Uncovering Roots of Diversity Conceptions in Teacher Candidates in a Concurrent Teacher Education Program: A Case Study of Teaching and Learning about Diversity

by

Victorina Baxan

A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
Department of Leadership, Higher and Adult Education
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education
University of Toronto

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Abstract

With the increasing diversity of students in Canadian schools (Egbo, 2011; Gérin-Lajoie, 2008; Solomon, Portelli, Daniel & Campbell, 2005), teachers are expected to have an understanding, knowledge and skills related to diversity to be effective teachers of students with often multiple and intersecting diversities. Teacher education is ever more concerned with developing programs where future teachers can develop critical understandings and knowledge of the nature of diversity and the ability to readjust and respond to the diversity dynamics in schools (Childs, Broad, Gallagher-MacKay, Sher, Escayg & McGrath, 2010; Gambhir, Broad, Evans & Gaskell, 2008; Gagné, 2009). This case study investigated aspects of teaching and learning about diversity in a concurrent teacher education program with a focus on the sources and influences on diversity conceptions of teacher candidates. Findings revealed multiple tensions within the teacher education program, as well as within and among teacher candidates as they learned about diversity. At the programmatic level, there was tension caused by the differences in the way the teacher education curriculum was planned, delivered and experienced. At the level of the learner, individual characteristics
appeared to influence developing conceptions of diversity to the point where these 
overshadowed the careful design features intended to support the development of socially 
just and inclusive educators. Two main lenses were used to analyse findings and highlight 
these tensions: the conceptual change lens (Posner et al., 1982; Hewson & Lemberger, 2000; 
Larkin, 2010, 2012) and the liberal theory (Moosa-Mitha, 2005; McLaren, 1995; Fleras, 
2002). The findings suggest that in addition to the model of teacher knowledge (Shulman, 
1987) and conceptual change approach (Posner et al., 1982; Larkin 2010), other concepts and 
theories are important to understand teacher candidates’ evolving conceptions of diversity as 
members of a society where liberal multicultural notions of diversity are promoted through 
public discourses and policies. These include what Fuller (1969) calls the stages of concerns 
of beginning teachers; King and Kitchener’s (2004) reflective judgment model of 
development of epistemic assumptions in early adulthood or what Dewey (1904) calls 
“mental movement” of a student.
Acknowledgements

I completed this research with the support and encouragement of many people. I am profoundly indebted to the teacher candidates, teacher educators and program administrators whose participation was essential to the success of this study. I thank all the teacher candidates for their frankness in their answers and I hope that I do justice to their contributions by making their voices prominent throughout this study. I cannot give enough thanks to all the teacher educators and program administrators who participated in this study and my heartfelt appreciation goes to all of you who helped in the recruitment process, when I most needed it. Your insights and thoughtful responses helped me to better understand the emergent findings in my research.

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Prologue

This case study examines the experiences of teacher candidates learning about diversity while enrolled in a five-year concurrent teacher education program at the University of Toronto. From the time that this study was designed (2011) and data collection took place (2012), the teacher education context in Ontario has changed. The Prologue and Epilogue to this thesis are intended to provide a description of the Concurrent Teacher Education Program (CTEP) at the beginning of the study and changes that it underwent when the thesis was completed.

As the Concurrent Teacher Education Program was launched in 2007, at the time of data collection, the CTEP was in full swing. It was designed as a cohort-based undergraduate program, and upon completion students obtain two degrees: a Bachelor of Education in addition to a Bachelor of Arts, Science, Music, or Physical and Health Education. The Bachelor of Education degree qualified candidates for licensing in Ontario as an elementary school teacher (Kindergarten to Grade 6) or secondary school teacher (Grade 7 to 12).

According to the published information on the University of Toronto’s website, entry into the program was offered through two routes: directly from high school or after completing the first year of study in the same university. For students entering the program from high school, the program was five years in length. For university students admitted after completing one full year of study, the program usually took four years to complete. The program was offered by six partner units of the university in cooperation with the Faculty of Education – the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE). The five-year program was expanded on three university campuses: one core downtown campus and two suburban campuses. The downtown campus offered programs in Music Education, Religious Education/Christianity and Culture, Health and Physical Education, and Education and Society. All of these programs prepared teachers to work in secondary schools, with the exception of the Education and Society program that prepared elementary teachers. The program in Christianity and Culture, and Education and Society did not offer direct entry
from high school. Only those already in their first year were eligible to apply to these two programs.

The suburban campus in Scarborough offered programs in Science, Mathematics, and French with each program providing options for either elementary or secondary school levels. The suburban campus in Mississauga offered programs in Science, French and Psychology. The French and Science programs prepared teachers for secondary schools, while the Psychology program trained professionals in the elementary division.

The five-year Concurrent Teacher Education Program admitted approximately 300 students each year. As part of the application to the program, individuals needed to submit an Application Profile (AP). The goal of the AP, as the university website describes, was to “identify candidates with a broad range of experiences in educational and community settings” (OISE, 2011). The program offered only a full-time option for studies, and students were encouraged to complete 5.0 credits course equivalents (full credits) in order to be able to graduate within five years with the same cohort.
Chapter 1: Introduction

This thesis describes a case study of teacher candidates in the Concurrent Teacher Education Program at the University of Toronto. This research aimed to identify the causes and influences on teacher candidates’ conceptions of diversity. To achieve this goal this study examined teacher candidates’ understandings of diversity, their experiences with diversity inside and outside the teacher education program, their views on how the teacher education program affected their understandings of diversity, as well as ways these candidates described their future teaching in diverse classrooms. This chapter introduces the research questions for this study and this study’s rationale. The chapter begins with a description of key questions that contextualize the topic.

With the increasing diversity of students in Canadian schools (Egbo, 2011; Gérin-Lajoie, 2008; Solomon, Portelli, Daniel & Campbell, 2005), teachers are expected to have an understanding, knowledge and skills related to diversity and the ability to adjust and respond to the diversity dynamics in schools. Teacher education is ever more concerned with developing programs where future teachers can develop critical understandings and knowledge of diversity and be able to adapt to shifting contextual forces (Gambhir, Broad, Evans & Gaskell, 2008; Gagné, 2009). Immigration to Canada is often cited as one of the main sources of the increased diversity, especially in large cities (Statistics Canada, 2007a, 2007b; Ryan, Pollock and Antonelli, 2009). Approximately 250 000 immigrants are making Canada their home each year and Ontario receives the highest percentage of immigrants of all Canadian provinces (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2012). Toronto, as well as Vancouver and Montreal, are Canadian cities and metropolitan areas where a large proportion of the newcomers settle. As a result, students in the public schools in these areas are reflective of the immigrant population (Escayg, 2010; Harvey & Houle, 2006). In addition to ethnicity, linguistic and religious diversity is also increasing among the student population in Canada (Canadian School Boards Association, 2006; Solomon, 2002; Solomon & Levine-Rasky, 2003).
Diversity enters communities and schools in Canada in many ways beyond immigration (Ryan, Pollock and Antonelli, 2009). Indeed, in addition to increased immigration to Canada, there is also an increase in internal migration and an increase in the Aboriginal population, with more Aboriginal students moving into metropolitan areas (Gambhir et al., 2008). Furthermore, exceptionalities (Berg & Schneider, 2012) and students’ sexuality and multiple identifications (Varvus, 2009) are becoming salient sources of diversity that the school systems must respond to in the changing educational contexts. The salience of these and other diversities differ across time are linked to school systems’ reactions to external pressures (Gambhir et al, 2008; Varvus, 2012, 2015). These external pressures often come from legislation and policies that put emphasis on human rights with increased attention to combating discrimination and marginalization (e.g., the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms; the Ontario Human Rights Code). In teacher education programs, emphasis on certain aspects of diversity can also be traced to goals and standards for teaching, which are established by provincial and territorial departments or ministries in Canada. Increasingly, such standards place emphasis on student learning and factors affecting it (Gambhir et al., 2008). For example, a report issued by the Ontario College of Teachers (2006), the regulatory body for the teaching profession in Ontario, recommended that special education be an integral part of teacher education programs (Gambhir et al., 2008). Consequently, teacher education programs highlighted the importance of addressing this aspect of diversity and the related concept of inclusion in program development efforts.

It is imperative to note, however, that learners are not identified by a single marker of identity, but often bring with them multiple and intersecting diversities. Daniel (2009) points out to a number of such diversities when he states that the vast majority of urban schools in Canada are “students of colour, Black, Aboriginal, low socio-economic status (SES) and immigrant children” (p. 175). In addition to urban schools, studies also emphasise the changing realities in suburban and rural schools in Canada (Daniel, 2009, 2010). Teacher education programs thus need to remain flexible (Gambhir et al., 2008) and be able to respond to the varied demands and pressures coming from the ministries, school boards,
schools, and communities in order to prepare teachers who would be able to adapt their teaching to meet the needs of diverse students.

There have been a number of studies that focus on diversity (primarily defined in terms of ethnicity, language, religion and/or culture) in Canadian schools, which stress the need for an equally diverse teacher workforce to match the diverse student population (Bascia, 1996a, 1996b; Beynon, Ilieva, & Dichupa, 2004; Phillion, 2003; Gérin-Lajoie, 2008; Harper, 1997). Despite the call for a diverse teaching body, the diversity of teachers in schools is far from matching the diversity of students Blais & Ouedrago, 2008; Egbo, 2008, 2011). Blais and Ouedrago (2008) note a number of telling findings based on their analysis of Statistics Canada data for all provinces in Canada: in 2006 female teachers represented between 63% and 81% across all provinces in Canada; in 2001 teachers belonging to a visible minority represented from 0.00% to 0.12% across the provinces; the Protestant and Catholic faiths represented the highest share of religious affiliation in most of the provinces in 1991 and 2001 census data; with the exception of teachers in Quebec, English was the mother tongue of the overwhelming majority of teacher survey respondents in 1991.

In addition, Ryan et al.’s (2009) analysis of Statistics Canada data in Ontario shows that 9.5% of Ontario’s teachers (including school counsellors) in 2006 were “visible minorities” compared to 22.8% of Ontario’s “visible minority” population. In Toronto this percentage differs, with 18.6% “visible minority” teachers compared to 42.4% of “visible minority” population. Additionally, the Canadian School Boards Association (2006) reports that out of the approximately 250,000 immigrants who arrive in Canada each year, children and youth represented 40% of the new arrivals. Many of these students and their families settle in Toronto. Cummins (2007) describes classrooms in Toronto as “multilingual classrooms” to refer to the increasing linguistic diversity among school-aged children in this context.

Teachers are essential in meeting the needs of students in such classrooms. Research shows that teachers’ social identities affect educational opportunities and outcomes of students, in addition to teachers’ academic preparation, and teachers’ preparation to work with diverse students (Little & Bartlett, 2010; Childs et al., 2011; Cummins, 2007). The Ontario Human
Rights Commission (2007) points to disadvantages (such as suspensions and expulsions) that racialized students (including Black and Aboriginal students) and students with disabilities may face due to their lack of representation in the teaching force. The pedagogical and personal relationships that develop between teacher and students, the attitudes of the teacher, and teachers’ identities are key in the school achievement of culturally diverse students (Irvine, 2003, Postman & Weingartner, 1987; Ferguson et al., 2005; McMurtry & Curling, 2008; School Community Safety Advisory Panel, 2008). Other research studies show that teachers play a critical role in the achievement of students of color (Irvine, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Mitchell, 1999; Stanford, 1998).

The gap in the ethnic composition between teachers and students as well as related disparities in language and religion, has resulted in calls to prepare all teaches to develop diversity awareness, knowledge and skills (Akiba, 2011, McNeal, 2005; Gay, 1997; Grant and Wieczorek, 2000; Schmidt, 2004). Akiba (2011) maintains that, “educating pre-service teachers to develop multicultural awareness, knowledge, and skills for teaching diverse students is a major responsibility of teacher education program coordinators and teacher educators” (p.659). Faculties of education in many universities in Canada, including Ontario, have included diversity components in their curriculum (Dei & James, 2002; Gambhir, Broad, Evans & Gaskell, 2008; Lund, 1998; Solomon et al., 2005). Research that studies the effect of such programs on teacher candidates’ experiences of learning about diversity is limited.

For example, Mujawamariya and Mahrouse (2004) conducted a study in Ontario and found that teacher candidates did not feel prepared to teach students from backgrounds different than their own. Schick’s (2000) study revealed that teacher candidates in Saskatchewan tended to resist multicultural and/or anti-racist initiatives. In another Canadian study, Solomon et al. (2005) reported that teacher candidates felt significant discomfort with topics such as oppression, marginalization, colonization and racism. What tends to be missing in such studies is an examination of how teacher candidates (TCs) understand the concept of diversity, ways in which TCs’ initial conceptions of diversity change over time, and
influences on conceptions of diversity in teacher candidates, which my study aimed to explore.

**Rationale for the Study**

A number of teacher education programs in Canada (including Ontario where the study took place) have responded to the call in research on diversity and teacher education to diversify the teaching force (Crocker & Dibbon, 2008; Childs et al., 2011). One such response has resulted in reviewing teacher recruitment strategies to include a more diverse group of candidates (Childs et al., 2011). This response, however, has proven insufficient in meeting the needs of today’s schools for at least two reasons: first, immersing racialized candidates into an Anglo teacher education program often leads to the assimilation of a minority person into the majority culture (Ogbu, 1992); and second, racialized candidates may not be recruited into the teaching force quickly enough to provide a sufficient number of diverse teachers (Goddard, 1996; Childs et al., 2011).

A recent study by Childs et al. (2011) indicates that admission policies and procedures at a Canadian university are being constantly revised to provide greater clarity for candidates applying to teacher education program, as well as for those who evaluate these applications. Applicants are asked to volunteer demographic information on their application. However, the percentage of those who answer demographic questions is still very low to allow any further analysis (Childs, et al., 2011). This latter finding is similar to how Ubah, a teacher candidate (TC) participant in this research, describes her experiences related to her teacher education application process (a detailed description of Ubah’s case is presented in Chapter 6). Ubah did not include her demographic information the first time she applied to the concurrent program at the University of Toronto and was refused because of lower grades in certain subjects. She decided to include this information when she reapplied the following year. The TC expressed the belief in the interview that her decision to include personal information helped her gain admission to the program the second time she applied. Nonetheless, due to low levels of responses such as Ubah’s, targeted recruitment is not always possible meaning that all candidates enrolled in teacher education programs need to
be trained to be able to teach in diverse settings. As Goddard (1996) maintains in regard to the Canadian school context, “the abilities of teachers to sensitize students to issue of racism, stereotyping and multiculturalism are as important as their ability to function effectively with a variety of student populations” (p. 3). Reiter and Davis (2011) argue that the increasing student-teacher cultural mismatch leads to “[m]iscommunication, false expectations, and hidden biases in the classroom” (p. 41) due to the lack in skills in teachers to “deal effectively with a culturally, racially, and socio-economic diverse body of students” (p. 41). Teachers’ practices thus may unintentionally encourage discrimination and inequity in the education process (Reiter & Davis, 2011).

As broader research on diversity and teacher education shows, future teachers in teacher training programs tend to be unfamiliar with issues around diversity and multicultural education (Parameswaran, 2007). As members of the society at large they may have some misconceptions about diversity and multicultural education, but they do not have a clear idea of its role in public schools (Banks, 1994; Giroux, 1988; Howard, 1999). Candidates come into teacher education programs sharing preconceived notions about diversity education, critical literacy and multicultural education that are perpetuated by media and popular discourse (Giroux, 1988). Some of these include viewing culture as static and unchanging, regarding multiculturalism as increasing boundaries between different social groups, and paralleling inclusive education with lowering of standards of academic achievement (Giroux, 1988). Many teacher candidates associate cultural differences with differences in practices, customs, traditions and values, and they seldom question the impact of difference in access to power (Hill, 1997; Shor & Freire, 1987). Teacher education students often expect that they will learn specific strategies to deal with different social groups (Nieto, 2000). Consequently, they hold the view that children from different social groups have different learning styles that they will need to learn about (Elhoweris, Parameswarn & Alsheikh, 2004; Shor & Freire, 1987). All these misconceptions can decrease the teacher efficacy when confronted with a diverse classroom (Parameswaran, 2007). Stephan and Stephan (2004) thus argue that teacher education programs need to explore processes that would help change or decrease prejudice, stereotypes, and discrimination. Such processes in their turn, would allow “educators to create curricula that explicitly take advantage of these processes and maximize
opportunities to bring about beneficial changes in cognition, affect and behavior” (p. 782). James (2010) maintains that many of the stories that have been shared with him by students and aspiring professional who are ethno-racial minorities about their lives in Canada refer to racism and discrimination. James further states that:

They [students and aspiring professionals] submit that racism and discrimination – as well as ethnocentrism, xenophobia, stereotyping, etc. – have informed their understandings of the opportunities open to them in Canadian society, as well as the construction of their identities as Canadians with particular ethnic and racial heritages. While majority group members may not similarly attribute their identification, experiences, and opportunities to these factors, their lives are no less informed by racism and discrimination; for these factors are structurally embedded in society and affect everyone, though admittedly in different ways in relation to gender, social class, citizenship, immigrant status, sexuality, and other demographic factors (p. 211)

James notes that the experiences described by the students do not occur and develop in isolation, but “are structured by prevailing ideologies, ethics, and practices of the institutions and society around them” (p. 212). It is therefore important to determine what notions of diversity teacher candidates (TCs) hold, the causes and influences on TCs’ conceptions of diversity, and how these notions change over the course of the teacher education program. As Roth (1992) emphasises, such research initiatives would strengthen teacher education. Although teacher education programs make efforts to reform their curriculum, diversity studies curriculum in teacher education needs significant reform to address the “multilayered” needs of teachers (Milner, 2010, p. 118). A conceptual repertoire of diversity, which Milner (2010) defines as the “collection of thoughts, ideas, images, and belief systems that teachers build to more deeply understand diversity and its multiple relationships to teaching and learning” (p. 118), is needed besides teachers’ instructional practices. In addition, it is important to take into account the dynamic nature of the teaching and learning context in which teachers operate (Gambhir, Broad, Evans, & Gaskell, 2008).

A number of past research studies emphasizes that not only teacher candidates, but that teacher educators also need to be adequately trained with curriculum focused on diversity and inclusive practices (see for example Dei & James, 2002; Hesch, 1999). Furthermore, it is
important to examine how teacher educators help teacher candidates identify, confront and resolve conflicts of values that occur when working across cultures (Solomon & Lavine-Rasky, 2003; St. Denis & Schick, 2003). Ghosh and Tarrow (1993) point to the need for teacher educators to also be adequately prepared to train teacher candidates for teaching in diverse settings when they state that, “[…] change in teacher education will not be implemented without efforts focused on those who teach the teacher” (p. 81). My research examined the learning and teaching process about diversity from the perspectives of teacher candidates as main participants, with teacher educators’ and program administrators as additional participants.

**Goals of the study and research questions**

The aim of this study was to examine the causes and influences on diversity conceptions of teacher candidates (TCs) in a concurrent teacher education program in the Canadian context. This study investigated the teaching and learning about diversity through TCs’ eyes in the five-year Concurrent Teacher Education Program (CTEP) at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE) of the University of Toronto (UofT). This research did not intend to evaluate the teacher education program. It rather aimed at inquiring how teacher candidates perceived the impact of the program and factors outside the program on their developing understanding of diversity, and understanding of students that they would encounter in their future teaching. While the central objective of the study was to examine teacher candidates’ experiences, the study also investigated the views of teacher educators and program administrators on the preparation of teachers for diverse classrooms. Data coming from teacher educators and program administrators were used as complementary data.

The study addressed the following overarching research question: What are the roots of diversity conceptions in teacher candidates in a concurrent teacher education program? In order to uncover the sources of and influences on diversity conceptions of teacher candidates, I asked the following sub-questions:

1. How do teacher candidates enrolled in a concurrent teacher education program conceptualize diversity?
2. How do teacher candidates describe their past and present experiences with diversity and their influences on their conceptions of diversity?

3. In teacher candidates’ view, how is their understanding of diversity affected by the Concurrent Teacher Education Program components?

To gain better insights into conceptions of diversity, this thesis investigated the questions in individual TCs. The thesis first presents findings from six individual cases (Chapters 6 and 7), and secondly it describes collective case findings organized into themes across all the TCs in this study (Chapter 8). The importance of examining teacher candidates’ conceptualization of diversity has been emphasized by a number of studies on diversity in teacher education. Ladson-Billings (2011), for instance, in one of the more recent studies entitled “Asking the right questions: A research agenda for studying diversity in teacher education”, states that:

The research questions that emerge from […] changing demographics are more conceptual than empirical. We will want to know how teacher education conceptualizes this changing diversity. Will we draw sharp lines of demarcation between citizens and recent immigrants? Will the established notions of race prevail over those of national origin? Rather than becoming preoccupied with counting, we will want to know more about the meaning of that difference. We must also leave open the possibility that different kinds of diversity will become more salient in future classrooms. And finally, we will want to know what role can (and should) teacher education play in this changing demographic landscape. As we consider our more global and diverse future, rather than an emphasis on race and ethnicity we may become more focused on language, gender, and religion. … How do religious practices (e.g., female students wearing hijab or male students wearing turbans) influence what teachers and schools teach and how they interact with families? All of these questions have empirical possibilities, but they are nested in the conceptual question I posed previously: “How do teachers conceptualize diversity?” (p. 386)

The quote above not only emphasizes the importance of studying how teachers conceptualize diversity, but also points to the role that teacher education can play in shaping these conceptualizations and how meanings of diversity are grounded in a given context and time. Ladson-Billings’ (2011) call for research on meanings of diversity in teacher education is echoed by Tardif et al. (2002) when they suggest that in the Canadian context, “It is high time that research be undertaken at a provincial and pan-Canadian level to: (1) highlight the place of multicultural education within preservice training; (2) describe the way programs
and courses are concretely implemented; (3) finally, reveal the importance that major stakeholders attach to multicultural education in teacher training” (p. 6). This research aimed to bring forward responses to such questions in research literature through teacher candidates’ experiences of teaching and learning about diversity in the Concurrent Teacher Education Program at OISE, University of Toronto.

**Significance of the study**

Studies that focus on diversity as categories of difference with a certain status (Larkin, 2010, 2012; Varvus, 2012, 2015), diversity as often intersecting dimensions, and learning about diversity in this sense in teacher preparation programs are scarce (Lund, 1998; Ghosh & Abdi, 2004; Ladson-Billings, 2011). Research tends to focus on one or more diversity dimensions, but not on diversity as a more encompassing term. Even research on single diversity dimensions is relatively scarce. For instance, Bourne and Gonick (1996), Lucidi (1994), Sikes (1991), and Skelton and Hanson (1989) report little research examining gender (as a dimension of diversity) in initial teacher training. Davies (1994) and Grant (1993) also point to the limited number of research studies that examine how matters of race are addressed in teacher preparation programs. However, a collection of studies on diversity education can be found in literature. Gérin-Lajoie’s (2008), *Educators’ Discourses on Student Diversity Canada: Context, Policy, and Practice* focused on dimensions of diversity such as race, language, ethnicity and culture. Sanderson (2006) conducted a study that examines how teacher educators and their students constructed and interpreted the place of race and gender in initial teacher education in one Canadian faculty of education. Sanderson (2006) points to the fact that even when issues of race and gender are integrated into initial teacher education, they are not a priority, are given minimal attention, or even remain unexamined. According to Lund (1998) a focus on diversity in teacher education preparation “is not afforded a high priority in many Canadian universities and that where multicultural education is addressed it is often done through isolated course offerings” (p. 16).

My study decreases this knowledge gap in the Canadian research literature on teacher education for diversity. Rather than focusing on one or several specific diversity aspects, the
study explores and elicits the meanings that teacher candidates ascribe to diversity as a term or notion in itself. To uncover the roots of their diversity conceptions, the study investigated the dimensions of diversity that the teacher candidates found more salient (or of higher status) than others, both as individuals and future teachers; their views on influences on their conceptualizations and learning about diversity; as well as their perceptions of successes and challenges related to teaching in diverse classrooms. This research examined these questions with the overarching aim to uncover causes of and influences on teacher candidates’ conceptions of diversity, which I contend will help teacher educators and teacher education administrators better address the ongoing changes in teacher education curricula. Through a focus on teacher candidates, the study brings forward their voices on the role of teacher education in their learning. As Russell and McPherson (2001) argue “teacher education programs continue to be criticized for ignoring the voices … of teacher candidates” (p. 2).

Diversity is becoming more complex and is contingent on context and time, which makes it imperative to explore how it is understood, taught and learnt in teacher education programs, as well as what ideas teacher candidates retain as they think about future teaching (Ladson-Billings, 2011). Niyozov (2009) also maintains that, “Canadian schools, as is the case of majority of the western schools are in the state of influx, transition, and shifts to address enormous demographic, curricula, and pedagogical challenges. Canadian education policies and practices have attempted to respond to the above challenges by embracing multiculturalism, pluralism, equity and diversity” (p. 2). This study explores the responses of one such teacher education program through the eyes of teacher candidates.

As individual teacher education programs determine and define what an appropriate curriculum for teaching and learning about diversity is, and as individual teacher educators decide how to approach teaching this curriculum to teacher candidates, it became important for this study to learn how teacher candidates experience this curriculum. Findings from this study will have important implications for other teacher education programs in the province of Ontario and other Canadian provinces. In particular, findings will be relevant to those programs that have or are in the process of implementing a curriculum for teacher education that aims to prepare teachers able to address the needs of an increasingly diverse student population in a changing context. Furthermore, it is my hope that this research will also
inform educational policy and teacher education development initiatives in contexts outside of Canada that serve diverse student populations. In order to let the reader know what shaped my decision to embark on this research and further influenced the way I presented and analysed the findings, in what follows I position myself as researcher by describing a number of personal experiences.

**Subjective location of the author**

As an immigrant to Canada, I fit a profile that is often described in research literature and reports on immigration: I am one of the 250,000 who make Canada home each year; one of the many immigrants who settled in Ontario, which is one of the provinces that receives the highest number of immigrants compared to other provinces; and also one of those immigrants who settled in a Canadian city where a large proportion of newcomers usually settle (Statistics Canada, 2007b; Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2012). I am one of the 59 percent of economic migrants who were selected on a point-system by the Canadian government based on their education, language skills, occupational training, work experience, and age and who were expected to find highly skilled work because of these selective measures (Bloemraad, 2012). According to immigration research reports, it would have taken me between ten and twenty years to settle and feel integrated into the Canadian society, as well as to achieve socioeconomic parity with non-immigrants (Lo, Preston, Wang, Reil, Harvey, & Siu, 2000). In addition to length of residence, according to such reports, ethnicity and gender would have played a role in whether I would be successful in terms of achieving socioeconomic assimilation (Lo et al., 2000). The successful socioeconomic integration would in turn, help me feel a sense of belonging (Bloemraad, 2012).

At the time of completing this research, I am closing in on the ten-year mark. Reflecting back, I could argue that I am one of the few immigrants who became salaried employees within months of landing in Canada and who did achieve economic integration (Lo et al, 2000) within a short period of time. Finding steady, full time work is a well-documented struggle of many immigrants in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2007a). My multilingual skills, studies in a number of disciplines (Humanities, International Law, International Relations,
and International Education), as well as work and living experiences on two continents (including teaching), helped me land a job in the field of education. That job required me to interact with immigrants like myself, and allowed me to use my multilingual skills. Through these interactions, I came to understand my ‘economic’ privilege, as many of the individuals I encountered through my job were unemployed or underemployed. The encounters with immigrant teachers in particular (a group to which I belong and was part of my immigration pathway into Canada), made me aware that many of these teachers came across difficulties in re-entering their profession after immigrating to Canada. These difficulties pertained to creating appropriate networks, language issues (such as English language proficiency and accent) and cultural differences (Ryan et al., 2009). It was at that time that I started to question some of the ideas that I had about immigrant integration and learn more about the lives of internationally educated teachers in Canada. This led me to apply to graduate studies.

After enrolling in my doctoral program, I undertook a short study for a course paper. Findings from interviews with a group of practicing teachers (including internationally-educated teachers) about their teaching experiences in Ontario schools, revealed that they found it difficult to be ‘effective teachers’ to all members of the diverse student population in the context that they taught (i.e. south-western Ontario). Some of the reasons for these challenges were related to students’ values, immigration status or race. What struck me the most in these interviews was the ways some of these teachers described the students they taught. Such descriptions often included stereotypical terms related to aspects of diversity, such as race. That was a turning point in my thinking about a research topic – instead of focusing on learning about how immigrant teachers transitioned to their profession in Canada, I decided to explore the roots of diversity conceptions of teachers. My experiences in the doctoral program further helped to focus my intended research. I chose to investigate experiences of teacher candidates in a concurrent teacher education program in relation to diversity learning, as this was a program similar to what I completed outside of Canada as my undergraduate degree. Furthermore, it was a new program, which I became familiar with through a number of research assistantships (RAs) I had as part of my doctoral funding. Being a research assistant in a number of teacher education development projects at OISE helped me gain insights into the concurrent program as well as other teacher education
program pathways. In addition, after I completed my data collection for this study, I held teaching assistantships (TAs) in the concurrent teacher education program. These experiences further allowed me to gain a better understanding of teacher candidates’ experiences in the program.

At the time of writing this dissertation, I am also a parent to two children who are now in the school system in Ontario. Being a parent also influenced the way I described and analysed my data. This experience seems to have made me rethink the ten years of apparent success and belonging I felt as a new Canadian. As our family moved in search of what we perceived to be a better school, we settled in a community where the majority of families are white with high socio-economic status. The community has only a few first generation immigrant families, including my own family. It was in this community where my multilingual skills all of a sudden started to shed a negative connotation on my sense of belonging. These skills singled me out in social encounters, as many individuals asked me about my status in Canada. Being a recent immigrant or new Canadian appeared to also overshadow my economic status in the community we lived and acted as an exclusionary mechanism. The apparent ‘sameness’ that I have felt in social and work interactions prior to moving to that community is diminishing, giving rise to a new feeling of exclusion that I am still trying to grapple with. My writing is thus influenced by this new discomfort that permeates my life and which, as research argues, should be fading away by now, ten years after I landed in Canada as a new resident. Nonetheless, this new experience also sheds light on some of the stories the teacher candidates in my study describe from the time they went into their field placements. The notion of ‘catchment area’ for a school and the finding that elementary schools are more reflective of the community in which the school is located, acquired more meaning for me. All of these factors affect my positioning as a researcher and I will engage with findings in more detail later in the thesis. I now present an overview of this dissertation, followed by the chapter that reviews literature related to this research, which will help contextualize the findings.
Overview of the dissertation

This research study aimed to reveal how teacher candidates in a concurrent teacher education program conceptualized diversity, as well as to investigate the causes of and influences on their conceptualizations of diversity. At the beginning of this chapter (Chapter 1), I provided a description that situated this study in the Canadian context. I also presented arguments for the importance of this study. In what follows I provide a brief overview of the organization of this thesis. In Chapter 2, I present the literature relevant to this study. I first provide existing definitions of the concept of diversity in research reports and literature, with a primary focus on the Canadian context. Then, I describe how diversity and education is examined in literature, by focusing on the question of importance of diversity, diversities of the student population, and the students’ needs to be addressed by teachers. This description is followed by an examination of the focus of research on diversity in teacher education: qualities of effective teachers; knowledge base for teaching; frameworks for teaching for diversity; and changes in teacher candidates’ conceptions of diversity.

In Chapter 3, I describe the conceptual lenses that guided me in my data collection and that I used to analyse my findings. I also provide the rationale for my choices of conceptual lenses. The findings in this study are examined through the lenses of the liberal theory, postmodern theory and conceptual change model of learning. These lenses provided the opportunity to discuss findings at the micro and macro level. At the micro level, the conceptual change lens allows to better understand the development of diversity conceptions and influences on such changes in specific teacher candidates. At the macro level, the liberal theory helps make connections between the influences at the societal level and TCs’ conceptions of diversity. The postmodern theory helps emphasize the changing or fluid nature of diversity conceptions. In Chapter 4, I describe the research context, including the Concurrent Teacher Education Program at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto. In Chapter 5, I describe this study’s methodology, including methods of inquiry, study participants, data analysis, internal validity, and limitations of the study.
To fully understand how these TCs developed their understandings of diversity, the research findings are presented at the micro and macro levels, in two interrelated stages. Chapter 6 presents and compares six individual cases of teacher candidates. Chapter 7 presents the data across all the TC participants in this study. In Chapter 6, the first findings chapter, I describe six individual cases of teacher candidates (TCs). These cases are presented through the conceptual change lens, which allows an examination of TCs’ initial and developing conceptions of diversity, teaching and learning. The individual cases are presented before I present the major themes across all the TCs in this study to allow an understating of the dynamics and complexity of teaching and learning of diversity at the micro or individual level. This approach will later help make sense of the bigger themes identified in the larger body of data. In the final section of Chapter 6, I provide a cross-case analysis of the six individual cases to further highlight the complexity of individual learning paths in the concurrent program. In Chapter 7 I present findings that emerged from the data across the larger group of TC participants (119 questionnaire responses and 24 individual in-depth interviews). Findings are grouped around five major themes: (1) TCs’ understandings of diversity; (2) the content of diversity taught in the concurrent teacher education program; (3) the pedagogy used to teach about diversity in the program; (4) the context where TCs perceive to learn best about diversity, including TCs’ views on future teaching in diverse classrooms; and (5) influences on TC’s learning. Such a presentation, in my view, allows a deeper understanding of causes of and influences on diversity conceptions in teacher candidates in this study. All the three findings chapters provide insights into how the curriculum for teaching and learning about diversity in the Concurrent Teacher Education Program was planned, delivered and experienced through the eyes of those for whom this curriculum was intended – the teacher candidates.

In Chapter 8, I provide a synopsis of the findings as well as bring forward the major learnings or conclusions from this research. In this final chapter I also present the implications for theory, policy and practice, and the participants in this study. Directions for future research based on my findings are also highlighted. The thesis ends with an epilogue that describes changes to teacher education at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE), University of Toronto, and how they affected the Concurrent Teacher Education Program.
This chapter has described the goals, significance and rationale of the research and provided an overview of the dissertation. The following chapter describes the literature relevant to my research.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

This chapter reviews the relevant literature for my research in three main sections. The first section focuses on the existing definitions of the concept of diversity in research reports and literature, with a specific emphasis on the Canadian context. The second section reviews the ways diversity and education are examined in literature and the importance attributed to the concept of diversity. It also reviews literature that considers the diversities of the student population and their needs to be addressed by teachers. In the third section the focus is on research related to diversity in teacher education including: qualities of effective teachers; knowledge base for teaching; frameworks for teaching for diversity, and changes in teacher candidates’ conceptions of diversity. For the literature review I focused on broader literature that examines diversity and education, diversity and teacher education, as well as studies that investigate the Canadian context. Studies and research literature referred to in this chapter often originated in contexts characterized by diverse populations similar to Canada, such as the United States, Australia and the United Kingdom, and where efforts to better prepare teachers for a student population with multiple and intersecting diversities have been studied. A focus on a broader body of literature is also useful because the number of studies in Canada that I view as relevant to my research is limited. In addition, the research I conducted connects to broader issues in teaching and learning in teacher education that are not necessarily country-specific. This broadened focus allows for a review of key concepts and themes that can be examined at the conceptual level, such as what teachers need to know to be effective in classrooms.

I start this chapter by examining the meanings of diversity in research literature, as it is a key concept in this study. The examination is undertaken in order to provide the background for the reader to understand the varied and often contradictory definitions of this notion, and the ways these contradictions often translate in the public discourse around diversity. Finally, it is also necessary to provide a background for understanding teacher candidates’ conceptions in this study.
Meanings of diversity in the Canadian context

Given my interest in meanings of diversity, I sought to find research that provided definitions of this notion in the broader literature on diversity in education. I also reviewed literature related to diversity and teacher education, as well as research specific to the Canadian context. Findings that I connect to this research are outlined in the following sections.

Through a thorough review of literature and recent theory related to diversity, it became clear that agreement exists across the literature that diversity has been conceptualized in different ways, which, leads to multiple meanings (DeLissovoy, 2007; Canetto, Yang, Borrayo, & Timpson, 2003).

In Canada meanings of diversity are often associated with policies at the federal and provincial levels. The declaration of the Official Multicultural Policy in 1971 at the federal level has led Canadians to see Canada as a multicultural country where diversity is incorporated as “legitimate and integral without undermining the interconnectedness of the whole or distinctiveness of the parts of the process” (Fleras, 2002, p. 10). Multiculturalism is argued to have allowed Canada to accommodate its diverse population (Kymlicka 2010), by allowing ethnic and cultural minorities to maintain important aspects of their cultures and languages. Diversity-focused policies at provincial levels are shaped by the discourse of multiculturalism, as well as by legislation (e.g., the multiculturalism clause in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms). In the province of Ontario diversity focused policies, known as equity and diversity policies have been shaped by legislation as well as board-level initiatives. For example, the Toronto District School Board’s (2015) *Equitable and Inclusive Education: Guidelines and Policies* outlines the equity foundation statement, human rights and procedures, and guidelines and procedures for religious accommodation. The ‘safe schools’ act is directed to address issues of bullying and violence related to diversity. The Ontario Human Rights Code (the Code) as a legislative act seeks to prevent prejudice, discrimination, and harassment with respect to a variety of services in Ontario, education being but one. The Education Act is the primary piece of legislation that dictates education policies and practices in Ontario (Segeren & Kutsyuruba, 2012, p.7). Researchers see a shift
in Ontario policies from multiculturalism to equity as a result of what is perceived as the inability of Canada’s policy on multiculturalism to combat prejudice and discrimination in schools (Ghosh & Abdi, 2004; Harper, 1997; James, 2007). However, as a recent study that looked at policy documents from the Ontario Ministry of Education (including the Program Policy Memorandum [PPM] No. 119, 1993, 2009) found, “equity is constructed as a necessary condition to meet the three core priorities for public education in Ontario: high levels of student achievement, reduced gaps in achievement, and increased public confidence in the public education system” (Segeren & Kutsyuruba, 2012, p. 25). I do agree with these authors that there are tensions in Ontario Ministry of Education’s equity strategy as a result of the emphasis on achievement and academic excellence on one hand, and diversity and equity on the other hand. Indeed, the standardization agenda appears to some extent to contradict the goals of such equity policies, which makes the links between the emphases problematic.

In the Canadian education context, diversity along with difference is often linked to discussions about multicultural education, anti-racist education and intercultural education (Gérin-Lajoie, 2008; Jacquet, 2008). The first two perspectives of multicultural education and anti-racist education are characterized as overlapping and often complementing each other by some researchers (Jacquet, 2008), and as standing in opposition by others, while intercultural education is linked to a specific province. Moodley (1995, also cited in Jacquet, 2008), in his explanation of what is understood by multicultural education, shows its contested meanings:

What is understood by the term multicultural education is indeed varied, both in terms of theory and practice. Since its inception, it has evolved through a range of interpretations as to what it is and what it should be. Multicultural education has been said to have the potential for reinforcing or challenging hegemony (Sleeter, 1989). It has also extolled as a practicable alternative to current educational practices or dismissed as a palliative for the cultural and social inequalities in Canadian society. (p. 808)

Jacquet (2008) maintains that multicultural education is usually viewed from one of two basic and contrasting perspectives: the social-pathological and anthropological. The first
perspective views the cultural background of minority students as the sources of a ‘problem’ that needs to be fixed. The second perspective puts emphasis on equal respect for all cultures, based on the anthropological notion of relativism (p. 59). The critique for these two perspectives states that both overlook the complex interrelationship between the economic, social, and political factors that transcend the cultural framework (Jacquet, 2008).

Anti-racist education, as Jacquet (2008) further maintains by relying on Sleeter and Delgado-Bernal (2004), is a critical discourse of race and racism in society that has emerged mainly in opposition to multicultural education. Race, in the view of proponents of this approach, is not the only form of social oppression. Dei (1996) argues that, “anti-racist education may be defined as an action-oriented strategy for institutional systematic change to address racism and the interlocking systems of social oppressions” (p. 25). Critics of anti-racist education point to the fact that it “reduces racism to a question of color discrimination; it tends to overlook racism based on other ethnic markers; it portrays racism as exclusively perpetrated by whites against blacks or other visible minorities; it blames ‘institutional racism’ exclusively for the difficulties experienced by minorities in schools, and therefore blinds itself to other causes of inequality, such as group-specific histories and traditions” (Jacquet, 2008, p. 60).

The intercultural education approach in Canada is characteristic of Quebec and is argued to have developed in opposition to the multicultural model (Jacquet, 2008). The multicultural model, according to the proponents of intercultural education approach, treats the francophone community on the same level as other ethnic minorities and in so doing, reinforces difference (McAndrew, 1995, cited in Jacquet, 2008). The intercultural model, in its turn, aims at promoting integration into the dominant French culture and relies on anthropological and relativistic perspectives on culture. Integration is achieved, according to Jacquet, (2008) by fostering what the Conseil supérieur de l’éducation (1983, 1987) or Ministère de l’Éducation du Québec (1998, 1995) calls a ‘dialogue between cultures’. Critics maintain that this approach is also characterized by a number of pitfalls – by its ambitious
definition of culture it has come to marginalize the Other and also to put too much emphasis on the cultural dimension to explain issues of inequality in the classroom (Jacquet, 2008).

In the broader literature on diversity and teacher education, diversity is often linked to issues of equity and social justice, and notions of “teacher preparation for diversity,” “multicultural teacher education,” and “teaching for social justice” (Cochran-Smith, 2003). Definitions of diversity are more implied, rather than stated explicitly. For example, some authors maintain that diversity in teacher education is largely “synonymous with race, ethnicity, and/or culture, with these terms frequently overlapping or conflated” (Grant & Gibson, 2011, p. 23).

Research that is more specific to diversity in teacher education in the Canadian context also explores meanings of multicultural education and the ways it is understood by program participants (Mujawamariya & Mahrouse, 2004; Lowe, 2007). Mujawamariya and Mahrouse (2004), for example, describe how the ambiguity around “multicultural education” and “antiracist education” have led them to use “multicultural/antiracist education” in an attempt to encourage their respondents to give their definition of these terms as one notion rather than separate ideas. Other studies contrast multicultural education and antiracist education in Canadian teacher education. An earlier study by Carr and Klassen (1996), for instance, suggests that multicultural education does not consider teachers as “change agents”, but rather as facilitators in a teacher-student dynamic (p. 127). In contrast, antiracist education expects that teachers develop critical thinking skills and “openly discuss tensions and contradictions in society as well as validate the needs, concerns and experiences of students, whatever their background” (Carr & Klassen, p. 127).

A number of research studies discuss perspectives from which diversity is addressed in the Canadian context. Dei (2000), for example, outlines two broad perspectives: the “variety perspective” and “diversity as a critical perspective”. The “variety perspective” views diversity in terms of the contribution of diverse cultures within a multicultural framework. This perspective, also called the “feel good” (Lopez, 2005) or “niceness” (Razack, 2002) approach fosters tolerance for people of diverse backgrounds and respect for social difference
by celebrating holidays, foods and dress. It is a “polite way of acknowledging difference, recognizing our presence in the social milieu, without disturbing the vane of the social fabric, and existing relations” (Lopez, 2005, p. 57). The “diversity as a critical perspective”, on the other hand, sees schooling as a racially, culturally and politically mediated experience (Lopez, 2005, p. 58). This approach deals with marginalization and exclusion in schools and has the removal of oppression as a core goal (Dei, James, Karumanchery, James-Wilson & Zine, 2000). What is inherent in such studies is a critique of the multicultural approach to education and teacher education that places emphasis on liberal notions of equality.

At the education institutional level in Canada, diversity is often linked to Human Rights and refers to “Aboriginal ancestry, race, colour, culture, ethnicity, language, ability, disability, class, age, ancestry, nationality, place or origin, faith, religion, sex, gender, sexual orientation, sex or family status, marital status, gender identity” (OISE, 2005). This last definition, in my view, is useful in understanding the multiple dimensions of diversity. If I were to adapt this diversity definition to be included in teacher education, I would ground it contextually and analyze it from the perspective of its origins to better understand the intended purposes of such a definition. I would ask myself and the learners, for example, “What was at the basis of a definition of diversity as human rights?” and “What purposes did it serve when it was coined this way?”, “Whose knowledge does it represent?” Thus, linking the definition to a particular context and time, as well as an examination of the position from which it is stated, is what I consider important in defining diversity.

An earlier study, Harper (1997) identified five historical responses to human difference and diversity in Ontario school policy and practices: suppressing difference; insisting on difference; denying difference; inviting difference; critiquing difference. The focus in Harper’s analysis was on identity of state and student, and the author maintained that the conclusion could be applied to other school contexts. The author draws on examples concerning race, gender, class, language, and physical and mental ability to describe the production and treatment of difference in Ontario. The purpose of the suppressing difference response, as Harper (1997) maintains, is to assimilate subordinate groups into the dominant
group through the suppression of the former group’s cultures and/or languages, thus aiming at creating uniformity within the Canadian population. Francophones outside of Quebec and First Nations peoples can be viewed as an example. The *insisting on difference* approach emphasizes the need for accommodation, recognizing that differences are natural. It was prevalent at the end of the 19th century and in the early 20th century (Harper, 1997). Women, blacks, and people with disabilities have been marginalized by this particular approach. Today, this approach is said to be characteristic of all-black schools, or all-girls schools which are set up as a way to alter power relations and increase opportunities of disadvantaged students to excel in schools. This current segregation is different from the one at the turn of the 20th century in that it is not imposed. The notion of *denying difference* was prominent in the 1960s (Harper, 1997). It emphasized that success is an individual responsibility and that anyone could succeed if s/he applied him/herself. In a general sense, it aims to minimize the difference among students. Today this response has taken a different form. With the introduction of standardized tests in schools, students are expected to attain common performance standards, irrespective of students’ background, past performance, and social reality. Thus, by holding all students to common learning outcomes, policy makers are seeking to address the issue of inequality. The notion of multiculturalism is central to *inviting difference approach* and it emphasizes celebrating diversity (Harper, 1997). Harper (1997) states that it is more about tolerance than change and that it invokes a folkloristic notion of culture (i.e. cultural traditions of various ethnic groups in Canada need to be acknowledged). This approach was noticeable in multicultural education policies of Ministries of Education across Canada in the 1970s and 1980s. Harper maintains that it is still present in the educational discourse today. The aim of the *critiquing difference* response is to understand the power relations, how and when difference is produced and anti-racism education is its best known example (Harper, 1997). It focuses on prejudices and systemic discrimination and emphasizes that the way the society is structured limits some students, while placing others at an advantage. While Harper has discussed nuanced understandings of diversity, other studies define diversity within discussions of citizenship education and the idea of
balancing unity and diversity as an on-going challenge for multicultural nation-states (Banks, Banks, Cortes, Hahn, Merryfield, Moodley, et al., 2005).

Definitions of diversity, as seen from the above, are often provided through a description of other notions or ideas, such as multicultural education. While such an understanding might be useful for the purposes it was intended for in a specific research study or report, it is my view that a definition of diversity is informed by an individual’s lived experiences and as such, is shifting. In my view, diversity represents multiple and intersecting diversity dimensions, rather than one aspect, such as gender or ethnicity, and any of these may be more prominent than others in a given context and at a given time. Therefore, it is important to recognize the position from which a definition is provided by making the links clear in relation to what dominant group diversity is described from, as well as acknowledging the power relations in that context at the time of definition. Power dynamics are also shifting, as the oppressor might be the oppressed and vice-versa (Bannerji, 2000). Furthermore, differences may exist between and within communities of individuals that represent a certain aspect of diversity (Ghosh & Abdi, 2004). Now that I have highlighted a number of meanings of diversity in research reports and literature, I turn to examining themes in research on diversity and education and diversity and teacher education. The final section then presents my conceptual framework.

Diversity and education

Importance of diversity

Egbo (2011) provide the following rationale for the importance of diversity knowledge for teaching in 21st century Canadian classrooms: diversity is a salient feature of Canadian classrooms and is likely to stay this way; teachers embrace “ameliorative educational policies and programs in theory”, but this often does not translate in practice; there is a need to understand the concept of diversity, including race, and how these concepts connect to teaching and learning (pp. 23-24). In addition, although census data show more inclusive attitudes toward race and diversity in Canada compared to the United States, racial and
ethnocultural discrimination still exists (Skerrett, 2008). Grant and Gibson (2011) identify three distinct approaches that describe the importance of diversity in the broader research literature on diversity and education originating from the United States: diversity and urban schooling; training teachers to be successful educators of specific student populations; and examining diversity from a multicultural, social justice orientation. These approaches are largely characteristic of research on diversity and education in Canada as well. This said, the notion of ‘inner city schools’ as opposed to “urban schools” is used more frequently in Canadian research (e.g., Jack-Davies, 2010). Also, diversity is examined not only from a multicultural and social justice orientation, but also from an intercultural and anti-racist perspective, which is reflective of meanings of diversity in Canada discussed earlier in this chapter (e.g., McCaskell, 2010; Dei & Simmons, 2010).

The first approach, as Grant and Gibson (2011) maintain, diversity and urban schooling, identifies and examines questions of racial discrimination, lack of material resources in schools, and the notion of ‘street culture’. Geneva Gay, for example, discusses the prevalence of white middle and upper class, suburban and rural female teachers, and the issue of retention of teachers in urban schools (1993). Jack-Davies (2010) examines the reconceptualization of ‘inner schooling’ in Ontario, Canada and the reluctance of teacher candidates to work in those schools. Agyepong (2010) contends that, “public schools behave as though racism does not exist but it continues to be evident in the structures of Ontario school system” (p. 76). Studies that fall under this approach, according to Grant and Gibson (2011), call for changes in teacher education and the need to re-examine training models and practices in teacher educations to prepare teacher dispositions and beliefs in ways appropriate to teach marginalized students (see for example, Haberman, 1996; Irvine, 1990; Villegas & Davies, 2008; Villegas & Lucas, 2004, Weiner, 2000; Egbo, 2008, 2011).

The second approach focuses on training successful teachers for specific student populations (Grant & Gibson, 2011). American research within this approach mainly looks at two distinctive groups of students: African America students (e.g., Hollins et al., 2004; Irvine, 1990; King, 1991; Ladson Billings, 1994) and English language learners (e.g., Grant, 1982;
Lucas, Villegas, & Freedson-Gonzales, 2008), who are assumed to require special attention. In Canada research not only focuses on English language learners, but also on the notion of multilingual learners (e.g., Cummins & Early, 2011; Cummins, Mirza, Saskia, 2012). Also, Canadian studies focus on Aboriginal students (e.g., Restoule, 2011; Restoule et al. 2013), in addition to African Canadian students (e.g., Dei, 1993; 1996; Dei & James, 2002). These researchers focus on the importance of teachers’ understandings of how culture impacts learning, and how culture is traditionally ignored or assimilated in schooling. Teacher education programs need to help future teachers to gain understandings of cultures, connect culture to their classroom practice and also must challenge teachers to reject deficit views (Grant & Gibson, 2011).

The third approach, as Grant and Gibson (2011) argue, examines diversity from a multicultural and social justice perspective, which describes schools as sites of democratic and pluralistic engagement that bring about change, social justice and social reconstruction (e.g., Cochran-Smith, Davis, & Fries, 2004; Grant & Agosto, 2008; Nieto, 1999). This approach then re-conceptualizes teacher education’s responsibility to help future teachers develop a multicultural knowledge base, to question the purposes of education, and to articulate the skills, dispositions and knowledge needed to teach students in and for a pluralistic society. Dei and Simmons (2010) discuss the problematic notion of anti-racism and the need to acknowledge the different approaches to anti-racism. These authors contend that when contextualized in Canada, such a discussion needs to engage questions of Indigenous rights.

**Diversities of student populations and their needs**

There are a substantial number of studies that focus on “diverse students” which are linked to the demographic question related to immigration, mainly referring to students’ ethnicity, language and race, and approaches needed to teach these students (e.g., Banks & Banks, 2004). There is also research literature that focuses on specific student populations, such as special needs students, gifted or talented students, “at risk” students, indigenous populations, religious diversity in students, single-sex classes, and all-boys schools (e.g., Saha &
Definitions of these student categories are unclear, as the definition of the notion of diversity are multiple and often conflicting. Also, while some studies advocate that these students should be regarded as a separate category of students and question whether they could be taught in “regular” classrooms, others contend that these students are part of the student population in general and should be included in regular classrooms. Such research studies, in very broad terms, focus on describing the specific student population, their needs, policies at the national or school levels, and the envisioned schools practices for the specific student population. A number of these populations are described in what follows to contextualize this study within the broader literature on teaching and learning, and the types of student populations in schools.

Teaching students with special needs is often associated in research literature with the concept of inclusion. The meanings ascribed to “special needs” differ across countries (OECD, 2005) and these meanings also often conflict in research originating in the same country (Knight, 2009). Knight (2009), whose research in situated in the Australian context, uses the term special needs students to refer to “students with difficulties in learning, students with disabilities, students whose first language is not English and those who are disadvantaged and thus require resources such as specialist personnel and materials so that they can access the curriculum more effectively” (p. 865). A UK researcher, Ainscow (2005), links the definition of special needs to the notion of inclusion and states that the purpose of inclusion is to “eliminate social exclusion that is a consequence of attitudes and responses to diversity in race, social class, ethnicity, religion, gender and ability” (p. 109). In Canada, different terms have been used over time to describe students with special needs, such as special education students and students with exceptionalities (Berg & Schneider, 2012). The Ontario Ministry of Education (2001, 2006, and 2007) describes students with special needs “as students who have behavioural, communicational, intellectual, physical or multiple exceptionalities, may have educational needs that cannot be met through regular instructional and assessment practices”. An OECD (2006) report reveals that some countries in South-Eastern Europe (e.g., Bulgaria, Croatia, Kosovo, Moldova, Romania, and Serbia) have only
started to examine the education of students with special needs and the related concept of inclusive education, which shows that the notion of “special needs” is not given high priority across contexts. Many of these countries are source countries for immigrants to Canada (Statistics Canada, 2007). One common use for the term “special needs”, as seen from the above, is to refer to students who are disadvantaged in some way: either as a result of a learning disability, a physical disability or due to exclusion based on diversity aspects such as ethnicity, gender or social class. Also common across studies cited above is the idea of meeting the needs of special needs students, which is often addressed through teaching.

When teaching special needs students, Knight (2009) argues that teachers need to engage in more explicit teaching and use fewer constructivist teaching practices to enable students to intensively learn skills that they can apply in new learning situations. Teaching special needs students is argued to put a lot of demand on teachers (e.g., Forlin, 1998; Knight, 2002, 2007; Stephenson, 2003) and a supportive school policy might address that issue (Knight, 2009). However, the shortage of teachers able to teach this population of students is high (Boe & Cook, 2006). Studies that focus on teaching special needs students, thus, emphasize the demands on teachers because of what is perceived as more challenging teaching and the need for policy and school boards supports for the teachers. A debate that persists in such studies is around the pedagogy suitable for specials needs students: explicit and simplified approaches versus more constructivist teaching. In the Canadian, as well as other contexts, another related and ongoing debate exists on whether these students need to be fully included in general or regular classrooms, or whether they need to have partial inclusion (i.e. a combination of general classroom instruction and specialized instruction within segregated settings) (Berg & Schneider, 2012). Nonetheless, the right of non-discrimination in Canada’s Charter of Rights and Freedoms made it possible for advocates of students with exceptionalities to lobby schools and school boards to include these students in the general education system (Berg & Schneider, 2012). As a response, Canadian Provincial and Territorial governments have adopted special education legislation and policies. For example, in the province of Ontario, The Education Act on Special Education governs special
education, and accompanying regulations; An Advisory Council on Special Education reports directly to the minister. The arguments for inclusion in Canada, I would contend, are based on a rights-based approach and equality perspectives, which emphasize that social justice is attainable through legislation of individual rights (Rawls, 1971). Furthermore, such an approach influences the diversity curricula in teacher education programs that prepare teachers for future classrooms with diverse students, including special education students.

Teaching gifted and talented students is another group of students discussed under the umbrella of diverse students. Although the way the term “gifted” is conceptualized differs among researchers, they tend to refer to outstanding or innate abilities (Endepohls-Ulpe, 2009), or multiple intelligences (Gardner, 1999). In regards to instructional strategies, some researchers contend that this student population needs more differentiated instruction to avoid boredom and under-stimulation (Endepohls-Ulpe, 2009). Furthermore many suggest that more structured instruction may benefit younger or “less intelligent students”, while an open instructional format is more suited for older or “more intelligent students” (Heller, 2005, p. 193). Notions such as accelerated curriculum or enrichment programs denote some efforts to attend to the needs of these students in order to develop their potential (Lautrey, 2004). Research also focuses on the issues of diagnosis of giftedness, which is closely linked to the question of definition of giftedness. Teachers are often described in research studies as having an impact in identifying gifted students. However, teachers are also criticised for focusing more on good performance in school, social behaviour or non-cognitive personality traits and their tendency to identify boys as gifted more frequently than girls (Endepohls-Ulpe, 2005, 2009). In Canada, gifted students come under the legislation and policies that cover special education. For example in the province of Ontario, it is The Special Education Regulations under the Education Act (i.e. Ontario Regulation 181/98 - identification and placement of exceptional pupils), which covers gifted students. By placing gifted students in the “special education” category, the legislation and policies in Canada seems to work from a normative orientation where all students need to be treated the same.
Research literature that focuses on the education of indigenous students acknowledges that this population is marginalized in modern societies because of colonialism, while suggesting that teaching these students requires knowledge of the different conceptions of the legitimacy of both schools and teachers (e.g., Clifton, 2009; Champagne & Abu-Saad, 2006; Jordan, 1995; Kleinfeld, 1995). Studies thus emphasize the importance of defining the rights, responsibilities and expectations of the school and community (i.e. students, teachers, principals, parents, and elders) in order to be able to attend to the learning needs of indigenous students (Bidwell, 2001; Bryk & Schneider, 2002). Studies and reports on indigenous students in Canada often use the term “Aboriginal students”. Aboriginal Education has received increasing attention in Canada in recent years (Congress of Aboriginal People, 2010; Restoule, 2011; Restoule, Mashford-Pringle, Chacaby, Smillie, & Brunette, 2013), one of the reasons being the increasing numbers of these students among school populations. The focus of many research reports has been on including Aboriginal content in curricula and programs, achievement of Aboriginal students, and high school completion rates. Reports and research studies also examine Aboriginal youth and enrolment in postsecondary education (Restoule, 2011; Restoule, Mashford-Pringle, Chacaby, Smillie, & Brunette, 2013). Most pertinent to this study are those reports that examine the inclusion of an Aboriginal focus in teacher education programs, the preparation of teachers to teach Aboriginal students, and understanding Aboriginal ways of knowing. Nonetheless, the research base on Aboriginal education is still very sparse (Congress of Aboriginal People, 2010). A growing concern is the lack of qualified teachers “who possess a strong degree of proficiency for Aboriginal Languages and Aboriginal studies ... In many instances across Canada, courses with Aboriginal subject matter are being taught by unqualified teachers outside their area of expertise” (Congress of Aboriginal People, 2010, p. 2). Another concern reported by Voyageur and Calliou (2000/2001) is related to the misconception that the Aboriginal population in Canada is a homogeneous group. These authors contend that the diversity of Canada’s indigenous peoples needs to be recognized.
Students at risk are still another group within the notion of “diverse students”. Studies that focus on this group of students are largely concerned with students’ overt, aggressive behaviours (McInerney & McInerney, 2006). Researchers describe these learners as kinaesthetic and visual learners, rather than linguistic and logical learners (Gardner, 1999). Some studies also provide advice for teachers on how to behave towards students “at risk” and describe the responsibilities of teachers toward students’ welfare (Lewis & McCann, 2009). Many factors are identified that may lead students to become identified as “at risk”, such as low socioeconomic status, single parent families, substance abuse, criminal activity, poverty, and minority status (Johnson, 1998). American studies tend to also focus on race as a major contributor to students becoming “at risk” (Johnson, 1998) and learning disabilities appear as one of the major school and learning issues for this group of students. As these students “are frequently illiterate and innumerate”, it is argued that teachers need to rely less on linguistic skills and more on visual and performance skills when teaching them (Lewis & McCann, 2009, p. 902). In Canada, “at risk” is also associated with minority status and race, as well as with Aboriginal students. What a number of these studies are missing is addressing broader societal issues that lead to students’ becoming “at risk”.

Studies that focus on addressing the needs of diverse students also examine questions related to single-sex schools (Cookson, 2009) or all-boys schools (Gilbert, 2009). They tend to argue for or against such schools, thus questioning the benefit of separating students by sex. In a study conducted in the United Kingdom, Alan Smithers and Pamela Robinson (2006) argue that there are many factors beyond gender that influence the performance of students. These factors include ability, social background, and teacher expertise, thus mixing or separating sexes in education remains controversial, as does the debate about the specific teaching strategies for boys and girls (Gray & Wilson, 2006).

Another aspect of diversity in student populations discussed in research relates to students’ sexuality and focuses on lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT) students. Much of this research examines the myths, stereotypes and biases that exist around these students in both elementary and secondary classrooms, as well as university teacher education classrooms.
(Robinson & Ferfolja, 2001). Many studies examine the assumptions that exist about these students, causes of discrimination (linked to pathologizing these students’ identities), resistance to discussions around what is perceived as ‘taboo’ or controversial topics in some schools and communities, and youth suicide as a result of harassment (e.g., Goldstein, 1997; Epstein & Johnson, 1998; Denborough, 1996). In Canada, sexual orientation is considered a protected ground under the Charter of Rights and is part of all provincial human rights acts, including in the province of Ontario. In recent years, student sexuality has been part of many public discourses, due to clashes between sexuality and religious values and anti-homophobia interventions such as gay-straight alliances (GSAs) in schools (Rushowy, 2014). In the fall of 2014 the Ontario Ministry of Education proposed changes or updates in the sex and health education curriculum, which caused an “outcry from religious leaders” (Rushowy, 2014). The negative reaction in some religious communities was due to the proposal to include explicit sexual content for elementary students. Such reactions point to resistance from some communities and schools to respond to diversity in terms of sexuality, as well as raise questions around appropriate knowledge to be included in the elementary and secondary school curriculum.

Diversity in religion among students in today’s schools is another topic that is part of the research on diversity and education. In the Canadian context, such discussions are linked to immigration flows and the changing demographics, as “increasing numbers of multilingual and multi-religious learners in Canadian classrooms flow from contemporary complex migration patterns” (Guo, 2012, p. 4). Niyozov and Pluim (2009), for example, examine how research, media and the public produce contradictory and overlapping statements about how teachers in Western countries work with Muslim students. Also, faith-based schooling in Canada is gaining attention (Zine, 2009). In her research that is located in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA), Zine (2009) examined the Islamic schooling in Canada and the politics of teaching and learning in the Islamic school system. Zine focused on how Muslim youth construct their identity following the 9/11 events that spread fear and hostility toward Muslims around the world. Zine found that the Islamic dress, such as hijab, is often the origin
of what she calls ‘gendered Islamophobia’ in the context of her study. In the broader literature, studies also focus on the larger socio-political realm and events (e.g., the attack on the World Trade Centre in New York) that sparked public discourses on specific religions, such as Islam (McDonough & Hoodfar, 2005). Such studies point to larger socio-political forces in shaping conceptions, beliefs and attitudes of diversity. These studies also reveal how inter-group tensions might arise as a result of individual events that foster xenophobia. Since such tensions can transition into schools, teachers would need to be familiar with causes for these tensions to be able to identify early signs of conflict among students.

Teaching at the elementary and secondary levels as related to student diversities has received less attention in research studies. Findings in my study suggest that teacher candidates are concerned more about diversity and teaching at secondary or high school level than at the elementary level. Factors that lead to concerns at the high school level are related to teacher authority, student engagement or student behaviour, and subject matter. At the elementary level diversity appears to be less of a concern because of the age of the students (i.e. because they don’t understand), although strong parental involvement in elementary students’ learning may pose barriers to teaching certain dimensions of diversity, such as sexuality.

What the studies above have in common is that they struggle with definitions of specific student populations, yet they specify varied student needs and ways teachers could address them. Most importantly, inherent in these studies are notions of oppression, discrimination and marginalization of ‘diverse’ students and the impetus for teachers to address these issues. Teachers appear to be depicted as ignorant of many of the factors affecting the lives of the students and strategies that they could use to achieve inclusion. These studies appear to only posit envisioned strategies, without examining teachers’ perceptions of the students and their needs, or their experiences in actual classrooms. In the Canadian context the rights-based approach to diversity, equity and inclusion appears to overshadow more systemic influences on learners in the public discourse. One way teacher education has responded to student diversities in Canada was to put emphasis on certain aspects of diversity at certain times more than others, depending on contextual changes. For example, changes in policies at the
school, board, provincial or federal levels have often resulted in offering a program focus or lens, such as inner city, gifted, or arts-based education (Gambhir et al, 2008).

**Teacher education and diversity**

Current research on diversity in education emphasizes the need to understand diverse student populations and calls for adequate preparation for teachers to teach such populations (Egbo, 2008, 2012; Parameswaran, 2007; Villegas, 2012). Research in the US predominantly focuses on diversity within K-12 students, and not on the diversity of future teachers (Grant & Gibson, 2011). In Canada, the diversification of the teaching force has become the centre of teacher education institutional discourses across provinces, due to the ever-changing demographics of the schools and slow changes in the demographics of teachers (Gambhir, Broad, Evans, & Gaskell, 2008; Tardif, Anderson, Gauthier, Gérin-Lajoie, Karsenti, Lenoir & Mukamurera, 2002). The school population is changing as a result of new immigrant arrivals to Canada, as well as internal migration and an increase in the Aboriginal population (Gambhir et al, 2008; Tardif et al., 2002). The impetus is then on teacher education to both address the enrolment numbers of white, middle-class teachers to teach students that are diverse by revisiting recruitment strategies and also by revisiting teacher education curricula (Childs et al., 2011; Gambhir et al, 2008).

Teacher education in Canada and in other contexts has undergone many changes over the years, as studies by Gambhir et al. (2008) and Crocker & Dibbon (2008) show. Changes are often triggered by the changing educational context (Gambhir et al., 2008). For teachers to be certified to teach in public schools in Canada, they need to complete a teacher education program that usually involves a number of components. Gambhir et al. (2008) maintain that in Canada these components tend to be consistent and derive from the knowledge bases for teaching from teacher education researchers (see for example Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005; Murray, 1996; Turner-Bisset, 2001). Teacher education programs tend to have a theoretical component usually reflected in course work, and a practical component usually associated with classroom observations and practice teaching. Producing competent
professionals, with reference to social justice and equity, and producing reflective teachers are among the most frequently mentioned themes in initial teacher education program statements in Canada (Gambhir et al., 2005). There is also an ongoing debate in research literature in regards to the background characteristics of teacher candidates, the diversity learning that is possible in a teacher education program, and the changes in teacher candidates’ conceptions of diversity and related notions (Larkin, 2010, 2012). Weiner (1993a, 1993b) found that teachers’ class, race and gender shaped their beliefs, perspectives, and practices. Efforts to shape beliefs and dispositions of the non-diverse teachers and instilling attitudes and perspectives that would enable them to teach diverse students are not always successful in a teacher education program. Haberman (1991a) and Haberman and Post (1992), for instance, found that courses that were intended to reduce future teachers’ stereotypes ended up reinforcing them.

Several scholars recommend making beliefs, ideologies, and teacher candidates’ dispositions part of the screening and selection process for teacher education programs (Ladson-Billings, 2001; Sleeter, 2001; Sleeter et al., 2005). Haberman and Post (1998), for example, reveal that life experiences, attitudes and dispositions of teachers toward inequality and difference, and the reasons for teaching were best predictors of success in urban schools. Nonetheless, other studies show that although cultural and experiential matches between teachers and students can lead to increased success, teacher’s race and ethnicity do not always improve student outcomes (Villegas & Lucas, 2004). Irvine (2003), in response to the role model argument advocated by some studies, maintains that “rather than arguing that teachers of color are needed as mere role models for students, I contend that teachers of color are cultural translators and intercessors for their culturally diverse students, thereby directly contributing to their students’ school achievement” (p. xix). Valli (1995) cautions against relying on recruiting diverse teachers alone because “the quest for the ideal candidates will function as an excuse for those of us responsible for teacher education” (p. 128). The latter argument is supported by research that suggests that recruitment and retention of teachers who share the
backgrounds of students in their classes are as important as how teacher candidates are trained (Childs et al., 2011).

**Qualities of effective teachers**

The idea of what a “good” or “effective” teacher is inherent in research on teacher education and the preparation of teachers for diverse schools. Such research emphasizes that a primary goal of teacher education programs is to produce good teachers for elementary and secondary schools (Casey & Childs, 2007). A number of research reports show that the selection of the best potential teachers from all the applicants during the admission process, the education process itself in the teacher education program and the experience new teachers acquire later in schools yield competent, effective educators (e.g., Darling-Hammond, 2000; Darling-Hammond, Berry, & Thoreson, 2001; Turner-Bisset, 2001).

Although teacher education programs need to first define what it means to be “a good teacher,” particularly a good beginning teacher (Casey & Childs, 2007), there is not a single definition of what it means to be a good teacher (Casey, 2005; Turner-Bisset, 2001). Despite the importance of producing ‘good’ teachers, researchers do not always use the term “good teacher”. Casey (2005) found that a number of terms are often used interchangeably, and the descriptive criteria differ from study to study. As Casey and Childs (2007) show, some studies focus on effective teaching (e.g., Cooper & McIntyre, 1996; Cullingford, 1995; Kyriacou, 1997; Perrott, 1982), others on creative teaching (e.g., Woods & Jeffery, 1996), veteran teachers (e.g., Shulman, 1987), quality teachers (e.g., Stones, 1992; Cochran-Smith et al, 2008), and good enough teachers (e.g., Cullingford, 1995). Indeed given the difficulty associated with defining a ‘good teacher’, the Ontario College of Teachers (OCT) has not defined a good teacher, but has rather developed descriptions of what is expected of their teachers (Casey & Childs, 2007). For the OCT, teachers must demonstrate a commitment to students and student learning, ongoing professional learning, leadership in learning communities, professional knowledge, and professional practice (OCT, 2015), which I describe in more detail in Chapter 4.
Irvine (2003) describes the teachers that are needed for culturally and racially diverse schools by pointing out that content knowledge and pedagogical skills are essential for teachers, but these alone are not sufficient. Indeed, Irvine suggest that “to be effective in today’s diverse schools, teachers must be culturally sensitive, view teaching as a calling, have a sense of identity with their students, and care about them deeply. Effective teachers are also ‘dreamkeepers’ and advocates for their students” (Irvine, 2003, p. xi). Irvine (2003) further states that a teacher education curriculum that aims to produce culturally aware and effective teachers need the following elements: teachers as culturally responsive pedagogists; teachers as systemic reformers; teachers as members of communities; teachers as reflective practitioners and researchers; and teachers as pedagogical-content specialists (p. xx).

In addition to identifying what a good or effective teacher is, past research argues that teacher education programs also need to identify the knowledge teacher candidates need to acquire while in the program (Egbo, 2011). What follows, is a discussion of the knowledge base for teaching as discussed in research literature.

**The Knowledge base for teaching**

A description of the knowledge base for teaching is important for contextualizing how teachers construct and develop knowledge in teacher education programs, as a result of the interplay of content, pedagogy, context, and curriculum (Shulman, 1987). Feiman-Nemser (2008) maintains that a discussion of the knowledge bases is inevitable in research that examines diversity and teacher education and the knowledge, skills and commitments that teacher candidates need to develop to work with diverse students. Feiman-Nemser (2008) argues that, “the rationale for linking evidence of teacher learning with evidence of student learning comes in part from the educational imperative to enhance the learning outcomes for a diverse student population” (p. 698). There have been many studies that advance models of teacher knowledge bases for effective teachers. This section focuses on key literature that remains influential in the field of teacher education.
Feiman-Nemser (2008) maintains that learning to teach can be conceptualized around four broad themes, “learning to think like a teacher, learning to know like a teacher, learning to feel like a teacher and learning to act like a teacher” (p. 698, emphasis in original). For Feiman-Nemser, learning to ‘think’ like a teacher refers to a critical examination of one’s existing beliefs, and developing an ability to think on one’s feet and adjust one’s practice. Learning to ‘know’ like a teacher refers to the different kinds of knowledge that teacher candidates need to acquire: subject matter knowledge; knowledge about diverse learners; knowledge about how students develop; knowledge about curriculum, pedagogy, classroom organization and assessment; as well as knowledge teachers generate in practice. The author emphasizes the need for a conceptual framework that would help teachers organize or ‘hold’ the knowledge and that would facilitate its retrieval and use (p. 699). Learning to ‘feel’ like a teacher, as Feiman-Nemser (2008) posits, refers to developing a professional identity. This process entails an examination of the self-knowledge that teacher needs, especially when teaching students from a background different than themselves; making decisions in regards to their vision of a good teacher and realities and challenges they face. Learning to ‘act’ like a teacher assumes that teachers need to be able to make a judgement of “what to do and when” (Feiman-Nemser, 2008, p. 699).

Sykes (1990) notices that “Most teacher education programs are structured around four distinguishable but overlapping knowledge bases: general education, pedagogical studies, specialty studies, and field experiences” (p. 245). Shulman (1987) proposed a more detailed list of knowledge bases for teaching: (1) content knowledge, which refers to subject matter knowledge; (2) general pedagogical knowledge, including principles and strategies of classroom management and organization that appear to transcend the subject matter; (3) curriculum knowledge, which includes materials and trades that serve as ‘tools’ of the trade for teachers; (4) pedagogical content knowledge, meaning a combination of content and pedagogy as a special form of professional understanding; (5) knowledge of learners and their characteristics; (6) knowledge of educational contexts (e.g., classrooms dynamics,
schools districts’ governance and financing, community character); and (7) knowledge of educational ends, purposes, and values and their philosophies and historical grounds.

Darling-Hammond (1997) maintains that the following can be taught in a teacher education program in order to meet the demands of teaching: (1) a firm understanding of the subject matter; (2) a foundation in pedagogical content knowledge; (3) knowledge of child development; (4) an understanding of differences as related to culture, language, community, gender, prior schooling, and environmental conditions that can affect people’s experiences; (5) an understanding of the concept of motivation; (6) knowledge of the process of learning; (7) how to assess students’ knowledge; (8) how to use teaching strategies; (9) how to use curriculum resources and techniques; (10) about collaboration; and (11) how to analyze and reflect.

In addition to the knowledge bases above, attributes that cannot be taught are also important for future teachers to possess, such as morality and ethics (Sockett, 1993). The Ontario College of Teachers (OCT, 2015), identifies care, respect, trust and integrity as main attributes in its Ethical Standards for the Teaching Profession. Egbo (2011) calls for a re-conceptualization of teacher candidates’ knowledge base, “since the ideological orientations of notice teachers can serve as a barrier to adopting transformative practices” (p. 26).

**Frameworks for teaching for diversity**

A number of frameworks have been presented in the literature that focuses on socially just teaching, or addressing the needs of an increasingly diverse student population. These frameworks have been primarily defined along the lines of race, ethnicity, culture, language, gender, and socioeconomic class. Such literature predominantly originates from the United States. Multicultural education and culturally relevant pedagogy are two such frameworks or visions of successful teaching that have been discussed and cited frequently in literature. These are argued to be different from the developmentalist, psychologized approach to learning, which are traditionally emphasized in teacher education (for a detailed review see Grant & Gibson, 2011). Such studies emphasize the need for teacher education to prepare
teachers who are able to teach in culturally responsive ways, but also to act as critical change agents in school and society (Whipp, 2013).

Sleeter and Grant (1999, 2003) present a typology with five approaches that define multicultural education: (1) teaching the exceptional and culturally different, which refers to helping students acquire academic skills, concepts and values to function in society; (2) human relations, consisting of working to develop positive relationships among students, reduce stereotyping and promote unity; (3) single group studies, which have the goal to study specific groups in depth in order to understand their histories and experiences with oppression and move these groups away from the margins; (4) multicultural education, which stresses the value of cultural diversity, human rights, equal opportunity, equitable distribution of power, respect for differences, and alternative life choices, and (5) education that is multicultural and social reconstructionist that aims at redesigning an education program through addressing concerns of diverse groups of students, helping students challenge the status quo, and encouraging students to work together and join groups to examine common concerns. Grant and Gibson (2011) maintain that the “education that is multicultural and social reconstructionist” typology is what is closer to a social justice or critical multicultural approach (p. 28).

Banks (2004) advances five ways that multicultural education is enacted: (1) through knowledge construction, where teachers help students understand the social positioning of groups through which knowledge is constructed and presented; (2) content integration, when teachers include examples and perspectives from different cultures, ethnicities or identities in the curriculum; (3) prejudice reduction, where teachers deliberately use teaching strategies that assert positive images of diverse groups with the aim of reducing prejudice; (4) equity pedagogy, when teachers modify their teaching styles and approaches in order to help student from racial, cultural and social class groups succeed academically through teaching styles that are consistent with learning styles of ethnic and cultural groups; (5) empowering school culture and social structure, when teachers, students and staff examine institutional practices
with the aim of changing them to create educational equality and cultural empowerment for all groups. Banks and Banks (2001), conceptualize multicultural education as:

an idea, an education reform movement, and a process whose major goal is to change the structure of educational institutions so that male and female students, exceptional students, and students who are members of diverse racial, ethnic, language, and cultural groups will have an equal chance to achieve academically in school. (p. 1)

Grant and Gibson (2011) maintain that a representation of what Banks (2004) calls “equity pedagogy” is a notion that is also referred in literature as culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1995), or culturally responsive teaching (Gay, 2000; Villegas & Lucas, 2002), cultural synchronization (Irvine, 1990), and culture-centered education (King, 1994, 2004).

While multicultural education is often criticized as a feel-good pedagogy (Jenks, Lee, & Kanpol, 2001), it is still one of the most referred to frameworks in teacher education and continues to influence the field. Although the frameworks discussed above continue to evolve, they continue to focus on the concept of culture. However, notions of culture often have varied and contradictory definitions and culture is often seen as static. Notions that relate to diversity, in my view are fluid and changing. Additionally, a discussion around the intersecting diversities is needed in order to avoid keeping groups separate based on a single diversity marker (such as women or people with disabilities), while also recognizing that certain markers are more salient at a given time and in a given context. The larger social context needs to be identified as an inherent component in understanding diversity and its contextual meanings.

Following a review of the literature, it is clear that the diverse studies of models of teaching imply that the end goal of effective teaching is student achievement. All the efforts in defining the varied ways a teacher can address the diverse needs of students is to promote student success. Teachers’ knowledge of how to teach is theorized with the goal of determining ways to foster student success. In turn, the way student success is defined by authors affects how the notion of ‘effective teacher’ is characterized. For example, Sleeter
and Grant’s (1999, 2003) five approaches that define multicultural education imply that a successful student is one who acquired not only academic skills, but also concepts and values that would help him/her function in society. Thus for these authors, an effective teacher is one who is able to foster positive relationships between students and who help students stand up for themselves. These could be achieved, according to these authors, by studying these students’ histories and experiences with oppression, which would also help students to understand their marginalization and move away from it. The varied approaches that have been advanced in the literature also point to the complexity of teaching where many facets or dimensions need to be taken into account including subject matter, student learning needs, to name a few. Every approach, I contend, suggests useful concepts, knowledge and focus, and the goal of new research is to build on the contributions of earlier research rather than solely focus on finding weaknesses.

In the Canadian context, what adds to the complexity of teaching and complexity of teaching in diverse classrooms is that teachers teach mixed grades of students. Also, what has received little attention in literature is the notion of teaching about diversity as related to subject matter. As findings in this study reveal, both teacher candidates and teacher educators question their ability to effectively teach or integrate diversity teaching in teaching the subject of mathematics or sciences, for example. Effective teaching, I believe, requires the flexible use of varied strategies informed by many theoretical constructs. Questions that I would ask as a teacher educator of myself and my students are: how are these approaches related? When or under what circumstances is one approach better suited than another (e.g., Is the developmental age important? Are the student characteristics important?)

What is also apparent in literature that discusses the varied frameworks for teaching for diversity is the importance of social and political activism in teachers. Teachers are expected to work with individual students in their classrooms, but also to identify and work toward eliminating practices and policies that marginalize some students based on varied diversity markers, such as language, race, and social class. What seems to be missing in such literature is an examination of what experiences inside and outside the teacher education program help
teachers to develop such activism or inclination to become teachers who act as change agents. I hope that this research, by examining TCs’ conceptions of diversity and influences on their developing understandings of diversity, provides some insights into this question.

**Changes in teacher candidates’ conceptions**

Castro’s (2010) review of research shows that studies that examine changes in teacher candidates’ views of cultural diversity, multicultural education and social justice tend to focus on a number of questions: the complexity in teacher candidates’ understanding of multicultural issues; teacher candidates’ perceptions of diverse learners; identifying the specific personal experiences that best contribute to students’ openness to diversity; and the types of instructional techniques that best contribute to students’ openness to diversity. Castro (2010) maintains that teacher candidates’ struggle to understand the concept of multicultural education and the process of institutionalized racism.

The impact of teacher education programs on changing individuals’ beliefs about teaching, the subject matter and about how such subject matter is learnt, as well as changes in TCs’ conceptions of diversity is contested in research literature. Akiba (2011), similar to Castro (2010), posits that studies that examine changes in beliefs and attitudes of teacher candidates over time through coursework and field experiences report mixed findings. The inconclusiveness of findings could be explained in part by variations in instructional approaches, program characteristics, as well as research methodology (Akiba, 2011). While some studies show a positive change in teacher candidates’ understandings of diversity (e.g., Siwatu, 2007; Dee & Henkin, 2002), others show little or no change, or even resistance to multicultural concepts (e.g., Chizhik & Chizhik, 2005; Reiter & Davis, 2011).

Reiter and Davis (2011), for example, in their study with 153 senior education students enrolled in a diversity training program, found no association between completing the program and their’ biases toward students’ background characteristics. These authors contend that the program had no effect on teachers’ attitudes toward diverse students. One
Another study that documented the lack of critical consciousness was the one conducted by Chizhik and Chizhik (2005) who aimed to study students’ conceptions in relation to social justice with a focus on notions of privilege and oppression. To achieve this, they conducted two research studies with 141 students in an undergraduate multicultural education course. The participants represented a mix of undergraduate and teacher education students. One study asked students to state whether they were privileged or oppressed and to provide an explanation for their answers. The other study asked students to rate other students on privilege, oppression and related concepts. They found that White students lacked a commitment to social activism and resisted multicultural education. Chizhik and Chizhik (2005) highlight three possible reasons for students’ resistance: (1) students’ overwhelming sense of privilege, (2) students’ downplaying the importance of oppression in society, and (3) students’ fearing responsibility for change.

Dee and Henkin (2002) and Siwatu (2007) report that teacher candidates felt positive about teaching in diverse settings. Siwatu (2007) administered the Culturally Responsive Teaching Self-Efficacy Scale (CRTSE) and the Culturally Responsive Teaching Outcome Expectancy (CRTOE) Scale to 275 teacher candidates. Their findings show that preservice teachers were more effective in helping students feel like important members of the classroom as well as develop positive relationship with their students than they were able to communicate effectively with English language learners. One reason that Siwatu (2007) highlights for the latter finding is preservice teachers’ inability to use praise phrases in students’ native languages. Dee and Henkin (2002) had 150 students complete the Pluralism and Diversity Attitude Assessment. They aimed to examine the extent to which participants had attitudes that were supportive of cultural diversity in education and the extent to which a student was comfortable with diversity in the classroom. The participants in Dee and Henkin’s (2002) study consisted of students in a teacher education program who were about to enter the
multicultural education courses. These students did not have any prior formal experience in multicultural education within the context of a teacher education program. Findings revealed that the participants expressed strong support for implementing diversity and related content in the classroom. Participants also showed high levels of agreement with equity beliefs and the social value of diversity. Factors that contributed to these positive attitudes were living in culturally diverse neighborhoods and having cross-cultural friendships (Dee & Henkin, 2002).

Learning to reflect on prior experiences with culturally diverse others plays a significant role in creating a positive view toward multiculturalism (e.g., Smith, 2000; Garmon, 2004; Kyles & Olafson, 2008). A participant in Smith’s (2000) study displayed critical understanding of institutional inequity and dismissed the myths of meritocracy and individualism. These attitudes were attributed to her reflection on her working-class background, being a White student in a predominantly Black middle school and to her experience as an American student in a Guam high school. Kyles and Olafson (2008) investigated the potential of reflective writing and diverse field experiences as strategies to create effective teachers for diverse learners. Participants in Kyles and Olafson’s study were 15 teacher candidates enrolled in a field-based program. These teacher candidates were characterized as primarily “monocultural,” compared to students at the practicum site. More than half of the students were Hispanic, but also included White, Black, Asian or Pacific Islander, and American Indian students (p. 507). A qualitative analysis of the reflective writing revealed that although teacher candidates were able to uncover their beliefs in “their simplest level of description” (p. 511), they did not progress toward “reconstructing or deconstructing their beliefs in their move toward a deeper commitment to multicultural education” (Kyles and Olafson, 2008, p. 511). These authors conclude that the reflective writing coupled with field experiences did not increase teacher candidates’ sense of efficacy for teaching. Bennett (2012), however, shows that one-on-one student teacher interaction and scaffolding critical reflection leads to TCs’ better understanding of culturally responsive pedagogy.
Conaway, Browning and Purdum-Cassidy (2007) also explored how teacher education programs can contribute to creating positive change in beliefs, attitudes, and perceptions about culturally diverse others through field-based experiences. Conaway et al. (2007) conducted a four-year longitudinal study with 218 teacher candidates (TCs). The authors aimed to track TCs’ concerns with teaching in an urban school from their freshman year to their senior year. Findings revealed that TCs decreased their stereotypes and concerns, as well as increased their expectations for urban students as a result of field experiences (Conaway et al., 2007). Ronfeldt (2012) examined the types of schools that make the best field experiences for teacher candidates’ learning by comparing “easy-to-staff field placement schools and “difficult-to-staff schools” (p. 3). His findings, contrary to those in Conaway et al.’s (2007) study, reveal that the student population in the difficult-to-staff schools, such as poor, minority and low achieving students, was unrelated to teacher effectiveness. Ronfeldt (2012) suggests that other factors may account for student learning in placements, such as exposure to effective teaching of associate teachers.

In addition to field experiences, studies also examine the effect of teaching strategies on changes in teacher candidates’ conceptions of diversity. Torok and Aguilar (2000), for example, examined the effect of a multicultural education course on teacher candidates’ beliefs about language issues in the classroom. The findings in this study point to the importance of instructional strategies as contributing factors to the positive change in TCs’ beliefs. Two of these were creating a safe environment and a “Freirean model that promotes dialogue and critical reflection as tools for learning” (p. 29). Brown (2004) also found that instructional strategies may play a greater role in changing future teachers’ attitudes about diversity than the content of the course.

In addition to field experiences and teaching strategies, Gay (2010) links the ability of student teachers to read scholarly articles and reflect critically on the “underlying principles embedded in these texts, the authors’ disciplinary orientations, and embedded cultural beliefs, references and notations” to teachers’ realization that personal beliefs are imbedded in analytical thought, empirical research and instructional practices (p. 146). By gaining such
as insight, student teachers may develop an understanding of why culturally diverse students and teachers respond differently to one another and to learning experiences. Another important aspect that needs to be taken into account in teacher preparation programs is the “power and prominence of examples in teaching” (Gay, 2010, p. 147). Teacher candidates may not be aware that some very strong beliefs about cultural diversity can be conveyed through examples frequently used in teaching, which can be positive and negative. For instance, some examples include negative beliefs through reference to poverty and alcoholism in relation to First Nations people or positive beliefs by pointing to certain achievements by Asian Canadians. Teacher educators need to teach prospective teachers how to recognize habits of using such examples and how to modify them to be more culturally diverse. Also, Hachfeld et al. (2015) point to the fact that “the goal to treat all students equally, though noble in its intent, can result in a lack of willingness to prepare one's lessons adequately for the challenges of a diverse classroom” (p. 51). This statement shows the importance of examining the ideological positioning of teacher candidates.

Overall, studies reveal mixed findings in regards to teacher candidates’ changes in conceptions about diversity, as well as program components that contribute to changes in conceptions of diversity, teaching and learning. Little research examines how teacher candidates developed diversity understandings over time and why they adopted or resisted certain conceptions related to diversity. A number of studies described above show the importance of field-based experiences and instructional practices that support critical reflection. Practica experiences may help students confront their beliefs and attitudes and acknowledge that they need to transform these beliefs (Anderson & Stillman, 2010). Without these experiences students would not have the possibility to integrate the knowledge acquired through coursework and reflect critically upon these experiences. However, researchers did not identify what specific components of field experiences contributed to changes in beliefs and attitudes of preservice teachers.
This chapter described the literature relevant to this research with a focus on meanings of diversity, diversity and education, and diversity and teacher education, as well as changes in teacher candidates’ conceptions of diversity. In what follows I present the conceptual framework that guided my data collection and analysis.
Chapter 3: Conceptual Framework

Introduction

This chapter has a dual purpose. The first is to examine the conceptual frameworks that informed me during the research process. The second purpose is to outline the ensuing choice of frameworks for analysing my findings, as well as to situate my research within these frameworks. The introduction thus walks the reader through my quest for a framework and the sections that follow look at my frameworks of choice in more detail. It is important to note that teacher education researchers emphasize the need for studies in teacher education to situate their research and conceptual discussions more solidly in theory (Cochran-Smith & Zeichner, 2005; Milner, 2008). Johnston-Parsons (2012) maintains that “Accounts of teacher education programs and research are often light on theoretical explanations” (p. 1). In regards to preparing teacher candidates for diverse classrooms, although there are studies that present theories and conceptual tools to understand questions of social justice in teacher education (Banks, 2004; Cochran-Smith, Davis & Fries, 2003; Sleeter, 2008; Tatum, 1992), it is argued that, “the lack of theoretical framing in teacher education, is to some degree, an epistemological issues as much as a conceptual one” (Milner, 2010, p. 332). Those involved in teacher education and teacher education research “may need to concentrate more directly on how we define and build knowledge, how we theorize about it, what knowledge counts as credible, and who can construct and deconstruct that knowledge” (Milner, 2010, p. 332).

In addition, related studies highlight the need to articulate the conceptual frameworks and concepts that inform researcher’s perspectives on, and relationships to, the research topic (Kirby & McKenna, 1998). The argument in these studies is that as researchers we engage with these frameworks and later interpret and analyse data, thus making it clear how meaning is created in the research process. Letting the reader know what informs researcher’s perspective “helps to alleviate conflicts that can arise during the analysis of different
perceptions of meaning and can expose contradictions in helpful ways” (Potts & Brown, 2005, p. 274). Also, it is important to acknowledge that different concepts and frameworks create different meanings and knowledge (Potts & Brown, 2005).

As I examined past research on teacher education and diversity in order to address the concerns articulated in the literature (i.e., the conceptual frameworks and concepts that informed my perspectives on, and relationships to, the research topic of diversity, and that would be used to later interpret the findings of this study), I also wondered about what might be expected of me as a researcher who engages with the question of teacher learning about diversity. Was it a framework that focuses on the knowledge that teacher candidates bring with them in the teacher education program (Richardson, 1996), a framework that identifies the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that teachers need to respond to student diversity (Banks, 1995; Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1995) and/or frameworks that examine the types of knowledge of teachers (Shulman, 1987)?

In my thesis proposal I examined a number of frameworks that are usually found in research on teacher education and even suggested what I perceived as a ‘unified framework’ that included elements from varied conceptual frameworks. However, as I completed my data collection and started to analyse it, I found that these frameworks were not helping me to make sense of the findings. Indeed, at one level the findings suggested that theories that examined how individuals learn might offer a useful framework to analyse the changes in teacher candidates’ knowledge. However, at a different level, such theories did no help to explain or understand the causes and influences on teacher candidates’ conceptions of diversity. I turned to broader social theories that address diversity and difference, such as liberal theories and social identity theories. It was at that moment that I was drawn to Moosa-Mitha’s (2005) approach of situating the social theories that address diversity and/or difference along two axes, based on their epistemological and ontological claims. These theories include the normative/difference-centred orientation of social theory and the critical/mainstream divide. I examine Moosa-Mitha’s approach briefly in what follows, as I believe that this will provide insight into the frameworks that informed my work and the choices I made for my research in this regard.
Moosa-Mitha (2005) focuses on theoretical frameworks that have “difference” at their centre and that she sees as anti-oppressive theories. This author argues that anti-oppressive theories have their basis in social identity theories and also posits that the anti-oppressive theories are not discrete from other social theories. In her writing, “social identity theories” are used to “refer to those theories that are grounded within oppositional social movements organized around social identity locations such as race, ability/disability, queer, gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgendered, and so on” (p. 61). By situating the difference-centred theories (e.g., Marxism, White feminism, postmodernism, liberalism, and identity theories) on two axes, Moosa-Mitha examines the extent to which they are critical and difference-centered as opposed to being normative and mainstream in orientation or perspectives. Thus, the author argues that, through an examination of the theories’ epistemological and ontological claims, their distinct contributions to theorizing about difference become clear.

Moosa-Mitha thus positioned the liberal theory within normative and mainstream orientations because of its ontological and epistemological claims. She advances that through the use of a transcendental and universal language, the liberal theory maintains the status quo. White feminism takes a critical perspective and appears closer to the difference-centered approach. However, its limitation lies in focusing on gender as a difference over any other. Marxism is closer to the high end of the critical edge, but in the normative end as well. The critical perspective is evident in Marxist theories because they posit that knowledge is socially constructed by and in the interest of the dominant forces in society. The Marxist theories also maintain that knowledge is historically situated and contextualized (Moosa-Mitha, 2005). Knowledge is thus not neutral as classical liberal theories assume. In contradiction to the critical edge in Marxist theories, these theories also view knowledge as ‘objective’ and a particular class in society uses this objective knowledge for its own personal/subjective interests. Thus knowledge claims are deductive and positivist in nature because they rely on scientific observations and thus they are treated as universal. This latter makes Marxist theories mainstream (Moosa-Mitha, 2005). As for postmodernism, “although the theorists themselves contest any form of categorization, [...] are theoretically situated as difference-centered but not necessarily critical in their theorization” (Moosa-Mitha, 2005, p.
The anti-oppressive theories (which for Moosa-Mitha are synonymous with social identity theories) are placed as both critical and difference-oriented.

The inherent idea of “taking difference seriously” (p. 39) in Moosa-Mitha’s (2005) writing, as well as her positioning of these theories on two axes, appealed to me for several reasons. First, “taking difference/ [diversity] seriously” seemed to be one of the core principles in the published materials of the Concurrent Teacher Education Program that my participants were part of. Second, the related notion of “criticality” in Moosa-Mitha echoed the notion of “critical thinking” (in addition to reflection) that was also evident as an envisioned goal in OISE’s published materials, documents that are part of my data collection (e.g., course outlines), as well as in a number of interviews with my participants. Third, a positioning of theorists as either critical and difference-centered as opposed to being normative and mainstream in orientation was leading to a certain tension (which Moosa-Mitha acknowledged in her writing) and which I also could see in the intended (i.e. programmatic or curriculum) versus experienced diversity learning in teacher candidates. The framework appeared to provide me with the language to describe such tensions and the type of teacher education that was envisioned by the institution, versus the type of program seen through the eyes of the teacher candidates. Fourth, such a framework provided a useful approach to theorize why certain diversity dimensions received less attention than others, not only in individual teacher candidates, but also in the teacher education program. This latter realization that I made while exploring Moosa-Mitha’s (2005) work, led me to examine in more detail two difference-centred approaches – the liberal and postmodern frameworks. In my view, these two frameworks have the potential to explain broader structures, beyond the individual and the teacher education program (i.e. communities outside the program and Canadian society) and their influences on teacher candidates’ learning in the program and their construction of knowledge.

The “anti-oppressive” concept that Moosa-Mitha (2005) uses is a possible term I could use to describe my own understanding of diversity to be taught in a teacher education program. Indeed, in my view this term goes beyond individual dimensions of diversity, such as class or race, and allows exploring multiple and often intersecting inequalities in schools and society
today. Anti-oppressive education was also a conceptual framework that I was considering using for this study, in particular as posited by Kumashiro (1999; 2000). However, the language that the teacher candidate participants used in the questionnaire and in the interviews led me to see that the type of language they were using was echoing what Moosa-Mitha describes under “Liberal theories” and “postmodern theories”. I also felt that these TCs’ language was also mirroring many ideas often described under “multiculturalism” in Canada, although this is a word often used in a variety of ways in this context.

Thus, I chose to focus my conceptual framework on liberal theories (and the related liberal multiculturalism) and postmodern theories. I felt that these frameworks would be useful in my research as they would allow me (1) to explore the meanings these theories ascribe to diversity and difference that would provide me with solid background for analysis; (2) to seek the meanings of diversity specific to the Canadian context, given the history of multiculturalism (what I see as liberal multiculturalism) in relation to diversity in Canada; (3) to articulate my understanding of the varied tensions that I saw in my research findings and the tensions inherent in the usage of these frameworks as well.

While the liberal and postmodern frameworks are useful in analysing some of the tensions and influences in teacher candidates learning about diversity, they do not address the question of how people learn and specifically how people learn about diversity. This shortcoming was necessary to address in order to investigate the major question for this study (i.e. examining the roots of teacher candidates’ conceptions of diversity). In order to discuss teacher learning and teacher learning about diversity, I thus use the conceptual change lens and its concepts of status and conceptual ecology, which have been argued to have both explanatory and predictive power in regard to learning more generally and learning about diversity in particular (Posner et al., 1982; Hewson, 1992; Hewson & Lemberger, 2000; Larkin, 2010, 2012; Vosniadou, 2008). I contend that the two approaches, one rooted in sociology and the other in psychology, provide the necessary lenses to understand the causes and influences on learning about diversity in teacher candidates. The key insight from the theory of conceptual change model is that individuals select between competing conceptions. Larkin (2010) suggests that looking at teacher learning through the conceptual change model
may offer an answer to a question that is often asked in research that examines teacher education for diversity, namely “Why are the perspectives of prospective teachers so difficult and so slow to change?” (Gomez, 1996, p. 112).

My intention in the introduction to this chapter was to describe the conceptual frameworks that informed me as researcher and rationale for choosing two lenses to analyse my findings. Although one could argue that there is a tension between the two lenses due to them being linked to different disciplinary fields, I contend that they complement each other and they are useful tools to analyse the complexity of learning and teaching about diversity and tensions within this process in the context of Canada. As it will be evident from the findings chapters, teacher candidates’ conceptions of diversity are influenced deeply by their own self and own knowledge construction and have strong links with meanings of this notion in the Canadian context. The sections that follow examine the frameworks that help explain these influences on teacher learning about diversity. These frameworks include liberal theory (and liberal multiculturalism) and conceptual change model of learning. While the postmodern theory is not central in this study, I include it as it helps gain insights into the changing nature of learning and teaching, including learning and teaching about diversity.

**Liberal theory**

An understanding of liberal theory/liberalism and multiculturalism is important to understanding teacher candidates’ conceptions of diversity in the Canadian context. It is not my intention in this section to provide theoretical positions on the compatibility or incompatibility of liberalism and multiculturalism, as this lies beyond the purpose of this research (see Stroubouli Lanefelt, 2012, for such a discussion). However, in the context of this study I contend that multiculturalism is consistent with liberal values. To me multiculturalism is an ideology. Within this understanding, I define multiculturalism as “a set of ideas, ideals, and assumptions about diversity and its status” (Fleras & Elliot, 1992, p. 53). In what follows I examine concepts from liberal theory in more detail, by drawing on Moosa-Mitha (2005) and a number of other studies (McLaren, 1995). I use these concepts in the findings chapters to analyse and interpret the data.
Liberalism has various interpretations, from individualistic (Rawls, 1971) to communitarian or pluralist (Kymlicka, 1995, 2001). Rawls (1971) maintains that the two principles of liberty and equality govern and characterize socially just democratic societies. Individuals would choose to “optimize their rights of freedom and equality in a socially just society” (Moosa-Mitha, 2005, p. 40). Communitarian liberals maintain that “communities should live in a way that allows individuals the greatest rights of freedom or autonomy, even if they are members of minority communities in terms of numbers, while being treated with equal respect as all others in society” (Moosa-Mitha, 2005, pp. 40-41). These two interpretations of liberalism see social justice as rights-based, which is formal and principled in nature (Moosa-Mitha, 2005, p. 41).

The usage of universalist terms in their vision of social justice and social relationships makes liberalist perspectives normative because their claims exclude the lived experiences of people whose relationships may be different from the assumed norm. Furthermore, the assumption that differences can be transcended into a “common language of humanity that is the ‘same’ in its entitlement of rights and privileges” (Moosa-Mitha, 2005, p. 42) also make this theory normative in that it renders invisible dimensions of gender, class or race. As Moosa-Mitha (2005) argues:

The transcendentalist claim of male-stream liberal theory is particularly clear in relation to its articulation of the rights of equality, the second foundational principle within which liberal social justice claims are envisioned. The right of equality alludes to equal dignity that all people possess and the right to be treated with respect regardless of their race, gender, or any other differences of social identity (Dworkin, 1977). Yet, the bases on which people have the right to be treated as equals is not based on an acknowledgement of their difference; rather, it is an interpretation of equality that transcends difference through an interpretation of equality that is synonymous with the “same” (Phelan, 2001). People have the right to be treated as equals because underneath social difference, we are all the same in our humanity. (p. 42)

For communitarian liberals, difference is communal in nature. Compared to individualist liberals who see social justice as attainable through legislation of individual rights of freedom and equality, communitarian liberals “emphasize the importance of viewing citizens, not just as rights-bearing individuals, but also as members of society and participants in the culture of
Communitarian liberals define racial difference as difference that is “cultural”. This definition leads to viewing structural stratification in society based on socio-economic indicators, which is racialized in nature, as “individuals’ personal choice in engaging in cultural practices” (Bannerji, 2000). Communitarian liberals recognize difference between communities, but not differences within communities and multiple relationships. People thus will have to choose between their own community and the wider mainstream society. Sameness is viewed as the norm, which makes communitarian liberal claims not difference-centered.

The liberal theory holds positivist and “objective” claims (Moosa-Mitha, 2005, p. 44). Rawls (1997, as cited in Moosa-Mitha, 2005) describes a vision of social justice through a process of deductive thinking. Dichotomies and binary thinking is also characteristic of these claims. When they have been proven to be wrong, adjustments are made to “mistakes”. As Moosa-Mitha (2005) argues:

For example, when Kymlicka (2001) states that the liberal state’s role in relation to marginalized communities in the past has proven to be biased against these communities. However, having stated this, he proceeds by discontinuing this fact as a mistake that can be corrected if the state were to take its proper role as the neutral arbiter of rights and privileges. Hence the epistemological assumptions of liberal theories itself never change; they are only fine-tuned. (p. 44)

Liberal claims have been criticized by anti-oppressive theorists who state that the reason “difference” is considered a problem and deviation in the liberal theories is because they valorize sameness and “view knowledge as a way to uncover events that follow universal laws in a predictable manner” (Yuval-Davies, 1999, cited in Moosa-Mitha, 2005, p. 45). In addition to liberal theory, postmodern theories are also useful in examining teacher candidates’ conceptions of diversity in this study. It is important to note that for the purpose of this research I use “theory” and “theories” interchangeably. I adopt this approach as it is not my purpose to discuss the many facets of either liberal or postmodern theories based on arguments that they cannot be spoken about in singular terms, but rather to describe key concepts from each that I find useful for my discussion of findings. Postmodern theories are also difference-centred, but they differ from the liberal claims discussed above in a number
of ways. Key concepts from postmodern theories are examined in the next section and will be used to make sense of the data in the findings chapters.

**Postmodern theory**

Postmodernism was a notion that was first used in architectural criticism, but has since been taken up by many social scientists (Lather, 1991). The fundamental claim of postmodern theory is that reality is socially constructed through language or representational terms. Indeed, reality “is too complex, multiple, and fluid to be captured by singular, universal explanations found in enlightenment based theories, with their attendant false/true dualisms” (Moosa-Mitha, 2005, p. 57).

Knowledge, according to postmodern theorists, is linked to relations of power and power exists in multiple relationships (Foucault, 1990). According to postmodern claims, everyone is an accomplice in maintaining certain representations or discourse about themselves and others in society, as well as maintaining hierarchical relationships. Similar to feminist and anti-oppressive analyses, the subject “is treated as an active subject and is centralized in postmodern analyses” (Moosa-Mitha, 2005, p. 58). Postmodern theorists’ ontological assumptions are multiple, representational, individuated and fluid (Moosa-Mitha, 2005, p. 58). In their analyses they aim to deconstruct rather than explain, predict or emancipate and “differences of voices and diversity of multiple meanings are an important facet of social reality and have to be acknowledged” (Moosa-Mitha, 2005, p. 59).

Postmodern theories are not clearly critical and because they lack a political agenda (i.e. treat all claims to difference equally), and thus they maintain mainstream assumptions. They have an individualistic orientation in their analysis (Moosa-Mitha, 2005). Postmodern theories view knowledge as fluid because of the constantly changing reality (Moosa-Mitha, 2005, p. 60). Individuals need to examine their own knowledge base and how they know what they know. A critique of postmodern theorists has been that they do not differentiate between analysis of difference that perpetuate dominance and analysis that challenges oppression (Spivak, 1987).
The purpose of this section was to provide the conceptual framework that has informed me in developing and writing this thesis and will serve as a basis for discussing findings. Now I turn to examining the theoretical efforts to prepare teachers for diversity, with a more in-depth focus on the conceptual change model of learning. This framework will be used to describe and analyse the individual cases in the findings chapters.

**Conceptual Change Model of Learning**

Grant and Secada (1990) highlighted the need for research on how teacher thinking develops in regard to student diversity a few decades ago. Larkin (2012) argues that there is still a theoretical weakness in current efforts to prepare teachers for diverse classrooms although “research on teacher preparation for diversity is enjoying an unparalleled period of vibrancy” (p. 5). Teacher education programs often use approaches such as racial autobiographies, and cross-cultural tutoring experiences to explore student diversity because of their perceived empirical success. However, these approaches are not soundly anchored in a theoretical understanding about how people learn (Larkin, 2012). At the individual level, these approaches seem rooted in cognitive dissonance models of psychology (Festinger, 1957, cited in Larkin, 2012, p. 6). Cognitive dissonance models posit that people are sensitive to inconsistencies between actions and beliefs and that this dissonance is resolved if/when individuals modify their beliefs, actions, or perceptions of actions (Larkin, 2012).

Other frameworks that have been used in research on diversity and teacher education are the identity development models (Chubbuck, 2004; Gere, Buehler, Dallavis, & Haviland, 2009; Gomez, Black, & Allen, 2007) and models of racial identity (Sleeter, 1993; Tatum, 1992, 1997). These models are useful tools to explain research data and examine where individuals are and where they need to be in their understandings of diversity. Unfortunately, they seem to fail to provide adequate tools for understanding how teacher candidates as individuals change their conceptions of diversity and the implications of such changes for teaching and learning (Larkin, 2012). As argued in more recent research on teacher learning and its implication for student diversity, a theory that focuses on how individuals learn, such as the conceptual change model, would provide such an explanation (Larkin, 2010, 2012). Thus, I chose the conceptual lens because it is about the growth of understanding and the changes
that occur as teacher candidates develop understandings of new ideas and concepts. I felt that this lens would problematize how TCs acquire new knowledge more than other theories would due to its focus of ‘growth’ of knowledge. To me the idea of conceptual change, and the goal to influence teacher candidates’ understandings of the processes of teaching and learning was fitting. Conceptual change examines the processes of teaching and learning by providing opportunities to create new understandings, which are inherent in research literature on teacher education, as well as in the description of the teacher education program in which my participants are enrolled (i.e. CTEP). As findings presented later in the thesis will show, learning about diversity and developing understandings of teaching is an individual experience influenced by a number of factors, including knowledge of self. Also, such learning occurs as individuals interact and live within larger societal structures. The use of the two conceptual lenses thus provided an effective structure for the presentation and analysis of the findings at two levels: the micro level (the growth of and influences on understanding of diversity, teaching and learning) and the macro-level (the broader causes and influences on conceptions of diversity). There appears to be limited research that uses the intersection of liberal theory, postmodern theory and developmental concerns. However, as the majority of the teacher candidates in this study are at an age identified in the literature as “young adults” (King, 2004) and research shows that undergraduates often see learning as “acquisition of knowledge, memorizing, utilization and/or use of knowledge [as opposed to] abstraction of meaning and an interpretative process aimed at understanding reality” (Hattie & Marsh, 1996, p. 531), applying such lenses revealed findings that would be useful for teacher educators to identify opportunities and challenges when integrating diversity content in teaching such as teacher candidate population.

Before the conceptual change model is described in more detail, I focus on Paine’s (1990) orientations toward diversity. Larkin (2012) argues that a discussion of Paine’s (1990) pedagogical perspective toward difference and the implications of contextual differences on teaching and learning is important to further understand the conceptual change model as a tool for analysing teacher education for diversity. I also draw on Paine’s work in the findings chapter as his discussion helps connect the conceptual change lens with notions from the liberal theory, which was presented earlier in this chapter.
Orientations toward diversity

Paine (1990) proposes four layers of meaning of the concept of diversity that can help analyse the views of teacher candidates, called “four orientations to diversity views”: individual difference, categorical difference, contextual, and pedagogical difference (pp. 2-3).

For someone with an individual difference approach, “the world is seen as full of people who differ in all sorts of ways and in all sorts if dimensions: some are fat, some thin, some shy, some smart” (Paine, 1990, p. 3). Difference is seen as a random feature of social life and it is often explained by drawing on psychological and biological perspectives. Teachers would look at the individual concerned for sources and solutions of problems. Categorical difference is another common approach to difference. Difference in this view is seen as a number of categories that have repeated patterns of variations across individuals. A certain difference category, such as gender, would have other characteristics associated with it, such as behaviour. Categories such as race, gender, or social class are noted and considered in problem solving (Larkin, 2012). Those holding this view tend not to question how categories of difference are constructed in society or what the nature of the link between a certain category and its associated qualities are. The categorical approach, as maintained by Paine (1990), “is present in the liberal view of justice which focuses on minimizing difference through concern for access and fair representation of categories, while not challenging the categories themselves” (p. 3).

The contextual difference orientation builds on the individual and categorical orientations. As Paine (1990) states, “from this perspective, difference among individuals occur in patterns, yet these patterns are seen as connected to a social situation or embedded in a larger, dynamic context” (p. 3). This orientation seems to be relational in nature and it takes into account the causes of difference. Differences are not fixed, but created, maintained and changed by their interaction (p. 3). Differences exist because of the social context and they are socially constructed to a certain extent.
The fourth approach to diversity, the *pedagogical perspective*, takes into account not only the causes of difference, but also its implications. Paine (1990) states that, “For educators, a *pedagogical perspective* on diversity assumes that differences are not simply random and interesting; they are understood as having pedagogical implications – consequences for both teaching and learning” (p. 3, emphasis in original). This approach combines knowledge of human diversity with knowledge about how to address diversity in educational settings in order to respond to or build on diversity.

As seen from the above, Paine’s (1990) approaches to diversity answer a few questions related to difference: what diversity/difference is, causes of difference, and sources of explanations for difference. The terms ‘diversity’ and ‘difference’ are used interchangeably. I summarize Paine’s (1990) orientations of diversity in Table 1 to and show how these orientations differ.

**Table 1. Orientations to Diversity**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What is diversity?</th>
<th>Individual orientation</th>
<th>Categorical orientation</th>
<th>Contextual orientation</th>
<th>Pedagogical orientation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Causes/sources of diversity</td>
<td>Individuals themselves</td>
<td>Little attention</td>
<td>Social context</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explanations of diversity</td>
<td>Psychological and biological</td>
<td>Liberal view of justice</td>
<td>Socially constructed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implications of diversity</td>
<td>Not addressed</td>
<td>Not addressed</td>
<td>Not addressed</td>
<td>Pedagogical implications for teaching and learning</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although Paine describes three main elements for the first three orientations (i.e. *what is diversity; causes of differences; sources of explanations for diversity*), he only focuses on one element (implications of difference) for the fourth, pedagogical, orientation. However, Paine takes a layered approach in his discussion and thus one can assume that the pedagogical perspective would entail elements from all the three approaches including defining diversity, naming sources or causes of diversity, and explaining sources of diversity. It is the fourth
orientation to diversity in Paine’s (1990) work that Larkin (2012) focuses when proposing the conceptual change model as a theoretical framework for teacher education for diversity. I will now turn to discussing this model in more detail.

**Features of the conceptual change model**

The conceptual change model of learning has a number of traditions, which are grounded in the field of science education (Anderson, 2007; Hewson, 1992; Hewson, Tabachnick, Zeichner, Blomker et al., 1999) and the field of educational psychology (Posner et al., 1982). More recent studies apply this theory to history education (Carretero, Castorina & Levinas, 2013). For the purpose of this study, I use the concepts of “status” and “conceptual ecology” as originally formulated by Posner, Strike, Hewson, and Gertzog (1982). The concepts of “status” and “conceptual ecology”, two features of the conceptual change model of learning, are important elements for this discussion as they are useful analytical tools for teacher candidates’ developing understandings of diversity.

The concept of **status** “is essentially a measure of an idea in the mind of the holder” (Larkin, 2010, p. 19) and it has been referred to as the “hallmark for conceptual change learning” (Hewson & Lemberger, 2000). The status of an idea refers to how strongly an individual holds and accepts an idea to be true. The status of an idea has three related components: intelligibility, plausibility, and fruitfulness (Posner et al., 1982). As Larkin (2012) states:

> an idea is intelligible if the learner can understand it, even if one does not agree with it or believe it. An idea is plausible if it seems likely to be true or is at least consistent with what one already knows. An idea is fruitful if it seems to have broad explanatory power. For any given individual, an idea must be intelligible before it can be considered to be plausible or fruitful. Generally, ideas must also be plausible to an individual before they can be considered to be fruitful, but there are cases [...] in which the broad explanatory power of an idea can be appreciated before its plausibility is accepted. (p. 9-10)

The notion of **conceptual ecology**, originally coined by Toulmin (1972), emphasizes the need to think of all the knowledge a person has as linked in some way:

> The structure and development of knowledge can be viewed in terms of the metaphor of ecology in which peoples’ ideas or concepts exist as a result of a process of natural
selection. The intellectual environment in which a person lives (including cultural beliefs, language, accepted theories, as well as observed facts and events) favours the development of some concepts and inhibits the development of others (Hewson, 1985, p. 165)

As learners encounter new information, specific elements within the ecology interact and influence how the learner will make sense of it (Strike & Posner, 1992).

Hewson (1985) stresses that when analyzing the nature of an individual’s conceptions, one needs to also analyze that individual’s “epistemological commitment, particularly internal consistency and generalizability” (Hewson, 1985, cited in Larkin, 2012, p. 20). Internal consistency helps the individual to not leave conflicting conceptions unrecognized as irreconcilable. Generalizability helps an individual to not only recognize conflicting conceptions, but also to avoid contextualizing them as “an alternative to rejecting the less plausible conception” (Larkin, 2012, p. 21). This idea seems to connect to Ball’s (2009) concept of generativity as “teachers’ ability to add to their understanding by connecting their personal and professional knowledge with the knowledge they gain from their students to produce or originate knowledge that is useful to them in pedagogical problem solving and in meeting the educational needs of their students” (p. 47). Thus the idea of generativity emphasizes the continuity in teachers’ learning, when new knowledge is integrated with existing knowledge. The role of the teacher education program is thus to create opportunities for TCs to make connections between what is studied in the program and what is brought to the program. Furthermore, teacher education programs should encourage TCs to continually reassess what they know and what they can see as useful when teaching in diverse classrooms.

According to the conceptual change theory, the idea that an individual holds most strongly is the one with the highest status and the one that fits best with his/her conceptual ecology. In order to change one’s mind, not only does the present idea need to have a lower status, a better idea is needed that would take its place. The key insight from the theory of conceptual change model, as originally formulated by Posner, Strike, Hewson, and Gertzog (1982), is that individuals select between competing conceptions. These early notions of conceptual change have evolved and conceptual change is no longer conceived as a battle between
competing ideologies or unitary concepts (Chinn & Brewer, 1993; Winitzky & Kauchak, 1995), but rather as a more interactive process in which prior concepts and beliefs influence and are influenced by new experiences (Winitzky & Kauchak, 1995). Carretero, Castorina and Levinas (2008) talk about relations and tensions between prior and new knowledge.

Prior conceptions of teachers about student diversity still have a lot of explanatory power for these individuals. They are still very plausible. As Larkin (2012) maintains,

In this model, conceptual change is considered to take place if the status of an idea changes, such as in the case of the status of a new conception becoming greater than a previous one. The lowering of a conception’s status may also occur if new evidence creates dissatisfaction with a current conception, though it is common for evidence to be dismissed or conceptions to be modified slightly in order to maintain a conceptual status quo, or what might be considered a conceptual ecology in equilibrium … Although perhaps it is not always this straightforward in practice, this conceptual change model draws attention to the metacognitive nature of this process and emphasizes the necessity for learners to evaluate competing ideas in order to determine and offer a justification for which has higher status (Hewson et al., 1998). Such a model is fully compatible with constructivist theories of learning (p. 10)

Teacher education programs offer practicums that provide opportunities for cognitive dissonance, such as racial autobiographies, reflective practice, and cross-cultural tutoring opportunities. What the conceptual change model suggests is that there is a need to offer alternate ways of thinking about those experiences. Just having teacher candidates reflect on those experiences is not enough. The role of teacher educators is to both provide prospective teachers with different ways of thinking about the relationships between school, community and the home. Furthermore, it is crucial to provide space for reflection in assignments and field placements. Larkin maintains that, “The ideas of teacher candidates is the raw material for teacher educators – if we think about our work that way, we are much more likely to have the outcomes that we want with our student teachers” (Larkin, 2012). The challenge for teacher educators is to create those kinds of environments where such teaching can happen for the teacher candidates (Larkin, 2012).

Research on conceptual change in teacher learning, as argued by Larkin (2012), needs to be informed by three main elements: (1) focus on the thinking of individuals as the unit of analysis; (2) examination of conceptual change in of itself, which is not solely focused on the
intended outcomes of a teacher education program; (3) using multiple sources of evidence to confirm that shifts in thinking have actually occurred. This approach was followed when analysing the individual TC cases.

More recently, research on conceptual change has been embedded in various theoretical frames with epistemological, ontological and affective orientations (Treagust & Duit, 2003; 2007). Conceptual change as epistemology is when the researcher examines student learning of concepts, which are revealed by different representations of knowledge. Research on epistemological conceptual change initially involved an understanding of how students’ conceptions evolve and more recently have been shaped by various forms of constructivism, some of which focus on individuals and some on social aspects (Philips, 2000; Treagust & Duit, 2008). Constructivist ideas in these studies were influenced by the Piagetian interplay of assimilation and accommodation, and Kuhnian ideas of theory change in the history of science, and radical constructivism (Duit & Treagust, 2003; Treagust & Duit, 2008).

Conceptual change as ontology refers to how students view the nature of the conceptions being investigated. Research from this perspective examines the ways in which students consider conceptions in terms of their view of reality (Chinn & Brewer, 1993; Carey, 1985; Vosniadou, 2008; Chi, Slotta & de Leeuw, 1994). Conceptual change from an affective orientation involves students’ interest and motivation. The classical approach to conceptual change is implicitly focusing on this issue by pointing to student dissatisfaction with past ideas. Moreover, the characteristics of this classical approach, such as intelligibility, plausibility and fruitfulness, include affective issues to a certain extent (Treagust & Duit, 2008). Although research in this area has been limited, it argues that affective dimensions of interest and motivation need to be developed because they play a significant role in supporting conceptual change at the level of content knowledge (Pintrich et al., 1993; Dykstra, Boyle & Monarch, 1992). Pintrich et al. (1993), for example, maintain that interest, personal and situational beliefs are paramount to students’ engagement in learning activities.

In addition to examining conceptual change from epistemological, ontological and affective orientations, which claim that learners need to construct knowledge for themselves, some research also emphasizes the need for learners to be active and have a certain intention to
learn. Thus, “conceptual change depends, then, not only on cognitive factors such as recognition of conflict, but also on metacognitive, motivational, and affective processes that can be brought under the learners’ conscious control and may determine the likelihood of change” (Sinatra & Pintrich, 2003, p. 2). From this perspective then, the willingness for change is within the learner’s control.

A critique of initial research on conceptual change was leveled due to its overly rational approach (Pintrich, Marx, & Boyle, 1993). Later research tended to take a particular perspective, it being epistemological, ontological or affective. More recently, research shows that in order to adequately address the complexity of the teaching and learning process, multi-perspective or pluralistic epistemological frameworks need to be used, including social constructivist and social cultural orientations (Duit & Treagust, 2003; Treagust & Duit, 2008). The number of the latter research studies is still small, but is still evolving. For example, Venville and Treagust (1998) used four different perspectives of conceptual change: Poster et al.’s (1982) conceptual change model, Vosiadou’s (1994) framework theory and mental model perspective, Chi et al.’s (1994) ontological categories and Pintrich et al.’s (1993) motivation perspective.

This chapter described the conceptual framework that guided me through the different stages of data collection and the analysis of my research. The framework represents two main lenses that I identified as containing essential elements to investigate the causes and influences in teacher candidates’ conceptions of diversity. While the liberal theory provides a useful frame of reference for examining the influences on TCs at the macro-level, the conceptual change lens provides the necessary lens for analysing the roots of diversity conceptions at the micro- or individual level. Although one could argue that there is tension between the two lenses, such an analysis is necessary in my view, as it allows a better understanding of the complexity of learning and teaching about diversity in a concurrent teacher education program. The context of the Concurrent Teacher Education Program in this study and the teacher education in Canada are described next in Chapter 4.
Chapter 4: Research Context

In this chapter I describe the teacher education context in Canada and initial teacher education at the University of Toronto (UofT). The description will help to illustrate the broader teacher education context, as well as the specific settings of the teacher education program where participants in this study were enrolled.

The Canadian Teacher Education Context

To become a teacher in Canada one has to complete an initial teacher education program. Education in Canada is a provincial responsibility. Each of Canada’s ten provinces and three territories develop their own education policies (including teacher education and teacher qualifications), which are in turn administered through district school boards (Gambhir, Broad, Evans, & Gaskell, 2008). Although each province determines the requirements for teacher qualification individually, most provinces require at least an undergraduate degree and a Bachelor of Education degree for teachers to be fully qualified.

There are four pathways of initial teacher education in Canada: concurrent, consecutive, graduate and sole degree models (Gambhir, Broad, Evans, & Gaskell, 2008). Candidates enter the concurrent program (that normally spans four to six years) without a Bachelor’s degree and receive their teacher preparation at the same time as university training in other areas. When applying to a consecutive program (lasting from eight months to two years, depending on the university), prospective teachers must already have a Bachelor’s degree relevant to the subject area in which they intend to teach. Casey and Childs (2007) state that “the instruction in the consecutive programs focuses on the how of teaching – pedagogical knowledge and pedagogical skills […], not the what to teach and consists of both formal instruction and supervised practice” (p. 3). The instruction in the concurrent programs, however, “includes the what - that is, content knowledge” (Casey & Childs, 2007, p. 3, emphasis in original).
While the consecutive model allows for a more diverse candidate population (in terms of age, past careers, expertise) to enter the program, it has some major challenges. These challenges include the intensity of delivering comprehensive courses and practicum placements in the shorter, eight-month degree and limited depth and the breadth of topics that can be covered (Gambhir et al., 2008). The concurrent program also has advantages and disadvantages. An advantage is that candidates can be introduced to education concepts early in the degree, and they have more time to rethink ideas and build professional knowledge. The disadvantages are that the candidates must fulfill the requirements of both the academic and professional portions of the program in a specific timeframe and that the delivery of degrees is segregated in many concurrent programs. To address the latter issue, some universities have built partnerships across faculties and deliver “specially designed education courses outside of the B.Ed. for their candidates”, such as Science for Teachers (Gambhir et al., 2008, p. 11). Such courses were characteristic of the teacher education program in this study, which were usually called “education-friendly courses”, as described later in this chapter.

In the graduate model of the of initial teacher education, candidates complete a Master’s degree and a Bachelor of Education degree at the same time. Quebec and the northern territories have the sole degree model of teacher education. In this program teacher candidates earn a Bachelor of Education degree over a three or four-year period of time and are not required to have a second undergraduate degree.

Formal instruction in all programs covers general and subject-specific pedagogy (Stronge, 2002). A number of programs include explicit instruction intended to affect preservice teachers’ attitudes, such as openness to learning about cultures other than their own (Casey & Childs, 2007). Supervised practice usually consists of teaching, under the supervision of a classroom teacher, often with support and/or supervision from the teacher education program’s faculty (Guyton & McIntyre, 1990). Gambhir et al. (2008) state that in Canada:

Initial teacher education programs are more often viewed as the first stage in a longer professional learning process where certain knowledge bases and practices (e.g., subject knowledge, curriculum knowledge, general pedagogical knowledge, knowledge of learners, knowledge of educational contexts) are introduced and
practiced in rudimentary manner, rather than programs targeted to compensate for a lack in skills or knowledge that view beginning teachers as empty vessels to be “topped up.” (p. 6)

Each year in Canada, teacher education program across approximately 55 universities graduate 18,000 new teachers (Gambhir at al., 2008). These numbers are likely to change, given the recent changes in certain teacher education programs in Ontario, as highlighted in the Epilogue to this thesis. Admission requirements are determined by individual institutions, which are also grounded in the context of provincial ministry (and regulatory body) regulations. As mentioned earlier in the thesis, efforts are being made by institutions to revise admissions processes to recruit a more racialized or diverse group of candidates in order to graduate teachers who would match the increasingly diverse student population in schools (Childs et al., 2011).

Provincial ministries have developed policies addressing diversity of the Canadian society and many of these policies guide school boards as well as the development of teacher education programs. Examples include: Ontario’s Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy (2009) from the Ontario Ministry of Education; Every Child Learns, Every Child Succeeds (2003) from Alberta's Commission on Learning; and Diversity in BC Schoools: A Framework (2008) from the British Columbia Ministry of Education. All provinces and territories in Canada have special education legislation. A few examples include: Alberta’s Educational placement of students with special needs policy under the School Act, and Alberta Education’s Special education policy (2003); Yukon Territory’s Education Act, revised in 2002 (especially Division 2 – Special Education); and Ontario’s Education Act on Special Education with its accompanying regulations (regulation 181/98: Identification and placement of exceptional pupils).

These policies focus on ways to support the diverse needs of students and the correlation between student success and equitable responses to diversity (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2009). In an earlier study, Carr and Klassen (1996) maintained that although government legislation has made efforts to alter the behaviour of school boards, there will be little change unless teacher training and recruitment are altered. Carr (1995) argued that one part of the explanation for the imbalance in minority teachers and students is teacher training. The racial
composition of Ontario's teaching force has remained relatively homogeneous with teacher candidates being overwhelmingly white and Anglo-Saxon. Furthermore, faculties of education in Ontario are not yet fully representative of the larger community.

More recent studies (Childs et al., 2011; Crocker & Dibbon, 2008; Gérin-Lajoie’s, 2008; Ryan et al., 2009) report that the mismatch between teachers and students in increasingly diverse schools in Ontario is still present. Also, although the teacher education programs have started to address areas of concern identified in literature, such as equity in admissions (Childs et al., 2011), faculties of education “give priority to the areas they are required to address” by the provincial teacher education regulatory bodies (Herbert, Broad, Gaskell, Hart, Berrill, Demers & Heap, 2010, p. vi). One such example is the Ontario College of Teachers Act (i.e. O. Regulation 347/02, Accreditation of Teacher Education Programs) that places emphasis on legal and ethical issues, understanding and teaching the Ontario curriculum and understanding child and adolescent development (Herbert et al., 2010). An understanding of the Standards of Practice (Ontario College of Teachers, 2015) of Ontario’s regulatory body for the teaching profession is important for this research as it provides a more contextualized understanding of the principles guiding teacher education in the program in which participants were enrolled.

In Ontario, the Standards of Practice (Ontario College of Teachers, 2010) for the teaching profession provides a framework of principles that aim “to describe the knowledge, skills and values inherent in Ontario’s teaching profession” (para 1). The Standards of Practice focus on Ethical Standards (care, respect, trust and integrity) and Standards of Practice for the Teaching Profession. The purposes of the Standards of Practice for the Teaching Profession are: “to inspire a shared vision for the teaching profession; to identify the values, knowledge and skills that are distinctive to the teaching profession; to guide the professional judgment and actions of the teaching profession; to promote a common language that fosters an understanding of what it means to be a member of the teaching profession” (para. 2).

Ontario College of Teachers (2015) describes The Standards of Practice for the Teaching Profession as follows:
Commitment to Students and Student Learning: Members are dedicated in their care and commitment to students. They treat students equitably and with respect and are sensitive to factors that influence individual student learning. Members facilitate the development of students as contributing citizens of Canadian society.

Leadership in Learning Communities: Members promote and participate in the creation of collaborative, safe and supportive learning communities. They recognize their shared responsibilities and leadership roles in facilitating student success. Members maintain and uphold the principles of the ethical standards in these learning communities.

Ongoing Professional Learning: Members recognize that a commitment to ongoing professional learning is integral to effective practice and to student learning. Professional practice and self-directed learning are informed by experience, research, collaboration and knowledge.

Professional Knowledge: Members strive to be current in their professional knowledge and recognize its relationship to practice. They understand and reflect on student development, learning theory, pedagogy, curriculum, ethics, educational research and related policies and legislation to inform professional judgment in practice.

Professional Practice: Members apply professional knowledge and experience to promote student learning. They use appropriate pedagogy, assessment and evaluation, resources and technology in planning for and responding to the needs of individual students and learning communities. Members refine their professional practice through ongoing inquiry, dialogue and reflection.

Although the document described above tends to be revised periodically, it has been criticized for “the imprecision of the language, its foundation on ‘common sense’ and the generous leeway for wide interpretation” (Stewart Rose, 2008, p. 44). Nonetheless, the statements above are not only the primary guide to teacher education program accreditation, teacher education curriculum and evaluation in Ontario, but this document also speaks to the notion of the teacher knowledge base in Ontario.

In the following section I describe the initial teacher education provision at the University of Toronto where my participants are coming from, with a focus on the Concurrent Teacher Education Program in which they were enrolled. The description reflects the teacher...
education pathways in existence at the time my study was designed and at the time of data collection. Changes to the pathways are highlighted in the Epilogue to this study.

**Initial teacher education at the University of Toronto**

This study was conducted at the University of Toronto (UofT), which is a large metropolitan research-intensive university, located in the increasingly multicultural city of Toronto. Initial teacher education at the UofT is provided through a number of pathways: through a Consecutive one-year post-undergraduate Bachelor of Education/Diploma in Technological Education program; a five-year post-baccalaureate Concurrent Teacher Education Program (CTEP); a one-year Master of Arts (MA) in Child Study and Education Program that combines a Master of Arts degree with elementary teacher certification; and a two-year Master of Teaching Program (MT) that combines a Master of Teaching degree with elementary or secondary teacher certification. This study explores teacher candidates’ understanding of diversity and their learning about the concept in the CTEP program. In what follows the CTEP program is described as it existed at the time when this study began. The Prologue and the Epilogue to this thesis are intended to provide a description of changes to teacher education offered at UofT.

**The Concurrent Teacher Education Program**

The Concurrent Teacher Education Program (CTEP) offered by the University of Toronto combines undergraduate degree studies and initial teacher education into one extended and integrated program of study. CTEP was first offered in 2007 with an intake of about 190 students directly from high school (UofT, 2011). In 2008 a Year 2 entry possibility for approximately 112 students was introduced. In 2011 there was an intake of approximately 300, distributed across the six partners of the program. The program was only offered to full-time students on three campuses of the university. In addition, one campus had three faculties that partake in the program. One faculty had two participating colleges.

Admission to CTEP could be gained by applying directly from high school or by applying after one year of undergraduate study at the University of Toronto (UofT) or, in some cases,
at another recognized university. Admission was based on an application that includes potential candidates’ academic records and an Applicant Profile (OISE, 2009). The profile was intended to demonstrate education-related experiences that helped the candidate gain insight into teaching and learning for educating students in today’s’ diverse schools (UofT, 2011). Two of the Partner Units of CTEP required candidates to submit supplementary applications for their programs, which were part of their existing admissions requirements. Individuals who are applying to the program from secondary schools outside of Ontario (e.g., U.S. schools or international students) had to meet requirements as outlined in UofT admissions publications (e.g., English language proficiency) (UofT, 2011). To be eligible as a Year 2 applicant, potential candidates had to be have accumulated a minimum of four full course equivalent credits in their first year. In addition, they should have had a cumulative GPA of 2.7 (approximately a B- on a 4.0 scale).

Students admitted directly from secondary school typically studied for five years. University students admitted after completing one full year (minimum of 4.0 course credits) at the university level usually studied for four years. Graduates from the Concurrent Teacher Education Program earned two degrees: a Bachelor of Education degree (B.Ed.) plus a Bachelor's degree in one of the fields of study: Arts (Honours), Science (Honours), Music, or Physical and Health Education (H.B.A., H.BSc., B.Mus., B.P.H.E).

According to the UofT’s description of the CTEP, the program aimed to: (1) allow students to explore issues in education early in their post-secondary career, and develop as professionals over a longer period of time; (2) through fieldwork and interaction with the broader community, to provide students about 120 days of practical experiences with children and young people in diverse teaching contexts; (3) to have the principles of equity, diversity and social justice at the forefront, students would have the opportunity to apply their knowledge in these areas to various educational settings; and (4) to connect students with a highly committed faculty and staff at the university, as well as social and educational communities (UofT, 2011). Teacher education at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (i.e. the Faculty of Education and the unit that provides the Bachelor of Education portion of the concurrent teacher education program, in collaboration with the six partner
units) at UofT is underpinned by seven principles: teaching excellence; equity diversity and social justice; research-informed; learning communities; school/field/university partnerships; faculty collaboration; and coherence (OISE, 2011a).

Each of the seven principles had several research projects associated with them to show how these are put into practice (Rolheiser, 2011). The equity, diversity and social justice principle included projects that focused on Aboriginal awareness, inner city schools and working with English language learners. Other diversity related projects focused on inner city schools or special education, which “has become increasingly important in schools and, therefore, a critical area of attention in teacher education” (Rolheiser, 2011, p. 4). Many of the research projects described by Rolheiser (2011) placed emphasis on critical thinking among teacher candidates. The students in the teacher education program are described as “a diverse group of teacher candidates that show an openness and commitment to working towards equity in diverse classrooms and schools, and share the potential of becoming great teachers” (OISE, 2011a).

Teacher education at OISE was also guided by the Learner Document (LD), a conceptual framework that aimed to describe the capacities that graduates from all the teacher education program pathways were expected to develop in the programs. This framework is argued to be the response to the call for coherence in teacher education (Broad et al, 2013). Coherence is sought through research that focuses on achieving consensus across the elements of teacher education program based on a “theoretically sound and research-supported conceptions of teaching and learning” (Kagan, 1990, p. 49). One of the capacities under “teacher identity” reads “develop a critical reflective teacher with an inquiry habit of mind that is grounded on research and evidence-based practice” (OISE, 2011b). Teacher education was thus informed by research, including research on knowledge bases for teaching, which were emphasized heavily in the Concurrent Teacher Education Program (personal communication with program developers). The seven principles as well as the description of the students at OISE show the institution’s and program’s commitment to train critical teachers and change agents.

All participants in the Concurrent Teacher Education Program were enrolled in either a Primary/Junior (P/J) program, which spans Kindergarten to Grade 6, or Intermediate/Senior
(I/S) division, which spans Grades 7 to 12. Concurrent teacher candidates selected and declared an anchor subject, which became the main area of study in the undergraduate program. Each partner division offered different anchor subjects, shown in the table that follows.

**Table 2. Concurrent Teacher Education Program Options**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>UofT Unit</th>
<th>Partner Unit I</th>
<th>Partner Unit II</th>
<th>Partner Unit III</th>
<th>Partner Unit IV</th>
<th>Partner Unit V</th>
<th>Partner Unit VI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teaching Levels</td>
<td>P/J or I/S</td>
<td>P/J or I/S</td>
<td>I/S</td>
<td>I/S</td>
<td>I/S</td>
<td>P/J</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Areas of Study - Anchor Subjects</td>
<td>French Chemistry</td>
<td>French Chemistry</td>
<td>Physical and Health Education</td>
<td>Music Education</td>
<td>Christianity and Culture</td>
<td>Education and Society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degrees Earned</td>
<td>HBA/BEd HBSc/BEd</td>
<td>HBA/BEd HBSc/BEd</td>
<td>BPHE/BEd</td>
<td>BMus/BEd</td>
<td>HBA/BEd HBSc/BEd</td>
<td>HBA/BEd HBSc/BEd</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: UofT (2011)

Candidates were required to complete a major or specialist in their main area of study or their anchor subject. In addition to an anchor subject, if candidates intended to teach in secondary schools an additional teaching subject had to be selected from an approved list depending on course schedules, and the courses offered in each U of T unit.

The program components of the Concurrent Teacher Education Program allowed for exploration of issues in education early in a post-secondary career, and development as a teaching professional over a longer period of time. Teacher candidates benefited from education-focused courses being embedded in the undergraduate degree, such as *Child and Adolescent Development in Education*, *Equity and Diversity in Education* and *Communication and Conflict Resolution*, which are in addition to the Bachelor of Education components (UofT, 2011). The Bachelor of Education components were spread over the final three years of the program, and include the following courses (the detailed description of
these courses, presented below, is adapted from the *Initial Teacher Education Calendar* on UofT, 2011):

**Year 3**

1. *Principles of Teaching: Legal, Ethical and Professional* is worth a half credit and it “builds understanding of teaching as a professional practice. The course primarily focuses on the research base underlying policies and documents such as *The Foundations of Professional Practice*. The course is linked to an online module on *School Law*”.

2. *Inclusive Education: ELLs and Exceptional Learners* is a “half-credit course which includes a 12 to 15-hour field experience focused on observation/tutoring, “This course provides a foundation in inclusive curriculum and pedagogical practices for diverse exceptional learners (including behaviour, communication, intellectual, physical and multiple exceptionalities), and students for whom English is an additional language. The course includes a field experience involving observation and tutoring of an exceptional learner or an English language learner. This course emphasizes inclusion of all students through differentiated instruction. Students are introduced to curriculum documents appropriate to their division(s), evidence-informed pedagogical practices, and assessment and evaluation methods.”

**Year 4**

1. *Psychological Foundations of Learning* is worth a half credit. “This course builds on, and extends, the introductory Psychology course on *Child and Adolescent Development*. It delves more deeply into how development influences learning and also examines general issues related to how students learn. In recent years, several important evidence-based principles have emerged about the nature of learning. For example, we know that learning is a constructive rather than a receptive process, that the structure and organization of knowledge profoundly impact our thinking, that self-regulation of cognition are important characteristics of effective learning, that motivation and beliefs direct learning, that social interaction and discourse play an important role in cognitive development, and that to develop competence, a deep foundation of knowledge is needed. We also know that individuals learn differently. How well a teacher understands and appreciates the psychological factors that influence student learning, student motivation, and the learning environment plays an important role in effective teaching practice. There will be a strong emphasis on “application”, with students being encouraged to think critically about learning as they connect course content to both in-class case studies and facets of actual teacher practice observed in their practicum.”

2. *Social Foundations of Teaching and Schooling* is a half-credit course. “This course builds on issues introduced in the prerequisite *Equity and diversity in Education* course by helping new teachers understand how they can support diverse students’ learning in classroom, school and school system settings. The course helps teacher candidates develop understandings of opportunities for teacher development in school settings; family, community and peer characteristics that shape students’
experiences of schooling; classroom social dynamics and teachers’ curricular and pedagogical choices; program and school organization, and how teachers can work effectively with other teachers and administrators; as well as how educational policies shape the conditions of teaching and learning. Course participants will develop observational skills in order to understand and intervene successfully in classroom, school and policy/system dynamics. By linking with the Practicum in the Professional Semester, the course allows students to observe, experiment with and reflect upon actual teaching experiences and to connect those observations and experiences to larger debates in the educational literature about the goals, purposes, and limitations of schooling.”

3. **Mentored Inquiry and Teaching 1** is a 0.25 credit course with 6-8 days spent in a school and the community. “This course draws upon, and integrates, foundational and curriculum theory and field-based learning. It is designed to prepare new teachers to make connections between theory and practice by linking course work and field experiences. Teacher candidates observe and develop understanding about classrooms, schools and communities. They begin to develop a sense of professional identity and collegial working relationships in the context of a field placement. Through inquiry, teacher candidates engage in reflective practice related to issues and challenges, problem solving and questioning of assumptions about teaching and learning from a range of educational perspectives. This course includes an in-class component, as well as MIT field experience days and will be linked to the e-Portfolio.”

4. **Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment 1** is worth one full credit. “This course emphasizes subject-specific methodology. Students are introduced to curriculum documents appropriate to their division(s), evidence-informed pedagogical practices, and assessment and evaluation methods.”

5. **Practicum 1** in schools is worth 0.25 credits, 32 days during the winter session. “The practicum consists of two main components: 1) orientation to schools, communities and systems and 2) opportunities for classroom practice related to the candidate’s specific program. During the Professional Semester in Year 4 Teacher candidates are assigned to a 7-week (30 – 35 day) practicum session in schools or other settings approved by the Ontario College of Teachers. This does not include the field experiences candidates are involved in throughout their program.”

**Year 5**

1. **Mentored Inquiry and Teaching 2** is a 0.25 credit course with 6-8 days spent in schools or learning environment. “During this course, the Professional Learning is taken in an educational setting during Year 5 of the Concurrent Program. This course builds upon **Mentored Inquiry in Teaching 1**, and focuses on further developing teacher candidates’ sense of identity as professionals through ongoing self-directed and collegial learning. It will expand teacher candidates’ capacity to learn from their personal and professional experiences and inquiry.”
2. **Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment 2** is worth one full credit. “This course emphasizes subject-specific methodology. Students are introduced to curriculum documents appropriate to their division(s), evidence-informed pedagogical practices, and assessment and evaluation methods.”

3. **Practicum 2** in schools is worth 0.25 credits, 20 days, 5 days per week, during the month of May. “The practicum consists of two main components: 1) orientation to schools, communities and systems and 2) opportunities for classroom practice related to the candidate’s specific program. In Year 5, teacher candidates are assigned to a 4-week (20 day) practicum session during the months of April to May in schools or other settings approved by the Ontario College of Teachers. This does not include the field experiences candidates are involved in throughout their program.”

4. The **e-Portfolio** embedded in the BEd courses from Years 3 to 5 (Academic to Professional).

Source: UofT, 2011

The following chart illustrates the distribution of the above Bachelor of Education courses from Year 3 to Year 5.

**Table 3. Bachelor of Education Course Distribution**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year of Study</th>
<th>Year 3</th>
<th>Year 4</th>
<th>Year 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor of Education Degree</td>
<td>5.0 Credits over three Years of study</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principles of Teaching: Legal, Ethical &amp; Professional (0.5)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inclusive Education: ELLs &amp; Exceptional Learners (0.5)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e-Portfolio</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Professional Semester (January to April)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Curriculum, Instruction &amp; Assessment 1 (1.0)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Psychological Foundations of Learning (0.5)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Social Foundations of Teaching &amp; Schooling (0.5)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mentored Inquiry &amp; Teaching 1 (0.25)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Practicum 1 35 days (0.25)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>e-Portfolio</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BEd Credits per Year</td>
<td>1.0 Credits</td>
<td>2.5 Credits</td>
<td>1.5 Credits</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: UofT (2011)
The e-Portfolio was a program component linked with the Concurrent Bachelor of Education courses. It was a performance assessment tool that required student teachers, as developing teachers, to demonstrate their learning and reflection through the analysis of a variety of artifacts that represent their experiences and evidence of learning. The e-Portfolio was developed progressively from Years 3 to 5 of the program (UofT, 2011; OISE, 2011a).

The e-Portfolio could serve as an organizer, a goal setter, and a descriptor. It helped teacher candidates to compile evidence of their learning, as well as to develop technology skills, relationship building skills, assessment abilities, and awareness of the need for constant professional development. The e-Portfolio provided teacher candidates with a structure to reflect regularly on their strengths and weakness as they select artifacts for their e-Portfolio (OISE, 2011a).

In the Concurrent Teacher Education Program, students had a variety of field-based education-related experiences and the opportunity to connect these experiences to content taught in the university. Initially, students observed school communities and gradually became involved in tutoring, student teaching, and research inquiry experiences. In addition to the field experiences, students were required to complete two supervised practicum placements and an internship experience.

Field experiences in communities and schools were located in the early years of the program and allowed candidates to explore education in diverse contexts. Through the ‘Mentored Inquiry and Teaching’ (MIT) days, Concurrent Education students spent six to eight days in field leading up to their practicum. MIT days were linked to courses offered in Years 4 and 5 of the program and would be taken in conjunction with other teacher education program courses. During MIT days, Concurrent Education students visited local schools to conduct inquiry-based research activities. Students were paired with mentors in the schools who could later serve as their practicum teachers.

Practicum placements were located in Years 4 and 5 of the program. In the Concurrent Program, students complete 52 days of evaluated student teaching (practicum). The practicum consisted of two elements: (1) orientation to schools, with a focus on the school
community, and (2) classroom practice. Students completed two practicum sessions over the course of the program. The first practicum was in Year 4 and spanned 32 days over a four-month period. The second practicum was offered in Year 5 and includes 20 days in April. The Table below shows which hands-on experiences were available, in which year of study.

**Table 4. Concurrent Teacher Education Field Experiences**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year 1</th>
<th>Year 2</th>
<th>Year 3</th>
<th>Year 4</th>
<th>Year 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Observation Field Experience in schools connected to the <em>Child and Adolescent Development in Education</em> course</td>
<td>Observation and Participation Field Experience in the community connected to the <em>Equity &amp; Diversity in Education</em> course</td>
<td>Observation and Tutoring Field Experience connected to the <em>Inclusive Education</em> course</td>
<td><em>Mentored Inquiry and Teaching</em> course</td>
<td><em>Mentored Inquiry and Teaching</em> course</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 to 20 hours</td>
<td>12 to 15 hours</td>
<td>12 to 15 hours</td>
<td>6-8 days in schools</td>
<td>6-8 days in schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completed in Years 1 or 2</td>
<td>Completed in Years 2 or 3</td>
<td>Internship 100 hours + Completed in Years 3, 4, 5</td>
<td>Practicum 1 32 days in schools</td>
<td>Practicum 2 20 days in schools</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The Concurrent Teacher Education Program *Anchor Subject Internship* was an education-focused program component embedded in the undergraduate degree (BA, BSc, BPHE, and BMus). The Internship connected the candidates’ subject specializations to aspects of the teaching profession. For example, a candidate in the Chemistry Program could enrol in an Internship opportunity that focused on the development of safe laboratory practices and procedures for the neighbouring Outdoor Science Education Centre. The Internship would integrate, extend and deepen students’ learning experiences as they began to identify particular academic or professional interests throughout the course of their studies. Concurrent teacher candidates could choose from a wide variety of Internship opportunities (school sites, non-school sites or international sites). This chapter presented the research
context for my study, by describing the teacher education terrain in Canada and also the specific teacher education program that my participants were part of. Before I present my research findings, I describe the research methodology used for this study.
Chapter 5: Research Methodology

In the preceding chapters, I discussed the rationale for the study, presented literature findings relevant to my research, and provided a conceptual framework that informed my research and data analysis. I also provided a description of the research context for my study. In this chapter, I describe the research methodology employed in my research. I start by providing a rationale for the approach I used in exploring the roots of teacher candidates’ (TCs) conceptions of diversity. I then describe how I recruited the participants. Next I present data collection and analysis strategies and discuss the ethical considerations and measures I took to establish validity of research findings. Finally, I discuss the limitations of the methods and of the current research.

Qualitative case study approach

In considering the aim of this study, which was to examine the causes for and influences on TCs’ conceptions of diversity, I chose to approach it as a case study. A case study is primarily a form of qualitative interpretative research (Yang, 2005a, 2005b) with a limited number of quantitative tools. I chose this particular design because I was interested in insight, discovery and interpretation, rather than hypothesis testing (Merriam, 1988; 2009). The case study allowed approaching “a problem of practice from a holistic perspective” (Merriam, 1988, p. xii/Preface). That is, it allowed me to gain an in-depth understanding of the situation and its meaning for those involved (Merriam, 1988; 2009). Merriam (1988) maintains that “the qualitative case study is a particularly suitable method for dealing with critical problems of practice and extending the knowledge base of various aspects of education” (Preface, p. xiii). A case study approach is often the best methodology for addressing questions in which understanding is sought to improve practice (Merriam, 1988). In the same vein, Patton (1990) writes that the case study is an effort that aims to:
understand situations in their uniqueness as part of a particular context and the interactions there. This understanding is an end in itself, so that it is not attempting to predict what may happen in the future necessarily, but to understand the nature of that setting – what it means for participants to be in that setting, what their lives are like, what’s going on for them, what their meanings are, what the world looks like in that particular setting – and in the analysis to be able to communicate that faithfully to others who are interested in that setting. … The analysis strives for depth of understanding (p. 11).

Several authors have advanced definitions of the case study. Creswell (1998) conceptualizes the case study as “an exploration of a ‘bounded system’ ... a program, an event, an activity, or individuals” (p. 61). Mertens (1998) states that a case study is a “method for learning about a complex instance, based on a comprehensive understanding of that instance obtained by extensive descriptions and analysis of that instance taken as a whole and in its context” (p. 166). Feagin, Orum, and Sjoberg (1991) define the case study by its special features: case study is ideal when a holistic, in-depth investigation is appropriate. Merriam (1988) conceptualizes the case study as “an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single entity, phenomenon, or social unit” (p. 6). Some of the more prominent features of the case studies are that they “are particularistic, descriptive, and heuristic and rely heavily on inductive reasoning in handling multiple data sources” (p. 8). Schram (2006) views the case study as intrinsic and states that it focuses on “teasing out what can be learned about [a] particular case” and that its value lies “in facilitating appreciation of the uniqueness, complexity, and contextual embeddedness of individual events and phenomena” (p. 108).

A case study approach is well-suited for my research as such an approach offered me the opportunity to investigate my main question and the sub-questions in naturalistic settings in order to generate understandings about them (Creswell, 2005, 1998; Creswell et al., 2003; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003). Research that focuses on discovery, insight, and understanding form the perspectives of those being studied offers the greatest promise of making significant contributions to the knowledge base and practice of education (Merriam, 1988; Creswell, 2005). Ross and Smith (1992), for example, used a case study methodology to assess preservice teachers’ emerging perspectives about the problems that confront diverse learners in classrooms, their commitment to teaching diverse learners, and their beliefs about the
causes of failure for diverse learners. Larkin (2010) chose a qualitative case study methodology to examine how preservice secondary science teachers’ conceptions about what it meant to teach science in diverse classrooms change during a teacher education program, and how courses and field experiences influenced those changes. While some of the characteristics of the teacher education program in my research are unique or context specific, many of the practical and conceptual issues that I present echo the broader practical and conceptual issues identified in teacher education research.

Case studies can draw on multiple sources of data, which bring out the details from the viewpoint of the participants (Stake, 1995). Merriam (1988) states that a case study “can […] include quantitative and qualitative data” (p. 2). Yin (2009, 2004) points to the fact that the validity issue in a case study is resolved as a result of the process of triangulation, in which multiple sources of data are used to establish meaning. Kidder and Fine (1987, cited in Merriam, 1988, p. 2) also note “there is nothing mysterious about combining qualitative and quantitative measures. This is, in fact, a form of triangulation that enhances the validity and reliability of one’s study.” Schumacher and McMillan (1993) also claim that in a case study “validity… may be its major strength” (p. 391). Yin (2009) maintains that a case study should use as many sources of evidence as are relevant for the study and that no single source has a complete advantage over others. He also comments that case studies can be based on any mix of quantitative and qualitative evidence. These principles were followed in undertaking this study.

I used a combination of data collection strategies, which ensured the richness and the depth for the description of findings (Creswell, 1998; Ivankova et al., 2006). Data collection strategies included: (1) questionnaires sent to teacher candidates in Year 3, 4 and 5 within each of the six partner campuses, faculties and colleges of the concurrent teacher education program; (2) in-depth semi-structured interviews with 24 teacher candidates from the six program partner units (eleven from Year 5, seven from Year 4 and six from Year 3); (4) in-depth semi-structured interviews with 15 teacher educators (representing the education-focused courses in the BEd, and the education related courses taught outside the BEd portion of the program); (5) in-depth semi-structured interviews with six program administrators,
several of which had teaching responsibilities; (6) researcher’s reflections notes on each participant recorded immediately after the interview; (7) documents (e.g., published information about the teacher education program; course syllabi for education-focused courses; reflective writings for teacher candidates being interviewed; applicant profiles for the TCs being interviewed).

Case studies “use prose and literary techniques to describe, elicit images, and analyze situations. [...] They present documentation of events, quotes, samples and artifacts” (Wilson, 1979, p. 448, cited in Merriam, 1988, p. 13). The present case study is a combination of description and interpretation. Merriam (1988) states that, “while some case studies are purely descriptive, many more are a combination of descriptive and interpretation or description and evaluation” (p. 29). Descriptive case studies are useful in presenting basic information about areas of education where little research has been conducted. Innovative programs, such as the concurrent teacher education at the University of Toronto (UofT), and practices are often the focus of descriptive case studies in education (Merriam, 1988).

Interpretive case studies also contain rich, thick descriptions. The descriptive data are used to “develop conceptual categories or to illustrate, support, or challenge theoretical assumptions held prior to the data gathering” (Merriam, p. 28).

My case study began with a questionnaire sent to teacher candidates in their third, fourth and final years of the Concurrent Teacher Education Program during the 2011-2012 academic year. The questionnaire allowed me to examine conceptions of diversity and the familiarity with this concept in a larger number of teacher candidates. I also conducted semi-structured interviews with 24 volunteer teacher candidates. While the main focus of this research was the perspectives of the teacher candidates, I interviewed teacher educators and program administrators as additional informants. This allowed the opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of teacher candidates’ learning experiences, and teaching of diversity in the program by triangulating multiple perspectives. The primary sources of data were participants’ responses as reported in interviews, questionnaires, and reflective writing. Other data sources, such as document analysis and researcher notes were used as complementary data. Triangulating multiple perspectives and multiple data sources was of significant
importance because the majority of data stemmed from self-reports. Nonetheless, I believe that a qualitative case study approach was best for this research since, as Mertens (1998) states, the case study is a “method for learning about a complex instance, based on a comprehensive understanding of that instance obtained by extensive descriptions and analysis of that instance taken as a whole and in its context” (p. 166).

In this study, I compared participants/groups of participants for a better understanding of learning that occurred in TCs. The type of comparison that was used in this study pertains to what Krathwohl (1997) and Wiersma (2000) call cross-sectional design, or what Ivankova et al. (2006) refer to as multiple case study approach. Cross sectional designs involve collecting data at one point in time from groups different in age and/or experience (Krathwohl, 1997; Wiersma, 2000). Differences between selected groups in a cross sectional study may represent changes that take place in a larger defined population (Wiersma, 2000). Bodur (2003) employed such a design to investigate the effects of preservice teacher education on teachers’ beliefs and attitudes about teaching culturally and linguistically diverse learners.

Interviews followed the questionnaire. They were recorded digitally and transcribed (Creswell, 2005; Ivankova et al, 2006). The text data was analyzed thematically at two levels, within each case and across the cases. The verification of data was performed through triangulating different sources of information, and rich and thick description of the cases. Finally, the data were further verified through auditing, which included individual coding by myself and a fellow researcher and then comparing codes (Miles and Huberman, 1994; Creswell, 1998; Ivankova et al, 2006).

In case study research, it is important to define the case as well and identify its boundaries (Stake, 2000; Yin, 2004). In this study, the experiences of all teacher candidate participants in the Concurrent Teacher Education Program comprise the clearest boundaries of what Stake (2010) calls a collective case study (Stake, 2000) and what I call a case of teaching and learning about diversity. To better contextualize the teaching and learning of diversity of these TCs, I first present six individual cases before I present the findings from the larger collective case. When presenting the six individual cases I am using elements from what is called portraiture (Merriam, 1988; 2009). Portraiture has been classified as a case study
approach (Merriam, 1988, 2009; Yin, 1999) and the portrait that is presented is the case of an individual’s journey rather than a finding that can be replicated (Mannen, 1988). The researcher writing the portrait cannot find the truth in the situation, but uses her position to control the information that is described (English, 2000) and the approach is an attempt to explain the situation using an insider point of view (Davies, 1997). Thus, portraiture offers the best way to examine TCs’ individual characteristics, Application Profiles, characteristics of their individual units within the concurrent teacher education program, and field experiences with the aim to uncover aspects of individual change and causes for change. Such an approach allowed me to trace changes and influences on TCs’ conceptions of diversity to experiences inside and outside the teacher education program.

I chose to focus on the Concurrent Teacher Education Program because of the length of the program and the likelihood that I would be able to collect more data pertaining to different stages in TCs’ development in the teacher education program. Multiple data sources were needed to explore the roots in teacher candidates’ conceptions of diversity. Such conceptions were not developed in isolation, but within the context of their learning to become teachers and acquiring understandings of teaching in diverse classrooms. As research shows, the instruction in the concurrent programs “includes the what - that is, content knowledge” (Casey & Childs, 2007, p. 3) and an advantage is that candidates can be introduced to education concepts early in the degree and they have more time to rethink ideas and build professional knowledge (Gambhir et al, 2008). In addition, I completed a five-year teacher education program myself, which allowed me to better understand the learning process. At the time when I began the study, the concurrent program was also the newest program among the teacher education pathways at OISE, and researching TCs’ experiences was warranted.

**Study participants**

The main participants in this study were the teacher candidates in the five-year Concurrent Teacher Education Program at the University of Toronto (UofT), a research-intensive university in Ontario, Canada. I focused on the teacher candidates in their third, fourth and fifth/final years within each of the six partner units spread on the three campuses of the university. While it would have been worth examining the conceptions about diversity and
experiences of learning about diversity of students enrolled in each year of the five-year program, the aim of this study was to focus on TCs’ learning experiences in the Bachelor of Education (BEd) portion of the concurrent program. As this program included specialized education courses, as well as education-friendly course outside the BEd it provided an appropriate focus for the study (see Table 3). The program elements of the concurrent program outlined in Table 3 were developed to prepare teachers able to teach students in diverse schools (as I maintain in Chapter 4), and thus are the most pertinent for the purpose of this study.

The participant selection strategy that was employed in this study could be attributed to what Patton (1990) calls “maximum variation sampling”. Patton states that this sampling strategy:

… aims at capturing and describing central themes or principal outcomes that cut across a great deal of participant or program variation. For small samples a great deal of heterogeneity can be a problem because individual cases are so different from each other. The maximum variation sampling strategy turns that apparent weakness into a strength by applying the following logic: Any common patterns that emerge from great variation are of particular interest and value in capturing the core experiences and central, shared aspects or impacts of a program. (p. 172)

The participants were involved in two phases of this research. From November 2011 to November 2012 an online questionnaire stage and an interview stage was completed. Each of these stages is described below in relation to study participants. During the first phase, an invitation for participation in the online questionnaire was sent out to all the teacher candidates in their fifth year of study in November of 2011. In the questionnaire I also included an invitation to volunteer for follow-up interviews. As I had initially very few responses to my invitation for participation, I sought a revision to my Ethics Protocol and extended the invitation to participate in my study to TCs in Year 3 and 4 in the concurrent program. This change helped increase the number of participants to a total of 119 participants. The majority of TCs in Year 5 completed the online questionnaire in the months of January and May of 2012 (41 and 29 percent, respectively), with the rest spread between February, March, April and June of 2012. Almost all TCs in Year 4 completed the online questionnaire in the month of May 2012 (with one questionnaire completed in August, 2012). The TCs in Year 3 participated in the online questionnaire between the months of April and
October 2012 (no particular participation patterned was observed). All the teacher candidates who volunteered to participate in the questionnaire were included in the study.

Having participants from the six partner units of the Concurrent Teacher Education Program allowed me to examine the research questions from multiple student contexts: teacher candidates studying toward either an Honours Bachelor of Arts (HBA), an Honours Bachelor of Science (HBSc), a Bachelor of Music (BMus) or a Bachelor of Physical Education and Health (BPHE). Additionally, different anchor subjects (French, Chemistry, Mathematics, Physics, Psychology, Physical Education and Health, Music Education, Christianity and Culture, and Education and Society) were included. Participants also came from programs that certified them in either elementary or middle school levels (Primary/Junior [P/J]: Kindergarten – Grade 6) or the secondary school level (Intermediate/Senior [I/S]: Grades 7 – 12), as Table 5 shows.

Table 5 Program Information for Teacher Candidate Participants in Questionnaires

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Partner Unit</th>
<th>Partner Unit I</th>
<th>Partner Unit II</th>
<th>Partner Unit III</th>
<th>Partner Unit IV</th>
<th>Partner Unit V</th>
<th>Partner Unit VI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teaching Levels</td>
<td>I/S</td>
<td>I/S</td>
<td>I/S</td>
<td>I/S</td>
<td>I/S</td>
<td>P/J</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 3 TCs</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 4 TCs</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 5 TCs</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total TCs by Unit</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grand Total</td>
<td>119 TCs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The majority of TCs who participated in the questionnaire phase of the study, across the three years, were female with almost identical numbers in each of the years, as depicted in Table 6.

**Table 6. Description of Participants in Questionnaire by Gender**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Female (%)</th>
<th>Male (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Year 3 TCs</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 4 TCs</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 5 TCs</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In terms of age, the majority of TCs fell into the 21 to 25 age group, with a substantial number of TCs in Year 3 aged 20 years or younger. The similarity in age between the three groups is likely attributed to the nature of the concurrent teacher education program. At UofT, the enrolment in the concurrent program is either after the completion of secondary school or after one year of university study, thus the age in Year 3 students is not surprising, as Table 7 shows.

**Table 7. Description of Participants in Questionnaire by Age**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>20 years or younger (%)</th>
<th>21-25 years old (%)</th>
<th>31-35 years old (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Year 3 TCs</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 4 TCs</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 5 TCs</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The religious distribution among the three groups of participants is shown in Table 8. The majority of TCs identified as Christian. Interestingly, quite a few teacher candidates indicated ‘no religion’ or preferred not to respond to the question asking them to identify their religious affiliation.
The majority of TCs participating in the questionnaire stated that they were heterosexual. Only a few TCs identified as LGBT (two percent in Year 5, and three percent in Year 3), while a few other preferred not to respond to the question related to their sexuality (three, four and two percent in Years 3, 4, and 5, respectively). Out of the 119 TCs participants in the questionnaire only six students identified themselves as having a disability: whether it be a physical, mental or learning disability. All the TCs across all of the years indicated (also in the questionnaire phase) that they were Canadian citizens. Also, the majority of TCs identified themselves as White Caucasian. No one identified as Aboriginal. When asked to describe the community that they spent the largest part of their growing up years, TCs responses fell into three large groups by community type: rural communities, suburbs and cities. The majority of TCs in Year 3 came from urban areas/cities, while the majority of TCs in Years 4 and 5 come from suburban areas. The number of TCs coming from rural communities and small towns was smaller than the other two groups across all the years, as depicted in Table 9.
Table 9. Description of Participants in Questionnaire by Community Where They Lived Growing Up

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Rural and small towns %</th>
<th>Suburbs %</th>
<th>City %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Year 3 TCs</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 4 TCs</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 5 TCs</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As for the racial composition of communities they grew up in, some TCs selected a number of descriptors (see Appendix C for questions asked), which can be linked to them moving to different communities while growing up. Overall, across all the TCs, ‘White Caucasian’ was the descriptor most frequently selected, and the overwhelming descriptor for rural and small communities. In addition to ‘White Caucasian’ two trends were noticed in relation to cities and suburbs: (1) across TCs living in cities, multiple descriptors of the racial composition of the neighbourhoods or communities were identified, with no particular pattern; (2) across TCs living in the suburbs, ‘South Asian’, ‘South Eastern Asian’, and ‘Chinese’ were most frequently reported. In the most general terms, the teacher candidates that enrolled in each of the six partner units were largely representative of the population residing in closer proximity to the respective educational units. When describing their parents’ education, the majority of TCs indicated that their parents completed either a college or university degree.

I was able to identify more than half of the TCs who participated in the online questionnaire, across the three years, as second-generation immigrants. Although this is a contested term, I this study I used Statistics Canada’s (2011) definition that states that “second generation includes individuals who were born in Canada and had at least one parent born outside Canada” (p. 3). Such identification was made based on the responses to questions in the questionnaire that related to identity, language spoken at home, and parents (see Appendix C). Many TCs volunteered additional information under “other” that also helped with this identification. One example includes descriptions of parents’ immigration pathway to Canada such as Economic Class or refugee.
In the second phase I conducted individual interviews with 24 teacher candidates, from the 199 TCs in the questionnaire phase described above. All the teacher candidates who expressed an interest in being interviewed were included in my research (See Tables 10 for program information that the participants shared in the interviews: partner unit, teaching level, areas of study, as well as distribution of participants across the three years). The interviews with all the TCs were conducted between the months of April and October of 2012. The following participation trends were noticeable: more than half of the interviews with fifth-year TCs took place in June of 2012; the majority of interviews with fourth-year TCs were conducted in October of 2012. In this study I use the terms “fifth-year/Year 5”, “fourth-year/Year 4” and “third-year/Year 3” to refer to the time the participants started their participation in the study. Many participants either graduated or moved into the subsequent year in their program at the time of the interview.

Table 10. Program Information for Teacher Candidate Participants in Interviews

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Partner Unit</th>
<th>Partner Unit I</th>
<th>Partner Unit II</th>
<th>Partner Unit III</th>
<th>Partner Unit IV</th>
<th>Partner Unit V</th>
<th>Partner Unit VI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teaching Levels</td>
<td>1/S</td>
<td>1/S</td>
<td>1/S</td>
<td>1/S</td>
<td>1/S</td>
<td>1/S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 3 TCs</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 4 TCs</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 5 TCs</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total TCs by Unit</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The teacher candidates provided biographical information in the questionnaire as well as in interviews, but the extent of the details varied. While the questionnaire had questions related to markers of identity, such as gender, race, and sexual orientation, I decided to leave it to the participants to share and discuss aspects of their identity in interviews. This decision followed after my first two interviews with TCs where I felt that the participants were not
willing to respond to direct questions about their identity. I revised my question to ask “Tell me a bit about yourself” rather than “How would you describe your identity”, which yielded results as shown in Table 11. As seen from Table 11, TCs’ responses do not add up to the total number of participants, either because these participants did not wish to share information related to certain identity markers or because they did not find it applicable to themselves. TCs’ decisions to share or not such data can be argued to also be linked to the importance they assigned to such information in relation to the research topic – learning about diversity. Also, these data speak, in very general terms, about the characteristics of the teacher candidates participating in the interviews: the majority of TCs were female; half of them were first generation Canadians and half reported affiliations to a religion; approximately one third of TCs identified as racial minority.

Table 11. Biographical Information as Reported by Teacher Candidate Participants in Interviews

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program Unit</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Racial Minority</th>
<th>First Generation Canadian</th>
<th>Disabled</th>
<th>Aboriginal/First Nations</th>
<th>Religious Affiliation</th>
<th>LGBT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Partner Unit I</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partner Unit II</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partner Unit III</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partner Unit IV</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partner Unit V</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partner Unit VI</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total (across partner units)</strong></td>
<td><strong>18</strong></td>
<td><strong>6</strong></td>
<td><strong>7</strong></td>
<td><strong>12</strong></td>
<td><strong>1</strong></td>
<td><strong>0</strong></td>
<td><strong>12</strong></td>
<td><strong>1</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The in-depth semi-structured interviews with the TCs allowed for further insight into teacher candidates’ experiences. In order to triangulate the sources of information and to gather different perspectives, I also conducted in-depth interviews with 15 teacher educators. Of these educators, 12 were teaching courses across the BEd portion of the teacher education program (see also Table 4: BEd Course Distribution) and three were teaching education-
related courses outside of the BEd. All the teacher educators who volunteered their participation were included in the study. It has to be noted that a number of teacher educator participants had cross appointments to teach several related subjects. In addition to teacher educator participants, I interviewed six program administrators. All the volunteer program administrators were included in the study. In addition to questionnaire and interview data, I drew on a number of other data sources in this research: my reflections on each participant recorded immediately after the interview; documents (the reflective writing/e-Portfolios documents of each teacher candidates being interviewed; Applicant Admissions Profiles for the TCs being interviewed; and published information about the teacher education program, including program courses, its vision, mission and research reports specific to teacher education at UofT. These data sources have added to the data triangulation and analysis in this study. Table 12 summarizes all the data sources for my research. The data from the teacher candidates were the primary data in this study, while the other data sources were used as complementary data.

Table 12. Overview of Data Sources for the Study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data sources</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher candidate (TC) questionnaire responses</td>
<td>119 participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher candidates in-depth interviews</td>
<td>24 participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher educator interviews</td>
<td>15 participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program administrator interviews</td>
<td>6 participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Documents</td>
<td>- TC application profiles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- TC reflective writing/e-Portfolio documents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Researcher reflections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- published information on teacher education at UofT</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From the 24 TCs interviewed for this study, I selected six TCs for my individual cases that I present in Chapter 6. When selecting the individual cases, I chose a representative from each of the CTEP program partner units in order to highlight varied perspectives across the program. Also, selection criteria were based on the data sources TCs shared, in addition to the questionnaire and the individual interview. Those TCs who shared their Application Profile as well as the largest number of reflections written at different stages in their program


were selected. In cases when only one TC from a certain program partner unit participated in the interview stage of the study, that participant’s data was selected for examination as an individual case. When more than one participant (from the 24 interviewed) was coming from the same unit, the TC with the largest number of data sources was selected. The next section describes in more detail the data collection process in this research.

**Data collection**

Case study does not claim any particular methods for data collection or data analysis and “any and all methods of gathering data from testing to interviewing can be used in a case study, although certain techniques are used more than others” (Merriam, 1988, p. 10). The advantage of using multiple methods is that the flaws of one method can be the strengths of another (Denzin, 1994). The data for my study were collected from November 2011 to November 2012. As mentioned earlier, because I initially had very few responses to my invitation for participation, I sought a revision to my Ethics Protocol. As a result to this revision, I extended the invitation to participate in my study to TCs in their third and fourth years of study and was able to conduct class visits (see Appendix Q). The majority of TCs in their fifth year completed the online questionnaire in the months of January and May of 2012 (41 and 29 percent, respectively), with the rest spread between February, March, April and June of 2012. Almost all TCs in Year 4 completed the online questionnaire in the month of May 2012 (with one questionnaire completed in August 2012). The TCs in their third year participated in the online questionnaire between the months of April and October 2012 (no particular participation patterned was observed). All the teacher candidates who volunteered to participate in the questionnaire were included in the study.

All the teacher candidates who expressed interest in being interviewed were included in my research. The interviews with all the 24 TCs were conducted between the months of April and October 2012. The noticeable participation trends included that more than half of the interviews with TCs in Year 5 took place in June of 2012 and that the majority of interviews with fourth-year TCs were conducted in October of 2012. In this study I use the terms “fifth-year/Year 5”, “fourth-year/Year 4” and “third-year/Year 3” to refer to the time the participants started their participation in the study. Many participants, as seen from the
details above, either graduated or moved into the subsequent year in their program at the time of the interview.

All the teacher educators who volunteered their participation (refer to Table 12) were included in this study. The interviews with teacher educator participants took place between April and July of 2012. All the program administrators (refer to Table 12) who volunteered their participation were included in this study. The interviews with program administrators were held between May and November of 2012.

As mentioned earlier, the data were collected through a variety of collection procedures: an online questionnaire, semi-structured interviews, and documents. This follows the “data triangulation” approach to data collection and allowed me, the researcher, to build on strengths of each type of instrument (Merriam, 1998; Patton, 1990; Yin, 2004). Data were collected in two main stages with the questionnaire stage followed by the interview stage. Although in the initial design of the study I also included focus group interviews with TCs, I had only one candidate who volunteered to participate in a focus group (this TC subsequently participated in an individual interview). The response rate thus did not allow me to conduct focus group interviews. When I asked the TCs that I met for individual interviews about reasons for not participating in focus group interviews, they tended to cite conflicting schedules as an obstacle in coordinating a time for a focus group.

In the first stage, all teacher candidates enrolled in Year 3, 4, and 5 of the Concurrent Teacher Education Program were invited to respond to an online questionnaire (see Appendix C). Brown (2001) defines a questionnaire as a “written instrument that presents respondents with a series of questions or statements [that are typically factual, behavioural, or attitudinal] to which they are to react either by writing out their answers or selecting from among existing answers” (p. 6). Researcher time, researcher effort, cost, and processing time are found to be some of the advantages of the questionnaire (Dornyei, 2003). Other benefits of using a questionnaire is that it is a useful instrument to collect demographic information, it provides structured data and the researcher can administer it without being present (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000). All volunteer teacher candidates enrolled in the six partner units of the Concurrent Teacher Education Program were included in the questionnaire phase of
the study. These TCs received a letter that outlined the research and were asked to sign a consent form to acknowledge their willingness to participate in the questionnaire (see Appendices A and B). The questionnaire was accessible online and done on a one-time basis. The questionnaire responses in this study helped refine the interview questions that were initially formulated based on finding from relevant research literature. As Merriam (1998) states, the questionnaire can be used “to learn enough about the situation to formulate questions for subsequent interviews” (p. 74).

In the second stage, I conducted individual semi-structured interviews with 24 volunteer teacher candidates, 15 teacher educators and six program administrators. All teacher candidates, teacher educators and program administrators who volunteered their participation were included in my study. Merriam (1998) notes that an interview is a conversation with a purpose, and that in a case study research the purpose of the interview is to obtain a special kind of information. Patton (1980) further explains that:

We interview people to find out from them those things we cannot directly observe. … We cannot observe feelings, thoughts, and intentions. We cannot observe behaviours that took place at some previous point in time. … The purpose of interviewing, then, is to allow us to enter into the other person’s perspective (p. 196).

All interviews were approximately one hour in length and took place on the university campus, with the exception of two TC interviews that were conducted online. One such interview was conducted via Skype and one via email. Reasons for online interviews were linked to the location of the participants at the time of the study as one TC lived at a distance from the university and the other TC was in an internship outside of Canada. The interviews allowed me to tap into the teacher candidates’ past experiences with diversity that are impossible to replicate (Merriam, 1998). Interviewing also helped study “a relatively large number of people in a relatively short period of time” in order to obtain “a broad picture of a range of settings, situations, or people” (Taylor & Bogdan, 1984, p. 78). I digitally recorded the individual interviews and took brief notes during the interviews, “since not everything said can be recorded” (Merriam, 1998, p. 81). Also, I wrote reflections immediately after the interviews, such as “descriptive notes on the behaviour, verbal and nonverbal, of the informant, parenthetical thoughts of the researcher, and so on” (Merriam, 1998, p. 82). The
post-interview notes helped me monitor the process of data collection as well as begin to analyze the information itself (Merriam, 1998, p. 82). All the interviews were transcribed verbatim. Prior to data collection, I emailed a letter to participants that outlined the research and asked them to sign a consent form to acknowledge their willingness to participate in the interviews (see Appendices D, E, K, L, M, V, and O). I also made available a printed copy of the information letter and the consent form at the time of the interview and asked participants if they wanted me to share a synopsis of the results after I had completed my research. Two teacher candidates were interested in receiving such a synopsis.

The interview protocols for individual interviews were based on findings from relevant research literature and then refined based on the results from the questionnaire. As the literature review presented in Chapter 2 shows, there is no single definition of diversity and sources and influences on TCs’ conceptions of diversity are not clearly identified in past studies. I thus designed questions that would elicit such definitions and gain insight into roots of TCs’ diversity conceptions (see Appendices C and F). After the questionnaire was posted, I noticed that not all the TCs chose to answer questions related to their identity. When I started interviewing, I retained all initial questions to probe for answers. However, after I completed two interviews I decided to leave it up to the participants to share information about themselves by changing one of the questions from “How would you describe your identity” to “Tell me a bit about yourself”. The questionnaire as well as the initial interviews allowed me to have probe questions, in addition to main questions (see Appendix F). The goal of the open-ended questions of the interviews was to explore in more detail the findings from the questionnaire phase of the study (Creswell et al., 2003; Ivankova et al., 2006). The interviews, thus, allowed me to “assess the perspectives of the person being interviewed” (Patton, 1980, p. 196). Also, I was able to understand why certain factors contributed differently to students’ conceptualizations about diversity. I pilot tested the individual interview protocol with one participant. The pilot interview was analyzed and helped me refine the protocol questions (including the wording of some of the questions, order of the questions, as well as prompts). In retrospect, I believe that it would have been helpful for all participants to read a copy of the interview transcript and make any changes they felt necessary, as many of the interview questions asked them to reflect on their lives and past
experiences. However, what I came to know about the availability of participants at the time of the research design became evident during the data collection. Indeed, I discovered that in having to fulfill the requirements of both an undergraduate degree and a teacher education degree, this particular group of teacher candidates had intricate study schedules. Additionally, the students were being solicited for many other research studies that focused on the Concurrent Teacher Education Program as the newest program among the other teacher education pathways at the university. Also, as I intended to follow up with TCs to invite them to share their reflective writings, I felt that asking them to review the interviews might deter them from engaging in frequent follow-up communications.

Documents, which are a major source of data in case study research (Merriam, 1998), were also part of data collection for this study. I collected documents (such as Application Profiles and reflective writings) and reviewed them throughout the two stages described above. Documents are usually produced for reasons other than research and they are not subject to limitations characteristic of interviews, such as eliciting atypical roles and responses or being limited to those who are accessible and will cooperate (Merriam, 1998). They are thus nonreactive and grounded in the context under study. Documents can be broadly defined as any communication: novels, newspapers, diaries, historical documents, works of art, various types of records, and program documents (Merriam, 1998).

Primary documents that I reviewed for this study included teacher candidates’ Applicant Profiles (also referred to as Applicant Profile in this research) and teacher candidates’ reflections written as part of their e-portfolios. Other documents included relevant published information about the university, the teacher education program, and course syllabi shared by a number of teacher educators in this study. I sought permission to review Admissions Profiles and reflective writings from only the teacher candidates who expressed interest in participating in the individual interviews. On the Application Profile I reviewed the TCs’ elaborations on the question related to diversity, the question related to experiences of teaching and learning, and the “additional question” where TCs provided any additional information they wished. This allowed “the plausibility of the account and the reliability of the informant” (Merriam, 1998, p. 84). Merriam (1998) also notes that one might also
confirm the informant’s account by checking documentary material. Furthermore, it shed light on TCs’ understanding of diversity and diversity related concepts prior to their enrolment into the teacher education program. Casey (2005) used teacher candidate Applicant Profiles as a primary data source to examine the relationships among teacher education admission criteria, practice teaching, and teacher candidate preparedness.

For reflective writing and other materials shared through the e-portfolios, I reviewed only those of the TCs participating in the interview stage of the study and who shared their Applicant Profile. I found that the e-portfolios represented a good data source to study TCs’ developing understanding of diversity and their teaching philosophy, as the portfolio incorporated a section related to teaching diverse learners, in addition to a number of knowledge bands strands. Data collection and analysis has been a simultaneous activity in my qualitative research (Merriam, 1998). In what follows I describe how I approached the analysis of the data in this study.

**Data analysis**

This descriptive and interpretive case study uses an inductive model of analysis (Merriam, 1998). The analysis of case study is one of the least developed aspects of the case study methodology (Tellis, 1997). Yin (2004) suggests that every investigation should have a general analytic strategy, so as to guide the decision regarding what will be analyzed and for what reason. “Data analysis” as Yin (2004) maintains, “consists of examining, categorizing, tabulating, or otherwise recombining the evidence to address the initial propositions of a study” (p. 24). Data analysis is the process of making sense out of one’s data (Merriam, 1998). The analysis begins with the first interview, the first document read (Merriam, 1998), a recommendation that I made efforts to follow. Although the data collection and analysis in case study research is recursive and dynamic, analysis becomes more intense once all the data are in. The ongoing analysis helped me avoid the risk of ending up with data that are unfocused, repetitious, and of being overwhelmed by the volume of material that needed to be processed. Furthermore, the ongoing analysis helped me assess which questions I had brought with me “to the field” were relevant and which ones had to be reformulated to direct my work (Merriam, 1998).
Once I made a decision to end simultaneous data collection and analysis, I organized the information in a way that allowed an intensive analysis. I organized the data to make sense to me (Merriam, 1998). My goal was to be able to locate specific data during intensive analysis. The entire body of data thus was first organized by individual question (see Appendices C and F) for each year of the TC group (i.e. Years 3, 4 and 5), for the teacher educators (see Appendix M), and for the program administrators (see Appendix O). I used separate electronic documents with tables. Sorting responses by question and by participant group not only allowed me to locate specific data, but also to identify initial patterns. I read through data several times from beginning to end, making notes, comments, and observations in the margins. I recorded patterns for Year 3, Year 4 and Year 5 TCs separately. Next, in a separate document I recorded common, divergent and also interesting patterns between the three years. As a next step, I recorded common, divergent and unique/interesting patterns from each of the TC groups in relation to teacher educator and program administrator data. I also recorded separately common, divergent and unique/interesting patterns between teacher educators and program administrators, and then put together a table with such patterns for all TCs as one group (not divided by years this time), and the teacher educators and program administrators. As I worked through the different blocks of data, I made sure to reread the raw information each time I made comparisons. This process allowed me to refresh my memory and to also see if my patterns were similar to what I had found in previous rounds of reading. All the electronic documents were dated to allow comparisons between the rounds of readings and pattern finding. I also shared the process and initial findings with my supervisor via email, which subsequently (through email date stamps) helped me to identify the varied steps I followed to organize data so that it made sense to me (Merriam, 1998).

After I completed sorting the data in this way, as well as completed the comparisons of initial patterns, I used the online tool called Wordle to generate word clouds from my data. I approached it in two ways. First, I used the text from raw data by question and second I used the text from the formulated patterns. This allowed me to compare whether the prominence of the words that appeared more frequently in the source text were similar. I saved the images created this way for subsequent use as snapshots of initial findings. When I completed what I considered a first phase of familiarizing myself with the data, I went back
to research methodology resources to re-read recommendations for case study data analysis. I also participated in conversations about data analysis as part of thesis group meetings organized by my thesis supervisor. I also took two NVivo workshops (NVivo is a platform for analysing data) to determine if it would be a useful tool for me to use, given the amount of data I gathered. I decided not to use NVivo due the cost for purchasing the software, the learning curve involved, but also because by that time I had already spent considerable amounts of time sorting and organizing my data.

After I familiarized myself with my data and revisited a number of research methodology resources, I decided to follow recommendations from such resources more closely, which started me on the second phase of data analysis. I used an inductive strategy as a primary method, that is, I looked for salient themes, categories and patterns that emerged from participants’ descriptions of their experiences and perceptions. I followed the three phases that Schumacher and McMillan (1993) recommend: coding the data into topics, grouping the topics into categories, and understanding the common patterns and their interrelations. Applying coding to raw data helped me to begin examining how my data supported or contradicted the theoretical framework that guided my research (DeCuir-Gunby et al., 2011), and led me to make certain choices about the conceptual framework, choices that I describe in the Introduction to Chapter 3. Coding “is, in essence, a circular process, in that the researcher may … revisit the raw data based upon theoretical findings and the current research literature” (DeCuir-Gunby et al., 2011, p. 138).

Thus, I read the transcripts from the interviews and my researcher notes repeatedly, sorted into units of meaning called topics, by participant group. I further sorted the topics in major topics (defined as a common topic that emerges from data), unique topics (a topic that seems of importance to the purpose of the research despite the fact that it does not occur too often), and leftover topics (i.e. a topic that may not seem important at the moment, but may or may not become important as the data collection continues) (Schumacher & McMillan, 1993). I later grouped the topics into categories. Each category had an abstract name to represent the meanings of similar topics. The next step was to look for common patterns in the data and for interrelations among the common patterns, within and across my participant groups. I
compared the patterns that I identified in this second stage of data analysis with patterns that I identified in the first phase, which I describe above as “familiarization with data phase”. This entire process lasted about one year. During that time, I also met with a fellow researcher and worked on coding parts of my data, specifically the questions related to meaning of diversity that my participants described. We coded independently and compared and discussed the results. The themes that emerged as a result of this process, along with illustrative examples, are presented in the findings Chapter 8.

Potts and Brown (2005) encourage that the analysis or making meaning of data be done by constantly reflecting and questioning: “What is the intended outcome, and how is the data analysis, whether statistical or not, being constructed? What data are included in the analysis and what are left out? Why? If using interview data, who decides which quotes from participants to include and who to exclude?” (p. 274). Such questions were part of the process for this research and were hard to answer. One way to deal with these recurring questions throughout the writing process was to distance myself from the research in order to reflect on it (Kirby & McKenna, 1989). I had to step back from the analysis in order to reflect on the data, the analysis and the destination of the research (Potts & Brown, 2005).

Distancing from my data and analysis was facilitated by my involvement in a research project at OISE, which involved data collection and analysis as well. My involvement in that project helped solidify decisions I made throughout my data analysis because of similar steps involved in both projects, and lengthy research team discussions of the data analysis process. By asking the questions highlighted above as well as by reflecting on the data, I was able to develop an intimate relationship with the data (Potts & Brown, 2005, p. 275). The analysis is about “understanding that relationship [...] and reflecting on the data in light of that relationship” (p. 275).

Keeping in mind that my case study focuses on a particular sample of teacher candidates in a concurrent teacher education program, the findings are not generalized to teacher candidates outside the program. I thus used descriptive statistics as a primary method for analyzing data from the TCs’ questionnaires. Schumacher and McMillan (1993) point to the fact that “the use of descriptive statistics is the most fundamental way to summarize data, and it is
indispensable in interpreting the results of quantitative research” (p. 192). This method helped see central tendencies and sum up the data. Questions of each section of the questionnaire were assigned a number for scoring purposes and the results were coded and entered. According to Dornyei (2003) the scores for the items addressing the same target are “summed up or averaged” (p. 37). Descriptive statistics was also used as a secondary method to generate, analyse and to compare frequency of occurrence for diversity dimensions in interviews (Trent, Kea & Oh, 2008). The survey software that I used allowed me to generate graphs for the demographic information that the TCs shared. I compared the information in these automatically generated graphs to TCs individual responses in questionnaire to identify any inconsistencies due to non-responses. This process allowed me to provide a more detailed description of my study participants, as presented earlier.

To analyze documents, I used a form of content analysis, which is typical of qualitative case studies: “Essentially content analysis is a systematic procedure for describing the content of communications” (Merriam, 1998, p. 116). Merriam also states that “essentially, qualitative content analysis looks for insights in which situations, settings, styles, images, meanings and nuances are key topics” and that “the process involves the simultaneous coding of raw data and constructing categories that capture relevant characteristics of the document’s content” (p. 117).

Based on data from the questionnaire, interviews and documents, I present and analyse my findings at two levels. I first describe six accounts or portraits of teacher candidates’ through the theory of conceptual change (Posner et al., 1982; Hewson & Lemberger, 2000; Larkin, 2012). This is to help the reader gain insights into the changes in TCs thinking during the course of their program at the micro level. The six cases have been selected from the larger number of participants because these teacher candidates volunteered to share data sources that represented varied points in their program of study (refer to Table 13). As all the documents that were submitted by teacher candidates were dated, the stage in the program such documents had been written was easily identifiable. Including the date on documents, such as reflections, appeared in most cases to be a document submission requirement in a given course or for the purpose of storing it in the e-portfolio. Also, these six cases represent
varied conceptions regarding diversity, as will be made evident later in the thesis. It is to be noted that determining the target of a conception was not so straightforward (Larkin, 2012). A conception, could be related to diversity, but might also concern a particular knowledge base strand, the school students, parents, learning culture, society in general, or any combination of these (Larkin, 2012). A change in status for one idea may affect the status of others, and also influences the “interconnected web of a teacher’s conceptual ecology” (Larkin, 2012, p. 16). Therefore, a description of the learning of TCs by program stage was useful in identifying their conceptions of diversity as well as developing notions of teaching as they progressed through the concurrent program.

For the purpose of presenting the findings for the six cases, I conducted a text content analysis (Bazerman, 2008) of the data sources. I sought to highlight or point to changes in status of teacher candidates’ conceptions about diversity, as expressed in their writing and interview responses (Posner et al., 1982; Hewson & Lemberger, 2000; Larkin, 2012). I also examined the text closely for descriptions of dissatisfaction with or changes in a particular idea regarding diversity (Larkin, 2012). The contexts of participants’ utterances as well as the statements themselves (i.e. quotations from data) were used to identify and describe the instances of status change since the conceptions were stated both implicitly and explicitly (Larkin, 2012). Thus, in the findings chapters that follow, the participants’ quotes that I use are intended to give voice to these participants through their own language in order to provide insights into ways they understand themselves (as individuals and teacher candidates), the teacher education program, as well as the broader communities and society they live in. It is my intention to show the complexity of the process of learning about diversity as teacher candidates learn how to teach, rather than provide straightforward solutions. By using direct quotes and thick descriptions, I also wanted the readers to reflect on the questions that this research raises in regards to the many roots of diversity conceptions in teacher candidates, and make clear that challenges in teaching and learning go beyond the individual and teacher education program. Thick descriptions are important when writing individual cases or portraits, as they are close to approaches situated in anthropological traditions in educational research (Geertz, 1973). Since I am adapting elements from data presentation approaches used in portraiture (Lawrence-Lighfoot, 1997), rigorous data
analysis is not part of the presentation of the individual cases. This is because in portraiture
the researcher uses a number of data sources and by using these, provides a form of
triangulation (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 1997). Thus, when describing each case, I tried to retain
the complexity of each of them by organizing data by the time it reflected (i.e. the time of
writing in the teacher education program) and each portrait represents the essence of the
individual (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 1997). In this way, each portrait retained its authenticity and
remains open to interpretation (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 1997). Therefore in this study, the
portraits of Dorothy, Thanh, Matteo, Agnieszka, Hendrika and Ubah and their development
of diversity, teaching and learning understandings are presented through my eyes as
researcher and the development in each TC is open for the reader’s interpretation.

Ethical considerations

The required ethical review process was conducted for all the participants in this study.
Information letters describing the purpose of the research, the research approaches used, the
responsibilities of the participants and their ability to withdraw from the study at any time
along with the consent letters were prepared in accordance with the requirements of the
University of Toronto (UofT). Protocols regarding confidentiality, privacy and anonymity
were followed as described in institution’s guidelines. In the information letter, participants
were offered the opportunity to select pseudonyms to protect their anonymity or let me do it
on their behalf. As none of them chose to do it, I selected the pseudonyms used in this study.
All identifiable information has been removed from the data. By using pseudonyms for all
participants in this study and also removing other identifiable information, I was able to
ensure that a participant cannot be linked to an individual unit in the program. Excerpts that
are used throughout the study are verbatim. I have used square brackets […] to insert my
comments for clarifying purposes or to provide background information. Square brackets
with three dots inside […] are used when part of the excerpt has been removed to reduce the
length of the quotation and care has been taken to not exclude parts that change the meaning
of the message conveyed by the entire excerpt.
Internal validity

Establishing validity or trustworthiness for qualitative research studies has received significant attention from many scholars (e.g., Guba & Lincoln, 1985; Wolcott, 1990; Creswell, 1998; Merriam, 1998). For this study I drew on Merriam (1998), and Guba and Lincoln (1985) who use the term trustworthiness to describe validity. Guba and Lincoln (1985) advance three concepts to assess qualitative research: credibility, dependability, conformability.

Credibility. To establish credibility, that is achieve that the results of this study are believable (Brown & Rodgers, 2002), I engaged in the study for a longer time, increased the number of participants by making changes to my Ethics Protocol, and used a number of triangulation methods. Triangulation was the main technique to achieve credibility in this study. The triangulation of data provides a robust picture of the research problem (Creswell, 2005). As Merriam (1998) notes:

Unlike experimental designs where validity and reliability are accounted for before the investigation, rigor in qualitative case study derives from the researcher’s presence, the nature of the interaction between researcher and participants, the triangulation of data, the interpretation of perceptions, and rich, thick descriptions (p. 120).

For data triangulation, I used several groups of participants and multiple perspectives (e.g., TCs from six units of the program across three university campuses, TEs, and program administrators). To achieve investigator triangulation, I asked a fellow doctoral candidate to code parts of the data and then we compared our findings. Methodological triangulation was attained by using multiple data collection methods (e.g., questionnaires; interviews; reflective writing, Application Profiles). The questionnaire, which was administered first, helped identify understandings of diversity across a larger number of participants (119), but also refine the subsequent individual interview questions. The individual interviews with 24 participants established a deeper understanding of why certain factors were perceived important or not important by teacher education students in their conceptualizations about diversity and perceptions of successes and challenges when teaching diverse learners. The in-depth analysis and examination of 6 individual cases further refined and confirmed larger
findings. To present the findings, I start with the individual case presentation, which I believe allows the reader to get insights in individual learning paths at the micro level before larger themes are presented from across all the TCs in this study.

In order to meet the requirement for prolonged engagement and thus credibility, I revised my initial Ethics Review Protocol to add two groups of participants from Year 3 and 4 in the program. These participants were in addition to the initial group from Year 5, which also allowed me to conduct class visits to explain the purpose of my study to teacher candidates and invite them to participate. The revision was necessary due to the low number of participants in the initial stages of data collection. Also, to meet the requirement of prolonged engagement (Guba & Lincoln, 1985), I collected the data over a period of one year. After I completed my data collection, I worked for two years as a teaching assistant for one of the diversity-focused courses in the concurrent teacher education program. This position provided me the opportunity to familiarize myself with the program and gain a more holistic view of the student experience in the program. Through this and another teaching assistantship for an education-related course, I was able to travel to and work on all the three campuses of the university, where my participants studied.

**Confirmability.** I tried to establish confirmability, also called objectivity (Merriam, 1998), by acknowledging my own biases as a researchers and elaborating on my location as a researcher in this study.

**Dependability.** To establish dependability, which is also referred to as reliability, I checked for inter-coding reliability and intra-coding reliability, as well as examined my location as a researcher in this study (Guba & Lincoln, 1985). To achieve inter-coder reliability, I worked with a fellow doctoral student on coding parts of my data, as already mentioned. We coded independently and compared and discussed the results for randomly selected responses from the three groups of participants (TCs, TEs, program administrators). We focused more specifically on the interview question that asked participants what they understood by ‘diversity’. As for intra-coding reliability, I coded my data after I completed data collection and then a few months later when I started data analysis and writing. This dual coding is described as two phases of data analysis as mentioned earlier. Since the analysis was done
within a case and between cases, I returned to the data multiple times while analysing and writing to ensure systematic and reliable coding of participants responses, as well as to capture a holistic impression over time for each participant.

**Limitations of the study**

There are limitations that restrict the generalizability of this study. Qualitative research aims to “produce a coherent and illuminating description of and perspective on a situation that is based on and consistent with detailed study of that situation” (Schofield, 2009, p. 71). The generalization, as Kaplan (1964) maintains, “must be truly universal, unrestricted to time and space. It must formulate what is always and everywhere the case, provided only that the appropriate conditions are satisfied” (p. 91, in Lincoln & Guba, 2009, p. 3). First, the study was limited to the experiences of teacher candidates (TCs) enrolled in a single teacher education program. Thus, it aimed to link changes in the ways they conceptualized diversity with limited aspects of the program (i.e. Bachelor of Education portion and education-related courses). Changes in TCs’ thinking and ideas might occur as a result of TCs learning in other courses (e.g., Arts, Science) in their five-year program. This is a significant limitation as past research (Hewson, Tabachnick, Zeichner & Lemberger, 1999; Larkin, 2010) shows that such courses do have an influence on TC’s beliefs about content and pedagogy. Also, this group of candidates entered the program either directly from secondary school or after completing one year of university studies, which meant the TCs fall under what is termed ‘late adolescent’ or ‘early adulthood group’ (King & Kitchener, 2004). King and Kitchener (2004), who examined the development of complex reasoning in late adolescents and adults, argue that the epistemological assumptions people hold are related to the way they make judgments about controversial (ill-structured) issues. These authors found, for example, that “development in reflective judgement is related to but distinct from development in other aspects of cognitive development (verbal aptitude, formal operations, academic ability, critical thinking) and from moral and identity development, and strongly predictive of tolerance for diversity” (p. 16). Thus, findings based on experiences in other initial teacher education programs with teacher candidates in a different age group, as well as an analysis of
my TCs’ overall experience in a five-year program at the same university and in other contexts may be quite different.

Second, although the teacher candidates came from three different cohorts of the program, their number was relatively small (i.e. 119 participants) compared to the number of TCs in each of the cohorts. Furthermore, findings, given the methodology of this study, came from self-reports. Additionally, the three cohorts were the first to complete the Concurrent Teacher Education Program since the program was only implemented in 2007, and the fifth year TCs in this study are the inaugural cohort. As it is made clear later in the Epilogue, this program was being phased out as I was nearing the completion of my study. Therefore, I made no effort to evaluate the program as a whole as this task was beyond this project. The findings of the study are intended to provide insights into how TCs develop understandings of diversity in the program as part of their learning to teach, as well as influences on their learning outside the program. While the TCs referred to events from their past, either in the teacher education program or outside it, I recognize that the participants’ responses were positioned within a particular moment in time, in a particular context, and therefore were bound to change.

Fourth, the findings are limited to one Canadian institution in a large metropolitan area. Data collected in a different institution in Canada or outside of this country, might have yielded different results. The study, despite these limitations, provided a detailed examination and insights from a student population that experienced learning and growth within a teacher education program. Additionally, the research took place in a context that is attracting thousands of new immigrants to Canada, as well as is characterized by internal migration. As such, findings may be valuable for other inquiries occurring in similar contexts.

This chapter presented the research methodology used in this study, which sought to determine how teacher candidates in a concurrent teacher education program conceptualized diversity and the roots for such conceptualizations. This chapter described the process of recruiting and selecting the participants, data collection methods, data analysis strategies, internal validity and limitation of the study. The next chapters, Chapters 6 and 7, present the findings from this research. Chapter 6 describes the individual cases of six TC participants in
the form of portraits as well as presents a comparison of findings within and across the six TCs. Chapter 7 describes major findings in this thesis across responses from all TC participants in the questionnaire as well as interviews. Findings in Chapter 7 are organized by themes and I make connections with past literature and conceptual frameworks in the summary and discussion portion of each chapter.
Chapter 6: Individual Case Findings

Introduction

The primary goal of this study was to examine the causes and influences of teacher candidates’ (TCs) conceptions of diversity in a five-year concurrent teacher education program. The purpose of this chapter is to present findings from six individual cases. The description of the six cases will help the reader gain insights into influences on individual TCs’ learning about diversity and their developing understandings of teaching, before major themes are discussed across the larger group of participants in Chapter 7. As I began analysing the data, it became evident that TCs developed conceptions of diversity as part of their learning in the program as well as their life outside the program. Therefore, it became important to examine the teaching and learning in the Concurrent Teacher Education Program as TCs progressed through the program. The descriptions through TCs’ eyes made it possible to better understand the roots of their diversity conceptions. The data in this chapter are thus organized chronologically. A description that focuses on the sequence of activities rather than on separate activities in a teacher education program provides a more detailed view of how TCs learnt in the program (Meirink, Meijer, Verloop, Bergen, 2008). I first present TCs’ conceptions of diversity, teaching and learning at the time of applying to study in the Concurrent Teacher Education Program (CTEP). Next, I describe TC’s developing understating of diversity, teaching and learning while they were enrolled in CTEP. The emerging themes across the six cases are examined in the final section of this chapter that presents a cross-case analysis of the findings. The themes in Chapter 7 build on the findings presented in Chapter 6 and come from 119 teacher candidate questionnaire data, 24 teacher candidate in-depth interviews, 15 teacher educator in-depth interviews and six program administrator in-depth interviews.

The findings in this chapter are presented using a conceptual change model of learning (Posner et al., 1982; Hewson & Lemberger, 2000; Larkin, 2010, 2012). This is done by providing an account of a teacher candidate’s development that offers a window into how a
particular teacher’s ideas about diversity changed over time (Larkin, 2012). Also, following Stake’s (2006) suggestions for the case study approach and Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) guidelines for portraiture, I present detailed evidence for each individual teacher candidate when describing findings, in order to make a persuasive case. I draw on a larger data pool for the analysis of the six cases: (a) teacher candidate Applicant Profile, completed prior to enrolment in the teacher education program; (b) teacher candidate reflections, completed at different points in the five years that they studied in the program; and (c) individual interview responses. Table 13 presents the detailed data sources and the coding system that is used throughout the presentation of the results in this chapter and the study overall.

**Table 13. Data Source Coding System for TC Documents Used In Individual Case Descriptions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data Source</th>
<th>Code</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Applicant Admissions Profile</td>
<td>AP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflection 1 - Knowledge Base Strands: Subject Matter (e-portfolio)</td>
<td>R1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflection 2 - Knowledge Base Strands – Pedagogy and Curriculum (e-portfolio)</td>
<td>R2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflection 3 - Knowledge Base Strands – Knowledge of the Learners (e-portfolio)</td>
<td>R3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflection 4 - Knowledge Base Strands – Equity and Diversity (e-portfolio)</td>
<td>R4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflection 5 - Knowledge Base Strands – Self/Teacher Development (e-portfolio)</td>
<td>R5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflection 6 - Knowledge Base Strands – Philosophy (e-portfolio)</td>
<td>R6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Field Placement Reflection (e-portfolio)</td>
<td>FPR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Source</td>
<td>Code</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observation Reflection (e-portfolio)</td>
<td>OR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internship Reflection (e-portfolio)</td>
<td>IR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lesson Plan Reflection (e-portfolio)</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Course Assignment Reflection (e-portfolio)</td>
<td>CAR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Candidate Individual Interview</td>
<td>TCII</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Also, the type of language used (i.e. status of conceptions) for this account offers insights regarding the status of individual conceptions at various points (Larkin, 2012). As mentioned, when describing each case, in order to retain the complexity of each of them I
organized the data by the specific time it reflects (i.e. the time of writing in the teacher education program) and each portrait represents the essence of the individual (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997). In this way, each portrait retained its authenticity and is open to interpretation (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997). In this study thus, the portraits of Dorothy, Thanh, Matteo, Agnieszka, Hendrika, and Ubah and their development of diversity, teaching and learning understandings are presented through my eyes as the researcher and the development in each TC is open for the reader’s interpretation.

For the presentation of each case, I first use the interview question that relates to teacher candidates’ background to introduce each participant. Characterizations of individuals are needed in research that uses conceptual change, as “through characterization of the individual by the practices in which s/he engages, a key aspect of theory building in conceptual change is justified, namely the attribution of the conception to the individual” (van Eijck, 2009, p. 6). Next, documents shared by each individual teacher candidate (see Table 13) are used to present initial and developing conceptions of diversity, teaching and learning. Each case concludes with a discussion and summary section where I make connections with the literature. A cross-case analysis in Chapter 7 concludes the presentation of the six individual cases, by first examining commonalities and divergences within and across cases and then providing a more in-depth discussion and making connection with literature in the last section of the chapter called “Influences on developing conceptions of diversity”. Arguments are further examined in the Discussion and Conclusion Chapter of this thesis.

**Dorothy**

**Introduction**

Dorothy came into the Concurrent Teacher Education Program at the University of Toronto after graduating from secondary school. The TC grew up in a small rural community in the South-Eastern Ontario that was described as having a “small in population, but large in geography” (TCII). The area, as the TC described it, was primarily Anglophone-Francophone. There was “one central High School, one central English speaking school, and
one central French immersion school. All of the students in the surrounding villages sort of came together in one central school. It was a collection of smaller villages” (TCII).

Dorothy who has “never lived away from home before”, moved to a large city where the university was located to pursue her university studies, a move that she perceives as “a culture shock” and which was her “first experience in a major downtown area”:

> When I moved to Toronto, as you can imagine, that was a culture shock for me because there were so many other cultures present. And it was just everyday life for everyone else. But for me, I was meeting people from countries that I’ve never even heard of. It was like a spring awakening I guess. It was a bit strange. I felt I was a little old to be learning something like that. (TCII)

Dorothy describes herself as “fourth or fifth generation Canadian, Caucasian, mostly English-speaking background” (TCII). She notes that “as a child and a teenager I was pretty sheltered as far as cultural diversify went” and that she encountered people “who were from different backgrounds, but it was a very controlled situation. It wasn’t a daily or daily occurrence.” (TCII)

Dorothy was in the fifth and final year of the Concurrent Teacher Education Program at the time of her participation in this study. She was studying in the downtown campus of the University of Toronto and seeking certification in Music and French as a Second Language. During the interview Dorothy appeared confident and versatile. Dorothy shared a number of documents after the interview, which were compiled in her electronic portfolio and were organized under specific “knowledge base strands” (refer to Table 13). The interview responses and these documents were used to analyse her understandings of diversity before enrolling in the teacher education program and her developing understanding of diversity as she progressed through the concurrent teacher education program.

**Dorothy’s initial conceptions of diversity, teaching and learning**

*Socioeconomic class and involvement in extracurricular activities*

At the time of applying to study in the teacher education program Dorothy was concerned with how an individual’s socioeconomic status impacted opportunities to be involved or
participate in extracurricular activities (AP). When asked to describe a time in the Applicant Admissions Profile (AP) when she or someone she knew had been advantaged or disadvantaged because of being different from others, Dorothy described the time when she was the President of a horse club. In this situation she witnessed how someone who did not own a horse, “the only horseless member of the horse club”, was not chosen to represent the club in a competition, although this club member “was very determined and professional, always positive and upbeat […], had worked so hard and had learnt so much” (AP).

Dorothy’s understanding of socioeconomic status at the time of enrolment into the teacher education program was that it should not impact how students are treated. The teacher candidate seemed comfortable expressing the idea that socioeconomic status did impact attitudes toward students. She also expressed her dissatisfaction with such an attitude when she stated, “No student should ever be valued or appreciated more than another based on their financial or social situation” (AP). Dorothy, at this entry point in her teacher education journey, made an attempt to identify an approach as a teacher to address this question, “all students have the potential to excel, if you chose to help and guide them to make good decisions and to have outstanding work ethics” (AP).

*Individual learning style, French as a second language, and disability*

At the time of applying to study in the teacher education program Dorothy also describes three experiences of “teaching and learning” in addition to the “Equity and Diversity Issues” question. This first experience described included using Math to help someone learn Music. Secondly, she recalled retelling a text in French in “a comical way in English” to help someone with French reading comprehension. Finally, she shared how she used color-coding for the piano keys to help a student who was “deaf in one ear” to learn beginner piano (AP).

All three of these experiences, as Dorothy explains in her writing, helped her learn that “no student learns in the same way”. The teacher candidate shows confidence with the idea of diverse student learners, whether it be individual learning style, French as a second language, or disability. Dorothy also identifies approaches “as a teacher” to address the needs of diverse learners when she states, “there are many diverse types of learners in the world that
teachers must be flexible enough to adapt to” (AP). She continues, “I learned to try different ways to approach learning material based on the students’ obvious inclinations” (AP). However, Dorothy does not recognize larger societal barriers to success, but points to the individual characteristic of “confidence” when she states, “the confidence they [students] lack, which is often the largest obstacle between the student and their success” (AP).

**Dorothy’s developing understandings of diversity, teaching and learning**

*How to become an educator?*

During her first year in the concurrent teacher education program, Dorothy seems to be concerned about her development as an educator and how to acquire the skills needed to “teach students from all different backgrounds” (R1 and R5). Although the R1 was posted under the “Subject Matter” knowledge base strand of her electronic portfolio, Dorothy is describing her own achievements in her teachable subject – receiving a particular merit scholarship. The teacher candidate describes the relevance of this entry under the “Subject Matter” as follows, “Falling under the subject matter strand, this award demonstrates my sense of dedication toward the field of education and my ongoing desire to nurture music growth in students at all stages of artistic growth” (R1). Dorothy’s R5 entry is under the “Self/Teacher Development” Knowledge Base Strand and shows her anxiety and thoughts about choosing teaching as a career, “There were often times during these first few months that I contemplated why I was in the music education program and if it was even right for me” (R5). Dorothy reveals in R5 that, “After having attended this conference I began to realize just how important teaching is to me” and that “This conference renewed my desire to become an educator”. These teacher candidate’s reflections during her first year in the program show that she is struggling with her identity as a teacher, but also looking for avenues that can help her become a better educator for a varied body of students. She does not appear to reflect on diversity-related concepts, but rather on her own self as a becoming teacher.
ADHD student and Math teaching, and ability grouping

During her second year in the teacher education program, Dorothy is concerned about her knowledge of “multiple learning and teaching techniques” (R3). She reflects on these under the “Knowledge of the Learners” (R3) knowledge base strand. Dorothy describes her experience tutoring a student with ADHD in Math. Although Dorothy has “always been considered a high-achieving student” (R3), she struggled with one particular subject and that was Math. The TC notes that this tutoring experience was not only a “challenge for him as a student but me as a tutor” (R3). Dorothy shows attention to aspects of diversity such as ADHD, which are considered to fall under the category of special needs.

Also in her second year, Dorothy reflects on her Teaching Philosophy (R6) by describing an experience as a music camp counsellor where she “began to develop a new concept of what it truly means to be a music educator”. She describes how two friends who had been practising playing violin for the same number of years were placed in different level ensembles, based on auditioning results. Dorothy always “deemed auditioning as fair” prior to this experience. After this experience, seeing how one of the students who was placed in a “lower level ensemble” felt “devastated, even worse, the friend he’d come with was placed in a completely different ensemble. He felt isolated and most certainly, he felt untalented”, Dorothy “realized that traditions are not always the best way to do things” (R6). The teacher candidate felt that auditions were not appropriate for placing students in ability groupings in a summer camp. Dorothy reacts on this “tradition” as follows:

Is this tradition that encourages students to work harder in order to merit a seat in an honour band or is it the fear of failure or judgment from this tradition (of auditioning) what causes so many to lose interest in music altogether? As I move forward from this experience, my plans for the future are to investigate opportunities that encourage inclusiveness in and outside the classroom (R6).

As seen from the above quote, Dorothy is questioning established practices in her field and questions the notion of merit. The TC is also bringing up the notion inclusiveness as opportunity to participate in activities.
Mastering the teachables

In her third year in the teacher education program, Dorothy is concerned with mastering French as a second language, which is her “secondary subject” / teachable (R1). She reflects on her French immersion study abroad program that she had completed during the summer term. The teacher candidate included this reflection under the “Subject Matter” knowledge base strand since she “feel[s] it is an achievement in her French studies” (R1). Although Dorothy does not refer to diversity explicitly in R1, she speaks to what a good second language teacher is when she states that “The greatest asset a second language teacher can have is fluent bilingualism, a firm and confident understanding of their subject” (R1). As seen from R1, Dorothy is still seeking opportunities for professional development as a teacher as she is concerned with her knowledge of the subject matter as a measure of ‘effective teacher’.

Teachable subject, attitudes toward teachable, factors affecting learning the teachable

In her fourth year in the teacher education program, Dorothy is concerned about a number of issues: music as her main teachable subject; students and parents attitudes toward music; and impact of socio-cultural and religious beliefs on learning music in secondary schools. In addition, she reflects on her role as a teacher of music and how to motivate students to learn.

In R4 Dorothy describes a case study as part of a group project in her teacher education program that focused on “a student with low self-efficacy and parents at home who were telling him that school just wasn’t worth the effort”. She relates this case study to her experience in her practicum in an effort to “bring reality to this scenario” (CAR):

My student was absent for more than 50% of my classes and was failing. His father told him not to worry because he was destined to take over the family plumbing business and he didn’t need to take band to be successful in the trades (CAR).

Dorothy further asks herself, “What is a teacher to do when a parent devalues your subject or school altogether? I find that both my subjects, Music and French, are often seen as “throw away” courses by parents” (CAR). During the placement that the teacher candidate describes she reports hearing parents, students and even teachers in the school that her two teachables are not needed in the “real world”. Dorothy is troubled by this finding and is thinking, “this is
a tough mindset to break” (CAR). She struggles with the idea of “fighting these parents and students”. She further debates between choosing to “move on to a subject that does interest them” or continue her work as a Music teacher in an effort to motivate students to learn because “it makes me feel like I haven’t done my job if someone leaves my class thinking Music doesn’t matter” (CAR).

Dorothy also reflects on the impact of socio-cultural perspectives and religious beliefs on students’ motivation to learn, as she shares a story she had learnt in her practicum:

My own associate teacher who taught at [my practicum school] for almost 25 years, before moving on to his new school, claims it was fighting the culture norms of the immigrant population that made him leave his position as head of music. (CAR)

Dorothy states that “motivation is a huge factor in a student’s achievement” and she came up with “10 Top Ways to Motivate” that she shared with her fellow teacher education classmates. She also states that she realized that motivation is one of the “toughest aspects of teaching” (CAR). Dorothy’s conception of Music as a subject matter seems to have been shaken and the status (Hewson, 1992) of this conception is not as high as before. Indeed, due to her encounters with perceptions of the subject and values that she perceives as directly linked to diversity aspects such as culture and religion of the immigrant population, she questions her subject matter.

**What is an expert teacher?**

In her fifth year of the teacher education program, Dorothy continues to reflect on the idea of what a “good” or “expert” teacher is and how to “become an expert pedagogue” (CAR). She states, “Call me old fashioned, but I truly believe that teachers learn best from actually being in front of the classroom. An expert in the field of education cannot possibly attain his or her expertise without first having experienced a live classroom” (CAR). The CAR represents a reflection on a mentored inquiry project. Dorothy’s past questioning of “Had I failed as a teacher?” and “Had I been an effective teacher?” and thoughts of “Each day I felt as though I hadn’t achieve anything, that I hadn’t helped my students grow” during her first practicum seem to have found an answer during this mentored inquiry project.
The answer is evident when Dorothy states that she became familiar with “standardized goal setting charts, templates and reflective memos” that helped the teaching and administrative staff in her school measure “growth” (CAR). Dorothy compares and contrasts her idea of reflection “at the personal level” and the newly discovered standardized “academic, behavioural and pedagogical goals that they actively track throughout the year” (CAR). These “black and white” documents that demonstrate “school growth over time in relation to achieving school wide academic success” (CAR from her fourth year) seem comforting for Dorothy because they help her measure her own success and effectiveness as a teacher.

She also finds comfort in her associate’s teacher’s words when she states that, “My associate teacher reassured me that [...] sometimes it takes months (or more!) for teachers to really see the effects of their teaching on their students” (CAR from her fifth year). Dorothy shows an understanding of reflection as a self-development tool, but also struggles with the idea of what type of reflection is better, “standardized” or “personal”. She understands that, “As teachers, we can never be perfect, yet always striving to better ourselves will help us better our schools and in the end, foster a community of students who are engaged and excited about their own learning” (CAR).

As seen from this section, Dorothy is concerned with the question of “effective teacher” that permeates teacher education research (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Darling-Hammond, Berry, & Thoreson, 2001; Turner-Bisset, 2001) and this notion holds high status for her. She appears concerned about students, but only in related to her own self – whether she failed or not – and not in relation to students’ learning as such. The events that were happening in the school are overshadowing her learning in the program and the concept of reflection appears, if not lowered in status, than not as clear as before.

**Context, defining diversity, factors affecting understandings of diversity**

The individual interview with Dorothy took place in her final and fifth year of her studies in the teacher education program, one month before graduation. In the beginning of the interview, when asked “When you hear the word diversity, what does it mean to you?” Dorothy compares the rural environment she grew up as a child with Toronto, a city where
she moved to study. She states that as a child she thought of diversity as “ethnicity primarily” and “people other than white people” (TCII). Dorothy further noted that since she moved to Toronto diversity means more than ethnicity and color and also includes “language” and “culture” and an “amalgamation of different traits and qualities” (TCII).

In the interview, Dorothy also compares her schooling experience prior to enrolling in the teacher education program and her experience in the teacher education program in relation to diversity. The teacher recalls that in High School “I’ve always felt a bit strange about being from an area where it’s rare to meet somebody who is not Caucasian” (TCII). Dorothy states that while in the teacher education program she always displayed an interest in people coming from “Africa or South America or whatever” (TCII). However, at the same time she felt embarrassed about not knowing more about these individuals and notes, “I felt a little behind in that aspect of my development, in my learning” (TCII). The TC thus wished to learn about diversity for her own development and not necessarily for her future teaching.

Dorothy is not comfortable asking many questions about diversity because she is afraid “to offend anybody”. She also notes, “I am afraid to come off as some rural ‘Hillbilly’ or someone who’s never experienced other people, you know” (TCII). She further explains, “Coming into this program a lot of my assignments were reflective of what I experienced going through High School. What did I think was an appropriate novel study? What did I think was an appropriate selection for a class reader or novel study? For example, I had to design a novel study and I had to pick a book, and I am thinking, what do I pick? Because I only know two or three novels, but what has everyone else read?” (TCII) These statements are indicative of her ability to reflect on past experiences and connect those to her learning and teaching (Ball, 2011). Although Dorothy seems concerned about not being able to choose the right teaching materials for her students, she is also concerned about the content of her assignments and how well she did on them.

In addition, although the teacher candidate appears to understand what influenced her knowledge of diversity when she states “my experiences growing really limited my view on certain topic” during the interview, other statements indicate uncertainty in regards to what helped her develop understandings of diversity, as seen from the following excerpt:
Since being in the program a lot has changed, and I am not sure if that’s the program itself or a combination of factors which include moving to a large urban city and living in the downtown core and interacting with students from different backgrounds both educationally and ethnically speaking. As I said, I am not sure whether that’s a reflection of the program itself or if I would have gained those experiences from doing any other program at the University. If I took a BSc, for example. (TCII)

Dorothy is also uncertain about addressing diversity both in the classrooms and outside the classroom when she notes that “It’s interesting, I became more aware since being in the program; however, at the same time there is still that apprehension of what’s appropriate and what’s not appropriate in terms of bringing culture into the classroom as a teacher and also just in social situations. What’s going too far? I have a lot of good-natured friends, so I can ask them all kinds of questions that might seem stupid and they are very good about asking or answering. I am still a bit nervous in some situations” (TCII). When asked to further elaborate on what helped her learn about diversity, Dorothy states that “in the beginning I learnt from my family” (TCII). Then, although she again expresses uncertainty, she points to a few more specific influences, such as interactions with diverse others:

Since I enrolled in the program… as I mentioned before, I am not sure if my concept of diversity was a direct result of a course that I took … and all these small aspects that all affect diversity and culture. I think that what’s affected most is being out in schools and seeing students and being out in the city of Toronto and interacting with people. I had a few jobs, part-time, in my undergraduate where I worked a lot with the public in customer service and so I got to interact with many different people. (TCII)

As the interview progressed, Dorothy continues to be more specific about what helped her learn about diversity:

I took some courses here as part of my Bachelor of Education, but I am not sure if they taught me anything or if they more so led me to realize things that I already probably knew, but just did not think about before. There were a few assignments, we were to write an auto-ethnography, and talk about diversity in our life and how we grew up and how it’s affected us teachers. There is nothing in there that I wrote that I didn’t know, just didn’t voice it before. Doing those types of projects, reflective projects, really helped me clarify and solidify my personal view of diversity […]. I guess in a way that helps me develop my understanding of diversity, but as I said, I don’t think it taught me anything, but just helped me define and how I feel about that word and what it means to me. (TCII)
Throughout the interview and as illustrated by the above excerpt, Dorothy is hesitant to state what she learnt about diversity in courses. Rather, she notes that the course assignment and projects increased her awareness about diversity and allowed her to “voice” what diversity meant to her. The teacher candidate observed that “people learn better by actually physically being in the environment” and stated that her practicum experiences that were spread throughout the five years of the program, and which took place in varied schools, allowed her to realize how diverse schools can be:

Having been in a program where we have been allowed to go into schools throughout the five years and not just compressed into one year, it sort of slowly introduced me to a variety of students. As I said, when I was a student in school it was very homogenous. It was very academic, we didn’t have a lot of students who were in remedial, and we didn’t have a lot of students with special needs. […] we didn’t have anybody who wasn’t Caucasian. It was very one-sided. In my field experiences in Toronto I’ve been placed in ELL classes, I had a few observation periods in a school that had a large special needs program. The particular class that I was in was very low functioning students. I’ve been in my regular practicum for two months and the school was very large. It had like three thousand students and they were from every background you could imagine. I’ve also been in observations in schools where it was very similar to my own experience. It was very homogenous, kind of mono-cultural. It really made me realize that as much as I can deny the fact that one school can be different from one another, they really are very different and they are reflective of the community that surrounds them [...]. Those experiences helped me develop that sense of the word ‘diversity’. (TCII)

When asked what aspects of diversity were taught in the program, Dorothy is evasive and states that “When people think ‘diversity” the first thing that comes up is race and color, as I mentioned before. I am not sure how that came about” (TCII). However, she then points to a few dimensions that she came to understand as being associated with diversity, “Some of those that I would not have thought under the diversity umbrella when I came here were things like age and social class. Once they were mentioned to me I was like, ‘yeah, totally, I see how that fits it’, but as I mentioned, when I was growing up those were not things that were thought about as classifiers. Because as I mentioned, I come from a very homogenous community” (TCII).

Further in the interview, when asked what aspects of diversity she found important to be addressed in the teacher education program, Dorothy responded in a general way by stating
that “I guess that the answer that everyone wants to hear is that they are equally important” (TCII). However, she observes that there are certain diversity dimensions that are addressed more than others, “I think that in the program the way it is, and in society I think that more importance is placed on some of these, such as ethnicity, disability versus ability, places of origin and religion and faith are the big ones. And sexual orientation, that’s really big in teacher education and school right now. I just find it interesting that those once seem to float to the surface more than the other ones. I know part of it has to do with the public reaction to what goes on in the school. If a kid is going to be bullied, a lot of the time it’s going to come down to those factors. But I mean they should have equal importance, but for some reason they don’t and I am not sure why [...] at least not out in the field from what I’ve experienced. I don’t think they all have the same weight” (TCII). Dorothy, as seen from this and other excerpts, continues to display uncertainty and evasiveness when asked to be more specific in her answers, although she is able to name diversity dimensions and provides some thoughts on their current usage.

When asked what diversity dimensions she finds more challenging than others to understand, Dorothy notes that there is an over positive “spin” on diversity from what she experienced, “I guess the concept of diversity is a positive thing. I don’t mean to say that I think that diversity is a negative thing, but I think teacher education programs often put a solely positive spin on diversity”. Dorothy also indicates that the “positive spin” may set up certain expectations in teachers which might not play out the same in the field, “I think that sometimes it sets up unrealistic expectations for new teachers going into classrooms thinking that everything will be happy and rosy if you incorporate culture and incorporate diversity and you bring up these topics and you have classroom discussions about all these things. I do agree with doing all these things. However, I disagree that it will always end ... have a happy ending” (TCII). Dorothy further refers to her future teaching in the interview and continues to express uncertainty in relation to diversity when she states “I am still a bit nervous about knowing my students when going into the classroom and being aware of what might be an academic issue or what might just be something that they were taught at home in terms of behaviour, classroom participation and learning” (TCII). The overly positive “spin” seems to
refer to a broader definition of diversity that includes student backgrounds, learning styles and needs, and classroom management.

In most of her interview responses related to diversity Dorothy tends to use statements such as “I am not sure why” and “I am not sure”. From her answers to the questions, it seems that her uncertainty stems from her fear of not offending anyone and also from her tendency to be careful, as exemplified in what follows: “As seen in my course here, we had people leaving the class in clouds of frustrations because of the topics that were discussed and because of what their colleagues have said and their peers have said. I think that when those class discussions open up, teachers have to be very careful because as much as you might feel you know your students, sometimes you never know what they are going to say. And sometimes you can go too far” (TCII). Although Dorothy’s responses, as well as my/researcher’s post- interview notes, show that she has a good grasp of what diversity means and how she came about to understand those meanings, her hesitancy in responses may lead someone to think that this teacher candidate’s learning is fraught with gaps.

**Summary and discussion**

At the time of applying to the five-year teacher education program, Dorothy described diversity in terms of socioeconomic status in the context of an extra-curriculum activity and how it prevented students who could not afford to buy certain required attributes to fully participate in such activities. Dorothy’s conception of socioeconomic diversity has high status for her (Hewson et al, 1992). Studies that focus on socioeconomic status as a diversity dimension usually associate it with student achievement in formal schooling setting and how it affects students negatively in that context (Johnson, 1998). Also, such notions appear frequently in discussions of “at risk” students as a major factor affecting their learning (Johnson, 1998).

What is prominent in Dorothy’s entry is that she does not posit the student she describes as responsible for not being able to participate in the competition, thus speaking against a deficit model of thinking that is characteristic of many teachers (Flessa et al., 2010). She instead shows dissatisfaction with the club’s practices and her statements echo some of the strategies
identified by Ontario elementary schoolteachers in Flessa et al.’s (2010) study for working with children in poverty: getting to know the students, believing in students and helping. Nonetheless, the TC’s description of her experiences at the club also contain some tensions: she does speak against the practices that seem to marginalize students and does not blame the student, but at the same time student success and student learning are described as dependent on individual characteristics of good work ethics and confidence. Her understanding of her role as teacher is related to being a guide or facilitator, and students’ success is a result of teacher’s guidance and good work ethics, thus overcoming the challenges imposed by low socioeconomic status. Inherent in Dorothy’s statements is the idea that teachers can make a change, but not all the teachers would act to help students achieve success, when she states “if you chose to”. This choice could be interpreted as a beginning to understand the role of teacher as change agent (Ball, 2009).

When describing how she used color coding for the piano keys to help a student who was “deaf in one ear” to learn beginner piano, Dorothy’s approach connects to the notion of generalizability” (Hewson, 1992) or generativity (Ball, 2011). This notion posits that teachers need to reassess and build on prior knowledge. In her responses to Application Profile questions, Dorothy also shows understandings of different learning styles and thus differentiated instruction (e.g., “no student learns in the same way”) and language and disability have high status for her. It can be concluded that Dorothy’s conceptual ecology (Hewson & Lemberger, 2000) at the time of entering the teacher education program consisted of diversity as socioeconomic status, language and disability and she viewed teachers as helpers or guides for students to achieve success, although her statements also show her struggle with understanding bigger structures that affect student participation and success.

During her first year in the program the TC does not appear to reflect on diversity-related concepts, but rather on own self as a becoming teacher. By detailing her accomplishment, but also questioning if she made the right choice to become a Music teacher, Dorothy appears to struggle with the issue of self-confidence and identity. What Dorothy is experiencing can be termed the “inner life” of the teacher and point to the role of identity and self in learning to
teach (Rodgers & Scott, 2008, p. 732). It is still unclear in literature on teacher education and teacher professional identity how the concepts of ‘identity’ and self’ are related. Nonetheless, as Dorothy’s case illustrates, the self the TC refers to and identity co-exist, but are also separate in some way: the self is more about the “meaning maker and agent” (Rodgers & Scott, 2008, p. 737). Rodgers and Scott, 2008 define self “to subsume teacher identities and to be an evolving yet, coherent being that consciously or unconsciously constructs and is constructed, reconstructs and is reconstructed in interactions with cultural contexts, institutions, and people with which the ‘self’ lives, learns and functions” (p. 751). Participating in a conference helped the TC reduce her anxiety and the questioning of self.

In her second year Dorothy questions the notion of ability as she continues to grow an interest in learning more about diversity and “inclusiveness”. The teacher candidate continues to struggle with ideas of merit and power, but she seems to be determined to “investigate” and learn more about them. She continues to be concerned about “self”, but the focus is shifting more toward questioning established practices in her field, traditional auditioning approaches, and she discards them as non-equitable.

Through the documents that she completed in her third year in the program, Dorothy further reflects on how to become an educator, but this is expanded to connect to her second teachable – French. Subject matter, one of the core elements of knowledge base for teachers (Shulman, 1987) and professional development of the key aspects included in The Standards of Practice for the Teaching Profession in Ontario seem to hold high status for her as a future teacher at that time. The TC is also concerned about what an ‘effective’ teacher is more generally (and not as related to diverse learners), a concept that she returns to in her final year. Dorothy associates the notion of ‘effective teacher’ with firm subject matter knowledge, one of the core knowledge base in teaching (Shulman, 1987).

While in her fourth year, Dorothy returns to her major teachable, Music, and reflects on students and parents attitudes toward this subject matter, attitudes that she discovered in a field placement. She makes attempts to understand why Music does not hold as high a status for students and their parents as it does for her, and connects her rationale to their socio-cultural and religious perspectives on Music. Implied in Dorothy’s response is the idea that
Music would not add value to the intended occupations of students, as envisioned by students’ parents. She is developing a set of “motivation” guidelines that she shares with her classmates and states that student success is strongly linked to their motivation. Thus, Dorothy appears to see the individual characteristic of motivation as a solution to overcome disinterest in Music caused by diversities such as religion and culture. Research that looks at the relationship between religion and subject matter learning tends to focus on sciences, such as biology. Evans (2008) used a conceptual change lens to examine the impact of religion on developing conceptions in students of evolutionary biology and found that religion (but also the intersection of religion and age) had an impact on student learning as “the human mind seems almost incapable of conceptual change when confronted with scientific data that contradicts a self-serving view of the world” (p. 287).

As she nears the completion of the program, Dorothy is again concerned about how to become a “good” or “expert” teacher. As the teacher candidate describes her practicum, one cannot but see how the varied ‘agendas’ of the school contexts she is in influence her thinking about teaching and learning. Student achievement, motivation for student achievement, measuring student achievement and growth as well as teacher growth and performance seem to permeate her reflections in both her fourth and fifth years in the teacher education program. Her understanding of diversity appears to have expanded to include “an amalgamation of different traits and qualities”, although she appears hesitant to clearly articulate what she has learnt in the program.

Overall, Dorothy is committed to learning and teaching. The teacher candidate seeks opportunities for professional development outside the formal teacher education program (e.g., teaching in summer camps; improving language proficiency for her second teachable in a study abroad program). Her diversity conceptions that hold high status are learning styles, learning disabilities, socioeconomic class. However, at the same time she seems to struggle with conceptions such as merit and power, and is attracted in the fifth year by the varied “standardized” means, such as SMART, to measure students’ and own success and effectiveness. She struggles with ideas about student achievement, although she seems to have found a solution to this question—motivation, which gained higher status for the TC.
Thanh

Introduction

Thanh enrolled in the Concurrent Teacher Education Program at the University of Toronto after finishing her first year of study in an undergraduate program at the same university. This was one of the two entry options available to applicants to the five-year concurrent teacher education program. She grew up in close proximity to the downtown campus of the university, in an area that she described as diverse, but not wealthy:

It’s pretty diverse in a sense. There were a lot of immigrants where I grew in. An area with new families; families that just came to Canada. Certainly not a lot of people who are well off, who had a lot of opportunities to be exposed to things. Most parents would be working or you might have a stay-at-home mom or a single parent or... The community I grew up in was pretty diverse. The size … I grew up in the East York area, but it wasn’t the wealthy part of it. It was near Little India as well. I would still say that it was in the city of Toronto. It was still diverse in that sense. It was not like I grew up in the suburbs or in the rural area. (TCII)

Diversity to Thanh appears to be associated with immigrants, socioeconomic status, family and marital status. When asked to talk briefly about herself or describe her identity, Thanh stated that “it’s a complicated question” (TCII). Thanh further states that:

The way that you look at me visibly I am Vietnamese - Canadian, although I was born here. [...] Something that you can’t tell… If you look at it from a diversity point of view, diversity can be many things, ability, disability. I am also someone with a disability although I don’t let it define me. That’s also something that I am trying to figure out for myself that can contribute to my identity as well. That’s a complicated question, something that I struggle to answer. (TCII)

Thanh also sees diversity as including ethnicity and ability and disability, as seen in the above quote. Thanh’s also shared that her parents and her older brother immigrated to Canada as refugees, and she was the “first child born in Canada” (TCII). Thanh emphasized that her “parents certainly aren’t professionals” and that “has impacted me in terms of the opportunities that I have and my career choices” (TCII).

At the time of the interview, Thanh described herself as a teacher candidate who finished the fifth year of the concurrent teacher education program, thus placing emphasis on her identity...
as future teacher. She was a Physical Education and Health major in the Intermediate/Senior division and studied at the downtown campus of the university. During the interview Thanh seemed a bit hesitant to share details of her personal background, a hesitancy that she overcame as we progressed in our discussion. The TC shared her plans to apply to study at Master’s level in the field of disability studies.

Thanh gave me access to her electronic portfolio that she had compiled while in the program. The interview responses and the e-portfolio documents (refer to Table 13) were used to analyse her understandings of diversity before enrolling in the teacher education program and her developing understanding of diversity as she progressed through the teacher education program.

**Thanh's initial conceptions of diversity, teaching and learning**

**Learning disability and its impact on learning and class dynamics**

At the time of applying to study in the teacher education program, Thanh understood diversity as ability and disability and she was concerned with how these aspects might influence student relationships and attitudes. When answering the “Equity and Diversity Issues” question in the Admissions Application Profile, Thanh chose to focus on an experience that involved a middle school classmate with a learning disability, “as part of a mixed learning disability (LD) class” (AP). She stated that this student was often “advantaged and disadvantaged because of his condition” (AP).

The advantage, as described by Thanh, consisted in this student receiving extra help on assignments and the disadvantage was that “this was seen as unfair by some students” (AP). The teacher had to intervene and explain to the class student A’s condition and what it involved in terms of assignments. At that point, Thanh’s describes her understanding of equity as related to ‘extra support’, which is exemplified by the following statement: “I learned that to be equitable, we sometimes need to give people extra assistance to reach the finish line” (AP). She also reflects on her future teaching and how she would address questions of learning disabilities by indicating that as a teacher she would have to take into account the needs of the class as a whole as well as the needs of individual students.
Furthermore, she would “provide a positive a supportive learning environment for those with and without disabilities” (AP). These statements show Thanh’s intended approaches to addressing the needs of a particular group of diverse students, those with a learning disability. Thanh seems preoccupied by this aspect of diversity at the entry point into the program and one could infer that this preoccupation is grounded in her own struggles with ability and disability, as seen from the way she describes herself (e.g., refer to the quote in the introduction to this section).

**Building on existing knowledge**

To answer the Application profile question about three experiences of “teaching and learning” Thanh chose to describe experiences where she focused on “existing knowledge”. In one experience she drew on her own experience of playing volleyball to teach novice players, while in another experience she built on her own and her friend’s knowledge of playing piano to teach her friend play the guitar. In the third experience she takes a “step-by-step” approach to help a struggling classmate catch up on the work she missed instead of giving her the class notes (AP). Through these descriptions, Thanh appears to demonstrate constructivist characteristics of learning and the implication is that student knowledge accumulates by building on prior knowledge (Ball, 2009).

**Mentoring**

Thanh’s response to the optional “Broader Context” question on the Application Profile that was intended to help the readers of the profile understand her responses, reveals that as a secondary school student she did not have the support of her parents in pursuing one of her goals. At the time, her goal was to be on the girls’ volleyball team and she states, “My parents told me that I would not make the cut” (AP). It was through her persistence and “with the assistance from my gym teacher, who later became my coach” (AP) that Thanh was able to achieve that goal. She reflects on the idea of being a mentor herself and having benefitted from the support of a mentor and that she “would like to help others as well” (AP). Implied in Thanh’s statements here and throughout the interview is socioeconomic status as a dimension of diversity and the impact it had on her family and later on herself. Indeed, the
supports she was looking for from her family were not available because her parents did not have an education and could not see its value. Thanh is looking to make a change, move up on the social ladder, and the notion of mentor has a high status for her as she sees in it a solution to resolve her own issues, but also as a pathway to help others by becoming a mentor herself.

**Thanh’s developing understandings of diversity, teaching and learning**

As mentioned earlier, Thanh entered the teacher education program through the “University students into Year 2” (R6) option. As such, many of the entries that she shared as part of the data collection for this study are marked “Year 1 and 2”. They were intended to cover that period of study, although they were entered in her e-portfolio in her second year in the concurrent teacher education program. For the purpose of this analysis, these entries will be referred to as “second year” entries.

During her second year in the program, Thanh was concerned with a number of questions, as exemplified by her e-portfolio entries posted under a number of knowledge base strands: Philosophy; Equity and Diversity; Pedagogy and Curriculum; Subject Matter; Self/Teacher Development. Each of these is described in more details in the sections that follow.

**Philosophy as self-worthiness**

For her “Philosophy” entry in the second year, Thanh chose to use an artifact – the song “Utopia” written and recorded by Alanis Morissette (R6). Thanh describes the artifact as follows, “It is about Morissette’s ideal world, in which everyone is able to communicate and converse, while feeling safe and supported by others. This “utopia” is quite similar to my vision of an ideal world. This artifact represents my vision of a supportive community/classroom, and reflects my values towards education and experience” (R6). In her entry, Thanh reflects on “positive” and “negative” experiences that she had in high school with respect to class discussions. A positive experience the teacher candidate describes relates to a course entitled “Theory of Knowledge”. From the description, it is evident that Thanh sees knowledge as “discussions” that revolve around varied questions, some of which are “controversial” (R6). The positive aspect of these discussions was that
“there was no right or wrong answer – as long as one was able to defend their point of view”.

There are a number of reasons for which Thanh valued these discussions around “knowledge”:

By having these discussions, I feel that we are able to expand our minds, learn how to think more critically, and be more aware of others and their differences. It also helps build a feeling of self-worth, knowing that one’s opinion matters. Ideally this brings us closer to achieving a ‘utopia’” (R6).

There seems to be a contradiction or tension in Thanh’s description: although the debate-type activities enhance her knowledge, this knowledge is not quite enough to reach her ideal, since it is still a “utopia”. Her discussion of “knowledge” seems to be more for the purpose of pointing to one of her values – creating a safe environment for bringing up controversial issues and “building knowledge”. One’s feeling of self-worth appears to play a critical role in learning, as further exemplified by her description of what she calls “negative experiences”:

Conversely, I have had negative experiences in which I have felt that my thoughts and opinions did not matter. It was as though I was unheard, or that my words were disposable. This has made me feel worthless in a classroom where it seems everyone has a voice but me (R6).

Thanh brings up the idea of “ranking” in her “Philosophy” discussion when she elaborates on what her “ideal” or “utopian” supportive community/classroom” would look like. She wonders if ranking would impede the self-worth of students or make them “feel less than their peers”. She states that “Unfortunately our school system is structured upon ranking. I wonder if this system actually motivates or deters students from trying” (R6). Thanh is thus setting a goal “to acknowledge success in myself and others more often on a daily basis. After all, how can one achieve success without first knowing that they have succeeded?” (R6). Thanh tries to reinterpret her idea of success, by turning to the “knowledge” that can be created in safe environments where students can feel their self-worth. The notion of ranking does not hold a high status for her as it may stay in the way of appreciating one’s self-worth. It appears so far that the TC is striving to get to an “ideal world”, which is primarily associated with being successful.
Equity and Diversity - becoming part of a community

During her second year in the teacher education program, Thanh also posted a reflective writing piece in her e-portfolio under the “Equity and Diversity” knowledge base strand. She chose to use an artifact that represented her placement in a community centre. The reason she gives for posting this reflection under “Equity and Diversity” is that “it reflects an institutional context for establishing foundations of equity and diversity” and that the centre “accomplishes these foundations by offering services and programs to all community members, regardless of their individual differences (e.g., race, origin, religion affiliation)” (R4).

In her placement Thanh seems to initially be concerned about the idea of being part of a community with which one cannot identify, based on religion, values and practices. She states, “Originally I was hesitant to do my placement at the MNJCC because I was not Jewish. I was afraid that my ignorance towards Jewish values and practices would create a barrier to my acceptance in the community and institution” (R4). Soon after she started her placement, Thanh realized that being part of a community is possible, if the two parties involved are making efforts, thus her notion of who can be part of which communities changed. It appears thus, that Thanh’s initial idea of what a community is (i.e. everyone is the same) has lowered in status and if the “newcomers and the community members” make each other feel “welcomed”, then someone who is different from the community would feel “comfortable”. Thanh further notes that newcomers need to feel welcomed and included in order to “feel comfortable accessing resources available to them” (R4).

Thanh states that the experience made her draw important conclusions related to diversity, such as “this experience made me think of Canada and its relations to newcomers or immigrants. More specifically, I thought of schools and their relations to students. These newcomers need to adjust to new faces, new rules, and new learning environments” (R4). Thanh’s understating of diversity relates to immigrants and the idea that they “need to adjust”. Through the descriptions of the placement experience Thanh appears to subscribe to notions of equity and diversity. Her conception however, evolves from seeing equity as “services and programs” offered to community members, to a realization that open-
mindedness or “positive and empowering outlook” is needed from both newcomers into the community and existing members. Despite this, she puts more emphasis on need for the newcomers to “adjust” to the new environment (R4).

**Subject matter as accommodating ability and disability**

During her second year in the program, Thanh also chooses to post an artifact from an assignment that asked TCs to reflect on their “history in physical activity and how it contributed to good health”. This reflection comes under the “Subject Matter” knowledge base strand, because “it demonstrates the skills and knowledge that I acquired in an area of sport that is applicable to what I will be teaching in the future” (R1). This entry resonates with what she perceived as “issues” in the Application Profile: a concern and dissatisfaction with parental support, “initial lack of skill and knowledge in sports”, and “discrimination from taller and more skilful players”. Her ideas about these issues do not appear to have changed. Thanh cites the same ways that helped her overcome these concerns: through older peers modelling their “own perseverance”, and building confidence through coaching younger players (R1).

The conclusions that Thanh draws in this reflection concern what “teaching is all about”: to create a supporting learning environment for individuals of different abilities. She appears to “value the notion of accommodating everyone in physical activity, and offering support to those who need it” (R1). Thanh’s ideas about how one succeeds in life did not change since she enrolled in the program, and she still appears to be concerned about her family status (i.e. lack of support) at the personal level. However, she seems to start making connections between her own understanding of ability and disability and future teaching by subscribing to universalistic notions of “accommodation”.

**Pedagogy and curriculum as organization, skills, collaboration and reflection**

In her second year in the teacher education program Thanh also reflects on the Knowledge Base Strand of “Pedagogy and Curriculum”. She chose to focus on an artifact that represents “the first lesson plan” (R2) for a course closely connected to her teachable (i.e. Physical Education). Thanh does not describe her lesson plan in detail. Instead, she focuses on
examining what she has learnt from the assignment and what her ideas about student
knowledge and teaching are. The reason the TC chose this artifact is because “it represents
the knowledge, skill, and organization required in evaluation, planning and instruction on
how to improve in specific subject areas” (R2). This statement, as one reads through the
entire reflection, indeed appears to show Thanh’s conception of what teaching is. Thanh puts
a lot of emphasis on “knowledge, skill and organization” as “very important to communicate
ideas” (R2). The TC holds the notion that student development is closely linked to the
teacher’s development when she states, “It would be difficult for students to attain growth
and knowledge, if the teacher were closed to learning and improving” (R2).

In addition to knowledge, skills and organization that appear to be essential in teaching and
learning for Thanh, she also seems to value ideas of reflections and collaborations, in her role
as teacher candidate and as a future teacher:

As an individual I often like to reflect on how I (or others) have done things in the
past, considering aspects that I would have done differently, or aspects that I was
particularly proud of. [...] By sharing my lesson plans with my peers and having my
peers share their lesson plans with me, I was able to evaluate and see the strengths
and weaknesses in my peer’s teaching strategies. [...] I realize that teachers will often
collaborate, communicate and coordinate on their lessons, so that their classes are
learning the same material across different classes at roughly the same time … I
wonder why though, some people are more hesitant to their work with others, when
sharing can evidently be so beneficial… (R2)

Thanh seems committed to professional development and her idea of teaching diverse
students is closely linked to this notion and also “planning and revision”. She states, “I think
there are always new/better ways to do things, especially when working with diverse and
dynamic students” (R2).

**Self/Teacher Development**

In addition to the reflections described above, during her second year in the teacher education
program, Thanh chose to also post a reflection and artifact under the “Self-Teacher
Development” section in her e-portfolio. The artifact is Thanh’s resume. The TC describes it
as “essentially, my resume summarizes who I am, what I have accomplished, and my
objectives for the future” (R5). Thanh further states that, “This is meaningful to me because
these experiences have helped me develop transferable skills and qualities …that will help me to adapt to future professional settings”. (R5)

While describing her “transferrable skills” Thanh emphasizes her knowledge of “others” that she acquired in a customer service position. She also notes that her knowledge of customers as having “different needs and different ways to communicate those needs” will help to get to know her future students. In drawing the linkages, she suggests “Similarly, students have different needs and ways of expressing their needs. As a teacher, I would have to attend to my students’ need in a respectful manner, just as I would with clients” (R5).

Thanh maintains that she has learnt how to be a “mediator” between “frustrated parents” and their children “who do not see eye-to-eye” (R5). This skill would help her to deal with “concerned parents” of her future students. Her role as a teacher would also involve revising the materials because “although I may have a template, or a lesson plan, on how to pitch a sale or a lesson to someone, I need to revise it along the way, because everyone is different and unique” (R5).

The TC notes that what inspires her about teaching is “working with unique and developing minds” and guiding individuals as they grow. She shows an understanding of challenges of working “with people who see things differently”, but she is willing to “accept the challenge” (R5).

Equity and diversity – activism

In the Year 3 in the teacher education program, Thanh adds a reflection under the “Equity and Diversity” knowledge base strand in her e-portfolio. Her reflection focuses on “a poster for a conference entitled, Educational Activism: Social Justice in Classrooms, Schools and Communities” (R4, emphasis in original). The TC indicates that she chose to add this particular artifact because the conference helped her raise her awareness of activism and how it may be implemented into the classroom. Thanh attended two workshops at the conference and she describes what she has learnt as follows:
In these courses, I learned about social issues, such as hegemony and how it influences society by keeping those of a dominant position in power. For example, the notion of the “old boys club” relates to sports, which historically has been an institution that promotes male hegemony. Although it seems farfetched, these social issues are important to address in the classroom, as they can help to develop critical thinking in students. Rather than being spoon-fed handouts upon handouts covering curriculum material, students should stop to consider what they are learning and why. In particular, who has been responsible for writing the curriculum and whom is it intended for? By answering these questions, students may realize that there are gaps in the education system, which reflects a lack of equity and diversity. (R4)

From this description, it is evident that Thanh is trying to make connections between the notion of hegemony and her teachable (i.e. Physical Education). She also appears to reflect on the role of teacher as helping student develop critical thinking and abilities to question the content of the curriculum and the purposes it serves.

Thanh appears to have developed a new understandings of the concept of activism when she states that “I now believe in concerning activism is that it can happen on a small scale” and that “an activist may simply be someone trying to make a difference in their own community, or classroom” (R4). As a teacher, Thanh sees activism as “weaved throughout the curriculum, and not merely concentrated in one lesson” (R4). She believes that by being a good role model, one “can evoke change, which models activism and good citizenship” (R4). Thanh projects her major learning from the conference workshops into her future teaching when she states that, “As an educator, my goal would be to help students set SMART (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, Timely) goals, so that they are able to see progress and stay motivated to learn”(R4).

This entry reveals that Thanh finds the notion of activism quite compelling, and the new understandings she developed in the workshops seem to make her willing to implement these new ideas in her future teaching. The implied discomfort that she had around the notion of “activism as a big picture” and thus unachievable, turned into a less threatening notion of “activism can start on a small scale” (R4). The idea of “small scale” in its turn, ties in with the comfort that this TC finds in SMART goals (R4). What Thanh describes echoes the notion of “Theory with a capital T” and “small-t theory” that help new teachers understand how to act in a situation that is different from what they expected (Korthagen, 2001, p. 8)
Spirituality as a vision for teaching

In her fourth year in the teacher education program Thanh appears to be attracted to the notion of spirituality and how it connects to her personal and professional self (including teaching). The reflection that she shared is related to a curriculum course assignment. By way of introduction in the reflection, Thanh describes her practicum experience and what prompted her to look at spirituality in more detail:

Miss, why are we doing this and what’s the point?” Throughout my seven-week practicum, this was probably the most common question I was asked – and a legitimate one at that! In living with post-practicum stress disorder (pardon my play on words), I can certainly relate to the lack of meaning and purpose that is sometimes experienced in the classroom or gym. I recognize this lack of engagement in many students and wonder if it is related to the absence of spirituality in Health and Physical Education (HPE). (CAR)

The lack of engagement is a concern that Thanh had in her practicum. A “class reading” in her teacher education program provided the incentive for Thanh to research spirituality and its relation to health and physical education (HPE). As a result, the TC appears to have found new meanings for spirituality:

Despite the importance of spirituality, up until now, I have had a vague understanding of the term and have often confused it with religion. I’ve learned from this article that this is a common misperception, which has likely contributed to why spirituality has been neglected in HPE (at least in public schools). (CAR)

The article, as Thanh further maintains, helped her guide her teaching practice toward a more “balanced” and “holistic approach to good health, body and mind” (CAR). Furthermore, the readings she has done appear to have changed the way she sees students. She suggests, “To develop good students, we need to consider each student as a whole” (CAR). The TC is also thinking about numerous practical strategies that she will use in teaching, such as “using yoga, meditation and relaxation exercises for a cool down; providing students with service-oriented leadership opportunities within the community; prompting students during ‘teachable moments’ in HPE to question the sources of their motives, goals, emotions and thoughts; integrating artistic and aesthetic activities into HPE; exposing students to the outdoors, and exploring topics such as flow” (CAR). The TC’s research and reflection about
her future teaching show that she has engaged in what Tisdell (2006) calls “research and
teaching [as] both a spiritual and intellectual pursuit” (p. 19) that can be argued to be a start
in thinking critically about different learning needs of future students.

In addition to practical strategies, Thanh also appears to have changed the way she sees
assessment, “assessment as learning and the autonomous learner, as we want students to be
active participants (“active spirits”) in their learning” (CAR, emphasis in original). Thanh, as
seen from the reflection described above, acquired new understandings of a concept that she
found very useful for her personal well being as well as for her professional self, and that she
thinks would help her address diversity in her classroom in terms of teaching and learning.

Professional observation as a way to become an effective teacher

In her fourth year in the concurrent teacher education program, Thanh posted another course
assignment reflection (CAR). Thanh reflects on her “professional observation and research”
in a “community field placement” (CAR). The purpose of the assignment, as Thanh
indicates, was to collect data pertaining to the demographics of a particular school. The TC
described the school as “a low to middle income area with a mix of Ontario housing,
apartment buildings and houses” (CAR). The school had a large representation from South
and South-East Asia. The TC also notes that, “Some issues of concern within and around the
school community include theft and gang violence” (CAR).

Thanh perceived all the aspects that she describes as information that “helps inform and
direct my teaching practice” (CAR). More specifically, the TC indicates that such
information will help her get to know the students and attend to their needs:

Low SES and education have many correlates including high dropout rates, poor
physical and psychological health. In turn, these factors would impact a student’s
performance, motivation and engagement in the classroom. As opposed to labeling a
student as lazy or uninterested, I would be more inclined to consider potential
underlying issues behind a student’s behaviour. As an educator, I would take these
issues into account by knowing resources and supports available to students and their
families. Within the classroom, this knowledge would impact how I plan lessons and
assignments (CAR).
In addition to students, Thanh also thinks that such information will help her communicate with parents. Thanh concludes, “Essentially, through professional observation and research, one can become more effective as a teacher by modifying teaching practices (based on students’ needs)” (CAR). Thanh, as seen from the above quote, set the goal to understand the different structures beyond the individual characteristics of students that might impact their success in school. She also points to the multiple diversities that might be at play when she uses the term “correlates”.

**Online learning, collaboration and measurable outcomes**

In her fifth year, Thanh seems concerned with a number of ideas that she describes in a “reflection assignment” (CAR) for an online course with a placement attached to it. Thanh continues to be concerned with the specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and timely (SMART) goals that she identifies in her third year. This time, however, she links this “goals” idea to the “school improvement plan (SIP) and how collaboration can lead to measurable results” (CAR). Thanh also indicates that the online courses provided her opportunities to learn about other students in the course who she was “shy to approach” in person. Furthermore, she gained a few valuable ideas for her future teaching, such as using technology (e.g., wiki, online forum, blog) to attend to varied needs of students.

Thanh also states that the course placement helped her “make the connection between theory and practice by seeing how data, action research, and SMART goals are used to develop a SIP” (CAR). Although she expresses her concern with being able to keep up with changing technology, she appears comforted by the idea that there are many resources she can draw on:

> I feel assured knowing that resources (e.g., administrative support, colleagues, and student surveys) exist to inform my practice. That is, if I use teacher inquiry and data collection, I can learn from students and colleagues (e.g., about technology) and understand how to help students achieve their best, as outlined by the SIP. (CAR)

It appears from the description above that Thanh is thinking about her future practice and linking her ideas to what she observed in the placement (e.g., the school improvement plan and data). She recognizes the importance of collaboration and plans to rely on it as a resource
while teaching. Thanh is content with the online course because it gave her an opportunity to
engage in communications and learn from other students’ experiences, in a way that she
could not have done in a traditional classroom because of her being “shy” (CAR).

**Diversity as culture, influences on learning**

The individual interview with Thanh took place in the month that she was graduating from
the concurrent teacher education program. When asked what diversity meant to her, Thanh
referred to culture and then described in more detail why she struggled with this concept:

> For me it means culture. Culture can be your age, your ethnicity, ability, disability,
gender, sexuality. Diversity for me is a very open term. That’s why I struggled to
answer that question about identity because it can encompass so many things and it
does embrace all the things that people have experienced in their lives. (TCII)

Thanh identifies a number of influences on her development of diversity understandings: her
secondary schooling experiences and the teachers she had, her university experiences and her
peers, as well as interactions with classmates, peers and friends. When asked how her
understanding of diversity was shaped by experiences prior to her enrolment in the program,
Thanh went back to the elementary school teacher that she referred to when defining
diversity, and stated that that teacher had helped her differentiate between “equity and
equality”:

> Theoretically my program does preach a lot of diversity, equity and equality and I
think back to my middle school experience and it was through that middle school
teacher that I learnt what was the difference was between equity and equality.
Without knowing that and what that looked like, I don’t think I would understand and
appreciate it as much as a university student. (TCII)

As the quote above shows, Thanh believes that her prior knowledge of diversity, the “seed”
that was planted early in her life, had an impact on choices she made for her postsecondary
education and the appreciation for what she is learning about the diversity concept. When
asked how she learned best more generally and about diversity in particular, Thanh appeared
to be able to connect ideas through collaborative work with peers, but reflections seemed to
help her most. She noted, “The information is a bit of an overload and I don’t have time to
process it. I need that time to think about it and then to talk about it with my classmates”. (TCII)

As part of her learning, Thanh also prefers that professors summarize articles because “novice readers” may take everything that is written at face value. Thanh also prefers modelling and guest speakers while learning in university classrooms, when she states, “I felt that I learnt a lot because my instructor brought us into the gym and she showed us […] I had a guest speaker coming in and I think that’s a good way to incorporate diversity” (TCII).

The TC notes that the varied field experiences that she had helped her learn about diverse students, “it’s good that we had opportunities to do little placements […]. We had a lot of opportunities in the program because it was five years as opposed to one year in the consecutive. The yearly opportunities do give you time to find those experiences and really integrate them in courses” (TCII). Although the TC appears to appreciate the many field experiences in the program because “The hands-on experience is more memorable, being engulfed in that”, she still thinks that they were “the tip of the iceberg” (TCII) and connects this idea to the “seed” that was planted. The TCs also describes a “conflicting” associate teacher (AT) in her practicum who compared the TC to “Grade 12s” and lists a number of concerns: feedback to her as a TC and feedback to students in her class; AT’s attitude toward her as a TC that required accommodation; her identity as a teacher and how the AT’s feedback influenced it during the placement; the idea of “power” in a student-teacher relationship; and the idea of being “strategically compliant” because of the need for references. The TC concludes that the AT seemed to both like and dislike her approaches to teaching and had a view that what she had learned in the teacher education program was “not practical” (TCII).

Family status and relating to concepts for understanding

When further describing her learning in the concurrent teacher education program, Thanh appears very concerned about “family status” as a diversity dimension. This is also apparent in other documents that she shared (e.g., recall the Application profile excerpts presented earlier). In the interview, similar to her statements in other documents, Thanh links her
concern with the concept of family status to what she perceives as lack of support from her family, due to their education and socioeconomic status.

When speaking about diversity dimensions that she finds challenging to understand, Thanh explains that when she cannot relate to concepts on a personal level, she finds it difficult to understand. For examples, she explains that, “Every time the Aboriginal ancestry came up it was really hard for me to understand because I don’t have a personal connection with Aboriginal ancestry” (TCII). The TC explains that she could relate more to the idea of “colonization that I can counter-relate to that because in Vietnam, the French colonized Vietnam. That had an impact on my family” (TCII). Other dimensions of diversity, such as ability and disability are concepts that the TC could not “understand and really appreciate” until she “went through it”. Also, faith and religion are also “hard to understand” for her because although she is “supposed to be Buddhist”, she does not go to the temple every week (TCII).

When asked how her diversity understandings changed as a result of the teacher education program, Thanh stated that she was still learning and emphasised her interest in ability and disability and her plans to enroll in graduate studies after graduation from the teacher education program.

Future teaching

When describing what she could do well in a classroom with diverse students, Thanh appears confident about her teaching strategies when she states, “I think I’d do well knowing different types of strategies that I’d use in the classroom” (TCII). She also seems to believe that getting to know the students is a key to her success as a teacher, which could be done through small steps such as greeting students in the morning and showing interest in their lives.

Although Thanh is confident in her teaching strategies and strategies to get to know the students, she is concerned about balancing her professional and personal self. Her concern is related to the ideas that “new teachers would try and make a difference and get involved”, but the involvement may lead the teacher to be perceived as “counsellor” (TCII). The TC
appears certain that she “should not be counselling students in terms of diversity and that” (TCII), especially on personal or social matters.

**Summary and discussion**

At the time of applying to the teacher education program, Thanh’s conception of diversity relates to student with special needs. The concept of ‘special needs’ has multiple definitions in studies on diverse student populations (Knight, 2009; Berg & Shneider, 2012), but the TC is primarily concerned with the notion of learning disability. The concerns that she describes relate to the debate in research literature around the inclusion of special needs students in regular classrooms (Berg & Shneider, 2012) and attitudes toward such students. The “mixed LD class” that Thanh describes reflects the approach in the Canadian context (e.g., Ontario’s Education Act on Special Education) where special education students are part of the regular classrooms. On the Application Profile the TC is also reflecting on notions of mentoring and building on existing knowledge. Through her descriptions, Thanh appears to demonstrate constructivist characteristics of learning and the implication is that student knowledge accumulates by building on prior knowledge (Ball, 2011).

In her second year, Thanh’s comparison of prior work experience in the customer service sector with teaching appears to describe a vision of the teacher as a “pitcher” of knowledge, a mediator between parents and their children and a “caterer to unique needs of individuals”. The TC’s notion of what the role of teachers should be reflects her professional experiences outside education contexts that she finds transferable. Thanh tries to reinterpret her idea of success, by turning to the “knowledge” that can be created in safe environments where students can feel their self-worth. The notion of ranking does not hold a high status for her as it may stay in the way of appreciating one’s self-worth. It appears so far that the TC is striving to get to and “ideal world”, which is primarily associated with being successful.

In her third and fourth years of study, Thanh appears to have developed new understandings of concepts, such as activism and spirituality. The concept of “activism” as “starting small” appears to cause Thanh to get rid of her fears and start thinking critically, and this change in her conception of “activism” can be seen as a change that might lead her to becoming a
“change agent” (Feiman-Nemser, 2008). At that point in her teacher education program, the TC sees role modelling as a way to start on that route. The context that led to the change in Thanh’s conception of activism and subsequent change in how she plans to act on her new learning was an *Educational Activism: Social Justice in Classrooms, Schools and Communities* conference held at OISE. What triggered Thanh to undertake research in her fourth year and develop her understating of another concept, “spirituality” was something that occurred in her practicum: what she perceived as “the most common question” that students tended to ask (i.e. “what’s the point” of activities). Thus, a particular field experiences caused this TC to seek to learn more.

Through focused observations and research, Thanh appears to think more critically about her role as a teacher in her fourth year. She reflects on the importance of getting to know more about the school, the community, the students and their families in order to become “a more effective teacher” (CAR). Goals that are associated with the term of “effective teacher” in research literature on teacher education and also that echo notions from the “multicultural education” approach to teaching described by Grant and Sleeter (2007). Thanh also sets the goal to understand the different structures beyond the individual characteristics of students that might impact their success in school. She also points to the multiple diversities that might be at play when she uses the term “correlates”, such as low SES, high drop-out rates, poor physical and psychological health. The conception of diversity as multiple dimensions has received attention in more recent literature. Knudsen (2006) for example, explores it in her discussion of intersectionality as a theory “to analyze how social and cultural categories intertwine. The relationship between gender, race, ethnicity, disability, sexuality, class and nationality are examined” (p. 61). Although Thanh describes her understating of diversity as multiple in her own way, it still shows that this conception seems to take roots with her at that point in time.

In the end of her fifth year, Thanh is reflecting on varied ideas that connect to her future teaching (e.g., student achievement), but it appears that these are viewed through a prism of “measureable’ outcomes: Thanh seems to have a predilection for setting goals that can be quantified and traced back to data. Such a change in her thinking is directly linked to her
being in a field placement where she witnessed such approaches to teaching. She however, also seems to put emphasis on the role of collaboration and learning from her classmates as well as her future colleagues. The relationships that she feels she has or will build, appear to be viewed as resources she hopes to rely on in her future practice, in addition to data.

As the interview that took place in her fifth year shows, Thanh’s struggle with defining diversity is closely linked to her struggles to define her ‘self’ and also to her challenge to understand dimensions that she does not have a personal connection with. The TC’s conception of diversity as culture encompasses many dimensions, and she sees it as an open term. Her personal experiences seem to have given rise to specific concerns about diversity for the TC, such as family status. Her interest in particular dimensions, such as ability and disability also stem from her struggle of defining her ‘self’ as “meaning maker and agent” (Rodgers & Scott, 2008, p. 737). The concept of “self” is also present in Dorothy’s case described earlier. This struggle in its turn, influenced her decision to study ability and disability at the graduate level, a future plan she set for pursuing after graduating from the teacher education program.

**Matteo**

**Introduction**

Matteo was in his early twenties at the time of participating in the study. He was in the fifth and final year of the concurrent teacher education program. He indicated that Religion and History were his teachables and he would be working with students in secondary schools (i.e. Intermediate/Senior division). Matteo described himself as “Male, Canadian and Italian” and stated that his religion was “diverse, very diverse” (TCII). As a child, Matteo lived in a community that was “mainly European” (TCII). At the time of the interview he was living in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) in a community that he described as “it’s more of an Asian background” and further stated in regards to his community and university life:

> Now it’s even more diverse. Now we are not in my little Catholic community. It’s more broad now. Being in a big city, you can see diversity. It wasn’t a big transition.
It wasn’t a big shock for me. It was just another day, another life. I would just take it day by day and it was no problem for me. They are exactly the same.

There seems to be tension in Matteo’s words above: on the one hand moving to the city was a big shock, and on the other hand it “wasn’t a big transition”, “just another day, another life”.

Similar to Thanh, Matteo enrolled in the Concurrent Teacher Education Program after finishing one year of study at the same university. Matteo shared a number of documents that he wrote during his studies in the teacher education program (refer to Table 13) and that are used to analyze his initial and developing understanding of diversity.

**Matteo’s initial conceptions of diversity, teaching and learning**

**Disability and institutional practices**

At the time of applying for a spot in the concurrent teacher education program, Matteo chose to describe an institutional practice that he believed affected access for individuals with either a temporary or permanent disability. This experience was examined in his diversity-focused response on the Application Profile (AP). The TC described the experiences of a friend who was injured and had trouble accessing the premises of a clinic, due to the fact that the “ramp was under construction” (AP). Matteo’s friend “had this look of horror like he saw a ghost” when he saw a “very steep flight of stairs leading to the entrance” (AP). The TC further notes his dissatisfaction with the institutional practice when he indicates that although he and his friend later found out that there was a “temporary wheel-chair entrance in the back of the building” (AP), the institution had failed to post an appropriate sign to that effect at the front of the building. Matteo is trying to connect this experience with his future teaching when he states, “this lesson will help me as a teacher to support students, even in situations that may not be clear, by targeting the problem, offering my assistance and following through to a successful resolution”. It appears thus, that Matteo saw the teacher as a problem-solver at this early stage of becoming teacher.

Matteo’s other responses on the application profile (i.e. to the question that asked to describe three experiences when he helped someone learn something and the question that asked him to add anything else about himself) show his engagement in volunteer activities where he
assists “young people… with respect to their Catholic faith” as well as several learnings that he connects to teaching. For instance, Matteo puts emphasis on clarity when teaching “subject matter” to youth, he sees classroom management or “control of students” as achievable through “calmness and understanding” and understands “the responses that students provide during discussions” as a “measure [of] student comprehension” (AP).

**Matteo’s developing understandings of diversity, teaching and learning**

Matteo, similar to Thanh entered the teacher education program in his second year. Also similar to Thanh, many of the entries that he shared as part of the data collection for this study are marked “Year 1 and 2”. They were intended to cover that period of study, although they were completed in his second year in the concurrent teacher education program. For the purpose of this analysis, these entries are referred to as “second year” entries.

During his second year in the teacher education program, Matteo was concerned with a number of questions, as exemplified by his entries posted under a number of “knowledge base strands” in his e-portfolio: Philosophy; Equity and Diversity; and Self/Teacher Development.

**Philosophy as moral values, student engagement and experiential learning**

For his Philosophy (R6) entry, Matteo chose to include a reflection on the “Ideas File” that appear to be part of an observation assignment for an education-related course in his undergraduate program. The goal of this file, as Matteo explains, “was to examine how children and adolescent develop, and to explore the interaction between development and learning” (R6). While the TC considers the many influences on human development, he also appears to be concerned about the focus of his program, when he states that he “keep[s] in mind the special focus I have as a student in Religious Education” (R6). He relates the observation experience to his past experiences of struggling with learning History as a subject. Through his description it is apparent that the TC holds the view that experiential learning is one of the best teaching methods:
My teacher realized that I gained all sorts of knowledge from this field trip to the ROM [museum] and it is in this moment that I realized that a great teaching method for students is going on field trips. (R6)

Matteo’s teaching philosophy becomes clearer when he connects the ideas that he learnt by way of engaging in the assignment/observation to future teaching. He refers to different teaching methodologies that help observe students behaviour, but suggests that one also needs to “think critically about behaviour” and that student learn “in a variety of ways”. Matteo further suggests that “a higher than average percentage of students in minority groups face specific challenges in the school system. For example, it is known that boys are less successful than girls in literacy assessments, while girls are less likely than boys to take science and technology courses” (R6). From his further descriptions, it is evident that the TC is conflating notions of gender and minority as they relate to the idea of “being successful in schools” (R6) as well as exposes “deficit thinking” (Valencia (1997, p. x). The TC also associates equality with “student engagement”, when he states, “Through these ideas of how to engage to learn, there will be that sense of equality for every single student to learn and grow as he/she wishes” (R6).

It can be concluded that Matteo’s teaching philosophy in his second year of studies was influenced by his moral values and his program focus. He viewed experiential learning as key in addressing how people learn. Although he makes attempts to connect learning with diversity, he falls into using cliché notions of success as depending on gender and subscribes to deficit notions of achievement as linked to “minority-majority” affiliations.

**Gender and sexuality combined as guidelines for future teachers on sensitive issues**

In his second year, Matteo also reflects on gender and sexuality and its impact on future teaching by reflecting on a Power Point presentation (PPT) as artifact under the “Equity and Diversity” knowledge base strand in his e-portfolio. He appears to have big concerns about these two dimensions of diversity, when he states, “it [PPT] talks about how sexuality and gender can combine to make a huge difference in people’s lives – between well-being and ill-being, and sometimes between life and death” (R4). His concern also comes forward as he describes the reason he included this particular artifact under “Equity and Diversity”: 
One’s gender and sexuality is a key example to show to others how diverse our world really is and I believe the issues of this topic need to be addressed and need to be dealt with immediately. [...] Looking at this artifact allows me to reflect on several things as well. As mentioned above, it allows myself and other future teachers to approach such sensitive matters in a professional way. I look forward in seeing the challenges I will face as a teacher and the different approaches I will use to try and resolves this issues as best as possible [...]. The presentation is an excellent guideline to inform students who are becoming future teachers as it will educate them on this sensitive issue. (R4)

This entry appears to reiterate some of Matteo’s concerns described earlier in relation to diversity: his own personal moral values and Catholic faith, his program focus on Religious Education and an attempt to find a balance between these as future teachers need “to approach such sensitive matters in a professional way” (R4). Matteo ends his reflection by providing a definition of sexuality from the “World Health Organization” (R4).

**Applying to become a teacher as Self/teacher-development**

In his second year in the teacher education program, Matteo posted his “Application Form” to the teacher education program (R5) under the “Self/Teacher Development” knowledge base strand in his online portfolio. His description expresses his contentment with the idea of becoming a teacher when he states, “while we had until April to hand in our application, I decided to begin in February” (R5). Matteo appears to view the process of applying to the teacher education program and the completion of the application form itself as a professional development tool when he describes the reason for choosing this artifact:

> The artifact is a reminder to myself of why I decided to go into teaching in the first place and reflects the excitement that I have for teaching. Questions in the application form I found made me go into deep contemplation and was able to bring about in writing my abilities/strengths as a professional working with children, and as well my abilities/strengths as a person outside of the classroom. (R5)

The thoughts that Matteo expresses in this entry are in line with the scope of the document he describes: the “self”. He talks about himself as a “human being [I] have much to offer and that I should never for one-second doubt myself” (R6). In addition, he also examines himself “as a professional” and what it takes to become an effective teacher. First, he believes that one needs to see what beliefs or strategies “are still good for yourself.” Next, he
suggests that one needs to see what beliefs or strategies are bad for you as a teacher. Finally, he acknowledges that one would need to change “the beliefs and strategies that are bad for you as a teacher “which will “lead oneself to becoming an effective teacher” (R6).

From the description that Matteo provides in this entry, it is apparent that beliefs are an important element of his identity/self as well as of an “effective teacher”. Matteo appears to be open to change in order to become an effective teacher and sees reflections as important in this process.

**Oh, the Places You’ll Go! – Achieving potential through pushing oneself**

In the beginning of his third year in the teacher education program, Matteo chose to post a reflection under the “Pedagogy and Curriculum” in his e-portfolio. This reflection focuses on the “*Oh, the Places You’ll Go!*” by Dr. Seuss” (R2, emphasis in original). It is a book that the TC used to read to “the Grade 8 class on their final day of elementary school before they embarked on their high school journey” (R2) in his placement at the end of his second year. As TC’s writing shows, he is concerned with “ups and downs” of life and how individuals need to “push forward” in order to succeed in life. This personal concern links to what the TC would “want to be and the type of advice I would like to give to my future pupils” (R2). Matteo puts great value on student potential, although his idea of how potential is achieved is only linked to “pushing” oneself:

> My personal belief is that every single individual has the potential to be great in life, however being great is not easy, one must push themselves to the limit and battle their way through the struggles of life to get it (R2).

Matteo seems to adhere to the notion that once you get to understand and follow certain principles in life, you would advance in your learning. However, this route is “fraught with struggles” and he exemplifies these with an excerpt from the book that he read to his students (R2).

**Disability stands in way of achieving potential**

In his third year of studies, Matteo returns to the idea of disability through a field placement reflection (FPR). He examines a “T-shirt” artifact of “a former high school student, with the
autograph of the student that I taught” (FPR). While in his placement, Matteo was concerned that a “spectacular basketball player” had low “self-esteem” because he was “diagnosed with autism” (FPR). He and this student’s coach “took actions” to help the student “boost his self-esteem”. As a result, the student “became starter on a basketball team” (FPR). This experience seems to have made Matteo reflect on the many disadvantages faced by students with disabilities and ways to help these students achieve their potential.

In this entry, similar to ideas in other reflection pieces, Matteo appears to show commitment to recognizing potential in students, and of being a role model for students. Additionally, he also emphasizes the need to “work hard” and sees “determination” as “leading to success” (FPR). Matteo states that he plans on continuing to work with “special needs students” (R2) after the placement. He notes that in order to be successful as a teacher, he will rely on the ideas of Catholic teachings as well as policy documents for teachers. The TC thus, appears to associate best teaching practices with those described in policy documents, and “commitment to students and student learning” is one such practice that he brings forward as an example (FPR).

“Together we are one”

In the beginning of his fourth in the concurrent teacher education program, Matteo posted a reflection under the “Equity and Diversity” knowledge base strand in his e-portfolio. While in his second year he seems concerned about gender and sexuality (examined under the same knowledge base strand), he now chose to provide a visual representation of what he perceives as “a perfect representation of Equity and Diversity” (R4/IR):
The artifact above comes from an internship experience in Matteo’s third year of study and represents “the finished product of the class banner for the paraliturgy […] with the slogan “Together We Are One” (R4). Matteo provides an explanation of why he believes the artifact represents equity and diversity as follows: “this project does not leave out a single student, each student must contribute to the building of the banner and they have done this by expressing their vision on each puzzle piece.” (R4)

It is evident from Matteo’s description and the visual he chose that diversity to him means “difference” but also how this difference becomes “One” or “unity”. The notion of community holds a strong status for this TC and he believes that it is through community that individuals might realize their potential. Furthermore, Matteo appears to have shifted or changed his idea that success is about “pushing oneself”, a notion that he espoused earlier in his third year in the program. Success for him is now connected to the notion of “self-
directed learning” and “gospel values”, but these in their turn, are achieved through being part of the community.

**Diversity not much of a barrier**

The individual interview with Matteo took place shortly after he graduated from the concurrent teacher education program. When asked what diversity meant to him, Matteo responds, “Basically a variety of ethnicities, religions and cultures” (Matteo described diversity earlier by referring to gender and sexuality, and “unity”). Matteo further explains that simple things such as going to school and living in the city have helped him define diversity “the way he knows it”:

I think just being in the city in general. Just something simple as going to school. You already start to notice that you are not the typical white European boy in there. There are other cultures, other religions as well. Especially even growing up in a Catholic school system I always assumed that everyone would just be Catholic, but apparently that was not the case. Not only Catholics attend Catholic schools, especially publicly funded Catholic schools. I think that the middle school helped me realize what’s been going on in terms of diversity. (TCII)

When I asked how his diversity conceptions changed, if in any way since he enrolled in the program, Matteo notes that they remained the same and that his attitude “is always open and welcoming” (TCII). Matteo does not appear to be concerned about diversity or see “much of a barrier” in diversity. Dimensions of diversity such as color, ethnicity, and religion do not matter much to him because “we all learn the same curriculum” (TCII), although he appears concerned about gender and sexuality.

**Sexual orientation, gender and marital status are challenging**

As we progressed in the interview, Matteo brings up a few diversity concepts that are challenging for him. For example, when he describes the dimensions of diversity that were taught in the concurrent teacher education program, he states, “We touched on almost every single [diversity] subject” (TCII) and continues to describe how sexual orientation, gender and marital status led to heated discussions because of what he perceives as “different programs” in one course:
What I found more challenging to get around in the Religion program was that we were slandered a lot I would say by other cohort groups, because there were a couple of classes that we had to share with them. We discussed about sexual orientation, gender and even marital status. And it got to the point where we had to almost walk on egg shells because obviously we are Catholic teachers; we are representing the Catholic Church. Those who are not of Catholic faith, their opinions were I guess a bit harsh towards us. Very, very harsh. Everyone looked upon us as being almost homophobic or not accepting everyone else’s gender, and we had these strict set of rules and we had to abide by them, no matter what. And for me that was the only downfall, that they did not really understand the Catholic faith. If we are talking about diversity, then let’s get to know this thing. If you are accepting all these different ways of learning, then you should also be accepting of the ways of learning of the Catholic faith. If we talk about diversity in that sense, it was a challenge for me on that part because of where the Catholic Church stands on all these issues. And it was a challenge for them to understand and to be acceptable of the opinion we have. I would say that was the only challenge that I had. (TCII)

The mixed class of teacher candidates coming from different partner units in the program, which in the quote above appears to imply divergent beliefs and positions on sexuality, gender and marital status, contributed to heated discussions. Matteo’s concern with gender and sexuality is also evident when he describes aspects of diversity that he thinks are important to be included in the teacher education program:

If I could make a recommendation, I would recommend finding a way not just for teachers of the public system in general, but I would say I’d find a way to address this [sexuality] in the Catholic system as well. For gender as well. I would recommend for people going into the Catholic school, I would recommend that [the institution] finds a way of how to go about teaching sexuality, gender, even sexual education in a Catholic manner where it can properly be addressed. (TCII)

When asked to clarify what he meant by gender in his response, the TC connects gender to sexuality and goes back to describing the class discussions with his peers: how the discussions got “hostile” when questions of sexuality were brought up in relation to elementary students. As Matteo describes, “our view” was that elementary students’ age is “tender” and these individuals need to “grow their sexuality”. The “non-Catholic views” included those that suggested that it is necessary for sexuality and gender to be addressed, even in elementary schools. The implied meaning and concern that Matteo has appear to be that teachers should not impose certain understandings of diversity on young students, especially sexuality. This view seems to stem from Matteo’s personal values and religious
beliefs and his program’s emphasis on them as well, when he states, “We want to be accommodating, but not too accommodating. Obviously take your Catholic stance into it as well and try to, I wouldn’t say try and convert them, but try and get your point of view out there and try and make them understand as well where you are coming from. That’s what I got from my college” (TCII).

“No one lives in a bubble”

Later in the interview, when asked if there was anything about himself that may have influenced the way he took up questions of diversity in courses, TC reiterates a lack of concern with diversity, more generally. He also maintains that the teacher education program spends “too much time” on diversity and that everyone, even in schools, is tolerable of diversity and “no one is living in a bubble”:

> I think that diversity is an issue, but not so much. I think that the program spent too much time on it. How to explain it? You take a grain of sand. Especially in the city of Toronto, it’s a grain of sand. Once we know what kind of kids we are going to deal in the classroom, it’s really not that bad. Even in the schools, for the majority part, everyone is really tolerable of diversity. Everyone knows that people are different; they are not the only ones out there in the world. Basically no one is living in a bubble. It was an issue, but only like a grain of sand. I don’t think we should have vast amounts of courses because there is only so much you can talk about. I liked how we brought it up, but not how we had to keep being on the same topic all over again, all over again, when everyone already knows. (TCII)

When asked to describe his field placements (i.e. how they prepared him for teaching diverse students and if he observed any examples of teaching for diversity), Matteo compared his experiences in elementary and high schools. He notes that in elementary school, certain aspects of diversity such as “background” does not “face you as a child” and that “the kids were acting just like kids” (TCII). He noticed more focus on ability and disability at that early stage. In high school in Matteo’s view, students are more aware of diversity, “in terms of race, gender, even in learning disability” because they have classmates who are a program called “the core program for students that need extra help” (TCII).

Matteo also brings up an incident from his practicum when he broke up a fight between a “brother-sister who was wearing the hijab” and “another gentlemen who saw the sister
wearing the hijab and said some inappropriate comments” (TCII) as a way to show that students are more aware of diversity later in their development. However, he states that the incident was not “a major issue” (TCII). It appears that even though there are students with religions other than Catholicism in Catholic schools, Matteo is not very concerned about this aspect of diversity, as seen from the description of his last practicum that follows:

It was actually the first Catholic school I went to. At the other school I went visibly you could not see any visible minority. In this one actually you did see different religious backgrounds, more particularly the Muslim faith. I guess it was a very high Muslim region there. That was the only interesting thing I saw, but I saw it from that particular conflict I just explained with the hijab. The school is still great. People are very tolerable of one another. Very acceptable, so no issues there. (TCII)

Matteo again sees “no issue” because individuals appeared “very tolerable of one another” and “acceptable”.

**Future teaching and diversity**

When asked about what he anticipated in his future teaching in relation to diversity, Matteo notes that “class” might be a challenge because “class is something that you really, especially in a Catholic school, where you wear a uniform, you cannot really distinguish […], you can’t see that” (TCII). Other aspects of diversity, such as race and religion, would not be a problem for Matteo because he observed in his field experiences that students were tolerable of one another. Learning disabilities would be a challenge for him “at first”, but he hopes to overcome it by being “diverse” in his teaching methods. The TC also believes that getting to know the students will help him in his teaching. Matteo further reiterates his “no issue” position on diversity, especially when teaching in Toronto (TCII). This response ties in with his final remarks on how diversity was integrated in the teacher education program and his statement that, “Diversity I felt was very well integrated into the program. My problem was that it was overly integrated. I found too much of it” (TCII). The TC wished for more focus on “curriculum” and “How do we actually teach History, how to actually teach Religion. That was the main issue. Because when it came down to diversity, even the practicum shows it, it was such a small concern. It was such a small issue” (TCII).
Summary and discussion

At the time of applying to the teacher education program, Matteo’s conception of diversity is related to physical disability. Causes for his concern are grounded in his friend’s experience with this issue, albeit a temporary physical disability and he questions intuitional practices that limit access for individuals with disabilities. While in his second year, he places emphasis on moral values as stemming from this Catholic faith, student engagement and experiential learning. The TC sees diversity conceptions of gender and sexuality contested notions, but as important to learn about because they would be beneficial for future teaching. Diversity dimensions such as sexuality and gender conflict with his moral and religious values, and this conflict is the root for his major concern about including them in future teaching. The TC sees reflection as an important aspect of professional development.

In his third year, Matteo reflects on student potential and “pushing oneself” appears to be the route to achieve that potential. However, disability can stay in the way. The TC draws such a conclusion based on prior experiences witnessing someone being disadvantaged in high school because of a disability, but also seeing a similar case in his practicum. To overcome disability as a barrier to success, the TC looks up to teaching strategies described in policy documents. For Matteo, “commitment to students and student learning” is one such practice that he brings forward as an example and which is formulated this way in the Ontario College of Teachers’ (2015) *The Standards of Practice for the Teaching Profession*.

During his fourth year in the program, Matteo places emphasis on community and although he recognizes that the community is made up of many different individuals, he emphasizes the importance of “one” or “unity”. At that time in his development, the conception of diversity as ‘unity’ holds a high status for him. The concept of ‘unity’ is part of one of the five approaches that define multicultural education described by Grant and Sleeter (2008): the “human relations” approach that consists of working to develop positive relationships among students, reduce stereotyping and promote unity.

In his final year, Matteo shows a strong commitment to his personal values and religious beliefs, which are associated with Catholic teachings and these appear to have a strong
influence on his conception of diversity. It can be argued that because of his religious beliefs, Matteo does not think that diversity is an issue. At the same time, his religious beliefs make certain diversity dimensions for him very challenging, such as sexuality, gender and marital status. He is struggling to find a balance between his devotion to Catholic teaching and his responsibilities as a teacher who is expected to engage in teaching according to a prescribed curriculum (including gender and sexuality). It can also be argued that Matteo’s subscription to Catholic teachings where “everyone is the same” as well as broader liberal notions of “tolerance” and “acceptance” appear to provide this TC a plausible solution (Hewson, 1992) for teaching in diverse classrooms, which is a solution that is consistent with what he knows. Because of this TC’s views that diversity is “not an issue” or “not a major issue”, as well as his strong religious beliefs and commitment to Catholic teachings, Matteo perceives the program influence on his learning about diversity as minimal or even non-existent.

**Agnieszka**

**Introduction**

Agnieszka was in the fourth year of the five-year teacher education program at the time of her participation in the study. She was studying toward a major in French to become a secondary school teacher (i.e. Intermediate/Senior division). She was on the Mississauga campus of the University of Toronto, in the western part of the Greater Toronto Area. When asked to tell me about herself, Agnieszka described the communities she had lived before coming to university. Her family moved from a “mid-size, pretty white” town in southern Ontario to a similarly “mid-size and pretty white, not diverse” town in central Ontario, before settling in a large city close to the Greater Toronto Area (GTA). Agnieszka shared that both of her parents had a university education and that for the time of her studies she lived away from home. Agnieszka shared a number of documents (refer to Table 13) that I use to analyse her initial and developing understandings of diversity.
Agnieszka’s initial conceptions of diversity, teaching and learning

“Life Skills (Special Education)” students

Agnieszka applied to enter the Concurrent Teacher Education Program after completing high school. At that time, Agnieszka seemed concerned with the idea that what she calls “Life Skills (Special Education)” [AP] and the ways students do not feel included in the school environment. She describes this concern in response to the “Equity and Diversity” question on the Application Profile. The name “Life Skills students” appears to be stemming from the name of the program that the special education students were placed in her particular school. She emphasized that although the school as an institution was working toward “making resources available”, these students still felt “excluded” because “of the actions of other students” (AP).

The actions of the other students in Agnieszka’s description refer to “other students” not socializing with “Life Skills students” because they are “uncomfortable with those seen as different” (AP). The TC sees socialization as “essential” for the Life Skills students because the “goal of the Life Skills program is to prepare its students for adult society”. The TC thus, draws some conclusion for her future teaching where she plans to “encourage my students to interact with Life Skills students” (AP).

Agnieszka’s understanding of diversity at the time of applying to the program appears to focus primarily on disability and is linked to the idea of inclusion. Nonetheless, the TC also refers to “visible minority” (although she does not define it) and socioeconomic class. Her statements also imply an understanding of bullying as “harassment amongst students”. Individual characteristics and “viewpoints” are also aspects of diversity that the TC brings up. Agnieszka states that an appreciation of diversity can be achieved through role modeling.

The TC’s responses to the three other questions on the Application Profile (including a question targeting applicants applying to the Concurrent Teacher Education Program with French as their anchor subject) show that she is familiar with “individuals from diverse walks of life and who have various disabilities”. She refers to experiences with “kindergarten
students”; “Grade 7 students”; “youth”; “English as a foreign language students”; as well as elderly people in a “Long Term Care Facility” (AP).

Agnieszka also describes her understanding of bilingualism and states that it is “une caractéristique importante nationale et personnelle” [an important national and personal characteristic] and also a social and professional advantage (AP). She provides a number of advantages that bilingualism provides to individuals: bilingualism allows individuals to appreciate the arts in its original state, without losing some of the meanings in translations; an individual would have an advantage when applying for jobs that require a bilingual speaker; and bilingualism allows communicating with those who don’t have these dual language skills.

Agnieszka’s Developing understandings of diversity, teaching and learning

Learning at home and at school, multiple intelligences

In the first half of the first year in the Concurrent Teacher Education Program (as it is evident from the dates on the documents that were reviewed), Agnieszka seems to be concerned with questions of “Teaching Philosophy”, and “Pedagogy and Curriculum” as knowledge base strands in her e-portfolio.

When describing her Teaching Philosophy, Agnieszka uses a picture of herself as a little child surrounded by books to illustrate her “key belief related to education”. This belief is her commitment to student learning as a “process that occurs [both] at school and at home” (R6). Agnieszka believes that “children can have a head start in their education by the experiences that they have at home” (R6), which denotes that the notion of cultural capital (Davies & Guppy, 2010) has a high status for her. The TCs appears comfortable with the idea that as a teacher she needs to “foster positive relationships and maintain communication with the parents and guardians of the students” (R6). The TC also emphasizes that if a teacher keeps the parents informed about what is happening in school through “classroom newsletters or a website” or even “calling home”, parents will be “more likely to facilitate similar learning at home” (R6).
To illustrate her understanding of how curriculum and pedagogy connect to students, Agnieszka posted a reflection that focuses on “a song that my [elementary] French teachers used to teach prepositions” (R2). She further notes that, “I selected this artifact because it made me think of Gardner’s Theory of Multiple Intelligences […]. He says that people can have varied intelligences” (R2). From the descriptions that follow, it is apparent that the TC’s acquired new knowledge or conceptions of “multiple intelligences”. This notion is appealing to her, thus gaining a higher status for her, and as an “aspiring teacher” she “needs to remember the variety of intelligences represented in my classroom, and give all students the opportunity to express themselves and carry out learning in their own unique way” (R2).

Agnieszka also notes that she acquired a new understanding of why her elementary school teacher used songs to teach preposition. She reveals her understanding that it was for the purpose of providing “varied ways of learning” (R2). She maintains that she is planning to use this approach in her future teaching by not “simply lecturing”, but also planning lessons that provide “varied ways of learning a concept” (R2).

**Diversity in the media**

In the second half of her first year in the concurrent teacher education program, Agnieszka posted reflections on “Equity and Diversity” and “Knowledge of the Learners” in her online portfolio. For the “Equity and Diversity” entry, Agnieszka “decided to flip through a fashion magazine, something that many students spend time doing” (R4). She wanted to see how much diversity the magazines featured. Agnieszka does not seem surprised by what she found when she states, “I found exactly what I was expecting: the majority of models shown in both the magazine itself and in its advertisements had fair skin. Although I did find several models of different races, the vast majority were White” (R2). After many searches, Agnieszka finally found what she was looking for – an artifact that “actually showed diversity … a refreshing change” (R4):
Agnieszka connects her “searching” experience to her future teaching and what her students might find through similar searches. The TC reflects on “how the lack of diversity in the media affects students of all races”, their confidence, self-image and worldview:

I wonder how students without fair skin can feel confident in themselves and develop a positive self-image if the models they see on a daily basis are all White. Even for White children, this lack of diversity deprives them of an accurate worldview, considering that they live in a diverse world. I am concerned that they may grow up thinking that an ideal, beautiful person must have fair skin, and fail to see the beauty of other people with various other skin tones or physical characteristics. (R4)

Agnieszka is thinking of addressing “the issue of diversity” in future classrooms by visual representations such as “posters, pictures, and photos ... featuring people of all races, and not limit my classroom decorations to only those reflecting White, middle-class individuals” (R4). This approach, as the TC notes, will make students feel “motivated to learn” and
“comfortable” because “my students are able to identify with the people in the pictures around the room” (R4).

In addition to visual representations, Agnieszka is planning to use “diverse materials” and “various celebrations” (R4). The TC is hoping that all the efforts that she is going to make to address diversity in the classroom are going to have an impact on student learning and their success in the classroom. The idea of success in this TC’s view is strongly linked to the feeling of being “welcome and comfortable” (R4).

**Breakfast and learning**

Also in her first year, Agnieszka is not only concerned about students not seeing role models in media, but also about other needs such as eating well and how it effects their learning (R3). To describe this specific concern, Agnieszka chose to focus on the importance “for children to eat breakfast” (R3). She uses a website as an artifact that describes the importance of eating breakfast and the consequences for not eating in the morning. Agnieszka notes that she included the artifact and reflection under the “Knowledge of the Learners” knowledge base strands in her e-portfolio because “it is crucial for teachers to understand the profound effects that missing breakfast can have on their students, and how missing breakfast can hinder students’ learning” (R3).

Agnieszka connects her ideas about the importance of breakfast to the causes for “why many students miss breakfast”: “the issue of poverty”; “busy morning schedules”; “children and parents do not understand how important breakfast is” (R3). She also maintains that “there are several ways that teachers can act to improve the situation”. These include talking to the students about the importance of eating breakfast (through physical education classes and special lessons) and informing the parents about why eating breakfast is essential (through newsletters and information booths at school open houses). The TCs also states that breakfast could be made available at school “for free, or at very affordable prices” (R3) by emphasizing that the “free” option could be for those students where “money is an issue” (R3). Agnieszka appears to realize that breakfast programs may not be available in all the schools and she indicates that, “it may be necessary for me to consider working with other
staff members to initiate one” (R3). Although the TC seems to believe that the “breakfast issue” has many explanations, she states that the high schools students are an age group that would mostly benefit from a free breakfast program because of the “long bus rides” and lack of time in the morning to eat breakfast. It appears, thus that the TC prioritizes the “busy schedules” over any other possible explanations for not eating breakfast, including the issues of poverty that she touches on in her writing.

**Self-development as effective teacher, student learning as beyond level**

During her second year in the concurrent teacher education program, Agnieszka appears to be concerned about questions related to the “Subject Matter” (R1) and “Self/Teacher Development” (R5). Although the R1 is posted under “Subject Matter”, Agnieszka (similar to Dorothy in a case presented earlier) is describing her own achievements in her teachable - “improvement in my French Language skills” (R1). She describes her improvement by examining two books as artifacts: one that she red in Grade 11 and one that she was reading in her second year in university.

Contrary to Dorothy who focuses only on her own “self”, in her description Agnieszka attempts to show the importance of certain teaching practices, and namely using materials beyond students’ levels (R1), which shows that as a teacher she envisions high expectations of students. She does this by drawing a parallel between her reading and comprehension challenges at the time of reading a book and her understanding of the same challenges a few years later. The TC appears to see a connection between her understanding of student learning and “Vygotsky’ views of learning”, more “specifically his concept of a zone of proximal development” (R1, emphasis in original). Agnieszka explains that according to Vygotsky, there is a difference between what children can do alone, and what they can do with assistance and that this difference is the zone of proximal development. The TC also cautions that students need to be “motivated, but not overwhelmed” with teaching materials in order to “remain engaged in their learning” (R1).

When Agnieszka describes “Self/Teacher Development” (R5) in her second year, she focuses on her experience as a “Sunday [school] teacher” in “a large church” with a “strong emphasis
agonieszka shows concerns with being an “effective teacher”, but at the same time provides a description of what effective teaching means to her. Effective teaching in her words was summed up as using a curriculum that caters to different learning styles, having varied and appealing lessons, making adjustments depending on the makeup of the class, catering her teaching to the abilities of her students, creating an atmosphere which fosters success as opposed to frustration, and recognizing the importance of cooperation and collaboration among teachers in schools (R5).

It appears that in her second year in the program, similar to her first year, Agnieszka is concerned about her future teaching and the idea of “effective” learning and teaching. Her notions of an effective teacher connect to the “commitment to students and student learning” and the idea of learning community in the Ontario College of Teachers’ (2015) *The Standards of Practice for the Teaching Profession.*

**Linguistic identity**

Agnieszka shared three reflections that she completed in year four: a reflection written in French on her “identité linguistique”/linguistic identity (CAR1); an “inquiry and observation” reflection (CAR2); and a “critique of a learning resource” (CAR3). All the documents have been written as part of course assignment reflections (CAR) and posted in her online portfolio under headings that name a specific course.

When Agnieszka describes her linguistic identity, she refers to influences on her decision to become a French teacher and her language learning. She also emphasizes the important role of “authentic” texts or environments on language learning and details her strengths and weaknesses in French as a second language. Finally, she identifies a “plan d’action”/action plan to improve her French language proficiency (CAR1).

In her writing, the TC identifies a former teacher from her secondary school as a major influence on her decision to become a teacher. She appears to have found both a friend and a language instructor in her Grade 12 teacher when she states, “Elle enseignait le français avec un talent exceptionnel, mais elle était plus qu’une prof pour moi, elle était mon appui” [She was teaching French with exceptional skill, but she was more than a teacher for me, she was
my friend/support] (CAR1). Because the TC had “des difficultés personnelles sérieuses”
[serious personal problems], she appears to have found the support she needed in that
teacher. This prompted the TC to think about her future teaching as “making a difference in
students’ lives” and “helping others” (CAR1).

As a language learner, Agnieszka seems to have certain preferences and prerequisites for
effective learning. For Agnieszka these included building her own confidence in speaking
French and having a safe environment where she can overcome the fear of being humiliated.
She also shares that she responds well to the “l’approche communicative”/ [communicative
approach] to teaching French rather than to lectures or professors who talk too much (e.g.,
“prof parlait trop”). Furthermore working with “authentic documents” and using student-
centred approaches when speaking in French or learning French was seen as a more engaging
form of instruction to her (CAR1).

When evaluating her language abilities in French, Agnieszka states that her French is strong
in writing and reading, but she needs to work more on her oral communication skills. The
latter appears to be linked to the notion of confidence building and her perception that “no
matter how one tries, one will not sound as a native French language speaker”. She quotes
her host family in France where she went for a study abroad summer who told her, “Mais on
sait que tu n’es pas francophone” [But you are nor francophone] (CAR1). This notion of
sounding like an “authentic” francophone seems to be a big concern for Agnieszka.

Agnieszka is also setting up a “to do” list or action plan to “improve her proficiency in
French” (CAR1). This plan also relates to her future students and future teaching and
includes her plans to access varied resources both at the practicum school and at the
university, to choose level-appropriate resource for her students, to plan differentiated
lessons, to become familiar with assessment strategies, to increase confidence by talking
more frequently in university courses, and to listen to French music or to the radio (CAR1).
Not the typical GTA student demographics

The second reflection that Agnieszka posted in her fourth year focuses on a field placement (CAR2). She first provides a “general description of the School Community field placement” and then analyses her findings for two “teacher interviews” (CAR2).

**General description of the placement.** For her general description, the TC examines the students, the school’s programs/extracurricular activities, the school’s community/location, the staff, and the school environment, which all appear to be of concern to her. Agnieszka appears to be “surprised somewhat” by the “school demographics because I did not feel that they were representative of the city of Mississauga or the GTA [Greater Toronto Area] in general” (CAR2). The TC further states that she was surprised by the large number of white students who made up the population in that particular school.

In addition to noting the “whiteness” of the majority of the student population, the TC also points to what she calls “behavioural issues” and that the students showed a “blatant disregard for authority” (CAR2). The description of the students as “difficult” is also apparent in Agnieszka’s examination of the “community/location”. As the TC states, the close proximity of the school to a mall made students “spend their lunch hour there” and that “this sometimes gets them into trouble there” and staff also stated that “this mall for students poses some problems” (CAR2). Agnieszka also appears to connect the “difficult” in the students with their socioeconomic status when she further states (in the same section/paragraph of the reflection) that, “There are several townhouse complexes and apartment buildings near the school, so although the school is not in a decidedly poor neighbourhood, the socioeconomic status of many of the students is not high.” (CAR2)

Agnieszka further observes that, “The students seemed to be healthy. I only saw one student who I would classify as ‘obese’”, as well as “From overhearing conversations of students, many students come from divorced or blended families” (CAR2). Agnieszka’s description of the staff reveals characteristics of teachers found in literature on diverse teachers and diverse learners (e.g., “The majority of staff are white, female”). Thus, for Agnieszka several dimensions of diversity intersect to account for the “difficult” students: low socioeconomic
status, associated housing such as apartments, family status, and “whiteness” (although it’s not clear if “white” refers to race or ethnicity) where “whiteness” is not what she expected to see as part of the “demographics” of the school. Individual characteristics (such as “obese” as opposed to “healthy”) also appear to describe the “difficult” students.

When describing the “program/extracurricular activities”, Agnieszka appears to contrast the fact that there is a “breakfast program where students pay 25 cents” with the programs and extracurricular activities that are offered to students, such as “sports”, “band and drama”, “library open during lunch”. The two notions (i.e., 25 cents breakfast, thus poverty, and the many programs available at the school, usually associated with ‘wealthy’ schools) don’t seem quite plausible to the TC to be present on in one place. This contrast is also evident in her description of the “school environment”. The positive description of the physical space as representing diversity visually (e.g., “pieces of artwork explicitly represent Asian, Aboriginal, and other cultures”; “All the signs in the school (ex. office, gym, staffroom) are printed in both English and French”; “The hallways of the school are decorated with mini flags from around the world”; “Many classroom doors feature a ‘positive space’ sticker”) does not match the implied description of the students (e.g., “artwork done appears professional at first glance only”; “The national anthem is played in the morning, but no classes I was in sang along”).

From the descriptions of the student population in her placement school (CAR2) that Agnieszka provides, one may simply conclude that she is very observant. However, these descriptions can also be interpreted as indicative that the TC had a certain notion of what the “typical students” in that location would be and that notion seems to have gotten dispersed. For example, white students who are not typically associated with behavioural issues appear to be “difficult”. One of the main reasons for this discovery, as the quotes show, appears to connect to students’ socioeconomic status.

**Interview with teachers in the placement**

In addition to the school demographics that feature prominently in Agnieszka’s “general description” of the field placements (CAR2), the interview questions with two teachers in
that school reveal her concern with the subject matter, student grade levels, and classroom management (the latter is a prevailing concern in the TC’s reflection). The TC notes that although the two teachers were “educated” in certain teachables and divisions/grade levels, they taught “a variety of subjects”. In her interviews, she wanted to know what subjects and grade levels these teachers enjoyed teaching most, given the circumstances.

Agnieszka concludes in relation to “favourite subject to teach” that the two teachers, “Although neither is teaching predominantly what they were educated in, they dedicate themselves fully to each class that they teach.” (CAR2). Although the TC concludes in relation to “favourite grade to teach” that what these two teachers’ responses had in common was “a desire to interact with their students in a positive way”, her description shows that these teachers preferred to teach younger students who could still be “moulded” or were “fun to teach” as opposed to older students who had “attitudes”:

Teacher A enjoys teaching Grade 6, which she has done for many years. As Grade 6 students are new at the school, she still sees them as ‘mouldable’ whereas Grade 7 students develop an attitude. She finds it very challenging to prepare Grade 8 students for the transition to high school. Teacher B’s favourite grade to teach is Grade 4. He feels that both the curriculum and the students are ‘fun’ at this age. The students are mature enough to carry on a conversation and to think on their own, but they have not yet developed the attitude of later grades. (CAR2)

The “attitude” concern also comes up in Agnieszka’s description of responses to another question that she asked of these teachers, “How do you manage your classroom and deal with students who challenge your authority”. The two teachers appear to have different responses to the “attitude challenge”: one teacher implemented a tracking book for a student with particularly serious behavioural issues; the other teacher set clear routines and expectations, and then followed through with consequences. (CAR2)

Agnieszka concludes that “the features” that she leant and wants to implement “in my own classroom management” are being “warm and welcoming, but firm” and that the “classroom
management technique” should be “matched to the individual students involved” (CAR2), which read as a combination of care and planned classroom management strategies.

**Diversity in learning resources**

The third reflection that Agnieszka posted in her fourth year focuses on ways “issues of diversity and equity are taken into account in a textbook used in a Core French class” (CAR3). The TC is of the opinion that the authors made a good effort to include diversity in the textbook. Agnieszka notes that diversity is evident because the “textbook is full of cartoon-style pictures […]”, therefore, a lot of the information about its presentation of diversity can be gained simply by looking at the pictures”, although she also notes that the book’s written content “gives further information” (CAR3).

Agnieszka compares and contrasts the diversity aspects that in her opinion are addressed in the book well with those that are not. One the one hand, “racial diversity is an area where the book excels” and “the portrayal of religion is another strong point of this textbook” (CAR3). On the other hand, the TC is dissatisfied with the way “gender”, “sexual orientation/family structures” and “ability” are represented in the textbook. These aspects are describes in more detail in what follows.

**Representation of race in the learning resource**

Agnieszka maintains that “many races are represented in both pictures and the text” through a number of ways. She describes sections on how the New Year is celebrated by different cultures, and activities about food from different countries, such as France, Mexico, and China. She also reflects on activities that encourage students to either speak about their own culture or “investigate another culture’ as well as usage of names of characters in the textbook that “represent a variety of racial groups”, such as Natalie, but also Zona and Zhi.

Agnieszka also references a specific “discussion of how Aboriginal people influenced Emily Carr’s artwork”. Finally, the TC states that:

> Issues of racial equity are addressed, as an entire unit is dedicated to Canadian multiculturalism, and one poem included in this unit talks about how in Canada many races come together in a space in which diversity is valued. (CAR3)
As seen from the above quote, Agnieszka’s understanding of equity is associated with the notion of multiculturalism that emphasizes “coming together” and valuing diversity.

**Representation of religion in the learning resource**

Agnieszka notes that although religion is not discussed or illustrated frequently, “it is present” and that the “representation of several religions is quite satisfactory” (CAR3). The TC appears satisfied with the overall representation of religion because “there are a few pictures of male students wearing a kippah, and there are images of girls and women wearing the hijab” (CAR3). Furthermore, she finds it “satisfactory” that when the book describes volunteer opportunities, it “states that students can work in a church, a mosques, or a synagogue” (CAR3).

**Representation of gender in the learning resource**

Agnieszka states that “I was dissatisfied about the portrayal of gender in this textbook because stereotypical gender roles are demonstrated, even exaggerated” (CAR3). Her dissatisfaction relates to the fact that “women are shown shopping, applying makeup, cooking, and working as flight attendants and waitresses”. Men, on the other hand, “are shown as athletes, and police officers” (CAR3). The TC notes that “it would have been nice to see more of a balance” because “that would create in students a more open and balanced concept of accepting gender roles” (CAR3).

**Representation of sexual orientation in the learning resource**

The TC maintains that “sexual orientation/family structures” is an area that could be improved in the textbook. She notes that although there are instances where “children are shown with a single adult”, implying single-parent families, whenever a couple is shown, it is always heterosexual (CAR3). She is concerned that many students may not see their families represented in the textbook because of such portrayals, especially those with “homosexual parents, with other relatives, or in the variety family structures that exist” (CAR3). Furthermore, the TC is also concerned that “students who are not heterosexual themselves may be less able to relate to the content of the book” (CAR3).
**Representation of ability in the learning resource**

Agnieszka maintains that “I am equally disappointed by the representation of ability and disability in this textbook” (CAR3). The TC’s dissatisfaction relates to the fact that “there are several characters in wheelchairs, but no other type of disability is addressed in any way” (CAR3). Also, the TC is concerned that the “pictures are in the context of volunteer work” and that there is the implication “as if physical disabilities are necessarily accompanied by intellectual disabilities” (CAR3). The TC concludes that “this book clearly treats disability as a barrier to independence” and she wishes that “people with disabilities” were shown in more admirable positions, such as playing wheelchair basketball, or giving a presentation in front of the class. Such images, as the TC states, will help “students, including those with disabilities, see that people with disabilities can be just as successful as those without” (CAR3).

In her concluding remarks to this reflection, Agnieszka states that even though the book has a “representation of stereotypical gender roles and limited diversity shown with regards to sexual orientation and family structure” in addition to not allowing a “more positive portrayal of people with disabilities”, it is one of the more diverse textbooks that she has seen (CAR3). The TC believes that the book shows that steps are being taken to ensure that students see themselves reflected “in their educational materials”, although she is aware that the materials “we use in our classes have a long way to go before they recognize and represent completely student diversity and issues of equity” (CAR3).

**Diversity as living and working together**

The individual interview with Agnieszka took place at the end of her fourth year in the concurrent teacher education program. When asked what diversity meant to her, Agnieszka responded, “I think of different cultures living together. Different backgrounds, different religions and all these people living and working together.” She further states that going to university and interactions with “different people” helped her define diversity in the way she described, because “There was no other diversity in my life before I went to university”
Agnieszka describes her university campus, located in the west end of the metropolitan area as “very multicultural, multi-vague, multi-everything” (TCII).

In the interview, Agnieszka appears hesitant to express whether her understandings and beliefs changed since she enrolled in the Concurrent Teacher Education Program when she states, “I don’t know. It’s hard to say because I don’t think I really thought about diversity beforehand so I don’t know if it helps me and my beliefs are really set” (TCII).

As we progressed in the interview, Agnieszka became more open and notes that classes, in particular those that had an explicit focus on diversity and a placement attached to it, helped her understand diversity more. She states that this was because “each class has kind of a viewpoint of diversity” and “classes are very explicit, but then you also learn just by watching, interacting with kids when you are in placement” (TCII). Agnieszka also emphasizes the program length and its impact on her learning about diversity in the program. She maintains that as she progressed through the program the class discussions become “more honest and a little more realistic” compared to “this idealistic view of how things should be, which is how people talked at the beginning” (TCII).

When I asked Agnieszka to elaborate more about the idea of “idealistic” and the notion of “things not working” that she brought up, the TC stated her concerns about discussing certain diversity aspects “in a setting where they do not exist” (TCII). One example that she gives is that in large metropolitan areas it is expected to have “diverse classes in terms of race”, but in certain other places in Ontario “you’ll have some classes which are not really that diverse” (TCII). The TC is thus pointing to the urban, suburban and rural divide in how diversity is present in the province. The question that arose in “idealistic” discussion was, “how do you tackle race in a situation where there is really no diversity?” (TCII), which seems to imply that diversity does not need to be addressed in a context where it is not present. Another example that the TC brings up is ways to tackle discussion about sexual orientations when teaching in a Catholic school “that’s not really welcome there” (TCII), thus highlighting the tension that she sees between religion and sexuality.
**Dimensions of diversity and class dynamics**

When asked what diversity dimensions she found important to include in the teacher education program, Agnieszka again appeared hesitant, then stated that all aspects of diversity were important:

That’s a good question. I don’t know. I don’t know if I can really answer that question. I think they are all important and honestly they are all addressed I think, other than maybe marital status and age. These are the only two that we don’t really talk about a lot, but throughout the whole five years in the program, I think that they all do get addressed and discussed. (TCII)

Agnieszka, on the other hand, appeared quite confident and was able to respond quickly to the question that asked her about any challenges to understand diversity concepts. She identified sexual orientation and gender as more “hidden” and related to views and opinion, and race as “more obvious”, but equally difficult because it could single our individuals in class. Agnieszka also noted that one of the greatest challenges in understating the concept of diversity in the program was not “arriving at an answer” in class discussions (TCII).

The TC also emphasized that the dynamics of a class discussion “depends on the makeup of the class” and that “if you have a very racially diverse class there might be a more in-depth conversation on race, but if everyone in the class is using English as their first language they might not have as many personal things to share about language” (TCII). The TC maintains that in her program “there is a culture of acceptance and openness” (TCII). The TC further argues that her instructors bring in their own perspectives on diversity although she states that “I would say they [instructors are] maybe not as diverse as the students they teach” (TCII). From the example she gives, the TC seems to see race and language as present in her classes more than other dimensions, and these diversity dimensions appear to have had an impact on class discussions.

**Future teaching and diversity**

When describing successes in her future teaching the TC highlights that she likes to “have a ‘get to know you thing’ at the beginning of the semester” (TCII). Also, because “we talked about it [diversity] a lot, so it is kind of at the forefront of my mind when I meet my students.
So it is possible and I can certainly make efforts” (TCII). Challenges that she foresees in future teaching relate to “finding materials that are relevant to the students, especially if there are a lot of groups represented because how can you have a given test be applicable to all the students?” (TCII). Also, the TC is concerned about “knowing about areas of diversity that are less obvious” although when describing her placements she states, “I didn’t really feel surprised by anything that I saw when I was on placement in terms of diversity” (TCII).

Agnieszka appears content with the diversity learning that she has done in the teacher education program when she states, “in every class we talk about it [diversity]. It is integrated. It feels like it’s not just kind of separation that we are talking about in a class or two classes, it’s in every class. (TCII)

Summary and discussion

When applying to study in the teacher education program, although she shows a concern with special needs students, Agnieszka appears to use language characteristic of broad liberal notions of inclusiveness and appreciation of diversity that are associated with multiculturalism in Canada (Wallace, 1994; Kymlicka, 2010). The TC is confident that an appreciation of diversity can be achieved and in her role as teacher she aims to model it.

During her first year in the program, Agnieszka reflects on childhood experiences and how she views parents’ role in students’ education. The TC is committed to keeping the communications flowing between families and the school she will be teaching. The notion of teacher-school-parent communication in this TC’s description relates to studies in teacher education that focus on teacher-parent relationship and school-home partnerships (Ciuffetelli Parker, Smith, & Goldblatt, 2009; Burton & Greher, 2007; Marsh & Turner-Vorbeck, 2010; Pushor, 2010) Marsh and Turner-Vorbeck (2010) maintain that communications with parents is one of the major types of parental involvement that leads to developing strong partnerships between teachers and parents in order to serve the best interests of students.

During her first year in the program, the TC also appears to have acquired new understanding of Gardner’s concept of multiple intelligences, which helped her reflect on past experiences and understand certain teaching choices her former teachers made. Her new conception of
multiple intelligences seems to be linked to the notion of differentiated instruction as an approach to effective student learning. Gardner’s (1999) multiple intelligences are discussed in literature in connection to “gifted students”. Agnieszka is also concerned about the public images of diversity and their impact on both white students and students of color (R4). The TC appears to have a good understanding of why certain students do not eat breakfast in the morning, when she refers to poverty, lack of information, lack of time and commuting time (R3), although she prioritizes busy schedules as a main reason for breakfast programs.

Although the entries in TC’s first year in the Concurrent Teacher Education Program appear to focus on varied ideas and concerns, they all connect these ideas to the concepts of “effective teaching” and “effective learning”, which she discusses in more detail in Year 4. During her second year, the TC is concerned with the concept of self. However, contrary to Dorothy who focuses only on her own “self”, in her description Agnieszka attempts to also show the importance of certain teaching practices, and namely using materials beyond students’ levels, which shows that as a teacher she envisions high expectations of students

In her fourth year (the TC did not share documents dated Year 3), Agnieszka appears to be concerned about her “self”, but also her students not being represented in learning resources and media. Classroom management is also of concern to the TC. Agnieszka also describes diversity as related to “difficult” students: low socioeconomic status, associated housing such as apartments, family status, and “whiteness” (although it’s not clear if “white” refers to race or ethnicity) where “whiteness” is not what she expected to see as part of the “demographics” of the placement school. Individual characteristics (such as “obese” as opposed to “healthy”) also appear to describe the “difficult” students. What the TC describes associates with research that focuses on “at risk” students (McInerney & MacInerney, 2006), although the usually overt and aggressive behaviour that is usually described in research is only termed as “attitude” by Agnieszka. Nonetheless, the TC points to dimensions of diversity that are usually present in such studies, such as poverty and low socioeconomic status.

As she was nearing the end of her fourth year in the program, the TC’s view of diversity seems centered on “living and working together” (TCII), a notion that is inherent in the multiculturalism discourse in Canada (Henry, 2002). Her experiences of learning about
diversity are linked to course discussions, placements, and peers and instructors. The TC is concerned with “hidden” and “obvious” dimensions of diversity in future teaching, such as sexuality and race, respectively. The “hidden” or mental health as an attribute of student diversity has not received much attention in literature, including Canada (Rodger, Hibbert, Leschied, Pickel, Stepien, Atkins, et al., 2014a, 2014b). Rodger et al. (2014b) in the study on mental health education in Canada maintain that “interview participants indicated that B.Ed. programs are not adequately preparing teacher education students for identifying and addressing the mental health needs that they will see on their classrooms once they are in the field” (p. 17). The TC also appears concerned with what Banks (2004) terms ‘content integration’ (i.e. including examples and perspectives from different cultures, ethnicities or identities in the curriculum) as a way to integrate multicultural education in teaching, when she states that although she was not surprised about the diversity she saw in placements, she is still concerned about finding relevant materials for “all the diversity” in future classes.

Hendrika

Introduction

Hendrika was in her early twenties at the time of her participation in the study. She completed her third year and was starting her fourth year in the concurrent teacher education program, with English as a major and Urban Studies as a minor. She was studying to become an elementary school teacher. When asked to share some information about herself, Hendrika stated that she grew up in a medium-size town and that she was “the third of four children” (TCII). She also shared that her family was of Dutch descent and that she was living with her parents and commuting to university. Hendrika also stated that had a part-time job, “I work at a Christian school as the after-school program coordinator, so I take care of little kids after school and it’s kind of fun” (TCII). When describing the community she grew up, Hendrika stated that it had “a very high diversity in that different people lived there” (TCII).

Hendrika further notes that growing up in a neighborhood with individuals of Chinese descent, as well certain the fact that values were promoted by her family, helped her see diversity from an early age. Hendrika shared a number of documents (refer to Table 13) that
were used to analyze her developing understandings of diversity. Since she was only in her third year of study, these documents were not as many as the ones shared by TCs in their fourth and fifth years of study.

**Hendrika’s initial conceptions of diversity, teaching and learning**

*Muslim student in a Christian school*

Hendrika, similar to Thanh and Matteo described earlier, entered the teacher education program through the “Applicants into Year 2” (AP) option. At the time of applying to the program, she was in her second semester in the undergraduate program at the university. Hendrika, through the experiences that she describes in her Application Profile, appears concerned with how religion may affect student experiences in elementary schools.

Hendrika examines her experiences in “two Co-operating Education placements in a Christian private school” (AP). During one of the placements, “one of the students Grade 4 class was a practicing Muslim. She was different from all of other students in her religious affiliation” (AP). Hendrika perceives this student as “disadvantaged because of the fact that she did not have a history of knowledge of the Bible or Christian practices whether from being in a Christian school form Kindergarten or from attending Sunday School” (AP). The TC states that the teacher in that class was “very sensitive” and invited the Muslim student to “do a presentation on her religion for the benefit of the class and the girl herself” (AP). Hendrika appears satisfied with the teacher’s approach to make the student “not feel alienated because of being Muslim” and identifies this as an approach she might use in her own future teaching.

*Literacy, leadership, bible messages*

In her Application Profile, Hendrika also describes three experiences in which she “helped someone to learn something” (AP). First, she shared an approach using “story puzzles” to help someone learn to read in a “Literacy Helper” position. Secondly, she referred to teaching summer campers “initiative and leadership skills” as a “co-director”. Finally, she
spoke about creating lesson plans” to help a “Grade 3/4 class” study “the overall message” of
the Bible, but also “suggest applicable ways to their lives” as a Sunday School teacher (AP).

Hendrika focuses on one experience to show what she learnt from the three experiences and
states that the co-director position helped her understand the importance of “giving up
control of certain activities” and the importance of “delegating” (AP). In her response to the
“Optional” question on the Application Profile, Hendrika refers again to her “Co-operative
Education placements” and expresses confidence in her decision to become a teacher. The
TC also describes students as “accepting of the teacher, irrespective of who the teacher is”
(AP). The TC appears enthusiastic in her writing when describing students and she seems to
have views of students as compliant.

Hendrika’s Developing understandings of diversity, teaching and
learning

*ESL teacher*

Hendrika shared a paper that she wrote upon finishing her third year internship (IR). She
chose to have her internship in a public school in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) where she
held the position of an “ESL teacher”. Hendrika appears to have been able to apply in
practice “all” she had learnt in the program up to that point in her internship, as seen from the
following statement:

> I have found that this experience made all of the teaching methods, instruction
> strategies, communication skills, and conflict resolution procedures taught in my
> second and third year of the program come to life, giving me real experiences to try
> out and observe concepts and terms. (IR)

The paper shows that Hendrika’s major concern in the internship was with teaching
strategies. This was followed by subject matter, getting to know the students, classroom
management, and collaboration with schoolteachers. These concerns are described in more
detail in what follows.
Emulating teaching strategies, subject matter

When describing her teaching practices in the internship, Hendrika makes a connection between the strategies that the instructors in her teacher education program used and how she adapted those in her own teaching. One teaching strategy that Hendrika “tried to emulate” was “turning the topic of the day, whether it is the proper use of gendered pronouns or the different provinces of Canada, into a game so that my students almost do not know they are learning” (IR). Another teaching method she adapted during her internship was “the idea of learning from the act of reading about someone’s life” (IR). She states that this approach had to be simplified to match expectations for Grade 6 students in her internship.

Hendrika thus appears to adapt teaching strategies that are game or play-based for elementary grades, and those strategies where students can make connections between what they read and their own experiences. As the excerpts above show, she is adapting many strategies that were used in university to the grades that she was teaching. In addition to the strategies that she was trying to emulate, Hendrika values “vocabulary building” and “conversational English Skills” activities and exercises because she appears to believe that these are the two areas that her “ESL students” needed most help with.

Getting to know the students

Another concern that is apparent in Hendrika’s description of her internship is getting to know students and building a good relationship with them (IR). Although the many descriptions of her teaching strategies and efforts to get to know the students make reference to “Chinese” and “China”, she does not explicitly state that her “ESL students” were primarily of Chinese descent. Furthermore, Hendrika appears to be cautious in the ways she approaches the ESL students when she states, “I tried not to focus too much attention on them because I did not want to label them as ESL students who needed extra help in this environment, but I was there to help explain anything if they did need me” (IR). Hendrika appears to seek activities that would balance her desire to build a relationship with the students, which she sees essential for their learning, with her view that these students should not be singled out.
Hendrika describes a number of activities and strategies that she sees as successful and “balanced” approaches to get to know the ESL students: participating in extracurricular activities where she could inconspicuously supervise the ESL students and “helping them when needed”; and the “country of origin independent project” (IR). The independent project idea appears to have had success with the students, other teachers and the school principal. The project, as Hendrika states, helped deal with some misconceptions about newcomers to Canada among her students, such as “immigrant families should be so grateful and happy to be living here” and that they “should forgo their entire way of living previously experienced in their home country” (IR).

**Classroom management**

Hendrika also seems concerned with classroom management, as shown by her description of the “pairing-up teaching strategy” in a separate section of the internship reflection (IR). The TC states that during her time in the grade one classroom, one of the non-ESL students caught her eye because he “was having a hard time controlling his behaviour and staying in his seat for any given period of time” (IR). She tended to focus more on this student while in that class, but one day as she “had already planned on working on literacy skills with one of my ESL students”, she could not give her attention to the “non-ESL student” (IR).

To resolve the issue of conflicting lesson plans that arose because of the non-cooperating “non-ESL student/behavioural student” and her “ESL student” who needed to work on literacy skills, Hendrika came up with the “pairing-up teaching strategy” where these students would work together (IR). Irrespective of the reasons the two students managed to work together (“desire for control” versus “desire to be entertained”), the strategy yielded good results, according to the TC. She appears very satisfied with the outcome of her teaching practices when she states, “The teacher and I eventually went to the principal to explain what had happened and he was so impressed that he told the other teachers who had ESL students in their classes, and it has become a strategy that is implemented in every classroom in the school where ESL students are present” (IR). Similar to her “country of origin project”, the TC shared the results with the other teachers and principal and this is one of her major emphases in her description.
**Collaboration with teachers**

As seen from the other sections in Hendrika’s reflection, she puts a lot of effort in building a “good relationship” with staff in her internship school and “conferencing with other teachers” in order for “students to receive the best education that they can get” (IR). She describes these efforts in a separate section in the paper and states that her success in this endeavour is due to a number of reasons: she worked in that school before; she got support from the principal; and her own initiative to talks to teachers.

The TC appears as very satisfied with her ability to build relationships and states that this has allowed her to share details and concerns that students talked to her about with others. Also, she was able “run for ideas” (IR) to teachers in the school when she needed them. The TC’s focus on collaboration connects to the “learning community” element in the Ontario College of Teachers (2015) describes *The Standards of Practice for the Teaching Profession*.

**Diversity as difference and variety**

The individual interview with Hendrika took place in the beginning of her fourth year in the concurrent teacher education program. When asked what diversity meant to her, Hendrika associates diversity with “difference” and “variety”:

> It means like a great difference among people, a lot of variety in whatever the subject we are talking about. So it could mean, if we're talking about diversity of people and you could have variety of race, you could have variety of gender, you could have variety of tastes. It does not necessarily just need to be race because people are not just one thing or another. So diversity, I guess, just means a lot of difference among people. You can also I guess have diversity of plants and stuff too but I guess when you said diversity I think of people mostly and the differences among them across the different qualities of what makes you a person. So diversity is in your background and how you grew up in your economic status and stuff like that. (TCII)

The definition that Hendrika provides is grounded in her experiences living in a primarily “Chinese community” as a child, as she explains. Also, her interactions with friends and family helped her define diversity in the way she described it. When asked how her diversity understandings changed since she enrolled in the teacher education program Hendrika points
out that before the program she associated diversity with “ethnic background” and later in the program she got to learn about diversity as “learning styles” (TCII).

**How does the program help define diversity?**

Hendrika maintains that program courses and placements help in varied ways to understand diversity, although she prefers “placements and discussions” (TCII). The TC also states that she finds that reflections “are good in the sense that it helps you to bring things back to you actual topics within a lecture, what topics teachers brought up and to understand why they are there, and how to recognize them in the future”. However, the TC believes that reflections are “an important process after you've done observation in your practicum because it will help you basically sum up everything that you've done.” (TCII)

**Learning styles, behaviour, class, sexuality and religion**

Hendrika believes that the teacher education program needs to address diversity in terms of learning styles, “diversity and behaviour”, socioeconomic class, and sexuality and religion. These are aspects that she find important to learn about. The states that, “In terms of gay and gender or religion, I think it is important to talk about in the education program, but I don't think it is as important as learning styles and behaviour and classroom management” (TCII).

When asked what diversity dimensions she found challenging to understand, Hendrika referred again to sexuality and gender, “diversity and behaviour” and also to “learning disabilities”. She discusses difficulties in discussing “gender and transgender” and the “young age” of students and “how to incorporate that” into teaching (TCII). The TC is also concerned about including “kids that have learning disabilities” within the classroom in a way that does not disadvantages the “other nine students who don't have learning disabilities” (TCII). The same idea of “neglecting the other nine kids” is brought when the TC describes her challenges with “behavioural issues students” who may need more attention, thus taking away more of her time.

When asked what the reaction of students in her class was to discussions of diversity, Hendrika speaks about heated discussions around sexuality and religion. The TC states that,
“there's a couple of people in our class that are avidly Catholic” and that “teaching kids that being gay is OK” led to heated discussions “because they got into a topic of religion” (TCII). The TC states that one needs to be careful when such questions are brought up both in her university classes as well as future classrooms, because “you don’t want to offend anyone” and “because who am I? I am not God” (TCII).

The TC seems concerned that certain university instructors are making assumptions about the teacher candidates based on the fact that they attend an “expensive institution” or wear certain things, such as “nice handbag and a nice coat” (TCII). These concerns are brought up when the TCs describes how instructors and classmates influence her learning about diversity. The TC states that certain professors, but not all, brought up the “white guilt” in certain TCs and the implication was that “you don't really know anything about the world and about diversity and about struggle […] that you are naive” (TCII).

**Being naïve**

When describing challenges as a future teachers in diverse classrooms, Hendrika calls herself “being naïve”, although she contests this notion when she describes it as coming from an instructor (earlier in the interview). The TC also sees not being able to relate to students or parents well as challenges. For successes in her future teaching, Hendrika details what can be described as a vision of what diversity teaching would entail – being accepting, seeing beyond what is visible, and using teaching materials that reflect students in the classroom.

The TC appears to be satisfied with how diversity was addressed in the program, although she would have preferred more focus on how to enact or put into practice the concept of diversity, “If you actually tell this physical ways in which we can actually do it, might be better” (TCII). The TC appears to want a tool kit or modelling for teaching diversity.

**Summary and discussion**

At the time of applying to study in the teacher education program, Hendrika’s conception of diversity relates to religion and is grounded in an experience she had in a Christian private school. The TC’s description of her understanding of religion as a Muslim student wearing
hijab in a non-Muslim school is a topic of more recent studies that focus on religious
diversity in Canada and elsewhere in the world (Niyozov, 2010; Zine, 2008). Hendrika’s
concern that this female student would not be understood is not unique. McDonough &
Hoodfar (2005) notes the emergence of public discourses on specific religions, such as Islam,
sparked by events such as September 11th in the United States. Other studies report hostility
and negative stereotyping that is often associated with a dress code ascribed to Islam – a
Muslim woman wearing the hijab (Housee, 2012). Zine (2008) also found that ‘gendered
Islamophobia’ (i.e. women wearing hijab) is a reality in some of the schools in the Greater
Toronto Area. The TC thus sees her role as teacher to help students like the Muslim girl feel
welcome in a classroom, which is a notion that resonates with multicultural values in Canada
(Henry, 2012). She is also focused on ideas that relate to literacy and leadership.

When she describes her internship experience, the TC maintains that she was able to
integrate what she learnt in the teacher education program into her classroom practice, a
statement that connects to a concern that is usually termed and discussed in research as an
ongoing debate on the relationship between theory and practice in teacher education
(Zeichner, 2010; Darling-Hammond, 2010). Hendrika’s solution to this issue is “emulating”.
Other notions that she describes relate to students, classroom management and collaboration
with colleague teachers in schools. The concept of effective teacher is associated for her with
being a successful teacher, as shown by her tendency to share her teaching approaches with
other staff and principal and her satisfaction that many of her ideas have been taken up by
others in her internship school. The sharing that the TC describes is tangential to the
‘leadership in learning communities’ from the Ontario College of Teachers’ (2015) The
Standards of Practice for the Teaching Profession, as the TC is sharing with the aim to gain
more recognition for her efforts and then for the purpose of reciprocal benefit.

At the time of the interview, which was the start of her fourth year in the teacher education
program, Hendrika conceptualizes diversity as difference and “variety”. ‘Variety’ is argued
to be one of the perspectives from which diversity is addressed in the Canadian context (Dei,
2000; Lopez, 2005; Razak, 2005). The ‘variety’ perspective views diversity in terms of
contribution of diverse cultures within a multicultural framework. Dimensions of diversity
that she finds important appear to also be challenging for her, such as sexuality and gender, and learning disabilities. She perceives “behavioural issues” associated with diversity as well (i.e. related to gender, “non-ESL”, but not to “ESL students”). The TC also appears to prefer to learn more about how to approach diversity in future classroom as she is not confident she would be able to relate to diverse students or their parents.

**Ubah**

**Introduction**

Ubah was in her early twenties at the time of participating in the study. At the time of the interview, she completed her third year and was starting her fourth year in the Concurrent Teacher Education Program at the university campus in the east side of the Greater Toronto Area. Her major was in French and she was studying to become a secondary school teacher (Intermediate/Senior [I/S] school divisions). When asked to tell me about herself, Ubah responded, “I’m a Canadian Muslim […], a Sunni Muslim” (TCII) and that her “ancestors were a bit from everywhere, from the Far East, from the Middle East – from really everywhere” (TCII). Ubah clarified that she identified herself through her nationality, religion, ethnic background, as well as her professional background. She also stated that she was a student and that she was “bilingual, in fact an allophone because I speak English, French, and Urdu and learning Arabic and Italian. And what else? I’m a female so yes, my gender roles and well, my sex, yes, it’s part of my identity as well” (TCII). Through this detailed description, Ubah appears knowledgeable of way to position herself in terms of diversity.

The TC’s description of the communities growing up show that Ubah’s family moved several times before she enrolled into university. Ubah was born in a community “almost 90% Chinese and we were the only South Asian Muslim family on the block” (TCII). Her family then moved to a “more South Asian” neighbourhood. After that, at around the age of eight, they moved to a “Sri Lankan and Chinese” community (TCII). Ubah emphasizes that she did not see her religion reflected in the communities they lived. A year later, the family moved back to the community where Ubah was born. When she was a teenager, Ubah and her
family moved again to a “much more diverse” community with “houses that were newly built. It was a new neighbourhood, new schools, new everything. And we have everyone from Hindus, to Christians, to Muslims, to […] I’m pretty sure we have Buddhists. But again, the main people who were there are mainly the Asians and the South Asians” (TCII).

Ubah, similar to Hendrika who also completed her third year of study in the teacher education program, shared fewer documents than the teacher candidates in their fourth and fifth year of study (Refer to Table 13). These documents are used to describe and analyze her understanding of diversity and related concepts.

**Ubah’s initial conceptions of diversity, teaching and learning**

*Recognizing one’s disadvantages and acting on them*

Ubah entered the Concurrent Teacher Education Program after completing high school. At the time of submitting her application for admission to the program, Ubah seemed to be concerned with the notion of self-reflection and “realization” (AP). She describes how during a “fundraising bake sale” a student came to ask “how large the cafeteria cookies were and the price of my cookies” and then “he ran away” (AP). Ubah, who thought that “His behaviour was very odd and blunt”, later talked to that student’s teacher to learn more about him. The teacher explained that “because the student spoke bluntly and seemed to completely immerse himself in the academia, his classmates withdrew from him” (AP). Ubah concluded that “It was the student’s inability to realize that he was disadvantaged by being isolated which kept him disadvantaged or withdrawn from school’s social life” (AP). The TC hypothesized that the student inability of realization might have resulted from denial, pride, or ignorance. Ubah concluded that each individual “needs to be aware of one’s disadvantages posed by one’s difference instead of casting a blind eye over them so that one may work towards a solution” (AP).

To show what she would do as a future teacher to address similar cases, the TC stated that instead of “making any extensive, complicated pledge as to what I will do to ensure that all students have an opportunity to succeed”, she would “be a role model to the students” (AP). She noted that she would show students through “teachable moments” that she was not afraid
to look at difficulties that she faced as a “woman and Muslim” (AP). Thus, gender and religion appear to be two strong markers of her own diversity for this TC at the type of applying in the teacher education program.

**Literacy, teaching strategies, vision for schooling**

At the time of applying to the teacher education program, Ubah also describes three experiences in which she helped “someone to learn something”. These included: using “alphabetized words” as she taught a student “the Arabic Alphabet” in her position of Islamic Studies Teaching Assistant; using lecturing and “Socratic thinking” she taught students how to extract DNA from fruit, how to use a phenolphthalein indicator, and how to lift paper without contact. Furthermore, “by providing the correlation between decreasing poverty and increasing accessibility to education”, Ubah taught students that school means much more than “torturing homework”, that school “is a solution to world issues” (AP).

The TC states that what she learnt from her teaching experiences was that she was not discovering the cure to cancer or mediating war conflicts; she was performing nothing complex, “just teaching some letters”(AP). However, Ubah argues that “speeches that shake the world begin as words and words begin as letters” and that she did not see a four-year-old learning her alphabet, but she saw the making of a lawyer, or a writer, or a politician “who has mastered eloquent speech” (AP).

In her “optional question”, Ubah appears quite succinct, and using an approach that tends to state what she would not do first (evident in her overall writing), she notes that she “would be an asset” to the program because she wanted to be a teacher who would “not make a difference, but make a world of difference” (AP).

**Ubah’s Developing understandings of diversity, teaching and learning**

**Intercultural approach to teaching**

Ubah shared a course assignment reflection (CAR) that she wrote in her third year in the concurrent teacher education program. The paper is written in French and focuses on the “intercultural approach – proposed activities to be used in French as a Second Language
courses” (CAR). Such an approach that is often associated with francophone communities in the province of Quebec. Ubah argues that culture is a complex term and that it needs to be incorporated while teaching French as a Second Language, because teaching French is not only about teaching grammar. She further defines the “intercultural approach” in teaching as an approach that focuses on the “Other”. The “Other”, as Ubah explains, refers to “Francophone/French” because the French language is a foreign language for most of the Canadian students.

Taking into account the “Other” as central to the intercultural approach, Ubah describes a three-stage activity for secondary school students in the French Immersion system. During the first stage students need to recognize their own culture (i.e. own identity, values, mentality, and cultural norms) and how they influence the way they see the “Other”. During the second stage of the activity, the students reflect on their interpretations of culture: students are required to identify their country of origin on a map and examine if that is the only factor that influences their identity, way of thinking, and value system. Student are given a choice to participate or not, because as the TC states, that can be “intimidating” (CAR). During the third stage of the activity, students would focus on learning about the “cultures du monde” [world cultures].

**Trying to fit in, but still proud of who I am**

At the time of the interview, which took place in the beginning of her fourth year in the concurrent teacher education program, Ubah stated that the word diversity reminded her of “images, a lot of colors going through my mind, a lot of cultural clothing” (TCII). She further stated that, “Diversity, it means to me I guess, an ensemble, an assemblage of different people, of different customs, of different cultures, of different ideas, philosophies, different countries, kind of all coming together” (TCII).

When asked what influenced this definition of diversity, she responded by referring to her being a “minority” and “growing up in the fairly Asian environment” (TCII). She described what appeared to be a search of identity when she stated, “It’s quite sad. I’ve tried to trace my roots back to China just to fit in with them. And then, I realized everyone is different in
their own way. We all come from different backgrounds and there’s nothing wrong with
having ancestry that supposedly traces back to Saudi Arabia or to Persia” (TCII).

Similar to Dorothy (a fifth-year student depicted earlier), Ubah described her schooling
experiences when asked to speak more about what influenced her understanding of diversity.
However, the two experiences differ substantially. While Dorothy described how she was
curious to see people of color and felt embarrassed for not knowing more about them, Ubah
was the individual on the side that Dorothy was curious to explore:

I suppose, just being the minority even in school, elementary school, growing up
there, I was the minority ethnically, in terms of religion as well. Being in high school,
I guess being overtly religious, being just as how I am. That also helped me, because
it showed me that there were people who have different attitudes… and how I express
myself in itself is an expression of diversity, right? And also, some of the comments
being made to me, racist comments, and even positive comments, such as teachers
being curious, kind of pulling me aside and saying “You know I like to learn more
about your faith or more about your culture.” It really, I guess opened my eyes to my
culture and my religion. And in doing so, it made me realize that yes, my religion, my
culture, they are different from others. But again, we have similarities. So, I guess it
helped me shape the definition of diversity that I have today. (TCII)

Ubah described her schooling experiences in great detail, how she tried to “fit in” through
what she calls “three phases”: elementary school, high school, and university (TCII). In
elementary school, Ubah was trying to learn Mandarin because she “wanted so bad to fit in
with students of Asian background”. This was in addition to “being in that Asian
neighbourhood”. She also watched “Chinese shows” (TCII). In this process, as Ubah
maintains, “The more I shifted away from my culture, the less I cared about learning about
others” (TCII). She also shared that she felt a bit embarrassed about her English language
(although she explained that she was born in Canada) and Urdu, her maternal language,
because “the language felt very dry and it kind of felt very fake, very foreign” (TCII). Ubah
explains that she used to associate Urdu with “kitchen and home”, while “English is for the
affective, you know, for emotions, for friends, for the academia” (TCII). Later, she started to
try and connect with her maternal language and also started taking French. Studying French
in particular, “really opened my eyes because I had this teacher who was really into culture”
(TCII).
At the age on nine, Ubah started wearing the hijab, but stopped “because my friend’s parents forced me not to”, and then she picked it up again when she was about sixteen or seventeen (TCII). She states that during that time one of her schoolteachers remarked, “‘oh, you look like a grandmother from the back.’ Things like that. And it wasn’t like ‘Oh, you’re a terrorist!’ but yes, they were negative comments” (TCII). The TC also describes how she didn’t want to go “to prom because of my religious interpretations, but this teacher had completely interfered into my life” (TCII). Ubah explained that by interference she meant that the teacher said “Well, I’m not going to give you your English mark until you’re going to prom” (TCII). The TC stated that the teacher’s intentions might have been good, but he “took it another way” because he compared Ubah to “another Muslim girl who was practicing a different interpretation of Islam” (TCII). Ubah also described a time when she was walking down the hall and “this student, it was a black student, who had yelled from downstairs and said “Go back home you eff-ing terrorist!”” (TCII).

In addition to her own experiences, Ubah referred to how other Muslim students were treated in school. She described an incident when a Muslim student threw his juice box in the recycling bin and the teacher said, “Hey, so did you just… why are you throwing your grenade?” (TCII). Another teacher commented, “Either you’re a suicide bomber or you’re a terrorist” (TCII). The TC stated that the student she was describing transferred to an “Islamic school” because of those experiences (TCII). Teacher participants in Niyozov’s (2010) study also question the racism addressed at Muslim youth that force these youth to opt of the public schools and move to faith-based schools.

**Changing definitions of diversity**

Ubah, as we progressed through the interview provides another definition of diversity, by way of reflecting on her university experiences and how they influenced her definition of diversity. She shared that “diversity isn’t just you know, color, race, religion. But it’s something that I usually overlook, it’s your gender. What you choose to be ... a whole list of different gender identities and that really opened my eyes to that word” (TCII). Ubah maintains that gender “wasn’t so evident in high school ... even less so in elementary school” (TCII). The TC concludes, based on her experiences, that elementary school is more about
culture, high school is more about religion, and the university is more on the gender orientation.

Ubah also notes the influence of media on how diversity is represented in society and that according to media diversity is “everyone except the white people” or “everyone except Canadians” or “everyone except Americans” (TCII). She emphasizes that the visual diversity is what media sees when describing a school that may just have primarily one type of students of color, such as South Asians.

When asked how her understanding changed since she enrolled in the program, Ubah appears confident and state that, “Oh, yes. Prior to the concurrent teacher education program, I didn’t really pay attention to the diversity in age and the diversity of learning skills” (TCII).

**Influences on diversity conceptions while in university**

Ubah names a number of influences on her understanding of diversity while in the university, such as readings, instructors (e.g., “teaching style of the professor, bringing his or her personal experience as well”), peers, her involvement in extracurricular activities in university, and placements (e.g., “If I didn’t have the placements, I wouldn’t have that practical hands-on experience with diversity”).

When asked if there is anything about herself, the instructors or the program that influenced her learning in the program more specifically, Ubah notes that the program puts emphasis on diversity, but also refers to the application form to the program. From her description, it appears that being a “minority” might have been one of the main reasons she obtained a spot in the program:

In terms of the program itself, this brings an emphasis on diversity. Like when I was in grade twelve, I was filling up the application for the concurrent teacher education program. I got rejected from the program because then my math wasn’t good enough, or the science. But anyway, I noticed the little section on the form, if you’re a minority. And I was very surprised to read that because, I mean, I didn’t know they could write anything like that there. I don’t think I filled anything out the first time. But anyway, just putting diversity at the forefront of the program, it’s evident from our books. It’s evident from the website. It’s there. (TCII)
Ubah puts forward a number of recommendations for the program, when asked to describe how learning about diversity could be improved for future students: students and instructors need to be honest about where they are coming from; there is a need for more effective placements, especially for the psychology course; the need to focus on a specific type of diversity in the field experience; the need to invite guest speakers who represent a certain type of diversity to classes; and the need for making the program “more academic” in the sense that instructors need to have higher expectations of teacher candidates.

**Summary and discussion**

In the Application Profile, Ubah appears aware of the language that is present in discourses of diversity, as it is evident from her approach of first stating what she would not do, and then contrasting it with “simple” things that she will actually do as a teacher. Her descriptions may even be found sarcastic. Although the TC appears focused on her “self” and is quite proud of what she achieved up to that time, she is also centred on teaching strategies that would help her model to her students how they could become individuals able to “solve world issues”. She is also set to make not just a difference, but “a world of difference” as a future teacher, which may be interpreted as an inclination to make a change. Although Ubah’s words might be read as “grand” or just portraying a vision for teaching, the subsequent interview and her reflective pieces show what research studies call specific personal experiences that best contribute to student’s openness to diversity (Castro, 2010): living in a culturally diverse neighbourhood and having cross-cultural friendships (Dee & Henkin, 2002); activism (Adams et al., 2005); ability to reflect (Garmon, 2004); being stereotyped (Spittle, Petering, Kremer, Spittle, 2012).

Similar to many other TCs in the program, Ubah shows concerns with teaching strategies. However, what is distinct about Ubah is that she identifies the intercultural approach to teaching as a teaching strategy, which is influenced by her learning French and having French as a teachable subject, and the association to the francophone community with an intercultural approach to diversity (Jacquet, 2008). When describing the approach, Ubah focuses on the “Other” (Other being the “Francophone/French” because the French language
is a foreign language for most of the Canadian students) with the goal of learning more about oneself.

Ubah, similar to other Dorothy, Thanh, Agnieszka, and Hendrika is also concerned about self and identity. As seen from the detailed descriptions of Ubah above, her conception of diversity is different at any given point in time as she progresses though elementary, middle and high school, and then university. Her conceptions are closely connected to her search of identity and self. Her struggle to fit in at different stages in her life are linked with different notions of diversity. As a student in elementary school, Chinese language (not English or her ‘maternal language’) held a high status for her as she saw this language as a way to help her fit in or belong. She felt embarrassed about English (although Ubah emphases that she is fluent in English, as she was born in Canada) and her Urdu (the maternal language), as they reminded her that she did not belong in that community. When she started to learn French, her entire conception of diversity changed, due to the teacher she had who ‘opened her eyes’ to see culture in a different way. Thus language as a marker of identity and diversity was held in either a high or low status, depending on what the language was. Later, Ubah turns to religion as a diversity conception with high status, although she had to abandon wearing hijab because of the pressures from classmates and their parents, and teachers. The perceptions of others about who Ubah was seem to make her change views about diversity dimensions that she found important. In university and at the time of the interview, gender appears as a diversity conception that has higher status than others she names in her definition of diversity. In university it was her instructors, peers, readings and extracurricular activities in particular (i.e. being an active member in varied student associations) that helped Ubah focus her attention on gender.

The presentation of findings from six individual cases above provide insights into the causes of and influences on individual TCs’ learning about diversity and gaining understandings of teaching as these individuals progressed through the teacher education program. Before I present major themes across the larger group of participants, I provide a cross-case analysis of initial and developing understandings of diversity portrayed in this chapter by identifying common themes and important distinctions among them.
Cross-case analysis and discussion

The purpose of this section is to compare and analyse the six cases of initial and developing understandings of diversity portrayed in the Chapter 6 above in order to identify common themes and important distinctions among them. The need to map the development of “teacher cognition, beliefs and skills with respect to teaching of diverse student populations” (Grant & Secada, 1990, p. 419) has been argued to lead to a better understanding of individual pathways of learning to teach for diversity (Larkin, 2010). As already noted earlier in the thesis, a conception related to diversity may also concern one or more knowledge bases, the school students, parents, society in general, or any combination of these (Larkin, 2012). Therefore, teacher candidates’ developing understandings of diversity is not done in isolation, but it is part of learning and teaching, and life inside and outside the teacher education program.

In what follows, I first compare teacher candidates’ conceptions of diversity, teaching and learning at the time of applying to study in the five-year teacher education program and then focus on how these future teachers developed understandings of diversity, teaching and learning as they progressed through the program. Such an analysis does not only help to better understand the roots (i.e. causes and influences) of teacher candidates’ conceptions of diversity, but also makes clear the extent of their conceptual change (Larkin, 2010, 2012). I make note of findings as reported by the teacher candidates themselves and findings that I as researcher see as emerging from the overall data for an individual case. For example, when Matteo states in the interview that his conceptions of diversity did not change, I call it “reported finding.” Nonetheless, the different sources of data that Matteo shared show that his conception of gender, for example, was altered as a result of his learning in CTEP - I call this finding “emerging finding”. The section of the cross-case analysis entitled “Past and present experiences with diversity and their influences on teacher candidates” brings the findings from the six cases together to examine the causes of and influences on these TCs’ conceptions of diversity, and also makes connections with research literature. The “Individual case findings summary and discussion” concludes Chapter 6 and makes further connections with research literature and the conceptual change framework used in this study.
Teacher candidates’ conceptions of diversity, teaching and learning prior to CTEP

Diversity conceptions

Findings from the six individual cases show that there are a few similarities as well as differences in their diversity conceptions at the time of applying to the five-year teacher education program. At the time of applying to the teacher education program, three of the six teacher candidates (Thanh, Matteo and Agnieszka) appear to understand diversity in terms of ability and disability and special needs students. However, conceptions of diversity among the other three teacher candidates differ. Dorothy’s conception of diversity relates to socioeconomic status (SES), although she also shows confidence in teaching students with disabilities. Hendrika brings up the question of religion, while Ubah is more focused on how to overcome disadvantages related to being different. The concern with ability and disability in teacher candidates can be linked to what Villegas (2012) calls “the movement toward inclusive education [that] has added further to the diversity of ... classrooms” (p. 286). As stated earlier in the thesis, the legislative frameworks in Canada that require special education students to be educated in regular classrooms have led to an increase of students with special needs in such classes.

In their Application Profiles, the TCs in this study wrote about special needs cases that they observed in their experiences prior to enrolling in CTEP. Thanh recalls a “mixed disability class” and Agnieszka describes a ‘life skills class.” While Matteo described a friend’s temporary physical disability, all three candidates appear concerned about the barriers that individuals with disability face as a result of attitudes toward them or access issues. This finding also raises questions about the selection of TCs in the program. It can be argued that since teacher education at OISE at the time of the study responded to the recommendation from the regulatory body to address this aspect of diversity, it was reflected in the selection criteria as well. The focus in the other three TCs related to their personal experiences. Dorothy’s observation of socioeconomic status is closely related to her own high SES and what she observed through extra-curricular activities; Hendrika’s Catholic background links to a concern with perceptions of “Muslim” as “other”; and Ubah’s preoccupation with the
notion of “difference” relates to her many experiences of being stereotyped as a Muslim female of color.

**Conceptions of teaching and learning**

The conceptions about teaching and learning that the six teacher candidates display in their responses in the Application Profiles differ across the TCs. Dorothy is concerned about individual learning styles and sees students’ lack of confidence as a barrier to success. Thanh is drawing on her “existing knowledge”, such as playing volleyball to teach novice players, or her knowledge of playing piano to teach someone how to play the guitar. Matteo sees the teacher as a problem solver and emphasize clarity when learning and teaching. Agnieszka emphasizes her knowledge of different types of learners in terms of age groups, English language proficiency and different abilities and disabilities. Hendrika is drawn to teaching literacy, but also on how to develop her leadership skills.

Lastly, Ubah, although interested in teaching literacy using varied approaches, is portraying a larger vision for schools as preparing individuals who could make “a world of difference” through dealing with “world issues” (AP). Implied in the many ideas related to teaching and learning among the six candidates is their concern with student success and that “no single formula exists for teaching all students” (Villegas, 2012, p. 288). While some TCs put the responsibility for success on the students themselves (e.g., Dorothy’s notion of “working hard”), others emphasize the role of the teacher in this process (e.g., Thanh speaks of the importance of building on the prior knowledge of learners; Matteo emphasizes the need to be clear in one’s teaching; Agnieszka is drawn to knowing the learners; and Ubah has a bigger vision for the role of education).

**Programmatic influences on TCs’ diversity conceptions and conceptions of future teaching in diverse classrooms**

Findings reveal that the teacher candidates’ learning about diversity occurs within the larger teaching and learning process in the teacher education program, as they bring in prior experiences with diversity and conceptions of teaching and learning. Findings show that diversity understandings, as reported by the teacher candidates, have either not changed or...
expanded, with a few TCs stating that they could not explicitly identify such changes at the
time of the interview. Nonetheless, across all the TCs, as documents (e.g., reflective writings)
and interview data show, these individuals have acquired new knowledge and conceptions
that relate to diversity, teaching and learning.

Diversity conceptions

Across the six individual cases, three teacher candidates express uncertainty about changes in
their understandings of diversity at the time of the interviews. Two TCs indicate that they
have not changed the way they define diversity. One TC refers to specific changes in her
understanding of diversity. Dorothy (who associated diversity with socioeconomic status in
her Applicant Profile), although hesitant to indicate how her diversity understandings
changed in the program, states that her initial understanding was of diversity in terms of
ethnicity and “people other than white people”. However, she later declares that diversity is
more than color as it also includes language and an amalgamation of many things. Thanh,
similar to Dorothy, is hesitant to explain how her understanding of diversity changed and
only states that “the seed was planted”. She explains that she is still learning, and is also
planning to study in a Master’s program with a focus on ability and disability. In her
Application Profile, Thanh focuses on ability and disability. Agnieszka, similar to Dorothy
and Thanh, is unsure how her understanding of diversity changed, although she defines
diversity as cultures living and working together. Agnieszka describes special needs students
in her Application Profile.

Matteo, compared to the other TCs described in the six individual cases is confident in his
statements and declares that his understandings of diversity did not change as a result of the
program because he is still “open and welcoming”. At the time of the interview, Matteo
defined diversity as difference and “variety” of ethnicities, religions and cultures. In his
Application Profile, Matteo focuses on ability and disability. Matteo, though, through an
artifact that he describes in his fourth year in the program, conceptualizes diversity as
difference, but also as “unity”. Hendrika, similar to Matteo, sees diversity as difference, and
although she is not as straightforward or explicit as Matteo in her responses, she does not
name any changes. Therefore, one interpretation of Hendrika’s response could be that she
could not name any change in her conceptions of diversity. In her Application Profile, Hendrika describes diversity in terms of religion.

Ubah is the only TC who indicated that her diversity understandings expanded. She initially provides a definition of diversity as “images, a lot of colors going through my mind, a lot of cultural clothing” and then states that through the program her understanding of diversity as color, race and religion expanded to also include gender. In her Application Profile, Ubah focuses on how to overcome disadvantages related to being different.

When analysing teacher candidates’ responses, a few findings emerged that relate to either acquiring new or changing conceptions related to diversity, teaching and learning. Dorothy, for example, acquired new conceptions about students and parents’ attitudes toward Music as a subject matter, and explains their attitudes as linked to socio-cultural values. Thanh acquired new conceptions about activism and spirituality. Matteo changed his conception of success: while in the beginning of the program he sees success as “pushing oneself”, later in the program he associates success with self-directed learning that happens through involvement in community. Agnieszka appears to have learnt more about students’ attitudes as “behavior issues”. Hendrika developed a new strategy to both address classroom management issues as well as help students learn from each other, which she calls “pairing up strategy” of a “non-ESL, behaviour” student with an “ESL student”. Ubah acquired new understandings of diversity in terms of gender.

As seen from the comparisons within and across the six cases, ideas expressed in the Application Profile changed in the documents that the TCs shared, as well as later in the interviews. However, some TCs did not report or hesitate to state any changes in their understandings of diversity at the time of the interview. These findings lend themselves to different interpretations. An argument could be made that perhaps the teacher candidates are not aware of the sources of their own learning. Also, certain types of knowledge might become automatized (Winitzky & Kauchak, 2005), which make these unconscious so it does not readily come to mind in an interview. These interpretations are found in research on “skill learning where tacit knowledge proves to be difficult for learners and researchers to access” (Ford, n.d., as cited in Winitzky & Kauchak, 2005, p.68).
Conceptions of teaching and learning

Findings reveal that concerns and changes related to teaching and learning as they progress through the teacher education program vary within an individual TC as well as across the six TCs. For example, Dorothy is initially concerned about individual learning styles and sees students’ lack of confidence as a barrier to success. However, as she progresses through the program she is focused on her ‘self’ and how to become an educator, and she seeks professional development opportunities that might help her in this quest. She is also concerned about the idea of what constitutes a “good” or “expert” teacher. Also, Dorothy becomes worried that her teachable is not viewed as a valued subject by both parents and students in future classrooms. Thanh, another TC, is initially drawn to the idea of “existing knowledge”. Later in the program, she is fascinated with the idea of community and learns that one can become part of a “different community” if both parties make efforts toward accepting each other. Thanh is also concerned with self-development, but SMART goals appear to have won her attention because they help her achieve measurable outcomes. This is somewhat contradictory to her newly and equally attractive idea of spiritually and the related concept of viewing students and their learning as “holistic”.

Matteo, who initially portrayed the teacher as a problem solver and emphasize clarity when learning and teaching, later keeps stating that he has to take into account the Religion focus on his program. For him, experiential learning is associated with a good teaching and learning strategy. He is also concerned with professional development and the notion of what a “successful” or “effective teacher” is. He describes students as having potential, which he is willing to help achieve. Agnieszka, in her Application Profile, emphasizes her knowledge of different types of learners. As she progresses through the program, she focuses on learning and how it occurs (both and home and a school) as well as learning resources. She also points to the need to establish partnerships with parents to help students succeed academically, through communications, but also letting parent know how important breakfast is for students. Agnieszka appears concerned that students may not see themselves represented in school materials and media. The TC appears concerned with the notion of self and what an “effective” teacher is.
Hendrika was initially drawn to the idea of literacy and how to teach it, as well as how to develop her leadership skills. While in the program, the TC is focusing on a few notions: getting to know the students; being an effective teacher; collaboration with teaching staff in school; subjects matter knowledge; class management, and teaching strategies. Ubah described a larger vision for schooling in her Application Profile, as well as touching on notions of literacy and teaching strategies. As she advances in her program, the TC continues to be concerned about teaching strategies. For Ubah, her bigger visions for schooling appear to connect with work she does in extracurricular activities or volunteer opportunities outside her program, such as being part of student organizations. Inherent in her descriptions is a struggle to find one’s self and this struggle appears to influences her diversity conceptions as she progresses from elementary, to middle, and then to high school, followed by the university.

A comparison across the six individual cases reveals that the three teacher candidates who completed their fifth year of study (Dorothy, Thanh, and Matteo) appear to be concerned about professional development. Dorothy, Matteo, as well as Agnieszka (who was in her fourth year at the time of the interview) also seem to be focused on the idea of what a good/effective/expert/ teacher is. The two TCs who completed their third year of study (Ubah and Hendrika) appear to have teaching strategies as a common concern. Although other commonalities and differences might be found across the six teacher candidates, the above seem the most prominent.

**Past and present experiences with diversity and their influences on teacher candidates’ conceptions of diversity**

Across all individual cases, participants explicitly name a number of influences on their learning about diversity, both inside and outside the concurrent teacher education program. These include: their community growing up, family, placements, reflections, collaboration with peers, discussions, instructors, individual program focus, teacher education program length, readings, values, and faith and religion. These findings are also present in the larger participant groups of TCs that I discussed in more detail in Chapter 7 where I present the
collective case results. In what follows I focus on the prominent findings that emerged from the six TCs’ data.

Only two influences appear more prominent in TC’s descriptions, which connects to the teacher education program, as reported by four (Thanh, Agnieszka, Hendrika and Ubah) out of the six cases that were examined in more depth. These two influences include those from peers and instructors. Three of these TCs (Thanh, Hendrika and Ubah) describe the communities they grew up as diverse or “non-white”, although only Matteo and Hendrika explicitly identify the “community growing up” as a major influence on their learning. Causey et al. (2002) identify living or participating in service activities in diverse communities as one of the major influences on teacher candidates’ positive attitudes toward multicultural education and teaching. Other commonalities across participants exist, but not as prominent in terms of number of cases. For examples, Dorothy and Hendrika name the field placements in the teacher education program as major influences. A number of studies have found that field experiences contribute to creating positive change in beliefs, attitudes, and perceptions about culturally diverse others (Conaway et al., 2007; Bell et al., 2007; Causey et al., 2000). Thanh and Hendrika name reflections as important in their learning about diversity. Reflective practice is one of the most important strategies in multicultural education (Middleton, 2002). Thanh and Agnieszka note that the program length allowed them opportunities to learn more about diversity. Gambhir et al. (2008) maintain that program length is one of the advantages of a concurrent teacher education program, as it allows participants to be introduced to concepts early in their degree and then revisit and expand such concepts and ideas. Only Matteo explicitly identified the emphasis of his program (i.e. Religion) and his personal values and commitment to Catholic teaching as major influences on his learning and teaching, and conceptions of diversity.

What is inherent in the descriptions of the conceptions of diversity, teaching and learning of the six TCs described in Chapter 6, although not as prominently in Matteo’s case, is their concern with the question of self and/or identity and a major influence that the ‘self’ had on their conceptions of diversity. “Teacher Identity” is one of the core elements of the “Learner Document” (LD), a conceptual framework that identifies a set of capacities that teacher
candidates develop over the course of the teacher education program at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE) of the University of Toronto, where my research is situated (OISE, 2011). Teacher identity, as described by the six individual TCs, connects more closely to the capacity described by the LD as “understanding the value and necessity of perseverance and self-assessment in the development of teaching excellence” (OISE, 2011), as well as the “Self/Teacher Development” knowledge base strand in these TCs e-portfolios. As one can see from the above description of cases, TCs reflections that focus on the ‘self’ do not always come under the “Self/Teacher Development” knowledge base in the e-portfolio. As stated earlier, it is not clear exactly how the concepts of identity and self are related (Rodgers & Scott, 2008). However, the conception of identity can be understood by examining four basic assumptions, as described by Rodgers & Scott (2008):

1. the identity is dependent upon and formed within multiple contexts which bring social, cultural, political, and historical forces to bear upon that formation;
2. that identity is formed in relationship with others and involves emotions;
3. that identity is shifting, unstable, and multiple; and,
4. that identity involves the construction and reconstruction of meaning through stories over time (p. 733, emphasis in original).

As Rodgers and Scott (2008) further note, contexts and relationships describe the external aspects of identity formation, and the internal, or meaning making aspects, refer to stories and emotions. The ‘self’ thus, includes teacher identities and is “an evolving yet, coherent being that consciously or unconsciously constructs and is constructed, reconstructs and is reconstructed in interaction with cultural contexts, institutions, and people with which the ‘self’ lives, learns and functions” (p. 751). Teachers, thus, need to make a “psychological shift” in how they think about themselves as teachers. Sancho, Correa, Giro, and Fraga (2014) also emphasize the “process of ‘self-construction’” in professional teacher development (p. 19). Flores (2014) also states that the nature of becoming a teacher is a “multiperspectival and multidimensional ... and is driven by a wide array of factors, contexts, and emotions” (p. 356).

The ways the six individual TCs describe this process of self-construction as related to their learning about diversity differs. Dorothy is constantly reassessing her ‘self’ as teacher of
Music and as an effective teacher. Thanh struggles to define the self and consequently cannot state what her conception of diversity is as these two seemed to be closely linked, with ability and disability being the diversity aspect with the highest but also unclear status. Agnieszka and Hendrika are concerned about the self and the self as effective teacher. Matteo’s search for ‘self’ is not as prominent. His ‘self’ appears to be strongly linked to his religion and Catholic teachings in which he finds the answers to many questions as they arise. Ubah is the TC to whom Rodgers and Scott’s (2008) conceptualization seems to apply most: she developed her identity within multiple community and schooling contexts; her descriptions of ‘self’ do indicate a lot of emotions as she struggles to define herself and thus puts a lot of pressure on self. Additionally, those around her make her constantly reassess who she is, and her stories of finding herself through stages of schooling experiences show multiple and shifting identities. The complexities of the process of self as meaning making, coupled with learning about diversities of students, is thus rooted in ongoing psychological shifts, interactions with other individuals, policies, peers, instructors, families, student and schools, and larger societal structures.

**Individual case findings summary and discussion**

Findings presented in this chapter reveal that although many teacher candidates were part of the same classes and cohorts, and all were part of the same concurrent teacher education program, each candidate’s conceptions of diversity and developing knowledge about teaching is an individual experience influenced by many individual factors, including the ‘self’. The six individual cases presented in this study highlight these individual learning paths and how conceptions of diversity grow and develop over time. They also reveal what influenced each individual TC’s earlier learning as well as learning in the teacher education program. Each of the candidates entered the program with certain understandings of diversity, teaching and learning. Their progression through conceptual change varied, as the description of each case and the cross-case analysis showed.

One of the most prominent findings is that the initial conceptions of diversity or notions that they associate with diversity (as described in the Application Profile) appear more organized, and teacher candidates appeared more confident in their descriptions at the onset of the
program compared to the ways they described diversity at the time of the interview. In turn, compared to interview responses, teacher candidates’ descriptions of diversity, teaching and learning in the documents that they shared appeared more coherent, and their reflections are linked to varied experiences in the program and reflect the immediate influences of those components. Larkin (2010) found that the responses of teacher candidates tended to reflect what they had experienced shortly before the interview sessions. This finding suggests that although conceptualizations represent emergent knowledge rather than a reflection of fixed knowledge structures, TCs appear to be at a stage of non-concern, characteristic of pre-teaching experiences in teachers (Fuller, 1969).

King and Kitchener’s (2005) work on “developmental progression” (p. 6) in early adulthood provides a further explanation for these findings. According to these authors, there are three levels in an individual development progression: pre-reflective thinking, quasi-reflective thinking, and reflective thinking (p. 6). A major characteristic of the “pre-reflective thinking”, according to King and Kitchener (2005) is that “knowledge is assumed to be certain, that single correct answers exist for all questions and may be known with absolute certainty” (p. 6). TCs’ descriptions in the Application Profiles seem to fall under this level of developmental progression as TCs rely on “unsubstantiated personal opinions” (p. 6). King and Kitchener argue that “with the quasi-reflective thinking comes the recognition that uncertainly is part of the knowing process” (p. 6). At this stage TCs would have developed an ability to see “knowledge as an abstraction” and would start to realize that “beliefs are internally derived, not simply accepted by others” (p. 6). Also at this stage the TCs would begin to understand that “different approaches or perspectives on controversial issues rely on different types of evidence and different rules of evidence, and that factors like these contribute to different ways of framing issues” (p. 6). Nonetheless, findings show that the TCs are still grappling with uncertainty and are not yet able to make explicit connections between understandings acquired before and while in the program. Such links would become more explicit as they move to what King and Kitchener (2004) call “the reflective thinking stage”. In this stage the TCs would be able to understand and make knowledge claims in relation to the context in which they are generated and they would also realize that knowledge is constructed and reconstructed (p. 9). The TCs would be open to re-assessing
their conclusions and knowledge claims (King and Kitchener, 2004). Findings reveal that TCs have not yet transitioned to what King and Kitchener (2004) describe as the reflective thinking stage.

Another finding is that the knowledge growth related to diversity, teaching and learning varies across the six cases and it is not always stable. Although there are some commonalities in teacher candidates’ responses, as shown by the cross-case analysis, there are also substantive differences between candidates and even within individual candidates. For example, although Matteo’s initial understanding of diversity relates to ability and disability, and later in the program he shows an interest and growing understanding of the importance of sexuality and religion (the TC also finds these dimensions both important and challenging), in the final interview he states that his conception did not change as he remains the same accepting and open person. Matteo’s example shows a lack of convergence in conceptualizations over time, but also show that the influences outside the teacher education program, such as religious beliefs and larger liberal multicultural discourse of sameness appear to overshadow the programmatic influences on his conceptions of diversity.

The lack of convergence is also seen across the participants, not only within participants. Even though the teacher candidates are enrolled in the same program, their conceptualizations of diversity differ. It can be argued that there are a number of reasons for this divergence. This is also evident from the themes across all the TC participants in this study described in the chapters that follow as ‘collective case findings. One of reasons is the programmatic structure of the five-year teacher education program. As the six partner units have a different program focus (e.g., Physical Education, Religious Education, Physics, and English), they may not align with the Bachelor of Education portion of the program. This inherent “tension” has been reported in past research on the routes that exist to prepare teachers, and the tension between becoming subject experts by specializing in a disciplinary major (e.g., Mathematics, French, Religious Education) and the tailored teacher education courses (Davies & Guppy, 2006).

Another possible explanation is that the teacher candidates do not take classes with the same instructors for courses both inside and outside the Bachelor of Education portion. The
instructors, as data show, bring different experiences and perspectives on diversity, which influence how the TCs take up questions of diversity in their courses. Related to instructors in the program is the question of the research universities putting emphasis on scholarship over teaching (Davies & Guppy, 2006), as well as the question of academic freedom. The emphasis on scholarly research and the freedom that professors have to emphasize particular perspectives on course topics may provide a further explanation of how teacher candidates perceive their learning in the teacher education program.

Still another explanation may be the diverse settings of the field experiences. As the responses from instructors, teacher candidates, and program administrators show, such experiences vary across TCs but also from year to year as the TCs are sent to those schools that accept teacher candidates. The teacher education program does not have control over the number of available placements or their location, although they do make efforts to provide more varied experiences for the TCs.

The most prominent finding emerging from the individual cases is the importance of “self” in teacher candidates learning about diversity in the teacher education program. While TCs appeared to construct knowledge in individual ways, some patterns were found: (1) teacher candidates who had little experience with diversity (mainly those coming from rural areas or small communities) appeared more willing to learn about diversity; (2) teacher candidates found certain diversity concepts both important and challenging (e.g., sexuality, faith and religion); (3) teacher candidates tend to find challenging those concepts to which they cannot relate; (4) conceptualizations reflected program emphasis, especially for students in the Religious Education program; (5) instructors appear to have a major influence on TC’s learning about diversity. These findings show the many and interrelated influences on TCs’ conceptions of diversity.

Chapter 6 presented findings from six individual cases in order to provide insights into the causes of and influences on individual TCs’ learning about diversity and gaining understandings of teaching as these individuals progressed through the teacher education program. This chapter also provided a cross-case analysis of the individual cases or portraits. The chapter that follows examines the findings, organized by the themes, which emerged
from *all* the teacher candidate questionnaires and interviews in this study. Interviews with teacher educators and program administrators in this research were used as supplementary data.
Chapter 7: Collective Case Findings

Introduction

In the preceding chapter, cases of individual teacher candidates (TCs) were presented and compared to show the complexity of developing understandings of diversity and influences and causes for changes in conceptions. By drawing on a larger pool of data, such as teacher candidates’ Application Admissions Profiles, teacher candidates’ e-portfolio reflections and individual semi-structured interviews, it was possible to offer a window into how each individual teacher candidate’s ideas about diversity changed over time as they learned to become teachers. Also, patterns emerging from the six cases were presented, the most prominent being the importance of “self” in teacher candidates learning about diversity in the teacher education program.

In this chapter, I present the findings of the collective case (all the teacher candidate participants in this study) by describing the major themes that emerged from teacher candidates’ responses to my research questions. The primary sources of data for this chapter were the questionnaires and individual interviews. All the teacher candidates who volunteered to participate in the questionnaire and in the interviews conducted for this study were included in this research: a total of 119 teacher candidates (58 TCs from Year 5; 24 TCs from Year 4 and 37 TCs from Year 3) participated in the online questionnaire. A total of 24 teacher candidates volunteered and participated in individual interviews. Data from 15 teacher educators and six program administrator interviews were used as supplementary data for triangulation purposes.

Both the questionnaire and the semi-structured individual interviews with teacher candidate participants were structured around four main clusters of questions: conceptualizations of diversity, experiences that helped define diversity, learning about diversity in the teacher
education program, and perceptions of future teaching and diversity (see Appendix C for the full questionnaire and Appendix F for the interview questions). I looked for emergent themes in the questionnaire responses and the interview transcripts. Codes that emerged from the readings of the interviews were compared across interviews, and similarities and differences were noted. I used pattern coding (Miles & Huberman, 1984) to identify emergent themes. The patterns generated themes and subthemes, which are not static, but rather complex and dynamic (a more detailed description of the analysis approach is provided in Chapter 5).

The teacher candidates in this study have a mixture of “individual difference” and “categorical difference” (Paine, 1990) orientation to teaching and social interactions. These orientations are reminiscent of the claims of liberalism that vary from individualistic (Rawls, 1971) to communitarian/pluralist interpretations (Kymlicka, 1995, 2001; 2010). What the teacher candidates in this study reveal also falls into what Dei (2000) calls the “variety perspective” on diversity. This perspective, also called the “feel good” (Lopez, 2005) or “niceness” (Razack, 2002) approach fosters tolerance for people of diverse backgrounds and respect for social difference by celebrating holidays, foods and dress. It is, as Lopez (2005) further states, a “polite way of acknowledging difference, recognizing our presence in the social milieu, without disturbing the vane of the social fabric, and existing relations” (p. 57).

The majority of teacher educators and program administrators’ responses reflect elements from all the four orientations in Paine (1990): individual, categorical, contextual and pedagogical, with a few that could be firmly placed under the pedagogical orientation to difference.

In both the interviews and the questionnaire the teacher candidates displayed a tendency to discuss diversity in simple ways, such as ‘great differences between people’. Another finding is that teacher candidates tended to name a geographical location where diversity seemed to originate from or be associated with. For example, a teacher candidate in Year 4 contrasts the location where he grew up with Toronto, the city where he is studying:
There wasn’t a lot of diversity. I grew up in the suburbs of Calgary, so very much white. A lot of lawyers and engineers. Let’s say I came from an upper middle class family. A long line of oil and gas engineers. Most of my schools, elementary and middle school, were mostly white population. Same background, upper middle class. Then in high school there was a bit more diversity but even still there was like only one black person in my entire high school of 2,000 in Calgary, so [...] I knew that a lot of my colleagues that are from Toronto have heard about multiculturalism and diversity since their elementary, because they’ve known everybody in their classes, but for me it was something completely new. So I think my interest made me take the readings more seriously and I would ask my professors for other sources to continue to read about it. I’d say, talking to all the diverse people that are in Toronto and just the fact that you can do so many cultural activities like there is little Italy and Korea town. Just going and travelling and meeting these things also helped. (Minjee Y4)

One could argue that Minjee Y4 above echoes what Paine (1990) calls a “contextual difference” orientation, where “difference among individuals occurs in patterns, yet these patterns are seen as connected to a social situation or embedded in a larger, dynamic context” (p. 3). However, although the teacher candidate does place difference in the urban, as opposed to the suburban setting, she does not take into consideration the “causes of difference” (Paine, 1990, p. 3). The teacher candidate relates what she observed in the two locations, without attempting to give an explanation of the reasons for the differences she noticed. She seems to have decided to learn more about it when she states, “interest made me take the readings more seriously and I would ask my professors for other sources to continue to read about it” (Minjee Y4).

Although there was great consensus on the above-named larger patterns, there were also divergences in these teacher candidates’ responses. Some of these divergences relate to the way teacher candidates view certain dimensions of diversity (especially sexuality and faith and religion). Data show that past experiences, individual beliefs, teachable subject and division, and affiliation to a particular unit in the teacher education program also account for these divergences. Compared with the findings from the individual cases, the salience of “self” is not as prominent in the questionnaire with its brief responses to questions. The major findings related to meanings of diversity from the six individual cases were confirmed
across the entire TC participant group. Influences on diversity conceptions identified in the six cases became clearer when data across all the participants were analysed.

In what follows, I present the findings in more details, with illustrative examples from the interviews. Findings are organized by themes, which provide responses to my research questions. The themes presented under “Teacher candidates’ conceptions of diversity” highlight major findings to the research question “How do teacher candidates enrolled in a concurrent teacher education program conceptualize diversity?” The themes presented under “Teaching and learning about diversity in the concurrent program” provide responses to the two research questions: “In teacher candidates’ view, how is their understanding of diversity affected by the Concurrent Teacher Education Program components?” The themes that relate to the research question “How do teacher candidates describe their past and present experiences with diversity and their influences on their conceptions of diversity?” are examined under the suggestive title “Past and present experiences with diversity and their influences on teacher candidates’ conceptions of diversity.” The last section of Chapter 7 provides an overall summary and discussion of the collective case findings.

**Teacher candidates’ conceptions of diversity**

**Introduction**

A strong theme throughout the questionnaires and interviews across all teacher candidate participants is that diversity is associated with individual and categorical differences, more than other orientations to diversity (Paine, 1990). When describing what diversity meant to them in interviews, many participants tended to use an umbrella word such as “variety” or “multitude” or “culture” first and then name two or more types of differences. For instance,

> It [diversity] means like a great difference among people, a lot of variety in whatever the subject talking about. [...] So it could mean, if we're talking about diversity of people and you could have variety of race, you could have variety of gender, you could have variety of tastes. It does not necessarily just mean to be race because people are not just one thing or another. So diversity, I guess, just means a lot of difference among people. You can also I guess have diversity of like plants and stuff too, but I guess when you said diversity I think of people
mostly and the differences among them across the different qualities of what makes you a person. So diversity is like in your background and how you grew up in your economic status and stuff like that. (Hendrika Y3)

When I compared the interview and questionnaire responses related to diversity orientations within groups and across groups, based on year of study, a few interesting findings emerged. The Year 3 teacher candidate (TC) interviews show an equal distribution of TCs’ responses between categorical and individual orientations to difference. The Year 4 TC interviews show that the responses that fall in the categorical orientation are slightly more in number than those displaying an individual orientation to difference. Interviews with the Year 5 TCs show more responses that fall in the categorical orientation to difference.

When responding to the question “When you hear the word diversity, what does it mean to you?” in the questionnaire, participants also used words such as “variety” and “range”, similar to Paine’s (1990) study, and tended to provide lists of dimension of diversity, as in “variety of culture, race, and religion” (TC Year 5, questionnaire). The questionnaires show more responses that fall under the categorical orientation to difference in each of the years, followed by the individual orientation responses and then by a mixture of individual and categorical responses. Although these comparisons cannot show change in an individual, they may represent changes that take place in a larger defined population (Wiersma, 2000).

There were a few questionnaire and interview responses in each of the years where the participants used one word or an expression to describe diversity, such as “multiculturalism”, “multicultural”, “culture”, “cultural mosaic” or “differences in a good way”.

Categorical differences that the teacher candidates use most frequently in their response refer to ability and disability, race, gender, sexuality, class, and faith and religion. They also frequently focus on background, similar to Paine’s (1990) study. When using the word background, participants discuss family background and upbringing, as well as culture. Culture as background in many cases refers to an individual’s place of origin or ethnicity.

Individual or psychological differences most frequently refer to variations in beliefs, opinions, perspective, outlook, personal characteristics and attitudes. The shift away from the
social aspect of diversity to internal and individualistic matters of ‘points of view’ (Marvasti & McKinney, 2011) is mostly characteristic of the teacher candidates who are studying to become Religion teachers. A fourth-year teacher candidate, for example, describes diversity as “thinking differently”:

To me diversity means, or I think of it in the sense of thinking differently. I guess it's what I focus on. So diversity I guess to me would be diversity of opinion or outlook or perspective. The only issues that the way I usually hear the term used, and this includes courses at OISE, seems to be in a particular side of the political sphere. It seems to be much more of a superficial sense where there's this kind of ‘well, people from different cultures obviously think very differently. So we need people, all these different cultures’. But to me I've always found it people within cultures are no less or more likely to think differently, to have different opinions, outlooks, perspectives than people let's say from various different backgrounds. And I guess my concern has been that I felt that the most important form of diversity, which maybe diversity of opinion, isn't particularly discussed. I've never had the impression that it was particularly encouraged at OISE. And we sort of didn’t have any courses encouraging it. (Brian Y4)

The teacher candidate above seems to believe that individual differences, such as the difference in opinion or outlook, are not necessarily connected or explained by an individual affiliation to a social group or culture, but could also stem from differences in individual background, such as upbringing. The implication that one’s point of view is not embedded in cultural patterns is in opposition to research that states that points of view do not arise out of nothing (Mills, 1959 in Marvasti & McKinney, 2011). The ‘point of view’ or ‘perspective’ understanding of diversity shifts the attention from the group-level and structural inequalities to problems of individual freedom and its expression (Marvasti & McKinney, 2011, p. 645). This position advocates for diversity as greater ideals and its connotations that are similar to liberal notions of diversity.

Regardless of terms that the teacher candidates use to describe diversity, data show three distinct aspects of the individual and categorical orientation to diversity: (1) diversity receives too much attention at the institutional/teacher education program level (especially TCs in Year 4 and Year 5); (2) diversity as visible and invisible differences; (3) diversity as
response to difference. I examine these three aspects of individual and categorical differences in more depth in what follows.

**Diversity as an overused term**

One of the strongest themes and most striking in its uniformity across all TCs’ responses, especially in Year 4 and Year 5, is the theme of diversity as overemphasized in the program. This finding comes as unusual because data reveal a general positivity toward diversity and a call to respect and recognize diversity in all TCs’ interviews, as well as in the questionnaires. Teacher candidates tend to use terms like “re-hashed”, “boring”, “tiresome” to describe diversity. The teacher candidates name a few reasons for finding diversity “too much”. First, in many TCs’ views, the teacher education program is a degree program that needs to focus more explicitly on teaching rather than on any other aspects. Second, TCs suggest that too many classes in the teacher education program focus on diversity. Finally, the belief that diversity is a “usual thing” in Canada was expressed frequently. In what follows, I provide a few representative excerpts from interviews. A teacher candidate in Year 4 states that diversity has been brought up so many times that it became the same for everyone:

… I've been thinking about it again, about my classmates. And I think we are all basically on the same page about diversity, just because it's been like re-hashed so many times. I think the reason that a lot of us feel it's like boring now is because we've internalized. I think it really helped that all this teaching has brought us to the same page about diversity and issues surrounding that. (Leslie Y4)

The re-hashing, in this teacher candidate’s view, brought some benefits to her, such as diversity being “internalized”. However, it seems as though this benefit is overshadowed by the negative tone in the excerpt. In addition to finding diversity ‘boring’, another teacher candidate in Year 4 states that diversity is ‘tiresome’:

Well, as they say, I guess I probably came in [the program] and probably remained fairly sceptical of the ways they always present the notion of diversity. I just find a lot of it to be very tiresome. (Brian Y4)
Brian Y4 further explains the reason he thinks diversity is tiresome, by referring to teaching which he believes should be the focus of the course and program more generally:

But this is not a course about colonialism or a degree I should say about colonialism or race relations or these kinds of things. It's a degree ultimately about teaching and I consider that we've spent far more time on this than we have on teaching. I bet that was what I thought going in the practicum. I was not particularly prepared more than when I signed up for this program in my second year. The assumption seemed to be that you already know how to teach, what we need is to make sure that you aren't racist.

A teacher candidate in Year 5 who was born outside Canada speaks about “getting used” to diversity and diversity becoming “a very usual thing”:

First I would say it’s a bit hard to explain. After coming out of High School I did not feel that diversity is something you need to pay special attention to because I was getting used to it by that time. When I just first came to Canada it was just all super cool, like all those different students and they all have something to share. Then by the time I got to grade 12 it was already a very usual thing. Maybe I was taking it for granted a little bit that everyone has something different to share. I think it’s still important, but I did not have a pre-set opinion about that. I thought that university was going to be the same and thought that Canada is just like that. (Svitlana Y5)

Another teacher candidate in Year 5 speaks how diversity is “just another day another life”:

The university raised it up one more level. Now it’s even more diverse. Now we are not in my little Catholic community. It’s broader now. Being in a big city you can see diversity. It wasn’t a big transition. It wasn’t a big shock for me. It was just another day another life. I would just take it day by day and it was no problem for me. They are exactly the same. My attitude is always open and welcoming, so in terms of what my current program taught me, I found basically the same thing: to learn how to deal with, to learn how to find the way around certain ethnicities, even though I find that it’s not so much of a barrier. Okay, I am white, she is black, she is Asian and we all come from the same religion, but in the end we are all in the same school system, we all learn the same curriculum. I had no problem. I found it’s still the same. (Matteo Y5)

All the statements above imply that diversity has received too much attention at the institutional level and that diversity is the natural order of things, it’s normal, and that there is no need to put so much emphasis on it. These findings “convey the impression that
differences are a natural part of social reality, that differences are common and in some way neutral” (Paine, 1990, p. 8). Yet they also show “an institutionally contextualized, normative discourse of diversity” (Marvasti and McKinney, 2011, p. 637), which the participants implicitly question. The implied questioning becomes clearer when TCs state that they want to know why it is important to include diversity in the teacher education program. A number of teacher candidates emphasized that the program needs to find “a way to make teacher candidates understand how it [diversity] is important”:

I think we need more information about diversity and all these important issues, but in a way that is approachable and not making us just think ‘well now we have our course on teaching equity and stuff’ because I think there is a flat stigma against it. And I think the program needs to work on that by making it more explicit. Somehow finding a way to make teacher candidates understand how it is important. (Minjee Y4)

Minjee Y4 above points to the need to clarify for teacher candidates why diversity matters. Without “more information” presented in a way that goes beyond a simple requirement to take a course, these future teachers may find it “tiresome” as the excerpts above show. Research shows that similar statements come up in many responses of teacher candidates’ enrolled in teacher education programs (Irvine, 2003). Irvine (2003) provides the “words of protestation” from a teacher candidate’s journal in her class related to discussions of diversity in courses, “Race is not an issue until someone brings it up. What difference does it make anyway?” (p. xi/Introduction). Questions like this, I think, demand that the teacher education program provides a clear rational for including diversity in every course, if teacher candidates are to engage in learning about this concept more profoundly.

Diversity as visible and invisible

With respect to teacher candidates’ individual and categorical orientations to difference, a second prominent aspect is difference as visible and invisible. This aspect concerns those responses that describe seeing or not seeing differences based on a number of factors. These factors include: physical appearance and associated stereotypes; beliefs (personal/religious); personal relationships; and mental health. A representative example of physical appearance
and stereotyping is that of Ubah Y3 who describes how she was perceived by both students and the teacher in a classroom setting for adult learners of English as a second language:

Oh, and related to my set of experiences with nationality, when I had gone into the LINK class, they thought I was an ELL student because of my dress and so, I was sitting kind of, with the teacher on the side, and they [students] were like “No, no, no you stay here with us.” And I was like “No, I’m actually the assistant.” And when they heard English, their jaws dropped. Now, not to be racist, but students thought that immigrants of color may not be as educated due to colonialism or whatever. But you know, some people were born here and their English can be good as well. But even the teacher who lived in America, born and raised in America, her ancestry dates back to America, she thought that I couldn’t be Canadian because of the way I dress. So, she thought, “Yeah, you know you were probably raised here, maybe. But you can’t have been born here because of the way you dress. You just can’t be religious that way.” It’s the thought that goes on behind.

Ubah Y3’s example illustrates the connection that the English language learners (ELLs) students felt toward her based on certain unquestioned assumptions that they made of her as the new person in their class: a young female of color in her early twenties, wearing clothing that is usually associated with being a Muslim. Ubah Y3, in the students’ view, met the profile of a newly-arrived person in Canada. When Ubah Y3 spoke, students’ “jaws dropped” because of her fluency in English and non-accented speech. The teacher of the ELL students made the same assumption about Ubah Y3, that is, that she couldn’t have been born in Canada because those born in Canada “cannot be that religious”, as shown by her dress. Ubah Y3 points to the “thought that goes behind”, which are the untested assumptions about a person. These assumptions are made based on what is visible, such as style of dress in this case. Ubah’s audible non-conformity challenged the stereotypical assumptions associated with her dress, as well as the view that immigrants are less educated and/or cannot have a level of English proficiency close to a native English speaker. Research documents that an individual’s class, race and gender shapes his/her beliefs, perspectives, and practices (Weiner, 1993; Sleeter, 2008). Such research though usually focuses on teachers, who tend to be part of the dominant group in a particular immigrant-receiving context like Canada or the US, thus primarily female, white and middle class. Little is known about newcomers’ beliefs and how specifically they relate to diversity aspects such as class, race and gender.
A Year 5 teacher candidate, a white male student with Religious Education as his teachable, describes the “visible” he witnessed in the teaching practicum as follows:

It [practicum] was in a Catholic school. It was actually the first Catholic school I went to. At the other school I went, visibly you could not see any visible minority. In this one actually you did see different religious backgrounds, more particularly the Muslim faith. I guess it was a very high Muslim region there. That was the only interesting thing I saw, but I saw it from that particular conflict I just explained with the hijab. The school is still great. People are very tolerable of one another. Very acceptable, so no issues there. (Matteo Y5)

Matteo Y5 compares his two practicum sites and how he “visibly” could or could not see “visible minority”. The teacher candidate uses the term “visible minority” to refer to “religious backgrounds” and he points to a conflict that arose between a white male student and a woman of color that wore the hijab. (As a comparison, the Employment Equity Act (1995) defines as visible minorities as “persons, other than Aboriginal persons, who are non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour.”)

To Matteo Y5, “there was no issue there” because, as he states in the interview, “we are all equal in front of God”. Although Matteo Y5’s own beliefs and affiliation with a program that puts emphasis on Catholic teachings may explain in part his position on the “no issue” in the hijab incident, he seems to ignore Islamophobia, which Housee (2012) refers to as the “new racism of our time” (p. 106). Islamophobia is a newer term (Conway, 1997), but the “anti-Muslim racism has, however, existed for centuries. It is, as Said (1981) reminds us, based on a very old prejudice. It is a racism that is justified by cultural and religious difference” (Housee, 2012, p. 106). The teacher candidate witnessed a form of hostility and negative stereotyping that is often associated with a dress code ascribed to Islam – a Muslim woman wearing the hijab (Housee, 2012). The TC, however, regarded it as any other incident that may happen in a school, which I find indicates his inability to distinguish between varied manifestations of marginalization and stereotyping in schools.

In contrast to Ubah Y3 and Matteo Y5, Thanh Y5 talks about mental health as an invisible dimension of diversity. This particular aspect of diversity, as she states, shaped her identity:
And then with some of the friends that I have encountered in the last couple of years, I noticed a lot of struggles with mental health, for instance. So that’s something that had a profound impact on me and that also triggered things with me as well. That also shaped my identity and how I view diversity as well. I would say that it is an invisible disability. I talked about mental health. (Thanh Y5)

A number of teacher candidates, when describing what diversity meant to them talked about visibility and invisibility in relation to their friends and how that influenced whether they saw or didn’t see “difference”:

My three best friends are different from me. One is from Pakistan and two are from China and the Philippines. I’m the only white kid in the group, which is odd because I don’t see them necessarily as color. I don’t see them as white, but I see them being my friends from Pakistan. I don’t see them as persons of color. So it’s not a grey area, but it’s not one or the other. I see him as my friend, so there’s no color aspect there. I think also it’s about knowing someone. If I don’t know you, the first thing I’m going look at, is racially, it’s a characteristic of you. It’s a feature, is whether or not you’re from Canada primarily or like if you have heritage roots that come outside like North America. So you can see the difference. If I know you, that feature sort of gets pushed away. If I don’t know you, it’s sort of right out in front, which is okay. It’s just something that I look at. (Alfredo Y3)

Alfredo Y3 to me seems to embrace the idea of color-blindness, similar to findings in Case and Hemmings (2005) who found that preservice teachers did not “see” color when interacting with friends, colleagues and students. Alfredo Y3 does not see color if the person in front of him is someone he knows. However, if the person is unknown to him, he would instantly pay attention to how a person looks and then try and guess the ethnicity or race of that person. As seen from the above quote, Alfredo Y3 conflates race with ethnicity, as well as the visible difference of skin color, which all seem to come under what he calls a “characteristic” or “feature”. This feature ultimately is linked to the idea of “heritage roots”. As conceptions of diversity, all of these seem to lower in status (Hewson, 1992) to the point of “okay”, conditional that a personal relationship exists. The way the teacher candidate describes diversity seems to point out that for this teacher candidate “diversity is not solid or stable, may be temporarily contained, and is prone to leaking and changing shape and consistency” and that “there is apparently something about the way we look that is inextricable from the way we behave” (Lentin & Titley, 2008, pp. 12, 15).
When defining diversity the majority of TCs also tend to state what their own definition is in relation to others’ perceptions of diversity. For example, one teacher candidate states:

The word ‘diversity’, it’s, I think in today’s media, in today’s context, especially in school, it’s kind of used to say ‘everyone except the white people’ or ‘everyone except Canadians’ or ‘everyone except Americans’. But diversity includes a lot of people and if you have for example, in my school where you only have Asians, and of course there are different types of Asians and different types of South Asians, it’s diverse, but only to some extent. Yet, the school was publicized as being a very, very diverse school. In my opinion, it wasn’t. (Ubah Y3)

In her conceptualization, Ubah distinguishes between her own definition of diversity and how others see diversity, by referring to her schooling experience. In the current context, as Ubah Y3 states, the dominant discourse on diversity seems to refer to all “non-Whites “and “non-Canadians” as “diverse”. “Others” think that her school was diverse because of the predominance of Asians and South Asians, but Ubah Y3 does not think her school was diverse namely because only those two racial and ethnic groups were present. I find that Ubah’s reference to media and the way certain schools are portrayed based on racial or ethnic origins, or immigration status, is representing a current popular belief about what diversity means in the Canadian context.

This section showed that teacher candidates talked about visible and invisible diversity based on dress/religious clothing, mental health, knowing the person/friends and religious beliefs. Religious beliefs and knowing a person seem to turn the “visible” into “invisible”. Mental health being “invisible” cannot be detected easily and it is static compared to the other type of visibility that one chooses not to see based on beliefs and group affiliation.

**Diversity as recognizing and respecting difference**

The third major aspect of the categorical and individual orientation (Paine, 1990) of diversity is diversity as response to difference. Diversity in this sense includes the responses where teacher candidates state the meaning of diversity by describing what to do with diversity/what should be done with diversity/what is done with diversity. The majority of the teacher candidates mentioned elements of recognition and respect in their interview.
responses. Many TCs support diversity for the greater benefit of social cohesion or oneness (Mavasti & McKinney, 2011). Diversity as responses to difference include statements that mention terms like “respecting”, “recognizing”, “valuing”, “living or coming together”. Fernanda Y3 states, “It means recognizing and embracing all difference”. Another TC, Seoyun Y4 states, “It’s respecting people’s differences, allowing them to express their own personalities, differences.” Recognition of differences is the focus of these statements.

Other statements reveal that ‘togetherness’ as the response to diversity. Amna Y4 states, “It just means a lot of different people with different races and personalities and abilities coming together”. Another TC, Agnieszka Y4, indicates, “I think of different cultures living together. Different backgrounds, different religions and all these people kind of make things, living and working together”. These statements are reminiscent of multicultural values in Canada that emphasize recognizing and respecting difference (Henry, 2002).

Seeing difference as ‘beauty’ and not deficit is another aspect of respecting diversity that comes up in interviews with teacher candidates. This seems to be a “prerequisite for practicing diversity” (Mavasti & McKinney, 2011), as suggested by the following interview excerpt:

Diversity to me is, it’s about encompassing, not necessarily pointing out differences but looking for the beauty in differences in the different areas in life that you may find. […] I like to think of diversity as being able to acknowledge that there are people who come from different backgrounds who may not look the same as us, but they all contribute and they’re all part of this world. (Erzsebet Y4)

Similarly, Ruth Y5 refers to accommodating diversity in the classroom:

With language, we did a lot of ELL, but one thing that I found interesting was sharing the different languages in the class and accommodating students in the class, not just saying, okay, we are here to learn English so we are going to speak in English. But valuing where they are coming from and valuing their languages as a reference point I think was a big thing for me. And the idea of knowing the native languages of your students and where they are coming from and allowing them to bring that in the classroom. I think that was the positive thing that I took out of it [the course].
To me, there is an implied positivity in the teacher candidates’ responses, as exemplified in the above excerpts. Schoorman and Bogotch (2010), who examined how teachers conceptualized multicultural education, also found that all teachers viewed multicultural education as a positive concept. However, teacher candidates in his study associated this concept with primarily demographic diversity, which is not the case in this study.

In addition to recognizing and respecting diversity, teacher candidates identified ‘integration’ as another response to diversity. For example, François Y3 states that diversity is “the seamless integration of various cultures and orientations (including physical, sexual, racial, etc.) together, where apparent differences do not stand out or are not seen as something out of the ordinary”. Integration, as this quote illustrates, is “seamless” and diversity is not “something out of the ordinary”. François Y3’s response echoes discussions about diversity and multiculturalism in literature, the way multiculturalism actually encourages integration (Kymlicka, 2010). Razack (2002) warns about the tensions that the terms diversity and difference can bring in a multicultural society: a tendency to “manage” (Banks, 1995) diversity by an additive approach, rather than one, which “restructures and defines integrative and inclusive pedagogical practices” (p. 13). Furthermore, “the management paradigm which dominates the debate on diversity, ignores its status and turns diversity into a problem to be managed, … dominated by the majority to such an extent that minority members are not allowed to participate” (Blommaert & Verschueren, 2002, p. 15).

**Summary and discussion**

Diversity as shown by the findings presented in this section is acknowledged and recognized. The notion seems to be “mainstreamed, expected and even taken-for-granted” (Vertovec, 2012, p. 287). Teacher candidates in the study seem to include not only group-based/social aspects/dimensions or attributes of diversity, but also individual characteristics. The type of difference found in their descriptions of diversity could be categorized as either “fixed” (i.e. that are generally unchangeable, such as age, ethnicity, gender, race, physical ability and sexual orientation) or “fluid” (i.e. that can be changed, such as opinions, work experience).
Some teacher candidates seem to focus more on a range of “fixed” dimensions of diversity, others are oriented toward more “fluid” dimensions and there are those who do not distinguish between “fluid” and “fixed” diversity. The breadth of differences that teacher candidates name, I would argue, are present in mission statements, policies and websites of public institutions including universities. These resources all explicitly invoke in their respective terms a range of responses to diversity: value, acknowledge, accommodate, celebrate, appreciate, respect, represent (see University of Toronto, Equity and Diversity Office; The Ontario Human Rights Code). The dimensions of diversity that are present in these resources are many: race, gender, ethnicity, culture, social class, religious beliefs, sexual orientation, mental health, physical ability, marital status. Furthermore, in many media materials the meaning of diversity is a “conceptual chaos” (Lees, 2003), as it does not only refer to people but also to products, lifestyles, services and arts. Such examples come from teacher candidates’ descriptions as well. Most participants, even those who are not certain how to define diversity, express a certain “good” or “positive” purpose associated with it.

The diffused meaning of diversity, I would argue, is driven by certain processes, such as normative discourses, institutional structures, policies and practices. Diversity seems to provide a “normative meta-narrative” (Isar, 2006). I will turn now to examining the findings related to one of the sub-questions in this research, teacher candidates’ learning about diversity in the teacher education program.

**Teaching and learning about diversity in the concurrent teacher education program**

**Introduction**

In the preceding section I presented findings that relate to teacher candidates’ (TCs) conceptions of diversity to answer my research question “How do teacher candidates enrolled in a concurrent teacher education program conceptualize diversity?” I now turn to discussing TCs’ learning about diversity in the Concurrent Teacher Education Program to address two of my other research question: “In teacher candidates’ view, how is their understanding of
diversity affected by the Concurrent Teacher Education Program components?” Findings are organized by themes with illustrative examples from data. As Merriam (1998) posits in regards to case study analysis, “findings can be in the form of organized descriptive accounts, themes or categories that cut across the data, or in the form of models and theories that explain the data. Each of these forms reflects different analytical levels, ranging from dealing with the concrete and simple descriptions to high-level abstractions in theory construction” (p. 178). TCs’ responses reveal a number of common themes related to: (1) content of diversity (i.e. what is taught, what is challenging, what is important, and what is actually learnt); (2) pedagogy (i.e. how the content is taught in the program); and (3) context (i.e. sources, where TCs learn best about diversity). Findings related to TCs’ views of their future teaching are presented under (3) context since they are closely linked to their field experiences.

The teacher candidates across the three years tend to refer to certain “main” diversity content that is taught in the program. While the teacher candidates link the choice of content taught in courses to the make-up of the class, the teacher educators (TEs) in the program state that diversity content depends on the mandate of the course. As one TE states, “I feel that the mandate of the course isn’t necessarily to teach diversity but that it is fundamentally part of everything” (TE). Teacher candidates and teacher educators tend to agree that the experience of the instructor with a certain aspect of diversity also has an impact on the course content. Teacher educators affirm that diversity is not always taught explicitly or that varied social markers do not occupy the status in a course. However, they acknowledge that diversity needs to be included in their teaching because diversity is a vision and mandate of teacher education at OISE.

TCs further state that certain topics covered create tensions and challenges. Content-related challenges vary among teacher candidates, but the most common include limited experienced with certain types of diversity, the number of topics, beliefs and sensitive topics (especially sexuality and faith and religion), as well as content related to future teaching (especially parent reactions to diversity content for a certain grade level). In the most general terms,
teacher educators in the program refer to the same challenges and emphasize the need to go “deeper” when discussing or addressing diversity in courses and program in general. Some TEs and TCs voice the idea that emphasis is put on learning about diversity as opposed to learning about how to teach diverse students. The following statement from a TC exemplifies this notion: “I think that we are taught of the importance of inclusion and teaching diverse learners. However, we are not taught HOW. That is consistently the comment I hear from my peers. We understand that it is important, but without practical ways to apply our knowledge, how can we make a difference?” (TC Y4, online questionnaire, emphasis in original).

Also related to content, the teacher candidates stated that certain dimensions of diversity are important to teachers, but also challenging to understand (particularly ability and disability, special needs). When speaking about the important dimensions of diversity that need to be included in the teacher education program, teacher candidates dispute two dimensions of diversity in particular: Aboriginal ancestry and ability and disability/special needs. The dispute and contradictions arise between opinions around the importance of including them and the “value for the money” (a TC’s words), that is what is more likely to get them a job. Teacher educators tend to agree that faith and religion and sexuality, and Aboriginal ancestry are dimensions of diversity that generate a lot of discussions and in their view are challenging to understand for TCs. The teacher educators explain this challenge largely by referring to TCs’ limited experiences with certain aspects of diversity. Some TEs also state that there is some resistance to certain topics of diversity and explain the resistance as related to TCs’ idealistic stance, in addition to past experiences with diversity. A few TEs affirm that TCs accuse them of racial bias when they bring in controversial issues for discussion. An interesting finding across a number of TEs and TCs is that they feel that there is an “anti-Catholic bias” (a TE’s words) among certain participants in the program, especially in discussions around faith and religion and sexuality.

Another finding related to content refers to what was learnt about diversity in the program. All TCs expressed that they became more aware of diversity while in the teacher education program and that the program put too much emphasis on diversity. The teacher educators
affirm that diversity understandings that TCs acquire in the program are not very deep and that the program is just “planting the seed, which may or may not grow over time” (a TE’s words). TCs tend to talk about “before” and “after” enrolling in the program and although the learning is specific to each TC, a common thread is that learning about diversity “was a quick turnaround” (a TC’s words) for TCs coming from the Greater Toronto Area (GTA). The GTA appears to be the geographical communities where the TCs live or were born in and also it is a geographical location associated with diversity, where individuals “live diversity” and “see diversity” (TCs’ words), as discussed earlier in the chapter.

A number of common themes emerged that relate to pedagogy or how diversity was taught in the program. Teacher candidates name discussions and reflections as the most frequent strategies used to teach about diversity in the teacher education program. Discussions as teaching strategy are talked about in relation to tensions. Reflections are talked about in terms of benefits and overreliance on them as a teaching and assessment tool. Guest speakers appear to be teaching practices that TCs value. Teacher educators (TEs) tend to name varied teaching strategies, including discussions and reflections. Some TEs intentionally create tensions in discussions to get the TCs “out of their comfort zone”. The TEs and program administrators in this study also tend to agree that reflections are important, “I think reflective writing is critical in this program. It’s not something that most candidates really like doing and so it has to very deliberately be built in, a few points throughout the course” (TE). The teacher educators recognize that TCs do not favour reflections because of their quantity, as seen from the previous quote. Some TEs refer to the requirement to upload reflections in an online portfolio (also known as e-portfolio), which in their view may be burdensome or difficult for TCs due to their unfamiliarity with the technology. Some other TEs have adopted strategies to deal with TCs’ non-responsiveness to reflections and in an attempt to make TCs “go deeper”. These include allowing anonymity for submitted work, not assigning marks for reflections, responding to reflections ‘in the moment’ via email or texting. These findings are discussed in what follows with illustrative examples from interviews.
Diversity content in the concurrent teacher education program

Culture or diversity is not just a unit that you just stick into education. It runs throughout your education, throughout your life. (Ubah Y3)

Diversity content taught across the program

Emerging from the questionnaire with teacher candidates and interview responses with all participants (including teacher candidates, teacher educators, and program administrators), is the finding that diversity was addressed in all classes, not only in one course. TCs, however, often identify stand-alone courses that had a specific focus on diversity, such as ‘Equity and Diversity in Education’ and ‘English Language Learners’. Teacher Educators in this study tend to affirm that diversity is a “love and hate affair” (one TE’s words) in the program. On the one hand, there is a big push at the structural and programmatic level to include diversity in the program, an idea that TEs largely agree with, while on the other hand, not every course in the program has a diversity mandate. Thus, it’s not always possible to explicitly include diversity or go in-depth into a certain diversity topic, an idea with which many TEs struggle. This struggle is rather bluntly exemplified in the following excerpt from a teacher educator interview:

Because we’ve had workshops on this and we make it part of our course outline [...]. A teacher sets out their priority. Here’s my issue. So the way you’re asking, equity seems to be an underlying thread of your investigation. So there’s equity infusion. Ready? There’s… Are you ready? There’s technology infusion. There’s the green environment infusion. There’s the Aboriginal infusion. So everybody’s going to say, “Well, they’ve got to learn to be environmentally aware. They’ve got to learn about using technology.” So those are just four that I mentioned. And I’m passionate about [X subject]. [...] I’m just saying the balance. So I want [X subject] infusion. So let’s take those five. How would you balance? Even if you gave them 20% equal value. But what I am aware of is that if teacher A says “I’m passionate about X”, they’re going to get some [X subject] from me. If somebody else is passionate about technology, okay, so I don’t think one program’s going to do that. And if they get the framework. So if you look at the 20%, that’s pretty good. Put that in your thesis, I think it’s pretty good. So if you look at those infusions, obviously your brain work and your bias is social justice, but let’s be aware that there are other [...]. So I get a little bit upset when we keep bringing up something like social justice. I’ll use that as an example, since that’s the topic of conversation. But what about the other
infusions? And it is infusion because you’ve got to learn how to teach math and you got to learn how to ask questions. You got to learn how to talk to parents. And those things are not part of the infusion, but it’s part of being a teacher. I’ll stop being so excited now. I’ll be calm. Does that make sense to you? (TE interview)

The quote above provides a critical stimulus to rethinking implementation strategies for varied infusions, and complements to some extent the idea expressed in the opening quote for this section that initiatives related to social justice need to go beyond the teacher education program. The quote at the beginning of this section also represents an example of a vision of teaching and learning about diversity that seems to filter through responses from all the participants in this study, although TEs in particular voice implementation challenges. The findings in this study showing a high emphasis on diversity in the teacher education program do not fully align with past research that states that diversity in teacher preparation “is not afforded a high priority in many Canadian universities and that where multicultural education is addressed it is often done through isolated course offering” (Lund, 1998, p. 16; see also Mujawamariya & Mahrouse, 2004). A teacher candidate in Year 4 states:

I think [diversity was addressed] really well because not only in the classes that have diversity in the title, like in all the classes we talked about it and it is always touched on. [...] In every class we talk about it. It is integrated. It feels like it’s not just a separation that we are talking about in a class or two classes, it’s in every class. (Agnieszka Y4)

A teacher candidate in Year 5 echoes the idea in the quote above, but also points to the fact that sometimes diversity content may not be taught explicitly, but also implicitly, and one needs to reflect on his/her learning to make that realization:

It was not explicitly said in all the courses, but if you are a reflective teacher, you are going to sit back and say “okay, I see how this is diversity”. You cannot put a big sign “this is diversity right here”, you have to sit back and reflect on it, on what you’ve learnt … because everything you’ve learnt is diversity. You have to make the connections and how it relates and how it affects student learning. (Catarina Y5)

In participants’ responses, the content of diversity taught in class was linked to the make-up of the class and instructor teaching the class. The content is also discussed in terms of what is challenging, what is important and what is learnt. Before I examine in more detail the major
sub-themes, I provide in Table 14 an overview of the dimensions that the teacher candidates’ interviews identified as taught, challenging and important.

**Table 14. Dimension of Diversity: Taught, Found Challenging and Found Important By TCs**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Diversity dimensions</th>
<th>Year 3</th>
<th>Year 4</th>
<th>Year 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Taught</td>
<td>Ability and disability</td>
<td>Ability and disability</td>
<td>Ability and disability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Race</td>
<td>Gender</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Class</td>
<td>Language</td>
<td>Class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sexual orientation</td>
<td></td>
<td>Sexual orientation</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Color</td>
<td></td>
<td>Color</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Faith and religion</td>
<td></td>
<td>Race</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenging</td>
<td>Catholicism and sexual orientation</td>
<td>Diversity a big topic</td>
<td>Catholicism and sexual orientation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Important</td>
<td>Aboriginal ancestry</td>
<td>Aboriginal ancestry</td>
<td>Race, gender, sexuality</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Diversity content that is taught

When speaking about content of diversity that was taught in the program, a few dimensions of diversity appeared more frequently than others. Many teacher candidates tend to name these the “main” dimensions. An illustrative example is that of Thanh Y5 who points to dimensions addressed in the Bachelor of Education portion of the concurrent teacher education program, such as race, ability and disability, sex and gender as being “the main ones”:

In the BEd portion we talk a lot about culture, race, ability and disability to the extent of learning disabilities and special education. Then there is sex and gender. Race, ability and disability, sex and gender come up in class, are the main once. And there is also a course on English language learners. (Thanh Y5)

A number of program administrators and teacher educators indicate that the teacher candidates will come to know more about special education, ability and disability because of the specific focus of some of the courses in the BEd portion of the concurrent program. Decisions regarding what content of diversity is to be taught seems to be linked to perceptions of diversity aspects that the teacher candidates will likely encounter in schools. These aspects include ethnicity, and race and skin color, and special education needs, as well as content that is thought as most relevant for a certain division (i.e. Primary/Junior [elementary school]), as the quote below shows:

Keeping in mind that this is a Primary/Junior program, I think what was left out is what is not particularly important; not nearly as important for P/J teachers to have a really in-depth understanding of gender identity as compared to understanding how to deal with a student who has two fathers, for instance. [...] We focused on things we were likely to encounter a lot more, like ethnicity, and race and skin color, and special education needs. Those definitely got the bulk of attention. I think that was fair because those are most likely to be encountered, to occur. (Dionysus Y5)

For Dionysus Y5 who is going to teach in the Primary/Junior division, learning about gender identity is not as important as learning about family status and how to deal with students who have same sex parents.
Questions of ethnicity, one of the “main” diversity dimensions addressed in courses, often lead to discussions about “What makes a Canadian”, as pointed out by a teacher candidate in Year 3. This topic is frequently talked about in courses and also generates a lot of debate, “Nationality was huge. The whole thing about ‘What makes a Canadian?’ There was an underlying thought that you are a good Canadian or you are Canadian if you were born and raised here and if your ancestry dates back to the […] or were you here, or if you’ve participated in the you know, in the First World War. So, even with this, we had some heated debates in class”. (Ubah Y3)

Agnieszka Y4 recalls that Aboriginal ancestry was talked about in the Bachelor of Education portion of the concurrent teacher education program, in addition to race and color and the notion of “white privilege”:

Aboriginal ancestry, I do remember this, in one of my classes last year, we had a guest speaker come in who was Aboriginal and they talked about issues for Aboriginal students. We also talked about race, color. Something that came up a lot is the issue of white privilege. We talked about that and a lot of questions that we have, so we talked about that explicitly. Like we do the checklist, the white privilege checklist, we talked about that a lot. (Agnieszka Y4)

The TC above refers to Peggy McIntosh’s article *White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Backpack*, which has received attention but is also contested in teacher education debates. The concept of “whiteness” is argued to be an important notion to be discussed in teacher education programs in relation to diversity as it is often from the dominant white group that the diverse other is often portrayed (Lawrence & Tatum, 1998). Another TC in Year 4, Erzsebet, also speaks about Aboriginal ancestry when she states, “I mean in Aboriginal ancestry we took a trip to the First Nation’s House and talked a lot about it.”

*Conceptions of diversity found challenging*

When asked what diversity dimensions they found challenging or difficult to understand, the teacher candidates talked at length about the number of topics to be covered, certain dimensions in particular, and reasons for challenges.
Number of topics. There appear to be two ways teacher candidates speak about the number of topics and knowledge. The first way refers to knowledge more generally speaking and connects to future teaching. The second way refers to knowledge about diversity and learning in the teacher education program. For example, a teacher candidate in Year 4 speaks about all knowledge a teacher is expected to have and the fear of now knowing everything, although her answer also seems to imply knowledge about diversity:

The greatest challenge I would say is the number of topics that you are expected to know and be well versed in by the time you graduate from here. I just found that there’s so much we haven’t learnt about and so much that I want to learn about. But I don’t know what to do. You know when I’m in that classroom, who’s going to help me answer my questions? Because I just can’t assume things. And I know, we’ve always been taught, like if you don’t know the answer, don’t tell someone you know the answer. (Erzsebet Y4)

Contrary to the thread of “all knowledge” and its related “fear of now knowing everything”, Minjee Y4 describes knowledge of diversity or lack thereof and the fear of not offending anyone:

I guess for me it’s such a huge topic and there are so many ways you can offend someone. There is so much to learn that I think that alone is kind of overwhelming for someone to even start to delve into. Your teacher is going to push you back and you’ll say, ‘It’s okay. I’ll learn it later’. And also everything, like even just racist comments and how we think about cultures at some point in history. Just knowing that it all has such deep roots in how things have been formed, especially in Toronto. It is such multicultural. The way everything interacts is so different no matter where you are in different places. I guess it’s like a huge sociological concept that helps society actually come together and how cultures interact and what has created this systemic problem. I think that is hard for me to know and also it’s hard to teach your candidates about that because it is so broad. (Minjee Y4)

The idea of not offending anyone, in the quote above, is also linked to the “deep roots” that “ha[ve] created this systemic problem” in the Toronto context. It is also due to the fact that the topic of diversity is very broad to be covered in a teacher education program, an idea that many Teacher Educators agree with as well.
Another common thread in TCs’ responses that relates to the breadth and complexity of the topic of diversity is not “arriving at an answer” (Agnieszka Y4). Arriving at an answer seems to be linked to how to translate what you learn into something that is “concrete” or “doable”, how to enact it. In addition, as Agnieszka Y4 indicates, “there might not be an answer” or “there might not be a problem” because the issues that are being raised are for the purpose of thinking about them and becoming more aware. This response connects to the notion of ‘normalizing’ diversity, often discussed in research on multiculturalism in Canada (Hendry, 2012), and which in TCs’ responses refers to not seeing diversity as a problem, or seeing diversity as ‘normal’.

Another TC, Seoyun Y4 also sees diversity as a large topic and points to the fact that aspects of it might be handled one at a time and then even though some students might not fully understand certain issues, the class moves on to the next topic. She states, “I feel like the structure they have now is to tackle one issue and move on to the next. And I think that sometimes there are people who still don’t understand certain concepts or they really can’t find themselves agreeing with those concepts and we’ve already moved on and we’re on to the next topic”. The ideas expressed in TC’s response raises some broader questions related to pedagogy and learning in the program and also echoes some of teacher educators’ comments presented earlier: the need to go deeper and the question of how to distribute course priorities.

**The most challenging diversity aspect in the classroom**

When discussing challenges associated with learning about diversity, teacher candidates often return to the idea of diversity as “cultural difference” and “not being a problem” because diversity is a “positive characteristic” of Toronto. They contrast these notions with the idea of ability and disability and special needs as “the most challenging [diversity] aspect in the classroom”:

I think, cultural differences are not such a big issue anymore just because people are so accepting to cultural differences nowadays. And many of us, almost all of us say that multiculturalism is a big part of Toronto and it’s a positive aspect, positive
characteristic of the city. So I think it’s not causing so much of a trouble nowadays even though some might argue that there is still some racism going on, which I totally agree. I guess in the classroom, people aren’t really racist to one another, so I think it’s not such a big deal anymore. But I think more about abilities and disabilities […] I feel like that’s the most challenging aspect in the classroom. And because it plays so much impact on how kids learn, how they perform in school […] And learning something is, I guess, the biggest part of going to school. So I think that’s the biggest area (Seoyun Y4).

Seoyun Y4 above makes a distinction between diversity in everyday life and diversity in the classroom context. Another teacher candidate, Alfredo Y3 also speaks about ability in the classroom context, but he speaks of ability in terms of “intellectual ability” and how certain students may not want to delve into their own intellectual capabilities. Alfredo Y3 does not only point to difficulties of dealing with students of different abilities, but also differentiating between a student who does need extra help and a student who just “doesn’t want to work hard”. This TC’s deliberations seem to echo Valencia’s (2009) definition of deficit thinking:

The deficit thinking model, at its core, is an endogenous theory - positing that the student who fails in school does so because of his/her internal deficits or deficiencies. Such defects manifest, deficit thinkers allege, in limited intellectual abilities, linguistic shortcomings, lack of motivation to learn, and immoral behaviour. [It] is a relatively simple and efficient form of attributing the “cause” of human behaviour [emphasis in original] (p. 10-11).

Another participant, Dionysus Y5 details his struggle of teachings “students who are LD”:

I sometimes still struggle with helping students who are LD because. One way to explain it that you grew up in school and you are taught one way to do math, you are shown how to do a long division in a very particular way and while we were learning math we found that there are two other ways to teach a long division. But I cannot remember because that was not how I was taught. So when I am teaching a student with LD, I only know this one way of showing it, and although I can take out the manipulatives and the calculator and show them as best as I can. If they are not getting it, it sort of […] I am not sure if they need more repetition to grasp the concept or if it’s making me too overbearing. Or if I need to explain it in another way. That’s something I struggle with personally. It is the LD students. (Dionysus Y5)

As seen from the above, Dionysus Y5 would rely on the “how I was taught”, apprenticeship of observation, in his teaching of LD students. The TC’s deliberation echoes past research
that also found that math teacher candidates “believed that the classroom formats they had encountered as math students were somehow inherently connected to the nature of math as a discipline” (Holt-Reynolds, 1992, p. 335). Although Dionysus Y5 is dealing with what he calls “an LD student”, his beliefs about subject-matter specific pedagogy (Shulman, 1987) seem to thwart alternative steps or strategies. Nonetheless, in the excerpt above it is evident that the TC is thinking about alternative ways of teaching. Faith and religion and sexuality are among the diversity dimension that TCs name as most challenging as well. These are analysed in what follows as they also fall under descriptions of reasons for finding diversity content challenging.

**Reasons for challenges**

Emerging from the teacher candidates’ responses that relate to challenges in learning about diversity are the reasons for these challenges. The most common reason is not having or having limited experience with a diversity dimension, a finding also present in teacher educators’ responses in this study. Aboriginal ancestry is a dimension of diversity that is the most frequently named as challenging to relate to and to understand:

Every time the Aboriginal ancestry came up it was really hard for me to understand because I don’t have a personal connection with Aboriginal ancestry. And I think it’s something that targets more, I think it’s a bit Eurocentric background. You are looking at when Europeans came to Canada, colonized and put Aboriginal people in residential schools. I think that that is a Eurocentric way of looking at it because my family was not here at the time. I don’t have a personal connection to it. I don’t have a European background. If you want to look at it in terms of colonization, then I can counter-relate to that because in Vietnam. The French colonized Vietnam. That had an impact on my family. But that’s hard for me to grasp because there are a lot of creeds within the Aboriginal. I don’t know a lot about that culture. It’s hard for me to understand and really appreciate it. It’s one thing to talk about it and then it’s another thing to be involved and to experience. That one is really hard for me to understand. Ability and disability was hard for me to understand initially before I went through it. And then Faith and religion - that one is definitely hard to understand. I am supposed to be Buddhist, but I don’t go to the temple every week, I don’t go to church. (Thanh Y5)
Thanh Y5 emphasizes the fact that she needs to have a personal connection to a diversity concept in order to understand it. In addition to Aboriginal ancestry she refers to ability and disability that she initially was not able to grasp and that she then came to understand because she “went through it”. Thanh Y5 also mentions faith and religion and because she does not “go to church every week” she cannot relate to this aspect of diversity.

**Separating one’s own beliefs from teaching and learning**

Another emergent thread for reasons for challenges is separating one’s own views, beliefs and opinions of diversity from learning about diversity and teaching about diversity. Francois Y3 points to the difficulties associated with accepting others’ opinions. He states, “The greatest challenge is accepting that other people are entitled to their opinions, whether I agree with them or not. That is part of diversity: the diversity of opinion and thoughts. However, especially when those opinions seem counter-productive to the acceptance of diversity, it’s hard to accept”.

**Beliefs and teaching about diversity.** Ruth Y5 also speaks about opinions, but focuses more on how to reconcile personal views of certain aspects of diversity and teaching about diversity:

> People may have held strong opinions about things that we may have been taught about, things that deal with religion, gender issues and racial issues. Some people may have felt a lot of conflict with it. For some people it was problematic to accept them as is, the differences and to pull themselves out of their personal opinions. And to push away from their personal opinions in order to be able to teach about diversity. If someone had a strong opinion or view about something, they had the right to have that view, but at the same time you cannot impose that view. And that’s one thing that we talked a lot about – how to teach something that you don’t necessarily agree with. (Ruth Y5)

Ruth Y5 raises an important question of having the right to an opinion or view and separating oneself from that opinion in order to be able to teach about it. At the same time balancing your views in such a way as not to impose them while teaching remains an issue. Another teacher candidate from Year 5, Pascal Y5, also speaks about how to balance one’s own
beliefs and teaching controversial subjects without accommodating too much or trying to instil own views. Pascal notes that this is especially important when teaching dimensions such as gender and sexuality in the Catholic school system. As he suggests, “We want to be accommodating, but not too accommodating. Obviously take your Catholic stance into it as well and try to, I wouldn’t say try and convert them, but try and get your point of view out there and try and make them understand as well where you are coming from. That’s what I got from my program”. Pascal Y5’s remarks resonate with another TC’s statements about not “converting”, not “trying to instil” certain views related to sexuality on elementary students when teaching them about this diversity dimension:

Gender was in the matter whether an individual is questioning their sexuality. And questioning whether they are male or female. Where it got really hostile was when we basically, we were doing a case study where a four-year old who was a male and he started questioning whether he was a female or not because he liked to play with dolls and the whole discussion was on whether […] the parents were to treat this boy like a girl now. Almost to a point where they were to do a sexual operation procedure. They were going to that extent. And obviously our view and even some non-Catholic views were, “okay four-year old is a very tender age. Let them grow in their sexuality. Their minds are at a fragile stage”. That was one opinion and the other opinion, the other side of class was like, “if they feel like this they should do it”. That was where gender came in and where a lot of clashes started to happen. It was interesting on my part to take those different points of view out there. (Matteo Y5)

Both TCs above are trying to negotiate between their faith and teaching about gender and sexuality. Their teacher identity seems to pose certain demands on how they need to approach certain “touchy subjects”. As Yongfei Y3 another teacher candidate puts it, “I think the real barrier was when it got to touchy topics like race and ethnicity, or religion. That was a big part too. That I found as a barrier. When people are emotionally attached to something, people cannot go as far as explaining because it might hurt someone else”. Race, ethnicity and religion seem to be talked about frequently in courses, but they still hold a lot of sensitivity, as per Yongfei Y3.

Beliefs and learning about diversity. Compared to beliefs and opinions related to future teaching, a second thread of beliefs relates to learning in the teacher education program.
Pascal Y5 describes his experiences in a mixed class of students and discussions around the same aspects of diversity: faith and religion and sexuality. On the one hand there was a group of students who were studying to become Religion teachers and who also had strong religious beliefs and backgrounds. On the other hand there were students who had majors other than Religion:

What I found was more challenging to get around in the Religion program was that we were slandered a lot I would say by other cohort groups because there were a couple of classes that we had to share with them. We discussed about sexual orientation, gender and even marital status. And it got to the point where I had to almost walk on eggshells because obviously we are Catholic teachers; we are representing the Catholic Church. Those who are not of Catholic faith, their opinions were I guess a bit harsh towards us. Very, very harsh. Everyone looked upon us as being almost homophobic or not accepting everyone else’s gender, and we had these strict set of rules and we had to abide by them no matter what. And for me that was the only downfall, they did not really understand the Catholic faith. If we are talking about diversity, then let’s get to know this thing. If you are accepting all these different ways of learning, then you should also be accepting the ways of learning of the Catholic faith. If we talk about diversity in that sense, it was a challenge for me on that part because where does the Catholic Church stand on all these issues. And it was a challenge for them to understand and to be acceptable of that opinion we have. I would say that was the only challenge that I had. (Pascal Y5)

From the excerpt above it is clear that there was a tension in the class discussions and that Pascal Y5 in particular felt that there was a misunderstanding and disrespect of the Catholic faith on behalf of teacher candidates who did not subscribe to the Catholic teachings.

Findings related to mixing students from different program units in the Concurrent Teacher Education Program show that the content in the program is not only dense, but also that different program’s focuses also lead to tensions. A teacher educator in the program also speaks about a perception that teacher candidates bring to courses that address diversity, and namely about how certain teacher educators have their “own agenda”:

From my experience, it’s been extremely challenging, changing that mindset and bringing my students to understand that in order for all students to succeed these are some things that you need to do. And it’s very challenging because it’s asking them to disturb what they know. And the other thing that I want to make quite clear is that because my racial identity indicates a black woman, I find my experience of doing
that work it’s been extremely excruciating. You get a lot of pushback that white men
do not get. Because I think as a black person when you come to this work and doing
this kind of work, teacher candidates think it’s your story. They think you have an
agenda. (TE)

The TE above also notes that her racial identity might have had an influence on how students
reacted to the discussion topics that she brought to the class and that was a challenge in her
teaching.

Conceptions of diversity found important

When responding to the question about important diversity dimensions to the included in the
teacher education program, teacher candidates’ answers included a broad spectrum of
dimensions, with discussions around ability and disability, special needs and Aboriginal
ancestry being the most prevalent. The dimensions that some TCs think are important are
linked to their personal interest, their teachable or program of study, and perceptions of what
a teacher is expected to answer to the question of ‘importance’, as exemplified by the
interview excerpt that follows:

I think we take the family status for granted. I guess because I have my own bias for
that one. We always talk about networking and opportunities. I don’t think that
people really understand the role of that. For instance I don’t have family members
who are professionals, family members who got Master’s degrees. I cannot go to a
family member and ask, “How did you get into that Master’s program?” It’s a little
bit more work from me to make that network. I cannot go to a family friend who is in
business and ask “how do I get my foot in the door?” It’s a little more of a struggle
for me. That’s why I think family status should be included a bit more. (Thanh Y5)

While Thanh Y5 speaks about “family status” in terms of the social capital with networking,
mentoring and advice and what she perceives as lack of support from her own family,
Dabrowka Y5 speaks about the importance of getting to learn more about religion since she
has a science background and does not know much about how to talk about Religion in
Science courses. Dabrowka states,

I am from a science background, and in religion class from high school we mostly
talked about our culture and I did not take any religious courses in university. So I
don’t know much about it, as I mentioned earlier. So some things that I have
difficulty understanding are what different belief systems are and how to be neutral when discussing religion in a class that has many types of religions. (Dabrowka Y5)

Dabrowka Y5 does not only want to learn more about religion, but she also wants to learn how to be neutral when teaching about different religions. Catarina Y5 also speaks about religion as being important to be studied, but links her rationale to her program of study, Christianity and Religion. She reflects, “In particular for my cohort, faith and religion is important. But in general for the program, I think they are all very important. I think disability, faith and religion for everyone too, because I think a lot of people are ignorant in the sense that they don’t know”.

A teacher candidate in Year 5, Dorothy Y5 talks about what she perceives as “expected” of teacher candidates when they are asked about what aspects of diversity are important. She also points to dimensions that she thinks are addressed because of the “program” and “society” putting emphasis on them (e.g., ethnicity, disability versus ability, places of origin and religion and faith, and sexual orientation):

I guess that the answer that everyone wants to hear is that they [diversity dimensions] are equally important. But I think that in the program the way it is, and in society I think that more importance is placed on some of these, such as ethnicity, disability versus ability, places of origin and religion and faith are the big ones. And sexual orientation, that’s really big in teacher education and school right now. I just find it interesting that those ones seem to float to the surface more so that the other ones. I know part of it has to do with the public reaction to what goes on in the school. If a kid is going to be bullied, a lot of the time it’s going to come down to those factors. But I mean, they should have equal importance, but for some reason they don’t and I am not sure why…. At least not out in the field from what I’ve experienced. I don’t think they all have the same wait. (Dorothy Y5)

As seen from the above excerpt, the teacher candidate seems to believe that as a teacher she is expected to say that all aspects of diversity are equally important to study or know about. However, as per this TC, only certain aspects of diversity are addressed more consistently in the program. Although she provides some reasons for it, such as what it happening in a school at a given time (e.g., someone being bullied), the TC is still unsure of the roots of such emphasis.
**Competing dimensions: ability and disability, special needs and Aboriginal ancestry.** An emerging finding across all the teacher candidate participants is the perceived importance of studying ability and disability, and special needs and Aboriginal ancestry. A striking thread related to these dimensions is the debate around what’s important versus what “will get you the job” (one TC’s words), as it will be seen from the interviews excerpts presented below. A white female teacher candidate in Year 3 believes that Aboriginal ancestry is “part of our legacies” and as Canadians we need to learn more about, although this may not be “comfortable”:

> If I would have a little something to spend more time on, I will definitely say Aboriginal Ancestry, that’s really important. It feels to me that as a Canadian, that is something that is really swept away under the rug and we couldn’t go around and tell anybody else how they are, you know, abusing human rights and meanwhile this is really part of our legacies as well and it’s not comfortable. So I think it is very important thing as a Canadian to look at. (Fernanda Y3)

The TC above emphasizes the human rights aspect in relation to Aboriginal ancestry, thus pointing to the more general rights-based discourses around diversity in Canada (Henry, 2012). In addition to learning about “Aboriginal ancestry”, a TC in Year 5 states that it is equality important to lean about “what it is to be an Aboriginal today”:

> If I were to add or change the list at all, I would maybe elaborate more of the Aboriginal ancestry and not just focus solely on ancestry I think. Focus maybe on what it is to be an Aboriginal today, what it is to be an Aboriginal child today, living in this society. (Ruth Y5)

Ruth Y5 wants to know more about the present situation of Aboriginal people, as related to prospective students. Pascal Y5, another TC, speaks about the curriculum and how different perspectives need to be included, including Aboriginal people and new immigrants. Some TCs point to the need to look at how the curriculum is viewed from perspectives other than the “African American or Canadian/British perspectives” (Leslie Y4). Seoyun Y4, contrary to Leslie Y4 speaks about how the teacher education program already puts emphasis on the dimensions of diversity that are important, such as ability and disability, culture, background
and Aboriginal ancestry. She, however, does not see Aboriginal ancestry as important to be studied because “I don’t see that causing a big problem in our classrooms anymore”:

Well, the ones that I think are important are already getting enough attention, I think. So ability and disability is a big one. Culture, background is a big one, I guess. I think there is a heavy emphasis on Aboriginal ancestry, but I don’t really know. I might just not have enough field experience, but I don’t really see that causing a big problem in our classrooms anymore. Like, of course, it’s important to respect the Aboriginals. But when seeing the students, I don’t really see them disrespecting Aboriginals. So I don’t really think it’s such a big problem nowadays. Not saying that it’s not important but, I feel like it’s not an issue anymore. (Seoyun Y4)

In the case of Seoyun Y4, her implied questions of why it is important to study diversity or certain diversity conceptions at a given time could have been answered if the reasons for such changes would have been made clearer in courses and program (e.g., the increase in the numbers of Aboriginal students in Canada; the mandate of the program; the policies and incentives coming from the regulatory bodies for the teaching professions, to name a few). Another TC, Svitlana Y5 focuses on ability with emphasis on “intellectual diversity” as an “internal diversity” as opposed to “external diversities” such as Aboriginal ancestry. This TC argues that “intellectual ability” supersedes all other dimensions of diversity. Svitlana Y5’s statements above are reminiscent of Gardner’s (1999) theories of multiple intelligences. All diversity dimensions, in her view, need to be looked at from an “intellectual diversity” starting point.

Poonam Y5 indicates that although special education is studied by many just because it “might get you the job”, the reason should be more about being passionate about and wanting to do more for the students:

Anything that has to do with special education is something that’s personally I am passionate about. I would like to see more of that put into the program. That would be beneficial. A lot of people say that they’d like to go into special education because that’ll get them a job, but I think people need to be passionate about education and special education specifically, if that’s the root you want to go into. It should not be just the way to get the money and get the job, but one of the dimensions that are involved with special needs students and how can we incorporate that in the class without singling out anybody. (Poonam Y5)
What Poonam Y5 seems to imply in this quote, and to which I will return in the discussion chapter, is the emphasis put on special education in the program. The reasons for studying special education, as Poonam Y5 argues, need to go beyond mercantilist expectations. Poonam Y5’s perception of reasons some TCs choose to study ability and disability resonates with findings in a study by Johnson, Carson, Richardson, Donald, Plews, and Kim (2009). Johnson et al. (2009) examined the reasons teacher candidates participated in the Diversity Institute initiatives at the University of Calgary, Canada. The researchers report that some TCs pursued the initiatives because their perception of it “looking good on the resume” and that “such attitude was perceived as a social and professional expectation that they [TCs] felt was impressed on them by institutional and career expectations” (p. 8).

Changes in teacher candidates’ conceptions of diversity

When asked how the program influenced their understanding of diversity, the teacher candidate participants across Year 3, 4, and 5 generally affirmed that they became more aware, more accepting, or have broadened their understandings of diversity. When describing changes, TCs spoke about “before” and “after” program changes, with reference to specific changes in understandings of diversity. A number of TCs, however, voiced uncertainty about their diversity learning in the program. Others appeared to still question what diversity was, describing their learning in terms of “what is expected to be learnt” or stating a need to go deeper in diversity teaching and learning. These are discussed in what follows with illustrative examples.

More aware, more accepting, broader understandings

More than half of teacher candidates in this study state that their understanding of diversity, as a result of the teacher education program, became broader, that they became more aware or more accepting of diversity. Fernanda Y3 points to some aspects of diversity that she “overlooked” before entering the program and to a particular course that helped her deepen her understanding in that area:
Courses that focused on diversity, they deepened my appreciation for barriers that other people might experience. I’ve had always consider myself actually quite compassionate and conscientious, but there’s definitely, there are definitely aspects that I overlooked. It became much more ample, and much broader [...] and this assumption that race really exists, you know. I’ve never questioned that word before until the program, until realizing that we use this word like it’s something real when it’s not even real, you know. It’s like a unicorn, not as nice, you know it’s not even real, that’s huge to me. The racism exists, yes. That people are racialized? Yes, that race exists. How did I overlook that for so long, you know? (Fernanda Y3)

Fernanda Y3’s conception of diversity seems to have become broader and race is at the centre of her understanding. This TC along with many other TCs in the program, assert a certain level of expertise about diversity before joining the program, which is similar to findings in Johnson et al. (2009) who investigated TC’s participation in activities by the Diversity Institute at the University of Calgary. Seoyun Y4 states that she’s grown to be more accepting of differences, but an interesting factor in her realization seems to be program’s emphasis on diversity:

I think I’ve grown to be more accepting to those differences. And I’ve learned the importance of accepting those differences because before coming to university, I didn’t really pay a lot of attention to people’s differences. Not that I didn’t respect them, but I just never thought it was such a big deal until I came here and I took courses and realized that if the university is spending this much time and money on creating such courses and spending their own time to teach us those values, I started to assume, like, I guess it’s important, that’s why they’re spending that much time and money to plant those values in us. (Seoyun Y4)

Seoyun Y4 above recognizes the importance of diversity, but the reasons she gives for the recognition are primarily linked to the “time and money” that is spent to create opportunities for teacher candidates to learn and “to teach us those values”, and she appears to trust the decisions made by the program. Thanh Y5 states that she learned to appreciate diversity more, but that her learning still continues. She adds that she thinks about other dimensions of diversity beside skin color and race, the two dimensions that would come to her mind when diversity was mentioned before enrolling into the teacher education program. Catarina Y5 states that she became more open and that before enrolling in university many students live in a “bubble, unless you are in downtown Toronto”: 
I think that I am more open. I am more aware. When you are in your first year in university, you don’t know much, because coming out of high schools, which is a ‘one kind’ of high school. Maybe you a minority, maybe you are a majority. But in high school you are in a bubble, unless you are in downtown Toronto. But even there you are kind of in a bubble. When you come out of the bubble and you experience it, that’s when you start to see the world. I think for me, that’s what happened. You come to the university, you meet and interact with people who are not like you but they have their own experiences. You have to learn from them. I am definitely more open to dialoguing and experiencing. Absolutely. (Catarina Y5)

The university environment does not only provide a venue to learn in classrooms, but also outside them through interactions with peers. Poonam Y5 also talks about becoming more aware, thinking more critically:

I think that since being in the concurrent program I became more aware of it. I’ve been used to one type of people, but the concurrent program allowed me to critically think about it because we would have to do placements where you would observe how equity and diversity takes place in the classroom. I was able to observe how teachers react or accommodate students with diversity and how that’s brought into the classroom. That’s the biggest piece, just being able to critically look at diversity as something that isn’t just there, because that is what it was before, just a matter of fact, but now I think what components of diversity make up a community. I can stand back and really take that in. (Poonam Y5)

Poonam Y5 further states how the program was more beneficial for students who were coming from non-diverse places, but that those students still have to learn more:

I think it was addressed well for students who I observed came from a background that was not diverse. The program was very challenging for them. We could see them not being able to understand equity and diversity, or they understood but could not implement it because they did not have the background of it because maybe they came from another country or outside Toronto where there was not so much diversity. So that was challenging for them. I don’t know how the program could help those students. For the most part most of us who are here are from the Greater Toronto Area. It was easy for us to understand diversity. Again, going back into the school where most of us came from, it was a quick turnaround.

For Poonam Y5 learning about diversity was a “quick turnaround” because of the prior experiences of living in diverse neighbourhoods or Greater Toronto Area (GTA). This “GTA” idea is also present in questionnaire responses:
The greatest challenge was first understanding where I belong in the concept of diversity. I am half Asian, and I found it hard to understand where I fit in the mould when my teachers made "diversity" seem so black and white. I also found it a challenge, because my classmates always rolled their eyes and felt annoyed when we talked about diversity. Many of them grew up in Ontario, where I believe there is more awareness of cultural differences. At least in my experience, I grew up in a very homogenous, middle class environment in Calgary. There are more opportunities to be exposed to multiculturalism in Toronto, in my opinion. (TC Y4, online questionnaire)

Ruth Y5 states that she did not realize how diversity connected to herself before the concurrent teacher education program:

What really changed for me, I was always open to diversity, and I thought that that’s what it was and everything was good and peaceful and we all live together and we all have problems with diversity issues, but those problems I did not see how they connected to me to some extent. I thought that they were so minuscule. It was like bullying in the schoolyard based on a diversity issues. I guess what I learnt in the program was that a lot of diversity issues are systematic. And they are bigger than that and broader than that. I did not realize that sort of situation. And how it is that our systems either work towards diversity or unintentionally work against it. I think that that was what the program helped me learn.

The TC above notes how her conception of diversity, as a result of the program, changed to include broader system issues and that she came to understand that issues are broader than she thought before. Ruth Y5 shows a contextual difference orientation to diversity (Paine, 1990) since she connects her diversity conceptions to social situations or the larger, dynamic context.

Specific changes

Some teacher candidates referred to specific learnings about diversity or what exactly changed in their understanding of this concept. Ubah Y3 speaks about diversity in age and learning skills, “Prior to the program, I didn’t really pay attention to the diversity in age and the diversity of learning skills. But being in the teacher education program now, I understand a whole plethora of diverse learning skills”. Choo Y5 states that “I thought diversity was looking at race, color and culture, ethnicity, language” but then she expresses how she learnt
more about disabilities and skills, age, gender, sexual orientation and even family status. Another TC, Dionysus Y5 speaks about special education needs and individual learning needs as changes in diversity understandings. Hendrika Y3 learnt about learning styles in addition to ethnic backgrounds that she knew before:

I think I knew what diversity was in terms of ethnic backgrounds, but I think what I gained from the program was learning about diversity in learning styles. I had spent a lot of time with kids before in Grade 11 and Grade 12 so I knew of, I feel like I know a lot about teaching, but just in learning how boys learn differently from girls or how a kid with ADHD will learn differently than a kid with autism. So learning that type of diversity I think is something I’ve learned a lot through the program.

As seen from the above excerpts, teacher candidates came into the Concurrent Teacher Education Program with understandings of race, color, culture, ethnicity, and language. These dimensions of diversity have also been reported in literature as traditionally associated with diversity (Sleeter, 2001). Since in or after the program, diversity for them also means age, learning styles/skills, disabilities, special needs, gender, sexual orientation, and family status, which show that TCs’ conceptions of diversity expanded to include more dimensions.

Still questioning

A number of TCs are still questioning what diversity is. They describe their learning in terms of “what is expected to be learnt” or state the need to go deeper or voice uncertainty about diversity learning. Dorothy Y5, for example, describes her quest for answers, what is appropriate and what is not appropriate to bring up in class and how to differentiate between academic issues and issues related in some way to a student’s diversity:

It’s interesting, I became more aware since being in the program, however at the same time there is still that apprehension of what’s appropriate and what’s not appropriate. In terms of bringing culture into the classroom as a teacher and also just in social situations. What’s going too far? [...] I am still a bit nervous about knowing my students when going into the classroom and being aware of what might be an academic issue or what just be something that they were taught at home in terms of behaviour, classroom participation and learning. I think I still have that aspect to go in terms of learning. From when I came into the program it’s changed.
Dabrowka Y5 would have liked to go deeper (also expressed by program administrators and teacher educators as well) while learning about diversity and that another “Part II” course about diversity would have allowed for more depth. As she suggests,

As a whole it [diversity] was discussed, but not in depth. I keep saying that. Not in ways that I’d have liked it to be taught. I feel in a class that teaches equity and diversity you have different categories, and you are discussing race and religion and you have sections even under that, we can know what kind of religion this is what kind of beliefs they have. [...] I feel like there should have been another course on this, like Part II. Maybe instead of talking a little bit about everything, have the major categories in the first part of the course like in the 1st semester and then in the second semester. Have more in-depth talk.

The reason the TC thinks one needs to go deeper is because she believe that over time students forget the content that was taught and remember “only certain points about it”, while the “likelihood of remembering at least something over time is higher, just because you have been exposed to it so much more” (Dabrowka Y5). A number of students expressed uncertainty regarding their learning about diversity in the teacher education program.

Dorothy Y5 speaks about the difference between learning from “scratch” and learning as “voicing out” what you already know, and recognizing that reflections helped her clarify and solidify her conceptions of diversity:

I took some courses here as part of my Bachelor of Education, but I am not sure if they taught me anything or if they more so led me to realize things that I already probably knew, but just did not think about before. There were a few assignments, we were to write [...] There is nothing in there that I wrote that I didn’t know, just didn’t voice it before. Doing those types of projects, reflective projects, really helped me clarify and solidify my personal view of diversity. I guess in a way that helps me develop my understanding of diversity, but as I said, I don’t think it taught me anything, but just help define and how I feel about that word and what it means to me.

François Y3 states that the learning in the Concurrent Teacher Education Program showed him how complex diversity is, but that the program is not the only place where he learnt about diversity as he has prior working experience and travelled extensively.
Summary and discussion

The findings presented in this chapter reveal a focus in courses on “single attributes” of diversity or “student characteristics” (Trent, Kea, & Oh, 2008). These findings are opposed to a focus on broader societal issues that relate to power (Grant, Elsbree, Fondrie, 2004) or contextual structures that may impact student diversity and their needs. A questionnaire response of a third-year TC echoes this emphasis, “Stress is put on only some aspects of diversity. To truly understand diversity, one needs to look at all aspects of how people can be different, not just a select few. By stressing only one aspect it almost seems like isolating that one trait as something that makes someone different from the norm rather than focussing on several different traits”. Implied in this TC’s response is the notion of multiple and intersecting diversities and how that affects individuals.

Although the teacher candidate seem to name “main dimensions”, which are commonly reported in research on preparing teachers for diverse students, such as race, ethnicity, language (Grant, Elsbree & Fondrie, 2004), they also demonstrate knowledge of a wider range of dimensions when they describe what it is important versus what is challenging. This is also evident when they refer to specific changes in their understanding of diversity (e.g., gender, age, sexual orientation, faith and religion, Aboriginal ancestry, family status, special education needs and learning skills, etc.).

Ability and disability and special needs seem to be dimensions that permeate the diversity content taught in the concurrent teacher education program. A reason for this finding, as reported by some of the TCs, program administrators, as well as teacher educators, is the focus of specific diversity-related courses. It can be argued that at the macro level the “flush of enthusiasm in the mid-1980s” when the “policy making focused on the ideological themes of inclusive education” (Winzer & Mazurek, 2011, p. 17) are still prevalent in Ontario and guide teacher education programmatic decisions. A surprising finding is that although these dimensions are strongly emphasized in the program, the teacher candidates still seem to find them challenging to understand, due to their practical inexperience and anticipation of
immersing into teaching. Research on inclusion of children with special needs into general classrooms in Canada emphasizes that “as job design shifted to more inclusive classrooms, it enjoined increased responsibilities for teachers and added to the complexity and stress of teaching” (Winzer & Mazurek, 2011, p. 7). Now that I discussed findings related to the content of diversity in the concurrent teacher education program, I will describe the themes related to pedagogy or the way diversity was taught in the program.

Diversity pedagogy in the Concurrent Teacher Education Program

Introduction

When asked to describe how diversity was taught in the teacher education program, the majority of the teacher candidates affirmed that the two most frequent instructional practices were discussions and reflections. Discussions appear to primarily be described as “difficult discussions” and linked to “touchy topics”. Although teacher educators name varied teaching practices, they also name discussions and intentionally tailoring them around sensitive topics. Furthermore, teacher educators as well as program administrators in this study also name course readings as a big part in teaching practices. The sensitive topics reported by the teacher candidate participants vary and appear to be connected to individual experiences in the course/program, open-mindedness, perceptions of what the instructors’ role should be in such discussions, and perceptions around who benefits from discussions. Connected to benefits of discussions is the idea that non-GTA students (that is, those born or who lived outside the Greater Toronto Area) benefit more from discussions because they tend not to be familiar with diversity as compared to GTA students (that is, those born or who lived inside the Greater Toronto Area).

Reflections are another teaching strategy used frequently by TCs. They tend to be perceived as an overused teaching practice by the majority of the teacher candidate participants, as well as teacher educators. Reflections thus, in light of an overreliance on them as a teaching and assessment tool, are further discussed by TCs in terms of their benefits, quantity and quality, as well as teacher educators’ expectations of the teacher candidates’ reflective writing.
In addition to discussions and reflections, the teacher candidates talk about guest speakers as one of the most preferred pedagogical practices in the program. Many teacher educators also report inviting guest speakers for their classes as a “voice from the field”. This finding is similar to a finding in Johnson et al. (2009). Johnson et al. (2009) found that presentations on diversity by representatives of sexual minorities and Aboriginal people were found as most meaningful by TCs enrolled at the University of Calgary, Canada. The participants in this study tend to agree that guest speakers bring in “another voice” or an “expert’s voice” or what Mujawamariya and Mahrouse (2004) call “native informants” (p. 348) in the classroom. Choo Y5 states:

In that course, Equity and Diversity, we had lots of guest speakers; principals and Vice-Principals, people who work in non-profit organizations. They came to speak to us about their experience with diversity: culture, racism, social issue of racism. Their stories are really moving. It does really get to me. It doesn't get to everyone, but it sort of got to me, sort of understand a different point of view about diversity, and also interactions as well. (Choo Y5)

The teacher candidates also value those guest speakers who bring in a non-positive perspective on diversity since, as TCs contend, there is an overly positive spin on diversity in the program. As a result, future teachers may enter their profession thinking that diversity is wonderful and nothing will stay in the way of implementing it in teaching:

For one course my instructor brought in a colleague who was a Music teacher in TDSB and he teaches at a school in Parkdale that has a large population of Roma students. People commonly call them as “gypsies”. He was one of the more interesting presenters that I’ve seen because he showed the non-positive perspective of having a culturally diverse classroom because. [...] He had IB students; he had applied level students, he had these Roma students who were ELD/ELL, like the whole gamut. And he was talking about how stressful it was to be in that situation and how hard it was to develop something that would engage everyone. In his case he came up unsuccessful at the end of the year or he felt unsuccessful as a teacher. In an attempt to engage the Roma students, he is going to lose the attention of the more advanced students. And vice-versa. It was an interesting experience to me, because until that point everybody was treating diversity as the ultimate goal. Very positive thing; nobody really talked about what the downfalls could be. I think it’s kind of a “taboo” topic. People are trying to stay away from it. (Dorothy Y5)
Although schools across Ontario differ in terms of diversity of students, the TC above describes what are in some schools typical diverse classrooms, especially schools in metropolitan areas. Aside from discussions, reflections and guest speakers, the participants name discrete teaching strategies employed by instructors in the program (e.g., student-led presentations, the line game, documentaries), as well as more sophisticated strategies (e.g., observations in schools, case studies, year-long projects on diversity, case studies, journaling through observations in community, reflections and simulations of learning environments and situations with diverse students, panel discussions representing the interests of different learners, and case study tasks). Teacher educators report these discrete and sophisticated teaching practices as well. Furthermore, teacher educators discuss the idea of taking into account TCs’ past experiences in their courses through strategies such as case studies, short surveys or information sheets. Nonetheless, there are also TEs who find it difficult to explicitly bring in TCs’ experiences. One TE states that he brings in TCs’ experiences in his teaching philosophy more generally, but not so much in his course:

I just think in my teaching, but not so much in my course. That is a little contradiction. I just say, “Look at a group of people. See what they’re bringing. See what their cultural needs are. See what all their needs are – their social needs, their academic needs.” So we have to really address those and I think a good educator has to do that with any group of students. But making it part of my course is, as I say, the implicit part of teaching rather than saying, “I’m doing this because you are [a certain diversity or experience type].” (TE)

Data from teacher educator interviews also show that they use ‘current materials’ (such as media articles, documentaries and videos) as well as policy documents in their teaching. Teacher educators tend to emphasize their role as ‘facilitator’ in the classroom and self-directed or student-led discussions. In what follows I describe in more detail findings related to discussions and reflections, as these two teaching strategies were identified by the majority of the TCs as most frequently used in the teacher education program to teach about diversity and diversity related content.
Teaching strategies used by TEs

Two teaching strategies that the majority of teacher candidates in this study identify as used by teacher educators to teach about diversity and diversity related content are discussions and reflections. These are described in what follows by examining two sub-themes: the notion of safe environment and the perception that TCs’ participation in discussions was influenced by past experiences in either diverse or non-diverse communities.

Discussions

When TCs described discussions, they frequently referred to the notion of safe environments as a major condition for them to engage in such discussions. An interesting finding across many TCs is the perception that the geographical location and its associated diverse or non-diverse population had an impact on a teacher candidate’s interest in discussions about diversity. These are findings are described in what follows.

Safe environments

Findings from the teacher candidate interviews and questionnaire, as well as teacher educator interviews, reveal that a prerequisite for meaningful discussions is the presence of a safe environment where students can state their opinions. Such a perspective can be seen from the following quote:

Through discussion I think and openness about not being ashamed to say like, "Oh, I have these feelings about something. I don't know why. And I don't know if it's right or wrong or if there is a right or wrong” and being able to talk about that openly. And like, I guess a friendly environment where everyone is accepting of that. (Pascal Y5)

Unless such an environment is created, the fear of not offending anyone may deter teacher candidates from participating in discussions. Wane (2003) maintains that creating safe spaces is imperative for engaging in dialogue that challenges our opinions, attitudes, values and beliefs. As another TC, Erzsebet Y4, states, “I think everyone is kind of scared of the whole topic of diversity because they don’t want to offend anyone, so I think that limits people in that aspect, in a way”. The teacher candidates appear to affirm that the length of the program
allowed time for students to get to know each other and be conformable to express their ideas on sensitive topics. Gambhir et al., (2008) note that the concurrent teacher education program, because of its length, allows students to engage with concepts early and revisit them as they go through the program. For example, Agnieszka Y4 speaks about being more “honest” in discussions and how “in the first couple of years” in the program that did not happen, especially with regards to the concept of race.

Agnieszka Y4 further gives an example about how the discussion around sensitive topics, such as race and sexual orientation and Catholicism, progressed in what she perceives as a “safe” environment:

Like for example, if we go back to race again. If we are in a GTA area, we are going to have diverse classes in terms of race, but if you go outside of GTA, Ontario, you’ll have some classes which are not really that diverse. So people coming from those types of places will say ‘Honestly, in my high school there were no people from different races’ or ‘you know, we are all pretty much white’ and that’s my experience too. Then you’ll say, if you are in a situation like that then how do you respond to that? You know, how do you tackle race in a situation where there is really no diversity? [...] If we have discussions about sexual orientation, what about if you are teaching in a Catholic school and that’s not really welcome there. So how do you tackle that? So some of those more real tricky issues start coming out, I think.

It can be argued that Agnieszka Y4 in the above quote acknowledges the diversity divide between the GTA and non-GTA and its implications for future classrooms. She discusses the impact of “Whiteness” on discussions around race as well as discussions around sexuality in Catholic schools. Another TC states that discussions around faith and religion and sexual orientation were ‘shocking’ to teacher candidates in the beginning, but as they progressed through the program, the teacher candidates became more open to these discussions:

I think a lot of the debate came with the faith religion and sexual orientation. First everyone was shocked about the discussions that were coming out, but then eventually we got to start listening to what people were saying and that dialogue happened, and we could understand what everyone was saying. I think earlier on in the program, we were a little scared to say our opinions, but eventually when we got to Year 5 it was just an open forum because we knew each other and we were open to discussing. (Catarina Y5)
Contrary to the teacher candidates in Year 4 and Year 5, the teacher candidates in Year 3 seem to reveal that discussions were uncomfortable and that they often required debriefing afterwards, as seen from the illustrative quote that follows:

Culture was explicitly talked about in classes. Well, it was related to the heated debate that we had in the course. One of the comments was “Well, we can’t accommodate everyone, so what’s the point?” type of thing. I was very infuriated by this thinking because it was scary for me because it reminded me of some arguments that were used in France, that are used to keep Muslim girls out of school, specifically Muslim girls. And one of the comments was “Oh so,” – it wasn’t directly said but implicitly said “So you really think that if we should just know different types of food in the cafeteria reflecting the student’s culture, that’s really going to help them?” “What is the point?” type of thing. And one student who normally doesn’t speak out, she’s very quiet, she got so mad and she said, “They don’t make a difference to you, but it makes a difference to me!” And so we were exchanging … like you could see the class kind of pitted into two. We had to have a debriefing session afterwards and the next class. (Ubah Y3)

Accommodation in the quote above was discussed in relation to culture. Culture in its turn, is thought of in terms of religion and gender and the religious clothing that some students may wear. Also, the debate arose around the idea of what constitutes knowledge about a culture, and a question asked was, “Is knowing about the food and including different foods in the cafeteria enough and does that make a difference?” Although this idea did not seem to make sense to many students, “one student who normally doesn’t speak out” did state that this idea mattered to her.

In addition to students getting to know each other over a longer period of time, the teacher candidates tend to also talk about the role of the teacher educators in such discussions. One example is when an instructor removed a certain “offensive” comment from Blackboard, which is an education software used in the course. TCs commented that that was not enough to dissipate the conflict that aroused due to a touchy topic. The implication in this example seems to be that the teacher candidates have certain expectation of teacher educators. More specifically, they expect some direction of “what right and what’s wrong” (Minjee Y4).
**Who is interested in discussions?**

An interesting finding related to discussions is the perception that the geographical location and its associated diverse or non-diverse population have an impact on a teacher candidate’s interest in discussions about diversity. For example, Minjee Y4 states that discussion around diversity were of interest to her as someone who was coming from a small community and was eager to learn as opposed to those students who grew up in urban areas and who didn’t see why diversity matters:

> Some people thought we covered the subject too much. [I know this] based on speaking to other members in my sister program. But either it’s my own biased knowledge that I am interested in this kind of thing or everyone else just feel in their guts ‘it’s already fine, we don’t have to worry about it’, without realizing how big the actual issue is.

Another teacher candidate, Dorothy Y5 also brings up the question of being from the GTA (Greater Toronto Area) or outside the GTA and how those teacher candidates from the GTA would not “see” things the same way compared to classmates from outside this area. She states:

> We had a lot of class discussions and really seemed to rile the class up. It was really bizarre; a lot of the students would get offended by the class conversations. We talked about all kinds of things. I was the kid who would disturb people. I would say things in the class when we were talking about ethnicity, for example, in the classroom and stereotyping and where those stereotypes come from and how they are perpetuated in the classroom. [...] I found a lot of the students who were born and raised in Toronto, would deny those things, they would adamantly deny that that was the case, ‘no that’s not true, students intermingle’. I don’t know if that’s true. I don’t know if I have that opinion because I am an outsider to this city and that I came from something that was so homogenous, so to me it’s clearly evident when I come into this situation as somebody who has not been in such a diverse culture.

Dorothy Y5 further states that some of her friends of Caucasian background “were complaining that they felt they were persecuted because we always talk about the evil white man” in the course of the “really tense class, a sensitive class”. She wonders if the tension was created intentionally by the instructor or happened because of the makeup of the class, and the role of the instructor in those discussions. A few teacher candidates state that the
discussions revealed that many teacher candidates, who thought of themselves as being open-minded, found out through discussions that they in fact were not so open-minded after all:

I found that when it came down to it, they [students] weren't used to having their views challenged and they became quite, a few of them became actually quite hostile. [...] It was not an unpleasant classroom environment and I'm sure he [instructor] would have stepped in, if it would get personal or anything like that. It was interesting to me that I think they define open-minded as having an open-minded position on this issue, and not being actually open-minded and able to listen to something that you wouldn't be used to. (Brian Y4)

TCs’ responses also reveal that diversity of opinion is of importance for them, although this very openness might lead to tensions. One the one hand, the tension arises from the divergence in opinion on what constitutes a certain concept, such as oppression as related to minorities. On the other hand, the tension relates to what happens in the class when difficult subjects are brought up. A few other teacher candidates describe the benefits of the discussions, such as “leaving food for thought” and “reform my own thoughts, values, morals” (Seoyun Y4). In addition to discussions, findings reveal that the majority of TCs tend to comment on the benefits and qualities of reflections.

Reflections

TCs all agree that the reflection was a teaching strategy that was overused in the teacher education program. Many TCs state that there were too many reflections and that they were repetitive. Some other teacher candidates state that although the reflections were many and repetitive, they still enjoyed them because they liked to write more generally. Some sample questions that come up in teacher candidates’ responses are, “How to reflect on something that you cannot relate to?”; “How can teacher educators expect deep thinking on certain aspects of diversity when not all teacher candidates have experiences with those aspects?” Some teacher educators affirm that the age of teacher candidates in the program may stay in the way of a “deeper” reflection. Such conclusions also are present in research that focuses on “young adults” (King, 2004) or undergraduate students (Hattie & Marsh, 1996). Hattie & Marsh (1996) found that undergraduates are more concerned about “acquisition of
knowledge, memorizing, utilization and/or use of knowledge” as opposed to “abstraction of meaning and an interpretative process aimed at understanding reality” (p. 531). A TE’s teaching philosophy has an impact on how TCs perceive certain practices. Indeed, as one TE states, “Teaching is about creating that hook, that mental, that buy in. So if you work towards that, so you can start by thinking about something that troubled you as a student. Something that you’d have liked your teacher to have done differently” (TE).

**Benefits of reflections**

Most of the teacher candidates in Year 3, 4 and 5 seem to question the benefit of the reflective writing. Reflections are viewed as both instructional strategies, assessment tools or writing exercises by TCs. Alfredo Y3, for instance, seems undecided on the benefits of reflections, finding them both “tedious” and “pretty cool”:

> We did a couple reflecting writing pieces, if you do not include the big culminating paper. They’re like one page items and I find it can be very tedious, very boring. Teachers ask me, I am like ok, I'll do it. I don't enjoy it. When I look back and think about what I may have learned from doing the reflective writing, sometimes it was really good and sometimes you just do it because the prof asked you. You're not sure why you’re doing it. You're not sure what benefits are going to come. [...] It still scares me to upload anything to the e-portfolio. [...] I think there’s a reflective writing and the critical writing piece based on your experiences. What does this mean? I think that’s pretty cool. You get to sort of look back and OK, how can I relate to it. (Alfredo Y3)

Alfredo’s Y3 dual reactions to reflections seem to be linked to his disapproval of the teaching method, expressed through “tedious” and “boring” and his interest in the subject of diversity and the linkages he can make with his past experiences.

Seoyun Y4 also finds that reflections are too much, although she also sees the benefit of “why” in them:

> I personally feel it’s too much. We are forced to sort of think back and really think hard why did that happen, why did that student act that way. So it’s good in a way that it forces us to go back and think. But sometimes, I feel like we’re constantly just repeating ourselves saying diversity is important and we need to respect differences. It always comes to the same point. Let’s say if you’re writing ten journals, at the end
of the ten journals, you’re saying the same thing over and over again, just with different scenarios. So I think it’s a little repetitive in a way.

Minjee Y4 gives a glimpse (also coming up in Alfredo Y3’s words above) about why reflective pieces may have been too many; she states that this was because there was a requirement to incorporate them in the e-portfolio. She however, liked this component, “Well, honestly everyone in my program will probably complain about how many reflective writing pieces we had to do with our e-portfolios. In every classes it feels like we had to do a journal log but I actually loved it because I actually got to reflect. Like when we did our field experiences, we had to write a journal about after every experience”. Another TC, Svitlana Y5 sees the reflective writing as a “writing exercise” or an “exercise in discipline” and because it was a repeated exercise, it lost its “meaningfulness”. Brian Y4 also thinks that there is “a bit of overreliance on this particular form of assignment” and that there is an expectation to incorporate too many things into the curriculum and he does not know how that may be possible.

Quality of reflections

In addition to the benefits and numbers of reflections, emerging from the interviews is the theme that relates to their quality. Agnieszka Y4, for example, speaks about “genuine” versus “forced” reflections:

I’ve done a lot of reflective writing. It’s okay, it’s good, it gets you thinking which is good because you are thinking. Well, sometimes you just read whatever you are reading and then move on to the next thing. This reflective writing sort of forces you to think about what you read and how you sort it through your life. Sometimes it feels like it is kind of forced, a lot is forced, but it sort of can take away from the genuine reflection if you just knew you’re writing it to be graded. But at the same time it gives you practice in reflecting [...] A lot of people don’t really love their reflection, with heavy emphasis on them that I am sure you know. (Agnieszka Y4)

Thanh Y5 also speaks about forced reflections as opposed to reflections that are “natural” and “spontaneous”:

If I were to speak on behalf of others, it was a bit too much. I don’t think you can force someone to reflect. I think reflection is something that should be natural and
spontaneous and when you force somebody to do it, I don’t think it has the same value. I think a lot of times we are doing it without realizing it.

Agnieszka Y4 further states that the reason she likes reflections is because they are in her head and no research is required. However, difficulties arise when one does not have the experience with certain aspects of diversity, such as race, because she cannot relate to it in any way. Dionysus Y5 also speaks about difficulties in writing reflections as related to having certain experiences with diversity or not. Also, this teacher candidate points to instructor expectations of TCs when doing the reflections, and how those expectations may not be warranted because not all the TCs have the experiences that the instructor wants them to reflect on (e.g., if you are Jewish, you need to reflect on the discrimination that Jewish people experienced):

I think that sometimes it was more beneficial than others depending upon how it was framed. For instance, when doing reflective writing with the Catholic priest [an instructor], he gave us an assignment to describe how we experienced discrimination in high school or in our lives, and if we hadn’t experienced discrimination, talk about someone we know who has. That assignment brought more issues due to the way he marked them, than due to the actual content. [...] Me, I don’t think I’ve experienced much if any discrimination, being a straight, white male. Most discrimination I might have experienced might have been due to lack of income equality or lack thereof in society, but even then Canada is pretty good for income equality. [...] I know that a friend of mine in the program who is Jewish, she wrote that she did not encounter any discrimination and she wrote about something else. And the professor, the priest, took off marks, gave her a lower mark because she did not write about the discrimination she faced from being Jewish. I know at least two other students who are Chinese received a similar reduction for a similar reason. (Dionysus Y5)

Some Teacher Educators in the program also point to the value of genuine reflections, with the following quote as an illustrative example:

I believe in reflective writing but I believe in genuinely reflective writing and the difficulty that I see sometimes is, by the way this happens to be in my own life. I was asked to do a critical reflection. So I actually did a critical reflection and I got an email the next morning from the person who corrected them, saying that my reflection had been incorrect. So I think when we ask people to reflect and really think critically, we, number one, have to give them a space and then, number two, we have to give them permission and, number three, when we hear what they have to say we have to get it, not to get upset. So especially when you are 20 or 21, you often
don’t have the life experience yet to really reflect. Sometimes I hear my students say ‘Oh, yes this is a good idea. I’ll do this when I start teaching’ and I think ‘Don’t say that, you don’t even know what’s going to be like when you start teaching. You don’t even remember this when you start teaching.’ They seem to sometimes want to say to me the things they think I want to hear, and genuinely I would love to hear them either be critical or say ‘you know I’ve never thought about this before and I’m going to need another 6 months or 6 years or 6 decades to figure it out’. So reflection is a very, very good thing; it’s very, very hard to do and sometimes just by virtue of their youth they don’t have the skills to do it. (TE)

The TE in the quote above brings up the question of TCs’ age and how that may be an impediment in the way they reflect in their writing. This position is similar to King’s (2004) when he speaks about the inability of young adults to reflect at a deeper level.

**Summary and discussion**

Past research on teacher learning in teacher education programs report teaching strategies such as autobiography (Clark & Medina, 2000; Florio-Ruane & deTar, 1995), using a simulation of unequal opportunity (Frykholm, 1997), teaching about White privilege (Lawrence, 1997; Lawrence & Bunche, 1996), and engaging students in debate (Marshall, 1998) when teaching about diversity. Models of pedagogy that emphasize dialogue and debate (Wells, 1999) have been argued to be critical elements in teacher education programs (Mitchell, Hunter, Patel Stevens, Mayer, 2005). Davies (2004) theorises that “Dialogue (the two aspects of speaking and listening) is actually about emergence: the bringing out of new and previously hidden meanings and understanding” (p. 216). Dialogic questioning (Dull & Murrow, 2008) or “interruptive democracy” (Davies, 2004) as seen from the pedagogical approaches described above, is one of the most widely used strategies in the teacher education program. As a TE states, “I believe in the Freirean dialogical approach”. Results also show that teacher educators tend to work on creating spaces where “multiple realities, voices, and discourses conjoin and clash in the process of coming to know” (Britzman, 2003, p. 49). Although teacher candidates tend to speak favourably about such a pedagogical practice, they at times question the role of teacher educators and the role of teacher candidates in these discussions. Certainly “learner autonomy” (Xu, 2013) or “peer-to-peer dialogue about difference and conflict” (Parker, 2013) is welcomed by many TCs. However,
teacher educators are still regarded as one of the main sources of learning and TCs expect TEs to be more involved in the classroom dialogue to facilitate “deeper” learning because “in the program it’s been a lot of emphasis on teachers teaching each other” (TC/Thanh Y5).

As the findings reveal, while some TCs choose to take neutral or moderate positions, others expressed more radical views and opinions in class discussions. A safe environment seems a prerequisite for discussions on controversial topics. Examples that are relevant to TCs’ lives seem to increase their learning opportunities in classroom discussions. The extent to which relevant examples are included depends on the group dynamics, and student and instructor interests. Students who don’t have experiences with diversity seem to fear embarrassment if they ask too many “curious” questions. Other TCs seem to fear embarrassment resulting from voicing unpopular views in classroom discussions.

A number of teacher candidates expressed concerns that if they brought up certain sensitive questions for discussion, such as race, they might be called or perceived as racist. Research shows similar findings, “Many teachers erroneously believe that if they recognize the race of their students or discuss issues of ethnicity in their classrooms, they might be labeled as insensitive or, worse, racist” (Irvine, 2003, Introduction, p. xvii). These findings point to the need for “mutual constructions of new antiracist linguistic norms in classrooms” (Trent, Kea & Oh, 2008, p. 334), and discussions that “promote critical, yet, respectful analysis of White talk” (Case and Hemmings, 2005, p. 624). Although TCs don’t appear to express any dissatisfaction with discussions as a teaching strategy, they do discount the other most frequently used strategy – reflections. TCs’ positive reaction to discussions could be explained by “a change of pace” (Holt-Reynolds, 1992, p. 341) that the touchy subjects bring in, since their responses do not affirm that the use of this teaching format leads to “the active construction of knowledge” (Holt-Reynolds, 1992, p. 342).

One of the reasons for TCs’ reaction to reflections can be argued to be what Holt-Reynolds (1992) calls “differing definitions” of what reflections are and what purpose they serve. Teacher educators in the program seem to rely on research-based definitions of this method
of instruction based on prior research that states that reflection “places an emphasis on learning through questioning and investigation” (Loghran, 2002, p. 34). TCs, on the other hand, feel that these types of assignments need to be modified to “insure their level of interestedness” (Holt Reynolds, 1992, p. 340).

TCs responses also reveal that the teacher education program seems to have made attempts to address some of the major structural and programmatic limitations often identified in literature that discussed teacher education for diversity, that is to “go beyond the typical add-on approaches” (Mujawamariya & Mahrouse, 2004, p. 351). Diversity in the program appears to be integrated throughout the program, not only in one course, although the degree of TCs’ contentment with such approach differs, as seen from discussions above. The purpose of this section was to describe the findings related to the pedagogy, the approaches that teacher educators in the program used to teach about diversity and diversity-related content in the teacher education program. The next section presents findings that related to the context or settings that TCs perceive as most influential on their learning about diversity in the teacher education program, as well as sources of learning in those contexts.

**Context of diversity learning in the Concurrent Teacher Education Program**

*Introduction*

The purpose of this section is to describe findings that relate to settings and settings-related sources for TCs learning in the concurrent teacher education program. Questionnaire and interview data suggest a multitude of sources of and influences on learning for teacher candidates, both inside and outside the teacher education program. When speaking about the teacher education program, the teacher candidates perceive as learning best about diversity in courses that have a placement or internship attached to it and in practicum. The placement or internship component of a course and practicum are discussed by TCs in terms of opportunities to “learn as you go”, to meet a diverse body of students and to interact with others, as well as a chance to demystify stereotypes. A major thread in responses related to practicum is the “type of practicum” which refers to the location/community or type of
school the TCs went to. A number of TCs state that the distance to the field placement site was an issue, although they tend to appreciate the “diverse” in the experience:

Distance […] places were quite far from where I live. I live on my own; I don’t live with my family when I am at school. So the greatest stress on my part is getting there, but I mean I wouldn’t change it because I had a great experience. But I am hoping for my second one that it will be a little bit closer. (Agnieszka Y4)

In addition to field experiences, a number of teacher candidates also speak about diversity-focused courses and how they helped develop understandings of diversity. Agnieszka Y4 speaks about a specific course that focuses on diversity and how each class would be dealing with one aspect of diversity, “I guess through the classes that we do. Because each class has a viewpoint of diversity. I mean we always talked about it. In really all the classes that we do”. Agnieszka Y4 further states how the courses helped her at the discussion level, but the field experiences helped her actually see diversity in practice:

I would say the classes and the field placements equally but in different ways. We talked about issues of diversity a lot in class, a lot. And then when you go into your field placements, you see it happening. It’s more implicitly learning what the situation is in schools today and how issues are dealt with and maybe thinking how you will deal with them differently. So like classes are very explicit but then you also learn just by watching, interacting with kids when you are in placements.

Other major sources of and influences on learning in the teacher education program are the instructors and peers (discussed in the chapter that describes the influences on learning).

Sleeter and Milner (2011) state that a deep description of the kinds of field placements teachers are placed, “the milieu”, could provide a better sense of teacher education program’s contribution and their ability to prepare teachers to succeed in a range of contexts (p. 96). This section thus aims to provide an account of the field placements (stand-alone or attached to courses) that TCs describe as sites where they learn best about diversity.

**Field experiences**

Across all teacher candidates, field experiences (practicum and courses with placement attached) appear to be the sites that the teacher candidates report as helping the most to
develop conceptions of diversity (See Appendix C and F for questions asked of TCs). The field placements are perceived as sites where the implementation of the course material takes place, as one teacher candidate states:

The course gave us an overarching idea of what we are looking for. But again all of that needs to be implemented. So, I felt that it was implemented, was actually going in and doing the placements, which was the most important part. If I went to a school and I knew I was looking for a particular thing, which I would keep a keen eye on that, and that would give me a different gaze. When we had the course Inclusive Education and we were to do ten hours in different areas, we could do a high school placement, a daycare placement. That really gave me the opportunity to look at diversity throughout the entire school experience. They were both important I believe, but the practicum cannot be replaced by anything. You really need to experience it. (Poonam Y5)

Another TC from the third year states that placements allow students to “get your hands in on the subject. It’s fieldwork. It's not just theory. Theory is nice. I mean, it doesn’t do so much” (Alfredo Y3). This finding reflects debates in broader research on teacher education that focuses on connecting university courses and field experiences and issues of learning on the job and/or formal classes (Boyle-Baise & McIntyre, 2008; Zeichner, 2010; Zeichner & Conklin, 2008). The university-field experiences debate is also present in research that explores how teacher education programs can contribute to creating positive change in beliefs, attitudes, and perceptions about culturally diverse others. There are studies that focus specifically on field-based experiences (Conaway et al., 2007; Bell et al, 2007; Causey et al., 2000) and studies that focus on university coursework (Torok & Aguilar, 2000; Brown, 2004; Middleton, 2002). Mixed results are reported in all of this broader and more specifically oriented research, as described in the Literature Review chapter.

Courses that include placements/internship seem to be one of the preferred learning sites for the teacher candidates from all the three years in this study. Across all the teacher candidates, they affirm that the length of the programs allowed for many opportunities to go in the field. As one TC states:

We had a lot of opportunities in the Concurrent Teacher Education Program because it was five years as opposed to one year in the consecutive. The yearly placements do
give you time to find those experiences and really integrate them in your courses.
(Thanh Y5)

Findings in this study can be argued to reveal that length of the concurrent program
(Gambhir et al., 2008) and a “non-hierarchical interplay between academic, practitioner, and
community expertise ... [as a] new epistemology for teacher education... [appears] to have
created expanding learning opportunities for prospective teachers that will better prepare
them to be successful in enacting complex teaching practices” (Zeichner, 2010, p. 89). In
addition to formal practicum, TCs had placements in non-formal environments, such as
community settings. Also, a major thread related to field placements is that being in an
environment foreign to oneself led to better learning about diversity. As Fernanda Y3 states,
“For Equity in Diversity in Education I had to do twenty hours of volunteer work in a
community that was completely foreign to my personal communities, so I did that”. The field
experiences allowed TCs to gain insights and examine many aspects related to diversity and
their future teaching. This is evident in how many TCs tend to compare field experiences
sites in terms of community, student population (such as age or other diversity aspects), and
school resources:

I think it would have to be through my field placement in the Equity and Diversity
course. I went to a daycare on Jane and Finch. I really experienced diversity. It was
funny because the daycare I went to, it was the same daycare run by same sisters in
Maple. In Maple the parents are doing well, mostly white children, you know. You go
to Jane and Finch and the kids are completely different. Different in a sense that
families are struggling, low income. But there, the minority in Maple was the
majority in there. I virtually saw diversity. But through that I saw, they are still kids.
Even though they have different economic situations and other different issues in
their lives, they are still children. That’s what I found in the city. (Catarina Y5)

Notwithstanding the fact that being in different placements was important to better
understand diversity, Catarina Y5 above emphasizes that all students were just ‘kids’,
implying the liberal multicultural notion of ‘sameness’ (Henry, 2012). This demonstrates
how forces beyond the teacher education program influence TCs’ learning about diversity.
TCs also comment on the diversity of teachers in those schools. Their responses reveal,
through what TCs could ‘see’ in their placements, that teachers are not as diverse as students in schools, a finding that resonates with research literature (see Sleeter, 2001):

In my practicum school I will say there was diversity in the staff, but not like in the students at all. In the internship school, same, like mostly white staff but some diversity. I mean, I can only really comment on race because just looking at the staff I don’t really know. The other thing, with other schools where I did my placement for the second and third year, but I don’t really think, the teachers are not as diverse as the students, I would say. Some diversity but not like the case of their teachers. (Agnieszka Y4)

The teacher candidates tend to agree that what made them to learn was the chance to “connect” with places and interact with individuals, the opportunity to work with one particular individual, such as “ELL” or “special needs student”. They also mention that they “went for a particular thing” and they kept their eyes open for that thing. A TC in Year 5 describes how her 20-hour placement helped her:

I would say it was the 20-hour practicum. We were in a placement where we had to work with children with different disabilities. I would say that learning on the job, learning on the job was the most important, because usually the classroom management techniques, the techniques that they tell you about in class, are mostly irrelevant for real-life situations. You still need to learn as you go. I was quite ready to learn as I go. I was quite enthusiastic about my placement. I knew that I would go and I would come out with a great deal of experience and knowledge. And it was like that, so I really appreciated that. […] So I would say that’s where I learnt most about diversity and how to deal with different types of diversity. I had to talk to parents occasionally. Also, during all of my practicum. So I went to quite different schools, an elementary school and then a school with a gifted program, and then my last school was very diverse and they had very strong applied programs. (Svitlana Y5)

The TC above emphasizes the many different sites that she went to, and being able to see and interact with diverse students while learning on the job. She felt these were the most important elements in her experience. Some TCs also comment on the specific focus or vision that the placement school/site has, such as gender or social justice and how that had an influence on what they learnt. As one TC states, “There was a whole week where the school devoted towards what they called “gender week” (Ruth Y5). When describing practicum TCs tend to compare what is happening in the classrooms (e.g., as “this is what diversity is going
to be”) and what is happening in the field (e.g., “unless you experience it or unless you are internally inclined to learn from others then there is not much point” [Svitlana Y5]). Two major threads related to field experiences in the Concurrent Teacher Education Program point to major sources of learning about diversity: field experiences sites and diversities of students in those sites, which are described in more detail in what follows.

**Field experiences sites**

What is evident from findings related to field experiences in the program (i.e., practicum, internships, and placements) is that the diversity of the sites was a major source of learning for the TCs in the concurrent teacher education program. Diversity of sites is described by TCs in terms of: (1) school resources and associated ‘well-off’ status of the school; (2) school focus, such as gender or social justice; (3) international placements; (4) mixed schools—public and Catholic schools; (5) community placements in non-formal settings. These sites allowed TCs to observe many diversity-related aspects of their future teaching, as will be seen from descriptions that I provide. TCs’ descriptions also provide empirical evidence of the changing context of schooling in Canada and associated complexities for teaching and learning about diversity. These are presented through TCs’ voices in what follows.

TCs’ responses reveal that the majority of respondents had them in high schools, as opposed to elementary and middle schools. A finding across all participants is that compared to elementary and middle schools, the high schools tend to be larger in size and house a more diverse student population. Elementary and middle schools tend to be small in size, with a majority of white student populations and extensive resources. While the elementary/middle school might be representative of the community where it is located (smaller size and majority white), the high school may not always be representative of the community. This finding can be argued to relate to the policies around who is able to enrol in which schools in Ontario. In effect, while enrolment in elementary/middle schools is strongly connected to a catchment area, enrolment in high schools is not restrictive to a certain geographic area. An example is the Toronto District School Board’s (2015) “Find your school” tool, which delineates areas geographically. A number of TCs state that they were placed in what they
call a “problem school” with heightened policing and “control” over students or that they noticed student streaming while in practicum. As findings show, the placement sites represent varied settings, from English as a Second Language programs to soup kitchens or women’s shelters. TCs tend to state that they appreciated seeing diversity outside formal school environments. Internships sites include sites inside and outside of Canada, which allows TCs to immerse in unfamiliar setting and share learnings from those experiences with peers in the program. The varied field experiences in formal and non-formal settings are described in what follows with excerpts from interviews.

Wealthy neighbourhood – poor school. Brian Y4 talks about her practicum in a part of the city that is considered “wealthy”. However, its wealth was not reflected in the school facilities, its resources or students attending this school. Furthermore, this school appears to be a high school that attracts students outside its geographical location, which can be argued to be one of the reasons the students were more “diverse” than the community where it was located:

It [practicum school] was in the city. Well, it's sort of wealthier sort of neighbourhood but the school is there. There was never any suggestion this was a wealthy school. It used to be a priest residence. They didn't even have a proper staff room. They had a little bathroom that you could sneak in. I mean they were great kids, but I guess there was some concern, mostly related to students as they say “they came from all over the place”, taking buses and the TTC [public transportation] to get in. So very few of them lived near the school itself. […] I guess you'll see a lot of them single parent families that came out for sure. Again, I can't point to any specific geographical location because there wasn't one for the students. (Brian Y4)

Implied in Brian Y4’s description is that ‘wealthy schools’ are associated with ‘non-problem students’, as he states that students are not representative of the wealthy neighbourhood and they are ‘coming from all over the place’ meant that diversity was increased, including single parent families. This interpretation connects to how other TCs below describe ‘wealthy’ or ‘well-off’ schools.

Well-off schools. Catarina Y5 describes a small school with a majority of white students, “It [practicum] was in a small school. It used to be over 1200 students. Now it’s 800 students.
White majority. Well-off area. Students aren’t really struggling there. Well-off.” A ‘well-off’ school’ thus appears to be small in size, with a majority of white students, located in a well-off area, with student who do well academically. Dionysus Y5 describes a school close to High Park, a community approximately 20 minutes away by subway from the downtown Toronto area, as a “well-off, lots of resources and white” school:

As for the neighbourhood, I would say the neighbourhood is pretty well off. I had about 15 min walk from the subway to the school and most of the houses looked like, there were about half-dozen apartments in the area. Most of them were fully detached houses, not duplexes or anything like that. So I would say that it was a pretty well off community. Demographically - majority white. There were three students who were Chinese in the class that I was in, one that was black, two that were South-East Asian. The rest were white. Fairly homogenous group of kids and school as well. As for school resources, I know that the school had a smart board, and it had a computer lab and it had a library. […] There was never a lack of resources, when I had to make my own. There were always pattern blocks, square tiles, building materials, or what have you. There was never an issue.

Dionysus Y5 continues to emphasize the availability of resources in the ‘well-off school’, the demographics of the school as a white majority with a few representatives of the ‘diverse’ (race and ethnicity), as well as characterizes the community in terms of housing type. Implied in his description is that ‘well-off’ neighbourhoods tend to have fully-detached houses.

A school with a focus on diversity and social justice. Ruth Y5 describes an alternative school with a focus on social justice that helped connect to diversity, “to put herself in other people’s shoes because I don’t have that experience”:

It’s hard to be the dominant race to an extent and it’s definitely difficult to put myself in other people’s shoes because I don’t have that experience. One thing other than my personal experience and reflection, I did a practicum last year. It was an alternative school. One of its main focuses was equity and diversity and social justice that helped me see how we can teach equity and diversity in the classroom from different levels. The focus there was on gender diversity. I think that different experiences have helped me see that there is diversity, that’s not just racial diversity or cultural diversity, or religious diversity but that there is so much more that is touched by everybody. With regards to gender diversity for instance, that experience at that practicum really helped me to realize that there is diversity that’s found in every sort of niche that sort of connects people to some extent.
**International Baccalaureate School.** Thanh Y5 describes a high school in Scarborough where she could witness class, race, ethnicity, culture, as well as students who were getting ready for “medical school”, “did well”, “studied” versus students who were aiming for more applied studies in colleges, students who were “late for class”, “pregnant students,” and “cliques”. She describes the school as so diverse that she calls it “Mercedes Benz versus TTC” in the interview, to highlight the vast socio-economic disparities between the students who could afford to come to school in luxury cars versus those who had to take the public transportation (i.e. operated by the Toronto Transit Commission [TTC], a public transportation agency):

It [practicum] was in my 2nd teachable – social science. A school in Scarborough. It’s supposed to be in more suburban Scarborough, but I still consider Scarborough as part of GTA [Greater Toronto Area]. It was very diverse because it was in Scarborough; it was in the suburbs, not in the forest, but it was a nice area. We had students who were dropped off in Mercedes Benz and then students who got on the bus to get there. A lot of diversity in terms of class, even in terms of race and culture. This school was an International Baccalaureate School. You have students predominantly form Indian or Sri Lankan backgrounds. Culturally diverse. I taught “Challenge and Change”, so it’s an open course. It was really interesting to see students who are university-bound and then we had students who consistently did well and studied. Students who were aiming for Med school. Students who were late for class. I had a student who was pregnant and occasionally come to class, and sometimes not handing in work. And then I had students who are college-bound. That was really interesting for me to try and cope with that. It was interesting that my associate teacher was someone with a disability as well. I thought that it was interesting I was placed with her. She was Head of Character Education in the school. It’s something that’s very big there. She wasn’t necessarily someone with the best character at all times, which is a little ironic. It’s really interesting being a teacher in the school – you get to see the culture of high school with adults, since there are cliques. There are tensions and sometimes people step on each other’s feet. It’s interesting how we teachers preach something and then the practice isn’t always the case. A little bit disheartening. It’s disheartening how judgmental some people can be. The students, I really enjoyed working with students. I could see that they were a good group of students. I talked about students doing presentations and that they listened to each other. Even though there are cliques, they are still able to work together. (Thanh Y5)

Implied in the above interview excerpt is that Thanh was able to expand her conception of diversity, not only did she get to see diversity in students, but became familiar with the
school culture in such a diverse school (e.g., cliques) and varied “social versus academic needs of students” (Flessa, Gallagher-Mackay, & Ciuffetelli Parker, 2010). Also, the TC associates the diversity with a particular geographic location – Scarborough – which is a district in the eastern part of the city of Toronto where many immigrants settle (Statistics Canada, 2007b). The multiple diversities may be connected to the notion of “immigrant”, in Thanh’s description.

“A problem school”. Erzsebet Y4 describes another school site with “massive diversity”. It was a combined “public and Catholic school” that was also “a school that has been targeted as “problem school””. The TC describes having “watching duties”:

It’s a massive high school where they share resources. And they have two high schools on the inside: one is public and one is Catholic. My old principal is actually the principal there, so it was very familiar for me to see some of those faces. The diversity in the school was massive. I mean that place is known for a lot of people coming in there, specifically I would say African, Jamaicans. We have a lot of Filipino students, some people from Dubai. I found a very diverse make-up in the high school itself. But they were targeted for being a problem school specifically for drugs. So, there are a lot of police on school property at all times. I mean, there cafeterias are watched. It felt like, because I did a lot of watching duties as well, it felt like it was very policed everywhere and they are trying to take control of the students. But there were a lot of punks and I actually did notice that a lot of the problem children, it wasn’t necessarily in the higher years. A lot of them are in Grade Nine or Ten so very, very young, which is really sad to see. (Erzsebet Y4)

Diversity in the school described by Erzsebet Y4 appears to associate with what research studies call ‘at risk’ students, as she mentions the necessity to have police on school grounds and drugs being a problem. ‘At risk’ in this case is further associated with ethnicity and race, stemming from immigration, similar to findings by James (2002), who investigated teacher candidates’ perspectives on issues which confront them when working in diverse schools in Ontario.

*International internship.* TCs in the Concurrent Teacher Education Program also had the opportunities to have internships outside of Canada. Seoyun Y4 describes an internship in China and compares the Chinese and the Canadian contexts by stating that she was able to
focus more on herself as teacher in China compared to having to focus on classroom management in Canada. The TCs provides a rationale for these differences in focus: “different settings, different educational values, different teachers”:

I did my internship in China. There, I taught English to Chinese kids. And here, I did my internship in an inner city school in Toronto. Maybe because it was in another country, the whole learning environment is really different, the values they have and how they discipline kids, it’s really different. So the issues that I had there were more about myself and me as a teacher. But here [Canada], it was more about classroom management – so both me and the kids. But there, kids were really cooperative. I taught four and 5-year olds. So JK and SK. But the teachers were really strict, even though kids were really young. So everything was so structured and rigid. And kids were really harshly treated, compared to kids here. So they were really cooperative, cooperating most of the time. So it was more about me, like how to organize myself better, how to make it more interesting, more fun, and how to engage kids better. But the practicum that I just had was more about… Of course, more about myself as a teacher, but it was also on the kids, too, because they were not so cooperating compared to the students that I taught in China. Every single one of us are really glad that we went. Seeing a whole new environment, like new school, classroom in a different country with different settings, different educational values, different teachers. That was a good experience. Also, I’m considering a career as an ESL teacher. I’m considering. So that kind of experience gave me thoughts as to how it would feel like to teach language students whose mother tongue is not English. (Seoyun Y4)

Implied in Seoyun Y4’s description above is that in China there is a teacher-focused approach versus the student-centered teaching in Canada. Also, the different values (which is China appear to connect to disciplining children) account for the difference in these approaches to teaching. In the Chinese context, the TC did not have to spend time on classroom management. Interestingly, the TC emphasizes the fact that she was able to use this time to focus on her ‘self’, which emphasizes its importance in the process of professional teacher development. This development is “driven by a wide array of factors, contexts, and emotions” (Flores, 2014, p. 356). Classroom management is indeed one of the major concerns of many TCs in this study as well as of novice teachers reported in research on teacher education that focus on knowledge bases for teaching under “general pedagogical knowledge” (Shulman, 1987).
Soup kitchen, women’s shelter, ESL class, non-profit agency. Many TCs in this study report having placement in non-formal settings, where they were able to learn about diversity related to poverty, physical and emotional abuse, as well as English language learners and recent immigrants to Canada:

One of the things that I think is really important is hands-on experience, going to places. […] I worked in a soup kitchen so I got to see marginalized families come in and people who are homeless and really understand what they go through on a day-to-day basis. I worked at a woman shelter and I know about emotional abuse and physical abuse and the toll it has on the children and the mothers themselves. And so, I think it would be really beneficial if in the future you have students going out and having placements there, going as a class and really sitting down and kind of looking around and getting a feel for things. I know we went one year to, I think it was an ESL school for adult learners, and that was a really interesting experience. I think observing a class or being able to talk to a teacher, to people who are going through those issues; it is a very, very valuable experience. (Erzsebet Y4)

Such placements allowed TCs to become familiar with larger communities “by getting a feel for things”, and observe learners of different ages as well social issues that affect the lives of learners. The type of learning that occurs in placements is usually associated with the notion of experiential learning, which allows for the inclusion of phases of reflection to help teacher candidates to connect what they observed in the placement and make linkages to past and future experiences (Knutson, 2003). Although benefits of reflections on experiential learning as part of teacher education curriculum are acknowledged in many studies, such approaches present some difficulties such as time constraints and difficulties in assessment (Knutson, 2003). Many of the reflective writings that TCs shared with me in this study originated as a result of such placements and TCs’ perceptions of reflections are discussed later in this chapter.

Diversity of students in field experiences

Another major thread in findings related to field experiences in the Concurrent Teacher Education Program is the diversity of students in the field experiences, which are described in more detail in what follows. The interview and questionnaire data reveal that the teacher candidates encountered a varied body of students in their field experiences, especially in
those schools that were in Toronto and the Greater Toronto Area. Many TCs’ responses contain description of what can be called ‘memorable’ moments in their practicum, placement or internship. These relate in many cases to a moment that triggered a change in their conception of diversity or appeared to have influenced how they perceived a certain diversity aspect. It thus can be argued that these moments influence the status change (Hewson, 1982; Larkin, 2012) of a certain diversity conception. In some instances such moments imply an issue related to diversity and the ‘issue’ is compared to a ‘non-issue’. For example, many TC responses generally appear to show that “problems” (mostly talked about in terms of behavioural issues) are associated with diverse students in diverse schools, especially high schools. Private schools are where the “smart” kids are and there are “no issues there”. Behavioural issues versus “no issue” are sometimes explained by the background of the students and the role played by family/parents in a child’s education.

Pascal Y5, for example, contracts two field experiences, one “not exactly diverse” and another “very, very diverse”, and how he could see “able-ism, race and different cultures” and where he could see conflicts arise:

My second practicum was not exactly diverse. It was very straight, same community, middle-class community. Not much difference between the students. My first practicum was very, very diverse between all levels of students, completely different in terms of socio-economic status. You had very, very rich kids; you had very, very poor kids. You had different ethnicities. My cousin went there and she would say, “It was the whites versus the Latinos versus the Blacks versus this”. Every group fought each other, which is unfortunate. The diversity at that school was huge.

The middle class community, as seen from the above quote, was not diverse, which implies that high socioeconomic status is not associated with “diversity”. Also, implied in the quote above is that conflict arises when there is a mixture of varied socio-economic statuses, varied ethnicities and also races. James (2001) found that teacher candidates in his study talked negatively about “Afro” students (p. 4). In this study, most of the TCs tend to just point to tensions, but not discuss them at length, maintaining a great deal of neutrality in their language. Some TCs note that there was hostility among teenage students in a Catholic school where “not everyone was catholic”, but also Muslim. This is in contrast with what a
different TC observed in her two practicum sites. Svitlana Y5 is describing her practicum with only “Caucasian teachers” but “not even one Caucasian child”. An interesting finding that she describes is that hostility among students in high schools tends to be explained by the interplay of age, religion and gender. However, there was little hostility among male and female teenagers of the same religion in a school that was primarily composed of a diverse but “same diverse” group of students. Her argument is interesting to follow:

It was a school in a new region, where a lot of houses are being built. Most children are of Indian background. The religion of most children is Sikh. There were a lot of cultural events going on in the school. Most teachers in the school for some reason are Caucasian. I don’t know why that is. I was teaching two classes, not even one Caucasian child in both. Both grade 10. My second practicum was my second teachable so that was History. One was ELL History, and the other one was just Applied History. For some reason more boys than girls in both classes. The school has a very strong culture; they have a dance team, a breakfast club. All the time you are hearing announcements that clubs are meeting up. I would say very little hostility among children going on because most of them are of the same religious background. What I noticed, I never noticed that before, this was a secondary school and in secondary schools you do expect issues of physical development layered with intellectual development, and the teenage search for identity. And when it layers with boy-girl relationships, that’s what happens to kids in grade 10, that just drives them crazy most of the time. I would say that it was nearly minimal. And I also noticed that in comparison with my other placement where many of my students were Caucasian, there was no hostility. Sometimes you would see Caucasian boys and girls meeting up and they do have a lot of physical development going on, you can feel boys being almost sexually aggressive; they would totally not behave respectfully. I would say that with children of Indian descent, it has to do with children’s religious backgrounds; maybe it has to do with the fact that families are big families and boys have sisters. I noticed great respect among opposite sexes there. I would say they are exploring who they are, and it was very interesting to see, but minimal hostility, minimal rudeness, even the rowdy kids I would say. Plus, an applied class was easier to deal with in terms of classroom management, compared to my class with academic subjects. I was quite happy with my second placement. My second placement was much better than my first. (Svitlana Y5)

Svitlana Y5 points to the classroom management issue which was easier to deal with in applied classes, implying that students in the academic steams are more difficult to manage in class. Studies that focus on conflicts and/or relationships among diverse groups in teacher education research are limited. Such studies could benefit teachers to better understand the
dynamics of interethnic relationships in schools, thus helping them better address questions that arise in classrooms where representatives of different ethnicities are present.

Some TCs detail how diversity of students was addressed in schools. While some TCs saw how white teachers made an effort to address the needs of a majority “brown” population, others encountered cases when special education students “just sat there doing nothing” when they were supposed to learn. A few TCs heard teachers express negative attitudes toward black “problem” students. Agnieszka Y4, for example, contrasts her practicum and her internships: as someone who comes from “my mostly white school” she was placed in a “brown school” where she saw teachers making efforts to revise curriculum materials that were “pretty white”. Her internship was in a French school, “more white” but also “a little bit more diverse in terms of not just one culture” and where she encountered more “behavioural issues”:

For my practicum last year I was at a high school that was middle to upper class, for sure, and the students were very high majority Indian and Southeast Asian. It was interesting because I come from my mostly white school and then I was placed in a mostly brown school, if I can say that, and it was very explicit. The teachers talked about it, the students talked about it. It was really interesting because the teachers that I was working with, they would say an opening like, “Okay, you know we had this book, but it is pretty white and the kids don’t really identify with it, what can we do instead?” Or like when you are showing videos I saw them making efforts, like an Indian speaking on a video or my associate teacher is showing the student these recipes from a website like a TV show or TV channel, like the Food Network and she makes an effort to have a common recipe. So I saw how the teachers reacted to the particular makeup of the school, which was really interesting and that was my practicum.

When I’ve done my internship, I did it in an elementary school and I was doing French immersion, Grade Five. It was a little bit more diverse in terms of not just one culture. I would say it was more white, though, just because being a mainly French immersion school I think a lot of the white parents in the neighbourhood would send their kids there. After that, it sounds bad, but mind you there was ‘diverse’ diversity, like in that school we had a lot of Asian students and in my practicum school not, like maybe two or three. So it was more diverse in terms of that, but it was odd, it was better off than the other community and so there were more behavioural issues whereas in my practicum school there were not. Not even in family makeup, because in my practicum school the teachers talked a lot about how the parents would not accept anybody from bad neighbourhoods, just because of their
makeup or whatever. In my internship school they were more from, not a lot, just kids coming from more diverse backgrounds, with different families. (Agnieszka Y4)

In Agnieszka’s description above, what appears to have triggered conceptual change is her placement in a context that was different (i.e., “brown”) from what she experienced in her schooling (“white”). Also, her realization that the students in French immersion schools are “more diverse”, and how parents can have a say in who “is accepted” into a given school appear as significant learnings. Immigrant children are more likely to attend French immersion schools than non-immigrant children in Canada (Canadian Council on Learning, 2007). Thus, it appears that the “diverse” in the case described by Agnieszka refers to immigrant students. The Canadian Council on Learning (2007) highlights the fact that many immigrant students are multilingual and students that carry a perspective that languages are important in one’s life have more to contribute to French-immersion classrooms. The TC does not make such a realization given that she was more concerned about classroom management (i.e. behavioural issues).

Some TCs also talk about how the “systems” in schools do not adequately identify information about the students. For example, how an “exclamation mark” beside a student’s name may mean many different things, while the teacher is expected to attend to those “masked” needs. Erzsebet Y4 describes her experience with students who were identified only with an exclamation mark beside their name and how she struggled to identify their needs or what the” something there” was that made them different:

I particularly remember one girl, we found out she’d actually been held back a grade and she had some problems with reading. Her English, the way she wrote on certain tests, she couldn’t complete her word. She’s spelling ‘because’ b-c-u-z and we started to pick up. But the problem that I found and which my teacher commented on was that you’ll find out a lot of these students have learning disabilities, but you won’t find out until you yourself discover it, when you think something is off. And they’re supposed to have the system where program support does the analysis. […] I found when we went on to her computer and she had an attendance list where they usually put an exclamation mark next to students when there’s something there – it could be a trouble issue. It could be that they were suspended, or it could be a medical, or it could be a learning disability – and this is all under one exclamation. She pulled out her list roll through classes and I would say ninety percent of the list had exclamation
marks next to the students. So, there were fewer students without exclamations than there were with. So, we were trying to go through each list and then when you clicked on it, there would be a message, but it would be so vague. You would have no idea what you’re dealing with. And so, now the teacher who has at least seventy students that she has no idea where to begin, because there are so many issues here. And she really did try and show me how to look at them, what’s wrong with the systems out there currently. But other than that, it was really hard and we really had to pick up on things on our own and try different strategies, even though some of these students haven’t been analyzed. And she was very clear to say that we’re not doctors. We can’t diagnose them, but we can try our best to help them in our classroom and that’s what we try to do. (Erzsebet Y4)

What is troubling in the experience that the TC above describes is that “ninety percent” of the students appear to have “an issue”, as denoted by the exclamation mark. Also, most of these students may have a learning disability, although the lack of information about the students makes it difficult to know ‘what the issue is’. Implied in this quote are the many complexities that TCs would encounter as new teachers because the “systems”, school records in this case, are not helpful tools. The notion of “masked” that Erzsebet Y4 discusses comes up in other interviews, but in a different school context and with a different meaning. In the second example, schools that have a uniform policy, which are usually private schools, tend to be more accepting of diversity, in some TCs’ views, as uniforms “mask” diversity. This connects to one of the finding related to how TCs define diversity, visible versus invisible, earlier in the chapter.

Some TCs also describe moments that had an emotional impact on them, thus the ‘emotional’ is what caused the conceptual change. For example, Alfredo Y3 describes how watching new immigrant women in an English Language class type Valentine’s cards to their spouses who were out of Canada helped him “reopen his eyes”. He suggests that because the media tends to “feed us after certain events” (such as September 11) we lose “that inside they’re human too.” A different TC also seems to have been touched by the same moment:

So they were typing out Valentine's Day letters to their husband. I mean, you read that in a book and okay, whatever. You go and you see that and that calls up a couple of emotions inside of you. Everybody knows what it means to be lonely. Everybody knows what it means to be sad like you can relate, it's like … it opens your eyes,
“OK, you know, these people are not any different from me”. So I think that would be the greatest, best thing about the program - the placements are the most beneficial. (Matteo Y5)

Both Matteo Y5 and Alfredo Y3’s description point to the ‘humanity in all of us’, irrespective of the type of diversity we represent, which appeared to have touched them at the time they were doing their placements. The notion of ‘humanity’ appears frequently in TCs who were part of the Religion program and points to values related to Catholic teachings, as pointed out by these TCs.

Some TCs responses reveal that stereotypical labelling exists in regards to the composition of student body in school placements:

When I found out where my practicum was, there were students in my cohort who were, “I know that school”. And they told me that its nickname was “Mo’ white” and that’s because it’s mostly white kids. And my friend was at a school that was referred to as “Asian court” because all the Asian kids were at that school. (Dorothy Y5)

Stereotypes related to diverse students are often the subject of study in research on diversity and teacher education and pertain to other dimensions of diversity, such as sexuality, in addition to what Dorothy above describes (Robinson & Ferfolja, 2001). Stereotypical attitudes and beliefs, as studies show, are not always possible to change. Courses designed to reduce them often end up reinforcing them (Haberman & Post, 1992).

Some TCs also remark how extracurricular activities in some schools make student exhausted and unable to focus on academics (Choo Y5). Some TCs report finding from field experience that “other religions and obviously other visible minorities” are present in Catholic schools, and that “there were Muslim kids in Catholic schools”. Matteo Y5 describes how girls wearing hijab encounter bullying sometimes, a scenario that was discussed in a teacher education class and which he later witnessed in his practicum. A TC witnessed “special education students” being bullied (Seoyun Y4). Also, some TCs noticed how “Special Education students would just come to program support and sit there and no one really took an active role in helping them” (Erzsebet Y4). Choo Y5 describes another perspective on special education students in a school of “500 students” with “Special Ed
being the largest department” with “students have some kind of severe disability”. In this school, teachers used “differentiated learning” to help these students in their learning.

All these observations that TCs bring in, as mentioned earlier, relate to moments that had an impact on their learning about diversity. Although there are moments that are similar across a number of candidates, in many cases they differ. Such differences in what one TC would see versus another TC can be argued to be linked to the notion of self and/or identity as contextual and the different interpretative systems that come with it (Rodgers & Scott, 2008). Thus depending on which interpretative system we look through at someone, we would foreground some markers of identity more than others. For example, an “African American” can be understood being “at risk”, or being associated with certain practices (Rodgers & Scott, 2008, p. 734).

Many TCs, although they note the benefit of learning about diversity in field placements, emphasize that when they were teaching, the curriculum was a priority and taking student diversity into account was not something they thought about in those moments. Dabrowka Y5 states in this regard:

> For my practicum, which was outside the classroom setting, I felt that diversity, I mean religion, was constant, but the background of the students, I did not really get depth with that because there was a curriculum, I was teaching and doing assessments and assignments and activities, but never really talking about culture or anything like that where students can have that background … Because I am in Sciences, when you are teaching Biology, you don’t really necessarily talk about students’ background, which I guess I should be just to take a broad education, …not a lot of opportunities to know more about it.

The TC above maintains that diversity (in this case associated with religion) was present in the classroom, but she was not able to see how the diversity of students could be taken into account when teaching Science. Other TCs note that they were not surprised by the diversity in the classroom, rather they were more concerned about classroom management, a concern that is often described by new or becoming teachers.
Field experiences as sites for learning about future teaching in diverse classrooms

In addition to expressing concerns about future teaching when describing their placements, concerns related to teaching diverse students were expressed by all the TCs when I asked them to share what they perceived as challenges or successes in teaching in diverse classrooms. Across all of the teacher candidates, in broad terms, when they discussed future teaching and successes and challenges related to diverse students, two main themes emerged: (1) getting to know the students and; (2) responding to diversity in their teaching.

When it comes to teaching, the majority of the TCs tend to express concerns about how to actually respond to diversity in their classrooms. The TCs’ responses resonate with those of program administrator and teacher educators who believe that the “first year of teaching is about survival” or that “serving the needs of diverse learners is not on TCs’ radar when starting teaching”. A number of teacher educators and program administrators state that “White teachers will be facing non-white classes”. While some TCs show awareness of the Eurocentric curriculum in schools, they also express perceptions of inability to enact diversity in certain teachables (e.g., Math, Sciences) compared to others (e.g., History). Some TCs also express concerns that the parents of their students as well as their own values and beliefs may hinder the implementation of certain diversity content in their teaching, especially in elementary classrooms (e.g., sexuality and related concepts). TCs convey doubts that they can address the needs of all students. Some TCs also comment on more general concerns in their future teaching, such as student engagement. The concerns expressed by the TCs connect to the broader concerns of beginning teachers. These include connecting what was learnt in the university to classroom practice (Zeichner, 2010); the ‘survival mode’ of beginning teachers that lead them to dismiss the university courses (Russell & McPherson, 2001); and also to the stages of concern of beginning teachers (Fuller, 1969).

The other finding related to future teaching in diverse classrooms is related to “getting to know the students”. The majority of the TCs tend to think that “once you get to know your students, you can be very successful in your classroom” (Pascal Y5) and thus, efforts need to
be made to that effect. Although a number of TCs describe what these efforts would entail, others refer to specific diversity aspects in students that teachers “must” address due to “legal issues” (Dabrowka Y5), such as ability and disability. While some TCs express that they expect to see diversity in future classrooms by providing references to demographics as a result of immigration, others state that students are “just kids”. A number of TCs attribute success to students from “certain cultures”, such as Chinese students being good at math and science (Alfredo Y3), stereotypical views often depicted in the literature. Overall, the TCs in this study appear to have understood the importance of getting to know the students in future classrooms, as a result of their experiences in the Concurrent Teacher Education Program, including field experiences. Knowledge of the learner is a core element in OISE’s Learner Document and is reflected in the Ontario College of Teachers’ (2015) The Standards of Practice for the Teaching Profession, the regulatory body for the teaching profession in the context where participants study. This shows the impact of the varied structures on TCs’ learning in the program.

Summary and discussion

Research studies show that teacher education programs tend to place teacher candidates in field experiences “reminiscent of their childhood” (Fuller, 1992, p. 192). Participants’ responses in this study show that the Concurrent Teacher Education Program makes efforts to secure a wide range of placements for teacher candidates, including formal school settings, non-formal or community placements, and international internships. Such placements are perceived by the TCs as major influences on their conceptions of diversity and sites where they learn most about diversity. Although some teacher candidate participants may have been placed in former schools or schools that are similar to their past experiences, the number of placement opportunities available throughout the five years of study tends to allow TCs to experiences school sites other than those in their childhood, as seen from the excerpts presented earlier. The attributes of the field placement sites that appear to have an impact on TC’s conceptions of diversity are many. These include: the range of diversities in students and in teachers in the school; community where it is located and whether it is diverse or not;
type of school (e.g., International Baccalaureate, French immersion; mixed Public and Catholic); availability of school resources, the school level or division (i.e. preschool, elementary, middle, or high school); and the subject matter taught. Furthermore, the interaction with the community, students and school staff all contribute to TCs’ learning in field placements.

There are a number of research studies that describe multicultural education coursework with a field experience (Fry & McKinney, 1997; Narode, Rennie-Hill, & Peterson, 1994; Olmedo, 1997, Sleeter, 1996). These studies examined courses that included a field experience in a school or community setting. Researchers found that teacher candidates (primarily White) who participated in such courses showed conceptual growth and greater willingness to work in urban schools (Sleeter, 2001). However, some researchers found that teacher candidates were not making connections between communities and broader relations of power (Ross & Smith, 1992; Sleeter, 1996). TCs in this study tend to report certain moments in their placements that made them rethink notions of diversity or help them add additional layers to conceptions that they already held. TCs in this research do point to certain systemic issues, such as poverty, but they often use language that is reconciliatory, such as “they are just kids” or “no issue there”. These positions can be interpreted as TCs avoiding to take a stance on an issue or that they were not able to make the connections between what they observed and broader structural issues.

A number of other studies have examined community-based immersion programs and their influences on teacher learning (Aguilar & Pohan, 1998; Canning, 1995). These studies, although small-scale, have found that experiences in these placements have a powerful impact on White teacher learning. This impact is attributed to being in a cross-cultural context in which future teachers have to tackle being within a minority and not knowing how to act when they are not able to find immediate refuge in a culturally-familiar setting (Sleeter, 2001). These studies are similar to what TCs report in relation to community placements.
Participants in this study reveal that many of the placements attached to courses they took are community-based placements. A finding that emerges from this study in relation to such experiences is the role of emotion in learning. Some TCs are touched by what they see in the placements and that helps them make certain realizations in relation to diversity. Interestingly, such realizations connect to these TCs conceptions of diversity that they already had. For example, recall the excerpts presented earlier that call ‘humanity’ a big realization. The tension is thus between the intent of the placement as envisioned by the teacher education program (i.e. have the issues of equity and diversity at the forefront”, which implies a critical element), and the values that some of these TCs hold (e.g., faith and religion in the cases described). One could argue that field experiences in the program, although apparently successful in developing empathy about diverse groups, may create “opportunities for future educators to observe others without challenging their beliefs or giving voice to the observed” (Trent, Kea & Oh, 2008, p. 335). The question remains “whether evoking empathy was enough to instil in their students the need to teach for social justice and change” (Trent, Kea & Oh, 2008, p. 336).

When describing the specific sites of their placements and the students they observed, TCs note the differences between the schools in terms of resources and the types of students they attract. The schools in more affluent neighbourhoods tend to be better equipped, as the finding show. One argument in Canadian literature for the reasons why these schools have more and better resources pertains to parent involvement in schools and the fundraising that they entertain. People for Education, an advocacy group (2008, in Flessa et al, 2010) notes in a recent report:

While fundraising has been commonplace in Ontario schools for many decades, the growing amounts raised are cause for concern. Some affluent neighbourhoods have the capacity to raise hundreds of thousands of dollars for their public schools; other neighbourhoods, where parents’ incomes are lower, raise little if any money. Thus, some schools have significantly enhanced resources, such as better stocked libraries and enrichment programs. (pp. 1-2)
The time spent in a single placement may not have allowed the TCs to arrive at conclusions highlighted in Flessa’s (2010) study, although TCs show awareness of the impact of resources on their teaching and students’ learning. When some TCs in this study refer to parental involvement in their responses, their remarks are related to concerns about parents’ reactions to including certain diversity content in their teaching (such as sexuality), which they see as a barrier to implementing diversity in their teaching.

This section described the context and context-related influences on TC’s conceptions of diversity. I now turn to discussing the influences on TCs’ learning about diversity in the teacher education program, as reported in the data. The proceeding chapter will discuss the reported influences by TCs, and also emergent influences from the overall data through my conceptual framework.

Past and present experiences with diversity and their influences on teacher candidates’ conceptions of diversity

Introduction

The purpose of this section is to present what TCs identified as major influences on their conceptions of diversity within as well as outside of the Concurrent Teacher Education Program. The teacher candidate participants across all the years in this study seemed to agree on a number of major influences on their learning about diversity, although these are interrelated as is made clear in what follows. These major influences can be largely classified as programmatic influences and individual influences, including past experiences. The major programmatic influences identified by TCs were the field experiences (including placements, internships, and practicum, discussed earlier as they appear to be both sources of learning and influences on learning), instructor influences and peer influences. A number of teacher educators expressed the idea that some TCs tend to resists certain diversity content and that may be linked to who instructors are and what they bring into their teaching. This is similar to what some TCs state in relation to instructors’ biases towards topics and their perceived ‘indoctrination’ goals.
The majority of the TCs also identified the field experiences as major sources of learning in the teacher education program, as seen from one of the previous sections. The data presented earlier show that the TCs had varied placements. For example, Seoyun Y4 who states, “I’ve spent my elementary, junior high and high school years in a pretty wealthy, safe neighbourhood. So the placement that I was put into for my practicum was a totally, like a big contrast. It was a totally different environment”. Other TCs still express wishes for more diverse field experiences:

[I would like] more diverse placements. And really push the students to go for something that is a bit different. And again, there might issues of sensibilité, right? The students might not want to work or whatever, but it should be even more openly discussed. And again, clearly, link it back to diversity. Let’s say, “What type of diversity did you see in that place?” Rather than just having a six-page assignment that you have to hand in. (Ubah Y3)

Similar to these TCs, the majority of program administrators and a number of teacher educators believe that physically being in diverse environments/placements is a major source of and influence on TCs’ learning. Some teacher educators tend to state that a combination of courses and placements provide the best learning for TCs. Program administrators tend to affirm that they don’t have much control over placement sites, although efforts are made to find sites as diverse as possible. Many teacher educators affirm that the placements are not as diverse. Program administrators state that the number and location of placements are based on the organizations'/schools’ willingness to accept TCs for field experiences. Compared to only a few TCs who mention their age as an influence on learning, all program administrators as well as a majority of teacher educators comment on the age of TCs and how it impacts learning. These findings show the often varied perspectives on teaching and learning in the teacher education programs from the three main groups involved: the program development group; the groups that delivers the program and the group that experiences the program. In what follows I describe the influences on learning about diversity through TCs’ eyes, by providing excerpts from the data.
Instructor influence

An important influence on learning about diversity in the teacher education program affirmed by many TCs was instructor influence. TCs identified what they perceive as positive and negative influences related to the diversity of instructors, such as categorical aspects of diversity (e.g., ethnicity, race, sexual orientation), individual aspects of diversity (e.g., beliefs), and various experiences instructors bring into their teaching (e.g., past school principal experience). These are discussed in more detail in what follows with illustrative examples from TC’s responses.

The TCs in this study identified instructors across a “range” of diversities to “no diversity”. While some TCs had “all Caucasian” instructors, others had instructors who had a salient diversity aspect of their identity that had a big impact on their teaching. Ubah Y3 describes an instructor who brought in certain diversity knowledge and content because of “past roots”:

In the Equity and Diversity course, the professor who taught this course was a Native American or had roots dating there and we spent about I would say half an hour, if not the entire class, talking about Aboriginals and the drop rate of these students. And that was very surprising for me because I didn’t know that we have so many Aboriginal students in the GTA. She said somewhere close to thirty or forty percent. I don’t know the exact number.

Ubah above describes how her conception of Aboriginal people expanded as a result of her professor’s ‘roots’. Also, she notes that she gained some factual information about this group of students. She learned about the increase in numbers of Aboriginal students in the Greater Toronto Area, which can be argued to have helped her see the importance of focusing on this student population. Implied in her professor’s teaching is the notion of ‘at risk’ students and dropout rates that are usually associated with Aboriginal students in Canada (Congress of Aboriginal People, 2010).

Ubah Y3 also describes how a “black” professor brought in a different perspective because of her race:
I really liked how my professor for the ELL course was black. It just added a new dimension to it. I’m not into the petty “Oh you know this person is from my culture, from my religion.” I think that’s wrong. We’re all human beings. I think we could connect. It was just nice to see a different person from a different background come in there and draw our attention. I guess from a first person’s perspective because for example, I as a person with brown skin I haven’t gone through the same things as someone with black skin would go through, right? Sadly enough, like the levels of racism, they are different and I think the black people get more branded especially if you are a black Arab Muslim then, poor you, right? So, these things were very openly discussed in our classes – race and color. So this was another thing. It was very difficult. One issue that I had with these courses is the term ‘racism’.

As seen from the above, a professor who was black brought into teaching aspects of diversity such as race and color and the ‘difficult’ topic of racism. For this TC the presence of such a professor was important because she brought in “a first person’s perspective” and she appreciated to see a “different person”. The difference in this case refers to race and implies that this TC had mainly white teachers. Ubah shows critical thinking when she points to differences within and among certain groups, and how a certain combination of diversity aspects can lead to different levels of racism (e.g., ‘black’ versus ‘black Arab Muslim’).

Also, and important element that the TC highlights is the open discussion in class, thus safe spaces where difficult discussions could happen.

Dionysus Y5 describes a professor who brought in sexuality as an aspect of diversity more than others because of his own sexual identity:

The professor was the one who was gay, so he was a well-known outspoken leader, went to a lot of conferences and was speaking about gay rights and so on. So I think that pushed the content more towards sexual identity and slightly away from other issues. Not hugely problematic for us as P/J teachers because we will, I think, encounter parents who are not heterosexual or hetero-normative. But I think it definitely applied more to other students who were not grade level specific or more subject specific – Music, Science, French students. It was slightly more applicable to them then to us. I thought that was beneficial, the content.

Implied in this TC’s description is that the particular professor was an activist who was also seeking professional development opportunities, such as conferences. The TC also points to the fact that he liked the content, although the content was not very applicable to his grade
level of teaching (i.e. elementary school), and that sexuality was more suited as a topic in higher grades or in specific subjects, such as Music, Science, and French. The idea of certain diversity dimensions being more suited for certain subjects and grade levels comes in many TC interviews, especially when they discuss the difficult dimensions of diversity: faith and religion and sexuality; sexuality, elementary students and parental involvement, parental involvement being a barrier to implementing diversity. What this shows is that some TCs are more open to accept certain content if they find it relevant to their teaching practice, although, as can be seen from the quote above, they tend to use reconciliatory language such as “I liked the content, but...” The use of reconciliatory language is prevalent in the majority of TCs’ interviews and points to a propensity in TCs to be neutral.

Erzsebet Y4 states that because her instructors were Caucasian and they did not have experience teaching in diverse schools, that fact had an impact on their credibility:

It is also a matter of all of our professors so far have been Caucasian and from a clearly upper middle class society, background that in itself influences it [how they teach]. I find a lot of the times my professors they have never been actually in the field of teaching and if they have, it’s been a “nice, everything is great kind of school”, whereas I did my practicum last semester in a school where there is a really difficult situation, very diverse. So it is just about under-believing them when they say anything, because they haven’t lived those experiences, and then getting outside of the theory and actually giving us real life ideas.

The TC above associates ‘whiteness’ (i.e. Caucasian) with a high socioeconomic status (i.e. middle class), which is indicative of this TC’s perceptions. Also, what is evident in her description is that not all professors might have had experience teaching in secondary schools, which is of importance to her. This leads to the conclusion that TCs are looking for credibility in their professors and credibility is achieved when the professors have some aspect of diversity coupled with teaching experience in schools. Their conception of diversity is strongly connected to TCs concerns with teaching.

Views on the diversity of instructors in the program differ among program administrators and are related to particular partner units within the concurrent teacher education program. A number of them state that the instructors are not as diverse, and thus professional
development opportunities are needed (both program administrators and teacher
educators/instructors agree that professional development opportunities are offered by the
institution, but are not compulsory for instructors). Yet, other administrators indicate that the
hiring practices aim to employ instructors that reflect the teacher candidate population, and
that professional development opportunities are not as important:

Here in our unit, my goal is to have instructors that reflect our community. I am
working on that. We have a diverse group. I already have plans to increase the
diversity. We have one of our instructors who is leaving and so I am actually
targeting hiring around reflecting our student population. That’s where we are going.
Well, I’ll go back to my initial statement on hiring and who is here. They [instructors]
are already experiencing and showing and living diversity by being who they are. So
if I hire somebody who is South Asian, they are bringing that to classroom, and the
students in the class, many of them can identify with the person that’s at the front.
And if you are not one of these people, the person at the front, you will see them
elsewhere, in another course. (Program Administrator)

As the quote above shows, the program administrator sees diversity as ethnicity or race and
points the notion of ‘role modelling’ that diverse instructors will be playing. Role modelling
has been discussed in many research studies in teacher education, especially the ‘role model’
argument in relation to ethnicity and gender (Carrington, 2002). While teachers’ gender has
not been found as a prominent influence on student achievement, teachers’ gender, race and
ethnicity have an impact on students’ attitudes to school (Laheima, 2000). Also, minority
group teachers tend to rate minority students higher, even if in a subjective way (Quirocho &
Rios, 2000). Furthermore, research also highlights the potential that minority teachers have to
challenge the ‘status quo’ in schools:

Many minority group teachers, in comparison to their European-American
counterparts, are more likely to bring a critical, social justice orientation and
consciousness that stems from their real, lived experiences with inequality. In a
related way, they are often more willing to work actively to dismantle personal and
institutional bias that they find in schools as well as to move toward culturally
responsive school-based reform more than are European-America teachers (Quirocho
& Rios, 2000, p. 52).

While some research contends that diversity aspects such as gender and ethnicity may be
criteria for choosing role models for students in schools, other studies note that the link
between such choices and personal identity is not clear because to be a role model to minority students it may not be necessary or sufficient (Allen, Hutchinson & Johnson, 1995; Allen, 2000). A person of influence in a student’s life thus is more about showing an interest in the student and helping the individual realize learning and other goals (Pole, 1999). This past research though is more focused on secondary school and not university settings. Teacher educators’ impact on teacher candidates’ learning remains a topic that requires more research. My study highlights this question from teacher candidates’ perspectives and shows that teacher educators’ (TEs) credibility is an important factor in their learning. The TEs’ diversity markers and their teaching experience in secondary school settings establish credibility.

In addition to describing their professors in terms of diversity dimensions such as ethnicity, race and sexuality, some TCs also tend to affirm that instructors bring in their own personal experiences with diversity. Examples of these experiences included having children of their own with different sexual orientations or having certain abilities or disabilities along with varied professional experiences. The benefit of these experiences can be seen in the following illustrative example:

A professor, her son had the Down syndrome. All of us had dealt with children with disabilities before, because by our third year most of us had already completed the 100 hour placements. We dealt with children with disabilities, but very rarely with a physical disability. So it was very interesting – she would tell us about her son, how he overcame some of his challenges, quite interesting. It helps to relate with issues a lot. I would say that professors shared their experiences with us and it’s always better when you have something personal to relate to. (Svitlana Y5)

Svitlana Y5’s conception of disability seems to have expanded to include physical disability. Although the TCs seem to appreciate the diversity of the instructors and the personal experiences they bring in, at times they express dissatisfaction with what they perceive as “indoctrination” or “instilling views” in instructors’ teaching approaches. This may be particularly true during debates or discussions around controversial topics:

A lot of teachers don't seem particularly equipped or willing to teach a controversial issue without attempting to sort of indoctrinate their students without just saying,
"Well, this is what I think on the issue and this is what you should all think because this is very obvious and don't you all hate people who disagree with this and start thinking," [...] So I guess, having such an unpleasant experience in these kinds of classes, I learnt that I don't want to do that in one of my classes. I want to make sure, if possible, that my students don't even know what my opinion is on the issue. That they can have that discussion themselves so I can teach them how to think and not what to think. (Brian Y4)

As Brian Y4 explains, what he learnt from this experience is that he should avoid being biased in his future teaching. The notion of bias though remains a subject of debate among TCs and TEs in this study. Some TEs disagree that they bring a certain bias in teaching and point out what they perceived as student resistance to certain topics. Such resistance is at times explained as linked to TCs’ age and thus inexperience. A number of TCs enrolled in the Religion and Christianity program in particular comment on a certain instructor/priest who “made some students leave the program” because of his teaching and marking strategies on topics of diversity (this thread is strong in the data as I had a significant number of participants from this particular concurrent teacher education unit:

I would say that the Equity and Diversity in Education course with the Catholic priest put a negative hue on the subject matter and future courses that taught it. On the other hand it made us possibly more hopeful because you could see that going into another class we were hoping that this one would be much better than the last one. And it was, but there was a lot of displeasure with the program after that. I think we lost two students after that year. I think they dropped out. I don’t know how closely that relates to that course or the program in general because being in the inaugural program. (Dionysus Y5)

What Dionysus describes above relates to certain biases that teacher educators bring into their teaching that is related to own values and believes.

As seen from the above descriptions, TCs’ conceptions of diversity seem to have expanded as a result of having a diverse professor or teacher educator. An attribute of the diverse teacher educator that appears to have an influence on TCs’ learning about diversity are the different perspectives that they bring, the ‘authentic’ self as representative of a certain diverse group, as well as personal experience with diversity (e.g., being a parent of a disabled child). Other attributes, such as their ability to create safe spaces, experiences in secondary
school teaching, can be argued to relate to broader qualities of effective teaching. What I think is a prominent finding is that in order to gain credibility to teach about diversity, teacher educators need to both be diverse (that is, intimately know a certain aspect of diversity) and have experiences teaching in schools (that is, know how to implement diversity in teaching). Also, the degree of openness to learning about certain aspects of diversity for some TCs is linked to their perception of the relevance of this diversity aspect to their future teaching (e.g., sexuality is not relevant or important to teaching elementary students), as well as to what they perceive as instructor bias. A major implication for teacher education then is related to recruitment of teacher educators and characteristics of effective teacher educators. In addition to instructor influence on their learning about diversity, many TCs describe peers as sources of and influences on their learning.

Peer influence

In addition to instructor influence, TCs affirm that their peers also have a significant impact on their learning about diversity in the teacher education program. TCs state that the makeup of the class (especially the past experiences of their classmates, the fact of whether they are diverse or not, and their open-mindedness) influence classroom discussions, interactions and ultimately learning:

It depends on the people’s attitude towards extra sensitive subjects and people have different experiences and I knew that people in my program, it’s a very small cohort, like sixteen of us but everyone has had different experiences that affect their beliefs. For example, one of the girls in my program had a lot of things stolen from her by a couple of black people in her school and that led to her understanding of what that culture represents for that at least. Me, coming from Calgary, I know how big the issue is out there and my understanding that I have never been exposed or mentioned about equity and diversity and didn’t know what it actually meant until I came here, whereas I was really eager to learn it and others weren’t. So that is a brilliant point there. (Erzsebet Y4)

An interesting thread in the data relates to mixing up TCs from different concurrent program units for certain classes: TCs from the Mississauga campus tend to state that they like the opportunity to mix up with other TCs in the concurrent program. Similarly, TCs with Music
Alfredoabove notes that ‘if you are comfortable, you are not learning’ thus he sees the diversity of his peers important in making him feel discomfort. The notion of discomfort for the TC relates to varied opinions on a topic that, in his view, stem from being from different ‘demographics’. The TC also points to the ‘radical’ beliefs of a professor that also contributed to his learning. Alfredo maintains that in his Religion program TCs tend to be mainly of one ethnicity and religion, which implies that the mixing of TCs from this and ‘the other College’ had a positive influence on their diversity learning. There also students who had different opinions than Alfredo above about the ‘mixing’ of TCs from different partner units.

While some TC refers to what they perceive as unacceptable Catholic views on diversity on behalf of the students who study Religion, the students with the Religious Education major see themselves as wrongly attacked or accused based on religious views following Catholic teachings. Although these two groups differ in their opinions regarding the topic of sexuality and religion in particular, they tend to agree that gender and sexual orientation is not a topic of importance when teaching students of young ages. A TC explains the reactions of students with a Religious Education major as follows:
We talked actually about the issue of homosexuality in Catholic schools and you know, we had the issue of obviously, you don't tolerate and this is from a Catholic perspective as well. You wouldn't tolerate picking on a homosexual student. You don't need to hear a theological explanation, but the notion is based that we are all sinners. So there's no particular sinner that you get to single out and they get it when they don't get forgiveness and they don't get love but everyone else does someone like that. But some students think it does. So maybe it was good that we'd have that discussion but, to be honest, I thought it was quite a tapestry of different opinions. (Brian Y4)

Some TCs also tend to describe themselves and their classmates in terms of diversity. While some TCs agree that students with an Education and Society major are more diverse compared to Religious Education students (both on the downtown campus), they also state that the Mississauga and the Scarborough campuses are more diverse than the downtown campus. TCs advance a few reasons for the “primarily white” TC population on the downtown (St. George) campus, which hosts four units of the concurrent teacher education program: Physical Education and Kinesiology, Education and Society, Music and Christianity and Religion. These reasons are linked to the socioeconomic class, ethnicity and religion: the Physical Education and Music programs usually attracts “Caucasian” and wealthy students due to the cost of sports equipment/training (e.g., many of the students may have cottages “up north” where they can go and train) and music instruments and private music classes, respectively. The program in Religious Education attracts primarily Catholic students of Italian origin. Implied in TCs’ descriptions of the concurrent student population is how different campuses attract students that represent surrounding communities, but also how partner units with a certain focus, such as Religion attract primarily white students of the same religion. A number of program administrators also comment on the makeup of the teacher candidates across the concurrent teacher education units. Their comments reveal similar findings related to how the downtown campus seems to be more ‘white’ compared to the Scarborough and Mississauga campuses:

I would say that the Mississauga and the Scarborough campuses are probably the most multicultural of the three. The downtown campus not so much. There is multiculturalism everywhere. I think that the diversity that you would see in Mississauga classes exceeds that of Scarborough, but when you visit Scarborough
you can see that it’s multicultural, multiracial, it does stand out. I guess what’s kind of little disheartening to me is that the African culture is not as represented as I’d like it to be. However, it’s very hard to do that because our profiles are anonymous. You don’t indicate race or anything like that. I think we are probably out there right at the cutting edge. In addition to that, we have sexual orientation where we identified individuals who have said “I am gay” or some are transgender. And we support all of that. Honestly I don’t see that at the downtown campus. There is some, but nothing like here. Come on in our classes. You’ll look around and say “Oh, yeah. You are right”. (Program Administrator)

The program administrator above notes that students of African descent are not represented in the teacher education program, which is linked to challenges in the recruitment process.

Also, related to peer influence is the thread that peers’ past experiences with diversity or lack thereof influences class discussion dynamics. Indeed, those familiar with diversity tend not to be very interested in learning about it and deny that certain stereotypes exist, while TCs who have no or little experience with diversity either are curious to learn more about diversity or see diversity as an individual difference and easy to deal with (the latter is characteristic especially TCs in the Religious Education program, with an example of “I see Steve and here is Tom, I don’t see race or color”):

Not having come from a diverse background, it is easy for me to see diversity as a new "Torontonian". I am aware of equality, gender, racial issues in and around the school, workplace, city, but one of the greatest challenges is convincing my peers at UofT (especially those who are Toronto natives) that these types of issues are still prevalent in the world today. Many have never lived outside the diverse city that is Toronto and therefore do not have a concept of what small-town rural living is like for non-whites. It's like Torontonians live in this dream world where everyone is all accepting - this even became an argument in my psych class at UofT. Toronto-born TCs refused to believe that there is still extreme racism in this country. (TC Y5, questionnaire)

Some TCs express the view that a BSc/BA major/subject area also may influence how learning about diversity occurs in the teacher education program. For example, TCs affirm that those studying anthropology, geography or environmental studies are better equipped to study diversity or have a better understanding of diversity, since it’s addressed in their respective programs outside the BEd:
I would encourage future TCs to choose their other majors and minors around their interests, which are hopefully connected to teaching. My studies in socio-cultural anthropology have allowed me to dig deeper into urban cultural studies that affect my students and myself in a city like Toronto. I see some TCs overwhelmed by their other subject choices that seem to have very little to do with their career path and end up taking away so much time and energy from the teacher or educational-themed studies. (François Y3)

Findings related to peer influence reveal that one major attribute in peers that contributes to diversity learning is their conflicting beliefs and/or opinions about diversity. Such beliefs lead to difficult discussions and discomfort in TCs and thus learning. The divergent beliefs are linked to diversity as ‘different demographics’, which can be related to ethnicity, race and faith and religion. Difficult discussions in many TCs’ descriptions in this study pertain to faith and religion and sexuality. Implications for teacher education relate to teacher candidate recruitment and mixing of students in different program units. Many of the program administrators in this study point to attempts to recruit more diverse teachers, which is not always possible due to the lack of demographic data on student application profiles. Childs et al. (2011) report changes in TC recruitment strategies, such as including a demographic question on the application form, although few applicants choose to respond to these questions. One possible reason for not revealing information pertaining to diversity markers could be linked to the fact that the applicants are not clear about the purpose of gathering such information, as Ubah, one of the TCs in this study maintains.

Another major attribute is peers’ past experiences with diversity. Those familiar with diversity tend not to be interested as much in learning about it and deny that certain stereotypes exist, while those TCs who have no or little experience with diversity either are curious to learn more about diversity or see diversity as an individual difference and easy to deal with (the latter is characteristic especially TCs in the Religious Education program). The first group of TCs are usually described as having lived in Toronto or the Greater Toronto Area. The other group comprises TCs who lived in rural communities or suburbs. There is tension related to this finding: while some TC who are not familiar with diversity want to learn more about diversity, they don’t see diversity as important in their ‘non-diverse’
teaching contexts or schools. TCs notions of ‘diverse’ versus ‘non-diverse’ school settings in Ontario have been discussed in literature as well. Erskin-Cullen & Sinclair (1996) found that “schools in large urban centres are places where teachers are faced with a plethora of challenges that range from poverty, violence, cultural diversity and a multitude of languages ... teaching in suburban settings ... have more homogeneous student populations, more parental support” (p.1). It appears that learning about diversity for some TCs is for the purpose of expanding their personal knowledge about diversity (i.e. ‘self’) and not necessarily related to future teaching.

The influence of “self”

When discussing peers and their influences, TCs also talk about themselves in relation to diversity learning and interactions with others in the classroom. TCs contend that having personally experienced or having been affected by diversity (e.g., having a disabled sibling; being gay; being a visible minority; being stereotyped based on ethnicity/Korean, language/Portuguese, minority/Muslim, Aboriginal; white, male, but living with a single mom, few financial resources; or an intersection of any of these) directly affects their learning. Developing understandings of aspects of diversity they can directly relate to for this group of students seems to be easier, although they still may experience difficulty understanding concepts that are foreign to them or that they have not come into direct contact with. As Fernanda Y3 states,

I do feel like, growing up in Toronto, as I grew up in Toronto, I have experienced being “othered” myself but never based on how I look - just based on the language spoken at my house or my name. You know, some people, some people have less support than others, right? So if you factor in racism on top of poverty, on top of an unstable home environment, I don’t know. That all sounds very, to me a little bit too cliché and too typical, but imagine all those things piled up on top of each other. When we moved to Toronto, I got spit on. I got made fun of, teased for being a hairy speck; teased for what my father spoke; teased for what’s the music. I was ten. It hurts. But then I have good parents, mine were good, educated parents and parents who supported me. (Fernanda Y3)
Fernanda Y3 above speaks about the intersection of multiple dimensions of diversify that can led to being marginalized and bullied: language, ethnicity, poverty, and instability in the home environment. She counted on her parental support to overcome some of the stereotypical attitudes toward her as a child. Another TC recounts:

Like for me, personally, being half Korean, a lot of times people will say racist comments about Asians like “uh Asians are the smartest like they don’t want to study” or things like that. But if I am bringing it up, there is a stigma against it like “Oh, we are just kidding. Like, don’t worry about it”. Even with words like “that’s okay”. Sometimes I tried really hard to be like “please don’t say things like that. It offends me”. Can you ever know who's in the room? And people, it’s just their attitude like coining it like a joke, “Yeah, you are so serious, can’t you just take it?” or “chill out” kind of thing so it is about balancing that too. (Seoyun Y4)

Seoyun Y4 notes the typical stereotypes about Asian students as being smart at some subjects. Although the TC confronted some of her classmates about it, they took it as a joke thus failing to fully understand the consequences of such attitude:

Well, there is my childhood growing up in that neighbourhood. And then there is my own personal fascination with sexuality and gender identity. I think that possibly makes me a bit more aware of the male privilege. The same thing as being white. I think that I am fairly aware of that. I wouldn’t say that I am nearly as acutely aware of it as a minority of either of the privileges, but I probably think that I am a lot more aware of it as a lot of straight white males. I guess that one thing is that growing up in a single parent household, we did not have a lot of money. I think that that is one way that I am aware of the class diversity I encountered in schools. One of my close friends in the program, both of her parents are lawyers, so she … her parents gave her some money and she was able to live on her own. She had her own apartment during her university time. She does have a job in her parents’ office. That gives her very flexible hours and it allows her to bring in a bit of extra money. I, on the other hand, I had to stay home with my family and live there. Because my mother’s work has a specific anti-nepotism clause, so they are not legally allowed to hire me. So I have not been able to get a job with such flexible hours or find one quite so easily. So I had to stay home and haven’t had so much money and I’ve only could afford to go to university because of OSAP and bursaries. I’m a hard worker. I won’t say that I am a straight A student, so I don’t qualify for a lot of scholarships. I’ve looked, but that’s I guess one way that I aware of it. I guess to some extent the friends that I hang out with. Because they are also very interested in the issue of gender politics and sexual politics. (Dionysus Y5)
Dionysus Y5 deliberation of him being a white male and how he recognizes not being as “acutely aware of it as a minority of either of the privileges” still appears to be contrary to findings reported in Mujawamariya and Mahrouse (2004). They state that “Our respondents did not articulate an understanding or a critical questioning of the need to examine their own biases, privileges, or issues of power in any way. Rather, their responses indicated, as Fine (1997) states, that "the gaze of surveillance, whether it may be a gaze of pity, blame, or liberal hope" (p. 64) was always on “Other.” Dionysus Y5, as well as many other TCs in this study, still has a “liberal hope” gaze, but some TCs show a deeper understanding of the importance of critically reflecting on their identity. The awareness of this particular TC that goes beyond the “the rhetoric of difference and plurality” (Mujawamariya and Mahrouse, 2004, p. 349) begs the question about what makes certain TCs able to reconcile their personal and teaching self into one, a question that could be further investigated in a future study.

Interestingly, a trend that is quite prominent in the findings is that TCs seem to differentiate between the two identities (i.e. personal and teacher) when discussing diversity. One possible explanation, if I look at the case of Dionysus Y5, is an amalgamation of influences: his past experiences of living in the core downtown area of a large city, having “diverse” friends, experiences of financial difficulties, personal interest in gender and identity and experiences in the teacher education program.

Some TCs express the view that when their peers found out about a salient diversity aspect of others, such as sexual orientation, for example, they could see a “sudden change” in their attitudes and behaviour because these peers could “see someone like that right there beside them” (François Y3). Other TCs speak about their own faith and how that makes it challenging sometimes to reconcile own views and what a teacher needs to do, such as “I am a very faithful person, if that’s why I am in the Religious Education cohort” (Catarina Y5). Another TC describes the ‘humanity’ or sameness in people, from a Catholic perspective:

I find my faith helped define diversity a lot. As a Roman Catholic we’re been always taught that everyone is different and everyone is special in their own way. Everyone is created in the image of God, as we say in the Catholic Church. I find that that
helped me define my sense of diversity because I looked at it not like “oh, there is the white group, there is the Latino group”. I looked at it like, “there is Steve and there is Tom”. I look at it as individual people rather than lump groups. (Pascal Y5)

Furthermore, some TCs state that they are open to diversity, but it depends on the ‘context’. In their personal lives they may not be as accepting of someone who is different (e.g., ‘I’ll marry one of my own’) as opposed to accepting someone different in social situations (e.g., ‘friends who are different than me’):

I am very much like my dad, in a sense that when I think of whom I want to marry, I feel like someone who is from my own background would be easier to bring into the family and feel like it’s accepted. So like Polish, white, I feel that my family would be accepting of. But then again, I take after my mom and I am not quick to judge. From her side I feel like I am very open to be around people who are very different than me. I have both sides, but it really depends like what context we are talking about: is it someone who I am introducing to my family who I want to be part of my family through marriage, I want to be from the same background just because I want to give to my kids the same religion, background, pass it down. But with friends, with my extended family, I have no objections because everybody brings something to the table in that sense – somebody who has different experiences, you can learn different things from everybody else. (Dabrowka Y5)

Dabrowka Y5 above appears to distinguish between her father’s conservative and mother’s liberal attitudes toward diversity. She is more conservative at the personal level and more liberal and at the social level. This TC’s response can be argued to be indicative of what Irvine (2003, p. xvi) calls “socially acceptable responses” when generally describing attitudes about diversity and interactions with diverse individuals. However, when such interactions might affect them directly, the responses and reactions change to meet personal beliefs and values.

The description above shows the importance of ‘self’ in diversity conceptions at two levels: personal and social. At the personal level some TCs are critical of or resist certain projections of diversity on self, others are conservative in their views of diversity. Being critical and/or showing resistance is a result of having experienced stereotypical or other negative attitudes or injustices, and also leads to being more open to learning about diversity (Fernanda Y3, Seoyun Y4, and Dionysus Y5). Being conservative at the personal level is linked to certain
values and beliefs, but does not always show resistance to learning about diversity, as long as diversity is not affecting the self at the personal level (e.g., Dabrowka Y5, Pascal Y5, and Catarina Y5). Being conservative at the personal level is also compatible with being liberal at the social level (e.g., Dabrowka Y5, Pascal Y5, and Catarina Y5). It can be argued that being liberal or accepting everyone translates into these individual teachers as well. Some conceptual change may occur from conservative at the personal level to liberal at the personal level when someone experiences close or immediate contact with the diverse other (e.g., François Y3). These findings connect to what Rodgers and Scott (2008) describe as identity and self. Contexts and relationships describe the external aspects of identity formation, while the internal, or meaning making, refers to stories and emotions. The ‘self’ thus, includes teacher identities and is “an evolving yet, coherent being that consciously or unconsciously constructs and is constructed, reconstructs and is reconstructed in interaction with cultural contexts, institutions, and people with which the ‘self’ lives, learns and functions” (Rodgers and Scott, 2008, p. 751). Teachers, thus, need to make a “psychological shift” in how they think about themselves as teachers, but also how they think about others.

**Community growing up**

Resonating strongly throughout the questionnaire and interview responses are two major influences of learning outside the teacher education program: community growing up and past schooling experiences. TCs describe their communities growing up as diverse or non-diverse. For example, TCs provided descriptions such as “white, but many Chinese people and wealthy”, or “not white, many immigrants, not well-off”, “downtown Toronto, only white kid in the school”, “white, no diversity”, “rural”. Hendrika Y3 describes a diverse community as follows:

Growing up in Markham. There is a very high diversity in that different people lived there. There’s a very large population of Chinese people. So in growing up all my friends weren't just white as opposed to if I lived in a small town, maybe. The school I went to didn't have much diversity in religion, but in background there were a lot of different people from different parts of the world. (Hendrika Y3)
Hendrika describes the community she grew up primarily in terms of diversity as ethnicity, which was a result of new immigrants settling in that particular area. She does also refer to religion, as an aspect of diversity that was not present in her community. Interestingly, she sees the community as diverse although it had primarily one ethnicity – Chinese. Her conceptualization of what diverse is appears to be in relation to others, from her dominant ‘white’ position. Another TC who grew up in Toronto also describes diversity from a ‘white’ dominant position, and diversity in his case also includes ethnicity and religion:

I grew up in downtown Toronto. Right at Queen and Bathurst. So, when I was in elementary school, aside from my brother and I there were probably two other white kids in our classes in our school. There was a lot of Chinese, Vietnamese, Caribbean, Muslim. It was a very diverse neighbourhood. Growing up in such a diverse neighbourhood, that was a big thing for me. (Dionysus Y5)

Other TCs describe non-diverse communities as being in the suburbs, composed of professionals such as engineers, primarily white individuals with high socioeconomic status:

There wasn’t a lot of diversity. I grew up in the suburbs of Calgary so very much white. A lot of lawyers and engineers. Let’s say I came from an upper middle class family. A long line of oil and gas engineers. Most of my schools, elementary and middle school, were mostly white population. Same background, upper middle class and then in high school there is a bit more diversity but even still there was like only one black person in my entire high school of 2,000. (Minjee Y4)

A few TCs described non-diverse communities in rural areas as households with large properties and large areas of land, white, with high socioeconomic status, and traditional family and religious values:

I grew up with two acres of land, on a farm. I was brought up in a rural environment. The elementary school was also a rural school, ten acres of land, we went everywhere. That being said, it was a fairly rich area. The average income was about 100 000 in the area. Growing up I was more in the richer, upper socioeconomic status. My parents are both immigrants, church every Sunday, visit my grandparents, visit my close relatives. It was really, really good. I was very connected to my family and connected to my community through my friends. Growing up was very white, very upper class, I had very narrow exposure to different groups of people. When I went to High School I could count the visible minority on my two hands. There were
very few visible minorities in that sense. Coming to university was a big culture shock. Being in Toronto, it’s so culturally diverse that it was different to see how my class isn’t completely white. (Pascal Y5)

Pascal Y5 emphasizes how diverse Toronto appeared to him when he came to university and how ‘white’ his classmates in his Religion program were, a finding prominent when TCs described their peers earlier in this chapter.

As seen from the above excerpts, teacher candidates’ conceptions of diversity are linked to communities in which they grew up. TCs fall into two large groups: those who grew up in the suburbs, small towns or rural areas, and those who lived in larger cities and urban centers. Living in a diverse city led to associating diversity primarily with ethnicity and religion. Living in suburban and rural areas led to linking diversity to ‘majority white’, high socioeconomic status (and related professional status), family and religious values. Living in such communities influenced how TC conceptualized diversity when they came in the teacher education program. It also had an impact on how they describe the influence of ‘self’, which occurs at the personal and social level. Related to communities, prior and present schooling experiences play an important role in TCs’ learning, which are discussed in what follows.

**Schooling experiences**

TCs across all the three years in this study, affirm two major schooling influences on their learning about diversity: pre-university experiences and coming to university more generally. When describing past/pre-university schooling experiences, TCs tend to compare their experiences in elementary and secondary schools. For example, “no diversity till high school”; “elementary white, high school International Baccalaureate, elite, social class visible, diverse, university less diverse because of the Phys Ed program/Caucasian primarily”; “elementary diverse, university not diverse because of St. Mike’s/religious perspective”. These past experiences allowed or did not allow TCs to interact with diverse others, and thus, as they state, influenced their openness to diversity and subsequent learning in the program. One TC describes her own situation:
I did go to school with mostly South Asian students. The population of other ethnicities was very small. Percentage-wise we were at 95%. Coming to university was a turn-around. At my college the population is mostly European students. That gave me a different perspective on how they experienced their high schools. Things that they would celebrate, practices. I was able to learn from them and they were able to learn from me. When I did my practicum I was placed in a school that had a Catholic identity and that’s not where I come from. That was a different experience in itself. I was able to see how that kind of spins diversity. It was still multicultural, but then there is that religious perspective on it. (Poonam Y5)

Diversity in Poonam Y5’s description of her schooling experiences primarily refers to ethnicity, religion, and race. Being a non-Catholic she had her practicum in a Catholic school, which to Poonam appears as a major learning experience. Another TC, Thanh Y5 had varied encounters with diversity and shared experiences with diversity learning fostered by her secondary school teacher through various “celebrations” in school, and the wide range of students in the International Baccalaureate (IB) program. Thanh Y5’s recollection of the “potlucks” in her middle school echoes findings from Zimmerman’s (2006) study that showed that teachers found comfort with simplistic views of diversity with celebratory approaches to diversity. The celebratory approach adopted by Thanh Y5’s former teacher is also reminiscent of Bank’s (2008) “Contributions Approach” to teaching in diverse classrooms, which is also referred to as a tourist approach. This approach puts emphasis on specific cultural elements such as heroes, holidays, folk tales, food, and clothing but leaves the core curriculum unchanged. Although this approach acknowledges diversity, it provides a superficial understanding and leaves out issues of power and structural inequalities. The great majority of teacher candidates seem to agree that going to university had a major impact on their learning about diversity:

I’ve always been to a Catholic school, so religion was the same. But coming to university, there are people of different religions, different ways of following their religion. So university was a big eye-opener. And then in terms of teaching, I’ve done both of my practicums in catholic schools. As I got older I felt I was becoming more like I’ve seen it more often than when I was younger. Plus, I know more about it because I’ve taken courses. (Dabrowka Y5)
Interestingly in the excerpt above, Dabrowka Y5 describes diversity in terms of what she experienced before and after coming to university. In this description faith and religion appear to be connected to both of her conceptions, except that she saw only one type of religion before university and multiple religions after.

A number of TCs also refer to other influences on their learning such as family and upbringing, and interactions with friends and people other than themselves. A few others, who are older than the average teacher education student, refer to travel. Some teacher candidates, when describing how they learnt about diversity, stated that they were not quite certain whether the learning occurred in the formal context of the teacher education program or through their involvement in extracurricular and other activities outside the program. Erzsebet Y4, for example, states that it’s hard for her to “separate what I’ve learned in class and what I’ve learned just from my own involvement in different extracurricular things”, because she feels she learned a lot about diversity by just talking with people.

**Summary and discussion**

As findings presented above show, major influences on TCs’ learning about diversity relate to instructors and peers in the teacher education program, TCs’ own identity and beliefs, the communities in which they grew up and schooling experiences. Although these influences have been examined separately, this is not an indication that influences act on their own. Rather, “interactions” and “important connections and overlap between and among developmental interactions” (Milner, 2006, p. 344). The interactions between these influences seem to have made a difference in ways TCs learn and understand the concept of diversity. Past research in the Canadian context also reveals that TCs view instructors as having a major influence on their learning about diversity and related concepts (Carr & Klassen, 1997; Mujawamariya, Cuffaro & Tardif, 2001; Mujawamariya & Mahrouse, 2004). For example, Mujawamariya and Mahrouse (2004) state:

> Of those respondents who were open to the idea of multicultural education, many were critical of the approaches taken by the instructors. Instruction was perceived to be lacking in specificity and guidance. Many complained about approaches that were
based on theory and not on practice. Several individuals noted that they were left to figure out the how of multicultural education on their own, indicating that they were not given enough practical information, either knowledge or skills-building, to teach a diverse learning student body effectively. They felt that they should have been given specific pedagogical tools to equip them to respond to the needs of the diversity of students in their classes. (p. 347, emphasis in original)

Similar to Mujawamariya and Mahrouse’s participants, many TCs in my study make comments on instructors’ approaches, or the “how to” of diversity. Some TCs in this study also focus on what instructors bring in their teaching (e.g., personal beliefs and perspectives and individual professional experiences) and tend to be critical of those instructors who, in their view, are biased toward a certain dimension of diversity, such as race.

As seen from the above excerpts, teacher candidates’ learning about diversity is closely linked to the communities they grew up as well as their schooling experiences. TCs fall into two large groups: those who grew up in the suburbs, small towns and rural areas and those who lived in larger cities and urban centers. Milner (2006) describes communities teacher candidates in the United States come from as follows:

Communities can be categorized generally as suburban, rural, or urban. Although these contexts have similarities, there are many differences. For example, suburban schools tend to be relatively homogeneous in terms of socioeconomic status (SES) and ethnic background. Compared to urban and rural communities, suburban communities are higher in SES and predominantly White. Compared to their counterparts in other communities, suburban students also tend to score higher on achievement and proficiency tests and tend to pursue postsecondary degrees more often than students from other contexts, teachers tend to have higher educational credentials, and families tend to be more nuclear and more educated. (pp. 345-346)

TCs’ responses in this study seem to echo Milner’s description of urban schools and communities. However, contrary to his findings that describe a higher commonality between rural and urban schools, TCs descriptions in this study reveal more commonalities between suburban and rural communities and schools in the Canadian context, particularly in regard to SES, ethnic background and school resources. There is also a noticeable difference between schools in urban settings, where there are “pockets” of very high SES and white majority populations compared to other “pockets” with very low SES, and greater ethnic and
religious diversity. Furthermore, the TCs descriptions of the influences on their learning (including placements sites) often present schools with limited resources, higher ethnic diversity and lower SES student diversity within a high SES community or neighbourhood. The urban geography in the Canadian context, at least as described by the participants in this study, appears more complex that in Milner’s (2006) study. Also, the School Boards polices that define a catchment area for a particular school also has an impact on the diversity or lack thereof in certain schools (TDSB, 2015).

Going to university, more generally, had a major impact on TCs learning about diversity for reasons that closely linked to what was discussed in the previous paragraph, namely communities growing up and pre-university schooling experiences. Teacher candidates who lived in small towns or rural areas tend not to have experienced diversity in schools. Their encounters with diversity happened primarily as they move to the city/Toronto and the University of Toronto. While in university, the program where the TCs are enrolled seems to have an influence on the diversity of students. Religious Education and Physical Education are described as “Caucasian” or “European” and this has been this way “historically”, as one TC puts it.

Other influences on TCs’ learning and understanding of diversity are as follows: interactions within and outside the university; parental attitudes and openness to diversity and home environment that encourages or discourages interactions with divers others; travel; experiences of being “othered”, stereotyped, or commented on based on accented speech, religion and religious clothing, ingrained images such as those about Aboriginals, as well as abilities associated with certain ethnicities. All these experiences, as described by TCs, show that although on the surface diversity is accepted and acknowledged, unquestioned assumptions and attitudes still exist among teacher candidates and society more broadly.

The purpose of this section was to present how TCs describe influences on and sources of their learning about diversity inside and outside the teacher education program. Chapter 7 has described the findings of the collective case (all the teacher candidate participants in this
study), by presenting the major themes that emerged from teacher candidates’ responses to my research sub-questions. These sub-questions focused on TCs’ conceptions of diversity; experiences with diversity and their impact on TCs’ conceptions of diversity; ways the Concurrent Teacher Education Program influenced TCs’ conceptions of diversity; and the related question of how the field experiences in the program helped TCs understand their future teaching in diverse classrooms.

Collective case findings summary and discussion

This study explored the roots of teacher candidates’ (TCs) conceptions of diversity by examining the causes of and influences on their learning about diversity in the Concurrent Teacher Education Program at the University of Toronto. In this section I present a summary of the collective case findings by making connections with past research and my conceptual framework in order to highlight more prominently the roots of diversity conceptions in teacher candidates. The discussion relates to the larger group of teacher candidate responses in both interviews and questionnaire.

Teacher candidates’ conceptions of diversity

Teacher candidates in this study, both across all the collective responses as well as within individual responses, associate diversity less strongly with definitions and norms from education and appear to echo liberal notions of diversity and difference. Meanings ascribed to diversity were “inherent in the language teacher candidates used” (Schoorman & Bogotch, 2010, p. 1044). These participants’ responses also seem to resonate with some postmodernist claims when they state that diversity cannot be explained in precise terms and conceptions of diversity change depending on the situation (i.e. personal or social interactions versus teacher-related interactions), or when they treat all claims to difference equally. Teacher candidates do speak at length about the communities in which they grew up and the impact these communities had on their ‘self’ or identity and their conceptions of diversity. However, the same teacher candidates do not critically analyse what it means to live in a society that is
difference-centered (Moosa-Mitha, 2005, p. 63), nor do they make connections to broader social structures that influence individuals who are marginalized.

As seen from the chapter that presents the collective case studies, the teacher candidates include both group-based/social dimensions and/or attributes of diversity, and also individual characteristics when describing their understanding of diversity. The type of difference found in their descriptions of diversity could be linked to liberalism and its interpretations: individualistic (Rawls, 1971) and communitarian/pluralist (Kymlicka, 1995, 2001). Teacher candidates put emphasis on equality, one of the two principles (i.e. liberty and equality) that govern and characterize socially just democratic societies (Rawls, 1971). Also, similar to an individualist liberal orientation, teacher candidates affirm that individuals may choose to “optimize their rights of freedom and equality in a socially just society” (Moosa-Mitha, 2005, p. 40).

Teacher candidates in this study also echo claims made by communitarian liberals, such as “communities should live in a way that allows individuals the greatest rights of freedom or autonomy, even if they are members of minority communities in terms of numbers, while being treated with equal respect as all others in society” (Moosa-Mitha, 2005, pp. 40-41). Compared to individual liberal claims that see difference as based on individual rights of freedom and equality, teacher candidates also make communitarian liberal assertions where racial difference is viewed as difference that is “cultural”. Such a definition sees structural stratification in society as based on socio-economic indicators, which is racialized in nature as “individuals’ personal choice in engaging in cultural practices” (Bannerji, 2000, p. 43). Also similar to communitarian liberals, teacher candidates recognize difference between communities, but not differences within communities and multiple relationships. People will thus have to choose between their own community and the wider mainstream society. Sameness in communitarian liberal claims is viewed as the norm, which makes these claims not difference-centered.
The teacher candidates tend to use universalist terms, such as “we are all the same”, in their descriptions of diversity, which makes their perspectives normative. A normative perspective includes claims that tend to exclude the lived experiences of people whose relationships may be different from the assumed norm (Moosa-Mitha, 2005). Furthermore, the assumption that differences can be transcended into a “common language of humanity that is the ‘same’ in its entitlement of rights and privileges” (Moosa-Mitha, 2005, p. 42) also make teacher candidates’ orientations to diversity normative in that it renders invisible dimensions of gender, class or race. An illustrative example is that of a teacher candidate describing what he understands by diversity, which was discovered through a “humanity” that connects people in a placement in a community centre. The TC states:

> When I hear diversity I automatically think of culture. You can be diverse in other ways, but I automatically think of culture. It takes me a moment to link diversity to other aspects of what it means to be human [...] Again, with the story of the ladies typing out, I mean, these were women who did not even know how to type. Many are coming from countries where they may not even be allowed to use a computer. So they were typing out Valentine's Day letters to their husbands. I mean, you read that in a book and ‘okay, whatever’. You go and you see that and that calls up a couple of emotions inside of you. Everybody knows what it means to be lonely. Everybody knows what it means to be sad; like you can relate, it's like, it opens your eyes. OK, you know, these people are not any different from me. So I think that’s … that would be the greatest, best thing about the programs are the placements or the most benefit. (Alfredo Y3)

The quote above demonstrates, what Moosa-Mitha (2005) captured in her description of why we need to be treated as equals:

> the bases on which people have the right to be treated as equals is not based on an acknowledgement of their difference; rather, it is an interpretation of equality that transcends difference through an interpretation of equality that is synonymous with the “same” (Phelan, 2001). People have the right to be treated as equals because underneath social difference, we are all the same in our humanity (Moosa-Mitha, 2005, p. 42).

In addition expressing claims that echo liberal notions of diversity, the teacher candidates’ responses also seem to resonate with some postmodernist claims about difference. Yet these responses are not as prominent as the connection to the liberal notions of diversity. This is
evident when they state that diversity cannot be explained in precise terms and that their conception of diversity changes depending on the context, or when they treat all claims to difference equally (thus maintaining mainstream assumptions).

Teacher candidates across the three years in this study, as shown in previous chapters, speak of diversity as age, ethnicity, gender, race, physical ability and sexual orientation (these could generally be categorized as either “fixed” or unchangeable) and also in terms of as perceptions or opinions, or work experience (which could be termed “fluid” in that they can potentially change). Although some teacher candidates seem to focus more on a range of “fixed” dimensions of diversity, others are oriented toward more “fluid” dimension. Additionally, there are those who do not distinguish between “fluid” and “fixed” diversity. The tendency of teacher candidates to speak about diversity as multiple, representational, individuated and fluid resonates with postmodern theorists’ assumptions (Moosa-Mitha, 2005, p. 58). Also, similar to postmodern claims, are teacher candidates’ responses that are difference-centered, but not clearly critical (Moosa-Mitha, 2005). The reason for the non-criticality goes back to what was stated earlier, treating all claims to difference equally which is makes their assumptions mainstream, similar to liberal notions of diversity which emphasize recognizing and respecting difference.

Two diversity dimensions that are prominent in teacher candidates’ discussions are religion and sexuality. These aspects have been discussed in work by Moosa-Mitha (2005) to be postmodernist and difference-centered, perspectives reflected in work by Edward Said (1986, cited in Moosa-Mitha, 2005) and Michael Foucault (1979, 1980). The authors’ writing is focusing on the “Other” as inferior (e.g., Said’s (1986, cited in Moosa-Mitha, 2005) work on Muslim societies) or “Other” as “disease” (e.g., Foucault’s (1979, 1980) work on homosexuality). Although a detailed examination of these two authors’ work and claims could shed more light on my findings, my purpose in referring to them is to illustrate a possible interpretation of teacher candidates’ meanings of diversity as well as their focus on “Other” and sexuality in particular. TCs in this study do refer to Muslims as “Other”. Their discourse links Muslims’ appearance to difference based on religious attire and discussions
evolve around perceptions of “whether the veiling of women ought to be allowed in liberal democracies” (Sanchez, 2009, Abstract). Furthermore, Muslims are referenced in this study in regards to more recent events of “war on terror” and related “new racism of our times” (Housee, 2012, p. 106). According to Said (1981, cited in Housee, p. 106) such perspectives are based on an old prejudice, and “It is a racism that is justified by cultural and religious difference”.

The perceived ‘Muslim’ threat is similar to discussions of sexuality as threat, especially when some TCs bring up Catholicism and ways to reconcile Catholic teachings with teaching about sexuality in future classrooms:

> Things like if we have discussions about sexual orientations what about if you are teaching in a Catholic school and that’s not really welcome there. So how do you tackle that? (Agnieszka Y4)

Another TC, Brian Y4 recounts:

> We talked actually about the issue of homosexuality in Catholic Schools and you know, we had the issue of obviously, you don't tolerate and this is from a Catholic perspective as well. (Brian Y4)

Dimensions of diversity, or rather discussions around dimensions of diversity such as sexual orientation and Catholicism came up as challenging more prominently in responses from Year 3 and Year 5, although Year 4 teacher candidates do touch on them too. Many teacher candidates perceived sexuality as unacceptable in Catholic schools, although they do not state this perception in terms of “disease” (as discussed by Foucault, 1979, 1980) explicitly.

**Past and programmatic experiences with diversity and their influences on teacher candidates**

It can be argued that the breadth of differences and the diffused meaning of diversity that teacher candidates name are rooted in certain processes. These processes include normative discourses, institutional structures, policies and practices (Vertovec, 2012; Sanchez, 2009), as well as different theoretical stances on diversity and difference (Joppke, 2004).
Diversity in modern societies is often argued to be a result of constant population migration and global interaction (Sanchez, 2009). Sanchez (2009) maintains that, “This sociological reality is further complicated by how western colonialism and culture has historically abased the colonised ‘other’, today in Canada embodied in the peoples with dark skin and/or slanted eyes” (Abstract). An explanation of why diversity is viewed in such a way in Canada is offered by Kymlicka’s “liberal type of multiculturalism” (Sanchez, 2009, Abstract).

Although some research argues that “multiculturalism does not sit comfortably together with the liberal principles of neutrality […], Kymlicka regards group rights to their cultural differences as based on liberal principles of tolerance and celebration of diversity” (Sanchez, 2009). Sanchez (2009) further maintains that:

Canada has a policy of multiculturalism that is also a ‘national’ symbol and ideal. The Canadian experience is unique because Canada has built its national identity on the symbol of seeing itself as a ‘cultural mosaic’ based on rights to diversity and reasonable accommodation. But cultural and ethnic diversity in Canada is lived within the consequences of early assimilationist policies that assumed western-culture superiority, which devalued the self-perception of non-white Canadians. Immigration, especially from non-white countries is now Canada’s biggest source of population growth. This situation produces a micro-cosmos of world diversity in Canada where people forget their identity amid vivid awareness of ethnic and cultural differences. (Abstract)

Kymlicka (2002) in his turn states:

Today […] previously excluded groups are no longer willing to be silenced or marginalized, or to be defined as ‘deviant’ simply because they differ in race, culture, gender, ability and sexual orientation from the so-called ‘normal’ citizen. They demand a more inclusive conception of citizenship which recognizes (rather than stigmatizes) their identities, and which accommodates (rather than excludes) their differences. (p. 327)

Although liberal multiculturalism as espoused by the Canadian political philosopher Kymlicka emphasizes an appreciation and celebration of difference through recognizing and accommodating difference, it is not clear how one moves away from excluding and stigmatizing difference (Sanchez, 2009). It can thus be argued that one of the reasons the teacher candidate participants in this study subscribe to values related to diversity, such as
recognizing and respecting difference, is rooted in the way diversity is postulated in the liberal multicultural discourse in Canada. Although it is argued that the Canadian multicultural policy has been constantly reviewed since the seventies (Kymlicka, 1999), both the theory and policy of multiculturalism simplify difference “in dealing with it as if it came from clearly discrete non-porous groups and individuals with very simple identities” (Sanchez, 2009, p. 2). The majority of teacher candidates seem to have adopted this simplicity, as is evident from illustrative responses presented in previous chapters.

Teacher candidates name a number of influences on their learning about diversity, both inside and outside the teacher education program. Community growing up, interactions with diverse others and family and friends are a number of influences outside the teacher education program. These influences seem to hold strong authority, as seen from the data chapters. Community and family influences in the “creation of persons with moral depth” (Sanchez, 2009, p. 2), one of the communitarian liberalist claims, may be argued to be behind the doubts teacher candidates show in relation to their future teaching in diverse classrooms. They struggle with how to find a balance between personal views and beliefs, what a teacher “must” teach in terms of curricula (e.g., sexuality in a Catholic school), and how a teacher would approach teaching diverse students. Teacher candidates seem to be torn between “homogenizing powers of universal individuality” (Sanchez, 2009, p. 2) that communitarian liberals oppose and the “moral self” that was forged as a result of community and family influences.

There is also a tension implicit in some teacher candidates’ responses from the Religion program. The tension that emerged frequently was related to the claim that we as humans are all equal in front of God, while TCs made explicit statements that sexuality is not tolerated in Catholic teachings. On the one hand, the equality in Catholic teaching resonates with liberal notions of equality and many teacher candidates embrace both. Thus, when it comes to applying these notions in teaching of certain aspects of diversity, such as sexuality, the notion of equality is being disturbed and seems not as encompassing after all. In such instances, personal values overshadow broader subscriptions to liberal notions of equality. The question
that many teacher candidates struggle with could be formulated as, “How do we reconcile the liberal self with the moral, and teaching self?”

The question of how to reconcile multiple selves above could be also asked in relation to two other dimensions of diversity that come as prominent in teacher candidate responses: Aboriginal ancestry and ability and disability. On the one hand the teacher candidates think that Aboriginal ancestry is an important dimension of diversity that needs to be included in the teacher education program. This perception can be argued to be linked to a certain guilt or, to use some liberal epistemological claims of “adjustments” to be made to “mistakes” (Kymlicka, 2001) in relation to First Nations in Canada. On the other hand, teacher candidates juxtapose the notion of Aboriginal as important with ability as disability, which is “law” or may “get you a job” as dis/ability seems to permeate the content of the teacher education program. This tension is influenced by personal preferences (sometimes mercantilistic), programmatic and policy focuses that often direct programmatic decisions. At the macro level, policies in Ontario are subscribing to “ideological themes of inclusive education” (Winzer & Mazurek, 2011, p. 5). As pointed out earlier, all provinces and territories in Canada have legislation on special education. In turn, teacher education programs are translating the policy focus in its programmatic decisions, as exemplified by the curricular choices that the teacher candidates in this study point to: emphasis on diversity throughout the program; specific courses on diversity; courses with focus on specific diversity dimensions.

One can also link the teacher candidate “self” and understandings of diversity in this study to the question of who gets admitted into the program. The majority of the teacher candidate participants are Canadian citizens, with a majority being White, middle class, second-generation immigrants, as shown in previous chapters. However, it is important to focus on the notion of “second-generation immigrant”, as this seems to be a finding that is not commented at length in studies on diversity and teacher education. It has to be noted that the notion of ‘second-generation immigrant’ is often contested in research literature (Byers & Tastsoglu, 2008). It is often used in the same way as “second-generation Canadian”
Following Byers and Tastsoglou (2008), I use this term as a heuristic device to describe “Canadian-born, but also Canadian-raised” teacher candidates in this study who had at least one parent who was not born in Canada. If connected to influences discussed earlier (community, family, friends and interactions), the argument that second generation individuals prescribe more easily to liberal notions of diversity may shed a new light on the roots of diversity meanings. A study conducted by Sanchez’ (2009) with children of ethnically mixed marriages in British Columbia, Canada, shows that these individuals showed “compassion both as a principle for moral behaviour and also as a powerful emotion that allowed them to create an identity of self that encompasses and embraces diversity” (p. 1). Sanchez argues that “this attitude fosters a genuinely multicultural cosmopolitan vocation – the soul of what I call Cosmopolitan Liberalism” (Sanchez, 2009, p. 1, emphasis in original).

Connected to the idea of ‘second-generation’ is Ali’s (2008) study, which discusses the notion of sheltered life. Ali maintains that second-generation youth in Toronto tend to grow up in low-income neighbourhoods and interact primarily with individuals that are of the same race and ethnicity, which shelters them from prejudice or discrimination. Because of this seemingly sheltered life, they tend to subscribe to notions of appreciation of diversity inherent in the Canadian multicultural ideology. TC participants in this study are young adults who transitioned to the Concurrent Teacher Education Program directly from secondary school or after one year of university. Most of these TCs are second-generation immigrants/Canadians, and as data show the majority of them have lived sheltered lives. It can thus be argued that many of the teacher candidates in this study, similar to what Ali (2008) maintains, subscribe to liberal notion of multiculturalism and see diversity as sameness as a result of sheltered lives, or living among their own.

Sanchez (2009, p. 12) maintains that the multicultural policy in Canada contributes to “building the classifications of people as ‘ethnic’ (dark skin and/or slanted eyes) or non-ethnic (Caucasian) for the courts and public administration to be able to identify the recipients of rights it claims to grant” (p. 12). Roy (1995, as cited in Sanchez, 2009, p. 12)
states that “[multicultural] often serves as a synonym for ethnic or immigrant”. However, although apparently well intended, to use Sanchez’s (2009) words, “the flip side” of these types of definitions is “when alien minorities are given a contrastive function and seen as inferior to the ethically valuable identity of the dominant group” (p. 12). Negative connotations as described by Sanchez seem to provide a possible explanation for what I describe as “visible” and “in invisible” diversity in teacher candidates responses, which sometimes display ‘color-blind’ approaches to diversity. Teacher candidates seem to resist seeing diversity when interacting with friends, colleagues and students. As one TC recounts:

My three best friends are different from me. One is from Pakistan and two are from China and the Philippines. I’m the only white kid in the group, which is odd because I see… I don’t see them necessarily as color. I don’t see them as white, but I see them as being my friend from Pakistan. I don’t see them as persons of color. So it’s not a grey area, but it’s not one or the other. I see them as my friends, so there’s no color aspect there. I think also knowing someone. If I don’t know you, the first thing I’m going to look at is not racially. Just, it’s a characteristic of you. It’s a feature, it’s whether or not you’re from Canada primarily or if you have heritage roots that come outside North America. So you can see the difference. If I know you someone, that feature sort of gets pushed away. If I don’t know you, it’s sort of right out in front, which is okay. It’s just something that I look at. (Alfredo Y3)

Alfredo Y3 appears to resist labelling his friends “ethnic” (as in “dark skin and/or slanted eyes”) because this may be seen as a “public admission that they are not full members of the Canadian society” (Sanchez, 2009, p. 14). This resistance to being labelled “ethnic” has been argued to be characteristic of immigrant newcomers and their Canadian-born and English speaking children (Sanchez, 2009). The majority of teacher candidates in this study can be called ‘Canadian-born and English speaking children’ of immigrants, as the data show. The public policy of labelling is translated in media accounts as well. As one teacher candidate puts it, “The word diversity, I think in today’s media, in today’s context, especially in school, it’s used to say ‘everyone except the white people’ or ‘everyone except Canadians’ or ‘everyone except Americans’” (Ubah Y3).

As data show, “old tales of superiority and supremacy related to how people look have a pervasive way of staying with us and can become sources of oppression, especially when
sustained by public institutions” (Sanchez, p. 16). It can also be argued that some of threads in the data that show TCs’ openness to diversity depending on situation/context (e.g., ‘I’ll marry one of my own’ versus ‘I am open to have friends who are different than me’). Some may show a reluctance to be placed in a different category because “In America, when somebody has any black blood they are identified as black” (Sanchez, 2009, p. 16). If I were to interpret (although this interpretation may be regarded as populist) this latter statement, it would read as, ‘In Canada, when somebody has any diverse blood they are identified as diverse, although my political correctness and fear not to offend informed by liberal democratic values do not allow me to admit to this publicly’.

Overall findings suggest that the teacher candidates found that diversity was well integrated or even over-integrated in the program. It can be argued that the ‘over-integration’ position is linked to individual beliefs of each TC about the role of the teacher education (i.e. to teach TCs how to teach, rather than teach about certain content). Furthermore, the ‘over-emphasis’ position may also be linked to TCs’ prior experience with diversity and the overall focus of the Bachelor of Education program on diversity, which as data show leads to overlap in materials. Finally, as many TCs in this program came from what they call diverse communities, they already ‘knew’ diversity and thus did not need the emphasis on it.

The discussion in this section was intended to argue that teacher candidates’ conceptions of diversity are largely rooted in their subscription to liberal notions of multiculturalism. The interpretation I offer is not to claim that these are the only interpretations, but they that may offer some insights into the reasons many teacher candidates’ responses reveal meanings of diversity as sameness and their tendency to use reconciliatory language in their descriptions.

The following chapter summarizes the key findings and presents implications that emerge from the data collected for theory, policy and practices, and the participants in this study. This final chapter also describes directions for future research in diversity and teacher education.
Chapter 8: Discussion, Contribution, and Implications

Introduction

This chapter reviews the key findings and themes in this study and presents final conclusions. It also identifies implications of the findings for theory, policy and practice, and the participants in this study followed by suggestions for future research. An epilogue that describes changes to teacher education at OISE and their effect on the Concurrent Teacher Education Program concludes my dissertation.

The purpose of this study was to investigate the learning and teaching about diversity in a five-year concurrent teacher education program with the aim to uncover the roots of diversity conceptions in teacher candidates. The changing demographics of students in Ontario schools due to immigration and internal migration puts pressure on teacher education programs to prepare teachers able to attend to the needs of an increasingly diverse student population. The diversity of students is multilayered and does not limit itself to a single dimension such as race or language. Teachers play a central role in helping students to be successful in their learning. A central question in this research has been to examine how teacher candidates define the concept of diversity, what experiences inside and outside the teacher education program shaped their conception of diversity, and how they perceived their future teaching in diverse classrooms by reflecting on their teaching in field placements.

This investigation was important as research shows that the needs of diverse students in schools in Ontario and other contexts are still not met. Increasing efforts by teacher education programs to include elements that respond to the contextual forces and policies that relate to meeting the needs of diverse students needed to be investigated from the teacher candidates’ perspectives. Such an approach was valuable to provide insights into a permeating question in research that asks how teachers can be prepared better to meet demographic, curricula, and pedagogical challenges in today’s schools.
Although the Concurrent Teacher Education Program lasts for a period of five years, my interest was to examine teacher candidates’ learning in the Bachelor of Education (BEd) portion of the program. The BEd portion consisted of education courses in the last three years of the concurrent program. The BEd was administered through the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education in collaboration with six partner units at the University of Toronto. A review of published documents shows that the teacher education at OISE is informed by diversity, equity and social justice principles and its mission is to prepare teacher as change agents in diverse schools. It thus became important for this research to investigate how teacher candidates experienced a curriculum informed by such principles and mission.

Within a complex process of learning to teach, I found it very important to begin presenting and interpreting the findings by describing how individual teacher candidates navigated their learning in the concurrent program, as they acquired new or revisited old meanings of diversity. By mapping the individual paths of six candidates as they progressed through the varied stages in the program and their own personal development, a clearer picture of teaching and learning about diversity in the program was presented (Chapters 6). A second layer of analysis was necessary in order to present major findings across the larger groups of teacher candidates participating in this study (Chapter 7). A presentation of findings at the micro and macro levels allowed me to highlight the major sources and influences on diversity conceptions in teacher candidates.

The following main question was posed in this study, “What are the roots of diversity conceptions in teacher candidates in a concurrent teacher education program?” I asked the following sub-questions in order to uncover the sources and influences on diversity conceptions in teacher candidates:

- How do teacher candidates enrolled in a concurrent teacher education program conceptualize diversity?

- How do teacher candidates describe their past and present experiences with diversity and their influences on their conceptions of diversity?
In teacher candidates’ view, how is their understanding of diversity affected by the Concurrent Teacher Education Program components?

Findings revealed multiple tensions within the teacher education program, as well as within and among teacher candidates as they learned about diversity. These tensions are described in more detail in the sections that follow.

**Summary of major findings**

**Teacher candidates’ diversity conceptions**

Findings in this study reveal that diversity, for the great majority of the TCs, is associated with difference. Diversity, as described by TCs, is widely spread in urban settings, and tends to be recognized and accepted. The widespread nature of diversity in metropolitan areas is a result of demographic changes generated by an increase influx of immigrants to Canada each year. The majority of immigrants tend to settle in large urban areas, such as Toronto (Statistics Canada, 2005). When describing diversity as difference, the TCs refer to group-based dimensions and individual characteristics. The most frequent group-based dimensions include age, ethnicity, gender, race, physical ability and sexual orientation. Individual characteristics denote opinions, beliefs, and perspectives.

While some TCs tend to focus more on group-based dimensions of diversity such as ethnicity and race, other TCs centre their descriptions on individual characteristics such as beliefs and opinions. Still other TCs do not separate between the two or see them as intrinsically connected. The breadth of differences that teacher candidates name, I argue, originates from a number of sources. A major source of and influence on TCs understanding of diversity is the liberal multicultural discourse in Canada. Public, institutional, research and policy discourses around diversity are other major influences. Public discourses include media portrayals of diversity. Institutional discourses include the university and teacher education program and the research base on diversity that informs teacher education program development. Policy discourses operate at the school, board, provincial and federal levels and
include diversity focused directives and recommendations. One very important characteristic of all these discourses around diversity is the lack of consensus about what diversity means.

The liberal multicultural discourse is informed by the multicultural policy in Canada. The multicultural policy provides a definition of diversity that is stemming primarily from immigration. Diversity in the liberal multicultural discourse is currently defined in a number of ways: (1) an identity based difference (e.g., ethnicity and culture that emphasizes the maintenance and development of distinct cultural identities); (2) an approach that emphasizes valuing diversity and difference and calls for all members of the society to respect and recognize diverse cultural identities and diverse communities; (3) a rights-based approach that puts emphasis on human rights and calls for supporting social, cultural and economic diversity; and (4) the redistribution approach that calls for equal distribution of goods in society for all groups (Joshee & Sinfield, 2013). The teacher candidates in this study defined diversity in terms of culture and ethnicity. They also maintain that diversity needed to be recognized and respected. Furthermore, since diversity is what they ‘live’, they also found the term overused.

In addition to definitions of diversity in the liberal multicultural discourse, research literature on diverse student populations, and the role of teachers in meeting the needs of these students, also defines diversity in a number of ways. Teacher education program development is informed by research, policies at the provincial, board and school levels, and is also influenced by contextual forces such as immigration and internal migration (Gambhir et al, 2008). Regulatory bodies for the teaching profession also make recommendations for elements to be included in teacher education programs, such as courses with a particular diversity focus (Gambhir et al, 2008). As the description of the Concurrent Teacher Education Program presented earlier in Chapter 4 shows, the concurrent teacher education in this program included a number of elements as a result of the influences from contextual forces, such as increasing demographic changes due to immigration and internal migration, as well as recommendations from the Ontario College of Teachers (Gambhir et al., 2008).

Diversity definitions are also present in mission statements, policies and websites of public institutions, including the university where the participants in this study enrolled (UofT,
2011). Furthermore, media materials portray diversity in varied ways. Media reports do not only refer to people but also to products, lifestyles, and services (Lees, 2003). Examples from media come up in TCs’ description of diversity (see Agnieszka’s case in Chapter 6). The varied definitions of diversity in public discourses, policies and research “can affect the ways teachers understand and employ the term” (Silverman, 2010, p. 292). Findings from this study confirm Silverman’s arguments.

A finding related to how TCs conceptualize diversity refers to the language they use in their descriptions. Most participants, even those who were not certain how to define diversity, expressed a certain “good” or “positive” purpose associated with it. Many TCs used language that was reconciliatory, such as “they are just kids” or “no issue there,” which echo liberal multicultural notions of respect and recognition. The language that the TCs use also points to their struggle to take a critical position in relation to diversity and related concepts that they observed in their studies, particularly in field placements. One such example pertains to conflicts among diverse students that some TCs observed. Past research emphasizes the importance of how language is used in teachers’ conceptualisations of diversity and related concepts (Schoorman & Bogotch, 2010). An implication from this finding is that common efforts are needed for constructing language and discussions that “promote critical, yet, respectful analysis” of diversity (Case and Hemmings, 2005, p. 624).

Past experiences with diversity and their influences on diversity conceptions

Two other major sources of and influences on teacher candidates’ conceptions of diversity in this study are the communities where they grew up, as well as their secondary schooling experiences. TCs in this study describe rural, suburban and urban communities. Those TCs who lived in primarily rural and suburban communities conceptualize the diversity that they saw in those communities in terms of ‘white’, high socioeconomic status (and related professional status), family and religious values, and name those communities as ‘non-diverse’. Those TCs who came from urban settings call such settings ‘diverse’ and describe them in relation to ethnicity and religion. An interesting finding is that the TCs tend to omit ‘language’ as a dimension of diversity from their descriptions. Language as a dimension of
diversity is often cited as a major element of diversity stemming from immigration, especially in cities like Toronto that attract large numbers of newcomers to Canada.

Emergent from data is that the TCs that are coming from rural communities tend to be curious to know more about diversity. These TCs’ learning often appears to be caused by a willingness to expand one’s knowledge about diversity more generally, and not as related to teaching in diverse schools. Those TCs who spent most of their lives in urban centres tend to state that they ‘live’ diversity and thus are aware of it, and that the teacher education program put too much emphasis on diversity instead of focusing more on the concept of teaching. Such findings reveal the importance of past experiences, the preoccupation with self-development in TCs, as well as the ‘how’ of teaching as a major concern for TCs in this study. I return to these findings when I discuss the tensions between sources of and influences on TCs’ conceptions of diversity later in this chapter.

In addition and also related to the communities in which TCs grew up, past schooling experiences at secondary level also had a major influence on TCs’ conceptions of diversity. The TCs in this study link the descriptions of their past schools with the notions of ‘diverse’ versus ‘non-diverse’. The TCs coming from rural communities tend to have little experience with ethnic or racial diversity (i.e., schools were primarily ‘white’ or ‘non-diverse’), while those from urban centres tend to maintain that their schools were diverse. Erskin-Cullen and Sinclair (1996) also found that “schools in large urban centres are places where teachers are faced with a plethora of challenges that range from poverty, violence, cultural diversity and a multitude of languages ... [while teachers] teaching in suburban settings ... have more homogeneous student populations, more parental support” (p.1). Diversity in TCs’ descriptions that refer to urban, but also suburban schools is conceptualized in terms of ethnicity, race and religion, or even as only one ethnicity, such as Chinese. This finding points to the fact that diversity tends to be defined from the position of the ‘white’ dominant group, a group to which many TCs in this study belong to according to the demographic data presented earlier in this thesis. Lawrence and Tatum (1998) also found that it is often from the dominant white group that the diverse other is often portrayed.
**Programmatic influences on TCs diversity conceptions and conceptions of future teaching in diverse classrooms**

There are a number of sources of and influences on teacher candidates’ diversity conceptions at the programmatic level in the concurrent program: field experiences, courses discussions, teacher educators, peers and TCs’ own interests. Findings from teacher candidates’ data reveal that diversity is well integrated throughout the teacher education program. Among the sources and influences on learning that TCs name at the program level, field experiences are perceived as significant. Data from TCs show that the teacher education program made considerable efforts to find varied placements for the candidates. Program administrators in this study, however, also pointed out that they did not have control over such placements because the schools usually decided whether or not to accept TCs for practicum. As findings reveal, field experiences took place in both formal and non-formal settings. What made field placements the ‘best’ sites for learning about diversity, and what the TC’s report as having an impact on their conceptions of diversity varies among TCs. What emerged are the following influences in field experiences: the range of diversities in students and in teachers in the schools; whether communities where schools were located were ‘diverse’ or ‘non-diverse’; the type of school; availability of school resources; the school level or division; and the subject matter taught by TCs.

In addition, emergent from the findings is that the interactions with the community, students and school staff in field experiences were major sources of learning for TCs. Past studies that focus on field experiences as sites of learning about diversity report mixed findings (Akiba, 2011). Some studies reveal a positive change in teachers’ understandings of diversity (Brown, 2004; Cpuz-Jansen & Taylor, 2004), while others report little or no change or even resistance to multicultural concepts (Causey, Thomas & Armento, 2000). Many TCs in this study tend to report certain moments in their placements that made them rethink notions of diversity or helped them add additional layers to conceptions that they already held. An example that appeared repeatedly in TCs’ interviews is watching immigrant women write Valentine’s cards to their spouses outside Canada. These moments usually involve emotional
reactions, which lead to conceptual reaffirmation, redefinition or change (Hewson & Lemberger, 2000).

A number of major diversity-related learnings in field experiences were reported by TCs and connect to their perceptions of future teaching in diverse schools. TCs report that they learnt about the type of diverse students that they would encounter in their future teaching. They also were able to see differences between schools in terms of resources, student population and communities surrounding the schools. Some TCs were surprised to learn that the community where the school was located was not often represented in schools in terms of socioeconomic status. For example, because some high schools were more specialized or had a certain focus (e.g., International Baccalaureate schools; French immersion schools; focus on applied studies) they attracted a more diverse body of students. TCs also learned that ‘white schools’ were often located in ‘well-off’ neighbourhoods, and what students called ‘brown’ schools were often composed of representatives from a single ethnicity, such as East Asian students. This latter finding, as stated earlier, points to the ‘white’ dominant position from which diversity is described by many TCs in this study, but also the wider community and media.

In addition to the learnings described above, TCs’ responses reveal that field experiences allowed them to learn about the school culture. School culture for many TCs was linked to stereotypical attitudes toward certain diversities, such as Muslim students wearing hijab, and conflicts that arose in schools in relation to diversity. Conflict, as data reveal, arose between students of different ethnicities, races, religions, or socioeconomic statuses. Some TCs, however, describe what they saw as lack of conflict between students of the same ethnicity or religion. In addition, TCs in this study learnt about barriers to getting to know students better. One such barrier was the lack of information in school records about the type of issue associated with certain students marked as ‘problem students’ on class lists. Some TCs also report that the diversity of teachers did not represent the diversity of students in schools (e.g., a ‘brown school with only white teachers’), a finding consistent with research literature on diversity and education. A number of TCs also describe practices in schools in relation to special needs students. Indeed, while some schools worked to address the needs of such
students, others did not make an effort to engage special needs students in classrooms activities. This latter finding is troubling, given the many policies at the provincial and school board level that specifically focus on special needs students.

Major sources of learning for TCs in university courses appear to be discussions. Discussion is also one of the most frequently used strategies by TEs in this study to teach about diversity in courses, as reported by TCs. Research shows that teaching strategies that emphasize dialogue and debate (Wells, 1999) are very important elements in teacher education programs (Mitchell, Hunter, Patel Stevens, Mayer, 2005). Many TCs seem to prefer such pedagogy, although some question the role of teacher educators (TEs) in such discussions. These latter TCs would prefer TEs to be more involved in the teaching that happens in the classroom. This finding may relate to TCs’ experiences outside the BEd portion of the program, where lecturing is the most frequent teaching approach, as identified by undergraduate course descriptions. As findings show, the learning about diversity happens predominantly when difficult discussions are brought up, either by TCs or TEs. Despite the ‘difficult’ discussions, the majority of TCs tend to use reconciliatory language while interacting with peers and TEs. Even though TCs might bring up a diversity-related issue, then end their description by saying that it was not a major problem. Thus, there is a tendency to be politically correct in both interviews, but also in the classrooms discussions that TCs describe.

Related to discussions, the diversity topics at the program level are also considered major sources of learning. Diversity in the program is taught around topics that relate to specific diversity dimensions, such as special education or race. As data reveal, certain topics may be emphasized more than others for two reasons. One reason relates to who the teacher educators are and what they bring into their teaching, based on interest and past experiences. Another reason connects to what the teacher education program selects as major diversity focuses. At the time of my participants’ studies, programmatic foci were on English language learners (ELLs) and special education, as identified by course titles in published information. Some TCs also identify a programmatic focus on special education as well as Aboriginal education. Interestingly, TCs do not refer to English language learners very often. Many TCs
also point to a ‘more general focus’ in courses that includes aspects of diversity such as race, ethnicity, language, and ability and disability.

Also related to discussions as sources of learning is the notion of ‘sensitive’ or ‘controversial’ topics. The most controversial discussion topic that is often referred to in TCs’ data is faith and religion and sexuality. This latter finding is characteristic mostly of mixed classes that included candidates from more than one concurrent partner unit. Sensitive discussions happen, according to some TCs, when their classmates are representing varied diversities, such as race, ethnicity and religion. Beliefs and values associated with such diversity aspects are perceived as leading to conflicting views and sensitive or difficult discussions. Past studies also show that powerful peer-based learning is “informed by multiple lived experiences” and “provide a fertile ground for structuring difficult conversations” Daniel (2009, p. 19). Daniel’s (2009) study focused on the cohort model of teacher education for preparing preservice teachers to address issues of race within an urban Canadian university setting. Thus, it can be argued that the nature of the discussion and related peer influences were major sources of learning for the TCs in this study.

Some TC’s perception of the relevance of a certain topic to their teaching also influences their learning when participating in discussions. For example, some TCs view sexuality as lacking relevance to teaching elementary students because of the ‘tender’ age of students. Such views are primarily expressed by TCs enrolled in the Religious Education program, which shows that religious beliefs and programmatic focus influence TCs’ learning about diversity. Also, the degree of openness to learning about certain aspects of diversity for some TCs is linked to their perception of the relevance of this diversity aspect to their future teaching in either a ‘diverse’ or ‘non-diverse setting’. Some TCs question the value of including diversity when teaching in ‘non-diverse’ or rural school settings. A major implication for teacher education then is related to recruitment of teacher educators and characteristics of effective teacher educators.

In addition to discussions, reflections appear to be another most frequently used teaching strategy about diversity by TEs. Research literature in teacher education and diversity indicates that reflections are important sources for learning about diversity (Darling-
Hammond & Bransford, 2005; Thomson, 2011; Kyles, Olafson, 2008). In this study, the majority of the TCs contest such research findings when they state that there were too many reflections in the program. In part, this is explained by what TCs see as purposes of reflections. Some TCs describe reflections as an assignment, and thus too frequent and repetitive. Other TCs argue that reflections have to be genuine, not ‘on demand’ to serve the purpose of helping TCs to learn more about diversity. An implication for teacher educators is to clearly discuss the value of including reflections in their teaching.

Another programmatic influence in this study relates to teacher educators (TEs). Many TCs in this study see TEs as major influences on their learning about diversity. TCs associate this learning with teacher educators’ personal and professional perspectives, and/or the embodiment of diversity in teacher educators. By being a parent of a disabled child or being a former principal, TEs bring in first-hand experiences with diversity that help TCs learn more effectively. Furthermore, when TEs embody a certain diversity aspect, such as race or sexuality, TEs’ ‘authentic self’ is also a major source of learning. Other attributes that TCs value in TEs are their ability to create safe spaces, and TEs’ prior experiences of teaching in secondary school settings. Although many TCs appreciate what TEs bring into their teaching, some TCs in this study refer to TEs’ beliefs and biases as hindrance to their learning about diversity. These latter TCs tend to be critical of those instructors who, in their view, are biased toward a certain dimension of diversity, such as race. Some TCs comment on how marks are sometimes reduced by ‘biased’ TEs. As TCs explain, a TE’s bias relates to their belief that students who belong to a marginalized or an oppressed community (such as being Jewish) need to focus on such oppressions in their reflecting writing or assignments. Overall, what appears to be a prominent finding related to TEs thus is that in order to gain credibility to teach about diversity, teacher educators need to both be diverse (thus intimately know a certain aspect of diversity) and have experiences teaching in schools (thus know how to implement diversity in teaching). What TCs perceive as TE bias can be a hindrance to TCs’ learning about diversity.

Related to programmatic influences are findings that pertain to future teaching in diverse classrooms. The majority of TCs reported that the field experiences helped them to get to
know the settings for their work as future teachers. The two major themes that emerged from this learning are ‘getting to know the students’ and ‘implementing diversity in teaching’. The majority of the TCs tend to think that in order to be a successful teacher one needs to get to know the students in the classroom. Therefore, teachers need to certain efforts to achieve that. A number of TCs describe these efforts, by referring to community building or making students feel comfortable. Other TCs make reference to what is expected of teachers in view of “legal issues” (Dabrowka Y5). One major ‘legal’ diversity aspect is ability and disability. In addition to special needs students, some TCs refer to student demographics as a result of immigration. While as number of TCs acknowledge that there are multiple diversities in student, they also emphasize that what matters for teachers is that all the students are “just kids” and should be treated in the same manner. This latter proposition to view all students as ‘same” connects to liberal multicultural notions of respecting diversity and difference.

The majority of TCs in this study express concerns related to implementing diversity in future teaching. TCs conveyed doubts that they would be able to address the needs of all students in diverse classrooms. The TCs’ responses resonate with those of program administrator and teacher educators in this study. Many TEs and a few program administrators expressed the belief that the ‘first year of teaching is about survival’ or that ‘serving the needs of diverse learners is not on TCs’ radar when starting teaching’. These notions relate to what Fuller (1969) calls stages of concern in beginning teachers: pre-teaching ‘non-concern’, early teaching ‘concerns with self’, and later concerns with pupils. Some TCs also expressed concerns that parents’ perceptions of what diversity content was appropriate at certain ages might hinder the implementation of such content in their teaching. One example that a number of TCs bring forward is the topic of sexuality and its relevance for teaching at the elementary level. In addition to parental influence on implementing sexuality content in teaching, a number of TCs reported that their own values and religious beliefs might hinder them from implementing this aspect of diversity in their teaching. Many TCs also comment on more general concerns in their future teaching, such as student engagement. The concerns expressed by the TCs connect to broader concerns of beginning teachers, including connecting what was learnt in the university to classroom practice (Zeichner, 2010), but also to the stages of concern of beginning teachers (Fuller, 1969).
Overall, the TCs in this study appear to have understood the importance of getting to know the students in future classrooms, as a result of their experiences in the concurrent teacher education program, including field experiences. Knowledge of the learner is a core element in OISE’s Learner Document and is reflected in the Ontario College of Teachers’ (2015) The Standards of Practice for the Teaching Profession, the regulatory body for the teaching profession in Ontario. This shows the impact of the varied structures on TCs’ learning in the program.

The findings above reveal the complexity of learning and teaching about diversity in the concurrent teacher education program. The complexity of teaching and learning in the program shows that a “full-blown teacher” (Russell & McPherson, 2001, p. 4) does not emerge from a teacher education program and that becoming a teacher is a process of ‘continuing professional learning’ (Gambhir, Broad, Evans, Gaskell, 2008). Teacher candidates in this study learn about diversity while they navigate the process of becoming teachers. In order to become teachers who are able to meet the needs of students with multiple diversities, TCs are required to be able choose between competing and often conflicting priorities. Such priorities emerge from what they are expected to do as teachers by the school, school boards and the larger community, as well what they see as their purpose as teachers. Findings reveal tensions that stem from pressures that come from within and outside influences on teacher candidates. I describe these tensions in the following section.

**Interrelatedness and tensions between sources of and influences on teacher candidates’ conceptions of diversity**

As findings presented above show, major influences on TCs’ learning about diversity are rooted inside and outside the teacher education program. Programmatic influences include field experiences, sensitive discussions that happen in courses, learning from instructors and peers, and TCs’ ‘self’. TCs’ beliefs, community growing up and past schooling experiences also appear to be major influences on their learning about diversity. Although these influences have been examined separately, this is not an indication that influences act on their own. Rather, “interactions” and “important connections and overlap between and among developmental interactions” (Milner, 2006, p. 344) between these influences seem to
have made a difference in ways TCs learn and understand the concept of diversity. Findings reveal a number of tensions that are inherent in these interrelated sources of and influences on their learning. These tensions are present at many levels: programmatic, individual and societal levels. I describe these in what follows.

One of the major tensions at the programmatic level relates to the program’s emphasis on diversity, equity and social justice and what the majority of TCs perceive as an overemphasis on diversity. The teacher education program at OISE shows a commitment to graduating critical teachers who will be working to make a change in the lives of diverse students in schools. Such a commitment is evident in its mission statements, description of core principles, Learner Document framework, as well as diversity-focused research studies that have been conducted by teacher educators at OISE (Rolheiser, 2011). The design efforts for the Concurrent Teacher Education Program have been thus informed by research on teacher education for diversity, on knowledge base teaching, as well as by the changing educational context in Canada. The resulting integration of diversity content throughout the program, as well as reliance on teaching practices that have been found in research as effective approaches to teaching about diversity, however, is experienced by TCs in a manner that does not match the intended design. The majority of the TCs in this study state that through the emphasis on diversity throughout the program and TEs’ reliance on reflective writing as a major teaching tool, TCs see diversity as an ‘overused’ term and discard reflections as an effective strategy to learn about diversity.

Data in this research reveal a number of possible explanations for TCs reactions to diversity teaching in the concurrent program. One of them is the lack of understanding by TCs of why such a big emphasis on diversity was important in the teacher education program. Struggles to position diversity in their learning in the teacher education program, and in their future teaching, is in turn related to TCs’ perceptions of the role of teacher education program. Many TCs state that they wanted to learn “how to teach” as opposed to learning about certain content, including diversity. The TCs thus are thinking more about the act of teaching and how they can become effective teachers, including how to implement diversity, rather than
why it is important. This finding relates to the second tension – the tension at the individual level.

The tension at the individual level relates to TCs’ conceptions of diversity as revealed by the six individual cases presented in this study. Although findings that emerged from these six cases cannot be generalized to the overall teacher candidate population in this study, they nonetheless provide useful insights that explain some of the tensions in this dissertation’s findings. The multiple data sources used to analyse the six individual cases revealed that diversity was conceptualized differently in relation to self, teaching, and social life. At the personal level some TCs were critical of or resisted certain stereotypical projections of diversity on ‘self’. Other TCs were conservative in their views of diversity (e.g., ‘I’ll marry someone of my own faith’). Those TCs who appeared to be critical and/or showing resistance to stereotypes did so as a result of having experienced stereotypical or other negative attitudes or injustices themselves. These experiences led these TCs to be more open to learning about diversity (see Fernanda Y3, Seoyun Y4, Dionysus Y5). Those TCs who appeared to be conservative at the personal level in relation to diversity, tended to have certain values and beliefs (often related to religion) that prevented them from being open to accepting diversity at the individual level. Being conservative at the personal level, however, does not always show resistance to learning about diversity, as long as diversity is not affecting the ‘self’ at the personal level (e.g., Dabrowka Y5, Pascal Y5, Catarina Y5). Thus, it can be argued that being conservative at the personal level is compatible with being liberal at the social level (e.g., Dabrowka Y5, Pascal Y5, and Catarina Y5).

Findings from the six individual cases further reveal that a certain degree of conceptual change may occur (e.g., from conservative at the personal level to liberal at the personal level) when an individual experiences close or immediate contact with the ‘diverse other’. An example is when François Y3 describes how his classmates who subscribed to Catholic teaching, and thus contested sexuality as relevant to teaching young learners, appeared to change their attitudes (at least in what he could observe) when they learnt that a classmate present at that time in the discussion was gay, and when that particular TC shared personal stories of marginalization with the class. These findings connect to what Rodgers and Scott
(2008) describe as ‘identity and self’ - the external identity of an individual is influenced by contexts and relationships, while the internal self (or meaning making) is transformed by stories and emotions. Taking Rodgers and Scott’ (2008) deliberations into account, it can be concluded that teachers need to make a “psychological shift” in how they think about themselves as teachers, but also how they think about others. This shift to me connects to what Hewson and Lemberger (2000) call ‘conceptual change’, because both of these processes involve the notion of growth over time and constructing and reconstructing meanings.

This meaning making, however, takes place in “specific school political arrangements, in relation to certain expectations and requirements” (Zembylas, 2003, p. 226). Teacher candidates in this study struggle to choose between varied normative and contextual forces that compete for their “allegiance” (Britzman, 1993, p. 33). Furthermore, the way the ‘teacher self’ makes sense of his/her experiences is different at different developmental stages and it evolves over time (Kegan, 1982, 1994; King & Kitchener, 2005). Dewey (1904) describes this process as ‘mental movement of a student’. The TCs in this study can be argued to be at a stage when their meaning making is continuous and changing. TCs continually select between competing conceptions (Hewson & Lemberger, 2000; Larkin, 2010, 2012). Immediate and competing forces influence teachers’ conceptual ecology (Hewson & Lemberger, 2000), which is their structure and development of knowledge of themselves as teachers and knowledge of diversity as a concept. These forces comprise the focus and expectations of the teacher education program, their own beliefs, family, and public and institutional discourses of diversity, including the liberal multicultural values of accepting and respecting diversity.

Findings in this study reveal that within the competing forces, the programmatic intention for diversity is overshadowed by liberal multicultural discourse of “equality as sameness” (Joshee & Sinfield, 2013, p. 60). I contend that the liberal multicultural discourse is the major influence on teacher candidates’ conceptions of diversity outside the teacher education program. A subscription to liberal multicultural values is helping teacher candidates in this study to fit into larger existing structures of the Canadian society that value and recognize
diversity and difference. Also, as stated earlier in this thesis, data reveal that the majority of TCs in this study lived sheltered lives within communities similar to themselves. Although they encountered diversity in the teacher education program through its many elements, such as courses and field experiences, the teacher candidates in this study subscribe to values that are familiar to them, such as recognizing and embracing diversity, and question the program’s emphasis on diversity. The TCs in this study are at a very particular stage in their development - development of complex reasoning characteristic of young adults (King & Kitchener, 2004). Because of their developmental stage, coupled with a concern of ‘self’ as meaning making that is strongly connected with concerns of becoming teachers (Fuller, 1969), it is not surprising that these TCs embrace notions that are widely spread and expected in Canada, such as recognizing and embracing diversity. Now that I have provided an overview of the main findings and learnings from this research, I turn to discussing implications for theory, policy and practice, as well as the participants in this study.

**Implications**

Ladson-Billings (2011) maintains that a pressing question that research that studies diversity in teacher education needs to address is how teacher candidates conceptualize diversity. As we move toward a “more global future” we would want to know what dimensions of diversity are more salient at a given time and why, and the role teacher education can play in a constantly changing context (Ladson-Billings, 2011, p. 386) as a result of immigration or internal migration (Gambhir et al., 2008). Larkin (2010) in his turn maintains that what is missing from research on diversity and teacher education are “portrayals of how and why individuals acquire specific concepts, skills, and beliefs from their experiences in teacher education” (p. 7). Another question related to diversity and teacher education is “Why are the perspectives of preservice teachers so difficult and so slow to change?” (Gomez, 1996, p. 125; see also Larkin, 2010). This study addressed these questions as it examined how teacher candidates (TCs) conceptualize diversity by first looking at the diversity understandings TCs brought into the teacher education program, then investigating how their diversity conceptions changed as a result of the varied components of the concurrent program. The study also explored the nature of the change. The previous chapters and the summary of
findings in this chapter provided some answers to the questions raised in the literature. This section discusses some of the implications of this study for theories that inform teacher education practice and teacher education research.

**Theoretical implications**

This study adds to the body of research that examines teacher knowledge by highlighting the importance of “self” in teacher learning. In addition, The TCs’ preoccupation with becoming effective teachers, as well as the challenges they faced in choosing between competing priorities trouble traditional models of teacher knowledge. Findings in this study thus suggest that in addition to the model of teacher knowledge (Shulman, 1987) and conceptual change approach (Posner et al., 1982; Larkin 2010), other concepts and theories are important to understand teacher candidates’ evolving conceptions of diversity as members of a society where liberal multicultural notions of diversity are promoted through public discourses and policies. These include what Fuller (1969) calls the stages of concerns of beginning teachers; King and Kitchener’s (2004) reflective judgment model of development of epistemic assumptions in early adulthood or what Dewey (1904) calls “mental movement” of a student.

In addition, findings reveal that while the conceptual change lens was a very useful tool to understand the nature and reasons for changes in individual teacher candidates’ conceptions of diversity, it did not account for broader influences on TCs’ learning. This finding points to the fact that “psychological (learning) processes are not independent of sociocultural contexts; indeed they are constituted by the contexts of which they are part of” (Cochran-Smith & Dudley-Marling, 2012, p. 239). Therefore, by examining findings through the claims of the liberal theory, it was possible to highlight influences on TCs’ conceptions at the macro-level. In addition, this lens helped highlight the interplay between the individual and collective orientations towards diversity in teacher candidates.

Prior research on conceptual change shows that for conceptual change to occur, a few conditions must be met: individuals need to be faced with knowledge that is inconsistent with prior ways of thinking; alternative conceptions need to be present; there is a need for time, motivation, thinking and skills to reflect and compare alternative conceptions with prior
knowledge (Hewson, 1992; Hewson et al, 1999; Hewson & Lemberger, 2000; Larkin, 2012). Building on findings from previous studies on conceptual change, findings in my research reveal that interest plays an important role in supporting conceptual change at the level of content knowledge (Treagust & Duit, 2008) and that TCs are faced with competing ideas (Hewson et al., 1998). This study adds to past research on conceptual change by highlighting the importance of “self” in the process of acquiring new conceptions of diversity or redefining existing diversity conceptions. In addition, TCs not only must choose between competing ideas, but also between competing and often conflicting priorities. Such priorities, as mentioned earlier, stem from expectations from the teacher education program, schools, schools boards, and the larger community. Findings also reveal that having experienced stereotypical attitudes and being in close contact with ‘diverse others’ are also factors that affect conceptual change in an individual. Conceptual change is thus a complex process contingent on contexts and relationships that TCs experience. It is also a process that requires a psychological shift in an individual. Such a shift involves how one thinks about oneself and the others. Conceptual change also requires restructuring and integration of personal knowledge with knowledge acquired in the teacher education program. It can be argued that this process of restructuring the diversity knowledge and its integration with personal knowledge of self is at the heart of being a successful or effective teacher of diverse students. The role of teacher education is to guide the TCs through the conceptual change process by acknowledging and drawing on the social, personal and programmatic influences on teacher learning.

**Policy and practice implications**

This section outlines suggestions for practices and policies at the institutional level. While research indicates that the needs of diverse students are not met (Cochran-Smith & Dudley-Marling, 2012; Villegas, 2012), there are still teachers who can engage their diverse students in meaningful learning (Anderson, 2007). A question of interest for policy makers is related to the body of knowledge required for a teacher to be effective or successful with diverse students and the role of teacher education in ensuring that teachers acquire this knowledge. Anderson (2007) emphasizes that the knowledge about diversity and diverse students that
TCs acquire in the program would translate into their practice. Based on this study’s findings, the knowledge question can be linked to the programmatic focus in the Concurrent Teacher Education Program. On the one hand the program has an explicit social justice orientation. On the other hand, a major focus in the program is on special education, as a result of recommendations from the regulatory body of the teaching profession in Ontario. Two major tensions that exist between the social justice education and special education communities are the differences in the disciplinary perspectives that inform the two fields and the historical overrepresentation of diverse students in special education (Cochran-Smith & Dudley-Marling, 2012; Villegas, 2012). While special education is grounded in psychology and takes an individual orientation, social justice education draws on anthropology, sociology, cultural psychology, and sociolinguistics and thus has a sociocultural orientation (Cochran-Smith & Dudley-Marling, 2012).

The different disciplinary affiliations of special education and social justice education translate into different pedagogical frameworks used by proponents of each field. Special education teachers often place emphasis on differentiated instruction with a focus on learning styles, brain research, and multiple intelligences (Cochran-Smith & Dudley-Marling, 2012). Special education teachers often disregard students’ sociocultural differences. Educators that use a social justice perspective adopt culturally responsive teaching (Ladson-Billings, 1995) approaches that aim to take into account diverse students lived experiences and avoid putting the blame on students for their academic success. Nonetheless, these educators are not taking into account the developmental needs of individual learners (Villegas, 2012). Findings in this study reveal that at the program development level the two disciplinary approaches are brought together in the Concurrent Teacher Education Program. This shows that teacher education at OISE is indeed informed by the latest research that calls for collaborative efforts to “link diversity issues in general teacher education with diversity issues in special education” (Cochran-Smith & Dudley-Marling, 2012, p. 237; see also Irvine, 2012; Robinson & West, 2012). Nonetheless, TCs in this study conceptualize diversity as both individual and categorical differences without sometimes differentiating between the two. More efforts thus need to make the differences between the two approaches more explicit for all stakeholders in the teacher education program, including teacher candidates and teacher educators.
Collaborative inquiry projects between educators from the two disciplinary orientations could help achieve this goal.

Although emphasis in the program varies between differentiated instruction and sociocultural approaches to teaching (as made evident by the course descriptions provided earlier in Chapter 4), field experiences appear to have a more individual orientation to learners, which is grounded in psychology (as TCs’ descriptions of these experiences reveal). TCs’ descriptions of the field experiences also reveal that the teaching that occurs at the school level is also grounded in psychology and that in many instances students are identified by an ambiguous “exclamation mark” signifying some “masked” needs. In one particular case a TC reported “ninety percent” of the students in her class appeared to have “an issue” (Erzsebet Y4). This finding relates to the question of overrepresentation of diverse students as special needs (Irvine, 2012; Rueda & Stillman, 2012). Consequently, there is a need to reassess provincial and school board policies that identify students in special education to distinguish between cases of poverty or second-language acquisition, for example, and disabilities. Furthermore, consideration needs to be given to the underlying tension between policies that mandate for special needs students to be part of the regular classrooms and the expectation that teachers in such classes to be specialists in the field of special education. While teacher education programs places emphasis on special education, it is the additional qualification (AQ) courses that would qualify TCs as “specialists”, as a number of TCs in this study state.

TCs in this study also comment on the overlapping diversity content in courses. It might be helpful to facilitate discussions across the program partner units, as well as within the units and teacher educators about the “what”, “how” and “why” of diversity in order to address these concerns. The majority of teacher candidates in this study state that their understating of diversity, as a result of the teacher education program, became broader, that they became more aware or more accepting of diversity. A question that remains is how to transcend beyond this, by taking into account the concerns of candidates with ‘self’, how to become effective teachers and the broader societal influences of the liberal multicultural discourse.

TCs appreciate the number of field experiences that are offered in the program. Although data reveal that TCs had varied placements, establishing stronger partnerships with schools
within and outside the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) may better address concerns expressed by some program administrators. These administrators state that TCs are placed based on availability of spots and willingness of schools to accept TCs, rather than with an intention to offer more varied placements. A clearer message for TCs on the benefits of varied placements could equip them with the patience and willingness to travel to a distance from their home for a placement. Incentives, such as covering travel cost, may help too, given the age of TCs and their limited financial resources, including access to a personal mode of transportation. Group/co-teaching could be a method that would benefit TCs and offer them the peer support that some of them seem to seek, in addition to supports at the school and university level.

Since the community growing up is one of the major influences on teacher learning, an interview may be a good addition to teacher education admissions procedures in order to find out more about the TCs. Interviews would be a valuable element since the Application Profile that TCs complete when applying to the program is anonymous and does not always reveal the true nature of TCs’ demographics. Furthermore, as findings and prior research reveal, few applicants choose to provide biographical information at admission, even in cases when they are encouraged to. In this section I provided implications for TCs, TEs and teacher education program, based on findings in this study. In what follows I provide directions for future research.

**Implications for teacher candidates**

This research study addresses teaching and learning about diversity, a question that is “too complex for a simple and straightforward declaration” (Evans, 2006, p. 48). Although the size of the sample participants does not allow making generalizations for the teacher candidate population in Ontario or Canada, I put forward a number of suggestions “in the form of concluding reflections as a way forward” (Evans, 2006, p. 49), based on findings presented in earlier chapters, research literature and recommendations made by my participants. In this section, I offer some reflections rather than suggestions for teacher candidates based on the insights from the findings in this study, the literature that I reviewed
and also recommendations made by the participants in this study (teacher candidates, teacher educators and programs administrators).

Definitions of diversity currently available in public policies, universities and professions are ever-shifting, ambiguous, and are directed toward different facets, goals and orientations. It might be helpful for TCs to realize that although there is an emphasis on diversity at the macro and micro levels in Canada, which sometimes seems to be “too much” (a TC’s words), there is a need to understand the historical, institutional, and geographic circumstances that are specific to Canada as they prompted certain meanings of diversity at each of these levels. Furthermore, although Canada is associated with a successful model of immigration, this model has undergone substantial changes and requires that we keep up, review and critically analyse changes in policies and what drove them. This will help Canadians in general and TCs in particular to better understand the changing demographics due to immigration. TCs would also need to question whether liberal multicultural notions of diversity are enough to examine the current diversity in Canadian schools.

Reflections have been argued to be one of the most effective ways to teach and learn about diversity. An appreciation of this teaching practice on behalf of the teacher candidates would lead to better use of their efforts. TCs need to start from the premise that a reflection is not ‘just an assignment’ and seek clarification from TEs when they feel that they cannot make connections between the study topics and their own lived experiences.

Although field experiences appear as important sites of learning, teacher candidates would benefit from realizing the importance of readings and classroom time in learning about diversity. Efforts could be made to engage in discussions around diversity concepts more deeply in classrooms. Also, TCs could benefit from realizing the importance of conceptual frameworks in the readings to help them understand what is happening in the field, and not discount them as long or void of practical guidance. An appreciation of frameworks that address diversity, often interdisciplinary, may shed light on multiple interpretations of diversity and reasons why certain concepts may or may not “play out” in the field.
Teacher candidates recognize that there is a big emphasis on diversity at the institutional and programmatic level. It might be helpful for TCs to address their concern related to ‘learning about diversity’ versus ‘learning how to teach about diversity’ early in the program or as soon as they make such a realization. Also, TCs might wish to engage in discussions about teaching diverse learners both in placements (with students, supervising teacher educators, colleagues, fellow classmates, associate teachers and school administrators) as well as in university classrooms (with fellow classmates, teacher educators and program administrators). It is important to try and overcome the ‘fear to offend’ and ‘politically-correct language’ in order to further discussions that are more critical. Being proactive and asking questions of various stakeholders may help further their knowledge about teaching practices in diverse schools and factors that may affect their teaching. Although the pressure of first encounters with students in classrooms is high, teaching for diversity may start with small steps, such as “saying hello and thanking every student for being there,” as one TC states.

Teacher candidates need to be more active in voicing their concerns related to content, teaching practices and field placements related to diversity during their studies. This could help address questions of overlap of materials that they bring up in interviews, or pedagogy that is not conducive to in-depth study of diversity.

**Implications for teacher educators**

Findings in this study, based on the three large data pools from teacher candidates, teacher educators and program administrators have significant pedagogical implications for teacher educators. As the majority of teacher candidates in this study maintain, diversity content is over-integrated in the concurrent teacher education program, although taught both implicitly and explicitly. A concern that TCs have expressed is the overlap and repetition of diversity content across courses. Teacher educators (TEs) in the program may need to engage in conversations about diversity content in order to avoid overlaps, which seems to be one of the reasons TCs found diversity “boring” or “too much”.
TCs express an appreciation of safe spaces that are created by teacher educators for varied ‘sensitive’ diversity discussions, although such spaces may be lacking sometimes. A number of reasons have been brought up by TCs that relate to who instructors and students in classrooms are. Although some TEs note in their interview responses that they make efforts to get to know the TCs in their courses in order to bring their experiences into their teaching practices and classrooms. However, many posit that the class size, content and class time do not allow addressing this question.

As findings reveal, the majority of TCs in this study subscribe to broad liberal notions of equality and responses to differences, such as recognizing and respecting difference. A question that TEs might address in their teaching is how varied meanings of diversity came to exist more generally, and then more specifically in Canada. Following from this, TEs could also engage students in how these meanings affect general public understandings of diversity and meanings of diversity in teacher education research. Furthermore, since many TCs note that diversity does not connect to their teachable, it would be helpful to bring in disciplinary-focused conceptual discussions of diversity and initiate conversations around disciplinary approaches to diversity content and diversity teaching.

TCs find that TEs over-rely on certain pedagogical practices, such as reflections. They view these as mainly assessment tools and not as a teaching strategy aiming at developing critical thinking. Furthermore, although TCs affirm that they find discussions conducive to greater learning compared to reading or lecturing, some of them maintain that there are too many student-led activities and question the value of ‘TCs teaching TCs’. TEs may consider incorporating an element in their teaching where purposes of varied teaching practices are discussed. This will both help TCs reduce their resistance to such teaching practices and also help them appropriate strategies to avoid “restating arguments for the sake of obtaining a mark” (one TC’s words) as well as understand that reflexivity and internalization are important steps in the process of conceptual change.

A prominent thread in the findings relates to what TCs call a ‘fear not to offend’ in discussions and interactions in the university program, as well as in school classrooms. TEs might consider addressing the question of ‘political correctness’ (a TE’s words) and the
impact of taking neutral or moderate positions, as opposed to expressing more radical views and opinions on teaching and learning. Furthermore, although some TEs include discussions of diversity-related policies in their teaching, more critical analysis of how these policies impact certain marginalized groups is needed. A discussion of policy impact on the discourse about diversity is also needed. As I read through the interviews, I wondered whether certain teaching approaches in the program started with the assumption that TCs did not know enough about diversity and if recognizing what students know, or think they know about diversity, would be helpful in channelling TEs’ pedagogical efforts.

TCs appear to favor field experiences as sites of learning about diversity, including courses that have a placement attached to it. Implied in TCs’ responses is the idea that reflections are part of assignments for completing varied field placements. Teacher Educators may benefit from learning more about the varied placements TCs go into and offer more guidance of how to make connections between classroom readings and field placements. An example given by a TE is an “inquiry project” where TCs choose an aspect of diversity they want to focus on in the field placement and subsequently critically examine it in the reflective writing.

TCs name a number of influences on their learning about diversity, with teacher educators/instructors being a major influence. TEs might benefit from understanding the importance that TCs place on their role in the course and that this role goes beyond just teaching the material. Who TEs are and what they bring to the course in terms of personal and professional experiences have a big impact on how TCs relate to certain concepts of diversity. Although the majority of teacher candidates value the experiences that the TEs and TCs bring in the program, they still question why TEs bring certain diversity content into the classroom or why both TCs and TEs may display a certain bias towards certain conceptions (e.g., an ‘anti-Catholic bias’, which comes out strong in many interviews). It might be helpful for TEs to address these concerns by having discussions linked to personal biases or certain experiences that may have had an impact on TEs (as well as TCs), and how those connect to the Canadian context or content that is relevant to the schools in Canada.

TEs, as described by teacher candidate participants in this study, appear to bring in varied identities and personal and professional experiences in courses they teach. TCs appreciate
these experiences, but also question the relevance of some of them. Although there are opportunities for professional development related to diversity at the institutional level, only a few TEs profit from them, as data reveal. One of the reasons that are provided by teacher educators themselves (as well as program administrators) is that professional development is not compulsory. This reason combined with the many demands on TEs’ time hinders TEs from engaging in such opportunities. TEs might benefit from discussions within and across teacher education units aimed at generating ideas that may help overcome some of the barriers to professional development. Furthermore, such discussions would facilitate a better understanding of the teaching practices and diversity content choices across the units, as well as how to better negotiate diversity content with the course mandate.

**Implications for future research**

In this section, I provide reflections on the implications of my study for future research, as well as reflections on additional research in the area of diversity and diversity learning and teaching. This study adds to prior research that emphasizes the importance of focusing on the sequence of activities rather than on separate activities in a teacher education program in order to provide a more detailed view of how TCs learn in the program more generally (Meirink, Meijer, Verloop, Bergen, 2008) and how they learn about diversity in particular. My study also shows that it multiple conceptual frameworks are needed to examine teacher learning and conceptual change. Since conceptual change is a process that is deeply individual, but also part of the learning in the teacher education program and life outside the program, frameworks that stem from different disciplinary fields are useful analytical tools for teacher candidates’ developing understandings of diversity.

One area of future research is to further explore theoretical frameworks that can help explain how teacher candidates change their understandings of diversity. A comparison of applications of different theories to data analysis could yield valuable findings that would shed insights on applicability of theories when analysing research on diversity learning in teacher education programs. As findings reveal, teacher candidates in this study entered the program either directly from secondary school or after completing one year of university studies. The TCs fall under what is termed late adolescent or early adulthood group (King &
Kitchener, 2004). TCs’ stages of development (King and Kitchener, 2004) as well as what Fuller (1969) calls the stages of concerns of beginning teachers came out as important characteristics to be taken into account when analysing findings. Thus, findings from a study that further explores the interrelatedness between the development of ‘teacher self’ and the developmental stages of the ‘individual self’ would help better understand the learning process in teacher education programs as experienced by teacher candidates.

Future research could also examine teacher candidate conceptualizations of diversity in different social contexts. Such research would help compare how diversity discourses in different contexts compare to that of Canada and determine the salience of certain diversity dimensions specific to other contexts. In addition to exploring the influence of contexts on diversity conceptions, future research could investigate in more depth peer and instructor relationships and their influence on TCs’ learning about diversity in teacher education programs, including mixing students from different program and/or disciplinary units. TCs in this study link the diversity of peers and instructors to differences in opinions and beliefs. These influences, coupled with a specific programmatic focus, such as Religion, appear to have a big impact on TCs learning about diversity.

Another area of research could explore diversity conceptions of stakeholders in ‘diverse’ and ‘non-diverse’ Ontario schools: practicing teachers including associate teachers, schools administrators, students and their parents in schools across Ontario. TCs in this study expressed concerns about implementing diversity in their teaching due to certain unwritten policies in schools or school culture, irrelevance of incorporating diversity at certain teaching levels and ‘non-diverse’ schools, as well as the influence of parents on implementing diversity content. Exploring perspectives of teachers, administrators, parents and students themselves on the relevance of diversity and ways to address the needs of students represented in classrooms across Ontario could help better inform teacher education programming as well as teacher educators’ pedagogy.

Future research could also focus on comparing how diversity is conceptualized by first-generation immigrants/Canadians and second-generation immigrants/Canadians, taking into account the country of origin as well as the communities where they settle in their new
country. Findings from such a study could shed more light on sources of diversity conceptions, such as length of stay in Canada and experiences with diversity inside and outside of Canada.

Finally, a longitudinal study that traces diversity understandings of teacher candidates from the beginning to the end of a five-year concurrent teacher education program, as well as in their first few years of teaching would provide more insights into major influences on learning about diversity at different stages of becoming teachers. Such a study might identify ways to help these future teachers overcome the many concerns typical of beginning teachers that seem to get in the way of meaningfully implementing diversity in their classroom teaching. This section provided recommendations for future research that result from findings in this study. The Epilogue that follows concludes this dissertation.
Epilogue

At the time of completion of the study (2015), the five-year teacher education program that my participants were part of was being phased out due to changes in the Government of Ontario’s requirements for teacher education. Subsequently, OISE’s decision was to become an “all-graduate institute of teaching, learning and research” (Singh, 2014). The provincial government decision, following the recommendations from a task force set up in 2013, was to expand teacher education programs to two years instead of one year, starting in the fall of 2015 (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2012). This change was required of all faculties of education in the province of Ontario, Canada.

The University of Toronto (UofT) where the participants in this study come from, rather than increasing the length of the teacher education programs, announced its decision in May 2014 to discontinue all the pathways into teacher certification that were offered at the undergraduate level and not to admit any new students in its undergraduate programs beginning in 2015. The two options for becoming a teacher through their programs are now two existing graduate programs instead, the Master of Arts in Child Study and the Master of Teaching (OISE, 2015). As a result of the change, the two graduate programs would graduate about 350 students a year, compared to approximately 1,100 students each year (Singh, 2014).

Media reports at the time of the announcement shed some light on reactions to this change (Singh, 2014). Other faculties of education in Ontario, in order to meet the new Ministry of Education requirements that the Bachelor of Education be extended to four semesters of course work and include a minimum of 80 days of classroom teaching experiences, have extended the six-year concurrent program to six years. The University of Toronto administration stated that the change to graduate programs only was in line with the university’s primary focus as a research-intensive university. The students enrolled in UofT’s undergraduate teacher education programs at the time of the announcement reported mixed feelings regarding the change: some supporting the idea of obtaining a graduate degree, while others expressed their concern that the change is limiting access to teacher education.
programs due to increased costs and fewer places. Some administrators in the existing undergraduate teacher education programs at UofT expressed concern that the shift to solely research-oriented degrees would reduce the professional focus of the programs (Singh, 2014). How the graduate teaching degrees will work out remains to be seen.
References


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Appendices

Appendix A. Teacher Candidate Questionnaire Information Letter

(Questionnaire for all teacher candidates in the third, fourth and final year of the Concurrent Teacher Education Program: institution’s listserv email message including information about the study as well as printed Information Letter for class visits)

Dear Teacher Candidate:

My name is Victorina Baxan and I am a graduate student in the Department of Leadership, Higher and Adult Education at the University of Toronto. As part of my thesis research, I am conducting a qualitative study on teacher candidates’ experiences in the Concurrent Teacher Education Program. The title of the study is: Uncovering Roots of Diversity Conceptions in Teacher Candidates in a Concurrent Teacher Education Program: A Case Study of Teaching and Learning about Diversity.

I am requesting your cooperation as a voluntary participant in this study. As there is much interest in how teacher education programs prepare teachers for diverse student populations in Ontario, I hope that this study will shed light on this question from your perspective as a teacher candidate and future teacher in Ontario schools.

I am inviting you to assist me by agreeing to participate in the study. If you agree to participate, click on the following web address that will lead you directly to the on-line questionnaire: http://www.XXXXXXXXX. It takes about 20 minutes to complete the on-line questionnaire. The technology driving this on-line questionnaire will allow you to access the questionnaire only once, so please set aside about 20 minutes to complete the questionnaire in one sitting.

This questionnaire will be sent to all students enrolled in their third, fourth and final year in the Concurrent Teacher Education Program. It involves responding to questions about your opinions on diversity and teaching diverse students. Since the on-line questionnaire does not require you to identify yourself, and the results of the on-line survey auto-tabulate, there is no way to trace responses back to specific individuals. This means that your anonymity will be preserved. The data collected will in no way be used in evaluative purposes. In addition, your name and the name of your affiliated school will not be identified in conference presentations, written reports or publications. All data from this research will be kept in locked files and will be accessible only to the researcher. All data will be destroyed after five years. When the study is complete, a report of the findings, in summary form, would be available, should you be interested in receiving a copy.

In addition, should you agree to participate in this questionnaire, you could, of course, withdraw at any time without harm or discomfort, and could decline to answer any question or any parts of the questionnaire. Following the receipt of questionnaire responses, I will conduct follow-up focus group and individual interviews. Please indicate whether you would like to be contacted for follow-up interviews by clicking here ____________ (Appendix B).
If you would like to receive more information about the study, please contact me or my supervisor, Dr. Antoinette Gagné, at the numbers/emails below. Also, if you have questions about your rights as participant, you can contact the Office of Research Ethics at ethics.review@utoronto.ca or 416-946-3273. Please save a copy of this information letter for your own reference.

Yours sincerely,

Victorina Baxan
Phone: @ or email: @

Dr. Antoinette Gagné
Phone: @ Email: @
Appendix B. Teacher Candidate Consent and Interest in Follow-Up Interviews Form

(This form appears as a link in the Teacher Candidate Questionnaire Information Letter [Appendix A], sent via email and attached to the printed Information Letter during class visits)

☐ Yes, I agree to participate in the questionnaire conducted by Victorina Baxan. I have read and understood the conditions under which I will participate in this study. I understand that participation in this study will be kept confidential, that it is not related to my course or program requirements, and that I may withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason without harm or discomfort to me.

Please indicate whether you would like to be contacted for follow-up interviews (a focus group interview, an individual interview or both) by providing your email address or phone number below.

☐ I would like to be contacted for a follow-up focus group interview conducted by Victorina Baxan and can be contacted at (please include phone number or email):   

________________________

☐ I would like to be contacted for a follow-up individual interview conducted by Victorina Baxan and can be contacted at (please include phone number or email):

________________________

☐ I would like to be contacted for both a follow-up focus group interview and individual interview conducted by Victorina Baxan and can be contacted at (please include phone number or email):

________________________

Your participation in the study is greatly appreciated.
Appendix C. Teacher Candidate Questionnaire

INTRODUCTION
This questionnaire is part of Victorina Baxan’s thesis research at the University of Toronto. I would like to find out about your learning experiences about diversity in education and teaching diverse students in the Concurrent Teacher Education Program. All the teacher candidates in Year 3, 4, and 5 of the program have been sent an invitation to participate in my study.

This questionnaire will take you about 20 minutes to complete. I would like to ask you about your opinion and suggestions on how to improve teacher candidates’ experiences of learning about diversity in education in the Concurrent Teacher Education Program. I want to remind you that it is not possible to trace your answers back to you and that all data are automatically tabulated. For several questions, it is possible to select more than one answer. In addition, you may skip over any questions that you do not want to answer. I thank you in advance for your support.

Part I

I would like to obtain information about you that will help me analyze your responses. Let me remind you that I will not be able to link you personally to your answers and your responses are voluntary.

Please put a check on the line next to your answer and fill in the blanks for the statements which apply to you.

1. What program are you in?
   - Primary/Junior
   - Intermediate/Senior

2. What is your home faculty, college or campus?
   - Faculty of Music
   - Faculty of Physical Education and Health
   - St. Michael’s College
   - UT Mississauga
   - UT Scarborough
   - Victoria College

3. What is you gender?
   - Female
   - Male

4. Please select the response or responses that best identify your racial identity (based on Statistics Canada’s July 2008 classification):
   - Aboriginal (Inuit, Métis, North American Indian)
   - Arab/West Asian (Armenian, Egyptian, Iranian, Lebanese, Moroccan, etc.)
☐ Black (African, Haitian, Jamaican, Somali, etc.)
☐ Chinese
☐ Filipino
☐ Japanese
☐ Korean
☐ Latin American
☐ South Asian
☐ Southeast Asian
☐ White (Caucasian)
☐ Other
☐ I prefer not to respond

5. If you consider yourself to be a person with a disability, please select the response or responses that best identify you:
(according to Statistics Canada (2001), "Disability" refers to difficulties with daily activities and the reduction in the amount or kind of activities due to physical or mental conditions or health problems)
☐ Person with a physical disability
☐ Person with a learning disability
☐ Person with a mental health condition
☐ Person with a health condition
☐ I do not consider myself to be a person with a disability
☐ I prefer not to respond

6. Do you consider yourself to be gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, two-spirit or queer
(based on 2011-2012 Consecutive Bachelor of Education Program Online Applicant Profile)?
☐ Yes
☐ No
☐ I prefer not to respond

7. Are you a(n):
☐ Canadian Citizen/Permanent Resident
☐ International Student

8. Please select the response that best identifies your religion (based on Statistics Canada's 2001 classification):
☐ Christian
☐ Muslim
☐ Jewish
☐ Buddhist
☐ Hindu
☐ Sikh
☐ Other
☐ No religion
☐ I prefer not to respond

9. What language do you speak at home?
☐ French
☐ English
☐ Other (please specify) ____________________

10. How old are you?
☐ 20 years old or younger
☐ 21 - 25 years old
☐ 26 - 30 years old
☐ 31 – 35 years old
☐ 36 - 40 years old
☐ 41- 45 years old
☐ 46 – 50 years old
☐ 51 – 60 years old or older

11. What was the size of the community that you feel best describes where you spent the largest part of your growing up years?
☐ Rural or small town (under 10,000)
☐ Small city (10,000--100,000)
☐ Medium city (100,000--500,000)
☐ Suburb of a medium city (100,000--500,000)
☐ Large city (500,000--1,000,000)
☐ Suburb of a large city (500,000-- 1,000,000)
☐ Major city (Over 1,000,000)
☐ Suburb of a major city (Over 1,000,000)
☐ Other (specify)_________________________

12. Please select the response or responses that best describe the racial composition of your neighborhood (based on Statistics Canada's July 2008 classification):
☐ Aboriginal (Inuit, Métis, North American Indian)
☐ Arab/West Asian (Armenian, Egyptian, Iranian, Lebanese, Moroccan, etc.)
☐ Black (African, Haitian, Jamaican, Somali, etc.)
☐ Chinese
☐ Filipino
☐ Japanese
☐ Korean
☐ Latin American
☐ South Asian
☐ Southeast Asian
☐ White (Caucasian)
☐ Other
☐ I prefer not to respond
13. What is the highest educational credential achieved by any of your parents or guardians (based on 2011-2012 Consecutive Bachelor of Education Program Online Applicant Profile)?

- Secondary (high) school diploma
- College, CEGEP, or other post-secondary certificate or diploma
- Apprenticeship-based certificate
- University degree, certificate or diploma
- None
- I prefer not to respond

Part II.
In this part of the questionnaire, I would like to ask you about your views and opinions related to diversity. Please answer these questions as honestly as you can. Absolutely no attempt will be made to identify you from your responses. There are no correct or incorrect answers.

1. When you hear the word diversity, what does it mean to you? Please describe.

___________________________________________________________________________

2. How would you describe the method through which you gained your understanding about diversity? Check all appropriate categories.

- personal experiences before enrolment in university program
- university classes
- field placements/teaching practicum
- workshops
- mentoring
- individual readings
- professional experiences
- interactions with socially diverse others
- observations
- independent study
- other (Please specify)_____________________

3. How do you learn best about diversity? Check all appropriate categories.

- working by myself
- working with students similar to myself
- working with students different from myself
- participating in or listening to instructor-led class discussions
- listening to lectures by the instructor
- watching television or programs on video/DVD
- listening to guest speakers
- interacting with others outside of class/in the community
- hearing about other students’ or my instructor’s experiences with diversity
- being asked to demonstrate (or share) what I’m learning with my classmates
- other (please describe) ________________________________
4. To what extent do you agree with each of the following statements?

a. My own background (in terms of age, gender, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, etc.) often influences how I view myself and others.

b. I am able to recognize when situations (on campus, at work, or in other areas) are not welcoming to members of certain groups.

c. My own beliefs often influence how I view myself and others.

d. I communicate effectively with others from backgrounds different from my own.

e. I seldom participate in community service or political activities.

f. It is important to me that my instructors come from a variety of backgrounds with regard to race/ethnicity, age, gender, etc.

g. It is important to me that the students in my classes come from a variety of backgrounds with regard to race/ethnicity, age, gender, etc.

Part III.

In this part of the questionnaire, I would like to ask you about your views and opinions related to diversity courses in your program of study. Please answer these questions as honestly as you can. Absolutely no attempt will be made to identify you from your responses. There are no correct or incorrect answers.

1. How important is it to you that your university courses teach information about the following topics?

a. race and ethnic relations in Canada
b. topics related to sexual orientation (bi-, hetero-, or homosexuality)

Very important☐    Somewhat important☐   Not very important☐   Not at all important☐  No opinion ☐

2. Overall, would you say that your instructors in the Concurrent Teacher Education Program regularly make diversity topics part of their courses (assigned materials, discussion topics, etc.)?

☐ Yes
☐ No
3. Overall, would you say that your instructors in the Concurrent Teacher Education Program take into account students’ backgrounds and past experiences when teaching their courses (assigned materials, discussion topics, etc.)?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Unsure ☐

4. Please rank order the importance your program explicitly gives to the following topics (1 being the most emphasized, 6 being the least). By “explicitly” I mean that the topic has been covered in particular courses.

☐ Racial/Ethnic Diversity
☐ Language Diversity
☐ Economic (Social class) Diversity
☐ Gender Diversity
☐ Sexual Orientation Diversity
☐ Special Needs
☐ Religious Diversity
☐ Other (please specify) ____________________________

5. In which of the following courses were diversity topics explicitly addressed? Check all appropriate categories.

☐ Principles of Teaching: Legal, Ethical and Professional (Year 3)
☐ Inclusive Education: ELLs and Exceptional Learners (Year 3) course
☐ Social Foundations of Teaching and Schooling (Year 4)
☐ Psychological Foundations of Learning (Year 4)
☐ Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment (Year 4) course
☐ Mentored Inquiry and Teaching 1 (Year 4) course
☐ My practice teaching
☐ In general, my BEd courses
☐ Courses outside the BEd portion of the Concurrent Teacher Education Program
☐ In general, the Concurrent Teacher Education Program
☐ Other (please specify) ____________________________

6. What teaching strategies were used by teacher educators when topics of diversity in education were raised?

☐ Individual assignments
☐ Group work outside classes
☐ In-class group discussions
☐ Other (please specify) ____________________________
7. Overall, how would you rate the level of attention given to diversity questions in your CTEP classes?
   - Too much
   - About right
   - Not enough

8. Overall, how would you rate the level of attention given to diversity questions in your BEd-specific classes?
   - Too much
   - About right
   - Not enough

Part IV.

In this part of the questionnaire, I would like to ask you about your opinion and suggestions on how to improve teacher candidates’ experiences of learning about diversity in education in the Concurrent Teacher Education Program. Absolutely no attempt will be made to identify you from your responses. There are no correct or incorrect answers.

1. What was the greatest challenge in understanding the concept of diversity during your studies in the teacher education program?

   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________

2. What helped you most in developing an understanding of diversity in education and teaching diverse learners in the teacher education program?

   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________

3. How could the topic of diversity in education be better addressed in the Concurrent Teacher Education Program? Please state your opinion and suggestions. There are no correct or incorrect answers.

   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________

4. Additional Comments: Please add any comments that you think may help improve your experience of learning about diversity and teaching diverse learners in the Concurrent Teacher Education Program.

   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________

Please click here __________ to submit your questionnaire.
Thank you for completing the questionnaire. I appreciate your time and effort in helping to improve teacher candidates’ experiences in the program.

To provide further input, I will be conducting focus groups interviews and individual interviews. If you would like to participate, please provide an email address for me to contact you for further details by clicking here (Appendix B).

Thank you!
Appendix D. Teacher Candidate Individual Interview Information Letter

Dear Teacher Candidate:

My name is Victorina Baxan and I am a graduate student in the Department of Leadership, Higher and Adult Education at the University of Toronto. As part of my thesis research, I am conducting a qualitative study on teacher candidates’ experiences in the Concurrent Teacher Education Program. The title of the study is: *Uncovering Roots of Diversity Conceptions in Teacher Candidates in a Concurrent Teacher Education Program: A Case Study of Teaching and Learning about Diversity.*

As there is much interest in how teacher education programs prepare teachers for diverse student populations in Ontario, I hope that this study will shed light on this issue from your perspective as teacher candidate and future teacher in Ontario schools.

I am seeking teacher candidates from the Concurrent Teacher Education Program to volunteer for one interview. All teacher candidates who volunteer their participation will be included in the study. This interview will require no more than 60 minutes of your time. With your permission interviews will be digitally recorded and transcribed. The interview will involve responding to questions about your opinions on the concept of diversity and teaching diverse students. Should you accept to participate in this interview, the confidentiality of your response will be ensured. A pseudonym will replace your name and no individuals will be identified in conference presentations, written reports or publications. The data collected will in no way be used in evaluative purposes. In addition, your name and the name of your affiliated unit will not be identified in conference presentations, written reports or publications. All data from this research will be kept in locked files and will be accessible only to the researcher. All data will be destroyed after five years from the time the study is complete. When the study is complete, a report of the findings, in summary form, would be available, should you be interested in receiving a copy.

In addition, should you agree to participate in this interview, you could, of course, withdraw at any time without harm or discomfort, and could decline to answer any question. If you accept to participate in this individual interview, please read through the attached consent form and contact me directly via email at @. Following the receipt of your form, I will contact you to arrange details for the interview. I am extremely grateful for your assistance and would be glad to answer any questions you may have now or later. I and my supervisor, Dr. Antoinette Gagné can be contacted at the numbers/emails below. Also, if you have questions about your rights as participant, you can contact the Office of Research Ethics at ethics.review@utoronto.ca or 416-946-3273. You could keep a copy of this information letter for your own reference.

Yours sincerely,

Victorina Baxan    Dr. Antoinette Gagné
Phone: @ or email: @    Phone: @ Email: @
Appendix E. Teacher Candidate Individual Interview Consent Form

Please complete, sign and return this Consent Form to Victorina Baxan in person or at @.

☐ Yes, I agree to participate in an individual interview conducted by PhD candidate Victorina Baxan in the Department of Leadership, Adult and Higher Education at OISE, University of Toronto. I have read and understood the conditions under which I will participate in this study. I understand that participation in this study will be kept confidential, that it is not related to my course or program requirements, and that I may withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason without harm or discomfort to me.

Please sign below:

Signature _______________________ Date ________________________________

Name (please print) _________________________________________________
Appendix F. Individual Interview Guide for Teacher Candidates

(Note: when prompts/clarifications or additional questions were used, these are listed in parenthesis. slashes are used for cases when the researcher used terms or questions interchangeably)

I am interested in understanding how you conceptualize diversity. I am also looking forward to learn from you how you experienced learning about diversity in the Concurrent Teacher Education Program and other contexts, and how you perceive your future teaching in diverse classrooms. I want to remind you that I am going to use a pseudonym to replace you name. There is not right or wrong answer. In addition, you may skip over any questions that you do not want to answer.

Background information

1. What year are you in your program?
2. What teaching level/division of the program are you in?
3. What is your home faculty, college or campus?
4. What is your specialist/major?
5. Tell me a bit about yourself. (How would you describe your identity/racial identity?)
6. How would you describe your religion?
7. What languages do you speak at home?
8. How would you describe the community you grew up in? (e.g., size, racial composition, etc.)
9. Can you tell me a little bit about your family? (e.g., size, ancestry)
10. Are you the first to go to university in your family?

Conceptions and experiences with diversity

1. When you hear the concept/notion/word diversity, what does it mean to you?
2. What experiences have helped you define diversity as you know it today?
3. How would you describe your own experience with diversity? (Consider, for example, your own ethnicity, your neighborhood, community, classmates, university education and any other experiences)
4. In your opinion, how your beliefs and experiences with socially diverse others prior to enrolling in the Concurrent Teacher Education Program have influenced how you understand diversity today? (Please describe)
TCs’ experiences of learning about diversity in the Concurrent Teacher Education Program

1. Thinking about the Concurrent Teacher Education Program and experiences outside the program, how would you describe the method through which you gained your understanding about diversity? (e.g., readings, courses, interactions with socially diverse others). How do you learn best about diversity?

2. The university’s website refers among others to the Ontario Human Rights Code. How were dimensions of diversity from this document talked about in courses or fieldwork, if you think back to these? (In what courses were these talked about?) What was your reaction to and experiences with these discussions?

(Ontario Human Rights Code lists dimensions of diversity such as Aboriginal ancestry, race, colour, culture, ethnicity, language, ability, disability, class, age, ancestry, nationality, place or origin, faith, religion, sex, gender, sexual orientation, sex or family status, marital status, gender identity)

3. Are there any specific dimensions of diversity that you find particularly important and that you would like to see addressed throughout your teacher education program for all teacher candidates?

4. Can you describe any ideas that relate to diversity in education that you found more challenging than others?

5. Is there anything about yourself that may have influenced how the students took up diversity topics in courses?

6. Reflecting upon the Concurrent Teacher Education Program, is there anything about the program, or instructors or your classmates that may have influenced how students took up diversity topics in courses?

7. Based on your experiences in the program, has your understanding of diversity changed?/ How has the program help you develop your understanding of diversity?

8. In your opinion, what components of the program contribute most to TCs’ understanding of diversity and teaching of diverse students?

9. How (specifically) have your field-based experiences (observation, internship, mentored inquiry, practicum) prepared you for teaching diverse students? (Any challenges or positive experiences?)

10. Have you observed examples of teaching for diversity in your practicum?

11. Can you describe you most recent practicum experience in relation to diversity?

12. How specifically, have your courses prepared you for teaching diverse students? (What materials were made available to you by the instructors to address diversity? How did you find these materials?)
13. Can you please describe teaching strategies used by teacher educators/instructors when topics of diversity in education were raised? (Were any of these strategies more effective than others? What about reflective writing? E-portfolio?)

14. In your opinion, how do instructors take into account TCs’ past experiences with and beliefs about diversity when addressing this topic in their courses? (Please describe)

15. How would you describe your instructors in CTEP, from the diversity point of view?

16. As a prospective/future teacher, how does the concept/notion/question of diversity impact you and your future teaching?

**Future teaching**

1. If you were to teach a diverse group of students, what successes and/or challenges do you anticipate?

2. As a future teacher, what strategies could you use to make sure all students have the opportunity to succeed? Can you give some examples?

**Concluding questions**

1. What was the greatest challenge in understanding the concept of diversity in the Concurrent Teacher Education Program for you?

2. What helped you most develop your understanding of diversity?

3. Overall, how well was the topic of diversity integrated into your teacher education program? (e.g. courses, practicum placements, reflective writing)

4. How could the topic of diversity be better addressed in CTEP?

5. How will your experience in the Concurrent Teacher Education Program impact your career choices?

6. Is there anything else you would like to add to help improve TCs experiences in the concurrent teacher education program?

*Thank you very much for your contribution to this research.*
Appendix G. Teacher Candidate Application Profile Information Letter

Dear teacher candidate:

My name is Victorina Baxan and I am a graduate student in the Department of Leadership, Higher and Adult Education at OISE, University of Toronto. As part of my thesis research, I am conducting a study related to teacher candidates’ experiences in the Concurrent Teacher Education Program. The title of the study is: Uncovering Roots of Diversity Conceptions in Teacher Candidates in a Concurrent Teacher Education Program: A Case Study of Teaching and Learning about Diversity. As there is much interest in how well teacher education programs prepare teachers for diverse student populations in Ontario, it is hoped that this study will shed light on this question from your perspective as a teacher candidate and future teacher in Ontario schools.

I am asking your permission to access your Application Profile housed in the CTEP Program Office under the supervision of the CTEP Program and Planning Officer. This is accordance with the “Policy of Access to Student Academic Records” Section 4(e) “Access by Others”, subscription (ii) “any other information contained in the official student academic record … shall be released to persons … only with the student’s prior expressed written consent…”. This will help me find out how you conceptualized diversity at the time of applying to study in CTEP as well as analyse my research findings. Should you accept to allow me to access your Application Profile, confidentiality of your work and participation in this study will be ensured. Codes will be used to replace your name and no individuals will be identified in conference presentations, written reports or publications. The data collected will in no way be used in evaluative purposes. In addition, your name and the name of your affiliated unit will not be identified in conference presentations, written reports or publications. All data from this research will be kept in locked files and will be accessible only to researcher. All data will be destroyed after five years. When the study is complete, a report of the findings, in summary from, would be available, should you be interested in receiving a copy.

In addition, should you give me permission to access your Application Profile, you could, of course, deny me access at any time without harm or discomfort to you. If you accept to give me access to your Application Profile, please complete, sign and return to me the attached Consent Form. I am extremely grateful for your assistance and would be glad to answer any questions you may have now or later. I and my supervisor, Dr. Antoinette Gagné can be contacted at the numbers/emails below. Also, if you have questions about your rights as participant, you can contact the Office of Research Ethics at ethics.review@utoronto.ca or 416-946-3273. You could keep a copy of this information letter for your own reference.

Yours sincerely,

Victorina Baxan
Phone: @ or email: @

Dr. Antoinette Gagné
Phone: @ Email: @
Appendix H. Teacher Candidate Application Profile Consent Form

☐ Yes, I am granting access to my Application Profile to Victorina Baxan. I have read and understood the conditions under which I will participate in this study. I understand that participation in this study will be kept confidential, that it is not related to my course or program requirements, and that I may withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason without harm or discomfort to me.

Please sign below:

Signature _______________________ Date _____________________________

Name (please print) ________________________________________________
Appendix I. Teacher Candidate Reflective Writing Information Letter

Dear Teacher Candidate:

My name is Victorina Baxan and I am a graduate student in the Department of Leadership, Higher and Adult Education at OISE, University of Toronto. As part of my thesis research, I am conducting a qualitative study related to teacher candidates’ experiences in the Concurrent Teacher Education Program. The title of the study is: *Uncovering Roots of Diversity Conceptions in Teacher Candidates in a Concurrent Teacher Education Program: A Case Study of Teaching and Learning about Diversity*. As there is much interest in how teacher education programs prepare teachers for diverse student populations in Ontario, it is hoped that this study will shed light on this question from your perspective as a teacher candidate and future teacher in Ontario schools.

I am asking your permission to access your Reflective Writing/E-Portfolio that you are working on as part of your teacher education program (some of the reflective writing pieces that I am asking to have access to may be stored in your e-portfolio, and some you may have stored at home/on your computer). This will help me in finding out how you understand diversity and the areas that you feel are most important when teaching and learning about this notion. A request to allow me access to reflective writing will be sent to all teacher candidates in year three, four, and five of the Concurrent Teacher Education Program. All teacher candidates who volunteer their participation will be included in the study. Should you accept to allow me to access your reflective writing, confidentiality of your work and participation in this study will be ensured. Codes will be used to replace your name and no individuals will be identified in conference presentations, written reports or publications. The data collected will in no way be used in evaluative purposes. In addition, your name and the specific location and name of the agencies or schools where you completed your field experiences will not be identified in conference presentations, written reports or publications. All data from this research will be kept in locked files and will be accessible only to researcher. All data will be destroyed after five years. When the study is complete, a report of the findings, in summary form, would be available, should you be interested in receiving a copy. In addition, should you give me permission to access your reflective writing, you could, of course, deny me access at any time without harm or discomfort to you. **If you accept to give me access to your reflective writing, please read through the attached consent form and contact me directly at @.** Following the receipt of your form, I will send you my Utorid and instructions on how you can grant me access to your e-portfolio and/or you could send your reflective writing pieces to me, as attachments, to my email address (@). I am extremely grateful for your assistance and would be glad to answer any questions you may have now or later. I and my supervisor, Dr. Antoinette Gagné can be contacted at the numbers/emails below. Also, if you have questions about your rights as participant, you can contact the Office of Research Ethics at ethics.review@utoronto.ca or 416-946-3273. Please keep a copy of this information letter for your own reference.

I will also be conducting focus group interviews and individual interviews with teacher candidates related to diversity as described above. Please indicate whether you would like to be contacted for such interviews on the consent form.

Yours sincerely,

Victorina Baxan
Phone: @ or email: @

Dr. Antoinette Gagné
Phone: @ Email: @
Appendix J. Teacher Candidate Reflective Writing/E-Portfolio Access Consent Form

Please complete, sign and return this Consent Form to the researcher.

☐ Yes, I am granting access to my Reflective Writing/E-portfolio to Victorina Baxan. I have read and understood the conditions under which I will participate in this study. I understand that participation in this study will be kept confidential, that it is not related to my course or program requirements, and that I may withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason without harm or discomfort to me.

I can be contacted at the following email address:

__________________________

Please sign below:

Signature _______________________ Date ________________________________

Name (please print) ____________________________________________________
Appendix K. Teacher Educator Interview Information Letter

Dear Teacher Educator:

My name is Victorina Baxan and I am a graduate student in the Department of Leadership, Higher and Adult Education, University of Toronto. As part of my thesis research, I am conducting a study that is examining how diversity is learnt and taught in the Concurrent Teacher Education Program. The title of the study is: Uncovering Roots of Diversity Conceptions in Teacher Candidates in a Concurrent Teacher Education Program: A Case Study of Teaching and Learning about Diversity. As there is much interest in how teacher education programs prepare teachers for diverse student populations in Ontario, it is hoped that this study will shed light on this question from teacher educators’ and teacher candidates’ perspectives. In this research study I wish to find out what program components are perceived by teacher candidates (TCs) and teacher educators as having a contribution to TC’s knowledge and skills about teaching diverse learners, and on their becoming agents of social change. The data will be used for my doctoral dissertation, conference papers, articles and book chapters. The research findings will contribute to the current research literature and to continual improvements of TC’s experiences in teacher education programs.

I would like to invite you to participate in one interview session. This interview will require no more than 60 minutes of your time. It involves responding to questions about your opinions on diversity and teaching diverse students, the courses you teach, your academic/professional training, how you include diversity in your initial teacher education courses, the teaching strategies that you use and how TCs react to the inclusion of this topic in your teaching. I will seek to interviews teacher educators teaching courses across the Bachelor of Education (BEd) portion of the Concurrent Teacher Education Program as well as education-related courses outside of the BEd portion of the program.

With your permission interviews will be digitally recorded and transcribed. Should you accept to participate in this interview, the confidentiality of your response will be ensured. Names will be changed to pseudonyms, no individuals will be identified in conference presentations, written reports or publications. The data collected will in no way be used in evaluative purposes. In addition, your name and the name of your affiliated unit will not be identified in conference presentations, written reports or publications. All data from this research will be kept in locked files and will be accessible only to researcher. All data will be destroyed after five years after the study is complete. When the study is complete, a report of the findings, in summary from, would be available, should you be interested in receiving a copy. In addition, should you agree to participate in this interview, you could, of course, withdraw at any time without harm or discomfort to you. You can refuse to answer particular questions and/or request that certain information be kept “off the record’ and/or the tape recorder be turned off. If you accept to participate in this interview, please read through the attached consent form and contact me directly at @. Following the receipt of your form or email, I will contact you to arrange details for the interview. I am extremely grateful for your assistance and would be glad to answer any questions you may have now or later. I and my supervisor, Dr. Antoinette Gagné can be contacted at the numbers below. Also, if you have questions about your rights as participant, you can contact the Office of Research Ethics at ethics.review@utoronto.ca or 416-946-3273. You could keep a copy of this information letter for your own reference.

Yours sincerely,

Victorina Baxan
Phone: @ or email: @

Dr. Antoinette Gagné
Phone: @ Email: @
Appendix L. Teacher Educator Interview Consent Form

Please complete and sign the form and return it to Victorina Baxan at @. You can also keep it for later collection and email me notifying of your interest in participating.

☐ Yes, I agree to participate in an interview conducted by Victorina Baxan. I have read and understood the conditions under which I will participate in this study. I understand that participation in this study will be kept confidential, and that I may withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason without harm or discomfort to me.

Please sign below:

Signature __________________ Date_________________________________

Name (please print) _______________________________________________
Appendix M. Interview Guide for Teacher Educators

Introductory questions

1. How long have you been associated with initial teacher education at the University of Toronto and the Concurrent Teacher Education Program in particular? In what capacities?

3. What are your current roles and responsibilities in the Concurrent Teacher Education Program (e.g., course teaching, field supervision)?

2. What partner units do/did your students come from? (i.e. divisions’ names).

Conceptions of diversity

1. When you hear the word/notion/concept of diversity, what does it mean to you?

2. What experiences have helped you define diversity as you know it today?

Experience with Diversity

1. How would you describe your own experience with social diversity? (i.e. consider your own ethnicity, your neighborhood, community, professional colleagues, student body, college education and additional experiences)

2. Did your own academic education prepare you to teach about diversity and teaching diverse learners? If not, how did you learn?

3. In what ways do you think your own life and work experiences with socially diverse others influence how you work with teacher candidates?

Teaching about Diversity

As you know, my research interest is in diversity and I was wondering how you address diversity in your course.

1. The university’s website refers among others to the Ontario Human Rights Code. How have you addressed dimensions of diversity from this document, either directly or indirectly, during your course?

2. How do you address diversity in your classroom instruction?

3. What materials are you able to make available to your students to address diversity? How do you go about selecting instructional material?
4. What diversity dimensions have proven to be the most challenging for students to understand? Why?

5. How did students react to the inclusion of diversity questions in your course?

(Why do you think the students reacted in such a manner? Who were the students in your course? Do you take into account teacher candidates’ past experiences with and beliefs about diversity when addressing this topic in your course? If yes, could you please describe in what ways? If not, in what ways can their past experiences be incorporated into the course to facilitate their understanding about diversity?)

6. What teaching strategies have you used to provide prospective/future teachers with the opportunities to reflect upon dimensions of diversity in education?

7. Is there anything about yourself that may have influenced how the students in your course(s) took up the topic of diversity?

8. Reflecting upon the concurrent teacher education program, is there anything about the program that may have influenced how students took up diversity in your course(s)?

9. Is there anything about the students that makes it more or less difficult for them to develop meanings of diversity? (e.g., personal background, prior experience with socially diverse others, etc.)

10. Do you supervise the development of the e-portfolios of teacher candidates? What is the most important aspect of the e-portfolio?

11. A critical part of teacher education are the field experiences. How does your program address diversity in field experiences for student teachers? From your past observations, what are some of the successes and/or challenges that the teacher candidates face in their practicum in relation to diverse students?

Inclusion of diversity in program/courses

1. Are there any ways the institution encourages including diversity in teacher education programs?

2. Are there any barriers to including diversity in teacher education courses?

3. Are there any educational polices at the board or provincial levels that influence the inclusion of diversity in teacher education programs?

4. In your opinion, is there anything that may influence TCs’ understanding of diversity and willingness to teach diverse students?

Future teachers

1. What kind of competencies should teacher candidates be developing in order to work for equity, diversity and social justice with students, parents and their communities?
2. What is your impression of the overall impact of the program on teacher candidates’ understanding of diversity and teaching diverse learners?

3. In your opinion, what components of the program contribute most to TCs understanding of diversity and ability to teach diverse students?

4. What are the successes and challenges you anticipate teacher candidates will face in their early years of teaching with regards to addressing diversity in their classes? What led you to think of these? (How can challenges be overcome?)

**Professional development of CTEP instructors**

1. What are the teacher educators currently doing, either collectively or individually, for professional development or training in the area of diversity?

2. What sorts of professional development or training would you recommend that the University/Department provide to assist the teacher educators in meeting their teacher education diversity goals?

**Concluding Questions**

1. In your opinion, how does a teacher education program provide TCs with experiences, knowledge, and skills requisite to effectively teach diverse learners?

2. Is there anything else you would like to add?

*Thank you very much for your contribution to this research!*
Appendix N. Program Administrator Interview Information Letter

Dear Program Administrator:

My name is Victorina Baxan and I am a graduate student in the Department of Leadership, Higher and Adult Education at the University of Toronto. I am conducting a study that is examining how the concept of diversity is learnt and taught in the concurrent teacher education program. The title of the study is: *Uncovering Roots of Diversity Conceptions in Teacher Candidates in a Concurrent Teacher Education Program: A Case Study of Teaching and Learning about Diversity.* As there is much interest in how teacher education programs prepare teachers for diverse student populations in Ontario, it is hoped that this study will shed light on this question from the perspectives of program administrators, teacher candidates and teacher educators. The data will be used for my doctoral dissertation, conference papers, articles and book chapters. The research findings will contribute to the current research literature and to continual improvements of TC’s experiences in teacher education programs.

I invite you to participate in one interview session. This interview will require no more than 60 minutes of your time. It involves responding to questions about your opinions on diversity and teaching diverse students, the academic/professional training for teacher educators in your program, and how concepts of diversity are addressed by various program components. With your permission interviews will be digitally recorded and transcribed. Should you accept to participate in this interview, the confidentiality of your response will be ensured. Names will be changed to pseudonyms, no individuals will be identified in conference presentations, written reports or publications. The data collected will in no way be used in evaluative purposes. In addition, your name and the name of your affiliated unit will not be identified in conference presentations, written reports or publications. All data from this research will be kept in locked files and will be accessible only to researcher. All data will be destroyed after five years from the time of the completion of this study. When the study is complete, a report of the findings, in summary form, would be available, should you be interested in receiving a copy.

In addition, should you agree to participate in this interview, you could, of course, withdraw at any time without harm or discomfort to you. You can refuse to answer particular questions and/or request that certain information be kept “off the record” and/or the tape recorder be turned off. If you accept to participate in this interview, please read through the attached consent form and contact me directly at @. Following the receipt of your form or email, I will contact you to arrange details for the interview. I am extremely grateful for your assistance and would be glad to answer any questions you may have now or later. I and my supervisor, Dr. Antoinette Gagné can be contacted at the numbers/emails below. If you have questions about your rights as participant, you can contact the Office of Research Ethics at ethics.review@utoronto.ca or 416-946-3273. You could keep a copy of this information letter for your own reference.

Yours sincerely,

Victorina Baxan
Phone: @ or email: @

Dr. Antoinette Gagné
Phone: @ Email: @
Appendix O. Program Administrator Interview Consent Form

Please complete and sign the form and return it to Victorina Baxan at @. You can also keep it for later collection and email me notifying of your interest in participating.

☐ Yes, I agree to participate in an interview conducted by Victorina Baxan. I have read and understood the conditions under which I will participate in this study. I understand that participation in this study will be kept confidential and that I may withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason without harm or discomfort to me.

Please sign below:

Signature __________________________ Date ________________________________

Name (please print) ________________________________________________________
Appendix P. Interview Guide for Program Administrator

Please tell me a little about yourself and your role as program administrator in CTEP.

*Conceptions of diversity*

1. When you hear the notion/concept/word diversity, what does it mean to you?
2. What experiences have helped you define diversity as you know it today?
3. What diversity-related goals does the Concurrent Teacher Education Program have at this time?
4. Please describe any diversity aspects that are unique or particularly important to your program.

*Professional development of CTEP instructors*

1. What are the teacher educators currently doing, either collectively or individually, for professional development or training of instructors in the area of diversity?
2. What sorts of professional development or training would you recommend that the University/Department provide to assist the teacher educators in meeting the teacher education programs’ diversity goals?

*Teacher candidates and their learning about diversity*

1. In your opinion, how does a teacher education program provide TCs with experiences, knowledge, and skills requisite to effectively teach diverse learners?
2. Reflecting upon the current teacher education program, is there anything about the program that may influence how students take up the issue of diversity?
3. Is there anything about the instructors/teacher educators that may influence how students take up the diversity in courses?
4. Is there anything about the students that makes it more or less difficult for them to develop meanings of diversity? (e.g. personal background, prior experience with socially diverse others, etc.)
5. In your opinion, what components of the program contribute most to TCs understanding of diversity and teaching diverse students?
6. Do you take into account teacher candidates’ past experiences with and beliefs about diversity in the delivery of the teacher education program (e.g., selection of course material, selection of instructors, and selection of sites for field placements)? If yes, could you please describe in what ways? If not, in what ways can their past experiences be incorporated into the program to facilitate their understanding about diversity?
7. Overall, is there anything that may aid or hinder TCs’ understanding of diversity and ability to teach diverse students?

*Future teachers*

1. What are the successes or challenges you anticipate graduates of the Concurrent Teacher Education Program will face in their early years of teaching with regards to addressing diversity in their classes? What led you to think of these? How can challenges be overcome?

2. Is there anything else you would like to add?

*Thank you very much for your contribution to this research.*
Appendix Q. Letter to Teacher Educators to Facilitate Class Visit

Dear Teacher Educator:

My name is Victorina Baxan. I am a PhD candidate in the Department of Leadership, Higher and Adult Education at the University of Toronto. I require your assistance to facilitate a visit to your class as outlined below.

I am conducting a study that is examining how diversity is learnt and taught in a concurrent teacher education program. The title of the study is: *Uncovering Roots of Diversity Conceptions in Teacher Candidates in a Concurrent Teacher Education Program: A Case Study of Teaching and Learning about Diversity*. As there is much interest in how teacher education programs prepare teachers for diverse student populations in Ontario, it is hoped that this study will shed light on this question from the perspectives of program administrators, teacher candidates (TCs) and teacher educators.

In order to meet the objectives of this study, I request your permission to visit your class so that I can explain the rationale for my study to the teacher candidates taking your course and, for those who agree to participate in the study, allow them to complete a consent form and questionnaire after the class or online. The visit, including presentation of the study, would only take 10 minutes and the completion of the questionnaire will take approximately 20 minutes outside of class.

I thank you for your assistance in this matter and look forward to a positive and early reply to this request. I am extremely grateful for your assistance and would be glad to answer any questions you may have now or later. I and my supervisor, Dr. Antoinette Gagné can be contacted at the numbers below.

Yours sincerely,

Victorina Baxan
Phone: @ or email: @

Dr. Antoinette Gagné
Phone: @ Email: @