Parental Involvement in Educating the Linguistically Disadvantaged Children: Major Issues and Challenges

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Abstract

The different ways in which young children learn a second language are influenced by various factors, including culture, particularly the status of one's culture, language, and community within the larger social setting. It is critical to distinguish among children who are members of a minority ethno-linguistic group (minority language children) against a majority ethno-linguistic group (majority language children). Equally important is to differentiate among those within each group who are learning bilingually from infancy versus those who have learned a single mother tongue and are learning a second or additional language later in childhood. The focus of this paper is on young minority language children who learn a mother tongue that is different from the dominant or majority language in their broader social world. Indigenous children who, in many cases, are not learning the mother tongue of their ancestors as L1 are also given attention. In discussions of mother tongue education, indigenous children and other groups who have learned the language of the dominant culture rather than learning their 'heritage mother tongue' at home are a unique population. The heritage mother tongue that these children have may or may not be spoken by anyone in their family or community. But their family may wish them to learn the language through preschool or primary school programmes. A number of special challenges and needs are posed by these special circumstances which involve language recovery. To promote heritage mother tongue-based bilingual education in the world, some of the most promising early childhood and primary school programmes have been designed.

Keywords*: minority and majority language children, indigenous children, heritage mother tongue, language recovery, mother tongue-based bilingual education.*

Introduction

The focus of sociological attention has long been the educational disadvantage suffered by children from working class families. Traditionally, the focus was on promoting educational reforms such as the universal provision of free and compulsory education as the reasons for this disadvantage have been taken as being fairly obvious. The problem to be solved was the wastage of working class talent, rather than social class differentials in educational attainment per se (Lindsay, 1926). According to the evidence available, absolute differences in rates of educational participation between the classes have been reduced by educational reforms (Jonsson and Mills, 1993a; Jonsson and Mills, 1993b; Hellevik, 1997). However, despite these reforms, it seems that the association between social class and educational attainment has remained intact (Halsey et al., 1980; Shavit and Blossfeld, 1993). The failure of educational reforms to eradicate the link between social class and educational attainment has led sociologists to focus on the question of why this association exists.

A natural consequence of the failure of educational reforms to dramatically alter the association between social class and educational outcomes is the emergence of "culturalist" approaches. It may be fruitful to look to cultural rather than (or perhaps, as well as) economic differences between the classes to explain class inequalities in educational attainment if the lifting of economic barriers to educational participation did not eradicate social class differences in educational outcomes.

One cultural difference that has been invoked to explain the social class differential in educational attainment is that of language. Bernstein focuses on class differences in language to explain working class educational under-achievement. According to him, middle class people have access to an "elaborated" code whereas working class people have access to only a "restricted" language code. In the restricted code "The meanings are likely to be concrete, descriptive or narrative rather than analytical or abstract" (Bernstein, 1973, p. 128). The school is based on the elaborated code, he claims, in that it

transmits "de-contextualised" and "universalistic" meanings. Thus, due to the gap between their code, and the code of the school, the working class students are placed at a disadvantage.

The observation that the middle-class child often enjoys cultural as well as economic advantages is not new. An acceptance of "cultural reproduction" theory need not lead us into this insight as such. The resources associated with the home have been divided into "material" and "cultural" categories by Floud et. al. (Floud et al., 1956). Parents' aspirations and preferences for the child's education, parents' knowledge of the selection procedures of the grammar schools, parents' visits to the child's school, library membership and newspapers and magazines comprise their measure of cultural resources. According to Bourdieu, the children of the "dominant class" enter the educational system already well prepared to succeed within it and hence they are crucially advantaged over the children of subordinate classes. A clear continuity exists between the culture of the home and that of the school in the case of these children. Neither the content of what they are taught (syllabus) nor the manner in which they are taught (pedagogy) are likely to appear strange to them as these children will share a common mode of speech, style of social interaction and aesthetic orientation with their teachers.

On the other hand, the school will represent an alien and indeed a hostile environment – a cultural and social world, set apart from that of their families and communities, for children from other class backgrounds, and especially for those of working class or peasant origins, and one in which they are likely to feel out of place. Thus, while children from less advantaged class backgrounds will find difficulties, and probably increasing difficulties,- of adjustment, due to an interplay between the influences of home and school, the children of the dominant class will progressively benefit from the education system. The disadvantaged children then, other than in a few special cases, either because they are excluded by inadequate performance or because they in effect exclude themselves, fail to reach the higher levels of the educational system.

What do students need to know if they are to be constructed as effective learners? This question provides the stimulus where the question is rephrased to: "What do students need to know in order to operate in a manner which is acceptable in the classroom?" A question like this needs to be extended to incorporate questions about the consequences of participation in the classroom as it is not without political implications. It is widely recognised that success in school is not random, but rather falls into quite distinct patterns whereby students from certain social groups are more likely to be successful than others. The focus here lies in the examination of why students from socially disadvantaged backgrounds are less likely to succeed in school than their middle-class peers. As noted by Lemke (1990), the argument could draw on the classroom interaction patterns in which students must be conversant to be able to participate effectively. This knowledge can be transferred later to academic success.

Research on Parental Involvement

Valdés (1996) described the research on parent involvement as research:

> 'on parents and their ability to "support" their children's education... In general, this research takes the perspective that at-risk children do poorly in school because of their parents' beliefs and behaviors. Non-mainstream parents either do not have the "right" attitudes toward the value of education; or they do not prepare their children well for school or they are not sufficiently involved in their children's education' (p. 17).

Descriptions of parental involvement include a wide variety of parental behaviours, including participation in school activities, communicating with teachers, and school-related rules imposed by parents at home (Fan and Chen, 1999); parents' communication about school, checking homework, expectations for academic success, encouragement about reading, participation in school functions, parenting style and other components (Jeynes, 2005); parents visiting the school, attending parent-teacher conferences, volunteering, participating in school events, at-home discussions of educational topics, assistance with homework and time management (Lee and Bowen, 2006); helping with homework and projects at home, knowing what the child was learning in school and helping the child in other areas (Drummond and Stipek, 2004). Other types of parental involvement identified in the literature include teaching children the alphabet and reading to them before they enter school, attendance at school events, complying with teachers' requests to work with students at home (Lareau, 1987); and parental expectations for their children's educational achievement (Fan and Chen, 1999).

Joyce Epstein and her colleagues (Sanders, Simon, Salinas, Jansorn, and Van Voorhis, 2002)

identified six types of parental involvement: a) parenting, which includes supporting, nurturing, and child rearing; b) communicating, which includes relating, reviewing and overseeing; c) volunteering, which includes supervising and fostering; d) learning at home, which includes managing, recognising, and rewarding; e) decision making, which includes contributing, considering, and judging; and f) collaborating with the community, which includes sharing and giving.

This model was intended to increase the "sociocultural congruency" between home and school as described by Delgado-Gaitán (1991). Parents became better advocates for their children as they learned about the expectations of the school. However, there was no mechanism to recognise, value, or incorporate the parents' social capital or "funds of knowledge" to empower parents and families to participate and support their children's success in school. Funds of knowledge referred to the "historically accumulated and culturally developed bodies of knowledge and skills essential for household or individual functioning and well-being" (Moll, et al. 1992) and which may contrast sharply with the knowledge and skills valued in the classroom. Children's interests or cultural knowledge were not recognised by teachers or incorporated into academic learning, and a social relationship of reciprocity was not developed between families and schools.

Parental involvement refers to a myriad of behaviours and attitudes which support the agenda of the school. Schools may assume that parents are taking an active role in their child's education but there is often a cultural gap for minority parents who are unfamiliar with the educational system and who lack the resources to gain knowledge and then successfully navigate the system. In addition, there is a consistent lack of a mechanism for incorporating parents' input into the partnership. Instead, the partnership is engineered by the school to promote the school's agenda, and no reciprocity is developed between families and schools. The cultural perspectives of students and families are largely ignored, and middle-class mainstream perspectives continue to be highly valued in the schools. Instead of continuing to push their own agenda, schools need to incorporate parent input into the partnership and build on the strengths of the community.

Reay described how middle-class parents, who had experienced success at school, were more self-confident and much more skilled in asserting their opinions where there were "disagreements or tension between home and school, displaying certainty, self-assurance and an ability to counter opposing viewpoints, all aspects of cultural capital" (p. 77). In contrast, the working-class mothers were doubtful and anxious in their interactions with school staff, and their approach was apologetic and tentative. Working class mothers and middle-class mothers also viewed their roles differently. Middle-class mothers saw themselves in a supportive role, and working-class mothers saw their role as compensatory. The middle-class mothers had more options due to their greater affluence, knowledge of the educational system and self-confidence. Middle-class mothers had a greater sense of efficacy in home-school interactions and felt empowered to intervene in their children's education. On the other hand, working-class often felt incompetent, uncertain, and without a sense of entitlement to advocate effectively for their children which most often resulted in educational failures. Working-class mothers questioned their own stance and were much more timid and hesitant to express legitimate concerns than middle-class mothers.

Bazron, Osher and Fleishman (2005) referred to negative results from cultural disconnects, and the lack of a mechanism for schools to respond to the cultural needs of the students. Their suggestion was to "Help parents gain the skills necessary to negotiate the education system and knowledge of the norms of behaviour that govern schools" (Briscoe, Smith, and McClain, 2003). When parents do not know how to negotiate the system, they might be less likely to try to do so on behalf of their child, or feel they lack the knowledge to support their child's success in school (p. 83).

In a similar vein, Schecter and Bayley (2002) described fundamental assumptions of schools regarding parent involvement and the disconnect that occurred when parents not only lacked the necessary knowledge to support a child's academic activities, but also lacked the resources that would allow them to acquire this knowledge. Although the relationship between parent involvement and student achievement may have been influenced by the types of activities parents engaged in within the school and at home, the cultural resources they could activate and transmit to their children had a more significant effect. When these cultural resources were aligned with the cultural and linguistic repertoires on which school learning was built, students were more successful. When parents understood and were able to negotiate the school system, they also

became more effective advocates for their children and their learning.

Schools reach to parents by using “bridging strategies”. Parents and students will benefit when the bridges provide a venue for two-way communication. Schools must be responsive to the strengths and the needs of the communities they serve, just as parents should be asked to be responsive to the needs of schools. Delgado-Gaitán (1991) described how people from different social classes relate differently to schools, with middle class families and schools resulting in the closest match. Ethnically diverse families, often isolated from school culture, may not possess the cultural resources necessary to successfully “play the school hand” and participate in their child’s education and/or advocate for their child.

Conventional school activities institutionalised to involve parents in limited ways tended to relegate all the power to the institution and usually ignored the needs of groups, particularly those with a different language who were unfamiliar with the school’s expectations (Delgado Gaitán, 1991, p. 43). Lamont and Lareau (1988) described how children from the dominant class come to school with the skills and knowledge they need to successfully “negotiate their educational experience” while students from other groups had to acquire these middle and upper-middle “social, linguistic, and cultural competencies” once they are in school (p. 155).

Similarly, Edwards and Warin (1999) described the relationship between home-school as “colonisation of the home by the school,” and not collaboration. They also warned that “even the best intentioned colonials are eventually rejected” (p. 337). Middle-class children and families possessed the resources including language and behavioural norms that for the most part, were the same as those possessed by teachers, and therefore met their cultural expectations, resulting in higher degrees of success.

Zentella (2005) described the work of Heath, and noted that teachers were more successful in imparting literacy skills to their students when they understood that there were many ways in which parents could teach their children and modified classroom culture to accommodate students. In spite of this, however, “local schools and nationwide public service announcements continually urge parents to adopt the schools’ literate behaviours, as if that would guarantee success” (p. 20). According to Lareau and Horvat (1999) the social setting of mainstream public schools is mainstream culture. Other cultures are not valued in this setting, which puts parents of other ethnicities at a disadvantage.

Parental Influences on Mother Tongue Acquisition and Maintenance

The strongest influence on children’s first language acquisition in the early years is by parents and other primary caregivers. Children’s development of language skills, language socialisation, perceptions of the value of L1, and maintenance of L1 are influenced by these ‘first teachers’ attitudes, goals, and behaviours related to their child’s initial language development influence. Among the first investigators to characterise parents’ language attitudes as ‘instrumental’ and ‘integrative’ were Gardner and Lambert (1972). The focus of *instrumental language attitude* is on pragmatic, utilitarian goals, such as whether one or another language will contribute to personal success, security, or status. On the other hand, an *integrative language attitude* emphasises on social considerations, such as the desire to be accepted into the cultural group that uses a language or to elaborate an identity associated with the language.

According to Baker (1992) parents’ stated attitudes about their child’s language acquisition do not necessarily match their language behaviour with the child as relationships between attitudes and behaviours are always complex. Whereas most minority language parents are eager to see their children succeed in school and the broader society, at the same time, they also want their children to learn L1 and to be proud of their cultural heritage. Hence, it seems that parents with these dual language goals, rather than focusing on their expressed desire for mother tongue learning, tend to act more on promoting second language learning as suggested by the few empirical studies that have been reported. This behaviour results in the weakening of L1 in favour of L2 which in turn affects children’s dual language behaviours when they sense that the home language is less important. Thus, just as children are learning their first words, *subtractive bilingualism* can begin at a very early age. Possible differences between parents’ expressed desires and their actual language behaviours with their infants and young children need to be considered by the advocates of mother tongue acquisition in the early years.

Four types of parental language and culture orientation that have been identified by Kemppainen, Ferrin, Ward, and Hite (2004) are mother tongue-centric, bicultural, multicultural, and majority language-centric. They describe a correlation between these positions and parents’

choice of language school for their children. As a matter of fact, in many situations, parents have no choice about the language of instruction. De Houwer's (1999) conceptualisation of 'impact belief' is helpful in these situations which is described as the extent to which parents believe they have direct control over their children's language use. To provide particular language experiences and environments for their children, and to reward particular language behaviours, active efforts are made by parents with strong impact beliefs. A passive approach to their children's early language experiences is taken by parents with weak impact beliefs, seeing the wider environment as determining whether children acquire one or another language.

The manner in which the speed and quality of children's acquisition of L2 is affected by minority language parents' attitudes towards the majority language was described by Li (1999). According to her, three conditions that may affect young children's majority language learning when one or both parents speak a minority language are: continued use and development in L1 (extensive *family talk* covering more than household topics); supportive parental attitudes towards both languages; and active parental commitment and involvement in the child's linguistic progress (daily conversations, explanations, family talk and joint activities).

The important contributions of parents' home language behaviour in supporting preschool children's first language development was underscored by Lao's (2004) study of English-Chinese bilingual pre-schoolers. She firmly believes that mother tongue development cannot be achieved without a strong commitment from parents. According to her, the provision of meaningful print-rich home environments, guidance from adults with high levels of literacy, partnerships with schools, and support for parents who need to improve their own oral and written skills in L1 are necessary to enable them to facilitate their children's home language and literacy skills.

Language learning is also affected by factors internal to the child. Responses to opportunities or demands to learn more than one language by children depend on their temperament and other personality variables (Krashen, 1981; Strong, 1983; Wong-Fillmore, 1983), including motivation, learning styles, intellectual capacity, sensory abilities (for example, hearing and vision) (Genesee and Hamayan, 1980). Not much research has been conducted on the outcomes of alternative models for language in education due to the effects of these individual differences.

Thus, to support mother tongue bi/ multilingualism in the very early years, several considerations have to be kept in mind when designing policies and programmes. For advocates of mother tongue preservation and early education, perceived value of different language learning outcomes for their young children is a very important consideration for parents. For advocates of the primacy of mother tongue acquisition in the early years, possible differences between parents' actual language behaviours with their infants and young children and what they say they want are important. The quality and speed of language acquisition may significantly influence children's individual differences in learning styles, capacities, interests and motivation.

Knowledge of Home - School Relationships

An important aspect of teaching culturally and linguistically diverse students is knowledge of home and school relationships. Educators need to include parents and caregivers in their students' literacy development. They also need to examine any preconceived notions they may have regarding home literacy. For example, Auerbach's (1995) review of ethnographic studies of family literacy reveals that educators often hold untrue assumptions about family literacy situations. In actuality, Auerbach (1995) has found multiple studies offering "counterevidence" that "refutes the notion that poor, minority, and immigrant families do not value or support literacy development" (p. 15). She adds that "those families most marginalized frequently see literacy and schooling as the key to mobility, to changing their status and preventing their children from suffering as they have" (p. 15). Finally, Auerbach cites Urza's (1986) research among Southeast Asian children, which indicated that the school rather than the home is the greater influence on student attitudes and abilities in literacy.

Research by Au (1980), Delgado-Gaitan (1987), Heath (1983), Jordan (1985), Moll and Diaz (1987), Noll (1998), and Taylor and Dorsey-Gaines (1988) documents the variety of language uses and literacy events in the homes, families, and communities of culturally and linguistically diverse children. This research suggests that all children come from homes where language and literacy are important parts of the daily lives of children. For example, Latino immigrant families traditionally are very interested in their children's education (Delgado-Gaitan, 1994).

Soto (1997) and Jimenez, Moll, Rodriguez-Brown, and Barrera (1999) characterize Latino parents as very trusting of schools to educate and work in the best interest of their children. Like most parents, however, they want to be respected. Similarly, African-American, Asian-American, and Native American parents have been characterized as desiring a quality education for their children as well as respect for their culture and values.

Conversely, however, some families do not trust schools and teachers. Such lack of trust often is born in part out of their personal experiences. Parents may feel unwelcomed by school officials, intimidated by school rules and regulations, or ashamed of their language, cultural, or class differences; they also may have misunderstandings about the school system. Educators must develop opportunities to reach out to such parents, welcome them into the school, and engage them in their children's education. Parent involvement in and encouragement of children's home reading is particularly important in fostering children's literacy development. Koskinen et al. (1999) suggest how the use of a school-home books programme and audio-taped books can support students' home reading.

By collaborating with parents and families, schools can help increase the literacy development of children. For example, Morrow and Young's (1997) research focused on improving the literacy achievement (reading and writing) and interest of inner-city children through family literacy participation. The participants were largely African-American and Latino inner-city families and children who participated in a year-long family literacy programme. As part of the research, the researchers interviewed the teachers, parents, and children to learn their beliefs about literacy. Not surprisingly, parents had goals similar to the teachers: "They [parents] valued achievement for their children and wanted to know how to help them succeed" (p. 737). The researchers found that when developmentally appropriate and culturally sensitive literacy activities were used in schools and homes, when parents were included and involved in the planning, when homework was assigned that required parental involvement, and when monthly meetings with parents, teachers, and children were held, the literacy achievement of participants increased. Morrow and Young (1997) observed, "It seems as if this collaboration of home and school doing similar processes could have been the reason for its [the programme's] success" (p. 741). The authors added, "Teachers admitted that they had not realized how important such a program was in bringing parents, students, and teachers together in working toward the literacy development of children" (p. 741).

Knowledge of Multicultural Materials and Literacy Methods

Multicultural knowledge base comprises of "a broad spectrum of multicultural texts and methods for using these materials in culturally sensitive ways that will dissolve stereotypes rather than perpetuate them," note Abt-Perkins and Rosen (2000, p. 254). It includes both multicultural literature and methods for imparting literacy. The use of multicultural children's literature is one of the most powerful ways for schools to honour students' culture and foster cross-cultural understanding. Teachers also can use multicultural literature depicting children's worlds as a means to bridge home and school cultures. The work of Spears-Bunton (1992) and Willis and Johnson (2000) emphasise the use of multicultural literature to improve students' self-esteem, involvement and engagement,- and academic performance in literacy. In each of these studies, the level of involvement and engagement of African-American students increased when culturally relevant literature and instruction were used in high school English classrooms. In addition, the power relations in the class shifted as African-American students, once reticent to respond, became vocal leaders of discussion.

Multicultural literature often is used to broaden students' understanding of culture as well as cross-cultural, intra-cultural, and multicultural differences and similarities. Marshall (1998) encourages teachers of young children to use multicultural literature to talk about human differences, to talk through human differences, and to talk about topics that relate to issues of diversity. Walker-Dalhouse (1992) used a variety of fiction and non-fiction with two fifth-grade classrooms to extend understanding of multiple cultures. In addition, Spears-Bunton (2000) has used literature to stretch students' awareness of the African diaspora. Perry and Fraser (1993) assert that teachers play a central role in the construction of a "new American culture" and as such, they need to allow "the lives, histories, and cultures of the historically oppressed to critically influence the reconceptualization of knowledge that is represented in the curriculum and classroom" (p. 19).

Wonderful multicultural books are available at all levels. Educators can use criteria for evaluating multicultural materials to help them select the most appropriate books for their students. The literacy curriculum also can be the venue to help students understand the relationship of culture and power. Delpit (1995c) discusses five aspects of power in the classroom. She argues that teachers should explicitly teach children "the codes needed to participate fully in the mainstream of American life, not by being forced to attend to hollow, inane, de-contextualized sub-skills, but rather within the context of wonderful communicative endeavors" (p. 45).

Leland, Harste, Ociepka, Lewison, and Vasquez (1999) consider multicultural literature as part of a "new kind of 'critical literacy curriculum' which focuses on building students' awareness of how systems of meaning and power affect people and the lives they lead" (p. 70). The authors note that that their idea of 'critical literacy' is framed by Luke and Freebody's (1997) conceptualization and use of the term. Books in this category, the authors add, "invite conversations about fairness and justice; they encourage children to ask why some groups of people are positioned as 'others' " (p. 70). Along these lines, the authors argue, "readers need to be able to interrogate the assumptions that are embedded in text as well as the assumptions which they, as culturally indoctrinated beings, bring to the text" (p. 71). Specifically, the authors suggest asking students: "Whose story is this?", "Who benefits from this story" and "What voices are not being heard?" (p. 71). The authors have used such books with teachers and children in elementary schools to better understand how both groups interact and react to the texts. In their view, these books "honor diversity and invite students and teachers alike to explore a new kind of literacy curriculum- one built upon the premise that a model of difference is a model of learning for individuals in society" (p. 72).

Teachers working with students in culturally and linguistically diverse classroom will realise that there is not one, singular best way to teach all students; instead, a variety of instructional strategies should be incorporated. Because of cultural differences, not all students are comfortable asking questions or volunteering information. Teachers can develop alternative strategies for soliciting information from students while teaching them that asking and volunteering are acceptable behaviours in the classroom. Students' cultural differences may also influence motivational devices used by the teacher. For example, competitive games may not have the desired effect on students' motivation; in some cultures, seeking individual achievement may be embarrassing rather than rewarding.

Strickland (1998) identifies several characteristics of relevant literacy instruction for culturally and linguistically diverse students. She emphasises the variability that exists across students' home communities, the construction of meaning from different perspectives, the acknowledgment of context in literacy learning, the use of language for real communication, the use of relevant literacy materials, and a focus on high-level thinking and problem solving. Similarly, Craviotto and Heras (1999) identify six characteristics of culturally relevant classrooms. These strategies include using families as resources, reading multicultural literature, regarding students as active learners, emphasising classroom dialogue, providing opportunities for exploration, and using multiple languages in the classroom. The authors conclude that these strategies can enhance students' literacy learning.

These knowledge bases - self-knowledge, cultural knowledge, linguistic knowledge, culturally informed pedagogic knowledge, knowledge of methods and materials, and knowledge of home-school relationships are extremely important in helping educators address the literacy needs of culturally and linguistically diverse students. They help teachers develop a collaborative and culturally sensitive learning environment that encourages meaningful, engaged learning for all students in their classrooms. School administrators and classroom teachers need to acquire these knowledge bases through teacher-education programmes or staff development opportunities. The knowledge bases will support teachers' efforts to nurture the literacy skills of their students and promote high academic achievement.

If educators keep in mind the key elements for effective teaching of ethnic- and language minority students, they will have a strong impact on the academic achievement of their students. Taking the time to develop appropriate knowledge bases, having high expectations for all students, providing a welcoming environment, and working with family members and the community will provide teachers with the tools and understandings they need to help their diverse students be successful learners.

Conclusion

Several pitfalls may occur when schools and educators try to address the literacy needs of culturally and linguistically diverse students. One pitfall is the inability of educators to know enough about every culture. No singular body of knowledge, book, method, training programme, or course will teach all there is to know, and educators may not have time or opportunities to continue their multicultural learning. Rosaldo (1989), however, warns that a short-term investment will lead to a limited understanding of the role of culture in educators' lives and in the lives of students. He adds that a limited understanding may also lead to a "false comfort" (p. 8). Instead, multicultural learning for teachers should be a continuous process, requiring a long-term commitment. Building cultural knowledge and sensibilities is a life-long proposition. The most prudent approach is for educators to develop or acquire a respectful and sensitive attitude and an open mind.

A second pitfall is that many schools do not provide relevant professional development to their teachers. According to Lewis et al. (1999), only 3l percent of teachers in public schools during 1998 participated in professional development programmes that addressed the needs of students with limited English proficiency or students from diverse cultural backgrounds. Such professional development was more likely to occur in schools with greater minority enrolment. Lewis et al. (1999) state, "Teachers from schools with more than 50 percent minority enrolment were much more likely than those who taught in schools with 5 percent or less minority enrolment to participate in professional development programmes on this topic (51 versus 14 percent)." In addition, the authors note that teacher participation in professional development addressing the needs of limited English proficient and culturally diverse students also varied by region: 51 percent of teachers in the West, 33 percent of teachers in the South, and 22 percent for each of the Midwest and the Northeast. More schools need to provide such professional development to their teachers.

A third pitfall is that some educators are reluctant to acknowledge their inherent prejudices against children who are culturally, racially, or linguistically different from themselves. Delpit (1995a) reveals that many educators, in an attempt to sound unbiased and free of prejudice, loudly proclaim, "I only see children" (p. 177). She argues that this simplistic notion of race masks more deep-seated issues. Her response, in the form of a question, is: "What message does this statement send? That there is something wrong with being black or brown, that it should not be noticed? I would like to suggest if one does not see colour, then one does not really see children. Children made 'invisible' in this manner become hard-pressed to see themselves worthy of notice" (p. 177).

A fourth pitfall is a tendency of schools to address diversity only on the surface level. Barrera (1992) and Willis (1995) have argued that the use of literacy approaches that appear to support the language and literacy of children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds must be coupled with teacher knowledge and commitment. If not, the result is an approach that focuses on celebrating holidays and festivals, glorifying heroes or exceptional people, and adding culturally sensitive and appropriate literature. Such additive approaches assume the inclusion of multicultural materials is all that is needed to address diversity at the school. Although it is important to have materials that support the culture and ways of knowing that children bring with them to school, multicultural materials and activities alone are insufficient for social change. In order to address issues of cultural and linguistic difference, substantive changes must be made to the curriculum and instruction. Also, literacy must be understood as a socio-constructed process - one that builds upon students' prior knowledge to make meaning. As Nieto (1999) argues, often in the zeal to address issues of diversity, the goal of academic achievement is forgotten.

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