


1-1-2011

How to Recruit and Retain Bilingual/ESL Teacher Candidates?

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Recommended Citation

Diaz, Zulmaris and Mahadevan, Lakshmi (2011) "How to Recruit and Retain Bilingual/ESL Teacher Candidates?," *Academic Leadership: The Online Journal*: Vol. 9 : Iss. 1 , Article 30.
Available at: <https://scholars.fhsu.edu/alj/vol9/iss1/30>

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Academic Leadership Journal

[How to Recruit and Retain Bilingual/ESL Teacher Candidates?](#)

The student population in the United States is rapidly changing; in 2004-2005, approximately 5.1 million or 10.5 percent of the U.S. student population were English-language learners (Pearson, 2006). The National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES, 2003) revealed that 47 states provide English language services to English language learners (ELLs) enrolled in public schools. California alone educates 1.6 million ELLs, one-third of all the nation's ELLs, while in Texas more than half a million students received ELL services, one in seven students (NCES). The problem is that a great number of these students are being served by teachers new to the field or that lack training in teaching linguistically diverse students. According to Zeichner (2003), "only about one fourth of teachers who work with English language learners nationally have received any substantive preparation with regard to ESL teaching strategies and language acquisition theory" (p. 494). Indeed, the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES, 2002) declared that the professional development area in which teachers were least expected to participate was that of addressing the needs of linguistically minority students; of the 41% of teachers nationwide with language minority students in their classrooms, only 12.5% participated in eight or more hours of professional development related to ELLs in the past 3 years. In fact, the National Education Association (NEA, 2002) has expressed concern that districts across the United States are facing difficulties stemming from the small percentages of bilingual/ESL teachers relative to the growing number of culturally linguistically diverse students. Yet certification of bilingual/ESL teacher candidates continues to be a challenge for teacher preparation programs.

Moreover, institutions of higher education and school districts are also faced with the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, which requires all states to identify ELLs, measure their English proficiency, and to include them in state mandated assessments. Under this act, school districts are also required to have a "highly qualified" teacher in each classroom. As a result, there is an urgent need for educational institutions to devote a great deal of effort in producing and preparing sufficient numbers of highly qualified educators that can serve the needs of culturally and linguistic diverse students; teachers who are familiar with the language acquisition process, who understand how culture influences learning and who can work with students and parents from various cultural and linguistic backgrounds. The ambitious plan of the NCLB, of having all students educated by qualified teachers, is and will continue to be in jeopardy if the state and the nation do not find ways to deal with the issue of the teacher shortage.

There is a dearth of information on teacher training in the field of bilingual/ESL education, especially in the area of recruitment and retention. Therefore, the intent of this study is to contribute to this sparse body of research by gathering and presenting findings that could be used by teacher preparation programs to secure bilingual/ESL teacher candidates and to better prepare them to effectively educate future generations of English language learners. The study (a) examines efforts carried out by institutions of higher education in Texas to recruit and retain teacher candidates in the high need disciplines of bilingual/ESL education; (b) identifies practices used to recruit and retain teacher

candidates in the high need disciplines of bilingual/ESL education; and (c) describes to what extent institutions of higher education in Texas are effectively preparing bilingual/ESL teacher candidates.

Conceptual Framework

This study is the second in a series of research concerning various issues related to bilingual/ESL teacher recruitment and retention. The research agenda is meant to provide a framework for discussion and to present information on how various educational institutions, from elementary school through university, deal with the issue of teacher shortages especially in the high need disciplines of bilingual/ESL education. As a continuation of the efforts from *An analysis of Texas superintendents' bilingual/ESL teacher recruitment and retention practices* (Lara-Alecio, Galloway, Irby, & Brown, 2004), the first research of its kind to determine how Texas school districts address the needs of bilingual/ESL teachers through recruitment and retention efforts, this study investigates and identifies possible factors influencing the recruitment and retention of bilingual/ESL teacher candidates in teacher preparation programs.

Context of the Study

This study included Texas due to its growing ELL population. According Texas Education Agency (2009), in 2008, more than 800,000 students in Texas' public schools (approximately 15%) were ELLs and were served in bilingual or ESL programs. In fact, these percentages surpasses to that of the nation with over 5.1 million English language learners, which account for approximately 10.5 % of all public school students (Pearson, 2006). Texas, similar to the nation, has also been challenged with the issue of teacher shortage in the area of bilingual/ESL education.

Research Methodology

Procedure:

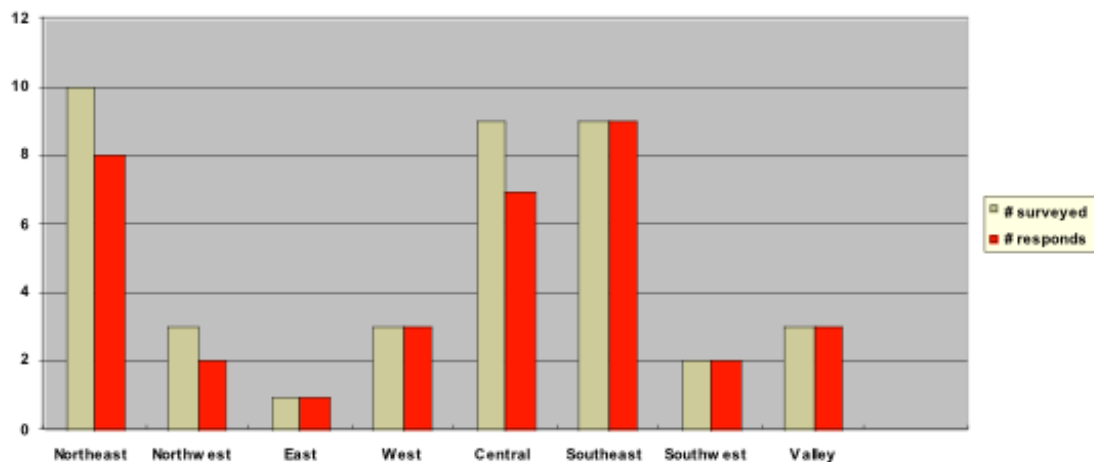
A questionnaire was delivered via electronic mail to all deans or department chairs of teacher preparation programs in Texas public and private institutions of higher education in charge of preparing bilingual/ESL teacher candidates. These account for 40 institutions out of 68 public and private colleges that offer teacher preparation programs, in addition, to eight online universities. The names of all institutions of higher education in Texas were identified from a data base found on the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board webpage. The names and addresses of the deans or department chairs that were selected were derived by cross-checking each university's home page to ensure that bilingual and/or ESL teacher preparation programs are offered. From 40 institutions 35 university administrators completed the survey with an 88% response rate; but only 34 questionnaires were included because one respondent could not answer many of the questions since his/her institution did not provided bilingual/ESL programs even though the program was listed, in the university's web page, as being offered. The percentage of subjects responding to the questionnaire according to the Texas regions in which their institutions were located compared favorably to the percentage of all subjects invited to participate and to the Texas regions in which their institutions were located. Figure 1 provides a comparison of the number of subjects that were surveyed to the number of subjects that responded to the questionnaire and their geographical regions.

In addition, five deans/administrators from the institutions with the highest rate in recruiting and

retaining bilingual/ESL teacher candidates (an enrollment of more than 150 students) consented to a follow up interview. The interview served the purpose of clarifying the results of the questionnaire and supplementing the study. Participation was voluntary and confidential.

Figure 1

Subjects Surveyed in Comparison to Respondents



Instrumentation:

The questionnaire consisted of 32 items, both open-ended and closed ended, with an internal consistency of .652 Cronbach's Alpha. The interval scale questions related to the importance of the bilingual/ESL programs as well as the importance of recruitment and retention of teacher candidates, and the effectiveness of faculty were taken into consideration when measuring its internal consistency.

The survey requested information about the institutions of higher education and the specific programs offered in relation to bilingual/ESL. In addition, the instrument gathered information on the administrators' perceptions concerning four areas: (a) the importance of the bilingual/ESL program; (b) strategies to recruit and retain bilingual/ESL teacher candidates; (c) the extent to which they believe faculty members prepare teacher candidates to effectively work with English language learners; (d) the success of their efforts to prepare future teachers to become certified in the area of bilingual/ESL education.

In addition, the survey contained four open-ended questions focusing on the challenges and concerns faced when dealing with bilingual/ESL programs, the vision of the deans and administrators in relation to these programs, and what strategies will drive this vision. Based on these responses, along with other items of the survey, a total of six questions were developed for a follow up interview. The questions addressed four recurring topics found on the survey data: (a) the concerns of institutions having difficulties recruiting and retaining bilingual/ESL teacher candidates and bilingual/ESL professors; (b) requesting a deeper insight on the most positive strategies used to recruit and retain teacher candidates; and (c) the need for a responsive attitude towards English language learners and the community.

Data Analysis:

For this research we used a mixed-method approach . To analyze the quantitative data from the surveys, a statistical program entitled SPSS12.0 for Windows and SmartViewer was used. Statistical methods used to analyze the data included frequency distributions, percentages, crosstabulations, and logistic regression analysis. The qualitative data obtained from the open-ended questions and follow-up interviews was gathered as a supplement to the quantitative data. Allowing participants to respond in their own words yielded additional information that would not have been provided in forced-choice questions. These responses were read and reread; and then organized into categories according to recurring topics, which confirmed and strengthened the interpretations made based on the quantitative information generated from the questionnaire.

Results

Data collected from the study were guided by three research questions:

Research Question One: What methods/policies/actions are institutions of higher education in Texas utilizing to recruit and retain bilingual/ESL teacher candidates?

The variables used to answer this question were organized into seven categories: (a) The importance of the recruitment of bilingual/ESL teacher candidates, (b) Strategies used to recruit bilingual/ESL teacher candidates, (c) Location from which the majority of bilingual/ESL teacher candidates are recruited, (d) Programs and services provided to recruit and retain bilingual/ESL teacher candidates, (e) Provision of role models for bilingual/ESL teacher candidates, (f) Faculty receptiveness and responsiveness to the needs of bilingual/ESL teacher candidates, and (g) College commitment to bilingual/ESL teacher candidates.

(A) The importance of the recruitment of bilingual/ESL teacher candidates. From the 34 responses, only one subject expressed that bilingual/ESL teacher recruitment was not important at all (2.9%) to his/her college of education; this institution reported having an enrollment of less than 20 students in the bilingual/ESL program. For 22 institutions the recruitment of bilingual/ESL teacher candidates is extremely important (64.7%); and the remaining 11 institutions reported it as somewhat important (32.4%) to their teacher preparation program.

(B) Strategies used to recruit bilingual/ESL teacher candidates. Participants were asked to select from a list of 7 strategies all those used by their teacher preparation programs to recruit bilingual/ESL teacher candidates. According to the information provided by the participants, high school recruitment and professional organization recruitment were the strategies most often used by teacher preparation programs to recruit bilingual/ESL teacher candidates.

(C) Location from which the majority of bilingual/ESL teacher candidates are recruited. Respondents were asked to select the areas in which their teacher preparation programs recruited the majority of bilingual/ESL teacher candidates; which included local school districts, within the state of Texas, outside Texas, internationally, and other. Nearly 85% of the participants affirmed recruiting the majority of their bilingual/ESL teacher candidates from within the state of Texas. Seventy-six percent recruit from local school districts, and 17.6% recruit internationally.

(D) Programs and services provided to recruit and retain bilingual/ESL teacher candidates, and their importance to the college. The survey listed 20 programs and/or services from which respondents were asked to select those that were provided by their college of education for the recruitment and retention of bilingual/ESL teacher candidates. Academic advising was a service that all institutions provide to their teacher candidates. Other influential programs and services reported were financial aid advising with 82.4%, and preparation for certification exams with the same percentage; followed by new student orientations with 76.5% and scholarships for bilingual/ESL teacher candidates with 73.5%. Other programs or services that had more than a 50% response rate were providing a liaison between the university and public schools (64.7%), financial aid programs (61.8%), followed by bilingual/ESL student organizations, faculty mentoring programs, and recruitment programs all with 52.9%. Deepening mainstream students' knowledge about bilingual/ESL programs had a 50% response rate.

In addition, participants were also requested to rank the five most important programs or service their teacher preparation colleges provide for the recruitment and retention of bilingual/ESL pre/in-service teachers. The variables that were ranked as the five most important programs were academic advising, financial aid, preparation for certification exams, financial aid advising, and bilingual/ESL student organizations. It is noteworthy that the institutions that have the least difficulty recruiting and that expressed the recruitment of bilingual/ESL teacher candidates as strongly important, offered the most programs and services for their students.

(E) Provision of role models for bilingual/ESL teacher candidates. More than 75% of the subjects "agreed or strongly agreed" that their institution is providing effective role models for bilingual/ESL teacher candidates. Moreover, less than 6% of the subjects "disagreed or strongly disagreed" that their college provides effective role models for bilingual/ESL candidates; it is worth mentioning that these institutions have less than 60 students enrolled in the bilingual/ESL program.

(F) Faculty receptiveness and responsiveness to the needs of bilingual/ESL teacher candidates. According to the findings about 85% of the administrators of teacher preparation programs in Texas represented in this study believe that their faculty is responsive and receptive to the needs of bilingual/ESL teacher candidates.

(G) College commitment to bilingual/ESL teacher candidates. Almost all participants, 31 out of 34 respondents, "strongly agreed or agreed" with the statement that their college is committed to the successful graduation of bilingual/ESL candidates. Only three participants "somewhat agreed" with this statement.

Qualitative Data

To bring support and in-depth meaning to the survey responses some open-ended questions were used in the questionnaire; in addition, five administrators received a follow up interview. The qualitative data indicated that various institutions in Texas use alternative means of recruitment. For example, one interviewee suggested that for recruiting bilingual teacher candidates, "Two things need to go together: active recruitment of students who speak a second language coupled off with money." Many participants suggested working closely with school districts, making sure to reach out and to personally visit schools, human resource personnel, bilingual/ESL programs directors, and with superintendents to promote bilingual/ESL teacher preparation programs.

Other suggestions were to provide small grants for students to pay for tuition and books, and to promote job market opportunities for bilingual teachers during new student orientations and high school recruitment orientations. A constructive recommendation by one respondent was, “to continue to explore new options. Begin with basic programs or the program that the university has already in place and look at other options within that framework or beyond; and decide on what adjustments can be done to provide options.”

For retaining bilingual/ESL candidates some of the suggestions provided in the qualitative data were good academic advising, an active bilingual/ESL student organization, and mentorship from experienced teachers. One dean asserted that the most significant retention strategy is to form a, “community of learners and a campus culture that supports diversity.” For this reason it is very important for all faculty “to be sensitive and to have some level of understanding of second language acquisition; to teach future teachers to be sensitive to the needs of English language learners and to promote a positive attitude towards language minority students,” as stated by another dean.

Research Question Two: What programs/services are institutions of higher education in Texas providing to effectively prepare bilingual/ESL teacher candidates?

To answer this question, the success rate of bilingual/ESL teacher candidates in passing state certification exams was taken into consideration due to the fact that the passing rate is one of the components used by the State Board for Educator Certification to accredit teacher preparation programs. In Texas, at the time this study was conducted, to be certified as a bilingual teacher, candidates need to take the Bilingual TExES exam along with the Spanish Test of Oral Proficiency (TOPT); for ESL certification, candidates need to take the ESL TExES exam. In addition, four of the six National Association of Bilingual Educators’ (NABE’s) National Standards for the Preparation of Bilingual/Multicultural Teachers (1992) were taken as independent variables; (1) institutional resources, coordination and commitment, (2) bilingual/multicultural program curriculum, (3) field work and practicum experiences in bilingual/multicultural classroom, (4) opportunities for professional development. These independent variables were then compared to a dependent variable, the success rate on the TExES exams and the Spanish TOPT for bilingual candidates.

Most of the institutions in this study are preparing bilingual/ESL teacher candidates to successfully pass the state certification exams. From the 34 institutions participating in this study, 29 reported a passing rate above 70% in the Bilingual and ESL TExES exams, and 27 reported a 70% and above passing rate in the Spanish TOPT.

According to the results from the crosstabulation analysis, the variables that were reported the most among those institutions with passing rates greater than 70% in the Bilingual and ESL TExES and the Spanish TOPT were: certification exam preparation programs, liaisons between universities and public schools, bilingual/ESL student organizations, effective bilingual and ESL faculty, and requiring all pre-service teachers to enroll in a course that will prepare them to teach language minority students as well as to interact with English language learners as part of their field experiences.

Similar results were found when using linear regression analysis. The data demonstrated that there is a correlation between the passing rate on the certification exams and the independent variables: (a) effective bilingual/ESL faculty, (b) academic resource centers for bilingual/ESL candidates, (c)

bilingual/ESL student organizations, (d) liaisons between universities and public schools, (e) academic study cohorts, (f) exam preparation programs, (g) funds to attend educational conferences, (h) requiring all candidates to enroll in a course that prepares them to teach language minority students, and (i) all pre-service teachers interact with English language learners as part of their field experience. However, the correlation between the ESL TExES passing rate and the independent variables was not as strong as the correlation found with the Bilingual TExES and the Spanish TOPT.

According to the results, the programs that contributed the most to the passing rate in the Bilingual TExES were: having an effective bilingual faculty, requiring all pre-service teachers to enroll in a course that will prepare them to work with English language learners, and providing an academic study cohort. For the Spanish TOPT, the programs with the strongest link to high test scores were: having an effective bilingual faculty, having liaisons between universities and public schools, and enrolling in a course that will prepare them to work with English language learners. Moreover, the variables that may have been a better predictor for the ESL TExES exam high passing rates were: an effective bilingual faculty, providing resource centers, and having liaisons between universities and public schools.

Qualitative Data

An important fact found in the qualitative data was that many institutions are finding innovative ways to provide teacher candidates with more marketable skills, as well as providing a pool of teacher candidates that could teach the growing population of English language learners. Some of the institutions are offering EC-4 ESL generalist or EC-4 bilingual generalist as part of their program, which means that their teacher candidates not only will be certified as early childhood teachers but also will be ESL or bilingually certified. Some other institutions are providing “supplementary ESL certification,” which means that within their program they are trained to teach English language learners and if they so desire they can take the ESL TExES examination as a supplement to their teaching certification.

It was noted that preparing ALL teacher candidates to work with language minority students is becoming an increasingly important issue in teacher preparation programs. All interviewees agreed that there is a need to prepare ALL teacher candidates to work with language minority students. One participant expressed that all pre/in-service teachers need to “understand the process of second language acquisition; know strategies, what things to do to support learning for ELLs; and understand the needs of ELLs, that way teachers could have a positive attitude to work with them.” Most importantly, as another participant underscored, “teachers need to know that they are responsible for all children and how significant they are in the success of these students.”

Research Question Three: Which institutions of higher education in Texas attract the most bilingual/ESL teacher candidates, and what are the key factors in their successful efforts?

When analyzing the result of this question, it was found that those institutions with an enrollment of 100 or more bilingual teacher candidates offered graduate study programs and were located in northeast Texas, west Texas, central Texas, southeast Texas, southwest Texas, and the Valley. On the other hand, the institutions that had an enrollment over 100 students in the ESL education program were located in northeast Texas, west Texas, central Texas, and southwest Texas; and these institutions offered post-baccalaureate programs.

To answer research question four, linear regression analysis was used. The dependent variable was the total enrollment of bilingual teacher candidates or ESL teacher candidates, according to the program evaluated. The independent variables were organized in four categories; (a) attitudinal responses, (b) recruitment and retention strategies, (c) accountability, and (d) investment measures.

When evaluating the key factors for attracting teacher candidates to bilingual education programs, it was found that attitudinal responses, recruitment and retention strategies and investment measures had a strong correlation with the number of students enrolled in the programs. On the other hand, accountability was not particularly useful in predicting program enrollment.

When studying attitudinal responses, the results revealed that the best predictors for the enrollment of bilingual teacher candidates in the participating institutions were providing effective role models, attracting federal and state funding, as well as having a faculty receptive to the needs of bilingual teacher candidates. Moreover, when analyzing the effect of the recruitment strategies the best predictors for high enrollment were recruiting via the web, professional organizations and Regional Education Service Centers. Those most likely to have high enrollments recruit candidates from local school districts, within the state of Texas, and from other sources. According to this study the strongest predictors for retention strategies for bilingual teacher candidates were secured four-year scholarships, resource centers for bilingual candidates, recruitment programs, exam preparation programs, other programs, retention programs, financial aid, secured four years of financial aid, deepening mainstream pre-service teachers understanding of bilingual/ESL programs, and academic study cohorts. It was also noted that a high number of bilingual faculty along with a higher allocated budget for the program were associated with higher enrollment of bilingual teacher candidates.

In reference to the ESL program, similar results were found; attitudinal responses, in addition to recruitment and retention strategies showed a strong correlation with number of students enrolled in the program. On the other hand, accountability and investment measures were not particularly useful in predicting ESL education program enrollment.

The variables that showed the strongest correlation to ESL teacher candidates' enrollment were how successful the institutions were at attracting federal funding, having less difficulty at recruiting ESL candidates, and rating bilingual/ESL as essential components in the college of education. Web recruitment, professional organizations, and high school recruitment along with outside the state of Texas candidates, local school districts candidates, and other candidates were better predictors for the enrollment of ESL teacher candidates when compared to recruitment strategies. Moreover the most significant variables in the total enrollment-retention model were academic study cohorts, resource centers for ESL candidates, secured four years of scholarship, financial aid, faculty mentorship, leadership groups, university-public school liaisons, recruitment programs, exam preparation programs, and bilingual/ESL student organizations. It is important to know that having a higher number of recruitment and retention programs increase the likelihood that a greater number of teacher candidates will be enrolled at a particular institution.

Qualitative Data

Many of the interviewed participants stated that their institutions had little trouble in recruiting and retaining candidates because they have found innovative ways to recruit and retain, as well as providing many programs for their students. However, something that was not taken into consideration

in this study nor the questionnaire is the “*fly-by-night* private Alternative Certification programs” as one participant referred to them. These programs have resulted from the “view and attitude of Texas legislators concerning the certification of all teachers and their negative views on the importance of pedagogy classes,” according to another participant. The new dilemma that teacher preparation programs are facing is that, “public schools can prepare their certified teachers to take the exams and they actively encourage them to do so. The public schools seem not to look at universities for certified/endorsed ESL people. Public schools, with their rapid training programs, can now churn out their own ‘highly-qualified’ ESL teachers,” as stated by one administrator. As a result, as another participant expressed, institutions “must show teachers why it is to their advantage to take courses rather than simply scheduling the test.” The problem with certification by test only is that it “will affect children’s learning on a long-term basis.” According to much research evidence “fully qualified teachers, those who are more knowledgeable in subject matter, pedagogy, curriculum development, assessment, and learning theory, are more effective than those who do not possess this knowledge and skill” (Berry, Darling-Hammond, & Sykes, 1999, p. 189). The problem is that most of the under qualified teachers are being placed in low-income schools that serve ELLs and minority students. This situation could lead to under education of the masses.

To aid with the problem of certification by exam only, many institutions are finding novel ways to face this recent issue and are developing “state-of-the art” certification programs with extensive and close collaboration with school districts.

Findings

While the number of language minority students in our schools is increasing the teacher shortage in the area of bilingual and English as a second language is simultaneously rising (NEA, 2002). There are many reasons for this shortage; including low salaries and benefits for educators, strenuous working conditions, the small pool of available educators, inadequate local funding and support, minorities finding careers outside of teaching, unsupportive leadership, low enrollment of bilingual candidates into teaching, financial barriers, and negative views of bilingual education. (AAEE, 2000; Diaz-Ricco & Smith, 1994; Gandara & Maxwell-Jolly, 2000).

Although, the challenge of bilingual education “remains a systematic one at the societal level” as one participant in this study affirms, and it is true that there is a need for “ensuring a stable political environment supportive of bilingual education” as another participant added, it has been demonstrated in this study that bilingual/ESL education is an essential program component for 22 of the 34 participating institutions. These institutions are aware that today more than ever there is a need for bilingual/ESL teachers. However, as pointed out by one participant, “unless the state of Texas and the federal government begins to live up to its constitutional commitment to fund education at more appropriate levels, minority programs such as Bilingual Education/ESL will fade in accordance with current political whims.” External funding is necessary for the success of the programs: there is close relationship between external funding and success in attracting candidates to the bilingual/ESL programs.

It is important to find creative ways to attract such students to the educational arena. The findings of this study and conclusions drawn from these findings suggest that college commitment, receptiveness and responsiveness of faculty, and recruitment and retention strategies play important roles in the recruitment and retention of candidates into the fields of bilingual and ESL education.

Implications

From the findings of the study it may be concluded that in order to sizably increase the number of bilingual/ESL teacher candidates a “one size fits all” approach cannot be used. Teacher preparation programs that approach the shortage of bilingual/ESL teacher candidates solely as a bilingual/ESL program issue cannot be genuinely successful. The results of this study demonstrate that in order to increase the number of bilingual/ESL teacher candidates, teacher preparation programs as a whole need to be committed to the bilingual/ESL program and consider it an essential component of their colleges. The recruitment and retention of bilingual/ESL teacher candidates needs to become a priority. Institutions need to provide effective role models for these students, as well as a receptive and responsive faculty. In addition, the opportunity to attract federal and state funding and receiving a higher budget from the department will bring positive results to the enrollment of bilingual and ESL teacher candidates. Nevertheless, the institutions need to provide multiple avenues for the recruitment and retention of bilingual/ESL teacher candidates. There is a close relationship between the number of recruitment and retention services and the number of students enrolled in the bilingual and ESL programs.

These conclusions are supported by the literature which emphasizes the importance of the college commitment in order to retain minority candidates, in this case bilingual/ESL teacher candidates. Tinto (1993) stressed that the “secret to a successful retention, [it] lies in the willingness of institutions to involve themselves in the social and intellectual development of their students” (p. 6). Haberman (1989) also suggests that universities that are willing to invest the necessary resources in recruiting minority candidates and hiring minority faculty improve their minority enrollment figures. Moreover, Fretwell (1990) claimed that the more competent institutions are in understanding the individual backgrounds and characteristics of their potential students, the better these institutions will be in creating an appropriate match between the minority student and the institution.

It is recommended that institutions of higher education in charge of preparing teacher candidates, especially in the areas of bilingual/ESL education, develop an infrastructure conducive to support, acceptance, and commitment towards linguistic diverse students. Every member of the faculty should have some knowledge of language acquisition, deliver this knowledge to all students in a positive matter, and promote empathy towards second language learners among future educators. Faculty and staff in teacher preparation programs should be held accountable for promoting an environment in where differences are accepted and celebrated. It is important that future teachers be able to function effectively in school districts with diverse student populations; therefore, graduates of teacher education programs must be prepared to effectively teach English language learners.

Recommendations

Until recently, the education of English language learners was a challenge that mostly affected states like California, Texas, Florida, Illinois, Arizona, and New York; this is not today’s reality. Therefore, teacher recruitment and retention in the area of bilingual/ESL education is an increasingly important issue for school systems. However, the issue of recruiting and retaining good bilingual/ESL teachers has rarely been considered by researchers and policy makers, much less the influence of recruitment and retention at the university level.

Due to the growing demand of qualified teachers who can address the needs of English language learners, universities need to embark in a more thoughtful, lasting, and efficient approach to recruit and retain college students in the area of bilingual and ESL education. It is necessary that universities take part in the preparation of qualified bilingual/ESL teachers to assure that the growing population of English language learners learn and perform at high levels. In addition, it is necessary that the federal government take part in the issue of bilingual/ESL teacher shortage by providing incentives to recruit and train teacher candidates into these fields, as they did for math and science educators under the National Defense Act and as they have been doing for the past thirty years for medicine and the military.

For this reason, the dual purpose of this study is to provide administrative leaders of teacher preparation programs a source of knowledge that could be utilized in the development of strategic plans directed towards the recruitment and retention of bilingual/ESL teacher candidates and to inform policymakers of the much needed support and development of successful programs during this critical era of teacher shortage. Based on the review of the literature, research investigation, and the conclusions of this study, the following recommendations should be considered:

Recruitment Recommendations:

1. Make recruitment of bilingual/ESL teacher candidates a priority by using a variety of means for recruitment, including professional organizations, Regional Education Service Centers, high school summer academies, college nights, and “word of mouth;” as well as, developing collaborative programs with local school district and community colleges. In addition, expand recruitment efforts beyond the state of Texas; and most importantly, offer financial assistantships to all bilingual/ESL teacher candidates.
2. Conduct personal outreach for paraprofessionals and in-service teachers. In addition, recruit students who know a second language.
3. Inform all teacher candidates of the job market opportunities for bilingual and ESL teachers.

Retention Recommendations:

1. Endorse college commitment to the success of bilingual and ESL teacher candidates by providing role models for bilingual/ESL teacher candidates, encouraging all faculty in the teacher preparation program to be receptive and responsive to the needs of bilingual/ESL teacher candidates, and to demonstrate a positive attitude towards second language acquisition. It is important for the program to offer a class or classes that will prepare all teacher candidates to work with language minority students and that will expand mainstream teacher candidates’ knowledge of bilingual/ESL programs.
2. Teacher preparation programs should make use of external funding, such as state or federal grants in order to provide financial assistantships to bilingual/ESL teacher candidates and a resource center for bilingual/ESL teacher candidates.
3. Promote a supportive environment in which faculty and students interact professionally and socially through mentorship programs and via an active bilingual/ESL student organization.
4. Create an outstanding learning environment in which the university works closely with public

schools while providing opportunities for teacher candidates to interact with English language learners. In addition, institutions should offer certification exam preparation programs.

Teacher preparation programs need to reflect our changing society to better meet the needs of our schools. Universities must be primed to examine their philosophy, pedagogies, and recruitment/retention practices, in order to address teacher shortages in the areas of bilingual and ESL education. It is time for teacher preparation programs to pay close attention to the disparity of teacher supply. Many teacher preparation programs continue to over produce teachers in fields with little or no demand while schools continue to struggle with finding teachers in areas of high demand. Efforts should be made to channel teacher candidates to areas where they are needed; and nowadays, with the growing population of English language learners, an area of great needs is bilingual and ESL education.

Concluding Statement

Today's schools are becoming more and more diverse. The 21st century is bringing changes to our society, and these are reflected in our schools. We are now living in a global society which has opened the door to a variety of languages and cultures. As a result, demographics of the student population are rapidly changing. Institutions of higher education need to work hand-in-hand with public schools to prepare qualified and effective teachers who can teach all types of students, from mainstream to culturally, linguistic, and socially diverse students.

The future of our nation will be in the hands of our current students. If we under-educate our student population, our nation and its economy will be negatively affected in the long run. As Berry et al. (1999) articulated, "teaching is the profession that shapes America's future. Few other tasks are of greater importance to the nation" (p.224). For this reason it is the duty of teacher preparation programs to train teachers to educate today's students to live in tomorrow's society. The future of our nation will depend on how well our society can compete and survive in a globalized world. It is time that policymakers, institutions of higher education, and society change their views towards bilingualism, and take a positive stand on second language education. What Fishman (1965) expressed twenty years ago is still in extant,

It is high time that the diversity of American existence were recognized and channeled more conscientiously into a creative force, rather than be left as something shameful and to be denied, at worst, or something mysterious and to be patronized, at best. Rethinking our unwritten language policy and our unproclaimed ethnic philosophy in this light may yet bring forth fresh and magnificent fruits. (p. 155)

Teacher preparation programs need to find ground-breaking means to meet classroom diversity and to bring more teacher candidates into the high need disciplines of bilingual and ESL education.

This study has demonstrated the need for proactive teacher recruitment policies in order to better serve the needs of today's schools. It is necessary to create cooperative efforts where many constituents take part. Policy makers and education supporters need to endorse programs that target areas of high need, as well as to engage in policies that will help ameliorate the problem of teacher shortage. School districts need to work hand in hand with teacher preparation programs in order to implement practices that will result in an increased number of well-prepared bilingual/ESL teachers, from

supplying teacher candidates from a pool of in-service teachers and high school students to offering teacher candidates the opportunity to work with school aged children, particularly ELLs, as part of their field experience. In addition, teacher preparation programs must take responsibility and aggressively implement recruitment and retention strategies that will increase the production and retention of teachers in the area of bilingual and ESL education.

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California Legislative Analysts Office (LAO) 2007 -08 Budget Book – Education Analyses, February 21, 2007

This year the Spanish TOPT has been changed to BTLPT (Bilingual Target Language Proficiency Test). It does not only assess oral proficiency but also reading, writing and listening.

VN:R_U [1.9.11_1134]