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# EDUCATING TEACHERS FOR CULTURAL AND LINGUISTIC DIVERSITY: A MODEL FOR ALL TEACHERS

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*Abstract:* Given changing demographics, all educators must face the reality of culturally and linguistically diverse [and often, limited English Proficient (LEP)] students in today's classrooms. School districts which never before had to instruct these students are now finding they must meet this need. Often, the number of bilingually trained personnel in these areas is limited. We must include training components relevant to this need in all teacher training programs. This article discusses issues related to the multicultural classroom. It presents a teacher-training component that includes information on cultural sensitivity, linguistic diversity, and teaching strategies. This component, tested on approximately 120 pre-service teachers, is the basis for an on-going pilot research study to be reported in a subsequent article.

## Introduction

Changing demographics in the United States have often been cited as reasons to mandate training in multiculturalism for pre-service and in-service teachers (e.g., Garcia & Pugh, 1992; Dunn, 1993; Banks, 1991). Bruder (1992) indicated that by the year 2010, California, Florida Texas, and New York will contain one-third of all United States youth. In Texas and California, 57 per cent of those youth will be non-white and in New York and Florida, 53 per cent will be non-white. Until 1960, the majority of immigrants to the U.S. came from Europe. Since then, and particularly in the past ten years, the majority of immigrants have come from Asia, Central America, and the Caribbean. In addition, a number of non-immigrant groups such as Puerto Ricans and Mexican-Americans, are among the fastest growing ethnic/racial groups in the nation. By the year 2050, descendants of these groups--all non-white, and many, non-native speakers of English--are expected to represent 40 per cent of this country's population. According to the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Educational Research and Improvement, in the ten year period between 1979 and 1989, the total number of children aged 8 to 15 years enrolled in U.S. schools who spoke a language other than English increased by 41 percent" (Pallas, Natiello, & McDill, 1989, p.22). This statistic is particularly noteworthy when one considers that during the same time period, overall school enrollment declined by 4 per cent (p. 22). It is evident that the number of limited English proficient (LEP) students is growing. School officials who never before had to instruct these students are now finding they must meet this need. Often, the number of bilingually trained personnel in these areas is limited making it difficult to provide a full program of bilingual education. Further, those districts that do offer English as a Second Language (ESL) classes for LEP students have little or no support services for these students. Similarly, there is a lack of specialized training for the classroom teachers who attempt to instruct these students for most of the school day. In addition to increased in-service training, as Sleeter (1992) postulated, there must be appropriate components relevant to this need included in pre-service teacher education programs.

This article presents a multicultural teacher education model piloted on 120 pre-service students, that incorporates three components to help meet the needs of LEP students in school in which bilingual

programs are not available. These components include information on cultural sensitivity, linguistic diversity, and teaching strategies.

## **The Model**

To prepare all teachers to provide more effective instruction for culturally and linguistically diverse students, many of whom are LEP, a teacher education model with three major components is proposed. The model consists of three bases or core competencies: the Theoretical Base, the Linguistic and Cultural Diversity Base, and the Experiential Base.

***The Theoretical Base.*** The Theoretical Base provides information on the nature of and issues related to multiculturalism and multicultural education in the United States. The Theoretical Base establishes the foundation upon which the trainee can build the skills to implement effectively a multicultural program. Without a knowledge base, trainees are left without the information needed to create an environment which supports diversity. The Theoretical Base focuses on the following aspects: (a) common definitions; (b) knowledge of issues; and (c) self-identify.

Educators need a common definition for terms and issues used. For example, they need to be able to answer, "What is multicultural education?" and they must have a unified view of its purposes. The following definition of 'multicultural' is a compilation of definitions in Banks and McGee-Banks (1993) and Bennett (1990). Multicultural education refers to an idea or concept, an educational reform movement, and a process. It incorporates the idea that all students regardless of their gender, social class, ethnicity, or race, should have equal opportunities to learn in school. Multicultural education is also a reform movement that is trying to change schools so that these equal opportunities exist for all students. Finally, multicultural education is an on-going process, with goals that will never fully be realized, but an ideal for which all must constantly strive.

Given the proposed definition, the following purposes of multicultural education are offered:

1. Enhance higher-order thinking and problem solving skills to increase academic performance of all students.
2. Increase awareness and knowledge of the history, culture, and perspectives of all ethnic and racial groups in the United States, and eventually, the world. [This includes ALL groups, e.g., early immigrants such as English, Irish, among others; and non-immigrants such as Puerto Ricans, Cubans, Vietnamese, African-Americans, Native Americans, among others].
3. Enhance students' self-esteem, self-awareness, and identity.
4. Promote the valuing of cultural differences so that they are viewed in an egalitarian mode rather than in an inferior/superior mode. To identify differences, commonalities must be identified.
5. Develop an understanding of the multicultural nation and interdependent world.

In addition to definitions and purposes, trainees must be given a knowledge of the issues related to multiculturalism, including the variety of perspectives on these issues. Issues related to ethnicity, race, gender, linguistic diversity, social class, religion, age, and exceptionality must be examined.

Finally, a knowledge of self-identity is essential. Appleton (1983) stated, "Multicultural education should start 'where people are.' Everyone should begin by confronting his/her own ethnic identity and background first." (p. 209). Banks (1994) proposed six stages of ethnicity. These stages represent varying levels of self-

identity and can be used by trainees to assess their level of understanding themselves and , subsequently, their ability to relate to others. This typology is dynamic and illustrates the multidimensional characteristics of the development of ethnicity among individuals. Stage 1 is *Ethnic Psychological Captivity* during which individuals internalize the negative societal beliefs about their own ethnic groups. Stage 2 is *Ethnic Encapsulation* during which individuals are ethnocentric and practice ethnic separatism. Stage 3 is *Ethnic Identity Clarification* during which individuals accept self and have clarified attitudes toward their own ethnic groups. State 4 is *Biethnicity*. Individuals have the attitudes, skills, and commitment needed to participate both within their own ethnic groups and within another ethnic group or culture. Stage 5 is *Multiethnicity and Reflective Nationalism*. Individuals have reflective ethnic and national identifications; and the skills, attitudes, and commitment needed to function within a range of ethnic and cultural groups within their own nation. Stage 6 is Globalism and Global Competency. Individuals have reflective and positive ethnic, national, and global identifications; and the skills, attitudes, and commitment needed to function within cultures throughout their nation and the world. Banks (1994) stated "Effective educational programs should help students explore and clarify their own ethnic identities. To do this, such programs must recognize and reflect the complex ethnic identities and characteristics of the individual students in the classroom." (p. 223)

Positive attitudes towards diversity and an affirmation of diversity are essential elements of this component. Nieto (1992) correctly noted that "becoming a multicultural teacher first means becoming a multicultural person." (p. 275) She postulated that the learner needs to learn more about a variety of cultures, confront his/her own biases and racism, and finally, must see reality from a variety of perspectives.

The Theoretical Base is the foundation of ideas and information related to multiculturalism and multicultural education. To achieve the ability to effectively teach linguistically as well as culturally diverse students, prospective teachers must increase their ability to understand the LEP student.

***The Linguistic and Cultural Diversity Base.*** The Linguistic and Cultural Diversity Base provides the trainee with needed competencies in second language acquisition and development, knowledge of the relationship between language and culture, and an increased ability to affirm the culture of diverse students. The trainee must have competency in language development. Ideally, the trainee will have some bilingual competence; however, the trainee must have some knowledge of language development, second language acquisition processes, and classroom techniques for assisting students through that process. In addition, the trainee must have knowledge of and experience with diverse populations.

The Linguistic and Cultural Diversity Base assists the trainees in establishing a good rapport with students from diverse backgrounds. It also enables trainees to empathize with and be more sensitive to the needs of diverse students. Finally, it gives trainees the tools necessary to assist LEP students and recognize the strengths that these students bring to the classroom. Linguistic diversity is seen as one aspect of cultural diversity.

While many trainees may be monolingual, or at best, partially bilingual, they can understand basic second language acquisition processes. They should be exposed to basic theories of major theorists, such as Krashen (1991) and Cummins (1979, 1981, 1989), among others. The ability to function in at least one language other than English is the optimum situation, but all teachers can attain the ability to assist second language learners. Three training activities can assist with the development of increased knowledge, sensitivity, and awareness of language development, second language acquisition, and the needs of LEP students.

1. Provide trainees with clear and simply stated essential theoretical facts (e.g., transfer of learning skills; interdependence theory; BICS v. CALP explained without reliance on technical terms.)
2. Translate theory into action. One training activity is the "Print Walk." Trainees walk around the classroom and label objects. Next, they will walk around a two or three block radius of the school; and make a list of objects to label. Both lists are compared. Trainees next develop a list of "abstract ideas" associated with the items on each list. (e.g., firehouse [tangible object] v. fire-fighting [concept].) Trainees develop semantic maps or realia to assist in the transition from "social talk" (e.g., context-embedded vocabulary) to "school talk" (e.g., context-free vocabulary). The sessions produce usable, classroom ready units of study for linguistically diverse students. Finally, trainees develop "Print Walk" activities that students will perform as part of classroom activities.
3. Finish the story. As trainees enter the room, have a story in an unfamiliar language displayed up on an overhead. Direct trainees to not speak to each other during the exercise and instruct them to write an ending for this story. This activity enables trainees to experience first-hand the frustrations often experienced by LEP students. Trainees usually demonstrate the following responses: (1) refuse to do the assignment, (2) write an ending in English (the language they know), or (3) try to imitate the language of the story and construct an ending which simulated that language of the story and construct an ending which simulates that language (often, the trainees will "invent" meanings for their simulated words!). Discuss the strategies often used by LEP students? The ensuing discussion often provides the basis for increased sensitivity and awareness of the need of LEP students.

These three activities provide concrete examples of how educators can provide trainees with the ability to translate theories in second language acquisition and bilingual education into classroom.

Cultural diversity awareness is needed to provide the trainees with knowledge of and experience with a variety of racial and ethnic groups in the United States. Moyers (1993) described a school district in which non-bilingual teachers drew upon community resources to achieve a higher level of knowledge of cultural diversity among Hispanic students. Parent volunteers, "culture fairs," and in-depth relationships between families and educators are part of the strategies used in this model .

Ultimately, the goal is to reach Bank's (1994) sixth stage, the establishment of global perspectives. Trainees must distinguish between cultural diversity in the United States and global perspectives. It is somewhat easier for trainees to affirm global diversity (e.g., studying about Mexican culture as it is manifested in Mexico).

Limited experiences with culturally and linguistically diverse groups in their own communities makes it more difficult for them to see and affirm this diversity as part of the American mosaic. However, as they attain this ability, it is enlightening for them to realize global perspectives and, hence, increase their world view (Banks, 1994).

***The Experiential Base.*** The Experiential Base enables trainees to receive practical, hands-on experiences with students. However, it is important that the cooperating teachers who are supervising the field component are trained mentors. Otherwise, the effectiveness of the field experience is questionable.

To provide optimum training, prospective mentors must be provided with staff development activities to ensure their effective mentorship. Mentees, that is, pre-service teachers, need to have clear direction from trained mentors. Mentor/mentee relationships must include opportunities for mentor training facilitate the establishment of common goals and objectives, and develop a climate supportive of diversity. Mentor training conducted during in-service training is a vital element of this component. However, such training

must be carefully implemented. Sleeter (1992) established a program of in-service training for teachers which focused on structural constraints to change such constraints included time, class size, the required curriculum, the structure of programs, disjuncture between schools and communities, and the administrative and bureaucratic context of teacher work. She concluded that staff development for multicultural education should be a part of a whole-school reorganization process, rather than a separate activity that focuses on changing teachers as individuals.

The Experiential Base component of the model is the subject of a pilot study being conducted at a rural school site in Western New York. The study is examining the effects of in-service training for mentors on their ability to provide effective field experiences for mentees. The purpose is to compare the attitudes of trained mentors to attitudes held by those who have not received training. It is examining the impact of this comparison on the outcomes of mentees' professional preparedness. Results of this study will be reported in a subsequent article.

## Conclusion

All teachers must provide effective instruction for the ever-changing, increasingly diverse student population. Teacher education programs must provide opportunities for trainees to be effective educators of culturally and linguistically diverse students, including LEP students. Programs should promote the implementation of multicultural units throughout the curriculum in an integrated manner; develop cultural awareness at a meaningful level, avoiding the superficial or "tourist approach" (Banks & McGee-Banks, 1993, p. 199), and encourage creativity and innovation. Schools must allow adequate time for teacher-mentors to plan for multicultural education. Administrators must ensure flexibility in the prescribed curriculum, allow time for training, and foster integration of curriculum materials. Finally, linguistic diversity must be acknowledged as a key element of cultural diversity. All teachers must be able to employ strategies to assist the linguistically diverse and/or LEP student. While bilingual education programs provide, without question, the best instructional strategies for LEP culturally diverse students (Cummins, 1989; Nieto, 1992), the rapidly changing demographics in even the most rural areas (where populations were usually homogeneous) make it imperative that all teachers be prepared to be effective instructors of culturally and linguistically diverse student populations.

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[Return to Table of Contents, Vol 9.](#)

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[go to HOME PAGE](#)

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