

## **FCSE TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAM RESPONSES TO ISSUES REFLECTING CHANGES IN U.S. POPULATION DEMOGRAPHICS**

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*The changes in population demographics will impact new professionals entering into Family and Consumer Sciences Education (FCSE). FCSE teacher preparation programs need to be responsive to these current and approaching changes by adjusting curriculum and course offerings to better prepare education professionals for the students/clients they will regularly serve. The purpose of the study was to conduct a nationwide, exploratory study of FCSE teacher education programs to determine their responses to changes in U.S. population demographics and to make recommendations for future curriculum and programming needs. Recurring issues that FCSE must address include recruitment and retention of quality teachers and increasing diversity in the teacher population. All areas of education including FCSE need more male and ethnically diverse teachers.*

In the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, the nation faces many changes in population demographics which will lead to changes in schools and communities. These changes will impact new professionals entering family and consumer sciences education (FCSE) classrooms. FCSE teacher education programs need to be responsive to the current and approaching changes and adjust curriculum and course offerings. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to conduct a nationwide, exploratory study of FCSE teacher education programs to determine their programming responses to the changes in U.S. population demographics and to make recommendations for future curriculum and programming needs.

Populations will continue to change in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, especially in the area of racial and ethnic composition. Estimates indicate that half of the increase in the U.S. population is due to immigration (Clausell, 1998; Day, 1996). Hispanics and Asians are two of the fastest growing populations in the U.S. because of immigration and increased birth rates (Ruff, 1994). Predictions have been made that shortly after 2050, non-White Hispanics, Asians, and Black Americans will achieve majority status (Clausell, 1998; Day, 1996). However, these changes are occurring faster than predicted. In 2004, non-White Hispanics achieved the level of population growth predicted for 2050 (U. S. Census Bureau, 2004).

While the population is becoming more diverse, the teacher workforce population is moving in the opposite direction (*Teachers Shortage Areas*, 2006). In 2003, the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future Report (as cited in *Respond to Changing Demographics*, 2006) stated that individuals of African-American, Hispanic and Latino, Asian, and Native American descent make up 14% of K-12 teachers and 36% of students are from those

backgrounds. In urban school settings, the percentage of students of color nearly doubles. A report prepared by Recruiting New Teachers, Inc. revealed that in the nation's largest urban schools, 69% of students are students of color while only 35% of their teachers are of color (*The Urban Teacher Challenge: Teacher Demand and Supply in the Great City Schools*, 2000).

Another issue compounding the lack of diversity in the teaching pool is the existing teacher shortage. The National Teacher Recruitment Clearinghouse stated that the U.S. will need to add between 2.2 to 2.4 million teachers in the next ten years, with the greatest need in urban and rural communities, to adequately prepare for increased public school enrollment and retirements within the existing teacher pool. Enrollment in public schools is expected to increase by 4% between 2000 and 2008, according to the 1999-2000 National Center for Educational Statistics Schools and Staffing Survey (as cited in *Teacher Shortage Areas*, 2006). With more than 25% of current teachers at age 50 or older, there will be retirement gaps in schools, especially as the demand for smaller classrooms continues to increase. In states with the fastest growing populations, like California and Texas, there will be even higher demand for new teachers (*Teacher Shortage Areas*, 2006).

## **Methodology**

FCSE Teacher Education Programs offered nationwide were sent a survey in the spring and fall of 2004 to be completed by the designated program administrator. Programs were identified through a nationally published directory of FCSE Teacher Education Programs. Seventy-two useable surveys were received. The survey consisted of yes and no response items, open-ended response items, and program demographics response items. The majority of the questions addressed multicultural education and the need for diversity in the teaching field. The items were developed based upon a literature review conducted prior to development of the survey. To ensure content validity, the survey was distributed to a small group of teacher educators during the development phase. Data from the survey were averaged and frequency responses were generated. Comments and written responses were compiled to determine related themes.

## **Results**

Demographic totals for the reporting programs indicated that 3,362 students were enrolled in FCSE and related programs. Those students were further identified as, Caucasian/Non-Hispanic Whites, 2,628 (78.2%); Black/African American, 358 (10.6%); Hispanic/Latino, 246 (7.3%); Asian, 53 (1.6%); American Indian/Alaska Native 44 (1.3%); Pacific Islander, 14 (0.4%); and multiracial 19 (0.6%). There were 3,070 (91.3%) female students and only 292 (8.7%) male students.

In response to the items inquiring about multicultural education coursework in the FCSE curriculum, only 58% ( $n=42$ ) of the responding FCSE programs required a multicultural education class and 24% ( $n=16$ ) recommended a multicultural education class as an elective. Furthermore, 88% ( $n=29$ ) of the programs had no immediate plans to implement an additional multicultural education requirement. Themes from the responses to open-ended questions indicated that in most of the responding programs multicultural education is integrated into courses across the teacher preparation curriculum and infused in the teacher preparation courses. Additionally, very few of the courses addressed diversity in relation to family composition. A limited number of courses addressed teaching practices for working with students that have limited English proficiency, minorities, and in general, multicultural students.

Programs were asked about their foreign language requirements, and only 35% ( $n=25$ ) required some level of university coursework and 65% ( $n=46$ ) did not. Comments indicated that some institutions relied only on the students taking a foreign language in high school as a part of the general admission requirements to a university. If this requirement was not fulfilled in high school, then it was to be fulfilled at the university. There also appeared to be a difference in the requirements of some programs if the student was seeking a Bachelor of Science degree, which generally required more hours in a foreign language, versus a Bachelor of Arts degree.

In response to items addressing various curricular focuses of methods courses, 91% ( $n=64$ ) of the responding programs indicated that their methods courses addressed the best teaching practices for working with students who have limited English proficiency, 84% ( $n=59$ ) addressed diversity with relation to family composition, and 91% ( $n=61$ ) addressed diversity in relation to socioeconomic status.

The National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) expects that accredited programs require field experiences and clinical components. In response to items inquiring about field experiences and observations, nearly all programs, 97% ( $n=70$ ), reported having a field experience and/or clinical component. However, having a requirement that included observing within a setting considered to be diverse was slightly lower at 88% ( $n=63$ ). In addition, only 76% ( $n=53$ ) of the reporting programs were taking steps to place teacher candidates at schools exposing them to students from backgrounds different than their own during the student teaching or field experience portion of the teacher education program. When asked about steps taken to place student teachers in diverse populations to expose them to different backgrounds, comments included: students are not allowed to return to the schools which they attended; if the student comes from a rural area, they must do a practicum/student teaching in an urban school and vice versa; students conduct observations in a variety of school settings for exposure to diversity; student teachers are encouraged to teach in schools unfamiliar to them; and we attempt to place students in diverse field experience settings prior to and to some extent for student teaching.

Finally, respondents were asked whether or not their programs were addressing the need to diversify the teaching pool in FCSE. Just 50% ( $n=32$ ) of the responding programs indicated they were working to diversify the FCSE teaching pool, and 76% ( $n=19$ ) of the responding programs indicated they have no immediate plans to address this issue. Some examples of recruitment strategies to diversify the teaching pool included: articulation and recruitment efforts with the community colleges and high schools; presentations at local high schools, in lower division university courses, department open houses, recruitment fairs, and Saturday showcases; recruitment in nontraditional areas of the state, rural areas and with our cross-cultural and first-generation college graduate programs; minority teaching scholarships; and visitation to university four times a year by students from urban high schools with large minority populations.

### **Discussion and Recommendations**

There is a need to continue to focus and in some cases increase multicultural education in FCSE teacher preparation programs. With only 58% of the programs having a required multicultural education class, the current multicultural focus is inadequate for the rapidly changing population demographics resulting in inadequately prepared professionals. Multicultural education training would increase teachers' knowledge and skills to enhance academic and social achievement for minority students. The improved training would also promote more positive interactions between teachers and parents of minority students. Education programs need to provide new teachers with detailed information of values,

behavioral norms, and experiences of minority students including Hispanics, African Americans, Asians, Muslim, and Native Americans. Student teachers should be given coursework to broaden their understanding and following completion, a practicum in a culturally diverse setting. Teachers need to increase their awareness of expectations, stereotypes and language barriers that affect their instructional practices and learning styles of students (Townsend, 2002).

Diversity is broader than exposure to ethnic and racial differences. The National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (2006) Unit Standards identifies an acceptable standard of diversity includes exposure to diverse ethnic, racial, gender, and socioeconomic groups. Most FCSE teacher education programs are addressing the various diversity issues within specific methods courses, with 91% of the responding programs' courses addressing best teaching practices for students that have limited English proficiency, 84% addressing diversity with relation to family composition, and 91% addressing diversity in relation to socioeconomic status. Although some issues of diversity are being addressed, due to time constraints in methods courses, the level of intensity may not be adequate for fully covering the necessary aspects of multicultural education. Teacher candidates need to understand how diversity impacts their use and application of teaching strategies to meet the learning needs of all students. Therefore, a specific course requirement would enhance the content delivered in methods.

The focus for FCSE methods courses should be on achieving a differentiated classroom. Teachers need to receive special training to meet the needs of all learners, especially those of diverse cultures. Townsend (2002) indicated that teachers often reflected ethnocentric views of the majority culture causing them to not recognize their students' diverse belief systems. Unfortunately, some teachers tended to have preconceived stereotypes about minority students, which resulted in significantly lower expectations and different responses to these students. Minority students are repeatedly overrepresented in special education, because they are unfairly predetermined to have lower academic performance and more behavioral problems (Townsend, 2002).

Nearly all of the responding programs, 97%, reported having a field experience and clinical component as a requirement, but only 88% required that setting to be diverse. While most programs tried to place teacher candidates in a diverse field experience setting for exposure to diverse classrooms, more programs need to ensure that teacher candidates are prepared to address the varying student needs in the classroom through intense training beyond basic exposure to diversity.

Minority school students regularly face challenges in the classroom. There is a documented gap between what these students are taught at home and what they learn in school. Teachers often have little idea as to what their students' lives are like outside of the classroom and at home (Townsend, 2002). Although many states have eliminated the extended service expectations for FCSE teachers which allowed for more contacts with parents and exposure to home environments, teacher candidates need strategies to promote parent/home contacts and exposure to home environments.

Teachers with diverse backgrounds can work to bridge the gap of differences students have between home and school. Multiethnic teachers have more personal experiences that allow them to better relate to students in certain situations. These diverse teachers can become role models for students in poverty-stricken and ethnic communities. They can establish relationships with students to help guide them through school. The students can gain encouragement from seeing their teachers who have come from a background much like their own and succeeded. This can inspire students to take on leadership roles in the future. Diverse teachers can also help to prepare students to live and work in a diverse society (*Respond to Changing Demographics*, 2006).

More attention needs to be given to increasing diversity in the teaching pool, especially in the area of FCSE, which is a predominantly white female oriented profession. For FCSE programs to evolve and address the current needs of our students and society, the teaching pool needs to better reflect the changing population and the students we teach. The teaching pool is impacted by the lower number of minority students attending college. According to Futrell (1999), the reasons for many minority students not pursuing higher education include a lack of academic preparation from the early grades until graduation, little school encouragement to succeed, and the increasing cost of higher education. The teaching shortage problem is confounded by public high schools having little information about the need for teachers and that there are few incentives for students to pursue a teaching degree. More recruitment strategies are required to engage these students (Futrell, 1999).

To increase the number of minority students in teacher education programs, attention can be given to this issue in various forms such as recruitment, advertising, alternative certification options, and scholarships. Futrell (1999) suggested some strategies to address this problem. First, the issue of preparing all students for post-secondary education needs to begin with the restructuring of teacher education programs to ensure only qualified and prepared teachers are being placed into classrooms. Public schools must implement a strong core curriculum, beginning at the elementary school level. Counselors and teachers can begin to work with students early and frequently about the expectations of post-secondary education. To recruit minority students into teacher education programs, Futrell (1999) suggested the development of marketing and recruitment campaigns, including information sessions, to attract more teacher candidates. Programs should set up an outreach program to inform high school juniors and seniors about the value of becoming a teacher. Universities can set up partnerships with school districts to identify minority students interested in teaching, which could lead to teacher educators and candidates establishing mentoring programs with high schools and community colleges. Programs should seek out opportunities to establish scholarships and other financial aid for minority students. Alternative approaches to teacher certification need to be established. Finally, federal, state, and local education agencies need to increase salaries and working conditions to make teaching better able to compete with other professions (Futrell, 1999).

Finally, only 21% of the nation's 3 million teachers are male. This number has fluctuated and declined over the last 40 years. In secondary schools, the number of male teachers is at 35%. The major dilemma for males entering the field is the view that teaching is for women. The low salaries that teachers, especially new teachers, receive in some areas of the country leads to less prestige in our society. The pay is often not enough to provide for a family. There are strategies to increase the number of males in the teaching profession. The first one is to increase teaching salaries. Those states with higher salaries tend to have more male teachers. Second, identify and recruit males who show an interest in high school. Current male teachers can serve as powerful role models, and by talking with their male high school students about teaching, they can inspire their students to pursue careers in teaching (*National Education Association Male Teacher Fact Sheet*, 2003). In addition to targeting males in their recruitment efforts, FCSE teacher educators must remember the importance of advocacy for better salaries for classroom teachers.

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