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Accreditation bodies for institutions of higher education like the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) and Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) require colleges and universities to create campus climates and experiences for students that foster diversity (NCATE 2002, 29-32; WASC 2009, 151). In particular, schools of education have the responsibility to prepare K-12 educators to support diverse learning communities (Gay and Kirkland 2003, 181). This article describes a self-study conducted by the authors for the School of Education at Azusa Pacific University, a private, faith-based institution, on faculty and student perceptions about diversity as the School prepared for NCATE reaccreditation.[1] To that end, this article is divided into four sections. The first provides the background and rationale for the self-study which is followed by a description of the research methods used in the second section. In the third section, results of the analysis are presented. The article ends with concluding observations and recommendations.

Background and Rationale for the Self-Study

Schools of education face the challenge of preparing educators to work effectively with an increasingly diverse student population and to ensure that all student meet state and federal education standards. The percentage of public school students in the United States who are racial or ethnic minorities has increased from 32% in 1988 to 45% in 2008, with the percentage of Hispanic enrollments doubling over this time period (U.S. Department of Education 2010, 31). In California, the state in which Azusa Pacific University is located, students of color made up approximately 68.7% of the student population in the 2008-2009 school year while 70.1% of the teachers were white.[2] Additionally, 53.8% of students in public schools in California were eligible for free or reduced-price meals.[3] According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2008), by 2023 over 50% of children in the United States are projected to be ethnic or racial minorities. In California and across the nation, the academic achievement of many of these students remains below their white peers on multiple measures, including grades, standardized test scores, rates of graduation, and percentages entering college (Peske and Haycock 2006, 1-20).[4]

In 2004, a report by the National Collaborative on Diversity in the Teaching Force, recommended that future teachers be guided through an understanding of the historical, social, and political underpinnings of how disenfranchised groups have been systematically excluded from receiving a fair and equitable education. An understanding of the impact of these forces on marginalized students provides the foundation for what scholars refer to as culturally responsive, culturally relevant, or culturally proficient teaching (Banks and Banks 2009, 382-383; Freire 2002, 57-74; Gay 2010, 22-76; hooks 1994, 13-44; Murrell 1998, 78; Nieto and Bode 2007, 145-149). For example, Ladson-Billings (2001) states that cultural competence is present in classrooms where "...the teacher understands culture and its role in education, the teacher takes responsibility for learning about students' culture and community, the teacher uses students' culture as a basis for learning, and the teacher promotes a flexible use of students' local and global culture" (p. 98).

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Educators who are successful in teaching students of color and students in poverty realize that learning is a social activity that takes place in a meaningful context and that learning facilitates students' ability to participate in their communities. These educators create a system of pedagogical practice that includes engagement; self-exploration related to social justice; and the students' background, community building, meaning-making activities, and inquiry facilitation (Delpit and Dowdy 2002, vii-xxvi; Murrell 2002, 17). Faculty in schools of education need to prepare educators to demonstrate such practices as they relate to curriculum content and instructional methodology, classroom climate, student-teacher relationships, and performance assessments. Preservice educators must be guided into the transformative work of using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of references, and performance styles of diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant to and effective for them (Gay 2010, 22-76). In other words, faculty should lead students in a critical analysis of the political agendas that perpetuate biases that privilege some and disadvantage others.

If higher education faculty do not address issues of diversity in their own classrooms, they contribute to institutional climates that do not respect student diversity (Hurtado and Milem 2009, 9-28, 97-98). Results from several studies on university climate indicate that white faculty and students typically perceive that diversity is being addressed on their respective campuses while faculty and students of color, on the other hand, do not (Dillinger and Landrum 2002, 68-74; Modestou and Paetzold 2005, 1-25; Georgetown University 2005, 1-5; Talbani and Dey 2008, 1-16; Williams and Clowney 2007). Instead, faculty and students of color often report feeling invisible and isolated, and experience incidents of prejudice and discrimination. In addition, some white professors may have lower expectations for students of color and do not always ask these students to participate in class discussions. Faculty of color are at times perceived as lacking academic rigor and overlooked for promotions. They may receive lower student evaluations, especially when they teach diversity courses involving sensitive issues. In particular, professors who teach diversity from an anti-racist and feminist perspective may encounter resistance from white students (Huston 2005; Spencer 2008, 253-256; Williams and Evans-Winters 2005).

Given the above, schools and colleges of education need to conduct ongoing, critical self-assessments regarding diversity; and faculty should be provided with professional development opportunities and the resources that will enable them to prepare K-12 teachers to work with a diverse student population (Darling-Hammond and Baratz-Snowden 2005, 21-23; Haberman 2005).

Research Methods

This self-study consisted of analysis of responses to open-ended questions posed in online surveys and semi-structured focus groups of School of Education students and faculty. Below we describe the development and administration of the surveys; selection of participants and conduct of focus groups; and mode of qualitative data analysis.

Online Surveys

Online surveys were developed by the authors and piloted with 20 students and 10 faculty members. Based upon feedback received, survey questions were revised and then electronically sent to all graduate students and faculty in the School of Education.[5] Participants were also asked to self-report gender and ethnicity/race. Response

time to the open-ended questions was estimated at approximately 15 minutes.

Online student survey. The online student survey consisted of three open-ended questions:

1. Please explain whether or not the academic standards have changed in the School of Education as a result of a focus on diversity and, if so, how?
2. Please describe or explain any differences you have observed in your graduate program classes among students based on race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, gender, exceptionality, language, religion, sexual orientation, and geographical region in:
   - participation in class discussions
   - seating arrangement
   - with whom the students collaborate voluntarily.
3. Please tell us what you think the School of Education and/or your specific graduate education program could do to improve the preparation of K-12 educators to work with diverse populations.

Online faculty survey. The online faculty survey also consisted of three open-ended questions, as follows:

1. Please explain any experience you have had with diversity.
2. Please describe or explain any differences you have observed in your classes among students based on race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, gender, exceptionality, language, religion, sexual orientation, and geographical region in:
   - academic outcomes
   - participation in class discussions
   - quality of assignments submitted
   - where students sit in the room
   - with whom the students collaborate voluntarily.
3. Please tell us what you think the School of Education could do to improve the preparation of K-12 educators to work with diverse populations.

Focus Groups

Separate semi-structured focus group interviews for students and faculty, comprised of 5 to 12 participants, were conducted with prompts provided to elicit responses regarding their perceptions of the university climate toward diversity and experiences in graduate classes with diversity issues. The authors asked program directors within the School of Education departments to randomly select faculty to participate in focus groups at the end of a department meeting and to randomly select students for participation before or after an evening class session. Those selected were contacted by email or phone one to two weeks prior to focus group meetings and notified that participation was voluntary.

The authors used an inquiry process for beginning and sustaining conversations among focus group participants (Corbin and Strauss 2008, 65-86) where they asked participants to discuss: (a) the definition of diversity; (b) the climate of the university, school, and participants' programs using the NCATE definition of diversity; (c) the support provided to faculty in preparing students to effectively meet the educational needs of diverse K-12 student populations; and (d) ideas for better preparation of students to work with diverse K-12 populations. As participants responded to the prompts, the authors

asked them to clarify and to go deeper into the meaning of their responses. Focus group conversations were recorded and transcribed.

Mode of Qualitative Data Analysis

In order to conduct a critical self-assessment of the school's climate related to diversity and student preparation to work with diverse K-12 students, only data reflecting perceptions from respondents that revealed areas of concern were coded and analyzed. Content analysis utilizing a constant-comparison method of the four qualitative data sets (student survey responses, faculty survey responses, student focus group results, faculty focus group results) was used as the authors agreed to participate in both an independent and collaborative process for interpreting different levels of emerging category themes (Corbin and Strauss 2008, 65-86).

First, the authors read and coded the data independently, making separate initial analyses of tentative open-coding patterns. Then they met to discuss the data collaboratively with one session for each source of data. At the final meeting in this step, the authors reviewed and reflected on the four independent data sets in order to agree upon one listing of open-coding patterns for each data source.

Next, the authors continued the collaborative process of reviewing, reflecting, and reconfirming as they grouped the open-coding patterns around more salient, second-level axial-coding themes. For the third and final step in the qualitative analysis process, the authors reviewed the listing of themes from axial coding with an eye to distinguishing larger, global themes. Using the axial themes, the authors were guided by the following question: What best characterizes the more global nature of the students' and faculty members' perceptions of the climate at the university regarding diversity and the preparation of students to work with diverse K-12 students? Triangulation was accomplished by comparing the four separate sources of data (Huberman and Miles 2002, 1-12).

Analysis of Results

The School of Education enrolls 2,012 students (59% white and 72% female); and employs 403 faculty (63% white and 60% female), of which 60 are full-time and 343 are adjuncts. The online survey was completed by 191 students for a response rate of 9.5%. Respondents self-reported as 78% female, 22% male, 60% white, 20% Latino/a, 7% Asian-American/Pacific Islander, 6% African-American, 5% biracial, and 2% other. Female students were over-represented, and hence males were under-represented in the respondent pool. With regard to faculty, 178 completed the online survey. Of these, 48 were full-time faculty, for a response rate of 80%, and 130 adjunct faculty, a response rate of 38%. The lower response rate of adjunct faculty might be expected because hypothetically they may feel less invested in the School than full-time faculty. Faculty respondents self-reported as 59% female, 41% male, 75% white, 11% Latino/a, 4% African-American, 4% Asian-American/Pacific Islander, 0% biracial, and 6% other. The faculty response pool was considerably less racially/ethnically diverse than the School's faculty population.

Eighteen student focus groups were conducted with a total of 164 participants. According to self reports, participants were 78% female, 22% male, 52% white, 30% Latino/a, 3% African-American, 7% Asian-American/Pacific Islander, and 8% biracial. Compared to the School's student population, female students were over-represented, and hence males were under-represented in the focus groups, while white students were under-represented. Five faculty focus groups were conducted with a total of 36 participants. According to self

reports, participants were 61% female, 39% male, 69% white, 11% Latino/a, 8% Asian-American/Pacific Islander, 6% African-American, 3% biracial, and 3% other. Compared to the School's faculty population, focus group participants as a whole were somewhat less racially/ethnically diverse.

Results of the Qualitative Data Analysis

Emerging open patterns and axial themes. Qualitative data from the four sources were coded first for emerging open patterns and then for axial themes. Open coding yielded 14 patterns from student survey responses; 19 from faculty survey responses; 19 from student focus group results; and 12 from faculty member focus group results. (Open patterns are identified by an open circle [○] in the Table.) Using these patterns, 11 axial themes were identified, as follows:

- Enhance curriculum and instruction;
- Include diversity dialogue in classes;
- Add more and diverse field experiences;
- Challenge student beliefs;
- Support graduate students in writing;
- Increase and support student diversity;
- Integrate and accept religious diversity;
- Recruit and retain diverse faculty;
- Challenge faculty beliefs and provide support;
- Address diversity online;
- Address sexual orientation.

Axial themes are identified by a diamond [♦] in the Table.[6]

Student survey responses identified with 8 of the 11 axial themes, excluding: Include diversity dialogue in class; support student graduate students in writing; and integrate and accept religious diversity. Student focus group results identified with 9 axial themes, excluding: Include diversity dialogue in classes; and challenge faculty beliefs and provide support. In contrast, faculty survey responses identified with all axial themes except one: Integrate and accept religious diversity. Faculty focus group results differed substantially whereby only 6 of the 11 axial themes were supported. Those excluded were: Include diversity dialogue in classes; add more and diverse field experiences; increase and support student diversity; integrate and accept religious diversity; and recruit and retain diverse faculty. Only 4 axial themes exhibited consensus across the four qualitative data sources: Enhance curriculum and instruction; challenge student beliefs; address diversity online; and address sexual orientation. At the other end of the continuum, only faculty survey results supported "Include diversity dialogue in classes," while only student focus group results supported "Integrate and accept religious diversity."

Global themes and descriptors. Three distinctive global themes emerged from analysis of the qualitative data: Knowledge; skills; and dispositions.[7] This analysis included assigning descriptors to each global theme as indicated below:

- Faculty and student knowledge needs to be enhanced by:
  - Aligning theory and clinical experiences;
  - Infusing multicultural/diversity issues throughout the curriculum;
  - Including in the curriculum ways to better prepare educators to serve K-12 students and their families with diverse sexual orientations;
  - Providing learning opportunities and resources, including literature, to support educators to serve diverse populations.

Table
Axial (♦) Themes and Open (○) Patterns in Student and Faculty Responses

Survey Results		Focus Group Results	
Student	*Faculty*	*Student*	*Faculty*
♦ **Enhance curriculum and instruction**			
○ Align theory with practice. ○ Additional emphasis on ELL, diverse families, resiliency, special needs. ○ Use guest speakers, diversity experts.	○ Infuse diversity in every course.	○ Incorporate diversity issues in curriculum. ○ Use guest speakers, diversity experts. ○ More training on ELL, low SES, exceptionalities, and gender differences. ○ Dealing with colleagues' biases in K-12 schools. ○ Faculty should model diversity for students.	○ Use children and adolescent literature which addresses diversity.
♦ **Include diversity dialogue in classes**			
	○ Diversity in syllabi does not ensure faculty discuss K-12 diversity issues.		
♦ **Add more and diverse field experiences**			
○ More clinical experiences in diverse K-12 schools. ○ More fieldwork opportunities with special education, low SES, ELL and racial/ethnic minorities.	○ Fieldwork, home visits, service learning.	○ Students need more meaningful clinical experiences to become culturally competent with students from lower SES, ELL, special education, & racial/ethnic minorities. ○ Clinical experiences should include work with diverse families.	
♦ **Challenge student beliefs**			
○ Some graduate students are "color blind" and have stereotypes and biases. ○ Increase classroom collaboration with diverse grouping.	○ Many students from white middle class backgrounds hold biases about diversity.	○ Students need understanding of diversity including difference between race and ethnicity. ○ Some students are biased toward ELL, African Americans, and academic ability of diverse students.	○ Many students come from a high SES and do not understand or relate to K-12 students in poverty.
♦ **Support graduate students in writing**			
	○ Provide writing support for graduate students.	○ Provide writing support for TPAs and research paper.	○ Provide writing support for new and continuing students especially ELL.
♦ **Increase and support student diversity**			
○ Majority of students are white females.	○ Recruit and retain diverse students. ○ Increase financial aid for low SES students.	○ Lack of African-American, low SES, and male students. ○ Students from diverse backgrounds need more financial and academic support. ○ Support of special education students at the graduate level.	

Note: ELL = English language learners; SES = Socioeconomic status; and TPA = Teaching Performance Assessment (State teaching credential assessments).

Table (continued)
Axial (♦) Themes and Open (○) Patterns in Student and Faculty Responses

Survey Results		Focus Group Results	
Student	**Faculty**	**Student**	**Faculty**
♦ **Integrate and accept religious diversity**			
		○ Dispel assumptions and stereotypes about religion ○ Consistent approach regarding faith integration regarding faculty and students expectations. ○ Training on church and state separation.	
♦ **Recruit and retain diverse faculty**			
○ The number of diverse faculty with experiences in diverse communities (including lower SES).	○ Emphasis on recruitment and retention of diverse faculty and staff.	○ Faculty need recent experience with K-12 diverse schools.	
♦ **Challenge faculty beliefs and provide support**			
○ Faculty need to model strategies to support ALL diverse students in K-12	○ Faculty need broader understanding of diversity. ○ Some faculty have negative perceptions of students based on race and class (bell curve and deficit theory issues). ○ Faculty should engage in diversity dialogue. ○ Some faculty believe rigor and standards are lowered with diverse students. ○ Some faculty hold biases about students who speak with accents or are ELL.		○ Faculty need development on working with diverse individuals: SES, age, experience, and special needs. ○ Increase faculty collaboration and professional development on issues of diversity. ○ Faculty should share and have diversity resources.
♦ **Address diversity online**			
○ Some students believe that diversity issues of race, ethnicity, gender, or SES disappear in online platforms.	○ Some faculty believe issues of diversity do not exist nor are important online.	○ Some students claim differences are erased online.	○ Differences among students not apparent online according to some faculty.
♦ **Address sexual orientation**			
○ Lack of clarity on university policy regarding sexual orientation. ○ Sexual orientation needs to be addressed in curriculum and instruction. ○ Support K-12 students and family members with diverse sexual orientations.	○ There is uncertainty as to the attitude toward teaching about sexual orientation at the university. ○ A lack of comfort in discussing issues of sexual orientation. ○ All faculty need to have more meaningful interactions with diverse populations. ○ Need faculty development in teaching about diversity. ○ Faculty need training in discourse patterns.	○ Students need information on serving K-12 students and parents with diverse sexual orientations.	○ Some faculty do not consider sexual orientation as part of diversity. ○ Some faculty are biased against individuals with diverse sexual orientation. ○ Ambiguity exists with the faculty regarding what can/should be taught to students. ○ Curriculum and instruction should include diverse sexual orientations. ○ Faculty need support and resources on sexual orientation.

Note: ELL = English language learners; SES = Socioeconomic status; and TPA = Teaching Performance Assessment (State teaching credential assessments).

- Faculty and students need to develop skills in:
  - Facilitating dialogue on issues of diversity;
  - Modeling and utilizing a wide variety of instructional strategies to meet the needs of all students;
  - Communicating (written and verbal) with and about diverse groups of K-12 students and their families who are English language learner, low income, racial/ethnic minorities, and/or in urban settings, and have disabilities or diverse sexual orientations.
- Faculty and students need to acknowledge biases and develop perceptions and beliefs that work towards:
  - Eliminating negative stereotypes about students who differ from the dominant culture including differences in race, class, language, and sexual orientation (bell curve and deficit model theories);
  - Challenging the color blind theory that refuses to acknowledge differences;
  - Creating a climate conducive to diversity conversations particularly on sensitive topics such as sexual orientation;
  - Dispelling the myth that online teaching and learning actually erases the need to address issues of diversity;
  - Recruiting and retaining faculty and students that reflect the diverse communities that the university serves.

Overall, while student and faculty responses indicated awareness of and concerns about diversity, the level of interest varied across axial themes.

Conclusions and Recommendations

This article described a self-study conducted by the authors for the School of Education at Azusa Pacific University, a private, faith-based institution, on faculty and student perceptions about diversity as the School prepared for NCATE re-accreditation. NCATE's definition of diversity in Standard 4 provided the foundation for the study: "Differences among groups of people and individuals based on ethnicity, race, socioeconomic status, gender, exceptionalities, language, religion, sexual orientation, and geographical area" (p. 53). To engage School of Education faculty and students in the self study, the authors used a qualitative approach that encompassed online surveys and face-to-face focus group interviews.

Several themes emerged from the coding of the qualitative data. Students and faculty shared a strong interest in enhancing curriculum and instruction around diversity with concrete examples like readings; guest speakers; fieldwork; clinical experiences; home visits; and in-class dialogue. Interestingly, they noted that there needed to be a recognition of student and faculty diversity in online courses. Both groups saw the need for greater student and faculty diversity in the School along with recruitment, retention, and support efforts. They also agreed that both students and faculty must be open to challenging their own beliefs about diversity, e.g. biases and stereotypes related to race/ethnicity and socioeconomic status. In student focus groups, participants noted a need for accepting and integrating religious diversity. Finally, both student and faculty acknowledged a need to address sexual orientation, for example, in coursework and curriculum so that students are prepared to deal with this aspect of diversity in their careers in K-12 education. In fact, many faculty participants in focus groups said they were torn between NCATE

expectations of including sexual orientation in the curriculum and in classroom discussions and the university's faith-based position which accepts only heterosexuality.[8] The authors synthesized these eleven themes into three global themes that addressed the knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed by faculty to address diversity within the School of Education and by students to become successful educators.

The analysis of results did indicate some limitations to the generalizability of the results. Response rates for student surveys were low as were those for adjunct faculty. This was balanced, to some extent, by the large number of student focus groups convened. At the same time, the representation of respondents and participants along gender and racial dimensions varied to some extent with that found in the School of Education. Nonetheless, this initial self-study laid important groundwork for the School as it continues the process of reflection and self-assessment on diversity issues into the future.

Endnotes

[1] The definition for diversity provided in the NCATE standards was used in the study: "Differences among groups of people and individuals based on ethnicity, race, socioeconomic status, gender, exceptionalities, language, religion, sexual orientation, and geographical area" (NCATE 2002, 53).

[2] Calculated from the DataQuest database of the California Department of Education. http://data1.cde.ca.gov/dataquest/dataquest.asp.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Note that the School of Education has only graduate programs.

[6] The identification of axial themes was based on the weight and gravity assigned to them by the authors rather than a minimum or set number of related, open-coding patterns.

[7] The research team noted a parallel between the study findings and the three NCATE focus areas.

[8] See, Institutional standards, Azusa Pacific University, http://www.apu.edu/about/pdfs/Institutional_Values_Brochure.pdf.

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