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Expectations for “Community Field Experiences” and Their Implication in the Current US Teacher Education

現代米国教員養成における“地域実習”への期待とその意味

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Introduction

Recently teachers in Japan have to be prepared to teach appropriately minority students, such as children with roots in foreign countries. To realize them, teacher education policy gives direction to emphasize not only academic studies at universities but also practical learning from experienced teachers and clinical experiences at schools¹.

On the other hand, in the United States, while it is still a problem that non-whites are often placed in social minorities, the introduction of community field experiences, as distinguished from school-based experiences, is recommended to educate teachers who can appropriately teach non-white students. It is believed that there are limits to what can be learned in universities and schools to promote the understanding of non-white students among teacher candidates, and the introduction of community field experiences is being promoted as a possible way to overcome these limits. Considering these discussions in the United States, the Japanese education policy direction as above will face the same limitations as those in the United States. Therefore, this study examines the discussions that have led to the introduction of community field experience in teacher education in the United States, clarifies the ideas of them, and aims to find a direction for the development of teacher education in Japan.

First, as a premise for the discussion, I will ascertain the position of the discussion on the introduction of community field experiences in the overall picture of current United States teacher education. Second, I will examine what limitations are identified in university and school-based learning and how these limitations are to be overcome through community field experiences. Third, to achieve this goal, I will discuss how community field experiences are proposed to be positioned in teacher education and what they expect from it.

1. Background of the Introduction of Community Field Experiences

(1) The position of the discussion on the introduction of community field experiences in US teacher education

As a premise for the discussion, this section takes a holistic view of the current US teacher education research and confirms the position of the discussion that promotes the introduction of community field experiences. The subject of this section is a review by Cochran-Smith, M., who is considered one of the leading scholars of teacher education research in the United States² and her colleagues. The review comprehensively covers more than 1,500 peer-reviewed empirical articles on teacher education systems and practices published from 2000 to 2012 and aims to classify and lay out the vast research trends in teacher education based on themes and topics.

In their review, they focus on the social, historical, and political context of current teacher education research (Figure 1). The social, historical, and political contexts of teacher education research include the global knowledge-based economy, world mass migration, new markets, and new conditions of social/cultural life. Specifically, they point to the shift from an industrial society based on manufacturing and material goods to a knowledge-based society that revolves around the production and distribution of goods and services related to information. This development has involved new labor markets, new types of production and consumption, and worldwide mass migration. They state that these are the background of current teacher education research.

How is teacher education research developing in this social, historical, and political context? Cochran-Smith et al. identified three trends. 1) policy/political trends: unprecedented attention to teacher quality and accountability,

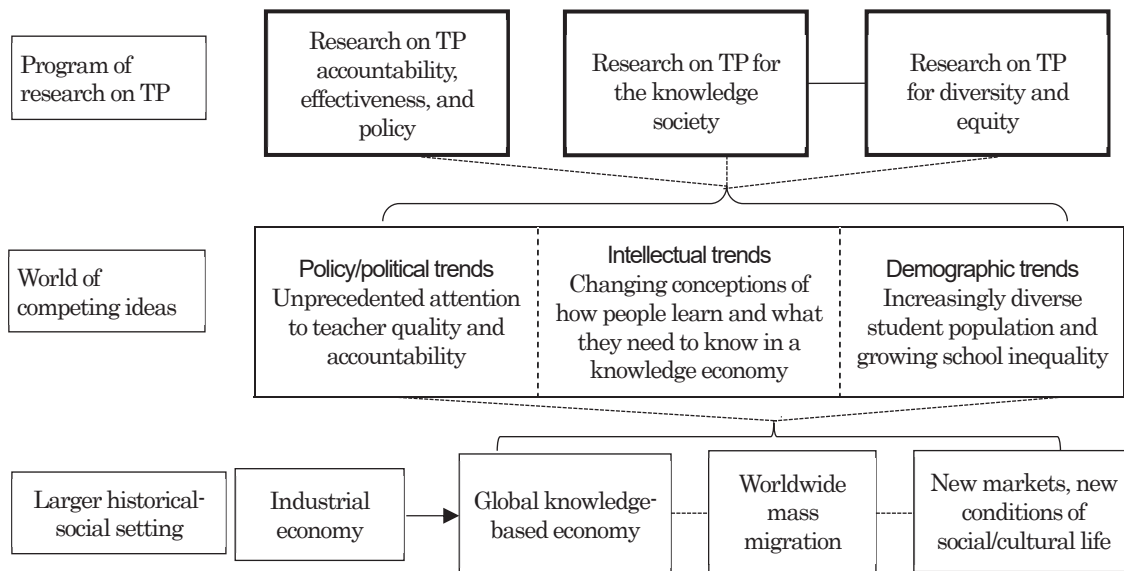


Figure 1: Teacher preparation (TP) research as historically situated social practice, part 1: The larger context (source: Cochran-Smith, M. et al., 2016, p.442)

2) intellectual trends: changing conceptions of how people learn and what they need to know in a knowledge economy. 3) demographic trends: increasingly diverse student population and growing school inequality. In each trend, what are their goals in educating teachers based on what ideas, and what are the main points being considered in the discussion of teacher education to achieve each goal? The following is a general overview of each trend.

First, as a policy and political trend, the studies are based on neoliberalism and market-based approaches and aim to educate teachers whose students achieve growth on standardized tests. These studies view the individual as human capital that contributes to economic growth, and they think that educational success is the key to economic success for individuals and nations. An important goal is to educate students to be successful in global competition. To achieve this goal, the introduction of outcome-based educational accountability in teacher education policy has become an important issue to consider in this trend.

Second, as an intellectual trend, the studies point to the transformation of knowledge demanded by economic society and it causes changes in views of learning. They advocate the need to create a new image of teachers and examine how to educate teachers. As industrial society has transformed into a knowledge economy, it has become necessary for students not only to receive knowledge but also to be skilled at evaluating and using information, framing and solving problems, and collaborating with others to develop new ideas. Teachers need to help students create new knowledge based on what they already know, instead of transmitting the knowledge to students. In order to raise such teachers, they discuss teacher education systems and practices that include problem-solving

learning by teacher candidates and enable teacher candidates themselves to experience independent and collaborative learning.

Third, as a demographic trend, the studies focus on educating teachers who are oriented toward diversity and equity. In the United States, racism persists and racial educational disparities remain. It is said that one factor of the disparities is that 90% of the teachers are still white while about half of the students are non-white. In schools with large numbers of non-white students, inexperienced teachers tend to be placed and they are not able to catch the needs of the students accurately and to support their development, and teacher turnover is high. As for issues in teacher education, while aiming to increase the number of non-white teacher candidates, there is currently a need for white teacher candidates to understand the life and cultural backgrounds of non-white students and learn how to construct educational methods and content suitable for a diverse student population.

The discussion on promoting the introduction of community field experiences is situated in the third category, diversity- and equity-oriented teacher education. Simply put, it aims to solve racial discrimination. According to Cochran-Smith et al., diversity- and equity-oriented teacher education is expected to be a potential counterpoint to the policy and political trends promoting neoliberalism. It is important to confirm that the introduction of community field experiences is not being discussed as an option for traditional teacher education but forms one of the major trends in the discussion on teacher education. It implies a fundamental questioning of teacher education policy based on neoliberalism.

(2) Historical background of the introduction of community field experiences

In the United States, how have been racial issues addressed in teacher education policy, and what issues have remained?

The civic rights movement took place in the 1950s and 1960s, and in 1964 racial discrimination was banned by law in the United States. Since then, there have been legal and policy reforms aimed at educational equality.

Teacher education policy has taken measures since the 1970s. First, the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE), composed of teacher education institutions in the United States, examined the qualities and abilities required of teachers who promote multicultural education. The National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE), which took over the role of accrediting teacher education institutions from AACTE, added multicultural education to its criteria for accreditation in 1977³. This led to the institutional guarantee of the introduction of multicultural education in teacher preparation across the United States.

However, racial disparities in education are not easily resolved, and there is still a persistent achievement gap between white and non-white students⁴. As a main factor of the problem, the perceptions of white teachers regarding race have been focused on since around the 1990s. In other words, the problem is that white teachers tend to prejudice and stereotype non-white students as naturally low-achieving and of rough temperament, even if white teachers are unaware of it. In teacher education, it is not enough for white teacher candidates to acquire knowledge of multicultural education, it is necessary for them to fundamentally reflect on and correct their perceptions of race. As a means of achieving this, they have promoted clinical experiences in areas with large non-white populations in teacher education programs.

According to one theory, it began to be advocated around the 1940s to introduce community field experiences that are distinguished from the school clinical experiences and to deepen the understanding of students' lives by teacher candidates⁵, but it was not until the 1990s that discussions on this practice began to develop with a strong awareness of the need to resolve racial issues as mentioned above.

The form and content of the community field experiences vary, with some making students do the service learning in non-white neighborhoods as a requirement for earning credits in multicultural education courses, and others offering homestay programs in non-white neighborhoods during long vacations so that students can experience the daily life of the local residents. For example, students are encouraged to explore the community guided by local residents, learn about its history and culture, and discover local resources that can be used for educational activities⁶.

2. Significance of Introducing Community Field Experiences in Teacher Education

(1) Limitations of teacher education in universities and schools

In this section, I will identify what limitations have been identified in university and school-based learning and how community field experiences aim to overcome these limitations.

In US teacher education, efforts have been developed to eliminate racial discrimination, not only through policy but also from bottom-up practices. One of them is the Professional Development School (PDS). The PDS was introduced in 1986 by the Holms Group, a private educational institution. It aims to deepen students' understanding of the teaching profession through not only academic studies at universities but also clinical experiences in school, moving back and forth between theory and practice. In Japan, it has been positively evaluated as a means to improve the professionalism of teachers, while also having the perspective of resistance to inequalities in society⁷. However, those who insist on the introduction of community field experiences in the US, while appreciating the PDS's emphasis on clinical experiences, criticize it as not being a system that fundamentally changes racial discrimination. By examining this criticism, the limitations of learning in universities and schools will be clarified.

Regarding the purpose of education and the ideal of teachers, those who promote the introduction of community field experiences set out the differences from PDS as shown in Table 1⁸. According to them, PDS placed the greatest emphasis on academic achievement in student development and positioned teachers as subject matter experts. They point out that while it is aimed at closing the achievement gap between racial groups, it will ultimately lead teachers away from non-white cultures. Researchers who promote the introduction of community field experiences believe that in the development of students, it is important not merely to improve academic achievement, but to help non-white students develop a sense of pride in their own culture and a sense of self-affirmation. To achieve this, they insist, teachers need to cultivate a sense of being public servants rather than professionals. For that, they say, it is not enough for teacher candidates to study in schools, and they will need to study in the community.

Why is it not possible to fulfill the above philosophy by simply incorporating learning in schools? There are two reasons for this⁹.

Table 1: The comparison between PDS and community field experiences

		PDS	Community Field Experiences
Principles	The way to think about the “professionalization” of the teacher	They focus on the “professionalization” of the teacher; developing a culture of academic expertise.	They worry that “professionalization” distances teachers from communities.
	What to focus on in students’ development	They focus primarily on students’ academic achievement.	They take a broad view of student development as academic progress, personal well-being, cultural affirmation, and social engagement.
	Which connections to emphasize	Between schools and universities	Between schools and communities
	What the school is	The centers of educational excellence	The anchors of communities
Perspectives	The goal of teacher candidates	To become a subject matter specialist	To gain cultural knowledge and cross-cultural experiences
	What means to be a teacher	Professionals	Public Servants
	What teachers should deal with	To concentrate on what happens inside schools	To think of education broadly.

(Source: Created by author based on Boyle-Baise, M., McIntyre, J., 2008)

First, universities tend to have a sense of power over schools, and the knowledge produced by universities is only unilaterally transmitted to schools, making it difficult to reexamine academic knowledge checked against practical knowledge (Figure 2). Academic knowledge here refers to knowledge produced by researchers. For example, it includes knowledge about the role of school education in society and teaching methods of the subjects, which teacher candidates learn in university courses. Practical knowledge, on the other hand, refers to knowledge produced by school teachers in their practice. This knowledge is acquired by teacher candidates through clinical experiences at schools¹⁰.



Figure 2: The relationship of traditional teacher education (source: Author)

Universities lack knowledge of non-white cultures and tend to prioritize the production of knowledge that meets the academic needs of their own research fields rather than contributing to the local community. The academic knowledge makes it difficult to advance the understanding of non-white cultures. Furthermore, schools must be influenced not only by the university but also by the political climate. For these reasons, there is a great risk that universities and schools will reproduce, without questioning, the current structure of social dynamics in which whites are dominant and non-whites are suppressed. It is pointed out that it is difficult for teacher

candidates to fundamentally question social structural injustice simply by studying in universities and schools.

Second, there is a deep-seated conflict between non-white neighborhoods and schools. This is due to historical racial discrimination. Especially in the past, white teachers have not responded appropriately to non-white students, such as unjustly reprimanding them. From the perspective of non-white parents' generation, school teachers are unreliable. It is noted that even when teacher candidates study in schools, it is practically difficult for them to build relationships with non-white parents or learn about non-white culture and life.

So, they insist that deconstructing the power of universities and schools in the framework of teacher education is necessary in order to properly promote teacher candidates to understand non-white culture and life. As a concrete way to realize this, the introduction of community field experiences in teacher education is advocated. Of course, collaboration between universities, schools, and communities is not easy and time-, resource-, and emotionally-intensive work, but they insist that it is essential to realize diversity and equity.

(2) Position and implication of community field experiences in teacher education

How is it proposed to situate community field experiences in teacher education practice? What do they expect from the community field experiences? I want to focus on Zeichner, K. who leads the discussion on the introduction of community field experiences. In Japan, too, Zeichner's arguments have been introduced, but attention has tended to focus on his advocacy of a connection between theory and practice, and not enough attention has been paid to his advocacy of the

introduction of community field experiences as distinct from school-based teacher education¹¹. In order to accurately understand Zeichner's assertion and its significance, it is necessary to examine how he attempted to position community field experiences in teacher education and how he set forth its significance.

Zeichner develops his argument by focusing on “knowledge”. He positions “community knowledge” as equal to the previously mentioned academic knowledge of universities and practical knowledge of schools (Figure 3), clarifies how community knowledge has been handled in teacher education to date, and finds out directions for the future.

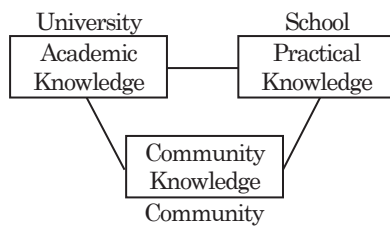


Figure 3: Zeichner's suggestion for the relationship of teacher education (source: Author)

According to Zeichner, there are three types of ways in which “community knowledge” is utilized in teacher education practice.

First, “community knowledge” is seen as a learning resource in teacher education. This refers to a form of introducing community field experiences in foundation courses and multicultural education courses at universities. They think the university is the main place for teacher education, as in the past. In the community field experiences, teacher candidates develop teaching methods for students by utilizing information on their home situations.

Second, they try to increase the number of non-white teacher candidates and mentors in teacher education and consider the knowledge they have as “community knowledge”. They set the school as the main place for teacher education, and the goal is to increase the number of non-white teacher candidates and mentors and make the school a racially diverse place. It is believed that those who grew up in the community are familiar with the life backgrounds of non-white students and can work appropriately to support their development. The goal is to improve schools while learning from the knowledge of non-white teacher candidates and mentors.

Third, they think the main place of teacher education is the community, and they make white teacher candidates work to solve problems in the community. The knowledge possessed by those who help solve problems and those who support them is considered “community knowledge”. In this perspective, educational issues are considered part of other social issues such as housing, health, and employment. The goal is for

teacher candidates to use the specialized knowledge they acquire at university to solve and change community issues. To realize the goal, community people are involved in teacher education as mentors, directly encouraging teacher candidates to understand the current situation and issues in the community.

After dividing the utilization of community field experience types into these three categories, Zeichner insists that the first two, university- and school-based practices are insufficient and that the ideal is to develop teacher education mainly in local communities, as in the third category¹². In other words, Zeichner advocates not only utilizing non-white communities as places to practice but also welcoming non-white community residents as teacher educators and aims to solve educational and community issues. These are unique points. In the United States, the introduction of community field experiences in teacher education is being promoted based on these thoughts.

Conclusion

As described above, teacher education promotes the introduction of clinical experiences in predominantly non-white areas in order to solve the persistent racial problem in the United States. In their discussion, community field experiences are not introduced as an option for traditional teacher education but it is expected to resist neoliberalism in the current trends in teacher education policy, in a macro context. What is particularly noteworthy is that it is considered necessary not only to ask white teacher candidates to reflect and change but also for the universities and schools to reflect on their own power. In other words, the “community” is expected to serve as a mirror to reflect the problems of traditional teacher education systems and places.

As mentioned at the beginning of this article, also in our country, teacher candidates are expected to promote understanding of students who tend to be placed in social minorities, such as those with roots in foreign countries. As a means of achieving this, expectations are placed on learning from the practical knowledge of schools. However, if we follow the US discussion, this may not lead to a fundamental reconsideration of the power structure of society. It is important to raise the point that in order to encourage teacher candidates to understand students who are in social minorities, it is necessary for universities and schools to reflectively review and change the risk that they have been complicit in reproducing the power structure of society.

However, as the US researchers pointed out, collaboration between universities, schools, and communities will be difficult to achieve. And even if universities and schools should change in some respects, they also have to play a role in

maintaining social order. How can these contradictions and difficulties be addressed while fostering teachers who are oriented toward diversity and fairness? We need to examine this issue through an analysis of US teacher education practices that have introduced community field experiences.

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¹² Payne, Zeichner, op.cit., p.1108.

Notes

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