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The journal accepts articles for peer-review that describe classroom practice which positively impacts student learning. We define teacher action research as teachers (at all levels) studying their practice and/or their students' learning in a methodical way in order to inform classroom practice. Articles submitted to the journal should demonstrate an action research focus with intent to improve the author's practice.

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ENGAGING EDUCATION MAJORS TO EMBRACE DIVERSITY THROUGH EXPRESSIVE ARTS

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Abstract. One of the most pressing issues in education today is diversity and how educators can effectively embrace diverse learners in the classroom. The issue persists because many teacher training programs do not offer a specific course to prepare preservice teachers to be more responsive to diverse learners in their future classrooms. A growing body of research has addressed the importance of diversity in schools. However there are few studies that provide specific strategies for educators to embrace diversity and harness its strength to build a strong classroom community. This paper describes how two college professors prepared preservice teachers through an expressive arts course to be responsive to diverse learners in their future classrooms. Preservice teachers completed a diversity project and presented their findings to kindergartners and their families at an elementary school. Key findings were diversity in different countries, people, family structures, national flags, cultures, languages, foods, clothing, art, crafts, music, dance and movement. Implications for practice include integration of expressive arts to the curriculum, empowering students with skills to be agents of change, foster mutual understanding, dialogue and respect for diversity in their immediate and surrounding environments.

Keywords: teacher action research, diversity, expressive arts, pre-service teachers

Introduction

When the U.S. Census Bureau (2011) made a press release of our nations' changing racial and ethnic diversity, the nation arose to a reality about its' changing demographics that has been slowly unfolding. According to the report, the Hispanic population in the U.S. had grown by 43 percent, rising from 35.3 million in 2000 to 50.5 million in 2010. This growth accounted for more than half of the growth in the total U.S. population (Humes, Jones & Ramirez, 2010). Despite this considerable growth in the Hispanic population, the non-Hispanic White population remains the largest major race and ethnic group in the U.S, though it is growing at the slowest rate. However, this will change in 2050, when a significant shift in the U.S. population is predicted to occur. The U.S. Census Bureau

estimates that between the years 2040 and 2050, the U.S. population will experience the "majority-minority cross over", after which White, non-Hispanics will represent a minority of the population (Ortman & Guarneri, 2009).

Nowhere is diversity more evident than in our public K-12 schools. Recent demographic trends show increasing racial and ethnic diversity in public schools (Humes, et al., 2010). The percentage of Black and Latino students enrolled in 90% to 100% minority schools increased from 33% and 29%, to 38% and 43%, respectively (Orfield, et al., 2012). Early childhood programs have also seen rising numbers of children from culturally and linguistically diverse communities (NAEYC, 2009; NAEYC 2011). This changing demographic, makes it imperative for public education systems to implement practices that embrace learning needs of diverse student (Taylor, 2010), and for educators at all levels to review their educational philosophies and pedagogy regarding cultural diversity, and take action where needed to improve cultural competence for educators (Gunn, Peterson and Welsh, 2015).

Culturally and linguistically diverse students have the greatest need for quality instructional programs. However, they are less likely to be taught with the most effective evidence-based instruction (Taylor, 2010). Some K-12 public schools have responded to diverse learners in the classroom, using best practices where the environment and instructional practices reflect the language and culture of the children they serve (Duarte & Rafanello, 2001). But, there is evidence that suggests public education is failing to reach the culturally and linguistically diverse student population, particularly those with and at risk for disabilities (Taylor, 2010). As a result, students suffer in several ways: disproportionately lower academic success, underachievement, special education referrals, lack of collaboration with peers, and disciplinary actions (Taylor, 2010; Cartledge & Kourea, 2008).

Teacher training programs play a crucial role in preparing preservice teachers to work with diverse learners in their future classroom. A core challenge for teacher training is a realization that as K-12 students are becoming more diverse, the ethnicity and cultural backgrounds of the teacher population is not in itself representative of the diversity in our schools (Banks, 2006b, Szecsi, et, al., 2010). According to the National Center for Education Information, student populations continue to be characterized by diversity while more than 90% of teachers are mostly white, middle class and from non-urban backgrounds. Thus, our nation faces a difficult conundrum centered on the fact that we produce learners characterized by rich diversity while largely producing teachers from the dominant culture. Comprehending this paradox is important to adequately respond to diversity in our schools (Murray, 2010).

Literature Review

Howard Gardner's Multiple Intelligence (MI) theory and Multicultural Education Anti-bias approach provided a framework for development and implementation of this study.

Howard Gardner's Multiple Intelligence Theory. MI theory describes intelligences beyond the traditional view of one form of intelligence measured using I.Q tests (Isenberg & Jalongo, 2014). In his book *Frames of Mind,* Gardner described seven candidate intelligences: "the linguistic and logical-mathematical intelligences that are such a premium in schools, musical intelligence, spatial intelligence; bodily kinesthetic intelligence; and two forms of personal intelligence, one directed toward other persons, one directed toward oneself, "(Gardner, 1993, pp. xi). Naturalistic and moral intelligences were later added to the theory (Gardner, 2009).

Principles of MI theory are applicable to this study in many ways. This study recognized that learners have different learning styles and ways of expressing themselves. This study further enhanced other intelligence besides linguistic and logical-mathematical that are emphasized in schools today (Chen, et.al, 2009). In addition, expressive arts prepared an environment for preservice teachers to express the following forms of intelligence: body/kinesthetic intelligence (through dance and movements); musical/rhythmic (music and songs); visual/spatial (readers theater, art and crafts). Preservice teachers also developed interpersonal and intrapersonal intelligence as they learned about themselves and their attitude toward crafts, music, dance, dress and food of other cultures. They learned about diversity in their immediate environment through diversity of other students and faculty in the course and in the elementary school where they showcased their research. Finally, they identified other forms of diversity outside their microsystem through research of assigned countries.

Multicultural Education Anti-bias Approach. This approach describes a new perspective of looking at the world that challenges the often narrow and distorting views of culture, seeks more thoughtful and inclusive teaching and learning, and values respecting others and their differences (Eliason & Jenkins, 2003; Banks, 1996; Nieto, 2012). Multicultural education is one of the approaches that have been designed to empower students to embrace diversity, knowledgeable, caring and active citizens in a deeply troubled and ethnically polarized nation and world (Banks, 1993).

Broadly, the objective of multicultural education is for students to identify similarities and accept the nature of differences among their peers (Cortez, 1996). More specifically, the goals of multicultural education are: 1) work to build tolerance of other cultures, 2) abolish racism, 3) teach substance from various cultures, and 4) teach and help students to view the world from different cultural perspectives. When young students developed a spirit and attitude of tolerance and understanding of various cultures, and an ability to understand a different frame of reference, this increases their sensitivity and knowledge and promotes actively working for social justice as they mature (Spring, 1998).

Diversity in the United States. Overall, diversity refers to policies and practices that seek to include people, who are considered, in some way, different from traditional members. These differences can be in socioeconomic status, religion, gender, race, ethnicity, age, sexuality, disability status, and other personal or demographic characteristics (Mikulyuk & Braddock, 2018; Herring 2009). The U.S. has a long history as a nation of immigrants and in the recent years has welcomed immigrants from Pacific, Middle East, Caribbean, and other

Latin America countries (Ortman & Guarneri, 2009; Eliason & Jenkins, 2003). Diversity is by and large celebrated in schools, college campuses, businesses and other sectors (Mikulyuk & Braddock, 2018; Bell & Hartmann, 2007).

Benefits of Diversity in Education. A growing body of research supports the crucial role of diversity in strengthening learning communities and societies at large, especially communities from which K-12 students reside, which often differ drastically from the communities of pre-service teacher candidates (Banks, et al., 2005; Sobel, 2004; Theobald & Siskar, 2008). Diversity in K-12 schools has been linked to positive student growth and development outcomes (Ancheta, 2013; Braddock & Elite, 2004), students' cognitive development, development of positive intergroup orientations later in life (Mikulyuk & Braddock, 2018; Bowman, 2010), increase in trust among learners of different backgrounds, and better community-level racial and ethnic intergroup relations(Mikulyuk & Braddock, 2018).

Other studies, however, found that though the impact of diversity on student achievement in the long-term tends to have positive outcomes, short-term outcomes are both positive and negative (Mickelson, 2001). Mickelson (2006) found that as the percentage minority race/ethnicity in schools increases, standardized test scores for Black and White students tend to decrease.

Education researchers have also investigated how K-12 diversity and neighborhood diversity shapes students' racial contact preferences (Braddock & Gonzales, 2010; Kurlaender & Yun, 2005). In a case study of the Miami-Dade Public School System, students from multiracial schools compared with racially isolated schools were found to have more positive racial attitudes and stronger desires to live/work in diverse environments as adults (Kurlaender & Yun, 2005). Teaching diversity therefore enriches the classroom by providing various ways to solve problems and to view people, events and situations. When children are able to view the world from the perspective of it's diversity, their views of reality have broadened (Banks & Banks, 1993).

There are few studies that provide specific strategies for schools to embrace diversity and harness its strengths to build stronger classroom communities. Murray (2010) recommended three social justice education approaches that schools, educators and learners can employ to embrace diversity. 1) School-wide discourse that focus on questions concerning how instructional practices, curricular decisions, materials and classroom routines connect to children's family, community and cultural roots. 2) Develop school-wide equity leadership team to engage in projects that correlate with the unique needs of the school. 3) Building and sustaining an honest and genuine relationships with the community that surrounds the school-parents, families, businesses, and neighboring schools.

Teacher Training and Diversity. As K-12 student population is becoming more diverse, colleges of education have reframed their pedagogical approaches and adjusted curriculum content to meet the learning needs of diverse students (Banks, 2004; Taylor, 2010). However, implementing these changes in the curriculum have come with several challenges. One, is a realization that as K-12 students are becoming more diverse, the ethnicity and

cultural backgrounds of the teacher population is not in itself representative of the diversity in our schools (Banks, 2006b, Szecsi, et, al., 2010). Two, is a lack of cultural awareness among educators in modern classrooms to meet cultural and linguistic needs of diverse learners and their families (Taylor, 2010; Banks, 2002; McClanahan & Buly, 2009; Sturm,1997). Three, is a lack of a systematic framework to effectively embrace diverse learners in the classroom.

Many teacher education training programs do not have specific courses in their curriculum to prepare future educators to be responsive to diverse learners (McClanahan & Buly, 2009). Some programs, require preservice teachers to take a course on multicultural issues in education, within other courses that do not specifically address diverse learning perspectives that will be represented in their future classrooms (Murray, 2010). As a result, many new teachers reported that coursework just didn't help them to prepare for the diversity in their classrooms and called for changes in their training and help in findings ways to work with diverse students (Murray, 2010; McClanahan & Buly, 2009; Rochkind, et al., 2008). Other experts in the field have shared similar sentiments, that many teachers enter teaching ill-equipped and unprepared to work with diverse learners (Murray, 2010; McClanahan & Buly, 2009). The National Association for Education of Young Children, NAEYC a leading professional organizations in the field of education, also called preparation of a more diverse teaching workforce and a more diverse leadership for the profession as a whole (NAEYC, 2011).

Therefore, teacher education will need to renew its efforts to restructure programmatic experiences so that preservice teachers understand cultural systems, rather than viewing culture as simply a list of shared habits (Gunn, et.al., 2015). Teacher educators must also help new teachers develop a complex understanding of their own culture and how it might influence their instruction. These experiences will help teachers understand how student identities such as ethnicity, race, language, gender, sexual orientation, and religion will influence their school experiences (Gunn, et.al., 2015; Banks, 2006a).

Teacher education programs can implement two strategies to better prepare preservice teachers to teach students from diverse backgrounds. First, continue to build on current knowledge bases that contain special knowledge, skills, processes, and experiences essential for preparing teachers to be successful when teaching students from diverse backgrounds and to use that knowledge to prepare teachers for today's classroom (Brown, 2007; Taylor, 2010, pg. 25). Second, establish partnerships with diverse schools so as to provide rich opportunities for preservice students to practice what they learn in their teacher preparation courses (McClanahan & Buly, 2009, pg. 59)**.**

Utilizing Expressive Arts to enhance diversity. The use of expressive arts to shape an individual's' identity has been documented in various research studies. According to Cabedo-Mas, Nethsinghe, & Forrest (2017), art has been acknowledged worldwide as a tool to shape individual and community identities, to enhance relationships between people, to promote positive conflict transformation, development and peacebuilding. The authors also reiterated the importance of including universities and teacher educators in the multiculturalism discourse when they stated, "to teach these values in teacher training

programs is indeed of importance, as teachers will necessarily have to show abilities and skills to learn students how to peacefully deal with everyday conflicts and emotionally raise awareness of inequalities and confrontation to violence," (p.18).

Use of expressive arts also impact children's emotional well-being. Several researchers have affirmed that the arts play an indispensable role in enabling children to recognize and represent feelings and emotions, both their own and those of others (Isenberg & Jalongo, 2014; Jalongo, 2014; Stevenson & Deasy, 2005; Kendrick & McKay, 2004). Other researchers have described music, movement, and dance as important ways to enrich the brain (Florh, 2010; Gruhn, 2011; and Hodges, 2010). Therefore, immersing our children in the arts during their elementary years is a step every child needs to take in this journey towards becoming a responsible global citizen. Tavangar & Morales (2014) encourage both leaders and teachers to take simple steps to bring the world - which includes the arts, music and stories - into the classroom, so that fears of the unknown lead to curiosity, and an opportunity to see and respect how similar as well as different we are.

There are many forms of expressive arts that can be used in the classroom including music, dance, movement, visual art, paintings and reader's theater. Music and art offer many opportunities for providing cultural experiences for young children. Educators can utilize music and art in their classrooms in the following ways: 1) Introduce music from other countries, 2) have pieces of art from different cultures displayed in the classroom, 3) invite artists and musicians from different cultures to visit and perform followed by discussion of what feelings or messages they might be trying to portray, 4) have children share music that they listen to in their home or art that their family appreciates, 5) provide paints or marking pens in such skin colors as brown, black or peach for children to draw collages. (Eliason & Jenkins, 2003, pg. 153).

Teachers can utilize expressive arts in the classroom through the following ways. 1) expressive arts activities in the learning centers, 2) facilitate whole group activities, 3) display children's art activities on the classroom bulletin boards, 4) taking field trip to local museums for children experience to experience diverse perspectives, 5) display calendars in the classroom that include ethnic holidays, and note outstanding citizens of diverse ethnic origins, 6) include dolls in the classroom that display different identities, physical abilities and genders, 7) use games from different countries and cultures to help broaden children's perspective, dramatic play such as clothing and items that reflect diversities, 8) include musical instruments, songs and dances, stories that reflect diverse cultures as well as invite performers from diverse cultures, 9) include other languages to teach children common phrases, alphabets, shapes, colors, units of money, songs and finger plays (Eliason & Jenkins, 2003, 150-151).

Culture, identity and diversity. Finally, research studies have documented the role of culture in shaping an individual's identity and their interactions with others in society. Culture is defined as a set of values, beliefs and ways of thinking about the world that influences everyday behavior (Trumbull & Farr, 2005). Bronfenbrenner's ecological system's theory (1989) places individual development in the context of culture. Educators can shape identities of their learners through classroom activities which raise cultural awareness and

competence (Brown, 2007; Taylor, 2010). In addition, educators who harness the strength of diversity in building a strong classroom community often incorporate lessons, activities and experiences of different cultures in their pedagogy (Brown, 2007; Taylor, 2010).

Banks (1996) and Nieto (2012) described four levels of incorporating culture into the curriculum; contributory level (level 1), additive level (level 2), transformation level (level 3) and decision and social activism (level 4).

Level 1: Contribution level, is where some contributions to creativity and the arts are recognized and mentioned, but the curriculum does not change significantly. This study is only one small step toward the learning of appropriate developmental knowledge, attitudes and skills related to respecting and being accepting of people and cultures different from oneself. The starting point of nurturing global awareness begins in the early and elementary years. As Boix and Gardner (2007) noted, seeking new and creative perspectives is no longer a luxury in our classrooms today- it is a necessity. Examples of activities at the contribution level in the elementary years include acknowledgment of different heroes and holidays in different cultures, such as Kwanzaa, Chinese New Year or Cinco de Mayo. Educators can also start multicultural education at elementary years by introducing books on places of interest, sports, dolls, puppets, diverse cultural books celebrating holidays (Abdullah, 2009).

Level 2: Additive level, is where something more significant is added to the curriculum without altering the total program. Banks (2004) purports that education and awareness of diverse cultures must start early. Moore (2004) reiterated that developing kindness and compassion are an important part of a child's early development. Hence, integrating and adding diverse themes, concepts and viewpoints into the curriculum would enable and encourage developmental awareness of diverse cultures among students (Abdullah, 2009).

Level 3: Transformation level, where multicultural perspectives are infused throughout the program and have resulted in major curriculum changes. This level of transformation begs that we look at two relevant questions: What kind of learning do we wish our students to have to prepare them to become global citizens? How can we best nurture our students from the elementary years onward to be confident as they navigate this cultural shift - one that encourages analysis, reflection, communication and action successfully? The discussion and reflection part of this study is a small step of encouraging students to be agents of change as they take up this challenge of becoming globally competent.

Level 4: Decision making and social activism. This level includes the previous three levels and extends beyond them by focusing on positive changes to society. It encourages students to make decisions and act upon the concepts, issues, or problems they have identified.

Methodology

Purpose of the study. The purpose of this study was to use expressive arts as a tool to prepare preservice teachers (PT) to embrace diversity in their future classrooms. PT were empowered to recognize and value diversity and vitality of culture at the local, national and global contexts. PT developed knowledge, skills and experiences to embrace diversity in

creative ways. They designed hands on activities for Kindergarten children to embrace other cultures in a non-judgmental manner. Finally, this study provided a platform for PT to develop a multicultural world view.

Research question. The research question that guided this study is: How can teacher educators utilize expressive arts to prepare preservice teachers to be responsive to diversity (racial, ethnic, gender, cultural, linguistic, national and socioeconomic) in their future classrooms?

Significance of the study. Teacher educators have a professional and ethical responsibility to provide opportunities for preservice teachers to know who they are, understand their peers, and to work individually and with others (NAEYC, 2011). One way to attain this objective is through involvement in multicultural experiences at home, school and in the community. It is also extremely crucial for teacher educators to provide opportunities for preservice teachers to broaden their own worldviews through integration of course work that increases their worldviews, knowledge of multiculturalism, and immerses them in a rich multicultural environment.

This study provided opportunities for PT to begin learning about their own cultures and those of others through hands on activities. This study was a powerful tool for effecting change. PT were encouraged through this advocacy project to be the voice that brings clarity of thought and cultural responsiveness at early childhood and elementary school settings. This study was also multigenerational. Three generations represented by college educators, PT and kindergarten children were engaged in activities to develop a multicultural worldview and skills to promote their cultural competence.

Qualitative Research Design. This qualitative action research was conducted using the participatory research method, often referred to as collaborative action research. Action research is associated with social transformation responsive to the needs of ordinary people and communities. It is also dependent on partnerships between groups, such university educators and classroom teachers (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003).

Categories of participatory action research include classroom action research, action learning, action science, industrial action research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). This research project was a classroom action research. "Classroom action research involves the use of qualitative, interpretive modes of inquiry and data collection with a view to teachers making judgments about how to improve their own practices," (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003, pp.339). In classroom action research, primacy is given to teachers self-understandings and judgements. The emphasis is on the interpretations teachers and students make and act on in the situation (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003).

Partnerships in classroom action research is more practical than theoretical. Partnerships, such as those between university professors and preservice teachers involve reciprocal roles. University teachers are often involved in the service role to the teachers. Such university researchers are often advocates for teacher's knowledge and may disavow or seek to diminish the relevance of more theoretical discourses (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003).

Research Setting and Participants. Participatory action research can be done in many ways and settings, but often in educational settings. Key participants in classroom settings are mainly teachers, students and curriculum consultants. But teachers often take the center stage (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). This research project was facilitated by two teacher educators from two universities in the Southeast. One university is a four-year historically black college and university (HBCU). It is located at a suburban setting with a predominantly African American student population of close to 500. The other university is located at a urban area and has a more diverse student population of close to 20,000 from 100 countries. It offers courses at the undergraduate, masters and doctoral levels.

The research project was conducted over a semester course on how to integrate expressive arts to P-6 curriculum. Preservice teachers from the two universities enrolled in the same course and completed the diversity project as the key assignment.

Data collection procedures. Data was collected using photographs of preservice teachers showcasing their research findings at a cultural diversity fair at a local elementary public school. At the beginning of the semester, preservice teachers formed small working groups comprising of at least two students from each university. Each group then picked a country to research for their diversity project, identified a group leader, secretary, shared responsibilities equally and were responsible for their group's collaboration. Preservice teachers met face to face twice in the course of the semester, and thereafter communicated through email and social media platforms such as Skype, Google Hangout and WhatsApp using their cell phones or computers. After 10 weeks of planning and preparation, the diversity projects were showcased at an interactive cultural day with kindergarteners and their families at a public elementary school.

Preservice teachers presented research findings of their diversity projects of various countries in the form of tri-fold posters, power point slide shows, artifacts, artwork, crafts, dances, short skits. Appendix A contains examples of photographs of the preservice teachers showcasing their research findings to kindergarten students at a local elementary school.

Data analysis. Data was analyzed using Discourse analysis I method. Discourse analysis is classified into two categories. Discourse analysis I, tends to pay more attention to the notion of discourse as articulated through various kinds of visual images and verbal texts than it does to the practices entailed by specific discourses. Discourse I analysis has two main characteristics: i) It uses the notion of visual, written and spoken materials, and ii) It is

especially concerned to trace the production of social difference through discursive claims to truth (Gillian, 2001, pp.151). Discourse analysis II, on the other hand, tends to pay more attention to the practices of institutions than it does to the visual images and verbal texts. Its methodology is usually left implicit. It tends to be more explicitly concerned with issues of power, regimes of truth, institutions and technologies," (Gillian, 2001, pp.151).

Photographs are classified as a form of data under the visual methodologies (Gillian, 2001). Visual methodology is often called the mirror with a memory. Photography takes the researcher into the everyday world where the issues of observer identity, the subjects point of view are revealed" (Denzin and Lincoln, 2003, pp. 50).

Discourse analysis of photographs from this study was done following seven steps described by Gill (2001).

   i) *Looking at the sources with fresh eyes.* Researchers were present when PT showcased their research projects. They reviewed photographs of the presentations afresh in the analysis phase.

   ii) *Immersing yourself in your sources.* Researchers reviewed the photographs several times.

   iii) *Identifying key themes in your sources.* Key themes were identified from the photographs.

   iv) *Examining their effects of truth.* Researchers examined the photographs to identify aesthetic features of different cultures and embedded tenets of diversity.

   v) *Paying attention to their complexity and contradictions.* Researchers reviewed photographs to identify the complexities of cultures and contradictions in elements of their themes.

   vi) *Looking for the invisible as well as the visible.* Researchers examined photographs to identify visible and hidden attributes of various cultures.

   vii) *Paying attention to details.* Researchers observed photographs to identify minute details that distinguish different cultures.

Results

The following key themes emerged from discourse analysis of the photographs of preservice teachers showcasing their research of different countries to kindergarten students at a local elementary school.

1) Cultural attires and appearances.

2) Historical figures and monuments.

3) National flags and locations on the globe.

4) National foods, games, dances, art, crafts.

5) Use of technology.

6) Diversity

These themes are represented in the tables below.

Table 1: Cultural attires and appearances

France	Male Preservice teacher wearing a French hat
Italy	Preservice teacher male with Italian scarf and moustache like Italian men who ride on Gondola
Spain	Preservice teacher male with Italian scarf and moustache like Italian men who ride on Gondola, Spanish hat, Table cloth decorated like the Spanish flag
Mexico	Preservice female teaching wearing a Mexican wrap in rainbow colors, 3 sombreros (Mexican hats), table decorated paper art in very bright colors, Piñata at the back table
India	Preservice teachers wearing Indian costumes and clothes -*Rajastani* skirt, *Chuni* (Indian Scarf) and *Panjab* costume with *Chuni* on her head wrap work by many women in India as a sign of respect. Children dance (*Garba* dance) to Indian music

Table 2: Historical figures and monuments

France	Eiffel tower, *Arch De Triomphe*
Italy	Leaning Tower of Pisa
Spain	Poster picture of the bull run, a famous sport in Spain, Pictures of Spanish monuments on poster
Mexico	Famous beaches in Cozumel and Cancun
Israel	Biblical historical monuments, such as dead sea, the old city of Jerusalem and holocaust museum
India	Famous people from India-- Mahatma Gandhi, Mother Teresa; Famous places on the poster Taj Mahal, Carvings of Elephants on the table, a famous animal in India

Table 3: National flags and locations on the globe

France	Flag of France on the poster, Position of France on the globe and paper passport to enter France
Italy	Children's Flag of Italy, position of Italy on the globe, paper passport stamped to enter Italy
Spain	Position of Spain on the globe, children's paper passport to enter Spain
Mexico	Position on the globe, Children's paper passport to enter Mexico
Israel	Position of Israel on the globe, Children's passport stamped to enter Israel
India	Position of India on the globe, Poster decorated as the flag of India, includes a detailed *Chakra* with 24 spokes depicting King *Ashoka's* virtue wheel. Each spoke stood for virtues like love and truth. Stamped paper passport to enter India * Role play/ Children's theatre, preservice teachers dressed as flight attendants and children simulate flying across all six countries

Table 4: National foods, games, dances, arts and crafts

France	French bread and French pastries
Italy	Garlic bread
Spain	Spanish food in a basket, Fish game on the carpet, learning to count number of fish in Spanish.
Mexico	Preservice teachers working with children to make their own Mexican musical instrument (tambourines)
Israel	Children wearing headband with feathers of different colors like that of a queen. Children learned to perform a dance used to teach counting in schools in Israel
India	Indian bread for the children

Table 5: Use of technology

France	Music from different countries was played as students displayed their research using power point presentations. Group communication through the semester was done through Skype, Google Hangout, WhatsApp on Cell phones, I-pads and Computers

Table 6: Diversity

France	Diversity was observed in many forms among the preservice teachers, kindergarten students, their families and teachers in the following dimensions: race, gender, physical appearances such as hair textures, skin color and in cultural experiences

Discussion

The main research question that guided this study was: How can teacher educators utilize expressive arts to prepare preservice teachers to be responsive to diversity (racial, ethnic, gender, cultural, linguistic, national and socioeconomic) in their future classrooms?

Findings from this project demonstrate teacher educators can use expressive arts as a tool to teach diversity to preservice teachers and to young children. Gay (2013) noted there is a lot of opposition to culturally responsive education due to ambiguities and uncertainties on how to engage in it. Preservice teachers utilized expressive arts to identify forms of diversity (racial, ethnic, gender, cultural, linguistic, and socioeconomic) in the countries they researched. Through the semester, the preservice teachers' increased their knowledge about various forms of diversity of their assigned countries: cultural attires, traditions, artifacts, food, music, dance, drama, stories, languages and games.

The findings of the study were affirming and encouraging. The kindergarten children worked with preservice teachers who were both African American as well as Caucasian. The preservice teachers' accepting attitude of the diverse children as seen in the photographs were indicative of their positive understanding of diverse issues. The findings from the photographs support that the learning that occurred through utilizing expressive arts to identify various forms of diversity, exhibits the preservice teachers' deep understanding of diversity, and their ability to make it developmentally relevant for the kindergarten children. For example, the preservice teachers wore costumes that were identified with the country being researched. The children got their play passports stamped as they visited each country and were welcomed in the language of the country. For example, when they visited France ,the children were greeted with a happy '*Bonjour*", and a folded hands "*Namaste*" when they visited India, and '*Hola*' when they entered Spain. The kindergarteners were introduced to cultures and lifestyles like new places, costumes, foods, crafts, music, dance and games they had never heard or seen before.

The diversity project as seen through the photographs, planted seeds in the hearts and minds of the kindergarten children, encouraging small steps in their journey to becoming global citizens. For example, as the kindergarteners visited France, they met a preservice teacher dressed as a Frenchman wearing a French hat, who helped the children find France on the globe and taught them the French word' bonjour' as seen in the photograph. As the kindergarteners journeyed to Italy, another country in the European continent, they met a preservice teacher dressed as an Italian gondola boat driver from Venice, Italy. The pictures on the tri fold posters created by the preservice teachers took the children on a visit to the two famous places of interest in France and Italy, namely the Eiffel Tower in France and the Leaning Tower of Pisa in Italy.

The acquired knowledge as evidenced in the photographs also created an awareness and understanding in the pre-service teachers of one of the essentials of 21st century learning skills. It created and developed in the pre- teachers a spirit of respect for diverse cultures, traditions and lifestyles. This research journey of enhanced awareness and understanding of diverse cultures enabled the pre-service teachers to change their stereotypical beliefs regarding minority and less affluent students and the fear and discomfort they felt regarding interacting with diverse students (Kumar & Hamer, 2012). The knowledge, awareness and understanding the preservice teachers gained through their research regarding diversity, carried over into the project with a more open minded, positive, enthusiastic and beneficial interaction with the Kindergarten students as seen in the photographs.

Preservice teachers as seen in the findings (photographs),were animated and excited to share their knowledge as they taught the kindergarteners a song from Israel, as the children learned the position of Spain on the globe, as the kindergarteners immersed themselves in the music and rhythm of the *Garba* dance from India. The preservice teachers were actively engaged as they worked with a special needs student as well as other students on crafts as in the photograph from Mexico or even as the preservice teachers between the ages of 40-50 years of age worked with and included a special needs child in a wheelchair with the singing of a song in Israel. The research enabled an attitude of openness to diversity on the part of the young (20-30 years of age) as well as the older(40-50 years of age) preservice teachers. This accepting attitude in spite of a difference in age among the preservice teachers was infectious, and led to the kindergarten children becoming open, willing and ready to be eagerly engaged, to learn about and appreciate diverse cultures other than their own culture as evidenced in the photographs.

In addition, the preservice teachers were enabled to be agents of change in assisting their learning communities to be equitable. The preservice teachers developed essential characteristics to embrace diversity in their classrooms. These include; a) sociocultural consciousness, an understanding and respect for multiple perspectives and viewpoints b) a critical examination of their own socio cultural identities, inequalities, biases, values and beliefs and c) applying knowledge learned to confront any negative attitudes they might have towards any cultural groups. They also recognized the importance of affirming students from culturally diverse backgrounds which they will carry with them into their future classrooms. The study also provided opportunities for inclusiveness in the classroom community. Other attributes developed were the crucial role of commitment to confront barriers and obstacles and develop skills for collaboration.

Kea, et. al. (2006) noted that constructivist views of learning, such as those demonstrated by Vygotsky, scaffold students between what they already know through their life experiences and what they need to learn. This study applied these constructivist principles of knowledge, teaching, and learning to empower preservice teachers to be responsive to diversity. As teachers assist students construct knowledge, build on their personal and cultural strengths, and examine the curriculum from multiple perspectives, an inclusive classroom community is created. This constructivist teaching promotes critical thinking,

problem solving, collaboration and the recognition of multiple perspectives. In this project, the pre-service teachers made collaboration efforts with one another to design and implement their research. These collaborative efforts included various forms of technology and apps like Skype, Google Hangout, WhatsApp, on cell phones, i-pads and computers .to communicate and collaborate with each other The research on various countries provided the skills, knowledge and authentic experiences of other cultures that led to a building of meaningful relationships and a strong classroom community.

Learning about children's experiences, home and community culture, and world both in and outside of school helps build relationships and increase the prospective teachers' use of these experiences in the context of teaching and learning (Kea, et.al., 2006). This aligns with one of the goals of this project—for pre-service teachers to understand the culture within their own classroom as well as cultures they have never experienced. As is evident in the findings, the pre-service teachers learned about various forms of diversity from different countries they researched. They also learned about their own cultures and those of other students they worked with.

Recommendations for Practice

1. Kindergarteners, with support from adults, have the potential to effect change in their classrooms, schools and homes through respect and appreciation of others, open multi-lateral communication, open-mindedness, dialogue, and flexibility.

2. Effective change can be attained through collaboration, networking, deliberation and engaging with issues in the classroom that are pertinent within our proximity at home and in the further distance, abroad in a developmentally appropriate manner

3. Educators can create a sense of community in the classroom by allowing children to share stories and artifacts of their home and family lives. This sharing provides insight into the lives of the child and family and encourages acceptance and inclusiveness in the classroom.

4. Educators are encouraged to be champions and advocates for multicultural education by including it as a major component of the daily classroom schedule.

Conclusion

Expressive arts provides a unique opportunity for educators and preservice teachers to provide students with learning opportunities to be accepting , respectful and appreciative of diversity and other cultures, and to nurture meaningful cross-cultural communication among racially, ethnically, linguistically, religiously, socio-economically diverse educators and students.

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Appendix A: Preservice Teachers Showcasing Research to Kindergarten Students

France Group	Italy Group

Mexico Group	Mexico Group Working with a Special Needs Child and other Children

Israel Group	Israel Group Working with a Special Needs Child and other Children

India Group	Spain Group