences in the college experiences of minority students. After analyzing data gathered in previous studies on the learning processes and outcomes of African American, Native American, and Latino American students, Fleming concluded that minority students are better served in culturally responsive (such as Afrocentric) academic environments, in terms of their personal, social, cultural, and cognitive development. Such environments respect the cultural and racial heritages of minority students and embed them in curriculum content and classroom pedagogy (Fleming, 1984).

Wright and Tierney (1991, p.855) described institutional efforts to “civilize and assimilate” Native American students. Despite a long history of miseducation and exclusion of their cultures and experiences from curriculum and instruction, Native American students have resisted pressures to give up their cultural identity, and the unequal distribution of educational resources. Boyer (2003) reported that Native Americans who do best in college have a strong sense of self-identity and connections to Indianness. This finding illustrates that minority students’ academic achievement can be partly attributed to cultural and racial ties, and to self-recognition.

The representation and academic achievement of minorities in higher education are overall lower than what would be expected if access to college and university were equitable. For example, in the U.S. Non-Asian Americans minority student achievement is substantially less (Bennett, 2004). To make sense of this variance in academic performance, the quality of experiences in higher education need to be considered.

Cultural and racial biases can reinforce teacher stereotypes towards minority students, which also negatively impact instructional practices, and learning outcomes. As O'Brien (1992) pointed out, many minority students suffer from cultural loss, because of their cultural and racial identities categorize them as minorities. There is a danger that most schools and universities will continue to impose culturally-and racially-based stereotypes on minority students and their learning and interaction styles, and be unresponsive to their needs (O'Brien, 1992; Villegas & Lucas, 2002).

In sum, research and scholarship on the academic achievement gap between historically marginalized students in the U. S. and ethnic minority students in China reveal that teachers from ethnic and cultural majority group generally tend to have lower expectations of students from ethnically, culturally, linguistically, and socioeconomically diverse backgrounds. These attitudes may be due to their limited cultural knowledge and living experiences of diversity, and reduce their instructional effectiveness, and lower the efficacy of minority students in mainstream academic environments. Inappropriate teaching expectations and practices jointly have negative effects on minority students' academic performance from K-12 to post-secondary education. Thus these results affirm the significance of situating teaching and learning in the various cultural context of different ethnic groups and communities; as well as re-evaluating the necessary knowledge and skills, prospective teachers need to eliminate academic gaps between underrepresented ethnic minority students and their peers from the ethnic majority group. Most Han teachers in China do not adequately address sociocultural components in teaching and learning, and modify teaching practices accordingly. Multicultural knowledge and methodologies may correct these inadequacies, and therefore should be key elements in teacher preparation and classroom practice.

### **Preparing culturally responsive teachers**

Previous research indicated that although many factors affect academic achievements in schools having students from multicultural and multilingual backgrounds, there is increasing agreement that teacher quality is considered as a major contributor (Wenglinsky, 2000; Villegas, 2008; Gay, 2010). Some researchers argued that teacher quality is the most important influence in school success and student achievement especially for students from minority groups (Sanders & Horn, 1998). While student population has changed over the past decades, many teacher education programs and K-12 classrooms and college instructions in the U.S. continue to use traditional methodologies (Darling-Hammond, 2005). This system of education is not a viable option for educating culturally, racially, and linguistically diverse students. Several scholars argue that failure to acknowledge the role of culture and context in teaching and learning may explain why students from culturally diverse backgrounds performed poorly in schools (Irvine, 1990; Ladson-Billings, 1995). Proponents of a cultural mismatch perspective contend that students from diverse cultural backgrounds bring to school a set of cultures and traditions that are not valued or represented at mainstream schools (Irvine, 1990; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Shade, Kelly, & Oberg, 1997).

These claims support the widespread training of culturally responsive teachers, who “cultivate cooperation, collaboration, reciprocity, and mutual responsibility for learning among students and between students and teachers” (Gay, 2010, p.45). One way to accomplish this is to include multicultural content in teacher education programs. The selection of teacher candidates into professional preparation programs is also important. It is crucial for pre-service teachers to be culturally responsive in developing effective teaching strategies that incorporate the

experiences, knowledge, and heritages of ethnically, racially, socially, and culturally diverse student populations (Gay, 2010).

Cochran-Smith (2004) suggested that teacher education is a complex issue and not simply “a problem of policy implementation that has been influenced by the new multiculturalism” (p.16). Incorporating multicultural education into teacher education programs need more than simple policy initiation, adequate guidance and leadership support are equally important. According to Skepple (2011), prompted by professional organizations such as the “American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education” (AACTE) and “National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education” (NCATE), many teacher education programs across the U.S. began to include multicultural education and diversity issues in their program curricula (Cochran-Smith, 2004; Darling-Hammond, French & Gracia-Lopez, 2002). The new multiculturalism in teacher education is closely connected to the notion of teaching for social justice in that it challenges all prevailing assumptions about the distribution of opportunities, resources, power, and privileges. It also endorses preparing prospective teachers to construct curriculum, implement instruction, interact with students, and collaborate with colleagues and communities in developing ways to create diversity in teaching and learning environments (Cochran-Smith, 2004).

According to Banks (1993), the primary goal of multicultural education is transforming schools so that all students learn the knowledge, attitudes, and skills needed to function in an ethnically and racially diverse nation and world. Thus, multicultural education acknowledges that schools are essential to laying the foundation for an equitable and productive society, and eliminating oppression and injustice (Banks, 1993). Multicultural educators “advocate for teachers to understand diversity and acknowledge the important and intertwined roles that race,

culture, language, gender, and class play in U.S. society and schools” (Rodriguez, 1983; Bennett, 1990; Pang, 2001; Howard, 2010, as cited in Yuan, 2017, p.88). According to Yuan (2017), “teachers who obtain knowledge about cultural differences and develop multicultural teaching competences can modify their teaching strategies” (p.88) to better facilitate academic success for minority students.

Creating learning communities to improve race and ethnic relations, and facilitating all students acquiring the knowledge, perspectives, and skills needed to effectively participate in a multicultural society comprise the major goal of education in China. In this way its multicultural mission is similar to that of the U.S., even though the specifics of diversity are different. Wang (2004) indicated that important aims of China’s education are to “develop identification with the Chinese Communist Party and the socialist system, fight against the breaking up of the Chinese nation, and promote the country’s unity and political stability” (p.358). *The Education Law of The People’s Republic of China* (as cited in Wang, 2004) indicated that the country has the responsibility to “help develop educational excellence and equity in minority areas based on their features and needs” (Wang, 2004, p.359).

Many teacher candidates from majority cultural and racial groups in different countries are often not well prepared professional to effectively work with culturally diverse students. They do not obtain the necessary multicultural knowledge base through their studies in teacher education programs (Delpit, 1995; Fuller, 1994; Reed, 1996). Sleeter (2008) pointed out that most White candidates enter teacher education programs in the U.S. with very little cross-cultural background knowledge and experiences, and they “often bring naïve optimism that coexists with unexamined stereotypes taken for granted as truth” (p.559). Ladson-Billings (2009) demonstrated that many in-service teachers who have been teaching a very long time still

struggle to teach in affirming and effective ways to multicultural students, due to lack of knowledge about and appreciation for the cultures and experiences of ethnic minority groups.

Yu (2014) investigated the lack of ethnic and cultural knowledge and course preparation for Han teacher candidates in his study of 120 colleges and normal universities from over 30 inland provinces in China. His findings showed that most teachers and teacher candidates at inland schools and normal universities were not ethnic minorities and had very limited knowledge and exposure to ethnic minority cultures and groups. Moreover, according to Yu (2014), since ethnic diversity was considered a sensitive issue in China, some in-service and preservice teachers, teacher educators, and school administrators were very hesitant to engage in the topic. Thus, most of Han teachers and teacher candidates do not know how to deal with multiple issues regarding cultural and ethnic diversity and differences especially in urban cities (Yu, 2014).

Lacking knowledge acquisition and academic training, majority Han teachers and teacher candidates do not have the skills to effectively communicate and interact with ethnic minority students. According to Yu (2014), less than half of teachers and teacher candidates he interviewed stated that they could effectively work and communicate with ethnic minority students. In contrast, 16% of teachers indicated they experienced cultural gaps in understanding their minority students. Up to 11% of the Han teachers and teacher candidates interviewed pointed out that their minority students were not motivated to communicate with them, and they could not identify effective ways to interact and assist those students (Yu, 2014).

Ellerbrock and Cruz (2014) also pointed out that “a lack of familiarity with the breadth and depth of diversity issues, difficulty providing a diversity context within a relatively homogenous university system, and resistance to diversity make it difficult for teacher education

programs to accept and infuse diversity into the curricula and candidates' learning experiences" (p.15). Many teacher educators simply believe "the topics (of diversity) have no place in their fields" (Ellerbrock & Cruz, 2014, p.15). Preservice teachers both from majority and minority groups often feel inadequately prepared to teach diverse students. Even many teacher educators are "ill-equipped to facilitate such difficult and potentially controversial conversations in their courses with their students" (Ellerbrock & Cruz, 2014, p.16). Without reforms that address ethnic, cultural, racial, and linguistic diversity explicitly and systematically, these feelings of inadequacy and their negative effects on classroom instruction will not be reduced (Villegas & Lucas, 2002).

Despite the fact that most teacher education programs claim to have incorporated some diversity content and multicultural perspectives into their curricula, the reality often proves the contrary. For example, Cochran-Smith (2004) and Grossman (2008) found little has really changed in the ways teachers are prepared in college-and university-based teacher education programs. A review by Howard and Aleman (2008) revealed that "only within the past 30 years has the issue of student diversity been part of the teacher capacity discourse" (p.157). Based on their research, The "American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education" (AACTE) and "National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education" (NCATE) called for more institutional efforts on incorporating diversity issues into teacher capacity which included teachers' "awareness of the social and political context of education and critical consciousness about race, class, gender, language, and equity" (Howard & Aleman, 2008, p.158).

Moreover, most teacher education programs still have few substantive courses that addressed issues of diversity. McDonald et al (2008) reported a continuing disconnection between theoretical knowledge and teachers' practical work in diversity, social justice, and

multiculturalism. Teacher education programs in the U.S. tend to be comprised of “a collection of methods courses in which prospective teachers learn about what methods exist for teaching particular subjects and how they are grounded in educational theory and research” (Lampert, 2005, p.36). The emphasis is more on educating teachers about content-based instructional methods and less about learning to enact effective practices within different cultural contexts.

To become effective with all of their future students, teachers and teacher candidates also need to develop a better sense of themselves and “develop a sense of their students’ experiences as well” (Darling-Hammond, 2002, p.204), along with subject matter content and pedagogy. This training in multiculturalism is necessary, for both teachers from majority and minority groups.

A similar problem emerges from the scholarship on core practices in teacher education. McDonald et al (2013) indicated that attempting to create a “common language” in teacher preparation and practice. While preparing teachers to use core practices is important, they also need more knowledge and skills specific to teaching in multicultural, multiethnic, and multilingual school contexts.

The ineffective preparation of preservice teachers for ethnic and cultural diversity is also evident in China. For example, the teacher education curriculum in China is criticized for promoting the traditional text-driven conception of teaching. Teachers are typically trained in one discipline only; cross-disciplinary or interdisciplinary thinking associated with creative thinking is not encouraged; and attention to students as multicultural learners is ignored in teacher training programs (Chan & Paine, 1992). As a result, developing culturally responsive teachers and implementing multicultural education to satisfy the needs of diverse student populations will become major needs for teacher educators and teacher education in China (Wiseman & Huang, 2011).

Much of the research on preparing teachers for diversity indicate that most mainstream teachers are not adequately prepared either through their personal experiences or professional preparation to meet requirements of teaching culturally and ethnically diverse students. This is due in part to living in cultural isolation; the unbalanced academic emphasis between disciplinary and pedagogical knowledge; lack of concerns on ethnic and cultural knowledge in teacher education curricula; and disconnections between university-based teacher education programs and diverse communities. Limited programmatic efforts have been made in teacher education courses to meet the need of preparing culturally responsive teachers, a consequence of little or no institutional explicit while there often are claims of ideological endorsements of diversity, research indicate that these often are not present in practice. Although research reports on multicultural teacher education calls for incorporating diversity issues into teachers' core knowledge base and pedagogical capacity, few of them offer specific techniques for how to actually help teachers to transform practice-based knowledge of diversity into effective teaching practices. Multicultural courses for teacher candidates are necessary, but teacher educators also should model transform multicultural education enacted.

### **New Direction for Teaching and Teacher Education**

An important mission of teacher education is exploring pathways to improve professional content knowledge and instructional strategies to empower educational excellence and equity. Teacher educators need to help teacher candidates develop the attitudes, knowledge, and skills needed to become thoughtful and approachable toward diverse students in multicultural academic environments. To achieve this goal, deconstructing teaching stereotypes also is needed.

Delpit (1995) pointed out that there is a silenced dialogue in teacher education about teaching students of color. This is due, in part to the challenges posed by cultural, linguistic, and

racial pluralism to traditional pathways and methods used in educating teachers. The needs of multicultural students require diverse responsive strategies. From this perspective, a salient goal of teacher preparation and practice is responding positively to the diverse ways of knowing, learning, and behaving of different cultural groups (Villegas, 2008). It is necessary to incorporate these multicultural goals in national and international contexts of teacher education and practice.

According to Cochran-Smith (2000) simply adding multicultural education courses into teacher education programs is not enough. Many scholars promote increasing appropriate training for teaching for diversity in teacher education programs (Bennett, 1999; Sleeter & Grant, 1988). As Cochran-Smith (2000) suggested, “educating teachers for diversity needs to be fundamental to the entire teacher education program” (p.176).

To address these needs Pang, Kian, and Pak (2004) proposed including the study of the cultural values, social interaction patterns, learning styles, and belief systems of ethnic minority groups. Rodriguez (1983) also recommended that teachers become knowledgeable enough to build on the students’ diverse backgrounds instead of ignoring them. Teacher education programs should be obligated to help teacher candidates “construct a solid knowledge base of cultural and racial diversity,” (p.18), as well as understand their cultural socialization, and develop teaching skills consistent with the accepted purposes of education for a multicultural society. According to Vavrus (2002), most U.S. teacher education programs have generally perceived multicultural education as a possible elective or singular addition within an “Eurocentric core curriculum that is supported by conventional pedagogies and systems of evaluation” (p.1). Under these circumstances multicultural education key concepts and principles cannot be fully delivered to prospective teachers.

The idea that classroom teachers need to have specific preparation and knowledge to work effectively with diverse student populations has been part of professional discourse for a long time (Goodwin 1997). Yet it is incorrectly assumed that teachers already have the capacity to do what is needed but often they do not. For example, Gay (1977) outlined three components of multicultural teacher education: knowledge, whereby “teachers become literate about ethnic group experiences” (p.34); attitudes to “help teachers examine their existing attitudes and feelings towards ethnic, racial, and cultural differences” (p.43); and skills to “translate their knowledge and sensitivities into school programs, curricular designs, and classroom instructional practices” (p.48). Among these three components, acquiring a multicultural knowledge base serves as the foundation for improving teachers’ multicultural attitudes and developing their culturally responsive pedagogies.

Multicultural researchers (Banks & Banks, 1989; Bennett, 1999; Coballes-Vegas, 1992; Sleeter & Grant, 1988) have recommended the following specific strategies and components for inclusion in teacher education curriculum to enhance multicultural competencies and develop a culturally responsive knowledge base:

At least one course in multicultural education that takes into consideration the needs of diverse students. Information about the history and culture of students from a wide variety of ethnic, racial, linguistic, and cultural backgrounds. Content about the contributions made by various groups. Information about first-and second-language acquisition and effective teaching practices for working with students from limited English proficient backgrounds. Field experiences and student teaching opportunities with students from varying backgrounds (Carmen, 1992, p.2).

Gay (2010) endorsed these recommendations in reasoning that part of the responsibility of teacher preparation programs is to prepare preservice teachers to work effectively with students from cultural and linguistically diverse backgrounds. To fulfill this responsibility effectively, teacher education programs need to be open to learning about and incorporating the cultural backgrounds and knowledge base of various ethnic groups within their curriculum design, and transforming that multicultural knowledge into effective teacher training practice.

Increasing the diversity of faculty also may benefit and strengthen teacher competencies in diversity as well as create a culturally diverse atmosphere in teacher education programs. According to research, teachers in the United States are predominately White, and live in middle class non-urban areas (Seidel, 2007). The lack of diversity among faculty members may decrease the saliency of diversity in teacher education programs and practices. Villegas (2008) explained that, “the short supply of teachers of color in elementary and secondary public schools has drawn the attention of policy makers and educators alike” (p.175). She also offered three arguments for diversifying the teaching force. These are “having teachers of color serve as role models for all students; the potential of teachers of color can improve the academic outcomes and school experiences of students of color; and the workforce rationale call for the culturally and racially diverse teaching population” (Villegas, 2008, p.176). Furthermore, Villegas’ (2008) research indicated that teachers who share the same cultural and racial backgrounds with their students often “have high expectations of students; use culturally relevant teaching; develop caring and trusting relationships with students; confront issues of racism through teaching; and serve as advocates and cultural brokers” (pp.173-175). Therefore, increasing cultural and racial diversity among teacher educators and students can reduce feelings of cultural blindness, and increase teaching capacities for diversity in multicultural classroom settings. Because teachers of color

might also have low expectations for minority students, the importance of preparing them as multicultural and culturally responsive teachers should not be neglected.

There is a cultural gap in many of schools in different nations as novice teachers often face challenges to effectively teach students from cultural backgrounds different than their own (National Education Association Report, 2008). It is essential for teacher education programs to enable teachers to understand teaching as an intellectual and cultural activity, as well as develop productive perspectives about interactions among race, culture, class, and schooling (Cochran-Smith, 2000). Professional teacher education programs need to modify course content and teaching techniques to support collaboration between faculty and teacher candidates to better demonstrate culturally responsive components in professional preparation and classroom practices. Based on these claim, Stoddart (1995) argued that the development of teacher education programs require mutual accommodations between cultures of teacher education programs and those of diverse school placements.

Although many prospective teachers of color in the U.S. may have experienced diverse cultural and racial contexts, most have been educated “within teacher education programs where they experienced a Eurocentric approach to education and have been provided with few opportunities to consider culturally relevant practices or a multicultural curriculum” (Seidel, 2007, p.168). Overall, in teacher education programs, it is still far easier to talk about cultural differences than to practice that understanding. As Seidel (2007) argued, there are shortcomings in models and support for developing culturally responsive pedagogy for teacher candidates and novice teachers---this situation needs to be improved. Obidah (2000) recommended that educators reconsider the design of foundation courses in teacher education programs to help

teacher candidates and faculty develop more confidence about teaching diversity, how they will teach it, and why they want to teach it.

Darling-Hammond (2006) suggested that teachers must “be able to succeed with a wider range of learners than they were expected to teach in a time when school success was not essential for employment and participation in society” (p.4). She recommended several approaches to reforming teacher education programs to better prepare prospective teachers to teach in diverse classroom settings. These included designing curricula that contain knowledge of learners and how they learn; attaching understanding of teaching to diversity; developing the knowledge base of teaching in multicultural classrooms; integrating knowledge and skills in field work practices; and connecting teacher education to diverse communities (Darling-Hammond, 2006). Irvine (2003) argued similarly in stating that cultural understanding and responsiveness should comprise the professional development center for urban teachers. With this multicultural knowledge base and pedagogical skills, teachers could become cultural translators, who have high expectations for and positive beliefs about multicultural students, and effectively use culturally-based teaching styles to help minority students improve their academic performance.

Previous research on multicultural teacher education reveals a “cultural gap” between homogeneous teacher candidates and the increasingly diverse students they will ultimately teach. To reduce this cultural gap requires more than making a few elective multicultural education courses in college curricula. Instead, prospective teachers need to receive systematic and sustained preparation in multicultural consciousness; affirmative views of diversity; cultural knowledge of diverse ethnic groups; techniques for learning about their students; and skills for culturally appropriate instructional pedagogy for diverse students. Developing these competencies will help prospective teachers to better identify the cultural and linguistic resources

their multicultural students bring with them, as well as utilize these resources to assist students' learning.

### **Promoting Multicultural Education and Teacher Preparation in China**

Ethnic minority education in China is an integral part of the education system and a major enterprise (Chapman, Chen, & Postiglione, 2000). The number of ethnic minority students attending all levels of the education system has increased in recent years. However, for much of the twentieth century, the quality of education in ethnic minority regions was behind the level of rest of the country. Opportunities for educational enrollment, attainment, and achievement of ethnic minority students continue to be much lower than their Han counterparts (Zhu, 2010).

According to Zhu (2010), two major factors account for this discrepancy. First, most ethnic minority groups reside in remote regions where educational resources and socioeconomic conditions are far less developed than areas along China's eastern coast. Second, most ethnic minority groups have distinctive cultures and languages that shape their thinking and communicating styles that are very different from those of the dominant Han group and culture. Furthermore, national unified curricula, textbooks, and standardized tests reflect the culture and values of the majority Han culture (Chang, 2007; Zhu, 2010; Leibold & Chen, 2014). Ethnic minority cultures are regarded as being useless or inferior by the majority Han (Leibold & Chen, 2014). As a result, minority cultural perspectives, experiences, and contributions are excluded from public institutions in general, and from schools in particular (Meng, 2004; Yang, 2006; Lin, 2008; Zhang & Chen, 2014). Compared with educational conditions and resources for Han students in developed regions and metropolitan cities, these disadvantages have led to inequities for ethnic minority students.

In an effort to address this problem, the Chinese government has instituted a series of policy provisions that allow local adaptations of curricula to increase relevance for minority students, instruction in local minority languages, and, in some areas, textbooks and instructional materials in local languages (Chapman, Chen, & Postiglione, 2000). The central government also increased the number of teacher training colleges serving ethnic minority regions, with special programs to strengthen teacher preparation for those regions. However, research indicates there is still a shortage of qualified teachers and inadequate training of teaching for diversity and multicultural education (Chapman et al, 2000; Zhu, 2010; Liu, 2010).

To improve teacher quality in ethnic minority regions, China has recently taken actions to attract high quality candidates into teacher preparation programs by promoting “free normal education (免费师范生) for ethnic minority teacher candidates and establishing ethnic preparatory classes in inland normal universities” (Liu, 2010, p.56). Based on Liu’s (2010) research, “in August 2007, new teacher candidates (approximately 12,000 total) benefited from the policy and were accepted to study at six top teacher preparation universities” (p.56). These candidates are expected to teach in rural schools and those in ethnic minority autonomous regions when they complete the teacher credential program. Still, a major challenge is to recruit and retain teachers for schools in rural areas and ethnic minority autonomous regions (Chen, 2003; Lin, 2010). This is due in part to “fewer educational resources and facilities, lower average family income, and less support from family in comparison to schools in urban areas” (Liu, 2010, p.57).

In the 1990s, Darling-Hammond and Cobb conducted international comparison studies of teacher preparation programs in the Asian Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) countries including China and the USA. Findings revealed little ethnic diversity in the pool of Chinese

teacher candidates and a lack of passion or commitment to teaching from the Chinese teacher candidates because of the low status of the teaching conditions, fewer educational resources, and poor benefits. The lack of cultural and ethnic diversity is not only reflected in the pool of teacher candidates, but also embedded in the curricula and teacher training in normal universities in China (Liu, 2010).

According to Chapman et al (2000), preservice teacher training in China is offered in three types of institutions. Normal schools (zhongdeng shifan xuexiao 中等师范学校) enroll graduates from junior secondary schools for three to four years and provide preservice training for primary school teachers. Normal colleges (shifan zhuanke xuexiao 师范专科学校) enroll graduates from senior secondary schools for two to three years and provide preservice training for junior secondary school teachers. Normal universities (shifan daxue 师范大学) enroll graduates of senior secondary schools and provide four years of preservice training for senior secondary school teachers (Chapman et al, 2000; Leibold & Chen, 2014). At present, normal universities also conduct professional preparation for instructors for the normal schools and colleges, in-service training, preservice preparation for beginning teachers, and continuing in-service education and support. Since the general content of the teacher education curriculum is determined at the national level, preservice teacher training in ethnic minority regions is similar to that in rest regions of China, although there are some regional variations and cultural differences (Chapman et al, 2000).

Chapman and his colleagues (2000) concluded that the preservice teacher preparation curricula in China emphasize subject knowledge. Each institution has some flexibility in its own curriculum, except in subject areas of Chinese, math, and science. Greater flexibility is allowed

in the curricula for geography, arts and craft, music, and sports. Within these parameters, all teachers follow the same course program, with few differences in the length of preservice programs across geographical areas. While all teachers generally follow the same course of study in some ethnic minority concentrated provinces such as Guizhou, Guangxi, and Yunnan, there are special courses for primary school teacher training for students from remote areas (mostly minorities) who are admitted with lower scores and who take fewer difficult subjects (e.g., art and music rather than physics and chemistry). Only a small group of students takes these special courses, and they are targeted to teach in remote primary schools (Liu, 2010). The rationale is that these teachers will raise the enrollment rates in remote areas by teaching more art, music, and physical education than other teachers, and they will teach effectively and creatively. Once in the schools, most teachers teach two or three subject areas, and, in small rural schools, they may teach more than that (Liu, 2010).

Other scholarship shows that only in ethnic minority autonomous regions and some provinces where minorities have an established written language (such as Tibetan, Korean, Kazak, Uyghur, and Mongol), local teacher preparation institutions address the issue of cultural and ethnic diversity and bilingual education (Chaoman et al, 2000; Lin, 2008). Still, the basic requirements are set at the national level which is based on Han cultural and social capital, and Mandarin language instruction (Chapman et al, 2000; Lin, 2008; Liu, 2010). The small amount of variation in courses for preparing teachers for diversity is based on geographic boundaries between ethnic minority autonomous regions and Han-concentrated areas (Lin, 2008). These instructional variations perpetuate ethnic boundaries that sustain the distinctiveness and isolation of minority groups even further from mainstream Han people and cultural orientations.

With the rapid urbanization and social transformation in China, there is a frequent flow of labor migration which increases interactions and contacts among people from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds (Zhang & Chen, 2014). For example, ethnic minority workers from the western border migrate to the more affluent eastern coast provinces to work and live among the majority Hans. Schools in urban cities such as Beijing and Shanghai now have more ethnic minority students than before. Having experienced little encounter with and knowledge of minority people's cultures, values, and learning styles, Han teachers may hold stereotypes and prejudices about their minority students (Ma, 2007; Zhang & Chen, 2014).

Ma's (2007) research in urban schools and normal universities in eastern coast provinces indicated that Han teachers and teacher candidates outside the autonomous regions have very limited knowledge and training of the different ethnic cultures in China. The attitude was prominent that there was no need to address diversity because regardless of which ethnic groups students come from, they are all Chinese citizens. Yu (2014) added that not only do teachers and teacher educators know very little about ethnic minority cultures, religions, and values, some of them even intentionally oppose ethnicity. In comprehensive universities (zonghelei daxue 综合类大学) and normal universities with few ethnic minority students, it is much more difficult for university faculty and administrators to encourage students to share and learn diverse cultures, cross-cultural communication, and instructional skills.

Efforts to examine and embrace pluralistic ethnic relations are mostly targeted at minority populations in the five autonomous regions, whereas the majority Hans and teacher education institutions at large lack ethnic sensitivity due to the physically and socially isolated status of the minority groups. Also, devaluing ethnic minority cultures and a lack of multicultural education components in teacher education programs exist at the most prestigious normal universities in

China and perpetuate a lack of cultural diversity knowledge and multicultural education among college-based educators (Yu, 2014). Most of them do not have any personal experience with or academic preparation about ethnic minority students and cultures. This leads to inadequacies in how to increase interethnic communication and education, as well as how to embrace the concept of preparing culturally responsive Han teachers beyond ethnic autonomous regions. These knowledge voids and skills verify the need for research (such as this study) on how to prepare mainstream Han teachers to be more culturally competent and responsive in a variety of learning contexts.

Research indicates that the urbanization, globalization and increasingly diverse student population in China are creating some distinctive challenges for majority Han teachers who have limited knowledge and living experiences with different ethnic and cultural groups. Previous studies on teacher preparation in China documents sociocultural effects on teaching and learning, and the importance of developing teachers' cultural competence. However, few studies exist in China that examine university-based multicultural teacher education programs that provide comprehensive approaches to connecting theoretical frameworks about diversity with classroom instructional practices. Much of the scholarship that does exist depend heavily on Western conceptions of multicultural education. While conceptually and ideologically these may be valid, its practical application needs to be adapted to be compatible with the China context. To adequately prepare majority Han teachers in China for working with students from diverse ethnic and economic backgrounds, explicit attention should be given to diversity in both ethnic autonomous regions and urban cities.

## Summary

This chapter summarized research and theory related to preparing culturally responsive majority ethnic group teachers, and promoting multicultural teacher education in China. A conceptual framework of multicultural education, core concepts of culturally responsive teaching and key principles of multicultural teacher education were discussed in detail. Teacher quality and preparation are regarded as critical to the quality of education in the U.S. and China. To strengthen educational quality and equity for ethnic minority students, Chinese scholars proposed to increase investments in preparing ethnic minority teachers for ethnic minority students from the perspectives of political policies, educational opportunities, and external factors. However, few studies have investigated majority Han teachers' preparation for being more effective with ethnic minority students. Even though multicultural education is a concern in China, little research has been done on preparing culturally responsive majority Han teachers in college-and university-based teacher education programs, especially in urban cities. Without exploring possibilities to assist Han teachers and teacher educators in developing ways to respect and value minority cultures and languages, further improvement of their instructional strategies and the implementation of multicultural teacher education in China will be impossible. Methodological procedures used in conducting this study are described in the next chapter.

### **Chapter III: Methodology**

In this chapter, the reflection on the researcher's personal experience and positionality is introduced at first. Then, the rationale for using qualitative methods is discussed in detail. Next, the setting and selection of research site and participants are explained followed by research questions, data collection, and data analysis.

#### **Walking into the context: Reflection on researcher's personal journey and position**

As a qualitative researcher who is the "primary tool" of data collection and analysis (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008), I had to be aware of my position in the research process and carefully monitor the impact of my personal experiences on my research. The researcher's personal characteristics such as personal experiences, ethnicity, and language can influence the collection, analysis, and presentation of data (Pillow, 2003, Kacen & Chaitin, 2006; Berger, 2015). I constantly reflected on my positionality and personal experiences as the means to "monitor the distance between my involvement and detachment to my research participants and to enhance the rigor of the study" (Berger, 2015, p.219).

Positionality can be defined as where one stands in relation to others and is relative to the cultural values and norms of both the researcher and participants (Merriam, 2009). Banks (1998) conceptualized four types of researcher positionalities. According to Banks (1998), the first is an indigenous-insider who holds similar values, perspectives, behaviors, beliefs, and knowledge as the cultural community under the study. The second is an indigenous-outsider who has assimilated into culture other than his or her own and is perceived as an outsider by the people of his or her community. The third is an external-insider who has become socialized or adopted into the outsider culture and rejects the cultural values of his or her indigenous community. The fourth type of researcher is an external-outsider, who is socialized into a community different

from the one under study, and has only a partial understanding of and appreciation for its cultural values which he or she is interested in learning more about. As a qualitative researcher, my role is mostly an active learner who “tells the story from the participants’ views rather than as an expert who passes judgement on the participants” (Creswell, 1998, p.18). I am a Han with prior knowledge of ethnic minority education, and teaching for diversity, and I had previous interactions with ethnic minority students. Being an indigenous-insider in Han community gave me an advantage in building trust with Han teacher candidates who participated in the study. However, since the struggles ethnic minority students in China experience in education and adapting to Han schools and society were not my own, this positioned me as an external-outsider.

My personal identity and academic experiences helped me understand the complexities of ethnic minority education and teaching for diversity in China. I was born in Chengdu, Sichuan Province. It shares a geographic boundary with Tibet and is famous for cultural and ethnic diversity. The major ethnic minority groups in Chengdu are Tibetan, Miao, and Qiang. Many ethnic minority research institutions, especially those that concentrate on Tibetans and Qiangs are established in Chengdu. Being interested in cultural and linguistic diversity, I learned the Qiang dialect, Sichuan dialect, and basic Tibetan vocabulary from my grandfather, who is a scholar in Qiang culture and language.

Since childhood I frequently visited Qiang Villages (羌寨) in Beichuan (北川) and Maoxian (茂县) with my grandparents, who have high hopes for the inheritance of Qiang language and culture in our family. I was in awe at the unique Qiang religion, culture, and language during my first visit to Pingtou Qiang Village (坪头羌寨). The linguistic system of the Qiang was like a foreign language to me. Most Chinese people do not consider indigenous

languages of ethnic minority groups as important as other foreign languages, especially English. Thus, my first experience with China's cultural dynamics and linguistic diversity was a mixture of pride and uncertainty---I was proud of being an "outsider-within" the Qiang cultural community but was hesitant to blend this cultural and linguistic heritage into my own Han ethnicity.

When I was a middle student in Chengdu, there were four Tibetan and two Qiang students in my class. My greetings in Qiang and Tibetan reduced the distance between me and my ethnic minority classmates. They were surprised and excited to see a Han who could speak their language and understand their culture. Sharing part of their cultural and linguistic backgrounds positioned me in the role of the "insider" with my ethnic minority classmates' community. I was able to understand and represent their experiences and struggles better than a completely Han "outsider". It also increased their level of comfort at the moment they heard my accent, which was a sign of familiarity and welcome. However, state schools in inland cities rarely provided ethnic minority language classes, which greatly limited the opportunities for bilingual education. During my K-12 schooling experience, I did not have the opportunity to take classes in ethnic minority languages, which limited my language proficiency in Qiang and Tibetan to greetings and daily communication. Although my Han classmates and teachers expressed interest in minority languages, they considered mastering Mandarin as the ultimate goal of Chinese language instruction.

In schools, including most minority schools, Mandarin is the language of instruction (Lin, 2008). Although some ethnic minority students have learned Mandarin, many do not know the language at all. Those who migrate to urban cities with their parents or attend inland Tibetan or Uyghur classes experience great difficulty learning subject content and the Mandarin language at

the same time when they enter the school (Lin, 2008). As time goes on, their interest in learning decreases and high dropout rates occur. Research indicates that not knowing Mandarin is a major contributing factor to ethnic minority student dropout (Wang, 2008). When I moved to Beijing with my parents at the age of 15, the high school and university I attended started to establish inland Tibetan and Uygur classes, and I volunteered to join the “study group” with Tibetan classmates. The exposure I had to their cultural challenges and learning experiences in Han-dominant society provoked my interests in researching ethnic and cultural pluralism, which was woven into the national unity and cultural assimilation policies.

From my previous learning experiences and daily interactions with ethnic minority students in urban cities, the absence of cultural relevance in learning materials and teaching strategies became apparent. As an essential element of retaining ethnic minority students in schools and increasing their learning motivation, cultural relevance, ethnic minority identity, and self-recognition seemed necessary. However, a common phenomenon I observed among schools and universities that minority students attend is they easily feel isolated, have difficulty in understanding their Han teachers and peers, and find it hard to identify with the institutional culture and the curricula taught.

The national curriculum and textbooks of China teach national unity, social and cultural capital of the Han, and the history and civilization of other countries, while local ethnic minority histories, values, customs, people, knowledge, and geography are often excluded (Lin, 2008). The arts, languages, cultures, and behaviors of diverse groups are not studied at all. They are “viewed as exotic or romantic” (Lin, 2008, p.77). Teachers who teach in urban schools and inland Tibetan or Uygur classes are predominantly Han and have limited social contact and experiences with minority students and communities. Due to the lack of pre-service preparation

of teaching for diversity in their preparation programs, the majority of Han teachers are not equipped with multicultural knowledge and values, nor culturally responsive pedagogical skills. Yearning to explore cultural sustainability and bridge the learning-teaching gap between ethnic minority students and majority Han teachers, my dual identity as an insider of Han community and outsider of ethnic minority community were intertwined in this research process, and involved a process of self-reflection. My personal experiences within various ethnicities, languages, and cultural locations allowed me to approach this study with cultural insights from both Han and minority perspectives and made me more aware of potential sensitivities while constructing research questions and recruiting research participants.

### **Rationale for qualitative research**

This study used a qualitative research approach, which incorporated documents, semi-structured interviews, and narratives in a selected teacher education program in Beijing, People's Republic of China. The research followed a "basic interpretive format" (Merriam, 2009), designed to understand the interaction of preservice teachers with the culture of the academic learning environment and school contexts in which they study and complete their student-teaching experiences. Qualitative research is a useful way to explore Han preservice teachers' views of their professional preparation and fieldwork experiences with respect to teaching ethnically and culturally diverse students; their understanding of ethnic and cultural effects on minority students' learning; and how their teacher education programs incorporate knowledge, attitudes, and skills for culturally responsive teaching.

Qualitative research has experienced a significant increase among educators, due to its strength in exploring the authentic voices and views of research participants. Qualitative research uses three techniques to ensure the accuracy of the data collected. These are walking (observing),

asking (interviewing), and reviewing (archival analysis) (Firestone, 1993). Wolcott (1992) identified three other activities essential to the qualitative data collection process. They are “experiencing, with emphasis on sensory data, particularly watching and listening; inquiring, in which the researcher’s role becomes more intrusive than that of a mere observer; and examining, in which the researcher makes use of materials prepared by others” (Wolcott, 1992, p.18). The interpretation of qualitative data rests on “giving them meaning, translating them, or making them understandable” (Neuman, 1991, p.329). These (and other) scholars recognize the strength of this research approach as gaining insight, yielding the best possible knowledge for inservice education, and for modifying practice (Stake, 1995). Thus it is a good choice for “understanding the processes that goes on in a situation and the beliefs and perceptions of those in it” (Firestone, 1993, p.22). Crowson (1988) recommended four procedural principles for conducting qualitative research in the field of education that were employed in this study. They are seeking to:

Appreciate each setting through the perspectives of its natives, and to satisfy an anthropologist-like curiosity about the behaviors that have been observed based on its control research goal of understanding; achieve researcher proximity, namely, the researcher as the primary instrument of data collection; relies on analytic induction or ground up interpretation; and ensure the search for understanding is heavily value-laden (pp.10-11).

Under the guidance of these four procedural principles, the major characteristics of qualitative research are summarized in the Table 2.

Qualitative data is usually rich in details and contexts. Presentations of the data are “tied directly to the data sources, and research validity and reliability are based on the logic of the study’s interpretations, rather than statistical tests” (Libarkin & Kurdziel, 2002; Patton, 2002, as

cited in Skepple, 2011, p.41). For instance, many qualitative researchers argue that “the best way to understand research phenomenon is to view it in its original contexts” (Skepple, 2011, p.41). Thus, qualitative studies seek to “recreate the contextual settings as a research framework” (Skepple, 2011, p.40). As Merriam (1998) explained, “qualitative research is an umbrella concept covering several forms of inquiry that help us understand and explain the meaning of social phenomena” (p.5).

Table 2: Characteristics of qualitative research:

<b>Objective/Purpose</b>	· Gain an understanding of underlying reasons and motivations based on perceptions and experiences
	· Provide insight into the problem
	· Become familiar with facts, settings, and concerns
<b>Validity/Reliability</b>	· Based on trustworthiness
	· Verification
	· Established through logical reasoning and consensus
	· Statistics not required
<b>Outcome</b>	· Exploratory and/or investigative
	· Findings are not conclusive
	· Issues can be studied in detail
<b>Data collection methods</b>	· Researcher is primary instrument
	· Unstructured or semi-structured techniques could include observations, individual interviews, questionnaires, and focus groups
	· Historical---comparative research

Sources: Cresswell, (2009), as cited in Skepple, R, (2011), p.40-41.

For the purpose of understanding the relationship within a setting, qualitative data often consist of “detailed field notes, observations, interviews, written documents, and audio or video tapes” (Skepple, 2011, p.40). Qualitative research involves broadly stated questions about “human experiences and realities, examined through sustained contact with people in their natural environments, and it generates rich, descriptive data that help researchers to understand their researched participants’ experiences and attitudes” (Skepple, 2011, p.42). Rather than presenting results in the form of statistics, qualitative research produces words, comments, and

statements. Its purpose is to identify people's feelings and experiences from their own perspectives of view (Rees, 1996).

This qualitative study explored how aspects of teacher education programs addressed the academic achievement gap between ethnic minority students and their Han counterparts, through the adequacy of pre-service preparation for culturally responsive teaching. It investigated how these ideologies were implemented in practice. It also helped explain "how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences---the overall purpose is to understand how people make sense of their lives and their experiences" (Merriam, 2009, p.23).

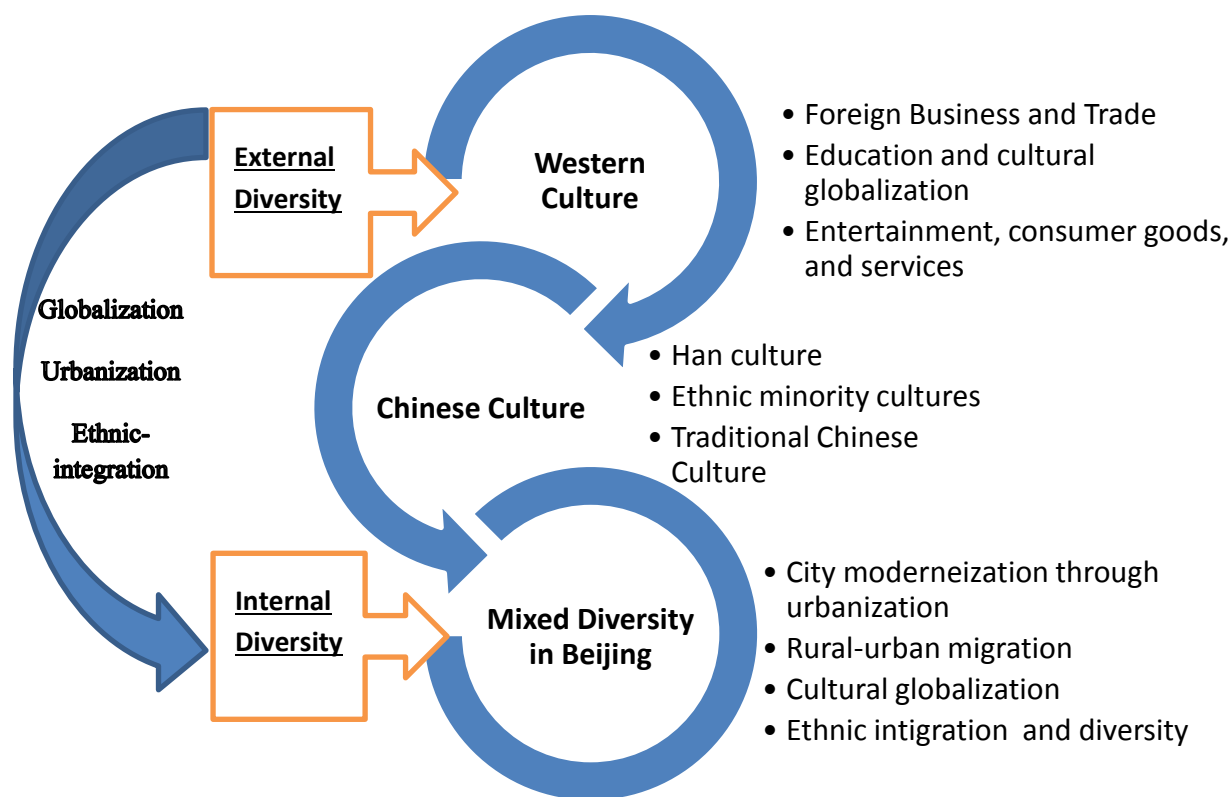
In this study these knowledge and skills were reflected in preservice Han teachers' perceptions of their student teaching experiences with diverse students. It also provided an authentic perspective on voices that previously have been ignored, whose standpoints need to be represented, and whose culture and ethnic heritages need to be valued in China's minority education programs and related teacher preparation.

### **Selection of Setting and Participants**

According to Hall (2003), it is important for qualitative studies to be situated within local cultural sites to more fully capture and understand local cultures and situations. In an effort to meet this condition, this study was conducted in Beijing, the People's Republic of China. Beijing is the capital of China, as well as the economic, political, cultural, and educational center of the country. Three major layers of diversity (see figure 2) attribute to the rich and complex content of multiculturalism in Beijing. These are globalization (Western cultural infusion in the context of modernization), urbanization (rural to urban migration), and ethnic integration (diversity

under national unification). The external diversity and internal diversity make reconceptualizing multiculturalism and re-examining multicultural education in China important and necessary.

Figure 2. The multi-layers cultural diversity in Beijing



Under the influence of globalization and China joining the World Trade Organization in 2001, Beijing is experiencing a process of rapid westernization, especially “Americanization”, in economy, culture, and education. In the ancient Forbidden City which was once the residence of China’s emperors, and is still the symbolic center of the Chinese culture, people now see other common sights. These are the forest green logo of Starbucks Coffee and the bright yellow sign of McDonald’s.

Besides the open business market for consumer goods and services, the education of younger Chinese generations are experiencing westernize more than ever. According to 2015 data from the Ministry of Education, there are currently 75 international schools (including state

public schools that have international departments which offer international courses, SAT, and TOFEL preparation classes) in Beijing.

Attending these international schools has become a trend of modernity. The broaden influences of globalization and westernization on Chinese life and culture add a larger context of multiculturalism in Beijing beyond the discussion of indigenous culture and ethnic diversity. How can Chinese people and future generations balance their own diversity while facing cultures brought in by the world's multinationals?

Beijing also attracts a large ethnic minority migrant population from the west inland regions of the country. These migrants come to the city to pursue better educational resources and career opportunities. At the same time, Beijing is a historic metropolis that had attracted diverse groups of minority individuals from surrounding areas to live and work over its 500 years of history. Minority communities and enclaves can be found in different parts of the city. According to Zhang and Chen (2014), the minority population in Beijing exceeds 801,000, or approximately 4.1% of the city's total population. Recently, more and more ethnic minority students enroll in Han-led public schools, although many ethnic minority schools exist in Beijing for educating a particular ethnic group, such as the Hui and Tibetans.

Another reason for conducting this study in Beijing is the availability of higher education institutions and teacher education programs. As illustrated in Table 3, Beijing ranks at the top of the distribution of quality higher education institutions (HEIs) among other major provinces. This educational advantage prompts ethnic minority students and families to migrate from their remote ethnic autonomous regions to Beijing to pursue education that hopefully will result in decent jobs and a good quality of life after graduation.

Table 3: The distribution of higher education institutions in 2015 (HEIs) in Beijing and other major provinces:

地区/Regions	普通高校Regular HEIs			成人高等学校Adult HEIs		其余非中央部门 Other Non-government HEIs	
	合计/Total	其中：中央部门 of Which:HEIs unde Central Ministries & Agencies	本科院校 HEIs Offering Degree Programs	高职（专科）院校 Higher Vocational Colleges	合计 Total		其中：中央部门 of Which:HEIs under Central Ministries & Agencies
<b>总计 Total</b>	<b>2529</b>	<b>113</b>	<b>1202</b>	<b>1327</b>	<b>295</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>799</b>
北京 Beijing	89	35	64	25	24	8	69
内蒙古 Inner Mongolia	50		15	35	2		
广西 Guangxi	70		33	37	6		
贵州 Guizhou	55		26	29	4		
云南 Yunnan	67		30	37	2		
西藏 Tibet	6		3	3			
青海 Qinghai	12		4	8	2		
宁夏 Ningxia	18	1	8	10	1		
新疆 Xinjiang	44		18	26	7		

Source: Ministry of Education (2015).

Beijing is also one of the first urban cities to create inland Tibetan and Uyghur classes. Founded in 1987, Beijing Tibetan Middle School became the first inland school to recruit Tibetan students from the Tibet Autonomous Region (Zhang & Zhao, 2015). Under the auspices of the Department of Ethnic Minority Education, 17 middle schools and 68 high schools have established inland Tibetan and Uyghur classes to date. Of these, six key high schools (重点高中) and 10 key middle schools (重点初中) are recruiting Tibetan students to study in Beijing (Zhang & Zhao, 2015). The increasing ethnic minority student enrollment and the government's investment for inland Tibetan and Uyghur classes, enhance the cultural and ethnic diversity in Han-dominant schools in Beijing. The increasing diversity poses challenges for Han teachers

who have limited knowledge, interactions with ethnic minority groups, and skills for helping them achieve academic success in urban schools.

Another effort to improve minority student achievement is sending Han teachers and teacher volunteers to ethnic minority regions, especially in the rural areas in Xinjiang and Tibet. Being the pioneer of the teacher exchange program, the city government of Beijing sends local Han teachers to Xinjiang every year, as well as establishes teacher development programs in normal universities for Uygur and Tibetan teachers. In the process of “bringing in” and “sending out” Han teachers who face ethnic minority students in Han-led schools, and Han teachers who enter ethnic minority cultural and ethnic community experience cultural shifts and differences, which make academic preparation of teaching for diversity for Han teachers vital. Two leading national teacher education institutions carry the responsibilities of teacher education, teacher development, and teacher exchange to rural and ethnic minority regions in Beijing. These are Beijing Normal University and Capital Normal University. Both are funded by the central government through the National Education Commission. These universities play a leading role in preparing preservice teachers for all school levels, and their graduates, especially from Capital Normal University, comprise the majority of the teaching force in Beijing.

Purposeful sampling (Patton, 2002) was used to recruit information-rich participants for an in-depth study of the teacher education program in multicultural education and culturally responsiveness teaching in China. Patton (2002) defined information-rich participants as “those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research” (p.242). Based on the research purpose of identifying preservice Han teachers’ perceptions of their teacher education programs in addressing and preparing them to be culturally

responsive teachers, the targeted study participants were Han teacher education students (who are called normal students 师范生) in a normal university in Beijing.

The normal university was selected because it concentrates more on training prospective K-12 teachers, instead of an institution that was more research-oriented and whose graduates mainly pursue advanced degrees in education and seek jobs as school administrators. As a result, the targeted study participants were Han teacher education students studying at Central Normal University (a pseudonym was used for the university name due to the confidential agreement). This university focused more on preparing prospective K-12 teachers, in-service teacher training, post-service teacher development, teacher exchange and volunteering in rural and ethnic autonomous regions, and providing professional training for in-service ethnic minority teachers from Xinjiang.

Central Normal University offers 57 undergraduate programs, 66 specialties, and 14 teacher education programs which cover a wide range of subject disciplines included in the national elementary and secondary education curricula. It provides a comprehensive university-based teacher education programs in China, and high-quality training and development for primary and secondary school teachers. It is also responsible for masters and doctoral programs in teacher education. In Central Normal University, Han students and faculty comprise the dominant ethnic group. In 2011, Central Normal University established the “Jing-Jiang School of Education” to recruit Uygur students and in-service Uygur teachers from the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region in elementary and secondary teacher education programs, in-service teacher training programs, and post-service teacher development programs. Currently 635 Uygur teacher education students and in-service Uygur teachers enroll in that school.

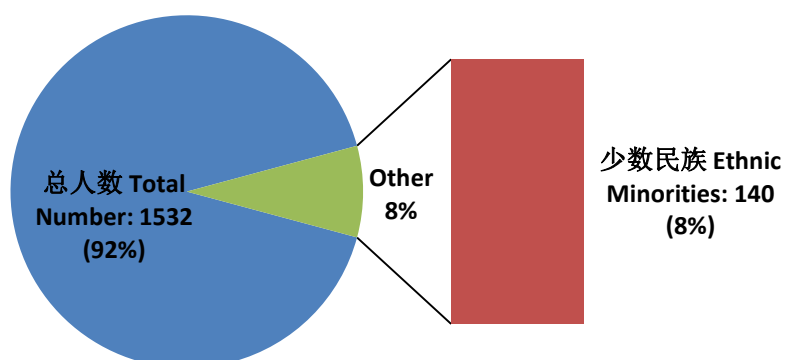
Aiming at increasing the educational quality and improving teacher quality in Xinjiang, Tibetan, and other remoted ethnic autonomous regions, Central Normal University also offers “free normal (teacher) education programs” to ethnic minority and Han students from targeted ethnic autonomous regions and rural areas. By 2015, Central Normal University had become one of the inland normal universities with the most diverse student population than other teacher education institutions (see Table 4 and figure 3). This teacher education institution also plays leading roles in preparing prospective teachers, and has a national influence on teacher education and development.

Table 4. Students’ demographic information at Central Normal University in 2015

Degree Program	Total Number	Ethnic Minority Students	International Students
博士生 Ph.D.	605	23	16
硕士生 Graduate	5226	255	50
本科生 Undergraduate	10730	1194	450
专科生 Professional Training	7656	578	1071
<b>总人数 Total Population</b>	<b>24217</b>	<b>2050</b>	<b>1587</b>

(Source: Central Normal University official website)

Figure 3. The faculty demographic distribution at Central Normal University in 2015



(Source: Central Normal University official website)

The research participants consisted of two groups. One group of participants was three professors from the Department of Teacher Education with expertise in teacher education, cultural diversity, multicultural education, foundations and pedagogy courses. They provided direct and insightful information about what was taking place in the teacher education program curriculum, training about teaching diverse students, and how theoretical knowledge in teacher preparation in China was being converted to practice. The teacher educators were selected based on academic and research areas of specialization, courses taught in the teacher education programs, and previous experiences working with multicultural and multiethnic students. This information was easily accessible from their university website.

To identify and access potential teacher educators, I contacted faculty members who met the selection criteria through email. The recruiting message and an invitation for participation were provided (see Appendix D). They specified that their participation was voluntary and they could leave the study at any time. As advised by Lindlof and Taylor (2002), the rights and benefits of the study participants were explained in detail. There were six qualifying teacher educators after initial screening of their research expertise and backgrounds. Five of them

responded to the recruiting message. Eventually, three were willing to participate in onsite interviews at Central Normal University. The interview protocol (see Appendix B) was provided to all participants. The demographic and academic backgrounds of teacher educators are summarized in Table 5.

Table 5: Demographic and academic backgrounds of teacher educators

Participant	Rank	Ethnicity	Gender	Research & Teaching Interests
Dr. Zhong, Yue	Associate Professor	Han	Female	Multiculturalism, Cultural Diversity Teacher Education, Teacher Quality Teacher Development Curriculum and Instruction
Dr. Wu, Chuli	Professor	Han	Male	Higher Education Policy Teacher Preparation Sociocultural Foundation of Education Multicultural Education
Dr. Li, Liqiong	Assistant Professor	Han	Female	Teacher Education, Teacher Quality Teacher Development Civic Education and Moral Education Pre-service Teacher Education

(Pseudonyms were used for all participants)

Dr. Zhong is an associate professor specializing in multiculturalism, cultural studies, and pre-service teacher learning and education. She teaches educational foundation courses to teacher candidates at Central Normal University. She leads research projects on ethnic minority education, education for migrant children, and pre-service teacher preparation and in-service teacher development in rural China. Focusing on learning and teaching from the sociocultural approach, Dr. Zhong investigates collaborative roles of teacher education programs, practicum schools, and communities in preparing high quality teachers in ethnic minority regions and rural areas in China.

Dr. Wu specializes in sociocultural foundation of education and teacher development. His current study focuses on the design of culturally responsive curriculum and textbooks in ethnic autonomous regions. He has a particular interest in developing multicultural teacher education in China and exploring intersections between conceptual and social dimensions of teacher preparation. Dr. Wu teaches educational foundation and pedagogy courses at Central Normal University with focus on cultural influences on student learning and teaching pedagogy. His passion has been researching and investigating how university-based teacher education programs can be leveraged to enhance prospective teachers' learning of social and cultural diversity and have the opportunity to construct instructional pedagogy and positive relationships with students from diverse cultural and social backgrounds.

Dr. Li is an assistant professor of teacher education at Central Normal University. Dr. Li focuses her research around teacher quality and teacher development, moral and civic education, and community-based teacher education. As a teacher educator Dr. Li serves on the development of Jing-Jiang School of Education on the in-service teacher development for Uygur teachers and school principals. Her research aims to better identify the ethnical, cultural, and socioeconomic factors that impact on teacher quality and educational achievements in Xinjiang and other rural ethnic regions in China.

Another group of participants was five Han teacher candidates enrolled in the teacher education programs at Central Normal University, who will become K-12 school teachers after graduation. These preservice teachers were selected from a range of different compulsory subjects taught in schools, including Math, Chinese, English, Science, and Social Science. It was important to have variation in the subjects preservice teachers teach, while selecting disciplines that mostly needed a culturally relevant pedagogy that could connect with students' daily lives.

Therefore Liberal Arts and Social Science subjects such as Chinese, English, History, and Politics were targeted for identifying participants. In order to capture the most diverse backgrounds of teacher education students, candidates from the Math teacher education program (which is part of a compulsory three major courses in K-12 education along with Chinese and English) who met the selection criteria were also invited to participate in the study. Besides subject disciplines, teacher candidates were selected based on their Han ethnic identity, years of studying in a teacher education program, experiences of student teaching, and student demographics in their student-teaching classes or schools.

Another factor in the selection of preservice teacher participants was whether they had been involved in any other teaching experiences with minority students, such as the Teach for China programs in remote ethnic autonomous regions. Participants were expected to have some minority student teaching experiences through Teach for China or other volunteer teaching programs, in order to better demonstrate their understanding of how cultural and ethnic factors contribute to minority students' learning processes, outcomes, and their own future teaching success in multicultural and multiethnic school contexts.

To identify potential participants, I first contacted program academic administrators of the targeted university by email and asked them to nominate qualified candidates (see Appendix F). The nominations form (see Appendix G), the researcher's background, and general research design were explained in detail. Network sampling (Merriam, 2009) also was used during the research participants' recruiting process. All qualified nominees received a recruitment letter (see Appendix E), a verbal explanation of the purpose and focus of the study, and interview protocols (see Appendix A and C) before their participation in the study. The researcher informed the preservice teacher candidates that their participation would be voluntary, anonymous, and that no

adverse effects would result from their decision not to participate. The rights of the study participants to understand the nature and needs of the study also were provided, along with the potential benefits and risks of their participation, as advised by Lindlof and Taylor (2002). To ensure the accuracy of information, all research related materials were translated into Chinese and sent to participants with the original English version. Teacher education students selected as participants are summarized in Table 6. There were three females and two males. They were either 22 or 23 years old. All were in the fourth year of college studies and four of the five taught in middle schools. A brief descriptive profile of each participant is presented next.

Table 6: Demographics and Educational Background by Participant

Participant	Age	Gender	City of Residency	Major Program	College Year	School for Practicum
<b>Ma, Yongqiao</b>	23	Female	Kashi, Xinjiang	Chinese	Fourth Year	Yanhua High School (Mixed students ethnicities)
<b>Wei, Jing</b>	22	Male	Kunming, Yunnan Province	English	Fourth Year	Yongan Middle School (Mixed students ethnicities)
<b>Cai, Jiayin</b>	22	Female	Beijing	History	Fourth Year	Humin Middle School (Mixed students ethnicities)
<b>Liu, Yunxi</b>	22	Female	Beijing	Politics	Fourth Year	Humin Middle School (Mixed students ethnicities)
<b>Jiang, Nanqiao</b>	23	Male	Beijing	Math	Fourth Year	Mingzhu Middle School (Han-led with Tibetan students)

(For names of all participants and schools, pseudonyms were used)

### **Yongqiao**

Yongqiao was born in Kashi, the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region. Growing up in a city full of ethnic and cultural diversity, she was deeply attracted to the fascinating history and

culture of Uygur people. During Yongqiao's K-12 education experiences in Kashi, she had extensive interactions with ethnic minority classmates from Uygur, Kazak, Tajik, and Uzbeks ethnic groups. Although she could not speak the Uygur language, she was very familiar with the people's traditions, religion, values, culture and taboos. These multicultural personal experiences enabled Yongqiao to acquire background knowledge about Uyghurs, develop cultural and ethnic sensitivity and interest in exploring multicultural and multilingual education in Xinjiang.

Yongqiao did her student teaching at Yanhua High School. She was responsible for teaching Chinese for the junior grade class with mixed ethnicities from Han, Uygur, Manchu, Tibetan, and Hui ethnic groups. Having a strong passion for improving educational quality in Xinjiang, Yongqiao actively participated in volunteer teaching and Teach for China programs. After graduation, she plans to return to Xinjiang and become a high school Chinese language teacher and participate in the local Chinese-Uygur bilingual education reform.

### **Jing**

Jing came from Kunming, Yunnan province. Growing up in a neighborhood with Dai, Miao, Zhuang, and Han ethnic groups, he was particularly interested in linguistic diversity in Southwest China. Jing spoke a local dialect in daily life and in schools which made him encountered difficulties while learning Mandarin and English, especially in "standard pronunciation." He said, "My heavy Yunnan accent marked my identity." As Jing demonstrated, the linguistic tie to his hometown inspired his interests in identity development in language learning. During his first year at Central Normal University, Jing experienced a geographic relocation along with an identity shift. He declared, "Sometimes I miss speaking Yunnan dialect. When I speak my dialect, I feel I am home." Jing's personal experiences and academic interests in identity development, second language acquisition, and sociocultural impacts on language

instruction evoked his concerns for preserving ethnic indigenous languages and cultures in China. After witnessing several ethnic and religious conflicts in Yunnan in recent years, Jing started to question the balance between ethnic assimilation and ethnic diversity. While teaching English in the senior grade at Yongan Middle School, Jing gave special attention and support to ethnic minority students and migrant students from rural regions in his class. He felt he could understand major challenges they might encounter both in school and in daily life. He explained, “I want to ensure my students receive the maximum support from their teacher.” Jing also volunteered to teach English in Kuitun in the Xinjiang Autonomous Region for three months during the summer break in the third year of his program.

### **Jiayin**

Jiayin grew up in a neighborhood in Niujie, a traditional community for Hui in Beijing. The first time she noticed groups of “others” was when she saw people wearing white hats and dressed differently. The concept of “others” developed when she realized eating differences and unique religion traditions of the Hui through social interactions. She found this was interesting because the overall concepts of Chinese and “One United Nation” were so deeply rooted in people’s hearts. Jiayin stated, “Nobody will realize differences exist among us unless we walk into others’ living communities. It is like entering into a different country, but it is not. Geographically, we are still in China, but we are so different.” Being a History major, Jiayin focused her research and study on the history between the Yuan, Ming, and Qing Dynasties. She explained that, “Those were significant historical periods when Beijing and Han people experienced cultural and ethnic diversity through political changes. The infusion of Mongol and Manchu ethnicities in this predominantly Han society increased demographic and cultural dynamics. We should not neglect that.” Jiayin’s desire to become a middle school history teacher

was sparked by her living experience in the Hui community, and her academic interests in indigenous history. She completed her student teaching at Humin Middle School, which is famous for its Hui student population, and ethnically diverse teaching force. Jiayin participated in the volunteer teaching program in Liangshan at Sichuan Province, where she taught history to middle school students from the Yi ethnic group.

### **Yunxi**

Growing up in a family atmosphere which was full of adventure, excitement, and curiosity, Yunxi developed a love for traveling. She enjoyed traveling around China and overseas to experience as much cultural diversity as she could. When she thought about the concept of diversity, “western culture” was the first example she mentioned. Yunxi participated in the student exchange program during her undergraduate study at Central Normal University. After returning to Beijing from the short term exchange program in the United States, she began to rethink and redefine the concept of diversity. She explained that “When we talk about diversity, especially cultural and racial diversity, the image of the melting pot America simultaneously appears in our mind. How would this happen when we have more knowledge and admiration about a foreign country rather than our home country?” Yunxi visited the five ethnic autonomous regions frequently during holidays and school vacations. At the time of this study, she had finished a short term volunteer teaching experience in Qujing at Yunnan Province, where she taught civic and moral education classes to middle school students of mixed ethnicities including Dai, Lisu, Bai, Tujia, and Han ethnic groups. Yunxi also did her student teaching in Humin Middle School, where she was responsible for teaching a politics course to junior grade students.

## **Nanqiao**

Nanqiao was born in Beijing to parents who migrated from a small town in Guizhou Province. They gave him the Chinese name which means “blessing and bridge to the South” in memory of their home town and hopes for their blessing. Nanqiao was interested in education for migrant children and rural science teacher preparation. His family background and personal experiences were tugging at him in another way, too. He wanted to become a story-teller and write about the rich experiences and struggles of his parents’ generation during the process of migration from Guizhou to Beijing. He said, “I think my parents’ experiences enable me to obtain a certain perspective and understanding for people who are outside the mainstream, while looking in and trying to adapt, and succeed.” Nanqiao was also an active student leader for several student-volunteer teaching organizations that concentrate on teaching migrant children in boarding schools and private schools in Beijing and rural areas. Being a volunteer of China Teaching Assistance and China University Student Aid-education Alliance, Nanqiao interpreted the concept of multiculturalism from social perspectives and science approaches. Nanqiao also tried to explore pedagogical skills that could bridge math education for migrant and rural students with insufficient academic backgrounds and complex living experiences during the process of migration. He completed his student teaching at Mingzhu Middle School, which was a Han-dominant school with a small amount of Tibetan students.

## **Research Questions**

The following research questions were examined in this study:

- What are preservice Han teachers’ perceptions of their teacher education programs in addressing and preparing them to be culturally responsive teachers for ethnic minority students?

- What is actually being done in the teacher education programs they enroll in to meet the goals of preparing culturally responsive teachers?
- How is success of the teacher education program in preparing culturally responsive Han teacher determined?

### **Data Collection**

From November 2016 to January 2017, multiple forms of data were collected to minimize the personal bias of the researcher, acquire multiple perspectives on culturally responsive teacher preparation at a university in China, and to triangulate findings in this study. Data sources included documents, interviews, and narrative stories. In order to identify the institutional missions and visions of teacher education programs at Central Normal University, the researcher collected curricular materials, course descriptions, assessment and evaluation tools, and learning materials. Professional development materials and student teaching evaluation guidelines also were collected from the selected teacher education programs. According to Merriam (1998), documentary data provide significant research information because they are not influenced by the research process, and are produced and grounded in authentic or naturalistic contexts.

Interviews were another major source of data for this study. They were helpful in capturing participants' perspectives, attitudes, strategies, and reflections. Interviews lasted for 45-60 minutes and were designed for in-depth exploration of the experience of the researched individuals (Charmz, 2006). The interview times and places were scheduled at the convenience of the participants. In the event that the researcher could not meet the participants in person due to distance and time constraints, the option of phone interview was provided. To ensure the maximum level of comfort and the accuracy of expression, all interviews were conducted in

Mandarin. Prior to the interviews the participants were given a brief description of the purpose of the study, the methodology, expectations, and the interview protocols (see Appendix A and C).

The interview questions were all semi-structured, following the general flow of opening questions, intermediate questions, and ending questions to gradually address the three primary research questions of this study. With the permission of the participants, the interviews were all recorded, and later transcribed by the researcher. Three sets of interviews were conducted in this study. Two sets were designed for teacher candidates and one for teacher educators. The first set of interviews for the teacher candidates focused on their general backgrounds, perceptions, and attitudes towards cultural and ethnic diversity, knowledge base of minority groups, and academic training regarding teaching for diversity in their university-based teacher education programs. The open-ended interview about the teacher education program included questions such as how is diversity addressed in your teacher education program; how are culturally responsive teaching strategies discussed and/or modeled for preservice teachers; and how are preservice teacher candidates guaranteed school placements with diverse student populations for their student teaching training.

The first set of interviews was conducted right after the participants finished their student teaching practicum in early December, 2016. These interviews lasted for 40-50 minutes. The follow-up second set of interviews for the teacher candidates were conducted at the end of the Fall Semester in mid-January. Interview questions focused on further investigating student-teaching experiences; attitudes and beliefs about ethnic minority students' performance and outcomes; challenges and obstacles encountered during student teaching experiences in multicultural and multiethnic schools and classrooms; and perceptions concerning academic

preparedness and actual instructional effectiveness in teaching multicultural and multiethnic students.

By conducting semi-structured interviews, the researcher hoped to obtain information about the participants' experiences with and reflections about (Patton, 2002) working with minority students' to enrich preservice teachers' understanding and interpretation of cultural and racial dimensions of minority students' learning (Merriam, 2009); and to explore the inter-relationships between teacher preparation, actual teaching practice, and minority students' learning experiences and outcomes (Delpit, 1995) in multicultural and multiethnic contexts. All interviews were audio recorded on a digital device and subsequently transcribed, analyzed, and coded to search for common themes and sub-themes. During the interview, field notes also were taken to provide descriptions of the interview settings and the researcher's comments or reflections. Field notes also were taken during the coding process.

A third set of semi-structured interviews was involved teacher educators and focused on details of the course content and learning experiences within the teacher education programs. They included issues such as what has been done in the teacher education program of Central Normal University to prepare culturally responsive Han teachers; what is included in teacher education program coursework, curriculum, and student-teaching about teaching diverse students in China; how is the success of different aspects of the program in preparing culturally responsive teachers determined? Teacher educators who participated in this study taught foundation or method courses and supervised field of clinical experiences required of preservice teachers. These interviews lasted for 40-55 minutes. The interview questions directed to them were designed to probe into their philosophies and practices about developing culturally responsive teachers in China. Prior to the interview, the selected teacher educators were

provided a brief description of the purpose of the study, the methodology, and interview protocol (see Appendix B). They were interviewed in their offices at their convenience.

The responses of preservice teacher and teacher educator participants were typed verbatim to protect participants' confidentiality and privacy. The interviews were fundamental to the study as they captured personal experiences, attitudes and beliefs, academic preparation, and instructional practices that affected how the participants considered multicultural education in China. Within the framework of qualitative research, semi-structured interviews are phenomenological in nature since they seek to understand the participants' points of view (Patton, 1990; Merriam, 2009). In addition, they generated questions that led to concept clarifications and follow-up interviews.

Interviews "are opportunities for the voices of research participants to be heard, cultural and racial identities to be valued, and multiple needs to be fulfilled" (Yuan, 2017, p.37) by faculties, administrators, and students. As Bennett (2004) explained, conducting qualitative research can help capture the essence and spirit of thinking about racial and cultural issues in higher education. It contributes to the transformation and deconstruction of socially and institutionally stereotyped notions of academic achievements and gaps between ethnic minority students' learning, dominant Han teachers' teaching practice, and teacher preparation in China's university teacher education programs.

Increasingly, personal narratives in research are used to "exhibit individual or collective experiences" (Errante, 2000, p.16). Narrative research is committed to capturing the authentic voices, perspectives, and experiences of marginalized or silenced groups (Dhunpath, 2000), and it obtained individual, personal, and social viewpoints (Creswell, 2002). This type of research also involves capturing "everyday, normal form of data that is familiar to individuals" (Creswell,

2002, p.531). In this study, narratives were part of building a relationship of collaboration in the research process between participants and the researcher, and accessing and recognizing the identity and background of the participants, and valuing their insights. Bell (2003, p. 23) suggested that “stories are one quite powerful way to explore socially constructed racial and ethnic positions, and to understand the thoughts and assumptions they generate and reinforce”. While discussing instructional strategies and teacher education programs policies, practices, and effects, the perspectives of teacher candidates could be authorized since they were the most direct participants (Cook-Sather, 2002). Byrne (2003) explained that narratives of student participants in research can “encourage a much needed client perspective of schooling and illuminate the subtle way that educational institutions systematically silence students voices and needs” (p. 30).

In this study the preservice teacher candidates who had student teaching or working experiences with ethnic minority students or in ethnic minority regions and communities were provided opportunities to share stories about their learning processes and difficulties; cultural, ethnic, and language barriers encountered while teaching minority students; and inspirations and thoughts they received from previous experiences about developing culturally responsive skill as Han teachers to improve the academic performance of diverse student populations in China’s urban school settings. To ensure the validity and reliability of the findings, I used several strategies throughout the study including triangulation (using multiple sources of data and from various groups of participants), conducting member checks by sharing my analyses with the research participants, and constantly using self-reflection on my positionality in the research process and in the distance between me and the research participants.

## Data Analysis

Digital recordings were used for the interviews and narratives, which were later transcribed by the researcher. As suggested by Erickson (1986), transcripts of interviews were read multiple times to achieve “a more holistic conception of the content” (p.149). The transcripts were carefully analyzed, using open coding and focused coding to develop themes according to the patterns derived from the hand-coded data (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Analytic memos, which were “uncensored and permissibly messy opportunities to let thoughts flow and ideas emerge” (Saldaña, 2009, p. 160), also were written to help refine and reveal the thinking processes about the constructing codes and categories. The coding processes were constructed on the theoretical approach to the study and the components of the conceptual framework. These included teaching attitudes, knowledge base, pedagogical skills, instructional materials, teacher-student interactions, and relationships with the community. The descriptions and functions of various kinds of codes and analysis processes were consistent with following guidelines suggested by Saldaña (2011):

[In the] first Cycle methods are coding processes for the beginning stages of data analysis that fracture or split the data into individually coded segments. Second Cycle methods are coding processes for the latter stages of data analysis that both literally and metaphorically consistently compare, reorganize, or focus the codes into categories, prioritize them to develop categories around which others revolve, and synthesize them to formulate a central or core category that becomes the foundation for explication of a grounded theory. Categories also have properties and dimensions; variable qualities that display the range or distribution within similarly coded data (p. 42).

Saldaña (2009) explained further that, “qualitative inquiry provides richer opportunities for gathering and assessing, in language-based meanings, what the participant values, believes, thinks, and feels about social life” (p.92). Category themes can be generated from the data through searching for qualities such as repeating ideas; similarities and differences of expressions; and connections to theories and previous research. The data were interpreted according to the three research questions of the study that focused on the perception, preparation, practice, and reflection of preservice Han teachers enrolled in a university-based teacher education program in China. Ground theory coding also guided the data analysis.

Scholars believe that theories are grounded in the data or constructed “from the ground up” (Saldaña et al., 2011, p.6). Emerson et al. (1995, p.143) explained that, “grounded theorists give priority to developing rather than to verifying analytic propositions. Rather, analysis is at once inductive and deductive” (p. 144). Therefore, grounded theory is an analytic process of constantly comparing data units to generate major themes. According to Charmaz (2006), grounded theory coding consists of at least two major components, which are initial or open coding and focused or selective coding.

Initial or open coding involves mainly naming “words, lines, or data units, while focused or selective coding involves sorting, synthesizing, and summarizing large amount of data by using most frequent or significant codes generated in the previous stage” (Charmaz, 2006, p.13). Strauss and Corbin (1998) described open coding as a data analytic process through which concepts are identified and their properties and dimensions are specified. The initial stages of analysis in this study involved classifying and grouping the original data. The transcriptions collected were coded line by line within a week after collection. To reduce error and distortions of the original meanings within the transcripts (Zheng, 2013) all interview transcripts and field

notes were written in Mandarin and later transcribed into English to facilitate subsequent analyses.

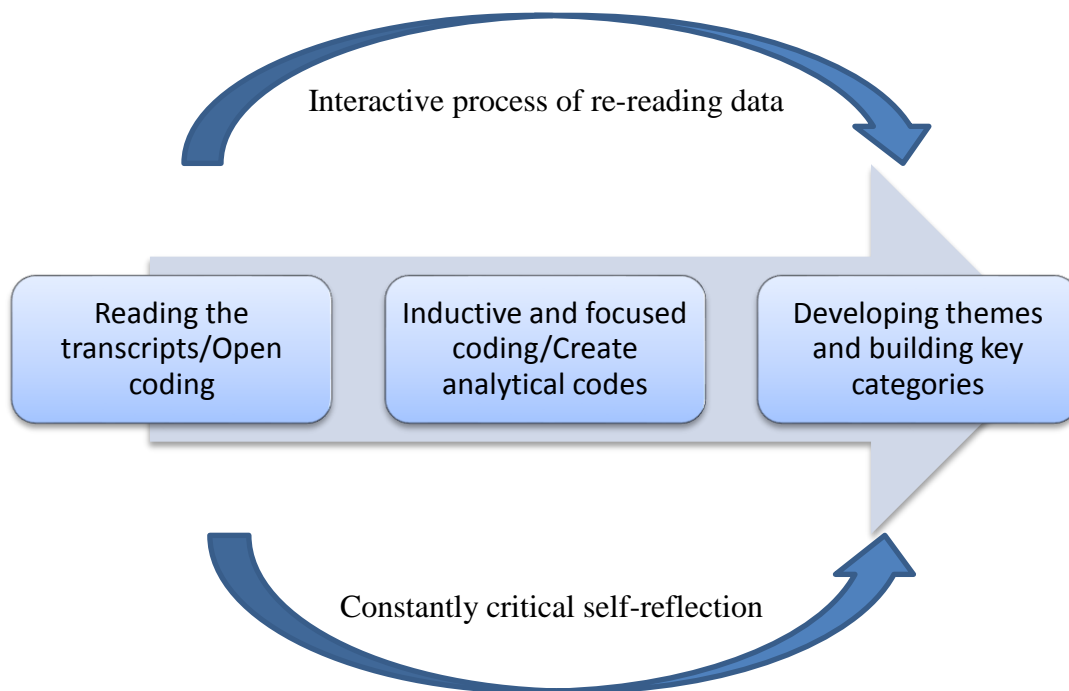
Saldaña et al. (2011) defined a code as “a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data” (p.42). The results from open coding were organized as categories for focused coding. During open coding, Brinkmann (2011) recommends, “using the direct language of participants as codes rather than researcher generated words and phrases, to honor participant’s voices and to ground the analysis from their perspectives” (p.58). Followed this advice, the data were analyzed several times to identify keywords and specific segments that associated with emergent patterns (Merriam, 2009). The multiple reading of and self-reflections of interview transcripts, notes, and memos were useful tools for the data analysis process.

The primary purpose of open coding is to discover theoretical implications within the data collected (Charmaz, 2006). This stage of data analysis involved naming concepts, defining categories, and characterizing categories regarding their dimensions. Constant comparisons (Glaser & Strass, 1967) were used to “establish analytic distinctions” (Carmaz, 2006, as cited in Zeng, 2014, p,46). The different types of data were compared to find similarities and differences, identify new categories, and refine existing categories (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

Focused or selective coding is a process of integrating and improving, during which groups created earlier are “organized around a central explanatory concept, representing the main theme of the research” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, as cited in Zeng, 2014, p. 48). Codes developed during this stage were “more directive, selective, and conceptual comparing to that of the previous stage” (Glaser, 1978, as cited in Zeng, 2014, p.48). The researcher decided if it makes the “most analytical sense to categorize the data incisively and completely” (Charmaz, 2006,

p.57). Once the open coding was completed, analytical codes were developed through reading and re-reading the interview data, field notes, and analytic memos, other categories and subcategories were created, conclusions and findings drawn from the results (Merriam, 2009). These coding processes are depicted visually in Figure 4.

Figure 4. Coding process



Member checking was used to increase the accuracy and reliability of the data. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), member checking is “the most crucial technique for establishing credibility” (p.314). The transcribed interviews along with my interpretation were sent to the participants to clarify any possible mistakes or misinterpretations. All participants replied after reviewing the transcriptions. Only two provided some revisions and clarifications that were minimal. This process of verification improved the validity of the data (Creswell & Miller, 2000).

## **Ethical Issues**

Pseudonyms were used in order to protect the privacy of all the participants, the schools where they did student teaching, the university that was the site of the teacher education programs, and the names of any other individuals mentioned during interviews. The researcher was the only person who handled the interview transcriptions and coding. All the written documents and recordings were dated and securely locked at the researcher's home. The researcher's computer was also password protected to maximize the safety of the research files and recordings. All data were destroyed in a timely manner after the completion of the study. All the digital recordings also were destroyed once the data analyses were completed.

## **Summary**

In this chapter, the reflection on the researcher's personal journey and positionality, the multiethnic contexts of Beijing, the process of developing ethnic minority education and educational migration were described. The descriptions included influences of national and local policies on cultural and ethnic shifts and exchanges among ethnic minority students and majority Han teachers. The selection of the research site and the participants were discussed in detail, as were the purposeful and network sampling strategies used in selecting the participants for this study. Processes used to collect and analyze documents, semi-structured interviews, and narrative stories that were the primary data source were described and facilitated the exploration of how teacher education programs in urban cities in China prepare Han teachers for ethnic and cultural diversity as embodied by minority group students in their classrooms.

## **Chapter IV: Findings**

The findings of this study were derived from data collected through semi-structured interviews, narrative stories, and documents. They supported the goals of this study which were to contribute to resolving misunderstandings and biased cultural knowledge towards minority groups; re-inventing cross-cultural teaching strategies; revisiting the cultural context of teaching; and re-visualizing multicultural teacher preparation in China. The findings consist of a progressive development cycle of preparing culturally responsive Han teachers in China. This process included raising awareness, redefining knowledge and competence, refining preparation, and reinforcing implementation. The examination of the data illuminate five major themes from teacher candidates' and teacher educators' perceptions and experiences of preparing for culturally responsive teaching. These themes are ambiguous perceptions of diversity; inadequate academic preparation in teaching for diversity; disparity between academic training and teaching practice; transformative pedagogy through multicultural teaching experiences; and institutional lack of commitment to preparing teachers for diversity. The first three findings derived largely from interviews with teacher candidates, but the teacher educator participants' comments were supportive of them. The fourth finding was based on five teacher candidates' narrative stories of their volunteer teaching experiences. The fifth finding evolved from comments made by the teacher educators. Each finding is discussed in detail with supportive data in this chapter.

### **The Imagined Others: Ambiguous Perceptions of Diversity**

In order to capture teacher candidates' personal perceptions and knowledge backgrounds towards multiculturalism and teaching for diversity, all participants were asked a set of questions that identified their personal beliefs and previous knowledge of diversity and ethnic minority groups, and how these shaped their cultural awareness and instructional competence while

teaching in diverse settings. All of the five teacher candidates mentioned the cultural erasure of minority groups during the process of national unity, and that social modernization created an imagined picture of “others”. The ambivalent feelings of diversity caused by globalization were also mentioned by the participants.

#### Puzzling Attitudes towards Multiculturalism and Diversity

“What we talk about when we talk about multiculturalism and diversity in China?” This question opened up the discussion about cultural globalization and cultural localization. The five teacher candidate participants’ impressions and conceptions of multiculturalism consisted mainly of Western (especially U.S.) culture and Chinese culture. Yunxi said, “when we talk about multiculturalism, it is not ‘multi’ as it is supposed to be. In most cases it is more like biculturalism---Western and Chinese cultures.” Most of the other teacher candidate participants agreed with the wide spread “biculturalism” and the binary diversity created by this cultural paradigm. As she declared further, “I think the concept of multiculturalism is imported from the West, especially from the United States. This leads to the pervasive impact of Western culture on our conceptions and knowledge construction of diversity.” Yongqiao agreed in that, “we [do not] have a clear understanding of multiculturalism in China, because the concept of cultural diversity we are so familiar with is closely tied to the Western context.”

Jiayin was confused about diversity because of cultural encounters in her daily life and schooling experience. She said, “When I think of diversity, I connect it to difference. Obviously Western culture is very different from Chinese culture. This difference is so visible because we learn English and Western history at school. Diversity within our Chinese society seems invisible.” The cultural confusion in the context of globalization resulted in an imbalance of cultural recognition and appreciation. Western culture (especially American culture) has been

central to the Chinese experience of diversity and modernity. This conception limits diversity in China to the five ethnic autonomous regions, where indigenous diversities are visible and distinctive. Therefore, there was a perception gap of diversity and multiculturalism between Western culture, Chinese majority culture, and ethnic minority Chinese culture.

Three teacher educator participants also expressed concerns about the unclear definition of multiculturalism and diversity in China. Dr. Wu explained that,

When we talk about multicultural education in China, we do not reach a consensus about the boundaries between ‘educational diversification’ which refers to diversifying instructional objectives/strategies/materials based on students’ academic backgrounds and academic performance; ‘cultural pluralism’ which focuses on social and cultural differences of people from different social status and cultural backgrounds; and ‘ethnic diversity’ which emphasizes anthropological study of ethnic minority groups while improving economic development and educational quality in remote ethnic autonomous regions. Under the theoretical umbrella of ‘multiculturalism’ or ‘multicultural education’, its specific definition in China’s context still needs to be clarified.

The ambiguous perception and vague definition of multiculturalism narrowed the concepts of diversity and culture to visible diversity and distinctive culture, which created a visibility gap within China’s context of multicultural education. Dr. Zhong explained this visibility gap and how it impacted Chinese scholars’ and teacher educators’ awareness of actions in preparing teachers for diversity. She stated,

Generally speaking, we have two sets of multicultural education concepts. One is globalized multicultural education, which is imported from Western scholars. Another is localized multicultural education, or more often localized multiethnic education, which

[is] mainly developed by anthropologists who study the indigenous culture, language, and history of ethnic minority groups in China.

Consequently, the split conceptions of diversity divided the content of multicultural education. It converted multicultural education in China into multi-ethnic education in ethnic autonomous regions. Dr. Zhong further pointed out that, “Generally speaking, teacher education institutions in those ethnic autonomous regions pay more attention to adding diversity content to their teacher training processes, but this kind of diversity infusion is still limited due to the comparatively lower educational qualities in those regions.” These cultural and diversity conceptions affected the diversity awareness and formation of cultural knowledge of prospective teachers.

#### Popularizing Western Culture

The five teacher candidates were concerned about the overemphasis on Western culture in Chinese schools and in daily life. Jing mentioned the excessive promotion of American culture and the global impact of English. According to him, “People are intensely curious about Western developed countries especially the United States. We are eagerly interested in knowing and learning from America because it becomes the shining beacon of civilization and modernization.” Jing also recalled that during his K-12 experience learning English and how it was pervasive and fundamental over other cultural and linguistic diversities. He commented that, “We learn English from kindergarten to university, because mastering English represents higher social status. Although we have hundreds of indigenous languages and dialects, few people are willing to master them.” The value attached to English and Western culture leads to an unequal distribution of cross-cultural courses in schools, and an unbalanced focus between Western culture and Chinese culture.

Yongqiao pointed out how local schools and society in Xinjiang were influenced by Western culture through formal English education and informal social interaction. She explained, It is unsurprising that English is the mandatory class in every city in China, even in ethnic autonomous regions. You can see coffee shops and Western fast-food restaurants in Urumqi, Inner Mongolia, and even in Lhasa. Local cuisine and costumes become tourism attractions of ancient times while Western culture, languages, and commercial goods symbolize the trend of modernity.

Nanqiao described one of his onsite observation experiences in Urumqi, where the promotion of trilingual education (Mandarin, English, and Uyghur) encountered resistance from local Uyghur students and parents. He recalled that “Uyghur parents worried about the overemphasis on English. They are afraid of losing the Uyghur heritage language. Some of them considered this as ‘cultural invasion’ and ‘language deprivation’.” Popularizing Western culture not only formally impacted school education, but also informally shaped people’s diversity awareness and cultural appreciation between Westernized culture and indigenous Chinese culture. All the teacher candidates in this study agreed people (including themselves) actively learn Western culture out of interest and curiosity, and by taking compulsory English class from K-12 schools to higher education.

### Unifying Chinese Culture

All the five participants mentioned the significance of maintaining China’s national unity and social stability. Developing a solid understanding of Han Chinese culture played an essential role in the moral, civic, and national education experiences of all participants. Since Han is the dominant ethnic group, the pervasiveness of Han culture and social capital hold a significant position. Yongqiao pointed out the ethnic-cultural hierarchy created by the dominant status of

Hans in social life, economic development, and political status. She explained this point as follows:

I think there is an invisible hierarchy among ethnic identities. Most people hold the view that being Han is being civilized and normal. If we review the allocation of social resources and the distribution of educational opportunities, it follows the economic development pattern---from underdeveloped Western inland areas to highly developed Eastern coastal regions. That attributes to the public description of some ethnic minorities in remoted southwest China as ‘Southern Barbarians’ (南蛮). Meanwhile with the emergence of labor and educational migration for better life qualities, moving to Han-dominant developed cities and learning to behave as Han symbolize the process of social and cultural uplifting for many ethnic minority people. It also becomes one of the big motivations for many ethnic minority children to learn Mandarin at a very early age.

The “barbarism” of certain minority groups referred to their underdeveloped economic conditions, and their ethnic presumed and cultural backwardness. Wu (1991) provided further explanations for this Han attitude of supremacy. He stated that “Most Chinese have believed that the Han people were the race of China. From their ethnocentric view, the Han do not believe that the cultural and territorial claims of minority groups are equal to that of the superior Han civilization” (p. 167). The ethnic-cultural hierarchy was notably present in teacher candidates’ volunteering in remoted ethnic regions. For example, Jiayin recalled from her volunteer teaching experience in Liangshan, that the Yi students there had a strong desire to leave the area because their hometown was synonymous with underdevelopment, and their ethnicity and culture were usually portrayed as benign and uncivilized. She explained,

One of my students told me that he hoped to attend a Han-led school in Chengdu.

Compared to local schools in Liangshan, Han-led schools have qualified teachers and a much better learning environment. But some inland public schools have stereotyped impressions and low expectations of Yi students. He expressed a common sentiment shared by many of my Yi students that if he were a Han, he would be more likely to succeed, such as to attend a prestigious university and get a decent job.

This ethnic-cultural hierarchy also reinforced the construction of a unified Chinese culture and society based on Han ideologies and social capital. As Nanqiao admitted,

Although we acknowledge we have 56 ethnicities and non-Han ethnic groups bring their cultures into our society through attending schools and engaging in social activities, the mainstream culture, such as academic culture, economic culture, and political culture are still based on Han-centric culture.

Jing linked his personal experience to the formation of the unified Chinese (Han) culture and social ideology. He mentioned that, “When we talk about Chinese culture, we simultaneously think of the traditional Chinese culture which is based on Confucianism. Within the one single unified cultural concept of ‘traditional Chinese culture’, figures and voices of other groups seem to be silenced.” Yunxi stated further that, “Because we always say ‘One China’, the image of ‘being the One’ is deeply rooted in our minds. Sometimes we tend to ignore who makes up the ‘One’, and how we are different from each other during the process of making up the ‘One’.”

The national policy of maintaining unity posed challenges for addressing the issue of diversity in urban cities and academic institutions. Three teacher educators in this study further elaborated on this issue. Dr. Li noted that national power has control over ethnic unity, and that social stability tends to limit the study of multiculturalism and ethnic diversity mainly to ethnic

autonomous or ethnic concentrated regions, where the cultural and ethnic distinctiveness and diversity correspond to regional demographic characteristics. She acknowledged that the geographic-based study of cultural and ethnic diversity limits the majority Han and scholars' awareness of indigenous diversity among the unified ethnic and cultural identification of Chinese. Dr. Li noting that,

Geographic boundaries not only create physical borders, but also build up the unified mindset of the meaning of being a Chinese for the majority Han living in urban cities. It even applies to ethnic minority groups without established written languages. The geographically constructed physical boundaries and ideologically constructed mindsets not only distance us from ethnic minority groups, but also divide the concept of diversity. This causes diversity in urban cities or Han-led regions to focus more on social, rural-urban, and economic differences, instead of cultural and ethnic pluralism.

#### Blurring Minority Cultures and Ethnic Diversity

“We are all Chinese people.” This was a frequently mentioned statement during the interviews with five teacher candidates. “I cannot differentiate ethnic minorities from Han. We all look the same, except for Uygur and Tibetan people.” Yunxi described her previous experience and understanding of ethnic diversity as a blank paper in stating that, “Our understandings of minority groups are very limited. We can name major ethnic groups, but that is all I know about them. Moreover, like many Hans who grow up in Beijing, we lack a living sense of ethnic diversity.” Jiayin attributed this monotonous ethnic awareness to unclear ethnic distinctions, and the missing indigenous language heritage of minority groups. She elaborated,

Generally speaking, the impact of ethnic minority culture and language is very limited compared to Han culture and the official status of Mandarin. Ethnic minorities have

already been assimilated into Han. Although I experienced ethnic diversity due to the influence of my living community [Hui], most of Hui in Beijing no longer speak Hui language. I used to have ethnic minority classmates from Manchu, Mongolian, Oroqen, Xibes, and Hui ethnicities from middle school to high school. No more than three of them could speak their indigenous languages. The rest of them no longer speak their indigenous languages for several generations. They told me they inherited nothing but the name of their ethnicities---just like wearing an ethnic hat, or a minority label.

The five teacher candidate participants also indicated that although ethnic minority cultures contributed to the rich context of diversity in China, the social impact, public awareness, and recognition of ethnic diversity were diminished. Jing stated,

I had a classmate from Bai in high school and I expected he might share the unique cultural habits or values with us, but he acted the same as us. If he did not mention his ethnicity, I simultaneously assumed he was as normal as a Han.

The national process and policy of ethnic integration and cultural assimilation homogenized ethnic minority cultures and languages, and reduced ethnic diversity awareness in urban Han-led cities. One of the major reasons caused this common sense of we are all Chinese was the geographic distance which limited people's living experiences and social interactions with others. Yongqiao noted that geographic distance could also result in cultural and ethnic distance which reinforced Han-centric perspectives of minority cultures. She said,

If you are not from ethnic diverse regions, it is very hard for a Han to realize how different we are in the same country. I have a comparatively strong sense of cultural diversity and ethnic awareness because I am from Xinjiang. In some places in Xinjiang,

Han people are the minority. But if you do not have this living experience, you might not have a strong feeling that diversity exists among us and it matters.

Without having this cultural and ethnic recognition, it is easy for the mainstream Han society to formulate a one-way cultural adaptation pattern. That is, minority people should adapt to Han language and culture to better become us.

The diminishing minority presence in daily life created cultural distance from ethnic minority people and resulted in “ethnic blindness” among Hans in urban cities. Yongqiao pointed out that, “We are so used to the concept of one unified big family of 56 ethnicities. If we talk about multiculturalism or cultural diversity in urban cities, we might not consider ethnic diversity as part of it.” Nanqiao attributed this ethnic ignorance to the voluntary process of cultural assimilation. He said, “Most minority groups voluntarily blend into Han society because it is the mainstream ideology and represents the sophisticated culture.” The shared sense of being Chinese silenced the inheritance of indigenous languages and reduced ethnic identification of minority people among Han. Yunxi summarized this process and the challenges within it in her statement that, “Ethnic diversity is among us, but it is far away from us. People take for granted that there are no cross-ethnicity barriers because we imagine that minorities are always happily adapting to our society. However the reality tells a different story.”

#### Symbolized Cultural Representation and Knowledge of Minority Groups

Both the teacher candidates and teacher educators in this study mentioned that geographic distance from minority groups limited multicultural living experiences, caused ethnic-blindness towards indigenous diversity, and created cultural and conceptual gaps between Hans and people from other ethnic and cultural backgrounds. The potential for cultural dissonance between majority Han teachers and their future multicultural students necessitated preservice teachers

developing multicultural awareness, knowledge base, and instructional practice to achieve educational equity and excellence for students from diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds. Unfortunately, the preservice teachers in this study reported limited knowledge of others. Their knowledge construction of others occurred primarily through K-12 education, informal learning in life through mass media, and social interactions with minority peers.

The academic knowledge of minority groups tended to be general, descriptive, and symbolized conceptions. Teacher candidates indicated that they learned about ethnic minority groups from courses in Chinese, morality and society, moral and education life, and history and politics. Although there were many course options to learn about other ethnicities, the knowledge received by students was mainly superficial. Jing described the background knowledge of ethnic minority groups as “based on numbers [55 ethnic minority groups] and national slogans such as ‘we are a big harmonious family’.” Jiayin added that, “The text and paragraphs of ethnic minority people can be summarized as ‘happy and extroverted others’. My knowledge base and impressions of minority groups are still linked to the pictures of dancing and singing people who are wearing ethnic costumes.” Nanqiao thought,

The formal education of ethnic minority groups or people from other cultural and racial backgrounds is too general. When we think of ethnic minorities, we picture the image of happily dancing Uyghurs or Mongolians on horseback. Students yearn for studying in the United States [and] are more interested in the life style described in American pop culture. All those bubbles of others break when people encounter social interactions in real life. For example, we used to have two Mongolian students from Inner Mongolia. The Han classmates asked them on the first day of school, ‘do you ride horses to school every day? The textbook says Mongolians all ride horses.’ The two Mongolian students

were embarrassed to admit that they did not ride horses in their hometown nor did they know how to ride a horse. Then a few Han students said, ‘You are fake Mongolians.’ Those students did not have any hostilities, but they were not aware of how their stereotyped knowledge of others could be hurtful.

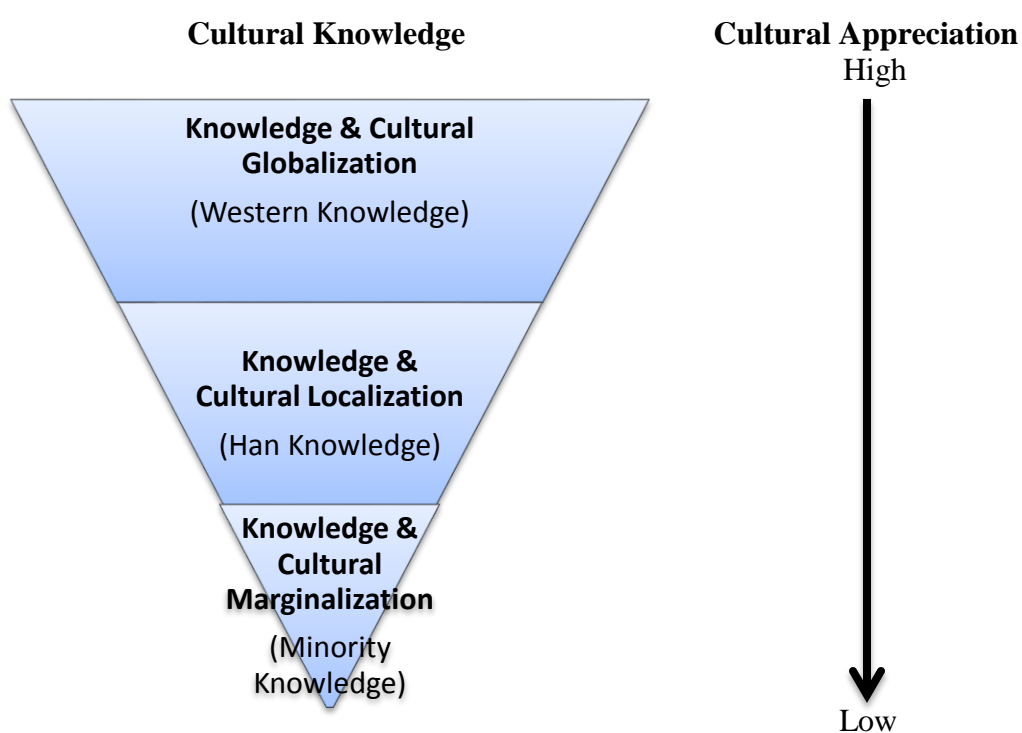
In addition to limited cultural knowledge and formal education of ethnic minority groups, social media transmit stereotypical impressions of cultural others. Yunxi mentioned her hesitance to do volunteer teaching in Liangshan and Xinjiang because the media portrayed indigenous people in those regions as backwards. Dr. Wu pointed out how the stereotypes of minorities created by media impact the placement of teacher practicum. He said,

We used to organize teacher candidates to participate in volunteer teaching and onsite observations at schools in ethnic regions such as in A’Ba [Tibetan and Qiang residencies] and Guizhou [Miao residency]. Teacher candidates need to enter ethnic communities to experience diversity, raise diversity awareness, observe local students’ communication and learning styles, and develop cultural appreciation for multiethnic students. This living experience was more useful than the superficial national unity textbooks. However, we encountered resistance from students and their parents because they question the safety of working in those ‘barbaric’ places. The media-making deficit understanding of ethnic minority groups was one of the major challenges for diversifying cultural placements for practicum.

Through reconsidering the definition of diversity, its significance in building relationships with others, and how to better understand students from historically marginalized ethnicities, teacher candidates and teacher educators in this study thought preservice education should reduce stereotypic beliefs of ethnic minority students, build cross-cultural skills, and

obtain a broadened cultural knowledge base. However, most teacher education students in inland cities of China have limited awareness of cultural diversity and ethnic pluralism due to the superficial level of multiethnic and multicultural education in K-12 schools and postsecondary education. Before entering into real teaching contexts with diverse students, their inverted cultural knowledge pyramid which is illustrated in Figure 5 impacted their attitudes and pedagogical responses to diverse students' needs.

Figure 5. The inverted cultural knowledge pyramid



The inverted cultural knowledge pyramid symbolized preservice teachers' preferential attitudes towards privileged cultural and ethnic majority students compared to marginalized cultural and ethnic minority students. In some instances, teacher candidates in this study exhibited little confidence in international students' and ethnic minority students' abilities to achieve academic success. Jing commented that, "We praise international students' minor progress in learning Mandarin. Ironically, ethnic minority students' underachievement in

learning Mandarin and English are usually interpreted as their lower intellectual abilities.” Yunxi further described the selective cultural acceptance between Western international students and ethnic minority students in urban schools. She claimed that,

Key schools in urban cities are more willing to accept international students as the trend of catching up to educational globalization. Teachers are also confident in international students’ learning abilities and willing to spend more time and energy on assisting their learning. In comparing their teaching attitudes and expectations between international and ethnic minority students, I feel that they seem to acquiesce in the significance of Westernization.

### **Inadequate Academic Preparation in Teaching for Diversity**

In order to develop culturally responsive teachers, the mission and curricula of their professional preparation programs need to support learning for all students. Teacher candidates need to be taught to acquire and internalize multicultural awareness and knowledge, be given opportunities to transform academic training into practical teaching in diverse educational settings, and be able to critically reflect on their academic preparedness and instructional effectiveness. Multicultural scholars suggest that part of the responsibility of teacher education programs is to prepare teacher candidates to effectively work with students from multicultural and multilingual backgrounds (Villegas & Lucas, 2002; Gay, 2010). Therefore, the teacher candidates in this study were specifically asked about their perceptions and academic experiences in their teacher education programs regarding building multicultural awareness, knowledge, and pedagogical competence.

Mission-fulfillment Program Goals

The missions of teacher education programs play important roles in shaping teacher candidates' learning experiences and outcomes. The goals of Central Normal University teacher education focused on developing subject knowledge, instructional skills, and morality. The cultural context of teaching and preparing teachers for diversity were not clearly mentioned in the mission of the programs. Dr. Li explained that,

One of the major responsibilities of teachers is to assist students to succeed in standardized tests. This text-oriented and achievement-emphasized expectation of teachers shifts the mission of teacher education programs from promoting the comprehensive development of teachers' cultural awareness, teaching attitudes, content knowledge, and pedagogical skills to subject knowledge education.

The invisible cultural context of teaching also limited teacher candidates' interests in cross-cultural and multicultural education. Although the teacher candidates and teacher educators in this study acknowledged the importance of developing cultural awareness and knowledge for teachers in multiethnic China, the university leadership did not consider cultural competence as important as subject competence. This resulted in cultural silence in the program mission, and considering preparing teachers for diversity as individual interests. Yongqiao argued that cultural diversity awareness of teacher candidates, the location of teacher education institutions, and the academic interests of teacher educators greatly influenced the sensitivity and effectiveness of promoting culturally responsive teacher education. She said,

Because I am from Xinjiang, my living experience inspired my academic interests in multicultural education. Reflecting on my previous K-12 experience, the Han teachers in our mixed-ethnicity schools do not have sufficient cultural understandings and knowledge of ethnic minority students. They are not equipped with teaching strategies

that meet Uygur and other ethnic minority students' communication and learning styles. Moreover, many of them do not consider this is a big issue. So when I entered my teacher education program I specifically paid attention to classes that could introduce multicultural education theory and teaching practice for prospective teachers. However, it seemed that the significance of addressing diversity mainly connected to students or professors' personal and academic interests.

Nanqiao also commented on the importance of institutional support in preparing teachers for cultural and ethnic diversity. He stated,

Addressing multiculturalism or multicultural education may be easier for liberal arts or social science majors compared to science majors. The major mission of since teacher education programs concentrated on enhancing our subject knowledge and capabilities of delivering subject content to students. If the university leaders are unaware of the importance of preparing culturally responsive teachers, it is harder for us to receive corresponding trainings...teacher educators' self-awareness and knowledge background in multicultural education also matter. There has to be faculty who can teach us how to teach in diverse cultural and ethnic settings.

While discussing the cultural exclusive mission of teacher education programs, teacher educators in this study raised another issue that correlated with the mission of meeting program goals. This is preparing teachers to fulfill the expectation of assisting students to success on standardized tests, or to support the comprehensive development of students from diverse social, economic, cultural, and ethnic backgrounds. Dr. Zhong explained,

When we talk about the mission of teacher education programs in China, it usually refers to teachers' capability to help students achieve academic success. This success is usually

connected to students' performances on national standardized tests. Tests scores are measurable, comparable, and definable. Therefore, they become the major tool to illustrate teachers' instructional effectiveness. But how can we measure culture, cultural awareness, and cultural competence? Can multicultural education effectiveness be quantified as standardized scores? That might be a reason why preparing teachers for diversity is not clearly stated in the nationwide missions of teacher education, and does not receive equal attention from the university leadership. For some teacher educators in the field of multicultural education and teacher candidates who have interests in this area, it [teaching diverse students] serves as an invisible mission for themselves.

#### Subject-oriented Curricula and Courses

The traditional university-based teacher education curricula in China follow the Han-centric perspectives and focus on subject content knowledge and pedagogy (Zhang, 2002; Bai, 2005; Jin & Jin, 2016). The curricula for pre-service teacher training at Central Normal University included: general education, subject-content education, teacher education, and field-work education. As illustrated in Table 7, these programs gave primary attention to the knowledge education in the candidates' subject majors.

The five teacher education participants mentioned the overemphasis on subject knowledge and how it limited the importance of sociocultural contexts of teaching. Jing said, "I don't think our programs address the issue of diversity and sociocultural context of teaching. Due to the commonly defined teacher competence as subject competence, the sociocultural impacts on teaching are usually ignored." Yunxi added, "The majority of teacher candidates and teacher educators rarely pay attention to the issue of diversity and preparing teachers for

diversity. They lack cultural or ethnic connections to minority groups and living experiences in diverse communities and cross-cultural environments.” Nanqiao explained further that,

We have increasing ethnic minority students due to the national preferential policies and the establishment of Jing-Jiang School of Education Program. However, the curricula and offered courses, still do not reflect enough cultural, ethnic, and regional diversity. The changing diverse reality should bring reforms in program design.

Table 7: Overview of Teacher Education Programs

课程类别 Course Categories	课程细则 Course Details		
	课组模块/Sections	属性/Requirements	学分 /Credits
通识教育 General Education	通识基础课程 General Foundation Courses	必修 Required Courses	30
	通识核心课程 General Core Courses	必修 Required Courses	8
	通识拓展课程 General Expand Courses	跨学科选修 Cross-disciplinary Elective Courses	8
专业教育 Subject-Content Education	专业基础课程 Subject Foundation Courses	必修 Required Courses	11-42
		选修 Elective Courses	2-10
	专业核心课程 Subject Core Courses	必修 Required Courses	35-38
	专业方向课程 Subject Area Courses	必修 Required Courses	14
		选修 Elective Courses	2-20
<b>师范专业必修 Required Courses for Teacher Education Students</b>			
教师教育 Teacher Education	必修 Required Courses		14
	选修 Elective Courses		6
	微格实践教学 Micro-teaching Course		10
实践教育 Field work Education	必修教学实习 Student-teaching Practice (Required)		

Jiayin thought the unequal distribution of subject courses, general educational courses, and teacher education courses fail to achieve the goal of improving teacher candidates' subject, educational, and emotional (interpersonal) competence. She stated, "The teacher education foundation and pedagogy courses are very limited and superficial compared to the subject content courses. The duration of teacher education courses is also packed into one academic year. This does not give us enough time to internalize educational theories into instructional practice."

All teacher candidates also described teacher education foundation and pedagogy courses as being too general and theoretically, lacking instructional guidance, and providing insufficient opportunities for practice. Jing, Yongqiqao, Jiayin, and Yunxi thought the content of educational foundation and pedagogy courses was outdated and disconnected from teaching realities. Consequently, these courses could not effectively prepare preservice teachers for actual classroom teaching. Yunxi explained that,

The foundation of pedagogy and educational psychology courses hardly fulfill our expectations. For example, those courses mainly introduce abstract educational theories and concepts from the West. We memorize the definition of various educational concepts such as what are major representative works of John Dewey; what is the definition of teacher; what is the definition of student. Those are memorized concepts and could hardly contribute to our actual teaching practice. We hope to learn more strategic skills in teaching in diverse school settings. That's why most teacher education required courses are boring for many normal students.

Jiayin thought the most helpful teacher education courses were the subject pedagogy courses such as psychology, and skills for teaching middle school history. She declared that,

These courses and the micro-teaching course offered us opportunities to actually teach a class like a real middle school history teacher. It provides role-play teaching scenarios. Experienced in-service history teachers came to our class and demonstrated how to effectively design a class and deliver the content knowledge. But offering only one course like this is not enough. Furthermore, the subject or general pedagogy courses did not teach us how to modify teaching strategies based on students' diverse backgrounds. Instead, they emphasized responding to students' academic needs and improving test outcomes.

The required and core elective educational courses for the teacher education program (TEP) students at Central Normal University are listed in Tables 8 and 9.

Table 8: Required TEP Educational Foundation and Pedagogy Courses

课程名 Course	课程属性 Requirement	学分 Credits
教育学基础 Foundation of Pedagogy	必修 Required	2.5
教育心理学 Educational Psychology	必修 Required	2.5
教育研究概论 Outline of Educational Research	必修 Required	2
教学科目教育学 Subject Teaching Pedagogy	必修 Required	3
现代教育技术及应用 Modern Educational Technology and Application	必修 Required	2
中学科目教学实践 Subject Teaching Practice in Middle School	必修 Required	2

Table 9: Core TEP Elective Educational Courses

课程名 Courses	课程属性 Requirement	学分 Credits
中学学科教学设计 Instructional Design for Middle School Subject Teaching	选修 Elective	2
中学学科课程标准与教材研究 Middle School Subject Curriculum Standard and Textbooks Research	选修 Elective	2
有效学科教学问题探讨 Discussion questions about subject-content effective teaching	选修 Elective	2
学科教师技能 Instructional Skills of a Subject Teacher	选修 Elective	2
课程设计与教学 Curriculum Design and Instruction	选修 Elective	2
学科课本设计与分析 Subject Course Textbook Design and Analysis	选修 Elective	2

No visible cultural and ethnic diversity courses are included among these listings. The core teacher education courses concentrated mainly on subject content pedagogy and Western education foundational theory. Brief discussions of sociocultural influences on education were included in educational psychology and foundation of pedagogy courses. Yongqiao said that,

After four years of academic preparation I am confident about teaching subject knowledge, but I am uncertain about my competence in teaching classes of mixed ethnicities in Xinjiang after graduation. I think that is because cultural foundations and cultural pedagogy do not receive equal attention in our program.

Teacher educators confirmed that university-based teacher education programs focused mainly on developing teachers with solid subject knowledge, effective subject instructional skills, positive teaching attitudes, and personal qualities for mentoring. Dr. Wu stated that,

Teacher education programs emphasized preparing preservice teachers to be responsive to students' academic backgrounds and outcomes, instead of their cultural, ethnic, and social identities. We have several teacher education faculties that specialize in the field of multicultural education and cultural diversity, but their influences on course settings and curriculum reform are very limited. We claim we address multiculturalism and global perspectives in teacher education but these multicultural and global perspectives are usually embedded in guest lectures, seminars, and elective courses.

Additional elective courses available to teacher education students at Central Normal University are listed in Table 10. Cultural and ethnic diversity was included in introduction of cultural studies, educational sociology, educational anthropology, and comparative and international education courses. Teacher educators in this study explained that efforts to add diverse components in teacher education curricula were achieved by creating elective courses and supporting extracurricular activities among students from diverse backgrounds. Dr. Zhong noted that,

Although we accept comparatively more ethnic minority students, in the numbers of total student population they are still minorities. Many teacher educators and teacher candidates hold the Han-centric view. That is why the majority needs to learn minority cultures and learning styles since they already voluntarily assimilate into our Han society. So we offer courses to introduce cultural, ethnic, and social diversity, but in the form of elective classes have 15-25 enrolled students, or embed those topics in general education courses and educational foundation courses. That hardly creates a sociocultural knowledge base for teacher candidates compared to their solid training in subject specialties.

Dr. Li pointed out that curricula on diversity varied by the location of universities. For example at Jianghe Normal University in Xinjiang, courses about local ethnic culture, history, and religion functioned as a “descriptive regional introduction” rather than academic training, pedagogical skills, and interpersonal strategies for bridging gaps between preservice teachers and students from different backgrounds. She said, “The institution offered ethnic culture and history courses about Uyghur people because this reflects Xinjiang’s regional characteristics and features. But pedagogical knowledge and strategies suitable for local students’ learning styles still need to be enhanced”.

Table 10. Additional elective courses for teacher education students

课程名称/Courses	学分/Credits	课程名称/Courses	学分/Credits
领导基础 Foundation of Leadership	2	教育政策与法律 Educational Policy and Law	1
文化学概论 Introduction of Cultural Studies	2	教育管理 Educational Management	1
班级管理 Classroom Management	2	课程与教学 Curriculum and Instruction	1
社区教育 Community Education	2	新教师工作指南 Working guide for new teachers	2
行为研究 Behavior Analysis	2	教育改革 Educational Reform	1
教育社会学 Educational Sociology	1	教育哲学 Educational Philosophy	2
教育人类学 Educational Anthropology	2	国际比较教育 International Comparative Education	2
学前教育 Pre-school Education	2	互动学习理论与技术 Cooperative Learning Theory and Technology	2
心理咨询 Psychological Consulting	1	教育经济学 Educational Economy	2
教育投资 Educational Investment	1	教的艺术与哲学 The Philosophy and Arts of Teaching	2

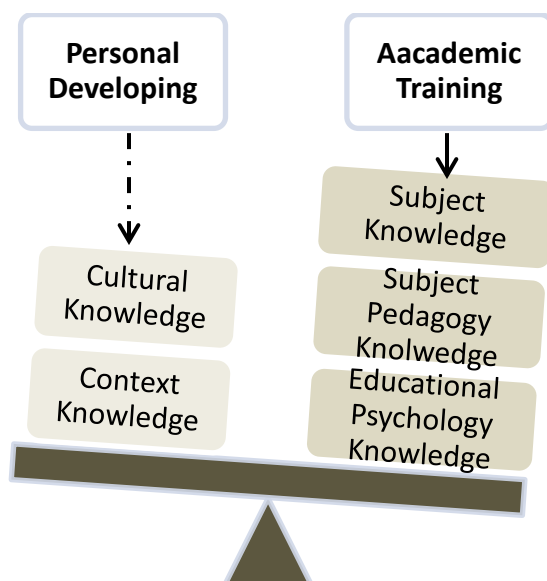
Dr. Wu added that a cultural knowledge base and training in multicultural education of teacher educators influence the effectiveness of promoting multicultural education in ethnic and Han-led regions. He said, “Even in ethnic autonomous regions, many teacher educators in local normal universities are not equipped with strong multicultural awareness and a solid knowledge base. This limits their practical effectiveness of designing multicultural courses and developing multicultural teaching strategies.”

The limited presence of multicultural education in teacher education curricula and courses, along with teacher education students’ insufficient pedagogical skills training and limited practical experiences in diverse placements created another fundamental problem. This was a growing cultural mismatch between prospective teachers and their multicultural students.

#### Unbalanced Knowledge Formation

The unbalanced knowledge base created between over-emphasizing subject matter content mastery and under emphasizing cultural diversity is depicted visually in Figure 6.

Figure 6: The unbalanced knowledge base of teacher candidates



The five teacher candidates in this study felt their academic training did not increase their confidence in teaching diverse students or teaching in diverse school settings. This was due to the limited culturally relevant courses, lack of culturally responsive teacher educators, and insufficient teaching practices in diverse placements. Their knowledge base about globalized and marginalized indigenous others remained largely the same as their pre-university knowledge backgrounds. Yunxi remembered one class that introduced cultural and ethnic diversity, and provided opportunities for ethnic minority students to share their distinctive ethnic and cultural heritages with Han classmates. She recalled,

The Introduction to Cultural Studies class introduced some theories and basic conceptions of culture. We had a very interesting class activity called ‘Cultural Showcase’. It focused on case studies of Chinese cultural diversity. We have many minority students from Tibetan, Uygur, Tujia, Hui, and Miao [backgrounds]. This is one of their favorite classes. They all proudly introduce their own culture and tradition to us. For example, Tibetan students introduce their yak culture and the celestial burial tradition. My Uygur friend Amina played the Tamboura, a traditional Uygur instrument. Tujia students taught us the Waving Dance and its cultural significance in Tujia culture. Miao students presented traditional Miao silver jewelry and the culture embedded in it. But no culturally relevant teaching strategies were introduced and discussed.

Jiayin said, “Discussions of diversity, globalization, and social status are mentioned in accordance with learning subject content knowledge such as Western Civilization and History, not in transformative perspectives of pedagogy, like how to inspire students to connect diversity taught in class to their daily lives.” Jing, Yongqiao, and Yunxi pointed out that diversity mentioned in teacher education programs was academic content diversity. As Yunxi explained,

“We learn from histories and educational models from different countries to obtain international perspectives, not for cultivating culturally responsive pedagogies for future students.” Nanqiao further stated that his training programs concentrated more on diversifying teaching strategies to improve students’ academic outcomes, rather than responding to their personal needs and cultural differences. He did not think “both pedagogy courses in general and subject pedagogy courses effectively prepare future teachers to be aware of students’ individual difference and obtain the ability to adjust teaching strategies based on students’ learning styles and ethnic backgrounds.” In taking a similar position, Yongqiao contended that,

Our academic preparation does not prepare us to realize the importance of cultural impacts on teaching and learning. We do not have classes on the concepts and guidelines of culturally responsive teaching. We also rarely receive culturally responsive teaching demonstrations from teacher educators, clinical supervisors, or cooperative teachers in practicum schools. Thus, many of us are not equipped with cultural and ethnic consciousness, not to mention the potential to identify cross-cultural and cross-ethnic conflicts that might occur while encountering students and school administrators who are from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds than ourselves.

Inadequate curriculum designs, course offerings, and knowledge of cultural diversity in teacher education programs limited developing cultural continua, and resulted in cultural discontinuity for the teacher candidates. Jing explained these situations as follows:

Our pedagogical knowledge is based on content instruction, not on context diversity, not to mention not including school context and the broader social environment of teaching and schooling. Some teacher educators do not include cultural awareness and sensitivity in their own instructional practice as well. There were 10 ethnic minority students in our

class, six from Xinjiang and four from Tibet. They are not active learners in class and usually do not perform well on tests. I did not observe our professors modifying instructional strategies to increase their participation and improve their learning. Perhaps the only adjustment I've seen is some professors will lower expectations for those minority students. 'It is understandable for their comparatively lower academic performances, because they are ethnic minority students.' I heard it from our faculty. But I do not agree with this judgement on minority students' learning potentials because they [faculty] don't understand students' previous academic backgrounds and learning obstacles in a different cultural and linguistic environment. Both Mandarin and English are second languages to them, and university faculties don't speak Tibetan or Uygur. So those students are learning a foreign language [English], from a foreign language [Mandarin]. Of course it is hard. I want to know how to maximize minority students' learning outcomes if I teach a diverse class after graduation, but I did not learn this knowledge from our program.

The five teacher candidates indicated they acquired knowledge of cultural others mainly through self-learning, peer interactions, and collaboration with international and ethnic minority students' study groups and cultural clubs. Contrary to formal academic learning in classes, the personal and informal development greatly contributed to their cross-cultural understandings. Yunxi mentioned how she learned Uygur traditions and culture from her roommate in declaring that, "After talking with my Uygur roommate, I realized how stereotyped beliefs and biased knowledge from mass media distanced us from minority people. Fears and misunderstandings of different groups are usually created by not knowing." Jiayin and Jing attended multicultural education seminars with ethnic minority students outside of the teacher education program's core

courses. They learned knowledge about ethnic indigenous traditions, cultures, and languages from narrative stories, ethnic minority folks, and documentary films. These seminars inspired Jiayin's future course design strategies because she could "make history class more interesting through connecting the required textbook to supplementary materials including photos, people, and site visits to local museums." Being an active student leader, Nanqiao attributed his personal knowledge of ethnic diversity to collaboration with ethnic minority students. He thought,

Icebreaking cultural silence and cross-ethnic barriers can be achieved through social interactions. There are 40 ethnic minority students in our program and we established a cross-cultural club with them. We learn ethnic songs and dance from our ethnic minority peers and we dance Guozhuang [a traditional Tibetan dance] together during Tibetan Calendar New Year. Then our club proudly established an ethnic dance club. Many Han students are very interested in learning traditional ethnic dances. Minority students also shared their unique culture with us and regained cultural recognition and ethnic confidence in cooperative and active ways.

#### Practicum (In)Effectiveness

The student-teaching practicum is an important element of teacher education. Its goal is to provide teacher education students with practical opportunities in course designing, self-teaching, building relationship with students, and helping students achieve academic success. According to the mission and objectives of student teaching practice at Central Normal University, the experience was to focus on improving preservice teachers' abilities to apply learned educational theories to instructional practice. The practicum occurred in the fall semester of the fourth year of the program, and it lasted for six weeks. Teacher candidates were assigned to teach in different cooperative-placement schools. Following an apprenticeship model, the

teacher candidates considered their in-service teachers from their subject specialties as their instructional supervisors.

The evaluation of the practicum effectiveness was completed by supervisory teachers and clinical teacher educators from Central Normal University. During the student-teaching field work, teacher candidates were required to complete four individual lesson plans and at least one solo-teach in class. Supervisory teachers decided the numbers of solo-teaches actually conducted, and the distribution of tasks and working responsibilities at schools. The major responsibilities during practicum experiences were teaching practice, serving as the interim class advisor/supervisor, and completing educational research and reflection on the student-teaching experience at their placement schools. Among these responsibilities, the teaching practice played an essential role in the candidates' fieldwork education. The criteria for evaluating the student-teaching practice are listed in Table 11.

Table 11. The evaluation criteria of teacher candidate's student-teaching effectiveness

Target skills	Evaluation Criteria
Teaching Objectives	Teaching objectives and instructional goals are clear and suit for students' learning
Teaching Materials	Effectively use of required teaching materials
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teaching content is fitted for students' cognitive development and learning styles</li> </ul>
Teaching Content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teaching content is accurately and proficiently delivered to students</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Key points and difficult points are highlighted and emphasized</li> </ul>
Teaching Strategies	Teaching strategies are appropriate and engaging
Teacher's role	Teacher plays the leading and dominant role in class
Teaching Attitudes	Teacher holds affirmative attitudes
Chalkboard-writing	Writing is clear, accurate, and well organized
	Able to use creative teaching strategies, supplementary materials, and technical supports
Innovative Teaching	

The five teacher candidates credited their fieldwork experience with improving their pedagogical skills and enhancing their interpersonal abilities of building relationships with students and cooperative teachers. Situating academic training in practical environments also

helped them to critically reflect on their subject knowledge backgrounds, teaching strategies, teaching attitudes, and personal beliefs about teaching. Jing declared that, “practicing is the most effective way to examine my abilities in teaching.” Jiayin agreed in stating that, “You have to teach to know whether you can teach well or not.” Yunxi shared a similar opinion towards the practical teaching experience. She said, “Sometimes what I learned from a 45-minutes solo-teaching class could exceed what I learned from four weeks of educational theory classes at my university.”

While recognizing the positive benefits of the practicum experience, the five teacher candidates also pointed out several issues that hindered the effectiveness of student-teaching. These included the duration of the practicum, school placement, and the role of the supervisory teacher. All the teacher candidate participants indicated that six weeks of practicum was not enough time to fully develop their teaching competences. For example, Yongqiao said, “six weeks passed in a blink of an eye. I just got familiar with my students and the school environment, and then time’s up.” Nanqiao further explained that, “the short duration of the practice limited our opportunities to actually do student-teaching. Our supervising teachers need to make sure we are ready to teach. So we spent a large amount of time on observation and self-preparation. Before we formally go on the platform, we need to do pre-teaching in front of the supervising teacher. This process could take three to four weeks.” Most of the teacher candidates completed one solo-teaching but Yunxi taught two times, and Jiayin accomplished three solo-teaches during the six week practicum.

The student-teaching placement affected the degree of cultural immersion and exposure to diversity among the teacher candidates. Yongqiao noted that, “the school environment expanded the context of education from theoretical knowledge in the textbooks to the living

community with fluid diversities among students and teachers.” Jiayin recalled how the school setting inspired her reflection on the cultural context of teaching:

I completed my student-teaching at Humin Middle School, which was famous for its distinctive ethnic diversity, especially for Hui students. We have teachers from Hui, Manchu, and Mongolian ethnicities. Students are also diverse in their ethnic backgrounds. The majority ethnic group is Hui. The ethnic features are represented in the architecture of the teaching buildings and the Muslim/Islamic dining hall for ethnic minority students who have specific dining rules. One of our major teaching buildings is designed like a mosque [see Figure 7]. I learned a lot about ethnic and cultural knowledge from my students and cooperative teacher.

Figure 7. The main teaching building of Huming Middle School



Yongqiao shared similar opinions about the effects of school context on raising multicultural awareness. She noted, “We have a very diverse student population. Our school is also proud of our well-established inland Tibetan classes. Through teaching and living with ethnic minority students, I simultaneously develop cultural consciousness and eagerness to explore whether my teaching strategies were effective for their learning.”

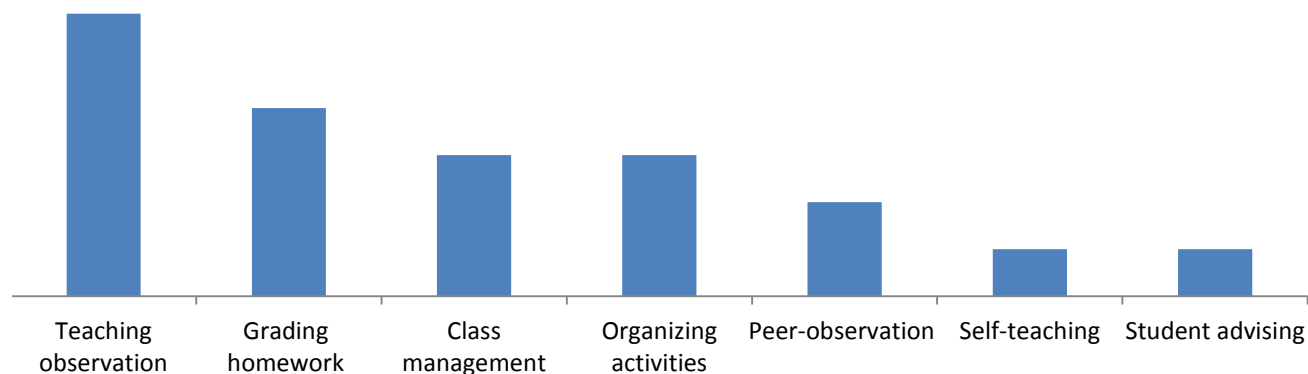
Although the school context contributed to the cultural awareness and diversity responsiveness of the teacher candidates, the majority of teaching practice schools were

culturally and ethnically homogeneous. Nanqiao pointed out that, “the ethnic and cultural environment and students’ demographic backgrounds in my placement school were Han-centric. Teachers and students, including myself, rarely realized cultural or sociocultural impacts on teaching and learning. I think the placement environment of student-teaching could also result in cultural detachment.”

The role of supervisory teachers was closely tied to the teacher candidates’ actual teaching opportunities and the effectiveness of field experiences. A common issue affecting the achievement of candidates’ teaching practice was the supervisor teacher’s distribution of working load during the practicum. All candidates said they lacked self-teaching opportunities because their supervisory teachers were concerned about the learning progress of their students. Jing thought this was “understandable because we are not formal teachers. Our head teachers do not want their students left behind their original instructional schedule.” Jiayin said “teaching opportunities are directly linked to supervisory teachers’ personal arrangements. Some are willing to offer more teaching chances; some are not.” Nanqiao thought student teachers were “more like visitors. We hope to have more opportunities to practice our teaching in class than just sit quietly at the back of the classroom.”

Figure 8 summarized the major tasks of teacher candidates during their practicum education. Most emphasis was placed on observing classes and grading homework and tests. Yongqiao expressed some sentiments that were shared by other teacher candidates. She wished she had “more practical opportunities. Practice makes perfect. If student-teaching opportunities are limited to only one or two times, the effectiveness of the practicum would not be fully achieved.”

Figure 8. The distribution of candidates' major tasks in practicum experience



### **Disparity between Academic Training and Teaching Practice**

Actual diverse teaching environments provided the teacher candidates with reflective understandings of teaching for diversity. All of them agreed that participating in volunteer teaching in ethnic minority regions or doing student teaching in multiethnic schools caused them to think about the social and cultural meanings of teaching. These experiences also inspired their academic interests in multicultural education, and desire to work in ethnic and rural regions to improve local teaching qualities and enhance educational equity in underdeveloped cities. Most of the teacher candidates in this study considered volunteering teaching a valuable opportunity to accumulate teaching experiences and improve teaching skills for different cultural and living conditions. Yongqiao equated her frequent participation in volunteer teaching programs in Xinjiang with “contribution to hometown.” She said,

The inadequacy of qualified teachers and the lower educational conditions in rural cities and remote ethnic minority regions are widely reported. This hindered many talented teacher candidates' willingness to work at those places. Since I had the chance to attend

the prestigious normal university in Beijing I want to use my academic training and knowledge to develop education in my hometown.

Jing expressed a similar willingness to “give back to his hometown” through participating in volunteer teaching in Xinjiang and Yunnan.

Teacher candidates from Beijing said their participation in volunteer teaching in remoted ethnic regions was motivated by interests in cross-cultural teaching and gaining more practical experience in diverse educational settings. Yunxi wanted to experience the ethnic and cultural impacts on teaching and learning. Jiayin said, “My student-teaching practicum at Humin Middle School enabled me to realize cultural and ethnic diversities in urban schools, and the importance of teachers knowing students’ cultural and ethnic backgrounds to better teach and interact with them. I want to further develop cultural teaching strategies from the cultural immersion provided by the volunteer teaching experience in Liangshan.”

#### Uncertainty and Unpreparedness

Both the five teacher candidates and three teacher educators thought teacher education programs could not fully achieve the goal of preparing teachers for diversity. The teacher candidates were not confident in teaching diverse students or in diverse school contexts. The major anxiety was about the uncertainty in approaching students from diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds. Yunxi mentioned that, “the cultural knowledge and ethnic traditions I learned from social interactions and elective courses were superficial and could hardly transform into my teaching strategies.” Jiayin agreed that the academic training in teaching for diversity was inadequate in building connections with diverse students and adjusting to the school environment. Nanqiao highlighted the limited living and teaching experiences in diverse

communities provided by the academic studies and practicum “did not diversify the Han-led social and cultural environments at schools.” He explained further that,

Connections to diverse educational and living communities, such as teaching in boarding schools for migrant children in Beijing, observing teaching at international schools, and entering in the local ethnic communities were very limited during our teacher education experiences. We are new in our professions as preservice teachers. We are also new in the cultural context of schools we are going to enter.

The three teacher educators also were not satisfied with the academic preparation of teachers for diversity at Central Normal University. They argued that the university leadership, teacher education curricula, and student-teaching practice were not responding adequately to the cultural differences and demographic diversity of future students in China. Dr. Wu said,

The issue of diversity and its impacts on learning and teaching do not receive sufficient attention. The traditional teacher education model in China excludes the cultural competence from the core teacher competences. This results in inadequate course works and limited practical opportunities for the cultural development of teacher candidates.

Dr. Li argued similarly in comments that, “The elective courses in cultural diversity and the elective ethnic education seminars ignited a sparkle for multicultural teacher education. But this sparkle has not transformed into institutional responses in offering required courses and practical trainings for building preservice teachers’ cross-cultural knowledge and teaching strategies.”

Teacher feelings of uncertainty and unpreparedness in teaching increased as teacher candidates entered more diverse schooling environments.

## Cross-cultural Communication Barriers

Communication difficulties in the culturally and ethnically diverse regions caused the teacher candidates to engage in critical reflections on linguistic impacts on education. Differences between Mandarin, indigenous ethnic languages, and local dialects created communication barriers that reduced their instructional effectiveness in local schools. None of the teacher candidates could speak local dialects and ethnic languages. This created obstacles that interfered with interactions between them, their students, and local teachers. In commenting on this dilemma Jiayin said,

I did not realize the linguistic impacts on teaching until I entered into my volunteer teaching school in Liangshan. Local students and teachers spoke the indigenous Yi language and Sichuan dialect, which were two foreign languages to me. It took me a very long time to understand their Mandarin with heavy accent. Local students and teachers preferred to speak indigenous languages after class. That made me feel isolated by their language.

Jing had similar experiences with linguistic barriers. He explained that,

Language was the first challenge. None of us [volunteer teaching participants] could speak and understand the Uygur language. We took for granted that there were no communication obstacles since we still taught inside China. But the Mandarin proficiencies of local students and teachers were not as good as we expected, so misunderstandings happened a lot.

Yongqiao provided a detailed example of how linguistic barriers impacted teaching effectiveness. She said,

In my Chinese class, most of my students were Uygur. Their Mandarin proficiencies were not high and I could not speak the Uygur language. When they learned difficult Chinese characters or concepts, the delivery of content knowledge encountered resistance and difficulties. I could not explain those difficult points in their language. But in the Uygur teachers' classes, they could always use the native language as support. Their instructional effectiveness and the academic responses of students were better compared to mine.

The linguistic barriers not only affected the quality of content instruction, but also created a sense of “self-otherness” for Han teacher candidates in these culturally different environments. Yunxi recalled that during her experience in Qujing:

In the first couple of weeks of volunteer teaching, we needed local teachers as interpreters. Not knowing what people were talking about was frustrating. Language separated me from their circles. This was a reverse cultural shock to me. I started to understand what international and ethnic minority students experience when they entered into our linguistic and cultural community, where no one speaks their languages.

### Challenges in Building Relationships

The five teacher candidates reported difficulties in building relationships in the areas of trust with students, cooperation with local teachers, and connecting with the local community. Three major factors attributed to their unpreparedness for building relationship. These were limited self-awareness of diversity, knowledge about local cultures and traditions, and guidance from mentor teachers.

The difficulty of connecting with different cultural and ethnic backgrounds was shocking to Jing. He attributed this to being so accustomed to ethnic minority people learning Mandarin

and adapting to Han culture, especially in urban areas. Yunxi associated the difficulties in connecting with students to the shifting role of teachers. She said,

In urban schools teachers are authority figures. Students simultaneously respect us and follow our instruction. There are no visible cultural differences and language barriers in communicating and teaching. But in volunteer teaching schools, the co-existence of cultural differences and linguistic diversity challenged our teaching attitudes and strategies. We were no longer authority figures for local students. More often we were viewed as visitors.

Yongqiao provided examples of how cultural differences affected building trust between Han teachers and Uygur students. She explained,

There were about 50 [included me] Han preservice teachers from our university who participated in volunteer teaching in Xinjiang. Before we entered in this school with dominant Uygur students and teachers, we received limited knowledge of the students' learning and communication styles in our teacher education programs. The local students also viewed us as outsiders, and hardly accepted us because we were not 'their people'. So it was really hard for us to get into the heart of local students and gained their trust.

Jiayin tried to develop mutual understandings of her students in Liangshan by changing her attitudes about the perceptions of teaching. She realized that cultural and language differences existed, and "tried to know more about the students through informal conversations with them after class". Also, "Knowing what they hoped to learn most was an important way to close the trust gap between us." Nanqiao's volunteer teaching was with migrant children in Beijing. His students struggle with shifting rural-urban identities created uncertain attitudes and relationships with their teachers. According to Nanqiao, "the students' socioeconomic

backgrounds and sociocultural identities shaped their trust towards their teachers...from higher social status and the dominant ethnic group.” Thus, there was consensus among the teacher candidates participating in this study that lack of knowledge about social backgrounds resulted in cultural rejections between ethnic minority students and Han teachers. This mutual distrust and limited knowledge of local ethnic groups and their cultural heritages reduced the effectiveness of the volunteer teaching program in remoted ethnic regions.

Challenges in building cooperative relationship with local teachers that the teacher candidates encountered concentrated mainly on the volunteer teaching experiences in ethnic autonomous regions. Jing said,

The cultural and language differences separated us from local Uygur teachers. Some of them did not view the volunteer teaching program as a way to improve local educational quality. They questioned our knowledge of local educational reality and understanding of local students’ abilities, so the cooperation with local in-service teachers was very difficult in the first few weeks.

According to Yongqiao inadequate cross-cultural knowledge and experience between Han and Uygur teachers expanded this cultural and understanding gap. She recalled an incident in which a Uygur teacher felt Han volunteer teachers thought their own culture was superior to Uygur culture. This perception created an unequal relationship between Han and Uygur teachers. Lack of assistance from supervisory teachers also increased the difficulties for teacher candidates to engage in local school environments. Jiayin explained this situation when she said “our leading teacher and cooperative teachers at the target school did not provide us with sufficient instructions and advice in adapting to the local cultural and school environments. This made our efforts to cooperate with local teachers more difficult.”

Disconnection between the volunteer teaching schools and local communities was jointly created by the teacher candidates' reluctance and their lack of knowledge of the realistic conditions in volunteer teaching regions. This hesitancy resulted mainly from language barriers and cultural differences. Although Jing tried to know students more through conducting home-visiting, communications difficulties interfered with making this a reality. He could not understand Uygur students and their parents unless a Uygur teacher acted as an interpreter. Jiayin recalled that "living and working conditions [in Liangshan] were far more underdeveloped than I imaged. The difficulties in transportation also limited our opportunities to actually go into students' living communities to explore how their family conditions impacted their learning motivation and educational attainment."

#### Instructional Obstacles

Instructional materials and classroom management presented other obstacles for the teacher candidates during their volunteer teaching experiences. All reported that the required textbooks in local schools did not match the students' academic backgrounds and learning styles. Yongqiao provided the following detail example from her Chinese class in Xinjiang:

In the school where I completed the volunteer teaching, the local Uygur students' Mandarin proficiencies were still at the elementary level. Due to the local Uygur teachers' limited Mandarin proficiencies and inadequate teaching skills, the majority of Uygur students could barely say their names in Mandarin. But the local school used the national unified Mandarin textbook, which was difficult for Uygur students. The textbook content exceeded students' learning capabilities. For example, students were expected to learn Chinese ancient poetry, but they could only recognize two to four Chinese

characters in the poems. This greatly hindered their learning motivation and reduced the instructional effectiveness.

Jiayin found similar textbooks problems in her history class in Liangshan. The school also used the national unified history textbook that presented “some complicated historical concepts that could create cognitive barriers for ethnic minority students who spoke their indigenous language.” She explained that, “when we studied The Victorious Battle in Tai’er Zhuang (台儿庄大捷), some Yi students could not understand the meaning of ‘victorious battle’, I had to rephrase it to “won” (胜利).” Textbook content that did not connect to local students’ lives caused intellectual content and cultural disengagement in learning. For Yunxi who taught politics and moral character classes in Yunnan, the content knowledge from the unified national textbook was not closely related to ethnic minority students’ daily life. Yunxi elaborated that,

They learned ‘big’, ‘general’, ‘political’ concepts of national unity and political ideologies. They constantly questioned why we learned it and how that could be useful in their lives. Some ethnic minority students firmly believe in their home culture and ethnic heritage. They view learning unified Han culture and ideology as home culture deprivation. I also wondered whether we could develop regional textbooks that more connected to local students’ life and culture.

Nanqiao also thought it was important to develop regional science textbooks for migrant students. He commented that,

Migrant students usually obtained [low level] pre-school academic preparation in their underdeveloped hometowns. If the instructional materials are designed only based on urban students’ learning abilities and cognitive standards, then migrant students are left

behind by the textbook content. But the unqualified educational conditions at many migrant schools also posed challenges for devoting energy, time, and money for developing appropriate textbooks for migrant students.

Another instructional obstacle was classroom management. Teacher candidates identified three elements that contributed to this issue. These were students' learning styles, cultural and religious effects, and class size. Cultural, religious, and family influences on students' learning styles and academic achievements were most evident in ethnic autonomous regions. Yongqiao and Jing provided detailed examples of the academic behaviors and interactional patterns of Uygur students that corresponded with their cultural and ethnic backgrounds. Yongqiao observed that,

Ethnic minority students, especially Uygur and Kazak, are very active and outgoing. Unlike Han students, they were not afraid of expressing their opinions in class even if they were not related to the class content. Uygur students also highly value social emotional ties between friends. They had to greet each other when they first met at school. Sometimes when the first class started, they were not finished greeting. It is part of their cultural traditions to show respect to their friends. But some Han teachers who did not understand this cultural practice viewed it as undisciplined. Moreover, male Uygurs shake hands warmly with their male Uygur peers. This is also a tradition. One day, a male Uygur student was late for my class, but he still shook hands with every male Uygur student, then went to his seat. If you don't know this is their culture, as a teacher you will be very angry. Male Uygur students do not shake hands with female teachers. So some of our female Han teachers were offended. But this is their culture. You have to understand and respect it.

Jing recalled how ethnic traditions influenced students' learning motivation and outcomes. He provided the following examples of these involving Uygur and Mongolian students in his class.

Ethnic minority people emphasize the natural development of children instead of the traditional academic concerns of educators. This was reflected in the attitudes of minority parents towards their children's education. They did not care about getting outstanding grades in school. So students have relaxing learning styles and were casual about studying at school. They would chat and walk around in class. Han teachers insisted they follow our instructional orders. That bothered me a long time...Although Uygur students behaved casually, Uygur teachers could make them sit down and learn with one gesture. I thought there was a cultural tacit understanding between Uygur students and Uygur teachers. But for Han teachers, we were not there yet. Meanwhile, Uygur people highly valued their ethnic religion traditions. During the Lesser Bairaml and the Corban Festival, Uygur students would not attend school.

Yunxi and Jiayin mentioned that class size affected their instructional effectiveness. In Yunxi's class in Beijing, there were less than 40 students, but in the remote areas in Qujing, classes had more than 50 students which posed challenges for responding to the individual needs of students. Jiayin had similar experiences and concerns in Liangshan. Some of her classes had as many as 60 students, which made "it very difficult to diversify teaching strategies to respond to students' various needs." Consequently, she wanted to "receive more related preparation in my teacher education program before entering into these complicated teaching placements."

The teacher candidates in this study indicated that although Central Normal University provided preservice volunteer teaching opportunities in diverse cultural and ethnic regions, there

was little pre-practicum mentoring and guidance for volunteer teachers to better adapt to local social and cultural environments. They also thought the university should help preservice teachers develop skills to deal with the controversial and complicated nature of teaching in multiethnic and multicultural environments as cultural and ethnic outsiders. For example Yongqiao said,

We were pretty much on our own. It took us a long time to figure out ways to build relationship with students and cooperative teachers, create a welcoming academic environment, and adjust teaching methods to meet ethnic minority students' needs and learning styles. If we could gain more content related knowledge from pre-working orientation or workshops, this exploration gap could be greatly reduced.

### **Transformative Multicultural Teaching through Experiences**

Narrative stories of cultural and instructional struggles the teacher candidates encountered in a completely different living and schooling environment inspired their self-reflections on the broader social context of education. For most of them (Jing, Yunxi, Jiayin, and Nanqiao), this was their first time being immersed in ethnic and cultural diversity, and experiencing cultural shock and confusion about ethnic identity. This experience caused some reconsiderations of the social significance of preparing majority Han teachers to respond to visible and invisible diversities of their future students. Volunteer teaching was an A-Ha moment for Yunxi. She realized, "I could not connect with my students unless I truly recognized and appreciated their ethnic and cultural heritages, and think from their perspectives." Several changes occurred for the teacher candidates after they had taught in ethnically and culturally diverse environments. These include greater sensitivity to diversity and more commitment to change.

Teaching in multicultural environments empowered the preservice teachers in this study to obtain a more comprehensive view of culture; recognize cultural and ethnic complexity and ambiguity; become more aware of the issues of social justice; and develop cultural and ethnic empathy with their own personal experiences and guidance from local teacher colleagues. Yunxi provided an example of obtaining a more comprehensive view of culture after completing her volunteer teaching. She said, “My previous concept of culture was based on Western and Chinese [Han] culture. After being exposed to various indigenous Chinese cultures in Yunnan, my understanding of culture was enriched. I no longer ignored ethnic cultures within the whole Chinese context.” Nanqiao added socioeconomic and rural-urban experiences and perspectives into his conceptions of culture. This became necessary for him because “teaching at migrant children schools made me realized the importance of socioeconomic culture and migration experiences on students’ achievements. The socioeconomic culture of education should not be excluded.”

An increasing openness to diversity and concerns for social justice issues also occurred. Jing recalled that,

Before entering into real diverse classroom, ethnic diversity and cultural conflicts were far away from us. Moreover, we were not comfortable and confidence in addressing sensitive issues such as power dynamics, privilege, social justice and injustice. We tried to avoid these topics by claiming we are a unified harmonious family.

Jiayin added,

Denying the existence of bias and misunderstandings cannot solve the problem, especially in ethnically diverse regions. Maintaining national unification and recognizing ethnic and cultural diversity is not a contradiction. We need to be more open and flexible

toward existing cultural and ethnic dynamics so that we can identify appropriate ways to balance complex diversities to better achieve national unity.

These teacher candidates experienced an attitudinal change from cultural sympathy to cultural empathy during their multicultural teaching experiences. Jing explained that, “Before entering local schools, we placed ourselves in the position of helper due to our comparatively higher socioeconomic status and advanced educational backgrounds. However, this sense of helping, or sympathy, was based on an unconscious assumption of Han superiority.” Yongqiao suggested that, “We should not place minority people in a sympathetic position. Instead, we are all equal. I mean, in terms of culture and ethnicity, we are all equal. There is no good or bad culture and ethnicity.”

In addition to cultural sensitivity, the teacher candidates made some changes to improve teaching effectiveness and interpersonal relationships with local students and teachers. These changes were conceptual, reflective, and instructional. Conceptual changes involved cultural acceptance and indigenous language learning. One indication of these changes was Jing’s statement that “teachers need to truly accept students’ cultural and ethnic traditions to build positive connections with them. Slogans such as ‘we have to respect ethnic diversity’ is not helpful in practical instruction.” Jiayin demonstrated cultural recognition and ethnic acceptance by actively connecting to local communities. Although at school she was teacher but for the Liangshan people and Yi cultural communities she was a student. She observed that,

When my students saw my efforts to understand them, they accepted me as a part of their community. I remembered one of my students shared her ethnic name ‘Lulu’ and the naming tradition with me. I was very happy because I felt my students started to treat me as part of their community family.

Language learning was another medium for developing understandings and positive relationships with local students and teachers. Yongqiao provided the following example of how learning the Uygur language improved her relationship with Uygur students and teachers:

It is important for Han people to know and learn Uygur language and culture. The one-way export of Han culture and Mandarin is not sufficient. Learning Uygur language can also reduce the ethnic distance between Han teachers and Uygur people. I learned Uygur language from a Uygur teacher. Every time I greeted my Uygur students and Uygur colleagues with ‘Ässalamu äläykum!’ students were very surprised and happy that their Han teacher was learning their language as they were learning Mandarin. I believe language learning should be bi-directional. Only requiring Uygur students to adapt to and learn our language and culture is not fair.

Teacher candidates engaged in a lot of self-reflective activities. Yunxi and Yongqiao wrote reflections daily about their successful and unsuccessful teaching strategies. Nanqiao designed reflective cards for students to indicate what they did not understand and needed more explanation. In so doing he and his students “reviewed and refined the teaching process together.” Jing recognized the importance of sharing reflections with colleagues. He stated, “I shared my teaching reflection notes with my cooperative Uygur teachers and Han volunteer teachers. Through self-reflection and peer-reflection, I was able to improve my teaching skills and learned from my experienced colleagues.”

Instructional changes included diversifying teaching materials; modifying teaching and testing techniques based on students’ learning styles and interests; connecting to students’ history and local community; and allowing students to be co-creators of learning activities. Nanqiao frequent used visual aids such as set squares, paper-cut geometrical figures, and computer

images to help students learn geometry and calculation. Jiayin diversified teaching materials by using currency. Her students tried to identify different ethnicities printed on money and were introduced to the historical development of Chinese currency from ancient to modern times (see Figure 9).

Figure 9. Ethnic minority people images on Chinese currency



Yongqiao diversified teaching strategies and test forms to increase Uygur students' learning motivation in her class after realizing that:

Uygur students preferred to learn in the active and engaging way. So I designed the Mandarin-Go-through a Pass activity to promote Mandarin instruction for Uygur students. There were five blockades [to overcome. These were]: I can understand; I can read; I can write; I can sing; and I can speak. There were cards with required key character on each one. If student could correctly pronounce and explain the meaning of the characters on 10 cards, they passed the first two blockades. The third step required students to correctly complete the dictation of five Chinese phrases. In the I can sing process, students chose to sing a Mandarin song which they were familiar with. This was their favorite part. In the final step, students had to create and complete a short Chinese dialogue with required key words. If they successfully completed all five blockades, they won a trophy. We promoted this activity to the whole school and developed it as a school-wide Mandarin

Competition Game. Students really liked it. And the local school is still doing it every semester.

Yunxi described how she invited students to be co-creators of instructional materials in creating a book entitled *Colorful Yunnan*:

In order to increase local students' class engagements and connect teaching to their history and life, I invited them to design a book about the local history, cultural and ethnic traditions, festivals, traditional food, and language/dialect in Yunnan. I made it the final class project. Students collected materials from their parents, grandparents, traditional folks, photos, and pictures. We had five editorial groups. Each group was responsible for writing one chapter. During the process of editing the book, students were able to revisit the local history and cultural traditions, as well as honor their linguistic and ethnic heritages in an academic way. The local school principal was inspired by this idea and started to design regional textbooks to preserve local cultural and ethnic traditions. I thought we made a good start.

The teacher candidates in this study thought cooperating with local teachers and community members was an important way for them to improve their instructional effectiveness. As Yongqiao explained, "An important lesson I gained from the volunteer teaching experience was cooperation. Learning from experienced colleagues greatly improved my teaching confidence and effectiveness." Jiayin also acknowledged the importance of connecting to local communities in Liangshan. She pointed out that,

Many students' parents are migrant workers [and] their children are often left behind with their grandparents. In some cases, students were left behind with their younger sisters or brothers. So they were responsible for taking care of their younger siblings. This resulted

in low educational attainment and academic achievements for some students. Many of them would eventually drop out of school. Getting into students' living community could help teachers to identify effective strategies to help those students, in academic ways, and also in social supportive ways.

Jing associated the importance of local community connections with resolving cultural biases and developing cultural awareness. Yunxi thought the educational opportunities of local students could be improved through collaborating with school administrators, parents, and local community members. She described an activity called "Educational Caravan" that was initiated by her volunteer lead teachers and several local in-service teachers. She explained it as follows:

In some remote villages in Southwest China, students have to walk a very long way to school. In order to provide educational resources for students in these traffic inconvenience areas, my volunteer teaching school started an Educational Caravan program. The school administrators, local teachers, and parents together rented a caravan loaded with books, stationery, school bags, and toys. The caravan drove to those target areas every month to bring educational resources to local children. This activity created a mobile classroom to improve educational opportunities for students in rural areas.

The challenges they experienced and the effective teaching strategies they learned from volunteer teaching inspired the teacher candidates to develop a sustainability model for others interested in volunteer teaching in ethnic autonomous regions. According to Yongqiao they "summarized multicultural teaching strategies from their own teaching experiences" and planned "to develop a few pre-work guidelines for future Han teacher candidates who will do volunteer works in ethnic regions. By doing so, it could help to reduce the cultural and ethnic gaps during cross-cultural teaching experiences." Yunxi and Jiayin indicated that in their teacher education

programs, similar activities occurred in the form of an “Experience-Sharing Seminar.” Jiayin thought this effort could be expanded “if the university or local schools could summarize our previous teaching experiences that would become a very helpful multicultural teaching manual for future teacher volunteers or prospective teachers.”

### **Institutional Lack of Commitment to Preparing Teachers for Diversity**

All five interviewed teacher candidates suggested that more equal emphasis should be placed on developing cultural competence in their preservice education programs. In response to candidates’ concerns, three teacher educators in this study identified several issues that might hinder institutional effectiveness in preparing Han teachers for diversity.

The national curriculum which was not prioritize diversity and multiculturalism was identified as one of the major obstacles to the professional development of multicultural education in China. The Ministry of Education creates common curriculum and instructional goals for teacher education throughout the country. According to Dr. Wu this “national unified teacher education curriculum left limited autonomy for teacher education institutions and teacher educators to add cultural elements in program core curricula and course design.” Dr. Li added that the national unified K-12 curricula and textbooks also posed challenges for prospective teachers to choose or design regional instructional materials that reflected students’ daily lives, local histories, and cultural and ethnic heritages. In elaborating this idea she said,

The national required textbooks and curricula define what teachers need to teach. Thus the national created common knowledge posed challenges for teachers to add additional culturally relevant materials in class. Moreover, this common knowledge is the knowledge tested in national standardized examinations, such as the College Entrance Examination. So teachers’ instructional focus is closely tied to this knowledge. That’s

why in university-based teacher education programs subject knowledge and pedagogy skills are most important.

In China the major ethnic composition of the teacher population is Han. More ethnic minority prospective and in-service teachers and teacher educators could increase current Han teacher candidates' and teacher educators' cultural sensitivities and awareness toward diversity.

As Dr. Zhong noted,

Teacher education students and teacher educators in urban China, or in places other than ethnic autonomous regions, are still predominately Han. Thus, most teacher candidates and teacher educators will not pay attention to diversity issues because teacher education programs they are enrolled in are not diverse enough in demographics population and in academic content.

Another factor that significantly influenced teacher preparation for diversity is the national policy of ethnic solidarity and national unity generally, and within urban institutions. Dr. Wu suggested,

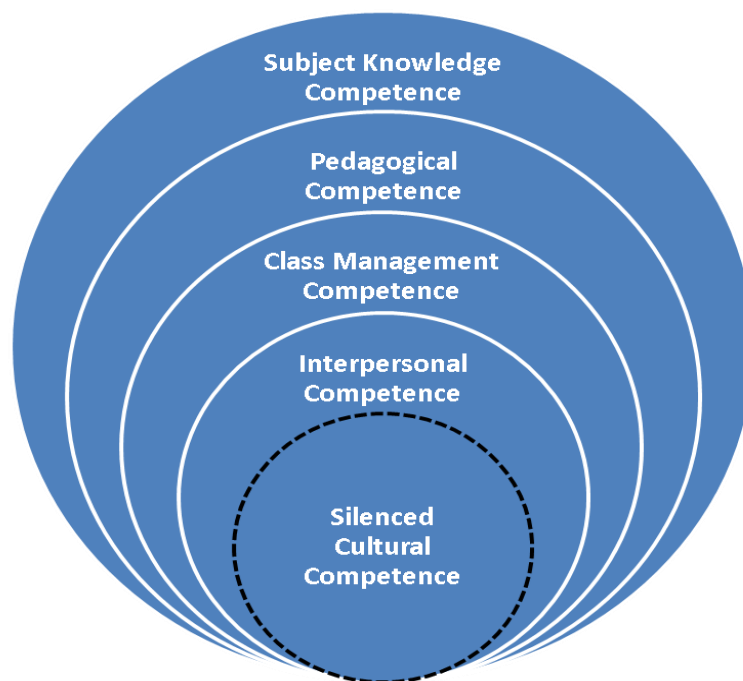
The ethnic issue is a very sensitive topic in China. In teacher education institutions we are very careful about addressing ethnic diversity, religious issues, and cultural conflicts. Not to mention sensitive topics such as power and social justice, bias and stereotypes. In most cases teacher educators won't touch those issues in class.

Dr. Zhong also commented on the knowledge and awareness disconnect between teacher educators and teacher candidates. She said, "Teacher educators are not equipped with cultural awareness and a multicultural knowledge background. Consequently, teacher candidates do not receive academic training and teaching demonstrations from their professors accordingly."

Figure 10 illustrates emphasis given to multicultural education and ethnic diversity in teacher education at Central Normal University compared to other priorities. Dr. Wu explained that imbalances in the development of competencies were due to following aspects:

The institutional view towards multicultural education and teachers' cultural competence [being] at the level of 'interesting', but not 'necessary'. Due to China's context, the cultural differences, ethnic diversity, and cross-cultural conflicts are invisible or more visible in certain ethnic regions. Unless you actually enter in those contexts through our volunteer teaching programs or teacher exchange programs. Otherwise, the promotion of multicultural teacher education can only be achieved by adding elective courses, guest lectures, or educational seminars.

Figure 10. Teacher candidates' competence development circle



Dr. Li further indicated that “subject-area faculties in their academic programs lack cultural awareness and cultural competence. This increases the difficulty of adding multicultural relevant courses to their programs.”

The national unified standards, institutional missions on subject matter education, and teacher educators’ limited multicultural competencies jointly posed challenges for preparing teachers for diversity in China. Efforts to develop prospective teachers’ cultural competence were achieved by adding elective courses, creating multicultural guest lectures and seminars, organizing volunteer teaching and teacher exchange programs, and teacher educators’ efforts to interweave relevant issues into their educational foundation and pedagogy classes. Dr. Zhong explained that, “we started research on multicultural education and preliminary studies on transforming its key concepts and strategies into teacher preparation. However, those studies were mainly focused on theoretical research, not actually its implementation into program curricula and academic training processes.” Dr. Li added,

Our students are pretty much on their own. However, if the sociocultural aspects of teaching are missing from the core curricula and required courses, it is harder for candidates to actually develop this cultural awareness and competence. They have to learn from practical teaching, challenges they encounter, and effective experiences they summarized from cross-cultural teaching experiences.

Course format was another major obstacle to multicultural education mentioned by teacher educators. For example Dr. Wu said “the current cultural relevant courses are 2-credit elective courses. But this might not be sufficient to systematically introduce Western and Chinese theories and scholarships in the field of multicultural education and multicultural teacher education.” Dr. Li thought “the audience of the class was a major concern. Teacher candidates

interested in multicultural education were comparatively minority...the total credits of teacher education required courses were only 30. Inside of these 30 credits, the space for multicultural relevant courses is very limited.”

The teaching force and faculty resistance also were mentioned as impediments to effective multicultural teacher education. Dr. Wu said,

Teacher educators from multicultural backgrounds and specialized in this area are a minority in Central Normal University’s teaching force. Moreover, teacher educators at Central Normal University are predominately Han and have limited multicultural living experiences. Teacher educators’ personal multicultural awareness and competence also affect programmatic concerns of preparing culturally responsive Han teachers at our university. Most of them [teacher educators] do not consider this issue is important and urgent.

Faculty resistance and lack of policy reinforcement also were challenges to developing multicultural teachers from internal and external perspectives. As Dr. Zhong argued, “Many teacher educators and university leaders do not consider multicultural teacher education as important as the subject content education for teacher candidates.” Similar resistances were reported by Lv (2014). In his study of Chinese teacher education programs, he noted they did not enhance teachers’ cultural awareness; challenge the cultural deficit teaching concept; embrace multicultural education courses; or offer teacher-mentoring and field work training for developing Han teachers’ culturally responsive pedagogies. Consequently, in service and preservice teachers at normal universities usually were not interested in exploring ways to improve teaching effectiveness for diverse student population. Nationally, the problem of Chinese educational institutions encounter in practicing multicultural education is “lacking of

relevant laws and regulations concerning education excellence and equity for ethnic minorities” (Lv, 2014, p.105).

Institutional support was another major obstacle to promoting multicultural teacher education. Dr. Wu thought the cultural awareness and background of leadership was an important consideration. He noted that at Sichuan Normal University, for example,

The Dean of the College of Education is a Tibetan professor. His personal cultural and ethnic backgrounds enable him to obtain strong multicultural awareness. So developing multicultural teacher education becomes one of their major concerns. Currently they offer a required course in the teacher education program---Introduction to Multicultural Education. They also hired ethnic minority professors and pioneered a doctoral program in multicultural education.

The importance of leadership support was also mentioned by Dr. Zhong. She said,

In the future, the issue of multicultural education and multicultural teacher preparation will become a key topic in China, especially under the influence of educational globalization. Our university leadership has started to notice this issue, but has not placed much institutional emphasis on it. The limited development in preparing teachers for diversity is on a theoretical level, not the practical implementation.

### **Summary**

The findings from this study revealed that preparing culturally responsive Han teachers was not receiving sufficient attention in the urban teacher education institution that was the focus of attention. Ethnic and cultural attitudes of majority preservice teachers towards diversity were constructed based on knowledge about preferential Western diversity, traditional Chinese Han culture, and marginalized indigenous ethnic diversity. The academic preparation in university-

based teacher education programs approached teaching for diversity through adding elective courses, providing guest lectures and educational seminars, and diversifying the placements for volunteer-teaching programs. The cultural knowledge and multicultural teaching competence of teacher candidates were developed mainly through their personal encounters and practical teaching experiences, rather than academic training.

The Han teacher candidates reported that cross-cultural understandings and multicultural teaching competence could be achieved from living and practical experiences. However, institutional involvements in multicultural teacher preparation and the academic training of prospective teachers for diversity were still limited to theoretical knowledge and the general introduction of cultural norms at teacher education institutions. For future implications, teacher educators recognized the need to progressively address multicultural significance in teacher education by engaging in supplementary activities such as creating culturally relevant elective courses; having more guest lectures and seminars; maintaining the volunteer teaching and teacher exchange programs to ethnic and cultural diverse regions; and refining relevant policies and preparation guidelines.

## **Chapter V: Summary, Discussion, and Recommendations**

The summary, discussion, limitations, significance, and recommendations for future research are presented in this chapter. The summary provides a brief overview of the research problems, procedures, and findings of this study. The discussion section provides an interpretation of the study results from the previous chapter. The discussion of significance provides some of the contributions this study makes to the body of scholarship on preparing multicultural Han teachers in China. In the section on limitations, some aspects that were not explored and the scope of this study are illustrated. Information in the recommendations section concentrates on possible future research about preparing multicultural teachers in China and other countries that could extend the findings of the present study.

### **Summary**

Several years ago, I joined a study group for inland Tibetan class students at my university. The program was designed to assist Tibetan students to better adapt to the sociocultural and academic environment in Beijing. Tibetan students were assigned to local mentors. I said “hello” to my Tibetan mentee in the Tibetan language. She was surprised and asked, “Are you an ethnic minority, too? But you don’t look like a minority.” After the brief introduction about my personal interests in ethnic minority cultures and languages, she was very touched. She added, “You are the first Han I met who is so interested in minority cultures and can speak an indigenous language.” During the discussion, I noticed her frustrations and struggles with getting used to Han cultural habits while learning Mandarin and English at the same time. She admitted being afraid of forgetting her home language. I also heard discussions about improving ethnic minority education by promoting national preferential policies, lowering the College Entrance Examination scores for ethnic minority students, and establishing inland

Tibetan and Uygur classes, boarding schools, and teacher-exchange programs. But the voice from ethnic minority people was usually diminished if not totally silenced. Did these policies work? Has the goal of reaching educational equity and quality for ethnic minority, rural, and migrant students been achieved?

In 2015, I met two Han individuals who had just completed the teacher-exchange program in Xinjiang. They shared challenges and frustrations during their cross-cultural and cross-ethnic experiences. One said, “We were there to help them, but I did not know how to approach them.” Then she asked me, “What do you know about the U.S. model? How do they address the issue of preparing racial and cultural majority teachers for minority students?” That conversation inspired my research interest in addressing multicultural competence for Han teachers in China. “You cannot help your students unless you understand them.” This comment symbolically summarizes the purpose of this study, which was to uncover pre-service teachers’ conceptions of diversity, and to investigate possible ways to assist them in developing multicultural understandings and teaching competence for diverse schooling contexts.

A qualitative methodology was used to obtain the data needed to answer the research questions of interest to this study. The three research questions explored teacher education students’ and teacher educators’ perceptions about preparing teachers for diversity; the academic preparation processes in building a knowledge base and pedagogical practices for prospective teachers; and practical implications for promoting multicultural teacher education in China. The Han teacher candidates in this study obtained multicultural teaching and living experiences, and teacher educators specialized in multicultural and teacher education areas at Central Normal University.

Most data collected derived from semi-structured interviews with teacher candidates and teacher educators, narrative stories of teacher candidates' multicultural teaching experiences in ethnic regions, and documents such as the online catalogue, program courses, teaching evaluation, and textbooks. Five major findings resulted from these data analyses. First, teacher candidates have ambiguous perceptions of diversity, which were created by Han-centric academic knowledge taught during K-12 to postsecondary education experiences. The geographic distance from and the cultural blindness about indigenous ethnicities created distorted knowledge about ethnic minority groups in China. Second, inadequate academic preparation in teaching for diversity was illustrated by the teacher education program missions and goals, subject-oriented curricula, an inadequate multicultural teaching force, and cultural homogeneous practicum placements. The overemphasis on subject content knowledge and pedagogy development limited the cultural competence of the teacher candidates.

Third, when entering cross-cultural and cross-ethnic environments, teacher candidates were not prepared for the complex diversity and schooling reality. Consequently, the initial approach to local students and cooperative teachers was a major challenge to teaching effectiveness. Fourth, the teacher candidates' multicultural understandings and teaching strategies were developed in these challenging environments. Crossing cultural borders and reducing cross-cultural instructional discomfort were achieved by the candidates through living experiences without receiving sufficient pre-practicum preparation and instructional guidance from their academic programs.

Finally, the teacher candidates and teacher educators proposed several possible ways to address cultural significance in teacher education, and remove multiple obstacles hindered the development of multicultural competence for majority Han preservice teachers. The obstacles

included the national policy over ethnic diversity; unified national standards of curriculum design, textbook development, and teacher qualities; regional divided impacts on multicultural immersion in teacher education institutions, and faculty resistance and leadership unsupportive attitudes created institutional challenges to developing culturally responsive Han teachers in China. The participants in this study suggested improvements in addressing cultural diversity in urban teacher education could be accomplished by: raising teacher candidates' and educators' cultural awareness; adding multicultural education courses and seminars into regular university curricula; diversifying student-teaching placements; and recruiting teacher education students and faculty from diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds.

## **Discussion**

A variety of studies that focused on multicultural education theory in China raised large amount of concerns, many of which are similar to those expressed by the participants in this study. For example, Geng (2013) questioned how to convert the multicultural theory into practice under the Chinese educational system. Jin (2009) noted that despite attention to situating multicultural education into China's context, theoretical and conceptual ideas have not been implemented very well in preservice and in-service teacher development. Most Han teachers do not understand cultural influences on teaching and learning, and they do not know how to respond to the needs of diverse students in multicultural schooling environments. These claims were confirmed by the results of this study and suggested that it is important to raise the multicultural awareness of teacher candidates, in-service teachers, and teacher educators in China. While teacher candidates in this study acknowledged the significance of ethnic minority culture and western culture, they stressed that their acceptance of the existence of various

cultural heritages and ethnic diversities was not transformed into teaching strategies before and after entering in teacher education programs.

The findings of this study also revealed that conceptions of multiculturalism in China tend to be rather narrow in substantive focus, and limited to ethnic minority groups within minority autonomous regions in China. While this is quite common, it is inconsistent with much of current theoretical characterizations of multicultural education in both China and other countries such as the United States. As Wang (2012) pointed out cultural diversity and cultural sensitivity should not be limited to ethnically diverse groups in ethnic minority regions. In doing so, multicultural awareness and cultural competence will be neglected in urban cities and urban teacher education institutions. Wang and Gou (2012) suggested that the development of multicultural competence need to include both regional characteristics and national emphases. The teacher candidates and teacher educators in this study endorsed these ideas. While some participants (Yongqiao and Jing) who had multicultural living experiences advocated for valuing indigenous cultures and languages, others (Jiayin, Yunxi, and Nanqiao) showed hesitance and uncertainty of addressing ethnic diversity in urban cities. Although all teacher educators expressed a commitment to developing courses and activities that help in introducing multicultural education concepts and teaching strategies to prospective teachers, the actual development of these curricula and related competences for teacher candidates was not occurring at a level of sufficiency to claim identity as unqualified multicultural education. While the idea and intention may be noteworthy their actualization was less than desirable.

This study showed raising teacher candidates' consciousness of diversity is essential to their competence and efficacy. As such these results are consistent with earlier research. For example Cruz et al. (2014) recommended increasing multicultural competence by developing

cultural consciousness of self and others; utilizing concepts and experiences grounded in empirical and real-world multicultural contexts, and incorporating multicultural literature in learning and teaching. These general ideas were supported by similar but more specific suggestions for the China context by the participants in this study. They included consideration of Han and ethnic minority teachers' own cultures and ethnic heritages; ethnic minority cultures in both ethnic autonomous regions and urban settings and their influences on schooling; and policies associated with schools and schooling for ethnic minority students. For teacher candidates in this study, these notions are imperative not only for teachers to demonstrate "culturally responsive caring" (Gay, 2010, p.69), but also to improve the academic preparedness and psycho-emotional well-being of ethnic minority students. These needs and potential outcomes of multicultural or culturally responsive education in China reflect similar ones in other countries worldwide. For example, most teachers in China are members of the dominant Han ethnic group, and students from minority ethnic groups are disproportionately underachieving in schools. Consequently, appeals for more equity and social justice, and bridging cultural, opportunity and education gaps between minority group, the majority group, and between students and teachers are as applicable in China as in other multiethnic, multiracial, and multicultural societies. So is the potential remediation of multicultural and/or culturally responsive education.

The knowledge teachers need to teach culturally and ethnically diverse students more effectively could be organized into categories outlined by Banks (1994). These are "knowledge of the major paradigms in multicultural education; knowledge of the major concepts in multicultural education; historical and cultural knowledge of the major ethnic groups; and pedagogical knowledge about how to adapt curriculum and instruction to the unique needs of

students from diverse cultural, ethnic, and social-class groups” (p.47). Bennett (1990) also suggested that teachers should be familiar with key concepts and theories of multicultural education. The participants in this study self-declared needs were consisted with the suggestions of these scholars, but with more emphasis on practical application of these conceptual ideas within the realities of the China context. These competencies should improve teacher confidence, comfort, and efficacy in designing more culturally responsive achievement standards, policies, and practices for ethnic minority students in China in both urban and autonomous areas. These findings, along with previous scholarship on multicultural education suggest that acquiring a strong cultural knowledge base about ethnically diverse cultural communities and students is a prerequisite for relevant curriculum and effective pedagogy for them.

Some scholars use an iceberg analogy to explain multiple layers of culture and where to locate powerful culturally responsive teaching and learning within them. The portion of an iceberg that is visible above the surface of the water symbolizes aspects of culture that are easy to identify and learn. But the most significant and larger parts of the iceberg are below the surface. The teacher candidates described their understandings and knowledge of indigenous ethnic groups and foreign cultures as superficial consisting of tangible aspects such as foods, dress, folk, arts, festivals, sports, traditional ceremonies, and languages. The intangible much deeper components of culture below the surface, such as social interactions, values, and beliefs are more profound, more influential, and more difficult to perceive and understand. Teacher educators in this study also confirmed that the cultural knowledge received by teacher candidates from their K-12 to postsecondary education experiences were surface culture. Significant and invisible aspects of culture and cultural knowledge were missing from their knowledge, perceptions, and academic preparation. Not addressing Han privilege and power, the

marginalization of indigenous cultures and cultural influences on teaching and learning, and the significance of schooling context in their pre-service preparation made teacher candidates' cross-cultural and cross-ethnic teaching experiences less effective.

Teacher candidate participants also attributed their ambiguous conceptions and insufficient multicultural knowledge to limited exposure to diversity and inadequate academic training. The knowledge and skills they did have were acquired primarily from social interactions and volunteer teaching experiences rather than academic education and professional development. Consequently, their perceptions, knowledge, and pedagogy were often inconsistent with multicultural education academic theory, research, and scholarship. Their understandings of the scope of multicultural education and culturally responsive pedagogy needed more specificity and clarity to be appropriately applied in multicultural and multiethnic schools.

Nor was preparing teachers for diversity clearly exemplified by supervisory teachers and teacher educators. As Villegas and Lucas (2002) proposed in their research, preparing teachers who are culturally responsive is an urgent issue in teacher education, and should be undertaken intentionally and systematically. Despite the increasing diversity in student population in China, teacher education programs have taken limited steps to address ethnic and cultural differences, socio-economic class gaps, and linguistic variations in teacher education programs, policies, and practices (Zhang, 2002; Xu & Qin, 2004; Chen, 2005; Zhou & Liu, 2013). The test-oriented teaching effectiveness and standardized teacher qualities in China marginalize and minimize cultural presence in teaching. The participants in this study described graphically the missing multicultural concerns and courses in their teacher education programs at Central Normal University.

The teacher candidates expressed intentions to respect and respond to ethnic and cultural diversity, but without academic training in establishing multicultural knowledge and developing pedagogical strategies, their intentions did not effectively translate into actions when participating in diverse teaching environments. During their practicum training and volunteer teaching experiences, these prospective teachers generally developed interactional and instructional strategies that were not compatible with local students' cultural, communication, and learning styles. The four participants who encountered multicultural and multiethnic students and teachers in autonomous regions (Yongqiao, Jin, Jiayin, and Yunxi) had a range of experiences in concordance with the ethnic and cultural diversity, while Nanqiao confronted socioeconomic and rural-urban diversities brought by migrant students. All teacher candidates in this study experienced difficulties, resistance, distrust, and uncertainties related to inadequate preparation in teaching for diversity, and lack of knowledge and etiquette protocols for entering different cultural and ethnic communities. Although all five teacher candidates claimed their teaching experiences were transformative because of active collaboration with local teachers, experienced colleagues, and local students, this was likely a mere beginning, or "an entry level" of a long-term process for the transformation to be genuine and sustainable.

Due to the short duration of the volunteer teaching programs and limited mediation from supervisory teachers, the teacher candidates' intentions to modify their teaching strategies to accommodate all students' learning styles and needs did not work as they expected at first. Therefore the "claimed transformation" may have been more in awareness about ethnic and cultural diversity than in pedagogical actions. Although efforts were made to diversify student teaching placements and increase opportunities for teacher candidates to connect with culturally and ethnically diverse communities, without providing sufficient cultural knowledge and

pedagogical skills, those good intentions were not be successfully achieved. Teacher candidates could not fully transform their intentions into appropriate instructional actions. In some cases, negative reinforcements of previous cultural biases and stereotypes also could occur.

Another issue raised by the cross-cultural teaching experiences of teacher candidates was the sustainability of progress made by the volunteer teaching programs in rural ethnic regions. Limited longitudinal studies have been conducted on the effectiveness of volunteer teaching programs and the intentions of the participating teacher candidates' intentions of returning to the same school sites after graduation. Although the volunteer teaching programs and similar organizations such as Teach for China are alternative ways for preparing teachers from the majority cultural, ethnic, and socioeconomic group to immerse themselves in diverse teaching contexts, the sustainability and transformative effectiveness of these efforts need to be explored in order to assist prospective and novice teachers to successfully transform their beliefs of respecting diversity into affirming teaching actions.

Although five participants in this study received opportunities for self-reflection on cultural diversity and professional development of multicultural teaching strategies during cross-cultural and cross-ethnic teaching experiences, they felt unable to adequately differentiate teaching strategies, diversify assessment techniques, modify local curricula and instructional materials, and struggled to connect teaching and learning to living communities. Teacher educators in this study attributed these limitations to the lack of attention and systematic preparation in teaching for diversity. As has been explored in the U.S. context (Cochran-Smith, 2004; Villegas & Lucas, 2002; Zeichner, 1993) the increasing diversity of student population calls for preparing teachers with beliefs, knowledge, and skills to engage in culturally responsive teaching (Gay, 2010; Landson-Billings, 2006). In China, although the Ministry of Education has

begun a series of educational reforms that encompass a “more holistic style of Quality Education (素质教育) centered on the whole person development (moral, intellectual, physical, aesthetic, and economic), the examination-oriented educational goals and expectations toward teachers and teacher education remained unchanged” (Dello-Lacovo, 2009, p.24). Although some efforts (such as initiating theoretical research projects, establishing the Jing-Jiang School of Education, and pioneering teacher exchange and volunteer teaching programs in ethnic minority regions) have been made to promote multicultural teaching, concrete and more comprehensive efforts within university-based teacher education programs in urban cities are still underdeveloped.

Regarding the programmatic efforts to prepare teachers for cultural, ethnic, and regional diversity, urban teacher education institutions provide limited courses, learning activities, supervisory faculty, and diverse practicum placements for pre-service teachers. Some preservice teachers pursue individual and self-initiated efforts to create new instructional materials and learning activities to utilize students’ learning in multicultural and multiethnic schools. These efforts are laudable but do not exempt teacher educators and teacher preparation programs from providing models of and support for culturally appropriate teaching practices before and during practicum experiences. These efforts might be more than theorizing if teacher educators had more autonomy and institutional supports in developing multicultural teacher education courses and seminars in urban institutions.

Teacher candidates in this study recognized the constraints imposed on diversity education initiatives by national textbooks and curricula, and the difficulty of connecting instructional content to students’ diverse living communities especially in ethnic minority regions. Teacher educators added that the national unified curricula and missions of university-based teacher education programs also limited their ability to incorporate multicultural education

courses in the core foundation and pedagogy coursework. Another restriction was imposed by institutional concerns about the desirability of prioritizing multicultural education and culturally responsive teaching in teacher education programs. Teacher candidates in this study also pointed out that culturally responsive teaching was not modeled by their teacher educators. The teacher educators confirmed that the majority of teacher education faculty were not equipped with adequate multicultural knowledge and pedagogical skills due to the lack of institutional programmatic concerns, policy initiatives, and teacher education accreditation standards. As they suggested, if the government were to include multicultural teacher education in the standards for teacher preparation, then, teacher educators would be more motivated to prioritize and be responsive to culturally responsive teachers in urban institutions.

A complaint expressed by the teacher candidates in this study that is often heard from their peers in other teacher education programs and countries is too much emphasis on theory in educational foundation courses and too little attention on hands-on practical learning. The recent scholarship and its relevance to particulars of China's ecological context also were issues of concerns. Undoubtedly, these criticisms were prompted by the heavy reliance on Western and U.S. "classic" educational philosophies such as those of offered John Dewey during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Another concern that was both specific to the teacher education program that was the target of interest in this study and somewhat generalizable across programs was inadequate student teaching opportunities. The length of time allocated to these experiences and the locations of their occurrences were inadequate for multicultural and culturally responsive teaching. In most instances these endeavors are not accomplished individualistically, and never purely intuitive. Instead, they require time, knowledge, and efficacy development, settings to

practice imagined possibilities, and close guidance, support and analyses of competent teacher educators and practicum supervisors. In other words, the ownership and implementation of multicultural education are most effective when they occur within communities of practice over time. The teacher candidates in this study did not seem to have ample amounts of these crucial resources. Specifically, their student teaching experiences were too short in duration, and often too distant from ethnically diverse cultures and communities for the duration of the culturally diverse knowledge and awareness that were beginning to occur to be sustainable over time without more systematic and continuous support.

### **Limitations**

There are several limitations to this study. First is the scope of the study. This was a case study that involved a short time period and a small number of teacher education students and teacher educators at one university. Qualitative studies like this one can provide in-depth understandings and explorations of an issue but the results are not generalizable to a large population. This study provided opportunities for participants to have their voices heard and opinions expressed (Glesne, 2005). As Bloomberg and Volpe (2008) advised, special caution is needed in seeking for the transferability of findings from one study to other similar cases. Therefore, the results of this study are only indicative and illustrative of the extent to which action in the context studied are consistent with theorized and conceptualized ideas about multicultural pre-service teacher preparation in China.

Classroom observations were not included due to local policy restrictions. According to Berreman (1972) participant observations are the effective research method to identify and characterize various strategies used to evoke particular groups. Due to the sensitivity of investigating ethnic issues and the fact that the researcher was a student at a foreign institution,

principals and supervisory teachers at mixed-ethnic school sites for practicum experience did not permit site access and class observations nor were teacher candidates observed in their volunteer teaching in various regions of China. The narrative stories of preservice practicum and volunteer teaching experiences provided a few snapshots of different situations rather than longitudinally observation sequences. Undoubtedly insights gained from observations of multicultural classroom teaching would have enriched those data derived from interviews and document analyses.

Moreover, this study did not take place in an ethnic autonomous region. The regional ethnic diversity influences on teacher candidates' cultural diversity knowledge and teaching experiences might be more visible and profound in ethnic autonomous regional schools and in ethnic teacher education institutions. Additionally, in the sampling criteria, I did not recruit Han teacher candidates without multicultural living and/or teaching experiences. Future studies could sample teacher candidates with teaching and living experiences only in majority Han cultural and social environments to get a better understanding about how dominant social and cultural capital affects cultural diversity and competence. This study focused on a teacher education program at a normal university. This institutional climate and culture probably influenced the participants' experiences and perspectives. Studying similar issues and population in different colleges and universities could produce different results. Moreover, gender was not considered in participants' selection criteria. In future research on pre-service teachers' beliefs and attitudes about teaching for diversity, gender difference and its influences on teacher candidates' focuses on teaching would be a worthy inquiry to pursue.

The positionality of the researcher provided a particular lens to this study that may have had biasing effects on the results. For example, my obvious endorsement of multicultural

education and shared Han identity with the participants could have enticed them to tell me what they thought I wanted to hear, on elicited assumptions of allegiance with the participants' concerns and feelings of uncertainty. My affiliation as student with a prestigious university in the U.S. could have promoted a kind of "heroine worship" or "stardom" given the prominence of Western ideas about multicultural education and ethnic diversity already evident in their academic experiences. This could have caused some participants to embellish their interview narratives to "impress the star", both positively and negatively. The data analyses and presentation of results were contextualized and completed through the researcher's lens. It is undeniable that some level of researcher subjective was present throughout these processes, and affected what was seen and heard, how it was understood, and how it was presented. While conscientious efforts were undertaken to control and compensate for these potential biases, there is no certainty that they were entirely successful.

### **Significance**

Ethnic and cultural diversity in China has been increased and enriched by globalization and urbanization. The unbalanced economic development and the unequal distribution of quality educational resources and opportunities have made improving rural education, ethnic minority education, and education for all Chinese students significant and urgent. Increasingly teachers are facing students from diverse socioeconomic, ethnic, cultural, and racial backgrounds. Previous research in other nations on improving teacher qualities and classroom practices with historically marginalized rural, migrant, immigrant, and ethnic minority students have identified teachers' cultural diversity competence as a major contributing factor. However, as Wang and Gou (2012) reported, both ethnic minority teacher education and teacher education in general in China largely ignores the significance of social and cultural impacts on teaching and learning.

This is the case for both teacher education institutions in urban cities and in remoted ethnic autonomous regions. Scholarship on eliminating educational inequalities in China's educational systems mainly focuses on training ethnic minority and rural teachers for ethnic minority and rural students in ethnic autonomous and rural regions. This study symbolized both continuity and change in addressing these issues. Its orientation and results are consistent with the findings of previous scholarship on the importance and manifestations of teacher education for and about cultural diversity, and with the potential change that could result from better preparing Han preservice teachers in mainstream teacher education institutions for teaching ethnic and cultural minority students in different contexts throughout China.

Another area of emphasis in teacher education in China that this study tried to transcend is the preeminent focus on disciplinary content knowledge and pedagogy. Given this emphasis and the corresponding lack of thorough preparation in culturally diverse sensitivities, affirmative attitudes, and pedagogies, it is understandable why preservice teachers had a high level of cross-cultural discomfort and instructional ineffectiveness in multiethnic and multicultural schooling contexts. To overcome these obstacles, this study highlighted the merits and positive effects of Han teachers learning about ethnic minority cultures and communities during their preservice preparation. Contrary to some assumptions that prospective teachers are resistant to and intimidated by these prospects, that was not the case. Rather they resented not being adequately prepared to work with ethnic minority students and communities. They offered reasons why their professional preparation was inadequate and made specific suggestions for how these situations could be corrected. Therefore, teacher candidates' experiential perspectives broaden the discourse on teaching ethnic minority students. These voices have been largely absent in previous research.

Very few studies on Chinese multicultural teacher education have been conducted from Han perspectives. This study pointed out the importance of preparing cultural and ethnic majority (Han) teachers to acquire multicultural knowledge and cross-cultural teaching competences for improving ethnically diverse, rural, migrant, and globalizing education in China. It also expanded the understanding of how mainstream Han teachers and teacher education programs in urban cities can be more responsive to and effective for ethnically, racially, culturally, and economically diverse student populations. The results offer guidance for creating a pathway to establishing school cultures and academic environments within teacher education programs where “students of every cultural and racial background feel welcome and are encouraged to reach their highest potential, as well as receive academic achievements” (Bennett, 2004, p.864).

### **Recommendation for Future Research**

More research is needed to determine how China characteristic and practical multicultural education and its effects on teacher education and student performance in various classrooms. Geng (2013) pointed out studies on theories of and knowledge constructions for developing multicultural teacher education in China were at an initial stage. They are open to future discussion and research on what knowledge and competences should be included in teacher education programs in the China context. According to Shen (2005) and Wang (2012) teacher candidates’ multicultural knowledge base was virtually a blank slate in university-based teacher education programs and institutional-wide policies. Lv (2014) further argued that there is a lack of conscious and systematic education and practice of multicultural teacher education in China. Some changes are beginning to occur, but much more is needed in policies, programs, and practices within teacher education and university-wide programs as well.

Teachers need much more training in how to value, affirm, and maximize the rich cultural heritages their multicultural students bring to classrooms. In this regard, prospective teachers should be educated to differentiate curriculum, instruction, interaction, and assessment to better facilitate success in minority students' learning at schools. Since teacher education programs play a crucial role in determining teachers' attitudes and actions toward diversity and their preparation programs should be much more explicit and comprehensive in developing dispositions and skills for culturally relevant teaching for ethnic minority, rural, and immigrant students in different living and learning contexts. The application of these competences may vary somewhat by location, ethnic group, teachers, and subjects being taught, but these different variations do not invalidate the necessity for multicultural teaching and learning.

Regarding the increasing diversity of the student population in China, teacher education institutions attempt to reduce the demographic divide and cultural mismatch by recruiting ethnic minority and international students through free normal education programs, and diversifying the faculty population. Relevant research suggests that teachers from the same race and ethnic group as their students may act as role models who can "instill positive attitudes toward schools, create a classroom climate and relationships that lead to greater academic success, and provide culturally responsive pedagogy that improve students' chances of academic success" (Zumwalt & Craig, 2008, p.412). Zhou and Liu (2013) also demonstrated the importance of increasing cultural and ethnic diversities in urban teacher education institutions. They associated this demographic diversity with the improvement of cultural sensitivity and multicultural representation in dominant ethnic and cultural environment. However it is also important to improve majority Han teacher candidates' and teacher educators' cultural awareness, knowledge, sensitivity, and skills. Both areas of growth should be pursued aggressively in the future.

In order for new teachers to translate their knowledge of culturally responsive teaching into practice with multicultural students, they need to connect to and be trained in diverse learning communities. Field experiences contribute to the preparation of culturally responsive teachers in a number of ways. Most important, as illustrated in the findings of this study, they offer prospective teachers opportunities to build a contextualized understanding of culturally responsive teaching and multicultural education by getting them out of the university classroom and into schools and communities. Based on preservice teachers' demands for more cross-cultural and cross-ethnic teaching placements, more research is needed to explore how diverse teacher education programs implement practicum training and volunteer-teaching placements, and how these clinical experiences in diverse communities can be better integrated into teacher candidates' multicultural competences and practices.

Regarding the role of institutional commitment in preparing teachers for diversity, supports and involvements of school and governmental officials can greatly contribute to developing multicultural teachers for ethnic minority, rural, migrant, and immigrant students in China. Financial supports, relevant policy mandates and enforcements and increased opportunities for teachers to observe successful multicultural education teaching across the nation and overseas could improve the quality of educational opportunities and teaching effectiveness for minority and multicultural students in China (Yuan, 2017).

Another recommendation for future research is to conduct other studies similar to this one about teacher education programs and subject-area studies. Involving cooperative and supervising teachers from student-teaching placement schools may reveal more depth, similarities, and differences in the result obtained. They also could enhance the reliability, validity, and generalizability of the data. Conducting comparative case studies between teacher

education institutions across different ethnic regions also could produce insightful findings for designing multicultural teacher preparation models suitable for various local, cultural, and ethnic contexts.

### **Concluding Comments**

The most frequent question I was asked during this study by Chinese teacher candidates and teacher educators was, “Why do you care about preparing majority teachers to recognize and respect the diversities of marginalized minority students?” This question triggered my own critical reflections on the formation of teaching attitudes, knowledge constructions of diversity, and instructional responses to localized and globalized students in China. This study invites both ethnic majority and minority teacher candidates and teacher educators (and me, too) to reconsider the scope and the content of diversity and multiculturalism. The unbalanced knowledge emphasis at the university-based teacher education program that was the site of this study reminded me of the continuing need to develop more holistic views and contextualized understandings of teaching attitudes and competences about ethnic and cultural diversity. For the future development and reform of teacher education programs, sociocultural aspects of teaching and learning should be included in curricula and instruction so that prospective teachers will be better able to make teaching more accommodating to students’ multiple identities and cultural backgrounds. This need is the mandate I accept for my own future professional development and as a stimulant for the work that I will do as a teacher educator. I also will encourage others who are committed to educational equity and excellence for diverse student populations to do likewise.

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## Appendices

## Appendix A.

### Interview protocol with teacher education students

Preamble: Thank you for your willingness to participate in the 40-50 minutes interview. The purpose of this interview is to review how the teacher education program prepares preservice teachers' knowledge and practice of culturally responsive teaching. I have prepared several questions regarding your backgrounds; study experiences; and perceptions about how well teacher education program prepare you to work with diverse student populations. At the end of the interview, I will provide you an opportunity to make any closing remarks regarding the issues discussed in this interview. All information will be held confidential and your involvement will greatly facilitate my future research work to prepare culturally responsive Han teachers for multicultural and multiethnic students.

#### General background

- Please tell me what level of schools (elementary school/middle school/high school) you would like to work after graduation?
- What do you think of “multicultural education” and “culturally responsive teaching”?
- What are your beliefs/impressions about cultural and ethnic diversity China? Are you familiar with culture, customs values, and knowledge of China’s 56 ethnic groups?
- During your K-2 schooling experiences, what classes and opportunities did you have to learn about diversity and knowledge of China’s 56 ethnic groups?

#### Academic preparation

1. Please tell me about the teacher education program you are enrolling in.
2. How does your teacher education program include multiculturalism, cultural and ethnic diversity, and teaching and learning for diversity into the program curriculum?
3. What courses are provided in your teacher education program about multicultural education, cultural and ethnic diversity, teaching for diverse students?
4. What opportunities (events, workshops, selective courses, volunteer teaching, student teaching etc.) are provide in your teacher education program/university about experiencing diversity and learning knowledge/tradition of other ethnic groups?
5. How do you believe your teacher education program has mentioned or addressed cultural, ethnic diversity and pedagogical skills as it relates to teaching diverse student population?
6. Do you think prepare culturally responsive teachers important to your teacher education program/university? (Please describe)

7. What opportunities does your teacher education program provide you to teach/tutor students from diverse backgrounds? (if yes, please describe)
8. Do you have previous experiences of teaching or working with multicultural and multiethnic students? (if yes, please describe)
9. How do you believe your teacher education program prepares you to have awareness, knowledge, and understanding of diversity and teach for diverse students?
10. How prepared did you feel in your ability to teach diverse students after finishing your program training?
11. What personal and/or professional factors do you believe that can positively impact your confidence and ability in teaching diverse students?
12. Is there anything else you like to add to assist your teacher education program in preparing teachers to teach diverse students?
13. Anything you would like to add about my research and interview questions?

Thank you so much for your time and participation!

## **Appendix B.**

### Interview protocol with teacher educators

Preamble: Thank you for your willingness to participate in the 40-50 minutes interview. The purpose of this interview is to examine what have been done in teacher education program to prepare culturally responsive Han teachers. At the end of the interview, I will provide you an opportunity to make any closing remarks regarding the issues discussed in this interview. All information will be held confidential and your involvement will greatly facilitate my future research work to prepare culturally responsive Han teachers for multicultural and multiethnic students.

1. Please tell me about the course you are teaching.
2. What are your beliefs about multicultural education and preparing teachers for diverse student population?
3. What courses are provided about cultural and ethnic diversity and teach for diverse students in teacher education program at this university?
4. What opportunities are provided for students to learn about multiculturalism, cultural and ethnic diversity, and teach for diverse students in teacher education program at this university?
5. What aspects of the teacher education program are beneficial in preparing preservice teachers to teach in a diverse setting?
6. How confident do you feel about preservice teachers' ability to teach diverse students after they graduating from teacher education programs?
7. How important is preparing culturally responsive teachers addressed in your program and future course design and program development?
8. In your opinion, how can current teacher education programs in China achieve the goal of preparing culturally responsive teachers (especially majority Han teachers) for diverse students?
9. Is there anything else you would like to add to assist the teacher education program in preparing preservice teachers to teach diverse students?
10. Anything you would like to add about my research and this interview questions?

Thank you so much for your time and participation!

## Appendix C.

### Follow up interview protocol with teacher education students

Preamble: Thank you for your willingness to participate in the 30-45 minutes follow up interview. The purpose of this interview is to explore your student teaching experiences and perceptions concerning your professional preparedness and instruction effectiveness in teaching multicultural and multiethnic students. At the end of the interview, I will provide you an opportunity to make any closing remarks regarding the issues discussed in this interview. All information will be held confidential and your involvement will greatly facilitate my future research work to prepare culturally responsive Han teachers for multicultural and multiethnic students.

1. Please tell me about the grade level and subject you are teaching in your student teaching school.
2. Please tell me what major responsibilities you have during your fieldwork experience in this school.
3. Please describe the demographic feature of your students.
4. If there are ethnic minority students in your class, how will your teaching pedagogy and instructional materials be adjusted to fit their learning styles and needs?
5. In your opinion, how might schools with mixed-ethnicity students better support ethnic minority students' learning?
6. How confident do you feel about your student-teaching experience in preparing you to teach diverse student population after graduation?
7. What personal and/or professional factors do you believe that can positively impact your confidence and ability in teaching ethnic minority students?
8. What suggestions for better preparing preservice teacher candidates to teach diverse student population would you like to give to teacher educators and school administrators?
9. Anything you would like to add about my research and the interview questions?

Thank you so much for your time and participation!

## Appendix D

### Recruitment/Invitation Materials

(Email) Invitation to the teacher educators

Dear [Professor's Name],

I am writing to invite you to participate in a research study I plan to conduct data collection from November 2016 to January 2017. The purpose of this study is to examine how to prepare culturally responsive Han teachers in China and what have been done in teacher education programs to achieve this goal.

I am undertaking this study as part of my doctoral program in Curriculum and Instruction at the University of Washington. This study will be the focus of my doctoral dissertation. At the beginning of data collection, I would like to invite you participate a semi-structured interview. Interview questions would focus on what has been done in the teacher education program in Capital Normal University to meet the goals of preparing culturally responsive teachers, and how to access to the success of preparing culturally responsive Han teachers in China. This interview and research is not in any way evaluative of your course and teaching, and it will hopefully bring contributions to the future course designs and program development at Capital Normal University to prepare multicultural teacher candidates. I will ensure that this study is not intrusive for you.

Taking part in this study is voluntary. You can stop and opt out at any time, and all information is confidential. All written transcript from interviews will be shared with you to make sure everything is correct. If the results of the study are published or presented, I will not use the names of participants, names of your course, names of university, or any other information that would identify participants, the department, or the university. You will be provided a gift card for participating this study.

I deeply appreciate for your consideration for this opportunity. If you are willing to participate in this study, I will be contacting you shortly via email to discuss this with you further. Please feel free to contact me by phone 413-230-8578 (USA) or 13811197475 (China) or via email at [huansy@uw.edu](mailto:huansy@uw.edu).

Yours sincerely,

Huanshu Yuan  
PhD Candidate  
Curriculum and Instruction, College of Education  
University of Washington  
[huansy@uw.edu](mailto:huansy@uw.edu) 413-230-8579 (USA) 13811197475 (China)

## Appendix E

### Recruitment/Invitation Materials

(Email) Invitation to teacher education students

Dear [Teacher Education Student's Name],

I am writing to invite you to participate in a research study I plan to conduct data collection from November 2016 to January 2017. The purpose of this study is to examine how to prepare culturally responsive Han teachers in China and what have been done in teacher education programs to achieve this goal.

I am undertaking this study as part of my doctoral program in Curriculum and Instruction at the University of Washington. This study will be the focus of my doctoral dissertation. At the beginning of data collection, I would like to invite you participate two sets of semi-structured interviews. The first set of interview would focus on how teacher education prepare preservice teachers' knowledge and practice of culturally responsive teaching and the implementation of these practice in student-teaching/field work experiences. The follow up set of interview would explore your student teaching experiences and perceptions concerning your professional preparedness and instruction effectiveness in teaching diverse students. These interviews and research is not in any way evaluative of your study and student teaching, and it will hopefully bring contributions to the future course designs and program development at Capital Normal University to prepare multicultural preservice teacher candidates. I will ensure that this study is not intrusive for you.

Taking part in this study is voluntary. You can stop and opt out at any time, and all information is confidential. All written transcript from interviews will be shared with you to make sure everything is correct. If the results of the study are published or presented, I will not use the names of participants, names of your program, names of university and student teaching schools, or any other information that would identify participants, the department, the school, or the university. You will be provided a gift card for participating this study.

I deeply appreciate for your consideration for this opportunity. If you are willing to participate in this study, I will be contacting you shortly via email to discuss this with you further. Please feel free to contact me by phone 413-230-8578 (USA) or 13811197475 (China) or via email at [huansy@uw.edu](mailto:huansy@uw.edu).

Yours sincerely,

Huanshu Yuan  
PhD Candidate  
Curriculum and Instruction, College of Education  
University of Washington  
[huansy@uw.edu](mailto:huansy@uw.edu) 413-230-8579 (USA) 13811197475 (China)

**Appendix F****Recruitment/Invitation Materials**

(Email) Nomination for teacher education student participants

Dear [Program Advisor's Name],

This is Huanshu Yuan, a PhD Candidate at the University of Washington working on my dissertation. I am looking for nominations for participants in my research study, which will be conducted from November 2016 to January 2017. The goal of this study is to see how to prepare culturally responsive Han teachers in China. I am writing to invite you to nominate teacher education program students who might be interested to participate in the study.

The commitment would be to participate in two sets of interviews, The first set of interview would focus on how teacher education prepare preservice teachers' knowledge and practice of culturally responsive teaching and the implementation of these practice in student-teaching/field work experiences. The follow up set of interview would explore participants' student teaching experiences and perceptions concerning their professional preparedness and instruction effectiveness in teaching diverse students. These interviews and research is not in any way evaluative of participants' academic study and student teaching. I will ensure that this study is not intrusive for participants. I expect to have up to five teacher education students. Some of the characteristics and experience that nominees would have include the following: Teacher education students who 1. Enroll in teacher education programs with professional subject areas from Chinese, Math, English, Science, and Social Science. 2. Identify as Han teacher education students. 3. Currently conduct student-teaching at schools. 3. Having mixed-ethnicity student population in their fieldwork schools and class.

Taking part in this study is voluntary. Participants can stop and opt out at any time, and all information is confidential. All written transcript from interviews will be shared with participants to make sure everything is correct. If the results of the study are published or presented, I will not use the names of participants, names of their program, names of university and student teaching schools, or any other information that would identify participants, the department, the school, or the university. Participants will be provided a gift card for joining this study.

If you know of current Han teacher education students who have these characteristics and might willing to participate, please fill out and send in the attached nomination form to me via email. I deeply appreciate for your time and consideration. Please feel free to contact me by phone 413-230-8578 (USA) or 13811197475 (China) or via email at [huansy@uw.edu](mailto:huansy@uw.edu).

Yours sincerely,

Huanshu Yuan  
PhD Candidate  
Curriculum and Instruction, College of Education  
University of Washington  
[huansy@uw.edu](mailto:huansy@uw.edu) 413-230-8579 (USA) 13811197475 (China)

## Appendix G

### Nomination Form for Teacher Education Student Participants

(Potential teacher education student participants' information will be listed by program advisor)

Student Name	Ethnicity	Program	Grade	Student Teaching Time	Student Teaching School/Demographic features of students in site schools	Contact information