

A Statewide Initiative to Improve Illinois Early Childhood Teacher Preparation Programs:

*Targeting the Developmental & Educational Needs of
Culturally Marginalized Children*



Aisha Ray, Barbara Bowman and Jana Fleming
Erikson Institute

National Association of Early Childhood Specialists in
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The Developmental & Educational
Needs of Culturally Marginalized
Children (DENCMC) Project
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A broad consensus exists...

- ...among American early childhood educators, advocates, and practitioners that

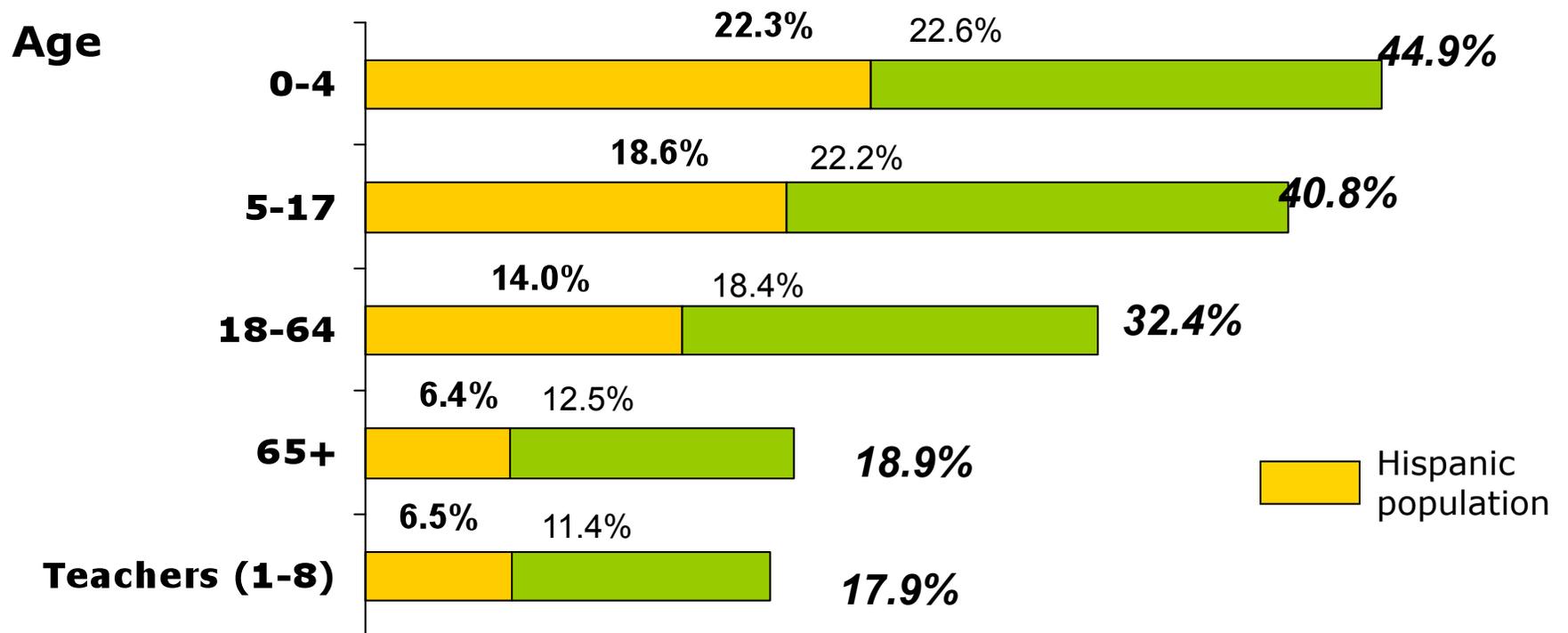
preparing teachers to effectively teach all children including those from so-called 'diverse' backgrounds is one of the most compelling challenges facing early care and education.

Theory, research & consensus documents in the field

1. Development occurs in the context of culture
2. Children's cultural and language identity are essential to their optimal development
3. Children's home culture and language should be used as platforms for teaching and learning
4. Children have a right to the knowledge and skills of power (e.g., literacy, "school English")

Diversity in America:

Population of Color &/or Latino/a by Age



Source: United States Census Bureau, 2005 American Community Survey (age)
Current Populations Services, Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2006 (teachers)

Disparities Apparent in Early Schooling

- Dissimilarities in children's educational attainment appear early (Bondy & Ross, 1998; Bowman, Donovan & Burns, 2001; Knapp & Associates, 1995)
 - Math and vocabulary differences
 - Greater risk of assignment to special education
 - Greater risk of expulsion from preschools—especially boys of color

Research suggests that...

- ...institutions of higher education (IHEs) that teach early childhood teachers are insufficiently preparing them:
 - To effectively educate *all* children
 - To work effectively with families & communities
 - To use children's home cultures, languages, dialects, and competencies as platforms for school learning
 - To be critical reflective practitioners regarding how their own beliefs and biases may influence children's learning and school adjustment

Significantly less attention has been paid to how diversity is addressed by the...

- *...entire organizational infrastructure that defines and even mandates teaching standards and professional preparation*
- It includes an amalgam of entities—
 - Institutions of higher education (IHEs)
 - politicians, policy makers, advocates
 - professional accreditation organizations, and
 - state boards of education

Two National Studies (2006) (supported by the Foundation for Child Development)

- Study 1 examined diversity content in professional requirements in 1/3 or 226 bachelor-degree early childhood education programs in the U. S.
- - On average early childhood teacher preparation (ECTP) programs appear to require 8 semester hours of diversity course work, or 12% of required professional education hours
 - 7% of ECTP programs state that they require a student internship in a diverse setting
- Study 2 found that diversity content is not infused across the competency described in EC teacher standards in ANY state, including Illinois (Ray, Bowman, Robbins, 2006a, 2006b)

The DENCMC Project

- Examines one aspect of the ECTP infrastructure in Illinois
 - Institutions of higher education (IHEs) that prepare teachers to care for and effectively educate young culturally, racially, and linguistically diverse children and children in poverty (CERL 'diverse' children)

Three Sources of Information

1. Professional preparation in 72 IHEs, especially course work and practice experiences for diversity content (*completed*)
2. 67 Faculty in all of Illinois' associate- and bachelor-degree early childhood teacher preparation programs (*completed*)
3. 25 Policy stakeholders—including early childhood leaders and advocates locally and nationally (*in progress*)

The DENCMC Project: 72 IHEs

- We are looking at professional preparation, that is course work and practice experiences, and faculty perspectives on their efforts to prepare early care and education teachers:
 - Associate-degree ECTP programs
 - Bachelor-degree ECTP programs that lead to Type 04 certification
 - Specific course work on “diversity” – DLL’s & second dialect speakers

Policy Interviews

- Interviewed 25 local and national leaders

- Representatives from early education and child development, higher education, & public policy
 - Teacher Educators
 - Practitioners
 - Researchers
 - Illinois State Board of Education Staff
 - Advocates
 - Leaders of national EC organizations

Policy Interviews

- Examining the following issues:
 - Status of policies and practices in ECTP programs to prepare educators to be culturally responsive
 - Supports and resources needed to prepare educators to work with diverse populations
 - Recommendations for policymakers and institutions of higher education

2 questions re IHEs for today's discussion

- Q1. Do professional requirements & program documents convey to pre-service teachers a clear, unambiguous message that their program expects them to master the knowledge and practice skills necessary for optimal developmental and educational outcomes for culturally, ethnically, racially and linguistically 'diverse' children?

Question 2

- How do higher education faculty assess their effectiveness in preparing pre-service teachers to master the knowledge and practice skills necessary for optimal developmental and educational outcomes for culturally, ethnically, racially and linguistically 'diverse' children?

Methods– 72, 2- & 4-Year IHEs

Professional Development Requirements

Examined IHEs websites & catalogs for:

- Course requirements that include a diversity course or courses – title and/or description contain language that clearly indicates course content addresses diversity
- Program description for diversity content
- Internship requirements – diversity placement

Diversity Categories

1. Race
2. Ethnicity
3. Culture
4. Language
5. Immigration status
6. Special needs
7. Social class
8. All children
9. Diversity
10. Minorities
11. Gender
12. Sexual orientation
13. Student learner characteristics
14. Social justice/anti-bias
15. Global community/global citizen
16. At risk
17. Religion
18. Family Characteristics

ECTP Programs' Professional Requirements

- To what extent do associate- & bachelor-degree ECTP programs specifically address & require that pre-service teachers master knowledge & practice competencies related to the developmental & educational needs of culturally, racially, and linguistically diverse children & children in poverty?
 - Course content & program review analysis
 - Interviews with faculty re: culturally, racially, & linguistically diverse children, including ELLs & 2nd dialect speakers, and children in poverty

Associate-degree findings

- 45 Illinois 2-year programs
 - **23%** of 558 required EC courses referenced diversity content & **77%** made no reference to diversity content;
 - **13%** of 45 schools have at least 1 course with Bilingual/ESL content;
 - No courses referenced second dialects; and
 - **20%** of 45 schools referenced diversity in program descriptions.

Bachelor-degree findings

- 27 Illinois 4-year programs
 - **43%** of 616 required EC courses referenced diversity content & **57%** made no reference to diversity content;
 - **30%** of 27 schools have at least 1 course with Bilingual/ESL content (undergraduate level); and
 - **93%** of 27 schools referenced diversity in mission statements.

Bachelor-degree Programs: DLLs/2nd DLs

- We found no coursework that referenced the language development needs of English dialect speakers;
- **89%** (24 of 27) of 4-yr schools have Bilingual/ESL Approval or coursework with Bilingual/ESL content.

Methods– 67, 2- & 4-Year Faculty Perspectives (Preliminary Data-1/5th reporting)

- On-line questionnaire (20 min)
 - program goals re pre-service preparation for diversity
 - Content/knowledge taught
 - Practice skills
 - Assessment of student competence re. diversity
 - Faculty challenges

- Interview (90 min) conducted over the telephone went into greater depth re. goals, challenges, assessment of program strengths re. preparation for diversity

Faculty—Preliminary findings

1/5th reporting

- ❑ 63% of programs do not require student teaching in a diverse site
- ❑ 58% of programs has written goals for student practice with CERL 'diverse' children and children in poverty
- ❑ Do teachers who work with CERL 'diverse' children and children in poverty need different or similar capacities in comparison to teachers working with 'other' children? $M=3.48$ (1 – 5, 5 = very similar)

Faculty—Preliminary findings

1/5th reporting

- Important for faculty to address student difficulties in working with CERL 'diverse' children 3.08 (1-4; 4=very important)
- How intentional is faculty in addressing student difficulties in working with CERL 'diverse' children 3.42 (4=very intentional)
- How well prepared are graduates to teach AA and Latino/-a children 2.58 (1-4; 2=somewhat prepared)
- How well prepared are graduates to teach children who speak dialects of English, such as AAE 2.08

Faculty—Preliminary findings

1/5th reporting

- How well prepared are graduates to teach dual language learners? 1.91 (1-4=very prepared; 1=not prepared at all)
- How satisfied is the faculty re. the job they are doing in preparing students for CERL 'diverse' children? 2.5 (1-4=very satisfied; 2=somewhat satisfied)
- How good a job is the faculty doing in preparing students for CERL 'diverse' children? 2.75 (1-4=very good job; 2=poor job)
- What % of program graduates possess the capacities to be effective educators of CERL 'diverse' children? Average response 26-50 %

Faculty Questionnaire—Preliminary findings

- ❑ 83% report feeling that the Illinois EC teacher standards should clearly define expectations re. CERL diversity
- ❑ 73% report feeling that IL IHEs should explicitly require all teachers to have practice experiences in classrooms with CERL diverse children and children in poverty
- ❑ 76% report feeling that IL IHEs should be required to provide courses on teaching DLLs and ESL courses
- ❑ 63% report feeling that IL State Board of Ed should development an educational endorsement for multicultural early education

Our findings suggest...

- ...that Illinois IHEs insufficiently and unevenly prepare pre-service teachers for culturally, racially, and linguistically diverse children and children in poverty, specifically:
 - Knowledge of the developmental and educational needs of culturally diverse children appears to be insufficiently addressed in many programs.
 - Knowledge of the developmental and educational needs of linguistically diverse children including knowledge of 2nd DLs, DLLs, and ESL content appears to be insufficiently addressed in many programs.
 - Practice expectations that help students develop the necessary skills and competencies with which to meet the needs of diverse children are not required.

Our preliminary findings suggest...

- IL higher education faculty:
 - Address diversity in relation to culture, ethnicity, language, and race
 - Feel they do a better job with children with some characteristics (e.g., poverty) than other children (e.g., DLLs)
 - Do not feel they are doing an adequate job
 - Recognize a need to change policies, standards

Questions

1. Do these findings seem to be consistent with how IHEs in your state are preparing teachers to work with culturally and linguistically diverse children?
3. How can IHEs be encouraged to respond more effectively to the imperative to create culturally competent and responsive early childhood educators?

Questions continued...

3. What kinds of initiatives or reforms are needed to ensure teachers are adequately prepared to serve young culturally, linguistically and racially diverse children?
5. Who is responsible for making these changes happen? Who needs to be included in the discussions?



Aisha Ray, Ph.D.
(312) 893 7137
aray@erikson.edu

Jana Fleming, Ph.D.
(312) 893 7242
janaflaming@erikson.edu

Erikson Institute