

# **On the Student's Right to Knowledge: Towards an Obligation to Teach the Truth Disposition for Teacher Preparation Curriculum**

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## **Introduction**

In discussing what the goals of education should be, Delpit (2006) utilizes a letter included in Ginott's (1972) seminal work *Teacher and Child* to illustrate the importance of developing the whole student as a human being. The letter was from the principal to the teachers on the first day of the new term. The letter reads:

Dear Teacher,

I am the survivor of a concentration camp. My eyes saw what no person should witness:

Gas chambers built by learned engineers.

Children poisoned by educated physicians.

Infants killed by trained nurses.

Women and babies shot and burned by high school and college graduates.

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So I am suspicious of education. My request is: Help your students become human. Your efforts must never produce learned monsters, skilled psychopaths, educated Eichmanns. Reading, writing, and arithmetic are important only if they make our children more humane. (p. xix)

This letter powerfully describes two profound truths about the function of education. First, it describes the intersection of pedagogy and curriculum theory in sobering terms as the imposition of a hegemonic view of humanity advocated by the Nazi's murderous regime was the goal of Nazi education. Second, it is important that teachers recognize the real power they hold in society and necessitates that they have a critical understanding of the responsibilities that come with it. Power is not merely an abstract concept consigned to the pages of social science and philosophy. It is a real thing with a tangible impact.

When I first joined the teaching profession in the autumn of 2007, what struck me the most about the day-to-day reality of being a teacher was how regularly I made consequential decisions that would impact other people's children. My experiences in both the public school system and at a private school in my native Louisiana have shown me that this is a central feature of being a teacher regardless of the environment. The routine tasks of grading, discipline, writing letters of recommendation, and student interactions are inherently exercises in power. I discovered quickly that the greatest power that teachers have lies in the fact that teachers are the most common bridge between people and the acquisition of knowledge.

Education provides the student with the means to comprehend and articulate their own lived experience; a teacher can provide or deny them the means to ascertain the reality of their world they inhabit and engage in the revolutionary activity of discerning fact from fiction. Stated plainly, from the scientific method to the importance of perspective in understanding historical evidence and that words can convey multiple meanings, teachers are ostiaries of the knowledge that is required for discerning truth for millions of students in the United States; this is an act of *sheer power* that comes with great responsibility. Teachers are integral in creating a society of Toni Morrisons and Albert Einsteins as well as a society of Adolf Eichmanns. When this power and responsibility are recognized, teacher education programs emerge as sites that train not only future educators but also future arbiters of power (Pinar et al., 1995); yet this fact is rarely if ever considered in the preparation of a teacher.

In a time where the term "parental rights" is being invoked to justify book bans, laws forbidding teachers from using a student's chosen

pronouns, and the culling of curriculum for concepts that racial, gender, and sexual conservatives consider to be divisive concepts across the country, it is critical that teachers not ignore the questions being intentionally omitted from the political discourse. What about the right of students to learn about the world regardless of if it contradicts their parents' or communities' beliefs and prejudices? This article takes the critical ontological posture (Magill, 2019; Magill & Salinas, 2019; Rodriguez & Smith, 2011) that teachers are obligated to teach the truth, regardless of what the law dictates, and that this must be required learning in teacher preparation programs. The Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP, n.d.) defines a disposition as "The habits of professional action and moral commitments that underlie an educator's performance (InTASC Model Core Teaching Standards, p. 6)." Using the rhetoric common to teacher education programs, drawing on the concept of cognitive justice (Leibowitz, 2017; Visvanathan, 2009), and in keeping with CAEP's conceptualization of dispositions as moral commitments, I define the obligation to teach the truth disposition as:

Because students have a right to learn about the world they inhabit, teachers shall only teach what is true with deference to established facts according to the fields of academic study, relevant context, appropriate methodologies utilized in establishing relevant facts concerning the subject matter being taught, and debate within the relevant fields of study.

This article draws on dispositions theorizing (Damon, 2007; Deiz, 2007; Hand, 2012; Howard, 2007; Kerr & Andreotti, 2019; Phelps, 2006; Saultz et al., 2021; Villegas, 2007; Warren, 2018; Warren et al., 2022), curriculum theorizing (Apple, 2019; Delpit, 2006; Pinar et al., 1995; Pinar, 1994), critical pedagogy (Freire, 1970/2018; Woodson, 1933/2005), and social thought (Chomsky, 1967; Holland & Henroit, 1980; Kammer, 2004; Yep, 2016) to theorize on and articulate an obligation to teach the truth disposition and necessary competencies for teacher preparation curriculum. As a mode of inquiry for curriculum theorizing, I have chosen to utilize the speculative essay format in this article because it allows the author to assume a different posture of inquiry "emancipated from the fetters of the positivist, technical, and managerial inquiry that too often dominate curriculum thought and practice" (Schubert, 1991, pp. 67). First, I discuss teacher dispositions. Then I theorize and articulate what the obligation to teach the truth disposition is and what competencies are necessary for a teacher to engage in it. I conclude by explaining the need for an obligation to teach the truth disposition in teacher education programs.

## **On Teacher Dispositions**

I ground my conceptualization of teacher dispositions in the theorizing on the importance, possibilities, limitations, and responsibilities of dispositions of Damon (2007), Deiz (2007), Hand (2012), Howard (2007), Kerr and Andreotti (2019), Phelps (2006), Saultz et al. (2021), Villegas (2007), Warren (2018), and Warren et al. (2022). Education holds a great deal of power in any society, and inequalities can be reconstituted through education (Kerr & Andreotti, 2019). For this reason, it is important to consider how teaching dispositions are conceptualized, how dispositions are defined, and how teacher education programs instruct future teachers in fulfilling them (Damon, 2007). There is tension as to what the orientation of teacher preparation programs should be (Deiz, 2007); this is not surprising considering the historical development of teaching as a profession as well as the outside pressure exerted on it from parents, community leaders, and the government. The question can be framed as “is teaching a profession or a vocation?”

As a curriculum theorist as well as a former K-12 teacher, I reject the conceptualization of teacher education as “vocational” because teaching is more complicated than knowing when to apply certain techniques that enable learning. Pinar (1994) asserts that teacher preparation programs solely dedicated to practice teaching pre-service teachers a narrow vocationalism occurs at the cost of developing their professional judgement skills which itself should be grounded in the study of the arts, humanities, social sciences, and curriculum theory. To illustrate the distinction between teaching being conceptualized as a profession and as a vocation, Pinar (1994) cites a statement from the University of Michigan Law School:

The Law School is very much a professional school. But it is distinctly not a vocational school. Students are not trained to perform many, or even most, of the tasks that its graduates may be called upon to perform as lawyers, and should not expect to be fully prepared to deliver a wide range of legal services on the day of graduation. Students may acquire or begin to develop some practical or technical skills and may gain confidence in their ability to perform as lawyers. Our practice-oriented courses and clinics provide, however, only an introduction to skills and a framework for practice which can only be defined through years of experience. The majority of our graduates join law firms where numerous opportunities exist for skill development under supervision of experienced practitioners who share with the novice responsibility for the quality of service rendered. Michigan, more than many other law schools, seeks to provide students with the intellectual and theoretical background with which an attorney can under-

take a more reflective and rewarding practice. *It is felt that too much haste or emphasis on vocational skills, without a broader and more critical view of the framework on which lawyering occurs, runs the risks of training technicians instead of professionals.* (p. 227, italics are Pinar's emphasis)

Technical knowledge is critical but so is the knowledge that enables a teacher to understand the social context of teaching and the ability to process their experiences over time to improve their practice. The goal of teacher education programs must be to train professionals who are able to create wisdom that advances the profession in complex and robust ways.

The theorizing described in this article situates itself in the tradition of the "postformal expansion of inquiry-oriented teacher education informed by political theory and postmodernism" (Pinar et al., 1995 p. 762). Citing Kincheloe, Pinar et al. (1995) write:

Kincheloe identifies four features of such a view: 1) teacher educators are profoundly conscious of the role of power in all dimensions of teaching and professional education; 2) they labor to "uncover the deep structures that shape education and society" (p.197); 3) they "encourage desocialization via ideological disembedding" (p. 197), that is, elucidate how hyperreality [see chapter 9] shapes the lives of students and teachers; and 4) they support community-based groups to contest entrenched political and business elites. (Kincheloe in Pinar et al., p. 762)

Drawing on Pinar et al.'s (1995) conceptualization of curriculum functions as an institutional text, Pinar's (1994) reconceptualization of teacher preparation, and the first of Kincheloe's four features central to the postformal expansion of inquiry-oriented teacher education (Pinar et al., 1995), I conceptualize teaching as a profession in the same fashion as law and medicine; it is subject to profound ethical concerns that only comes with being tasked with great responsibility by society which, in turn, grants teachers profound power.

Villegas (2007) definition of dispositions is as follows:

I propose that dispositions are tendencies for individuals to act in a particular manner under particular circumstances, based on their beliefs. A tendency implies a pattern of behavior that is predictive of future actions. This predictive feature of the proposed definition gives teacher educators some assurance that once program completers who have developed the dispositions (or tendencies) promoted by the program assume the formal role of teachers, their practices will be in keeping with those dispositions. A second important feature of this definition is its focus on candidates' actions rather than on their attributes. Since actions can be examined directly, unlike attributes, the

complexity of measuring a disposition is somewhat lessened, as long as the types of actions thought to represent that disposition can be specified with reasonable confidence. (p. 373)

In Villegas' conceptualization, a disposition is an ethical arc that stretches from belief to action that can be assessed or judged in a way that reflects the complex nature of a teacher's role in school, community, and society.

Schools are sites of power and every decision a teacher or a school makes teaches students about how power works through both the formal and hidden curriculum. This power manifests in areas such as dress code, discipline, access to transformative curriculum, and economic stratification. Villegas (2007) asserts that the ethical assumption of American education is "that school practices are equitable and fair," and, in the practical sense, the sorting power of schools can have a profound impact on students throughout their lives (p. 371). This is why educational attainment correlates strongly with quality-of-life metrics such as employment and lifetime earnings and the school to prison pipeline is such a salient issue (Fasching-Varner et al., 2014).

### **On the Obligation to Teach the Truth Disposition for Teachers**

Increasingly, teachers have been called to act in the service of promoting social justice on behalf of their students. Villegas (2007) asserts:

Because the sorting process significantly influences the quality of students' adult lives, teachers—as the school professionals most directly involved in the sorting—have a moral and ethical responsibility to teach all their pupils fairly and equitably. They also must be vigilant about the fairness and equity of the educational enterprise as a whole. This moral and ethical dimension of teaching makes issues of social justice legitimate terrain for exploration in the preparation of prospective teachers. (p. 371)

But what does it mean to teach pupils fairly and equitably? The obligation to teach the truth disposition presented in this article is defined as:

Because students have a right to learn about the world they inhabit, teachers shall only teach what is true with deference to established facts according to the fields of academic study, relevant context, appropriate methodologies utilized in establishing relevant facts concerning the subject matter being taught, and debate within the relevant fields of study.

This definition obligates teachers not only to teach students relevant facts and data but also how those facts and data were enunciated so

that the students may interrogate those methods and facts for themselves. The hidden curriculum that emerges from this disposition is that truth is the result of systematic research and contemplation that students are welcome to participate in. This definition also situates itself in the central tension between knowledge and curriculum, namely the battle for cognitive justice against the destruction of knowledge or epistemicide, which is to say the battle over what knowledge gets into the curriculum and what knowledge gets discarded.

Visvanathan (2009) defines cognitive justice as the recognition of:

The right of different forms of knowledge to co-exist, but adds that this plurality needs to go beyond tolerance or liberalism to an active recognition of the need for diversity. It demands recognition of knowledges, not only as methods but as ways of life. This presupposes that knowledge is embedded in ecology of knowledges where each knowledge has its place, its claim to a cosmology, its sense as a form of life. In this sense knowledge is not something to be abstracted from a culture as a life form; it is connected to livelihood, a life cycle, a lifestyle; it determines life chances. (para. 21)

Cognitive justice does not assert that all forms of knowledge are equal, but rather that the equality of knowers is necessary for any democratic dialog (Leibowitz, 2017). The struggle between the center and the margins is an epistemic struggle as much as it is a struggle for resources or political power. This struggle is inherent to the question of "What knowledge becomes curriculum?" From an obligation to teach the truth teacher disposition perspective, cognitive justice demands that the knowledge of the margins be elevated to curriculum alongside the knowledge of the center.

Diversity is central to cognitive justice. Visvanathan (2009) writes:

The plurality that cognitive justice entails demands a diversity of the ideas of time. Globalization and citizenship today are built on the instant time of financial capital, on speed, on factory time. Tribal time, body time, festival time, the varieties of ecological time have no real place in the official timetables of citizenship. Underlying modernity is the time of progress and the time of progress allows for the everydayness of obsolescence, the triage of defeated and marginal groups. (para. 30)

Cognitive justice can be understood as the recognition that different groups have different histories and ways of knowing that grows from different ways of being; they have different truths and sometimes those truths conflict although they remain true. For example, what is the truth about the United States? That it is a country that enslaved

and oppressed Black people for most of its history, or that for European Jews, it was a refuge from the sadistic antisemitism of Europe? Both truths are true. Cognitive justice does not shy away from conflicting truths; rather, it demands that both truths be taught as parts of a larger truth. Another example of the complexity of truth is evident in regard to sexuality education. The intersection of different cultures and sexual orientations produce knowledge, or truths, about the sexual self that is germane to understanding the larger truth about the sheer diversity of human sexuality. We see this in the recent rise in terms that describe sexual identity such as asexual, sapiosexual, and pansexual; this knowledge has always existed to describe ways of being but in recent years, people have invented words in English to say what the West and America could not before (Visvanathan, 2009). One of the hard truths of diversity is that not all cultures have the same concepts, but this is also the promise of cognitive justice from a critical humanist perspective; we can learn, encounter, and incorporate different knowledge that allows us to express our humanity easier (Plummer, 2021).

Epistemicide is the opposite of cognitive justice. De Sousa Santos (2016) defines epistemicide as “the murder of knowledge” (p. 92). This act is a spectrum that ranges from the literal destruction of texts as was done in the European conquest of the Americas, the banning of speaking certain languages that cuts a group off from its history as was the case in places like South Louisiana with the state government’s failed attempt to exterminate the Cajun language, and the imposition of “Western knowledge” in the name of modernity vs the knowledge of the colonized world. De Sousa Santos’ (2016) concept of epistemicide is important for any discussion of teaching truth and the obligation to teach the truth disposition for teachers because curriculum is not free from hegemony; it is one of the most visceral sites of it. For example, we currently see this tension in the current debates over how the history of American racism should be taught in schools, critical race theory, and the 1619 project in the rise of what historian Timothy Snyder calls “memory laws” (Snyder, 2021, para. 10). Considering this, it is clear that the obligation to teach the truth is not only a necessary disposition for a teacher to perform the terms of their employment, but it is also a political, moral, and ethical act because teachers teach other people’s children (Delpit, 2006).

### **Necessary Competencies**

The competencies required to engage in the obligation to teach the truth disposition are Chomsky’s (1967) definition of the responsibilities



of intellectuals, Freire's (1970/2018) concept of conscientization, Woodson's (1933/2005) concept of miseducation, Pinar's (1994) Currere, Kammer's (2004) faith justice, Yep's thick intersectionality (2016), and Holland and Henroit's (1980) social analysis. The following sections briefly discuss how these concepts would function as competencies.

### **Chomsky's Responsibility of Intellectuals**

Chomsky (1967) wrote that it is the responsibility of intellectuals "to speak the truth and to expose lies" (para. 4). The teacher is an intellectual. They guide students in the development of their intellect and teach students, through the curriculum, how to announce their own experiences and think critically. This means that teachers have a moral and ethical responsibility to teach students what is true about the world they inhabit. Chomsky draws his definition from the earlier work of Dwight MacDonald, who asserted that complicity made people responsible for the crimes of those they were complicit with. MacDonald (1957) wrote, "It is not the lawbreaker we must fear today so much as he who obeys the law" (p. 35).

In light of memory laws being passed in multiple states (Snyder, 2021), navigating the complexity of knowing when following the law crosses over into being complicit with injustice has always been, is currently, and will likely always be intrinsic to the teaching profession because schooling is, in the United States, largely a state sanctioned and maintained endeavor. This means that schooling is subject to the vicissitudes of institutionalized and cultural politics, which are subject to periods of progress and regress. The responsibility of intellectuals is the lynch pin that holds the obligation to teach the truth disposition together. The subsequent parts of the disposition and framework exist to help the teacher discern within their roles as public intellectuals.

### **Freire's Concept of Conscientization**

Freire (1970/2018) defines the concept of *conscientization* as "learning to perceive social, political, and economic contradictions, and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality (p. 35, translators note)." This includes the act of teaching students preexisting contradictions and oppressive elements, which can be understood as the truth about society, and how to recognize emergent contradictions and oppressive elements. Teachers can be disrupters or accomplices of hegemony, depending on their moral stance on the endemic power imbalances in American society; neutrality is impossible. Students may have only a partial view of the large forces at play in education, but

teachers and administrators must have a full and critical view of these forces. In the context of the obligation to teach the truth disposition, *conscientization*, or critical conscious raising, is directed at the teacher because a teacher cannot teach the truth if they do not know the truth.

### **Woodson's Concept of Miseducation**

Woodson (1933/2005) explains miseducation as "The thought of the inferiority of the Negro is drilled into him in almost every class he enters and in almost every book he studies" (p. 1). The education that Woodson is referring to is the Jim Crow Era curriculum, and he points to how teachers acted in the service of miseducation. He writes:

At a Negro summer school two years ago, a white instructor gave a course on the Negro, using for his text a work which teaches that whites are superior to the blacks. When asked by one of the students why he used such a textbook the instructor replied that he wanted them to get that point of view. Even schools for Negroes, then, are places where they must be convinced of their inferiority (Woodson, 1933/2005, p.1)

While Jim Crow is no longer the law of the land, miseducation has not vanished. It still undergirds a great deal of curriculum debates on topics such as race, gender, and class in the United States and teachers still act in its service.

The teacher is responsible for the material they teach and any miseducation they perpetuate. This is because teaching is a reflective profession that must navigate the tension between fact and fiction presenting itself as fact. This includes the formal curriculum and the hidden curriculum. In the context of the obligation to teach the truth disposition, teachers must be aware of what certain curriculum, policies, and practices are attempting to teach marginalized and centered students about their roles in society.

### **Pinar's Currere**

Pinar (1994) describes the method of Currere as:

It is regressive- progressive- analytical- synthetic. It is therefore temporal and conceptual in nature, and it aims for the cultivation of a developmental point of view that hints at the transtemporal and transconceptual. From another perspective, the method is the self-conscious conceptualization of the temporal, and from another, it is the viewing of what is conceptualized through time. So it is that we hope to explore the complex relation between the temporal and conceptual. In doing so we might disclose their relation to the Self and its evolution and education. (p. 19)

The regressive step is where one looks to their current experiences in education. The progressive step is where one looks to the possible futures of their work in education. The analytical step is where one looks at their present with all the pertinent factors, beliefs, and assumptions that shape this period. The last step is the synthetic, and it is where one combines the examination of the past and future into an understanding of the present. In the context of the obligation to teach the truth disposition, this method is important for educators to be reflective upon how they go about teaching the truth in ways that is accessible to students and is authentic to their own experience as both a current educator and former student.

### **Faith Justice**

Kammer (2004) describes the Roman Catholic concept of basic justice as consisting of three types of justice: Commutative justice, distributive justice, and social justice. Yet, these forms of justice fall short of the higher goal of faith justice (Kammer, 2004, p. 78). Kammer (2004) defines *faith justice* as:

A passionate virtue that disposes citizens to become involved in the greater and lesser societies around themselves in order to create communities where human dignity is protected and enhanced, the gifts of creation are shared for the greatest good of all, and the poor are treated with respect and a special love. (pp. 5-6)

In this sense, faith justice is not only contemplative, but it is also active; justice, then, is a verb. To act in faith justice is to be *homo serviens* or people of service (Kammer, 2004), which is the foundation of all education.

Teaching the truth is an act of service to the communities that teachers work in and the students under their care. It is an act of commutative justice that is necessary for establishing fairness in all agreements (National Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1986, p. 17). It is an act of distributive justice that is necessary for ensuring that those who lack material needs are not left behind (National Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1986, p. 17). It is an act of social justice because it is necessary for ensuring that all are able to participate in the societies in which they live (National Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1986, p. 17). There can be no justice of any variety without truth.

**Yep's Thick Intersectionality**

Yep (2016) describes thick intersectionality as:

To highlight more complex and embodied ways of thinking about intersectionality (Yep, 2010, p. 173). Recognizing that power is always already in all social relations, this concept refers to a deeper exploration of the complex particularities of individuals' lives and identities associated with their race, class, gender, sexuality, and national locations by understanding their history and personhood in concrete time and space, and the interplay between individual subjectivity, personal agency, systemic arrangements, and structural forces. (p. 173) As such, this concept suggests that we need to attend to the lived experiences and biographies of the persons occupying a particular intersection, including how they inhabit and make sense of their own bodies and relate to the social world (Yep, 2013b). (p. 89)

Thick intersectionality is not a rejection of intersectionality, but it is a rejection of the race/class/gender/sexuality mantra. Yep (2016) writes:

The race/class/gender/sexuality mantra produces a flat, formulaic, superficial, and roster like approach to intersectionality by simply listing such categories as components of an individual's identity (Yep, 2010, p.173). In the process, it tends to homogenize people inhabiting similar intersections...Such homogenization contributes to the erasure of their subjectivities and experiences. (p. 87)

Thick intersectionality has four characteristics. First, it rejects the coherence and premature closing of identity (Yep, 2016, p. 89). Second, it embraces the messiness of the lived experience (Yep, 2016, p. 89). Third, it focuses on how people actively invest in their performance of identity (Yep, 2016, p. 89). Fourth, it seeks to understand identity as lived, timebound, and historically and geographically contextualized (Yep, 2016, p. 89).

Whereas intersectionality as commonly understood is very much concerned with the macro level experience with identity, thick intersectionality is concerned with the meso and micro levels and centers the individual as the final author of one's own identity. For the obligation to teach the truth disposition, developing a thick intersectional competency is integral to navigating issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion inherent to teaching truth. A teacher must accept that identity is not static; rather, identity is lived. It is an experience and how different people experience identity makes up the internal diversity within groups that teachers must be critically aware of because experience impacts how truths are conceptualized across different communities.

**Holland and Henroit's Distinction  
Between Academic and Pastoral Approaches**

Holland and Henroit's (1980) distinction between academic and the pastoral approaches to social analysis is key to understanding the obligation to teach the truth disposition. They write:

There can be two approaches to social analysis. Let's call one "academic" and the other "pastoral." The academic approach studies a particular social situation in a detached, fairly abstract manner, dissecting its elements for the purpose of understanding. The pastoral approach, on the other hand, looks at the reality from an involved, historically committed stance, discerning the situation for the purpose of action. (Holland & Henroit, 1980, p.7)

Teachers exist in the divide between the academic and the pastoral.

On one hand, the job of a teacher is to disseminate curriculum in a manner that is effective and measurable. On the other hand, it is also the job of a teacher to nurture and to care about students and their wellbeing. For the obligation to teach the truth disposition, the development of a competency that can incorporate both the "academic" and the "pastoral" into a process that helps the teacher navigate situations where issues of society, culture, and power intersect at their desk is crucial because students are complex human beings that require more than instruction. Students require a teacher that sees them for who they are and can meet them where they are intellectually and emotionally so that students will be willing to learn the truths the teacher wishes to teach.

**Conclusion:  
Bringing the Competencies Together  
and the Need for an Obligation  
to Teach the Truth Disposition**

Before teachers can exercise the obligation to teach the truth disposition, they must possess both a reverence for the sheer power they have over the lives of students and a critical awareness of how that power has been abused by others in the past, the present, and be willing to contemplate how it could be abused in the future. To reiterate, education provides the student with the means to comprehend and articulate their own lived experience; a teacher can provide them with the means or deny them the means. This is an act of sheer power. The obligation to teach the truth disposition is a recognition of balancing the intersectional roles of *homo serviens* or people of service (Kammer, 2004), educator, advocate, and ostiaries in a single body and mind.

The obligation to teach the truth disposition would provide a complex way of considering what actions to take concerning how to teach about issues of socio-political import as well as the everyday instructional issues teachers must sort. This sort of discernment is a necessary addition to teacher ethics and multicultural pedagogy. The disposition presented in this article provides a method for teachers to apply what is heavily theoretical in a practical setting. All the capacities that teachers occupy are part of the day-to-day world of the teacher, and it is impossible to create an exhaustive list of the distinct roles they may play on any given day, but the role of “truth teller” is one of those capacities that is often ignored in teacher preparation programs. This article hopes to change that.

The obligation to teach the truth disposition is important because the curricular decisions teachers make exist within the broader power dynamics that frame education in the United States. These power dynamics are currently playing out in multiple states with so called “critical race theory bans,” which are curriculum laws or, as stated earlier, memory laws (Snyder, 2021). The increasing curriculum laws being implemented in states such as Texas and Florida highlight the necessity for teacher education programs to train teachers to navigate the law and use their power ethically in service of the students and communities they serve. Students have the natural right to learn the complex truths about the world they live in. Teachers are obligated to help them exercise this right.

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