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URBAN TEACHERS' BELIEFS ON TEACHING, LEARNING, AND STUDENTS A Pilot Study in the United States of America

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Less qualified urban teachers may contribute to the achievement gap between urban and nonurban students. A pilot study is conducted in an urban teacher education institution to examine teachers' beliefs in teaching, learning, and students. The objectives are to describe teachers' beliefs of the 28 pre-service and 26 in-service teachers in general and to investigate differences in their beliefs on a 26-item survey. Mean scores and standard deviations are used to describe teachers' beliefs, and a *t* test is used to examine the differences. The results from the urban pre-service and in-service teachers in this study do not support characteristics of culturally relevant teachers to meet urban students' needs.

Keywords: *teachers' beliefs; urban teacher education; culturally relevant teaching*

Regardless of a renewed focus on standards and accountability of education systems in the United States of America, urban schools confront an enormous challenge. Educators and policy makers are struggling to address the low academic achievement of many public school (K-12) students and the gaps in achievement among low-income and racial–ethnic groups of students in urban settings (Lankford, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2002). Poverty rates for school-age children have grown significantly, and approximately 90% of the increase has been concentrated in the nation's largest cities (Sharpton, Casbergue, & Cafide, 2002).

The impact of poverty, along with increased levels of reported child abuse, teenage pregnancy, violence, and drug use, is especially noted in urban school districts (Sharpton et al., 2002). The percentage of minority students who are not African American (i.e., Hispanic, Asian, and Pacific

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Islander) has increased in recent years in urban schools (National Center for Educational Statistics, 1997). These students often have difficulty speaking English, are less likely to live in two-parent families, and are more likely to have changed schools frequently. As a result, many students are identified as learning disabled and/or behavior disordered. The urban schools, where most of the minority students attend, tend to have higher enrollments than those in suburban and rural schools but have fewer resources; teachers also have less control over their curriculum than teachers in less bureaucratic settings (Howey, 2002).

Concern about low academic performance of urban learners has a long history, and disparity in teacher quality between urban and nonurban schools has been documented as well (Lankford et al., 2002; Larson-Billings, 1995; Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2001; Williams, 1996). The shortage of competent, caring urban teachers has long been recognized as a problem that teacher preparation programs need to address (Leland & Harste, 2005). Most prospective teachers, however, neither feel adequately prepared to teach in such schools nor are disposed to do so. An 8-year research study about teacher education (RATE) reported that the great majority of prospective teachers (more than 85%) preferred to teach in schools not located in urban areas (Zimpher, 1989). Furthermore, approximately half of the novice teachers who begin teaching in urban high-poverty schools leave these assignments within 3 to 5 years (Haberman, 2002; Howey, 2002).

TEACHERS' BELIEFS AS A FRAMEWORK FOR EFFECTIVE URBAN TEACHING

Few would argue that teaching is based on both explicit and implicit personal values and beliefs. According to Horowitz (1994), to better understand a teacher's role, his or her belief system may be conceived as snapshots of behaviors. Letendre and Akiba's (2001) research found that teachers could foster students' patience, responsible social behavior, sense of right and wrong, individuality, and innate ability. Misleading beliefs about the role of school and home culture, in addition to the relationships between teachers and students, have prevented the success of minority students in the American educational system (Grant & Sleeter, 1986; Spindler, 1974; Wolcott, 1967). Teachers' beliefs are essential not only because they shape the way teachers define and understand physical and social realities but also because they are unavoidably intertwined with content knowledge and teaching pedagogy (Romanowski, 1997). A teacher who understands

diverse children in poverty, those from minority language backgrounds, and those from minority ethnic backgrounds would make a difference in teaching urban students (Haberman, 2002).

The curriculum in urban schools must be rich rather than "good enough," academically strong, and supported by strong teacher beliefs with high expectations, not a curriculum based on deficit assumption about urban students. Effective curriculum for urban schools needs to include content that is relevant to urban learners' needs. Specific knowledge and skills should be related to issues such as home languages, dialects, family structures, neighborhoods, community resources, and cultural differences (Sharpton et al., 2002). Teaching strategies should also be related to physical, cognitive, social, and psychological developmental status, learning styles, and life experiences of urban learners rather than to what has worked for learners in other regions. These content strategies relevant to urban learners' lives should be threaded into the instructional plan in the earliest stages of formal learning.

The teacher belief system thus serves as an organizing framework that establishes the patterns of meaning, informs evaluations, determines views of right and wrong, and guides teacher decisions regarding curriculum and instruction (Romanowski, 1997). The end result of this process is the reorganization of a curriculum with consideration of individual students' needs, learning styles, and pedagogical strategies.

PROBLEMS UNSOLVED

Many urban teachers have treated minority students with lower expectation and made decisions on students' academic potentials based on false or stereotyped information (e.g., grades and/or test scores from previous semesters; Ferguson, 1998; Taylor, 1979). Students from minority or poor family backgrounds are at a disadvantage in schools because they fail to live up to teacher expectations (Kett, 1977). Despite the cultural and ethnic diversity in the United States, the teacher force is mainly composed of White middle-class women (National Center for Education Statistics, 1997) who frequently have limited knowledge about and experiences with students from cultural and ethnic backgrounds different from their own. The discrepancy between teachers' knowledge of diverse cultures and the cultural and ethnic backgrounds of their students may hinder the teachers' ability to effectively reach diverse students, and that includes those in urban areas. Song and Christiansen (2001) also reported that many urban teachers believe that higher order thinking materials, which are part of the regular

curriculum, are too sophisticated for urban children who enter school with inadequate vocabularies. Urban children, who are likely to be most in need of competent and caring teachers, are often in the very settings that is hardest to attract them (Sharpton et al., 2002). Urban students, thus, find themselves in classes with many of the least skilled teachers (Lankford et al., 2002; Wenglinky, 2000).

OBJECTIVES

A pilot study was conducted in an urban teacher education program located in a midwestern state in the United States. There are two research objectives proposed in this pilot study:

1. The first objective is to examine urban pre-service and in-service teachers' beliefs on teaching, learning, and students in general; and
2. The second objective is to investigate if there are any differences between the beliefs of pre-service and in-service teachers who participated in this study.

First, the study will examine urban pre-service and in-service teachers' beliefs on teaching, learning, and students in general. Do the urban pre-service and in-service teachers in this study reveal the knowledge base and pedagogy processes needed to be effective in classroom teaching? Do these teachers have deficit assumption toward diverse urban learners? How are in-service teachers' beliefs on teaching, learning, and students different from pre-service teachers' beliefs?

Second, the study will determine if there are any differences between pre-service and in-service teachers in their beliefs on teaching, learning, and students. Underlying the second objective is the assumption that the in-service teachers would have stronger and more positive beliefs on teaching, learning, and students than pre-service teachers do.

METHOD

PARTICIPANTS

The study had 54 participants: twenty-eight pre-service teachers and 26 in-service teachers. The 28 pre-service teachers were enrolled in a small urban teacher education program in spring 2002, and they were student teaching in five urban elementary schools. The 26 in-service teachers were currently teaching in the same schools where the pre-service teachers were

student teaching. Among the 54 participants, 7 are males and 47 females, twelve Caucasian (3 in-service and 9 pre-service teachers), 40 African American (17 in-service and 23 pre-service teachers), and 2 Hispanic (pre-service teachers only). Of the 28 student teachers, only half of them passed the Praxis II teacher licensure exam. Sixteen of 28 (55.9%) pre-service teachers had ACT scores between 16 and 20. Of the 26 in-service urban teachers in this study, 13 (50%) responded that they had teaching certificates, and 13 did not respond.

DESIGN AND PROCEDURE

Kolis and Dunlap's (2004) K3P3 Model was used to categorize the responses from the survey. The K3P3 Model has three knowledge bases (K3) and three pedagogical processes (P3) of effective teaching. K3 includes knowledge of content, knowledge of student, and knowledge of learning. P3 includes pedagogical content processes, pedagogical student processes, and pedagogical application processes. Three knowledge bases (K3) assume that good teachers will demonstrate (a) their own content area knowledge; (b) knowledge of their students' cultural and academic prior knowledge; and (c) knowledge of learning theories including developmental theories, motivational theories, assessment strategies, and instructional strategies. Three pedagogical processes (P3) assume that good teachers organize content topics in (a) learning-appropriate ways with specific goals and assessment criteria, (b) student-appropriate ways that integrate knowledge of students and learning in a classroom environment conducive to learning, and (c) context-appropriate ways that integrate content knowledge to motivate students (see Table 1). At the highest level of expertise, the master teacher provides a seamless integration of the three knowledge bases through the three pedagogical knowledge processes to facilitate the actualization of student learning (Gage, 1978; Kolis & Dunlap, 2004; Shulman, 1987). The K3P3 model of teacher knowledge illustrates the dynamic interplay between knowledge and pedagogy, with the intent of maximizing the actualization of student learning (Kolis & Dunlap, 2004). The K3P3 Model was adapted to categorize the 26 survey items used for this study by the researcher (see Table 1).

INSTRUMENT

A 26-item survey was administered to the participants in this study. The surveys were delivered to the school sites for the in-service teachers and to the student teacher seminar site for the pre-service teachers in spring 2002.

TABLE 1
K3P3 Model Descriptions

K3	*Descriptions of K3*
K1. Knowledge of content	Knowledge of content: spiraling curriculum, curriculum issues, standards, prioritize the content topics Knowledge of the structure, patterns, and themes of the discipline Knowledge of other content areas and make these content areas important to learning
K2. Knowledge of student	Knowledge about current student knowledge, interests, cultural experiences, life experiences, characteristics of the age group, motivation, humor, time frames, gender-specific concerns, family structure, and the community context, which provide the framework for student learning
K3. Knowledge of learning	Knowledge of multiple intelligences, learning styles, brain-based learning, and constructivist learning theory Knowledge of how people learn (process of learning) Knowledge of assessment criteria to check for understanding Knowledge of learning that connects to resource selection, learner outcomes, activities, instructional materials, and assessment strategies
P3	*Descriptions of P3*
P1. Pedagogy of content	Pedagogy of organizing content in "learning appropriate" ways, which directly address the content being taught Pedagogy of establishing content goals and student learning outcomes, selecting instructional processes and activities, and embedding assessment methods to monitor the learning process
P2. Pedagogy of student	Pedagogy of organizing learning in student-appropriate ways, which integrates and applies knowledge from the learning knowledge and student knowledge bases Pedagogy of recognizing and appreciating student appropriateness to establish a classroom environment that will facilitate the actualization of each student's learning within a group setting
P3. Pedagogy of application	Pedagogy of organizing learning in context-appropriate ways, which integrate and apply knowledge between content and student knowledge bases Pedagogy of hooking and enticing the students to become engaged in the learning of the content (Shulman, 1987) Pedagogy of orchestrating instruction in such a way that students see the relevance of the content as it applies to them today

NOTE: Descriptions of K3P3 were categorized by the researcher based on Kolis and Dunlap (2004): K3 = three knowledge bases; P3 = three pedagogical processes.

TABLE 2
Sample Survey Items of K1 Categorized by the K3P3 Model of Teaching

K3P3	*Survey Items*
K1. Knowledge of content	6. Students who lack basic reading and computation skills need to acquire those skills before they can move on to higher order thinking. 7. Low-ability students need to focus on acquiring basic knowledge and skills. 11. Students who know more about my subject area are more intelligent.

NOTE: Categorized by the researcher based on Kolis and Dunlap (2004).

The survey was a revised version of a Teacher Expectation and Deficit Assumption Survey developed by Williams (2001). The survey items were to measure teachers' beliefs on teaching, learning, and students. The 26 survey items were categorized based on the K3P3 Model of effective teaching by Kolis and Dunlap (2004) for content validity of the instrument: 15 items for K3 and 11 items for pedagogical processes P3. For K3, 3 items were selected for knowledge of content, 4 for knowledge of students, and 8 for knowledge of learning; for P3, 3 for pedagogical content process, 3 for pedagogical student process, and 5 for pedagogical application process (see Table 2). The survey items used Likert-type scales, 1 through 5: *strongly agree* (5), *agree* (4), *not sure* (3), *disagree* (2), and *strongly disagree* (1).

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

There are two objectives for this pilot study: (a) one is to examine urban pre-service and in-service teachers' beliefs on teaching, learning, and students in general, and (b) the other is to investigate if there are any differences in teachers' beliefs between the pre-service and the in-service teachers who participated in this study. For the first objective, descriptive statistics using frequencies (i.e., means and standard deviations) were used to describe teachers' beliefs on teaching, learning, and students based on the survey items answered by the urban pre-service and in-service teachers. For the second objective, a *t* test was computed to see if there were significant differences in teachers' beliefs between the pre-service teachers and the in-service teachers. The $p < .05$ level was selected to determine the statistical significance of the *t*-test results.

RESULT 1

In this section, the responses from the 54 urban pre-service and in-service teachers were analyzed, using frequencies from each of the 26 survey items to describe their beliefs on teaching, learning, and students in general (Objective 1). The analyzed responses were categorized based on the criteria of the K3P3 Model (see Table 1). First, the results of 15 K3 items are described (see Table 2).

For knowledge of content items (K1), 31 teachers (57%) agreed that students without basic skills cannot learn materials that require higher order thinking skills; 12 (22.9%) were not sure; 9 (15.7%) disagreed; and 2 did not respond. Twenty-nine teachers (54%) agreed that low-ability students need to focus on acquiring basic knowledge and skills before learning challenging materials; 16 (29%) were not sure; and 7 (13%) disagreed. Forty-eight (89%) teachers disagreed that students who know more subject area content are more intelligent. For knowledge of students (K2), 44 (82%) teachers disagreed that students who do not have English as their primary language should not be in their classes; 9 (16%) were not sure. Forty-seven (87%) teachers disagreed that poor students are less likely to have the capacity to learn intellectually challenging materials. Forty-four teachers (82%) agreed that poor students have the same capacity to learn challenging materials. Thirty-one teachers (57%) disagreed that students with multiple perspectives are more intelligent than those with a single perspective; 15 (27%) agreed; 12 (22%) were not sure. For knowledge base of learning (K3), 18 teachers (34%) disagreed that differences within the same cultural group (e.g., differences within an African American ethnic group) are greater than those between the different cultural groups (e.g., differences between an African American ethnic group and an Asian American ethnic group); 17 (33%) were not sure; 15 (27%) disagreed. Twenty-seven (50%) teachers agreed that some students cannot learn how to reason their way; 22 (42%) disagreed; and 16 (29%) were not sure. Thirty-two teachers (59%) disagreed that learning occurs in defined stages; 13 (24%) were not sure; 7 (13%) agreed. Thirty teachers (56%) agreed that assessment is important; 14 (26%) were not sure; and 10 (18%) did not agree. Forty-nine teachers (90%) agreed that students can learn to think intelligently. Thirty-eight teachers (70%) disagreed that knowledge of developmental theories has little practical value for classroom teachers; and 10 teachers (19%) were not sure.

The following summarizes the result of 11 pedagogical processes items (see Table 2 for the items). For pedagogical content process (P1), 32 teachers (60%) agreed that grouping based on students' ability is an effective teaching tool; 11 (20%) disagreed; and 9 (17%) were not sure. Thirty-six teachers (66%) disagreed that intelligence is a way to clarify students' capacity for learning challenging materials; 9 (17%) were not sure; and 18 (14%) agreed. Thirty-five teachers (64%) disagreed that intelligence is a fixed measurement; 13 (24%) were not sure; and 5 (9%) disagreed. For pedagogical student knowledge processes items (P2), 35 teachers (64%) agreed that students with special needs need more hands-on activities; 13 (24%) were not sure; and 7 (9%) disagreed. Twenty-seven teachers (50%) agreed that the heterogeneous classes allow higher level achievement; 14 (26%) were not sure; and 11 (20%) disagreed. Thirty-nine teachers (54%) agreed that they treat their students the same; 13 (24%) disagreed; and 9 (17%) were not sure. Thirty-five teachers (64 %) agreed that all students should receive the same education; 11 (20%) disagreed; and 6 (11%) were not sure. Twenty-two teachers (40%) were not sure that successful students from the previous year will achieve more this year; 15 (27%) agreed; and 9 (17%) disagreed. For pedagogical application processes items (P3), 25 teachers (46%) agreed that repetition is the best way to fix knowledge and skills in memory; 18 (34%) were not sure; 8 (15%) disagreed. Nineteen teachers (35%) disagreed that behavior-disordered students are best taught in a controlled environment; 20 (37%) were not sure; 13 (24%) agreed. Thirty-six teachers (66%) agreed that they try to teach in a way not to conflict with students' home cultures; and 11 (20%) were not sure. Twenty-nine teachers (53%) agreed that association is more effective than repetition; 19 (36%) were not sure. Forty teachers (74%) disagreed that teachers cannot motivate the students; and 8 (14%) disagreed. Thirty-two teachers (60%) agreed that grouping based on reading ability is an effective teaching tool; 11 (20%) disagreed; and 10 (19%) were not sure.

Result 1 showed that the participants reported their beliefs on deficit assumption toward their students and their beliefs on culturally relevant teaching strategies: There was no distinguishing pattern about their beliefs in general. The following is a summary of Result 1.

First, the urban pre-service and in-service teachers participating in this study (more than 50%) showed their beliefs on deficit assumption on the five survey items (see Table 3); if students are not ready for their developmentally appropriate curriculum, they may not learn it appropriately. This result summarizes teachers' beliefs that students who do not have basic skills and content knowledge cannot be successful in a challenging class, which should be based on ability grouping (see Table 3).

Second, the participants (more than 50%) also showed their beliefs on culturally appropriate assumption on the five survey items. For example, the teachers reported that they need to prepare their instruction based on their diverse students' needs. The teachers reported their beliefs that they should try to come up with the strategies to meet the needs of English-language

TABLE 4 (continued)

Survey Items	Pre-Service M	Pre-Service SD	In-Service M	In-Service SD
16. Students from low-socioeconomic situations are less likely to have the capacity to learn intellectually challenging material.	1.61	1.10	1.24	0.70
17. Students from low-socioeconomic situations are just as likely as their more affluent counterparts to have the capacity to learn intellectually challenging materials.	2.00	1.15	2.50	0.96
18. Behavior-disordered students are best taught in a controlled environment removed from the regular classroom.*	2.68	1.02	3.59	1.18
19. Students with special needs require more hands-on activities to learn their skills.*	3.57	0.96	4.18	1.05
20. Students who do not have English as their primary language should not be in my class.	1.54	0.74	1.68	0.72
21. Successful students from the previous year will probably achieve more in my class this year.	3.46	1.10	3.33	0.80
22. I treat all of my students the same.	3.54	1.32	3.33	1.39
23. All students should receive the same education.	4.11	1.20	3.57	1.36
24. There can be no education without assessment.	3.68	1.33	3.24	1.18
25. If students are not motivated to learn, there is nothing that teachers can do.	1.75	1.08	2.10	1.18
26. Knowledge of developmental theories has little practical value for classroom teachers.	2.00	1.19	2.19	0.98

*$p < .05$.

Those three items were the following:

> The use of ability reading group is an effective tool for teaching students with different reading abilities (Item 3, $t = -2.33$, $p = .024$);
>
> Behavior disordered students are best taught in a controlled environment removed from the regular classroom (Item 18, $t = -2.93$, $p = .005$); and
>
> Students with special needs need more hands-on activities to learn their skills (Item 19, $t = -2.14$, $p = .038$).

Mean scores of those items with statistical significance showed that the in-service teachers ($M = 3.95$) believed more strongly in ability grouping

for effective reading than the pre-service teachers did (M = 3.53). The in-service teachers showed stronger support ($M = 3.59$) for placing students with behavior disorders into a controlled environment than the pre-service teachers did ($M = 2.68$). Both groups agreed to adopt hands-on activities for students with special needs, but the in-service teachers showed significantly stronger support for this item ($M = 4.18$) than the pre-service teachers ($M = 3.57$; see Table 4).

Among 23 items that did not show statistically significant differences between the pre-service and the in-service teacher groups, 16 items belonged in the range of "not sure." Mean scores of the 7 remaining items, however, illustrated some similarities and differences between the two groups. Those 7 items showed either high (Items 2, 6, 8, 23) or low mean scores (Items 11, 16, 20; see Table 4 for the items). The first item was about students' ability to think intelligently (Item 2): The mean score for the pre-service teachers was 4.57, and that of the in-service was 4.62. Both groups strongly agreed that students could learn to think intelligently. The second item regarded beliefs about students' basic skills (Item 6): The mean score of pre-service teachers was 3.50, and that of in-service teachers was 4.62. Both groups agreed rather strongly about the importance of students' basic skills to move on to higher order thinking; the in-service teachers believed more strongly about the importance of basic skills. The third item concerned their beliefs about intelligence (Item 8): The mean score of the pre-service teachers was 4.54, and that of the in-service was 4.10. Both groups agreed strongly about intelligence being another way of saying that a student does or does not have the capacity to learn intellectually challenging material. The fourth item was about having the same education for all students (Item 23): The mean of the pre-service teachers was 4.11, and that of the in-service teachers was 3.57. Both groups agreed that all students should have the same education. The fifth item was about students' knowledge of subject matter (Item 11): The mean score of the pre-service teachers was 1.79, and that of the in-service teachers was 1.81. Both groups disagreed on the item saying, "Students who know more about subject areas are more intelligent." The sixth item was about beliefs of students from a low-socioeconomic class (Item 16): The mean score of the pre-service teachers was 1.61, and that of the in-service was 1.24. Both groups disagreed that students from the low-socioeconomic class would be less likely to have the capacity to learn intellectually challenging materials. The seventh one was about students from different home languages (Item 20): The mean score of the pre-service teachers was 1.54, and that of the in-service teachers was 1.68. Both groups agreed that those students who did not have

English as their primary language could be in their classes with other students (see Table 4).

DISCUSSION

The result of examining the general report from the participating pre-service teachers and in-service teachers showed no distinguishing pattern; they reported their deficit assumption on certain items and their culturally relevant pedagogy in certain items as well (see Table 3).

There are quite a few responses from the participating urban teachers showing contradictory stances that seem ironic. A majority of the urban pre-service teachers and in-service teachers in this study believe that students need to bring basic skills, content knowledge, and intelligence to their classes to learn challenging materials. They believe that students with more content knowledge will be more successful and that students with success in previous years will achieve more this year. They believe that some students cannot learn how to reason. They also believe that grouping based on reading ability is more effective. They responded that poor students and students who speak English as a second language could learn the challenging materials and that heterogeneous classes might allow higher level achievement.

Many researchers raise issues of achievement gaps in basic skills between urban low-economic students and nonurban affluent students. If urban teachers believe that their low-economic students can learn challenging materials like their suburban counterparts but do not believe that students can succeed if they do not bring basic skills and a good report card from the previous year, it is unlikely that urban students, most of whom have low basic skills and low achievement scores, can work on challenging problem-solving materials. If the majority of the participants believe that some students cannot learn how to think intellectually, how can urban learners whose basic skills are low and who do not know how to think intellectually learn challenging materials? It is also contradictory that the participants express their beliefs in ability grouping for reading but believe in heterogeneous classes for higher level achievement.

The participants scoring *not sure* on 21 items included both student teachers who completed all the course work and in-service teachers who were already in teaching careers. More than 20 participants (36%) chose *not sure* on 6 of 21 items. Such results may lead to the assumption that these participating urban pre-service and in-service teachers were not well prepared to teach diverse urban students.

Result 2 reported the three items that showed significant differences in teacher beliefs between the pre-service teachers and the in-service teachers. Among these three items, two items showed an interesting pattern. The in-service teachers believed more strongly that ability grouping rather than mixed ability grouping was most effective in reading. They were more likely to believe that students with behavior disorders should be in a controlled environment rather than be mainstreamed. The urban teachers in this study wanted a homogeneous ability group with mainstream students only. It is, however, almost impossible to find urban learners with homogeneous reading ability. The in-service teachers in this study did not believe in collaborative learning among different ability learners. In other words, they did not believe they could develop urban students academically: They wanted their urban students to come with the ability to be successful academically. The in-service teachers in this study did not show that they need to nurture and support cultural and academic competence of students with different needs. The responses of this study's in-service teachers failed to illustrate patterns of the culturally relevant teachers who could help urban students academically, nurture and support cultural competence, or help students to develop critical thinking skills (Larson-Billings, 1995).

Among the items that showed either high or low mean scores from both groups, beliefs about intelligence showed an interesting pattern. Both groups believed that students' intelligence (e.g., the intelligence test score) was an important factor in deciding students' capacity to learn intellectually challenging materials. In other words, the urban pre-service and in-service teachers believed that the intelligence or knowledge students would bring to their classes could be crucial requisites to learning challenging materials. If students did not bring that knowledge and/or intelligence to their classes, the teachers might not expect these students to learn new and challenging materials:

> Throughout the United States, nonurban students are 50% more likely to perform at a basic proficiency level than their urban peers. In high poverty settings, urban students reach basic proficiency half as often as their nonurban peers. In New York State, urban students are four times more likely than their suburban peers to perform below basic proficiency. (Lankford et al., 2002, p. 55)

According to the above report, urban students are not going to bring strong basic skills in reading and computation and/or high intelligence or a strong knowledge base to the classroom. Their primary language may not be standard English. If the above report accurately summarizes the basic proficiency of our urban students, it does not support a bright future for educating urban students; rather, it supports deficit assumptions about urban learners.

The in-service teachers' responses of this study reflect teachers' lower expectations for diverse urban students (Williams, 2001). Darling-Hammond (1997) stated that as urban schools include a greater range of students from different backgrounds and with different approaches to learning, formulas for teaching that do not take into account students' experiences and needs are less successful. The results of this study, however, did not show strong teachers' beliefs in teaching, learning, and students that support individualized teaching approaches based on diverse learners' needs and their diverse cultural experiences they bring to the classrooms. The majority of the urban teachers in this study still depend on a formula that may work in an artificial school setting where the students are ready to learn any prescribed teaching materials.

As Sharpton et al. (2002) mentioned, there is a strong need to redesign teacher education curriculum to increase teaching effectiveness in meeting the needs of urban learners and schools. Urban teacher education programs need to restructure their curriculum to include experiences designed to strengthen those teacher belief systems that are essential to shaping the way teachers define and understand physical and social realities of today's urban teaching (Romanowski, 1997). Goodlad (1994) suggested that simultaneous renewal should not only go on in higher education but in P-12 classrooms as well. Parallel curricula changes and selected classroom experiences must be made at the same time for changes to affect both the college and the P-12 classroom. As described in the subject section, the majority of the in-service teachers participating in this study did not respond as to whether the state has approved a teaching certificate for their classroom or content area assignment. Many urban in-service teachers who obtained their teaching credentials many years ago may not know how to deal with today's diverse urban students. The pre-service teachers we had in this study did not show strong academic knowledge or skills (e.g., Praxis passing rate and ACT scores). The participants demonstrated the cycle effect of low expectations and lack of preparation for both teachers and students as demonstrated in the literature and in many urban schools (Lankford et al., 2002; Wenglinky, 2000).

Even with the less qualified teachers in urban schools, teacher educators are obligated to re-educate the candidates to have a more expansive view of pedagogy (Bartolome, 1994). Rather than adding on versions of multicultural education or human relations courses (Zeichner, 1992), culturally relevant pedagogy needs to be the foundation that enhances teacher beliefs about teaching, learning, and students. Urban teacher education programs need to organize the content relevant to urban schools and their students' needs. Urban teacher education programs need to call for a shift from assigning content and pedagogical issues into a single course, to incorporating these issues within a series of courses and field experiences. The content areas and skills need to be taught in teacher preparation courses and assessed throughout the program (Sharpton et al., 2002). Support for the inclusion of the English as a Second Language (ESL) theories, beliefs about learners and learning, and strategies would enhance the preparation for teacher education candidates and practicing teachers. ESL learners and teaching strategies should be of interest to the wider educational community. European countries are much more aware of the need to understand the culture, language, and beliefs of others because of the geographical necessity, but in the United States, people have not seen that as a major need but rather have expected others to adapt to the American culture and language.

Another important reform is to develop professional development partnerships with local urban school teachers and administrators. That way, pre-service teachers will continue to develop their beliefs about teaching and urban students even after their completion of the Teacher Education Program (TEP). These professional development partnerships will help them to become more effective in teaching diverse urban students academically, socially, and psychologically (Kemp, Song, & Johnson, 2003). When collaborating with partner urban schools, teacher educators need to find and/or train exemplary urban teachers as role models. As a participant–observer in the classrooms of exemplary teachers of African American students, Larson-Billings (1995) reported that teachers in those classrooms believed that all students were capable of academic success; they saw their pedagogy as art and engaged in the process of improving practice, and they saw themselves as members of the community. As a result, none of the teachers or their students seemed to have test anxiety about the school district's standardized tests. Instead, they viewed the tests as necessary irritations, took them, scored better than their peers in other classes, and quickly returned to the rhythm of learning in their classroom. Our urban students are most in need of those exemplary teachers who are able to increase the performance of students (Lankford et al., 2002) and who would not dismiss producing excellence in urban students' learning. There are quite a few exemplary teachers we can use as role models to enhance teachers' beliefs on teaching, learning, and students in urban settings.

Extensive interviews of urban in-service teachers and pre-service teachers would help delineate specific perspectives about teaching, learning, and students. The survey items of teachers' beliefs should be revised after more research on their validity and reliability. This study should be replicated with a larger number of participants who represent the group characteristics of urban educators to generalize the result. In addition, a

comparative study between urban educators and suburban educators needs to be done to determine if there are significant differences in terms of the teaching beliefs between the two groups.

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