

## **Social Justice and Equity: A Teacher Educator's Journey Within**

*by Diane Ross*

### *Introduction*

The following research article tells the journey of my search to answer the question, "How do I, as a teacher educator, prepare teacher candidates to teach in socially just and equitable ways?" Like any good research, the first step is to form the research question and then select the research methodology that will lead to the most valid and reliable conclusions. Important for me to clarify at the beginning of this article is that what I learned in this process is that the choice of methodology was not a way to find the answer but was the answer.

In searching for a methodology to help answer my research question, I found heuristics. *Heuristic* comes from the Greek word *heuriskein*, meaning "to discover or to find." The heuristic process is a way of being informed, a way of knowing. The practitioner internally searches for the nature and the meaning of experiences and works to develop methods for further investigation. In this process, the researcher experiences a growing self-awareness and self-knowledge. In a heuristic study, the question of validity is one of meaning. My goal in this research became not to find monolithic conclusions to what teacher educators should do or be but to describe what meaning I gained from this research process. The hope is that the description of this process may be catalytic and educative to others.

The words of Caitlin Bruce, one of my co-researchers, best explained the purpose of this research.

You can point out that we [teacher educators working for social justice] are not alone. Sometimes we feel that we are the only one out there that cares. We need to know that there is a community. There is a multicultural community that we seek out. We need to know that there is a community out there that is supporting our work. We need to develop the language. We need to describe people's approaches. We need to describe what people are doing. We need to gather categories that describe what we are doing that links to what is already being done.

### *Rationale*

As teacher educators, we are directed by federal mandate to *transform* our teacher candidates into social activists and change agents in their classrooms. Social justice and equity are mandated dispositions that all teachers should acquire before they reach licensure. As a middle childhood teacher educator, I am asked to follow national standards in the preparation of my students. Under National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE)/National Middle School Association (NMSA) standards, effective February 14, 2001, middle childhood educators in the United States were for the first time asked to give evidence of the dispositions of teacher candidates.

Standard 1 *Young Adolescent Development*: “Middle level teacher candidates understand the major concepts, principles, theories, and research related to young adolescent development, and they provide opportunities that support student development and learning” (<http://www.ncate.org/standard/programstds.htm>, February 14, 2003).

The criterion for assessment of this standard is as follows:

Candidates must respect and appreciate the range of individual developmental differences of all young adolescents. They must believe that diversity among all young adolescents is an asset. They must use this knowledge to provide all young adolescents with learning opportunities that are developmentally responsive, socially just and equitable, and academically rigorous.

(<http://www.ncate.org/standard/programstds.htm>, February 14, 2003)

However, NCATE/NMSA leave problematic tasks of defining *social justice and equity* and provide little guidance as to how one observes and assesses evidence that teacher candidates are actually disposed to practice justice and equity in the teacher education unit and ultimately with middle childhood students.

*What does it mean to be socially just and equitable?*

Work to prepare educators who are socially just and equitable has been problematic because the NMSA standards, new in 2001, (<http://www.ncate.org/standard/programstds.htm>, February 14, 2003) have provided neither definitions for many key terms nor a clear indications of the consequences of the changes for teacher educators. Furthermore, multiple perspectives on the contemporary meaning of social justice and equity have complicated the task of preparing teachers with dispositions to offer socially just and equitable learning opportunities; Rizvi (1998), however, has reminded us that social justice is not a timeless or static concept but instead reflects the changing social and economic conditions in society. He presented three definitions of social justice, including Rawls' (1972) and Nozick's (1976) as well as a Marxist perspective.

Rawls' theory of social justice, emphasizing the concept of fairness, included two general principles necessary for a morally sustainable social justice. First, he believed that every person is entitled to the most complete basic rights as anyone else and second, that if anyone has more than another, the person most in need should receive more. Rawls emphasized fairness, yet his work suggested a "*veil of ignorance* as to the role of social position in this process of equal distribution" (Rizvi, 1998, p. 48).

According to Nozick (1976) social justice is based on market individualism and on what people deserve. Where Rawls focused on the distribution of goods, Nozick emphasized entitlement, believing that social justice requires just competition but not necessarily just outcomes. Both Rawls and Nozick relied upon a strong sense of individualism with each person intent on his or her own individual liberty.

The social-democratic theory of social justice embraced by Marxists stresses the importance of needs, a tradition based on the assumption that the community is more than a collection of individuals, and its members are responsible to the greater good. It assumes that the community is not merely a sum of its individuals. The Marxist view emphasizes a cooperative sense of community (Rizvi, 1998). With these three definitions standing in clear contrast, I struggled as a teacher educator to help my students define and make sense of *social justice* and the related disposition.

*Are schools a place for social justice and equity to occur?*

Historical perspectives on teaching for social justice have further impeded my understanding of the impact of the 2001 standards on my work as a middle childhood teacher educator (Counts, 1932; Kliebard, 1986; Rugg, 1920; Kesson & Henderson, 2000; Freire, 1970; Dewey, 1916, 1938; Hamilton & McWilliam, 2001; Michael Apple,

1979; Ayers, 1998; Goodlad, 1979). In 1916 John Dewey initiated a conversation about what should be taught and learned in his description of education as “the reorganization and reconstruction of experience, which adds to the meaning of experience and which increases the ability to direct the course of subsequent experience” ( p. 76).

Over time educational theories have evolved around three elements: subject matter, learners, and society. In the 1920s Rugg looked for the interdependence of these three components and the common question in education. The 20s and 30s saw the growth of progressivism, whose proponents fought the social efficiency model, seeking participatory democracy at all levels. Moving beyond the progressivists, Counts (1932) envisioned education as a means to create an equitable world without oppression and injustice, reawakening social reconstructivism. Although these traditions encouraged a change in the intellectual traditionalist and social efficiency modes, a need to reflect the voices of the underrepresented in educational theory and curriculum development remained. Many worked for participatory democratic practice, but others such as Apple and Friere fought in a politically active way. In their desire for social justice, these leaders paved the way for conversations about justice and equity in schools in the third millennium.

Historically, social justice and equity has been lifted up as integral in public schools in America. As Jonathan Kozol states in his most recent work *The Shame of the Nation*, we are far from creating a sustained systemic change in our schools’ injustice and inequity. Therefore, being able to show examples of social justice and equity in education is becoming harder and harder for teacher educators.

*How does one prepare teachers to teach in socially just and equitable ways?*

Regarding social justice and equity, the literature on teacher candidates indicates that

1. They do not believe racism is a problem (Moultry, 1988; Goodlad, 1990).
2. They enter the teaching profession for reasons other than changing society to make it more just and equitable (Ginsburg & Newman, 1985; Goodlad, 1990; National Center for Education Information data, 1996).
3. They do not believe Whiteness is a culture and are unable to reflect on their own status as privileged White persons, exacerbating status differences and inequities in the educational structure because most teachers are White and middle class, and an increasingly greater number of school-age children come from diverse backgrounds (Schwartz, 1996, Bradfield-Kreider, 2001; Carpenter, 2000).
4. They resist changing any beliefs they have brought into teaching; and they particularly resist beliefs imposed on them (Bradfield-Kreider, 2001; Carpenter, 2000; Dewey, 1938; Goodlad, 1990; Ginsburg & Newman, 1985; Howard, 1999; Jipson, 1995; Titus, 2000; MacIntosh, 1989; Moultry, 1988; Simpson, 1992; Sobel & Taylor, 2001; Strike & Posner, 1992; Tatum, 1992; Pohan & Mathison, 1999).

Not only is there a probable disjunction in my students around their experiences and willingness to consider social justice and equity in their work, but also often a disjunction between my personal philosophy on social justice and equity and that of my students. This raises the question of indoctrination and imposition of values and ideas. Ironically, in teaching with a belief in democratic values, tolerance, social justice and equity, I am often intolerant of those with more conventional value systems, leaving an

impression for my students that *I*, as the teacher educator, do not practice tolerance and acceptance but rather impose my values on my teacher candidates.

Teacher educators have asked teacher candidates to reflect on their Whiteness, their attitudes towards racism, sexism, and other issues of injustice and inequity in order to overcome their biases and to be effective teachers in working with school children from diverse backgrounds (Posner, 1996; Schon, 1990). Little, if any, research, however, has been published on teacher educators' reflections on their own dispositions related to social justice and equity.

One assumption underlying this research was that teacher educators must examine their own beliefs about social justice and equity in order to model the disposition for teacher candidates and allow them to "build a bridge of consciousness to meet the mental demands" required by the standards established by NCATE/NMSA (Kegan, 1994, p. 278). Another assumption underpinning this research was that in order to prepare socio-politically conscious educators, teacher educators must practice sociopolitical consciousness in their own work.

### *Research Design*

The following primary question guided this study: *How has my understanding of helping teacher candidates teach for social justice and equity developed? In other words, what has been my experience as an educator, caring very deeply that students, regardless of their race or social background, partake of a socially just and equitable education?*

Hannah Arendt, said, "For excellence, the presence of others is always required." Therefore, I had to find a method of research that allowed this theoretical framework to succeed. I needed to be in a frame of becoming and scholarly reflection but not in a

narrow solitary way. Moustakas' (1990) heuristic paradigm was not only a qualitative research methodology that fit this theoretical framework but also reflected the ontological and epistemological position that I believe I need to have while working to understand the question of social justice and equity in my work as a teacher educator.

Conceptually, this research entails my evolving sense of myself as a teacher educator teaching for social justice while trying to respect the individuality and freedom of my students. Reflecting Greene's (1988) existentialist phenomenology, I confront the problem of *becoming* in this research. According to Greene, the constant constructing of new realities and identities happens over time, through different encounters, and in different contexts. She has reminded us to remain aware of the *situatedness* of meaning, our own *subjectivities*, and our own multiple and often contradictory identities. Urging people to seek out their own human possibilities, she embraced Dewey's (1932) idea of a community in the making—not that community *is* but instead that it is always in the making through dialogue, through working together, through shared concern that motivates action

Greene (1988) believed that the goals of teacher educators should be to affirm people's original stories and to motivate them to grow beyond their stories. These possibilities exist only in commitment to others and in providing socially just and equitable learning opportunities for all in an unjust world. Greene's eloquence has inspired us to engage in teaching as dialogue, teaching as resistance to the status quo, and teaching as action toward freedom. Teachers and learners must remain in a constant embrace, resolute in their work to pursue better teaching and learning for all. Her notion of philosophy as a noun transformed into a verb requires people "to take the risk of



thinking about what [they are] doing, . . . to become progressively more self-conscious about the choices [they make] and the commitments [they define], . . . and to examine critically the principles underlying what [they think] and what [they say]" (1973, preface). Greene's position prompted my realization that judging my students would impede this research on social justice and equity; only by supporting them and their voices in and through my research would clarity result.

Greene (1973) stated that speaking from our own place in the world allows others to think and speak of their own lived realities and, therefore, make new meaning, new understandings, and changes in their world; and she has increased our understanding of how we can create openings for new ideas, not through imposition but through possibilities. Her reference to "the freedom to decide what sort of person [one] ought to be" (1973, p. 284) spurred me to determine where I stood and what realities I lived. *I* had to build in myself that morality I so wanted to see in others.

Heuristic methodology combines autobiography and phenomenology with case studies (Moustakas, 1990). The autobiographical component allows investigation of one's experience through the lens of a problem or a question (Beckstrom, 1993). In heuristic research, the researcher engages co-researchers who share the same passions and experiences (Moustakas). To understand myself better, I need to find others who are living this struggle to determine their work as teachers fighting for social justice and equity. Understood in the heuristic sense as the particular relationship formed by a particular researcher with a particular set of people in a particular time and place, knowing is complicated by the problem of vulnerability. The heuristic model, which requires us to be that full participant in the search for answers through research,

comprises six phases: *initial engagement*, *immersion*, *incubation*, *illumination*, *explication*, and culmination in a *creative synthesis* (Moustakas, 1990).

During the *initial engagement* I came to understand my question and how I was situated contextually in the issue at hand (Moustakas, 1990).

During *immersion*, I entered fully into life with others wherever the theme was expressed—public meetings, social settings, or in professional meetings. This *immersion process* began as a pilot study in the winter of 2002 and spring of 2002 during a methods class where I was the instructor and continued during the next five years.

During my *immersion phase*, I explored my growing understanding of how to work with teacher candidates to acquire dispositions to teach young adolescents with a sense of social equity. I reflected upon my dialogue with my students about classroom practices, classroom climate, relationships formed in their classrooms, critical incidents, and life experiences. I continued to *immerse* myself in the phenomenon of teaching for social justice and equity through conferences, personal readings, and work with colleagues and students. I continued this *immersion* during interviews with teacher colleagues, and I sustained self-dialogue and self-search so as to “live it and grow in knowledge and understanding of it” (Moustakas, 1990, p. 28). “Our most significant awarenesses are developed from our own internal searches and from the attunement [with] and empathetic understanding of others” (Moustakas, 1990, p. 26).

Following this *immersion process*, a period of *incubation* allowed me to remove myself from the topic in any direct way and let tacit understanding of the topic emerge. During my period of *incubation*, I tried new forms of meditation and relaxation. allowed human feelings and emotions to converge with information and data so as to reach a

sense of integration of the knowledge I had acquired about the phenomenon of teaching for social justice and equity. As Moustakas (1990) said, “When I persist in a disciplined and devoted way, I ultimately deepen my knowledge of the phenomenon” (p. 11).

During *illumination*, I clustered themes and qualities found in my data. During the *incubation phase*, I thought deeply about the experiences my students and I engaged in. Clustering and the constructing themes occurred during the *illumination phase*. The *explication phase* and the *creative synthesis* phase were devoted to examining the clusters and themes and to weaving the themes and sub themes into a narrative. This heuristic theoretical framework allowed for research that was theoretically and methodologically provocative (Moustakas, 1990).

The full examination of what has been awakened through illumination is known as *explication* in the heuristic method. “The initial ‘data’ is within me; the challenge is to discover and explicate its nature” (Moustakas, 1990, p. 13). During the *explication* stage in my research, I took all data back to the participants, and as a group we discussed the themes and categories that had been illuminated. New understandings of preparing teachers to teach for social justice and equity occurred during member checking and sharing of insights with the participants.

The final step of the heuristic process involves *creatively synthesizing* the experience after complete knowledge of the data has been acquired through meditation and focus. This *creative synthesis* can take various forms: poetry, story, drawing, or painting. “The story of a crucial human experience must be told in such a way that in itself it enables self-transformation” (Moustakas, 1990, p. 13).

## *Methodology*

For my research, I purposefully selected five teacher educators with whom to conduct extensive informal and formal interviews. This allowed for the building of a descriptive composite of the phenomenon. The three teacher educators were chosen because of their work with middle childhood teacher education classes and programs that emphasize social justice and equity in P-16 schools; all three are nationally known for their work. The two middle childhood teachers from the field worked with our students and, therefore, I considered them to be strong field-based teacher educators. The classrooms of both women were selected for placements of our students because of their strong emphasis on social justice and equity and their firm commitment to young adolescents. Moustakas claimed that one must choose co-researchers who have experienced the phenomenon that the researcher is attempting to understand.

All five of these co-researchers, by the nature of their work with me over many years, have experienced what it means to be a teacher educator who cares deeply about social justice issues in work with young adolescents. By virtue of national reputation and published research, each showed an intense interest in understanding the nature of this work and its meanings fully. Each teacher educator provided a different piece of the overall description. In my selection of co-researchers, I achieved a balance of male and female participants, local and national perspectives, and Black and White perspectives.

In heuristic study the data is within the self. The secondary sources of data are useful interviews, field notes, historical and biographical studies, letters, biographies,

diaries, reports, videotapes, and newspapers. Data for this research included the following elements:

<b>Interviews</b>	<b>Documents (Personal Experience)</b>
Transcriptions from individual interviews with five middle childhood teacher educators who work to understand their role in preparing pre-service educators to acquire dispositions favoring social justice and equity in learning opportunities for all young adolescents	Formal notes from curriculum meetings with the middle childhood-team and middle childhood-advisory boards when discussing issues of inner city field placement and issues of social justice and equity
	Informal notes from curriculum meetings with the middle childhood team and middle childhood advisory boards when discussing issues of inner city field placement and issues of social justice and equity
	Formal notes from a small liberal arts college education department meetings when addressing issues of social justice and equity
	Informal notes from a small liberal arts college education department meetings when addressing issues of social justice and equity
	Personal journal reflections on meetings with other middle childhood faculty at a small liberal arts college and elsewhere when discussing issues of social justice and equity
	Personal journal responses to the interviews based upon readings and literature on social justice and equity
	Personal reflective journals that focus on my understanding of being a middle childhood teacher educator who works with middle childhood pre-service educators to acquire dispositions that lead to social equality in learning opportunities for all young adolescents

### *Data Analysis*

While searching for themes and new understandings in my data analysis, I consulted the work of several theorists to study their thematic analyses of the process of teaching and learning. Whereas historically education has been described in terms of the triad of

grammar, rhetoric, and logic, Henderson, Hawthorn and Stollenwerk (2000) reoriented the focus of teaching and learning to a balance of self, society, and subject, drawing on Dewey's (1938/1963) triad of educational formation. Roy (2003) advocated educating teachers to work within *nomadic* spaces formed by the triad of self, subject, and society instead of in the *state spaces* of the current standards-based reform agenda. Ladson-Billings (2001) identified the traits of a socio-politically conscious educator: awareness of the sociopolitical context of teaching, personal investment in the public good, academic connections to world issues, and a strong sense of students' needs. According to Sockett (2004) the moral teacher operates on three levels: morality of character, morality of relationship, and morality of laws and rules.

Combs (1962, 1974, & 1988) agreed in part with each of these theorists. Like Henderson, Hawthorne, Roy, and Sockett, Combs assumed a triadic perspective when looking at teachers and their dispositions. As did Ladson-Billings and Sockett, Combs referred to the character and self-awareness of educators, describing teacher dispositions in terms of their perceptions of self, students, and context. All these theorists recognized the need to look at the multiple meanings of teaching and *learning, each of them recognizing the numerous layers inherent in this practice.*

### *Results*

As results of my research the I gained a deeper understanding in the following areas of my life: (a) where I have come from and where I am going, (b) how movement and growth occurred in understanding and illuminating my research questions, (c) how and why I used the heuristic method to gain new knowledge and perspective, (d) how I moved from desiring to change *others* to realizing that only by changing *myself* could I

ever fully understand my work, (e) how I went from conducting research *on my students* to conducting research *on myself and for my students*, (f) that only in self-study and illumination through dialogue and discussion with others could a middle childhood teacher educator searching to find social justice and equity in her work find any semblance of truth in that process.

### *Self*

Teacher educators with a focus of social justice and equity search for an authentic sense of *self*; they are not merely self-reflective but search for the *truth (authentic self-awareness)* in all that they do. They do not merely behave this way in the classroom but have a true sense of integrity throughout their lives. Authentic self-awareness comes from awareness of *critical incidents, role models, vulnerability, and spirituality*.

### *Critical incidents*

This research process made me vulnerable to myself and to my own need for recognition in my field, causing me to realize that it is not about what I *do* but who I *am* that will make me a better teacher educator. Living a life of social justice and equity has included fostering and adopting children and visiting locations where justice, equity, injustice, and inequity have been highlighted. Concentration camps in Germany and Peace Institutes in Austria. Having had experiences may allow me to gain new perspectives but they are, in and of themselves, no more important than anyone else's experiences, especially not those of my students. I have realized that it is not my critical incidents that will change my students' lives but their own critical incidents and their illuminated understanding of their impact on their practice. It is my job to help them find those and reflect upon them for their own illumination and growth. Educators for social

justice and equity search for meaning in *critical incidents* in their lives, recognizing the importance of those in *becoming* the teacher educators they wish to be, modeling this process for teacher candidates.

### *Role models*

During this research process I came to terms the role models were in my life and what they had actually offered. In my need to establish my independence from them; I truly missed the opportunity to see what they had offered me. I realized that my family was more than what I had previously perceived as narrow intolerant upper-class values: but rather they had modeled deep spirituality, vision, and relationships firmly committed to others. In my desire to find the answers to my questions outside of myself, I had neglected to look deep within myself and recognize who my role models were and what qualities they had given me. Understanding that who you are is strongly influenced by role models in your life is a disposition that must be modeled for teacher candidates. However, guiding them to cognitively consider the negative and the positive components is essential.

### *Vulnerability*

One of my co-participants in particular helped me recognize that vulnerability is not the negative that I perceived it to be. Like all the other components in the model, vulnerability is a process as well as a product. I am vulnerable because of the work that I have chosen to do, but making me vulnerable to myself and to others is necessary to do the work of social justice and equity. Openly reflecting and dialoging with my students and colleagues about my work is essential. Including what I am doing by submitting new scholarship for review. Fear of vulnerability now seems less problematic and more part



of the process. The fear is situational; I embrace it as germane to vulnerability. Because I understand this fear better, I can manage my response to this feeling. Realizing that the practice of social justice and equity makes them *vulnerable*; these teacher educators search out ways to be more *vulnerable* in situations, therefore making them better teachers and learners for social justice and equity.

### *Spirituality*

I entered this research process with missionary zeal. It was my calling to do good for others, but much of *whom I was* and *what I was* occurred outside of myself. It was about others and for others. I realized through this research that true spirituality entails neither church attendance nor extraneous intellectual discussions and readings. Only by listening to my inner voice would I find that integration of my beliefs in my soul. I needed to live a life of wholeness in my spirituality, not in the thinking and the doing but in the being. Tisdell (2003) stated that spirituality is not the same as religion. Spirituality is about honoring the wholeness in our lives. I need to understand that the disposition for social justice and equity is based in the *spiritual*, and I need to look for ways to connect to that spiritual sense in myself. By modeling this, I allow my students to search for their spirituality.

### *Students*

One of my co-researchers challenged me to consider that if we want our students to be student centered and responsive in their classrooms then we are called to do the same. Rather than see resistance as a negative response from teacher candidates to our work, we must take the focus off ourselves and place it back on our students. Responding rather than reacting to teacher candidates is essential. There must be

recognition that resistance is a part in the process of constructing new ideas. *What we know is that our job is to work with pre-service teachers at all levels of preparedness and we must be developmentally responsive, academically challenging and socially just and equitable to them.*

Teacher educators who exemplify the dispositions favoring social justice and equity work to have strong and trusting relationships with their *students*. They recognize that some students will *resist* the implications of social justice and equity in their work, but they do not judge students negatively because of this. Instead, they recognize that this *resistance* is part of the process of *becoming* for their students. Teacher educators look for ways to *empower* students through constructivist and inquiry based classrooms, encouraging them to share who they are and receive that information in nonjudgmental and respectful ways. They believe in the *potential* of that which has not been learned yet and see teaching and learning with their students as acts of *becoming*.

#### *Context*

Teacher educators who put social justice and equity at the forefront of their practice recognize the importance of *context* in their work. They understand that developing a broad and inclusive *worldview* is important and look for ways to do that. Tolerant, broad-minded, and inclusive, they search for the historical, political, and economic truths in their work and strive to share this with their students. *Positioning* themselves as a part of a learning community and recognizing their privilege or lack of that based upon race and socio-economic class, they work to lessen the hierarchical structure prevalent in their practice and search to see themselves as learners as well as teachers with pre-service educators. They recognize that there is a political reality in a

high-stakes testing, standards-based society that may be contrary to their goals of social justice and equity in their practice, but they look for ways to mediate that for themselves and for their students within the context of their work. These teacher educators *act* upon their beliefs in socially just and equitable ways, not only in their classroom but also in their lives. Furthermore, they recognize that it is only by their continued positive *vision for the future* of their work that striving for social justice and equity is possible in our society. They base their decisions on a set of *moral laws and rules*, not those given to them by society.

Finally, teacher educators working for social justice and equity believe that their mission is not to change others; instead changing themselves and striving for the truth or authentic oneness constitute their true vocation for social justice and equity. They recognize that *self, student, and context* is truly fluid, each impacting the other, and that these concepts describe *who they are* and *how they are becoming* teacher educators for social justice and equity. In living the sense of oneness in their lives, they realize that they are able to do the work that they do.

### *Conclusion*

Through this process of heuristic study I found some core affirmations for myself that may help others.

- First, iconic representations do not get at the essence of the truth (authentic self-knowledge) of an experience. The image of idyllic caring for children is often the iconic representation of being a teacher. The *truth (authentic self-knowledge)* of this experience for teachers who work for *socially just and equitable practice for all young adolescents* requires teachers to *dig deep and bleed*.

- Second, as painful and dichotomous as this life is, teachers must embrace the cracks and the fissures in their work and embrace the difference. We must live the questions. If social justice and equity is important to their practice then they must challenge the status quo. Teachers must see each encounter with their students, the schools, and society as problematic and a new struggle for meaning. They must pose problems so as to open up new worlds. Yet, they must also see each fissure as a possibility. The struggle and the difference must not be seen as a negative, but rather something to be embraced and celebrated as the reality of their lives (Roy, 2003). “In a paradox, opposites do not negate each – they cohere in mysterious unity at the heart of the reality” (Palmer, 2000, p. 99)
- Third, all self-reflection and self-knowledge are worthless if it does not lead to action. Praxis is the purpose of this research. The data and the implications derived from that indicate that action is the response to working for dispositions of social justice and equity. If one finds the *truth (authentic self-knowledge)*, as a moral teacher, one must be authentic to that *truth (authentic self-knowledge)* by responding to it. Action is not a choice but is the condition of morality. “We are here not only to transform the world, but also to be transformed” (Palmer, 2000, p. 97).
- Fourth, and probably the most difficult is that becoming a moral teacher who strives to have moral character, moral relationships, and moral laws and rules is an endless process. This process is not the process of creating a teacher persona but rather creating a persona as a human being. Through this research, it is evident that working with teacher candidates to have dispositions that are socially

just and equitable requires that *we* are socially just and equitable as human beings.

The only way that we can ensure that our teacher candidates have any possibility of acquiring these dispositions is for us to spend our lives, as middle childhood teacher educators, acquiring those dispositions in ourselves. The process of holding accountable *others*, first requires that we hold accountable ourselves.

It is *the way that we breathe* that allows our authentic self to work for social justice and break the cycle of inequity and injustice in our schools and in our world. We must be open and willing to be workers for that campaign. And through our transformation we achieve new perspective and live the universal life of *truth (authentic self-knowledge)*. We are to provide the agency of change because we are the representatives of this work in the world. As long as we are true and loyal to that inner self then we can communicate that message to others that we have invited to the communal table. We must face who we are so that we can work at whom we are *becoming*. We must recognize that by *judging others* are to hide from ourselves. Our only danger is in not seeing. What we do not see, what we refuse to admit is destroying ourselves. I must ask where my actions do not fit with my beliefs. I must believe that by fixating on others I fail to see my own flaws. I must feel that it is safe to admit this and therefore allow for real changes in my practice, not superficial changes.

In heuristic study, the researcher is the ultimate judge of validity (Moustakas, 1990). Whether I have lived a meaningful life through meaningful work seems to be what the ultimate question of this experience means in my life.

One of the reasons that I believe that you are here is to teach. I do not mean that in the literal sense of the word. I am Black and I am expected to do social justice

and equity. Hearing the things that I advocate come from the mouth of a blonde-haired- White woman is just so foreign from what people would expect from you; students, faculty, anybody. What you say is atypical from what they expect. That gives a purpose for you being here (co-researcher).

### *Future Implications for Teacher Education*

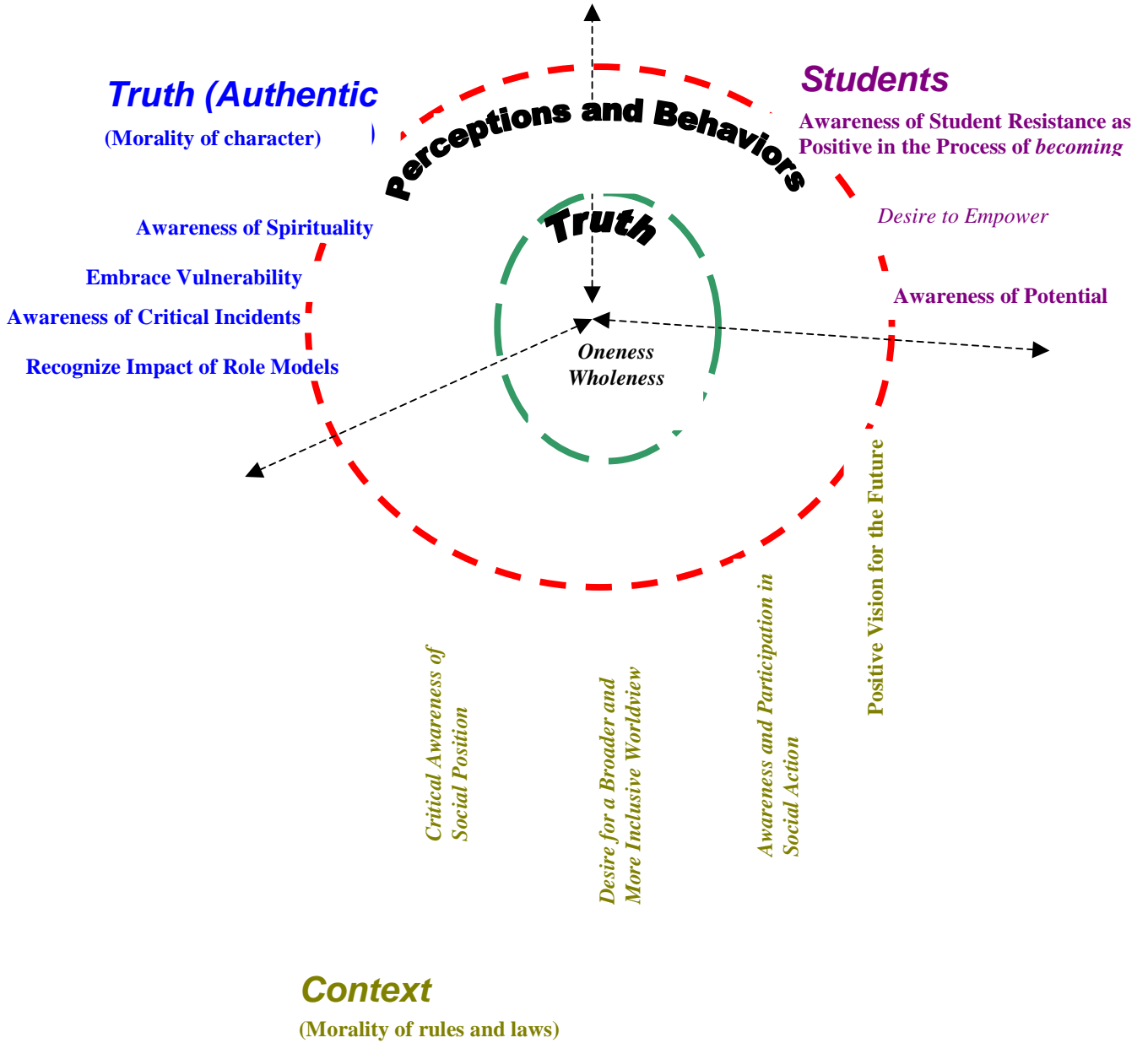
The challenge for teacher education is that dispositions cannot be add-ons. We must make every opportunity to make concrete the essence of the statement.

Programmatically we must become culturally sensitive in our practice. In Westernized society, through such things as NCATE reviews, we destroy the wholeness of our personhood.

We cannot see our students as ends in themselves or pawns to create what we envision. We must restore the inventiveness of teacher education. We must provide our students the courage to be the teacher described in the standards for social justice and equity by NMSA/NCATE. We must provide support as they explore their social upbringing. We must engage students in dialogue and counseling to determine their path to becoming. As teacher educators, we must look to ourselves to become the ethical teachers that we expect from our students. It is only in our ethical interactions with colleagues that social justice and equity will be possible in our schools.

I need to continue to listen to stories from teacher education programs across the United States and the world and how they are struggling with issues of justice and equity in their own programs. These struggles must be a part of my struggles and must be something that I share with my students

*Model of Teachers who work for Social Justice and Equity in the Classroom*



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