

CULTURAL DIVERSITY IN FAMILY AND CONSUMER SCIENCES: TEACHERS' BELIEFS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR TEACHER EDUCATION

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The purpose of this study was to identify practicing FCS teachers' beliefs about culturally diverse classes and examine their recommendations for teacher education. This paper is based on a sample of 54 teachers who responded to open-ended questions on a survey instrument. Respondents' comments were examined in relation to technical, communicative, and emancipative categories of action. Teachers believed that students need technical skill in English; teachers need technical knowledge about cultures and adaptive teaching approaches; and students can learn to understand each other and share common goals via FCS content and cooperative learning formats. They recommended that teacher education provide technical study of cultures and teaching adaptations along with direct experience working with culturally diverse students.

At the same time that an increasingly diverse population in the United States now includes one-third minority students, eighty-seven percent of teachers are white; one student in every five has a parent who was born in another country (National Education Association, 2002). In Florida almost 50% of students are classified as racial or ethnic minorities (Florida Department of Education, 2004). Thus, teachers across disciplines including Family and Consumer Sciences (FCS) are interacting with students from cultural backgrounds different from their own (Adams, Sewell, & Hall, 2004; Allison, 2003; Burdette-Williamson, 1997; Rehm, 2004).

These compelling demographic patterns imply that high quality multicultural education must be incorporated into university FCS teacher preparation programs. Multicultural education can be defined broadly as adopting new ways of thinking to address diverse needs in classrooms and empower all students to gain knowledge, attitudes, and skills for active contribution to the nation's democratic process (Banks, 1997). Teachers must be prepared to appreciate the voice of each class member and draw students into a cooperative community (Fear-Fenn, 1993; Yopp, 1993). Indeed, the purpose and practice of multicultural education reflects the FCS empowerment mission to:

Enable families both as individual units and generally as a social institution to build and maintain systems of action which lead to (1) maturing in individual self-formation and (2) to enlightened, cooperative participation in the critique and formulation of social goals and means for accomplishing them (Brown & Paolucci, 1979, p. 23).

FCS teachers can help students solve practical problems and improve their lives by embracing cultural differences within the systems of action (Allison, 2003; Brown, 1985). The technical system of action refers to the application of specific skills and knowledge to improve daily

activities, and "we as a profession have focused to a considerable extent on human needs such as food, clothing, and shelter, and on techniques for meeting them" (Baldwin, 1996, p. 5). The communicative system of action involves helping students reflect on the context of their choices, engage in discourse about valued ends, develop shared understandings, and assess means and consequences of action (Fedje, 1998). The emancipative system of action involves nurturing "autonomous, socially responsible citizens who are prepared to participate in the collective control of life" (Baldwin, 1996, p. 8).

Research Purpose

The purpose of this research study was to identify practicing FCS teachers' beliefs about teaching culturally diverse classes and examine their recommendations for teacher education. The overarching goal was to draw implications so teacher educators can better prepare FCS teachers to work with culturally diverse students within the three systems of action.

Literature Review

Although FCS teachers appreciate cultural diversity (Allison, 2003; Rehm, 2004), their positive attitudes are not always translated into reflective and critical practice (Adams, Sewell, & Hall, 2004). Marshall (1996) found that teachers have genuine concerns about their ability to relate to students from cultural backgrounds other than their own. Prospective teachers seem to need in-depth multicultural education regarding each system of action.

Technical Action and Cultural Diversity

According to Baldwin (1996), FCS teachers devote an extraordinary proportion of their efforts to technical knowledge about how to prepare healthy foods, care for clothing and homes, and communicate with others. Yet specific techniques related to ingredients and foods, clothing and modes of dress, body language, child rearing practices, and norms of social interaction differ widely by culture (Dresser, 1996). Although technical skills are essential to wellbeing, FCS teachers must re-think almost every category and detail of technical knowledge and skills in order to be relevant to culturally diverse students.

Teachers also need to make culturally appropriate alterations to their classroom approaches and delivery of instruction (Allison, 2003). Noncompetitive grading, cooperative learning, demonstrations, visual supports, and hands-on projects can help students from various cultural backgrounds understand technical concepts and skills (Fear-Fenn, 1993; Manning & Baruth, 1996). Assessments should not depend heavily on English language skills or require an understanding of particularly "American" contexts and terms (Austin, 1999).

Although technical skills certainly help students meet basic needs efficiently, they cannot help them determine meanings, values, or goals (Brown, 1985). Because most classroom issues are "messy dilemmas that require all the imagination, intellectual resources, and tact at a teacher's command" (Kleinfeld, 1998, p. 145), FCS teachers with culturally diverse students also need to practice communicative action.

Communicative Action and Cultural Diversity

Culturally responsive teachers show a disposition toward openness and self-reflection, celebrate varied cultural values, and are committed to individual students and social justice (Burdette-Williamson, 1997; Garmon, 2004). Teachers without negative biases can communicate with others more successfully and find common values in culturally diverse

classrooms (Sharp, 2003). Teachers can intentionally cultivate an atmosphere in which diverse students share with each other, ask questions about the role of culture in decisions, clarify personal and social goals, nurture caring for those who are different, and reach common understanding (Allen & Hermann-Wilmarth, 2004; Lesko & Bloom, 1998). Students from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds may prefer to express themselves and communicate through various methods such as role playing, skits, poetry, rap, self evaluations, journals, Socratic seminars, or storytelling (Howard, 2003).

According to Birmingham (2003), cultural diversity in social situations naturally prompts students to struggle with issues, balance virtues of kindness with truth, learn to care about others unlike themselves, and take responsibility while being open to change. Because individuals are "bound together into a moral course of action" (Birmingham, p. 190), reflective dialogue must be conducted with integrity and character. A supportive environment where moral questions of justice and compassion are addressed can have the additional benefit of preparing students for advocacy and transformation (Allen & Hermann-Wilmarth, 2004; Lesko & Bloom, 1998).

Emancipatory Action and Cultural Diversity

Culture often influences the economic, social, and political realities of families, and teachers can help students participate in emancipatory actions such as finding and expressing their unique voices and working together to advocate for improvements (Baldwin, 1996). Whereas teachers tend to value conflict resolution and positive relationships, emancipatory action involves being pushed out of comfort zones and can be difficult (Goodwin, 1997). Antagonism and strong disagreement can erupt when teachers and students risk asking troublesome questions about cultural issues.

Teachers and students can address and effectively utilize tensions if they approach individual needs in light of cultural meanings and consider alternative perspectives (Allen & Hermann-Wilmarth, 2004; Kleinfeld, 1998). Learning about each other as cultural beings over time can promote a positive quality of caring for those who are different and lead to relationships that are powerful in bringing about personal and social change for the benefit of everyone (Banister & Maher, 1998; Garmon, 2004; Gay, 2000).

Teacher Education and Systems of Action

Teacher education programs typically include courses that cover technical knowledge about various cultures. Basic knowledge about cultures and technical skill with a repertoire of alternative teaching strategies can facilitate successful teaching of students from different backgrounds (Banks, 1996; 1997). However, inexperienced teachers simply do not always have the depth of knowledge, flexibility, or confidence to facilitate effective communication among culturally diverse students (Goodwin, 1997). Technical knowledge alone can give a false sense of security, leading to disappointment and confusion when it does not work as expected (Kleinfeld, 1998). Teacher education programs can avoid this letdown by infusing opportunities for prospective teachers to engage in communicative action throughout their coursework and practical experiences. Prospective teachers who examine their own biases, begin to change misconceptions, and discuss both fears and hopes with others who support and challenge them can grow in the ability to connect with culturally diverse students (Lesko & Bloom, 1998).

Practical experiences with culturally diverse students and families, along with frequent reflection on the meanings of experiences, can prepare future teachers to consider cultural factors. Prospective teachers need to belong to a community working together for widened and

deepened understanding (Banister & Maher, 1998; Goodwin, 1997; Marshall, 1996). Technical information can be incorporated to the extent it helps students understand their situations, but engagement in dialogue is needed to develop common cultural meanings (Birmingham, 2003).

The multicultural education gained in teacher education programs is still evolving and is often isolated from other university and practical experiences. Thus, it is not overly effective in promoting teacher's confidence or capabilities when they are faced with painful controversies or divisive issues in culturally diverse classrooms (Goodwin, 1997; Kleinfeld, 1998). A rich support system is needed for prospective teachers to move into the communicative and emancipatory systems of action where they can prepare culturally diverse students for critical thinking and significant responsibilities (Banister & Maher, 1998; Birmingham, 2003). Administrative and community support, opportunities to create and share resources, and networks to assist are essential to the development of teachers who can think and act critically.

Methodology

The researchers designed a survey regarding FCS teacher beliefs about cultural diverse classes and recommendations for teacher education (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005). The survey requested demographic information about respondents' gender, years teaching, cultural background, languages spoken and understood, and grade levels taught, along with student languages/cultural backgrounds represented in the most diverse class taught in the past several years. Teachers were invited to write open-ended comments about their beliefs regarding culturally diverse classes and to suggest ways that teacher education programs could better prepare future teachers for cultural diversity.

One of the researchers attended a state meeting of district FCS supervisors to describe the research and request assistance in distributing surveys to teachers. The supervisors' districts represented different areas of the state, from the rural "Panhandle" to the populous Miami area, and with populations up to 89.8% minority students (Florida Department of Education, 2004). Comments were examined using content analysis to identify themes (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005) and related systems of action.

Results are based on a sample of 54 teachers from 12 districts (out of a total of 67) who wrote one or more comments. Although this was a convenience sample and results cannot be generalized to all FCS teachers, the researchers believe that the qualitative findings provide a valuable glimpse into cultural diversity within FCS classrooms along with parallel implications for teacher education. Numerical counts were only used when they indicated a clear trend. More importantly, the findings are intended to reflect the range of beliefs by practicing FCS teachers.

Sample

The sample included 53 females and one unchecked gender, forty-six (85.1%) Caucasians, three (5.6%) African Americans, three (5.6%) Hispanics, and two (3.7%) Caucasian/Native Americans. One teacher was in her first year, 16 teachers (29.6%) had one to 10 years of experience, 12 teachers (22.2%) had 11 to 20 years, and 25 (46.2%) had over 20 years of experience. Four respondents spoke Spanish fluently, 19 understood Spanish, and three others understood Greek, German, or French. The sample as a whole reported 19 different courses as their most diverse, with 10 teachers citing Early Childhood Education and 10 citing Principles of Food Preparation, followed by Culinary Arts (7 teachers), Middle School Life Choices (4), Child Development (3), and Nutrition and Wellness (3).

Students of Respondents

Students of the 54 teachers represented 39 cultures. The most common student backgrounds after Caucasian (100%) were: African American cited by 52 (96%) teachers, Puerto Rican by 42 (78%), Mexican by 34 (63%), Cuban by 31 (57%), Caribbean and Haitian by 30 (56%), Brazilian and Colombian by 16 (30%), Native American by 13 (24%), Vietnamese by 13 (24%), and Chinese by 12 (22%). Cultural backgrounds also included Australian, Belgian, British, Canadian, Chilean, Dutch, Ecuadorian, East Indian, Egyptian, French, German, Guatemalan, Hmong, Honduran, Indian, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Middle Eastern, Nicaraguan, Pakistani, Philippine, Portuguese, Peruvian, Russian, Scottish, and Thai. English was the most common language spoken, but teachers often indicated that one or more students in their class spoke Spanish, and many other languages from Creole to Vietnamese. Each class was so unique that cultural patterns were impossible to detect. As one teacher commented, "In Family Dynamics I had students from Russia to Colombia to Japan."

Teachers' Beliefs and Suggestions for Teacher Education

Teachers often focused on technical skills and knowledge deemed necessary for success in culturally diverse classes. They also valued classes where students get along, share traditions, and work together. Most seemed to believe that FCS content and cooperative learning "naturally" lead to mutual understanding, and some indicated specific attempts to engage students in dialogue about their cultural contexts and values. A small number expressed frustration and inability to understand differences, and a few provided examples of emancipative involvement to improve cultural relationships in their schools.

Comments Related to Technical Knowledge and Skills

Many teachers believed that technical information about cultural differences was important and that specific knowledge and skills should be taught in teacher education programs. Comments fell into two categories of technical action. First, they believed that English was an essential tool for students and that university programs should prepare future teachers to work with students without English proficiency. Second, teachers believed that it was important to learn about cultural differences and teacher education programs should include training to work with culturally diverse students.

Importance of English. Teachers expressed clear beliefs about language: English is an essential instrument for learning, students who lack English skill are academically disadvantaged, and students are responsible for learning the majority language. One experienced middle school teacher noted, "It is a concern when a student does not understand English," a comment that is not surprising given the linguistic variety of students in some classes. For example, one high school teacher taught students recently arrived from Argentina, Colombia, Mexico, China, and Bosnia with little English proficiency.

The most frequent suggestion for teacher education, mentioned by one-third (18) of the teachers, related to training in how to work with students with limited English proficiency. Five recommended Florida teachers "learn Spanish," and another five recommended learning a second language. As one reflected, "My life would be much easier if I would have double majored in Spanish, or at least taken four years during college." The comment that "I had to tell some Puerto Rican students they couldn't speak Spanish in class" indicates that some teachers favor development of English skill. Other teachers advocated the need to learn methods for ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages):

- Teach ESOL strategies in the reality of 25-35 students in one class.
- Get an ESOL endorsement.
- Future teachers need training in reading and testing, etc.

Even though they thought English was an important tool for learning, most teachers were not thwarted and found alternative ways to teach the subject matter:

- Students need visual, hands-on, kinesthetic presentations. They respond to body language.
- Learn how to do lessons with lots of visuals, weekly demonstrations, and weekly handouts!
- Students can and should help each other which helps the student having trouble understanding English.
- Have students who speak two languages help non-English speaking students--but warn them not to do TOO much.
- Students without English skill should be sent to ESOL classes for help.
- My classes are hands-on so they pick up things quickly from demos and working on projects with teams. Students are well received and seem to "get it" quickly.
- My Haitian students spoke almost no English. The labs they could do with help from others.

Many teachers commented that the language barrier was eventually resolved on its own:

- By having them in regular classes, the students are forced to learn English and they usually do very quickly.
- The students are like sponges and want to learn the new language and become fluent at amazing speeds.
- Bilingual aids are helpful but not plentiful. Students who want to learn, do learn regardless of language because they try harder.
- I had a little girl who came from Russia who did not speak any words of English. She taught herself and was in ESOL for only one year. She brought a tape recorder to class every day. She says she taught herself to read by watching TV and repeating, and by listening to the tapes.

One teacher emphasized, "Keep your standards high. They will rise to the occasion." Thus, teachers agreed that English is a fundamental technical skill needed to understand FCS subjects, but they suggested a medley of tips to help prospective teachers succeed even when lacking a common language.

Importance of information and techniques relevant to culture. Teachers emphasized cultural differences almost as often as language differences. They expressed the belief that students have culturally different learning styles, approaches to classroom behavior, family values, and other noticeable characteristics. Thirteen respondents thought that college training should include content related to cultural differences. They commented that future teachers should learn about appropriate behaviors, dress, traditions, religions, foods, values, holidays, and specific differences in cultures. More specifically, one suggested the need to learn about differences between Hispanic groups, and another suggested the need to "study poverty as its own culture." The general belief was that prospective teachers need "as much experience and exposure to different cultures as possible before teaching." Teachers believed that technical knowledge about cultures along with real life practice lead to success with diverse students.

A number suggested that teacher education programs provide training in specific techniques for teaching culturally diverse students: Cooperative learning, buddies and partners, guest speakers representing cultures, and delivery of lessons in more than one way. Other teachers believed that attention to classic principles and "best teaching practices" were sufficient regardless of culture or language:

- Teach about various learning styles.
- Time management principles are a must...tips on ways to decrease busyness, increase time with kids.
- Learning how to modify for individuals, regardless of culture, should be enough.
- Use school resources that are available.

Comments Related to Communicative Action

Family and consumer sciences teachers should prepare students for reflective dialogue about meanings, norms, values, contexts, and common goals in communicative action (Baldwin, 1996; Fedje, 1998). Most teachers in this study indicated enthusiasm about students sharing aspects of their cultures in classes. Most seemed to believe that cooperative learning and using class topics around universal interests such as foods "naturally" lead to the development of common values and goals, and a few indicated explicit discussion about cultural context and cultural values. They implicitly rather than explicitly suggested that communicative action should be an essential element of teacher education.

The importance of open and enthusiastic attitudes. Although it is perhaps impossible to directly teach positive attitudes toward diversity, most respondents expressed the belief that FCS teachers must be open:

- Embrace the different cultures.
- Accept and respect students.
- Prepare for the difficulties with having diverse students, but it is very rewarding.
- Be open-minded and try to find out where students are coming from.
- Be happy and smile a lot.
- Establish respect so all can succeed.

The comment, "I love working with diversity. It is so much more interesting," reflected a widespread belief in the enjoyment and rewards of teaching culturally diverse classes.

Many suggestions for teacher education parallel the belief that teachers must value diversity in terms of enrichment of learning and cooperative bonds among class members. One middle school teacher with more than 20 years of experience, whose most diverse class included students from nine cultures, suggested that teachers with open attitudes benefit from developing strong enduring relationships:

Nowadays you have to be very open ... not only accepting their traditions and cultures but trying to help them as a teacher. When a teacher is open-minded and helps the kids, you get a lot of personal satisfaction and support from parents and staff. The kids feel better and trust you more. For me as a teacher, I don't only have students in my school. I have friends.

As another teacher stated, FCS teachers who are eager to tap into the diversity will find that their job "is awesome."

The importance of sharing, cooperation, and relationships. Many respondents stated that students' lives were enriched by relationships with each other:

- Diversity adds more learning experiences for all students.
- They are all interesting and all have added much.
- I emphasize that 'different' is interesting, not weird.

Pointers for future teachers included:

- Share yourself with your students and they will share with you.
- Allow time for each student to tell about his or her culture.
- Help them embrace the differences.
- Draw on their cultures to enhance class.
- Learn what is important to their families.

Teachers suggested two approaches: "Celebrate differences as making life more interesting," and "Celebrate ways we are alike." A common belief was that diversity could result in strong bonds and teamwork:

- Diversity is positive and helps all model cooperation and unity.
- Though my students are diverse, they work well together and help each other.
- My students have been raised together and get along. I am proud of our community.
- They are a challenge, but everybody gets along and we have learned a lot from each other.

Although the comments above are not detailed, they reveal that teachers value cooperation, learning from each other, appreciation of others, and other features of communicative action.

Teachers also suggested specific ideas for teacher education programs:

- I use team-building activities the first week of class and then do more if needed during the semester.
- Find interesting ways to group them other than by culture such as birthday months and favorite color.
- A traditions lab is a great way to share.

Food as a universal language and powerful symbol for communication. Many teachers commented on the role of foods and cuisine. On one hand, some scholars (Baldwin, 1996; Brown, 1985) warn against too much attention to technical activities such as food preparation. On the other hand, teachers embraced the food area as a universal need and fascinating way to help students learn from each other, appreciate and respect others, share family meal favorites, and demonstrate their cultural background in a sensory way:

- It is a learning experience for all students. They do research and report on cultures and foods and it helps them appreciate others.
- I love to draw upon their cultural differences. I use them to teach units featuring foods from their cultures.
- Students are eager to share their foods and culture.
- I was chosen by the state Humanities Council to participate in a weeklong class on religions around the world. This helped me to be more understanding of various cultures. The next semester I had Jewish, Islamic, and Hindu students as well as the Catholic and Protestant students more common here. The knowledge gained helped me to make the student feel understood and accepted, especially concerning diet restrictions.

Some teachers appeared to have a deeper sense of the dynamics of interchange, sharing, and communication about cultural meanings and values. A Nutrition and Wellness teacher indicated that she had grown in understanding and changed her interpretations by listening and responding to students in their differences: "Sometimes 'American' expectations are not appropriate. I've learned a lot from my students, and also from our 'traditions' labs. Culture and customs are very important since we obtain most of our beliefs from our families."

Other teachers let students act "as their own resources," invited "savvy guest speakers from the students' cultures to help with instruction," and used "simulated social and business functions to practice what is appropriate in various student cultures. As one teacher reflected, "Students from different cultures ... bring different ways of understanding, bring different values and goals to class, and have varying work ethics." Most respondents appeared to value cooperative activities to enhance respect, appreciation, and open-mindedness for others. Although it is not clear how often or how vigorously classes discussed meanings and values, teachers did structure group work with the belief that such interactions nurtured communication.

Trouble reflecting and communicating. Despite the fact that most comments illustrated teachers' positive appreciation of the added benefits of diversity, a smaller number of comments contained elements of bias, frustration, lack of reflection on alternative meanings, and general lack of success in the communicative system of action:

- The Asians are the most interested in learning the language and culture. Others are not interested. Many were even born in the U.S. and still speak Spanish.
- Students from some cultures talk too loud, and too much.
- Some are loud and have to be constantly reminded to stay in their seats and use their indoor voices.
- Behavior and what is culturally seen as appropriate by students is not seen as appropriate by me; fast talking, too loud of talking, too hard to understand.

These comments might indicate a technical view of the world, in which the end is already defined from a "deficit" perspective of students from other cultures. Suggestions that teacher education include technical training in how to set discipline policy and "stress management" could also indicate that some have mistaken expectations that technical knowledge can solve problems of communication or interpretation.

However, some teachers also had students from up to 10 different cultures and speaking five languages other than English in their most diverse class. Certainly, some classes may be so diverse that the challenge to understand each other within a limited amount of time together each day is simply overwhelming to a teacher who is not prepared or supported with other resources. Other teachers noticed lack of communicative action among their students when they "stick together" only with those like themselves and think others "are catered to." Unfortunately, FCS teachers who fail to understand and appreciate cultural influences, change their biases, engage students in dialogue about situations in which they feel lack of respect, or work to improve each student's sense of participation are not likely to experience success with communicative action in their classrooms.

Comments Related to Emancipatory Action

With a few exceptions, teachers have not often been steeped in thinking from an emancipative point of view (e.g., Montgomery & Way, 1997; Thomas, Baum, Laster, & Fedje, 1999). However, several respondents in this study indicated some critique of traditional assumptions about what is appropriate: "Critically assess and change some topics," and "Throw

out grooming units. Culturally, students are very different from 'white' textbooks." Another stated that her school had intentionally created teams to promote inclusion and integrate positive benefits of culture throughout the school environment. One suggested that the development of web sites featuring information, sharing, and demonstrations of school activities would be valuable to school members, future teachers, and communities. Several teachers noted that schools and communities have many resources for those new teachers who search for them. Several mentioned the benefits of involving parents and community guest speakers. Teachers who seek support and connection within their communities seem to realize that there is no single "correct" answer, perhaps planting seeds for communicative and emancipatory action for the benefit of their students.

Discussion

Several conclusions emerge from this sample of teachers who had moderate to extensive experience with culturally diverse students in their classes. They seemed to agree that prospective teachers "should prepare for the difficulties with having diverse students, but it is very rewarding." Teachers held a range of beliefs, providing insights about cultural diversity and the systems of action for teacher educators.

Technical Action and Implications for Teacher Education

The most frequently articulated problem related to cultural diversity was not limited to FCS particulars but related to the general language barrier that arises when students do not understand or speak English. Although teachers felt challenged, most believed they had found successful ways to teach FCS content and skills through visual aids, body language, handouts, study partners, or simply having patience while students learned English on their own--reflecting many of the suggestions in the literature (Fear-Fenn, 1993; Manning & Baruth, 1996). They also suggested that teacher education deliberately prepare future teachers to become skilled with ESOL strategies or a second language and provide a repertoire of teaching techniques to promote academic achievement among students with limited English proficiency and improve teacher-student communication. Teacher educators could assign prospective teachers to adapt lessons and curriculum to include more visuals, cooperative groups, and other supports for students with limited English proficiency and from multiple cultures. FCS programs could consider requiring a second language so teachers can speak with students from one more background, experience what it is like to learn a new language, and feel the types of discomfort that can prompt changes in thinking and behavior (Garmon, 2004). Role plays could be used to practice greeting others in different languages, nonverbal gestures, and basic instructions for every day needs.

Teacher education students would benefit if they "complete significant coursework in ethnic studies" (Marshall, 1996, p. 378). For FCS programs, the focus could be on cultural aspects of individual and family life--but in a much broader sense than the readily identified areas such as foods and clothing. As one teacher with students from nine cultural backgrounds in a Nutrition and Wellness class stated, "Understanding cultures is half the battle." Panel discussion members and guest speakers from different cultures could provide unique perspectives on academic studies and teaching tips. Teacher education programs also should continue to include classic teaching principles (such as cooperative learning approaches) that seemed to resonate with these teachers as successfully used with culturally diverse classes.

Communicative Action and Implications for Teacher Education

Teaching in culturally diverse classrooms involves an astounding array of frequent and complex challenges, and communicative action needs to be emphasized in teacher education. A few teachers showed evidence of bias that could be detrimental to students and interfere with building genuine relationships. Several teachers appeared frustrated and seemed to seek a technical solution to problems that may have surfaced due to lack of reflective attempts to change their own biases or communicative ability to view situations from more than one perspective and work toward common understanding. They may reflect what McAllister and Irvine (2000) call "resistance," a lower developmental level that often intensifies unless a teacher is gradually and "gently" challenged toward more inclusive viewpoints and actions.

The majority of the teachers who indicated interest in cultures are likely to be more responsive than teachers who do not have open dispositions (Garmon, 2004). Most teachers in this study enjoyed having students share their cultures and learn about each other. They put students in teams, required group projects, and encouraged students to share examples from their own lives and cultural backgrounds. Some had interesting ideas for "traditions labs" and simulated business situations to help facilitate understanding about culture. They seemed optimistic that sharing foods and other family traditions "naturally" leads to communicative action, and their ideas and enthusiasm are inspiring. These ideas likely help nurture the caring so essential to work with culturally diverse students (Gay, 2000). However, they also might reflect what Banks (1996) calls "additive" education and what Brown (1985) labels technical action which do not automatically get at the highest and deepest levels of multicultural education.

Prospective teachers likely would benefit from greater depth of guidance with cultural aspects of communicative action. Case studies and stories are effective for discussing cultural influences on quality of life and analyzing diverse ways people handle complicated situations (Garmon, 2004; Howard, 2003). Novels, short stories, television shows, and movies about families from different cultures could be used to illustrate ways people meet challenges, communicate with each other, reach common principles and goals, and demonstrate character.

According to Howard (2003), prospective teachers must be equipped to "reflect on their own racial and cultural identities and to recognize how these identities coexist with the cultural compositions of their students" (p. 196). Some researchers stress the need to begin with investigation of personal experiences as a cultural being (Allen & Hermann-Wilmarth, 2004; McAllister & Irvine, 2000). Prospective teachers can discover their own biases and change habits, but emotional involvement is necessary for such growth (Montgomery & Way, 1997). As stressed by the respondents here, teacher education should include projects that not only require students to reflect on their own cultures but require them to experience other cultures.

Service learning projects with community groups and schools could be structured to promote dialogue and teamwork with people from other cultures. Prospective teachers could be assigned various activities in which they engage in real life cultural work: mentoring one or more students with limited English proficiency and different cultural values, creating/adapting lessons and learning materials to respond to a particular cultural issue, devising and implementing an after-school program related to the cultural differences in families, or developing a method to involve parents from various cultures in FCS classes.

Emancipative Action and Teacher Education

Teacher education typically introduces conceptual categories intended to help future teachers "think critically about how to develop communities that interact in meaningful ways, do

not dominate each other, risk resolving conflicts, and work together to survive on this planet" (Banister & Maher, 1998, p. 183). Concepts often included are power, privilege, ethics, equity, equality, and access (Garmon, 2004; Banister & Maher, 1998; McAllister & Irvine, 2000), but these ideas can seem remote and abstract. Direct and personal experiences in schools, such as seeing a child treated unfairly simply due to cultural background or learning about the plight of a child's immigrant family, more likely will make abstract categories come alive and more likely will spark motivation to take emancipative action. Programs could follow Howard (2003) by including critical concepts in written assignments and oral discussions in relation to practical situations that develop in schools. Direct experiences can enable future teachers to apply critical principles while working on close-to-the-heart problems of social justice with students they know (McAllister & Irvine, 2000).

Regular meetings should be structured so prospective teachers can share and learn from each other, help each other identify solutions to problems, and evaluate successes/failures regarding their work in schools and communities (Garmon, 2004; Pierce, 1993; Yopp, 1993). Their own experiences along with dialogue about historical events and current news events could be used to study causes of conflicts or oppression, consequences on families, and alternative solutions centered on cultural issues. Debates could be structured to critically study contested perspectives and cultural values. When prospective teachers feel safe enough to express their thoughts while accepting challenges to their perspectives, they begin to "produce" rather than merely "register" new ideas and actively solve problems (Lesko & Bloom, 1998).

Implications for Research

Because depth of understanding about the richness of diversity is limited in survey research, future research should include ethnographies and case studies within culturally diverse FCS classrooms. Answers to many questions about meaning and process could be answered through qualitative observations and in-depth interviews: What is the process that beginning FCS teachers undergo as they learn about and teach in diverse classrooms? What happens to new teachers who are overwhelmed with the diversity in their classrooms or lack understanding about their students? What are the differences in the situations between FCS teachers who do respond well to diversity and those who do not? What is it like to be a student in a culturally diverse FCS classroom? How can teacher education encourage prospective teachers to sharpen participatory skills for reflective discourse, gain depth of critical skill, and encourage democratic participation of all students (Pierce, 1993; Yopp, 1993)? It would be interesting to study community building in culturally diverse FCS classrooms from a critical theory perspective to determine where teachers maintain traditional values and where they promote active change.

Conclusion

Reflective and critical thought as well as community building action should be pervasive in culturally diverse classrooms, and FCS teacher education must adapt accordingly. If successful, we will prepare future teachers with:

skills, attitudes, materials, content, and instructional practices that will enable them to serve all children well by building classroom communities of learners, working effectively with parents and the community, engaging themselves and their students in the critical analysis of social structures and inequities, honoring children's heritage and experiences by incorporating them into the curriculum,

dealing explicitly with controversial issues as well as questions of power and privilege, and serving as advocates for children. (Goodwin, 1997, p. 143)
Given the positive interest in diverse students along with the desire for cooperation and mutual respect shown in this study, FCS teachers have potential to become leaders in their schools as they prepare students from diverse cultural backgrounds for meaningful and productive lives.

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