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Assessing Business and Marketing Teachers' Attitudes Toward Cultural Pluralism and Diversity

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Abstract

Student populations within business and marketing classrooms, like our nation, continue to grow increasingly diverse. Teachers' attitudes are critical to meeting the educational needs of learners from diverse backgrounds. This study used the Pluralism and Diversity Attitude Assessment (PADAA) to investigate business and marketing teachers' attitudes toward issues related to multicultural education. The PADAA uses four sub scales (Appreciate Cultural Pluralism, Value Cultural Pluralism, Implement Cultural Pluralism, and Uncomfortable with Cultural Pluralism) to describe respondents' attitudes toward cultural pluralism and diversity. Business and marketing teachers tended to reflect positive attitudes about the issues examined. However, they did express resistance toward classroom implementation of cultural pluralism as well as uncomfortable feelings about diversity. Results from this study will be useful to preservice and inservice career and technical educators, teacher educators, and school administrators attempting to understand and expand multicultural perspectives within career and technical education.

Teachers and students live and work in a culturally-pluralistic and diverse society. Fundamental challenges facing today's educators include their abilities to respond to an increasingly diverse nation, workforce, and student population. Teachers' attitudes toward and about issues of cultural pluralism and diversity will impact and shape the forms of multicultural education provided to tomorrow's society and workforce (Hernandez, 1989; Stanley, 1992). Business and marketing teachers who understand and embrace multicultural education are in a position to prepare students to become successful in the new millennium. Multicultural education is a way of teaching (Birkel, 2000) that describes an educational experience and system inclusive of a variety of participating cultures (Payne & Welsh, 2000). Multicultural education encompasses cultural pluralism as well as cultural diversity.

Cultural diversity is the condition that exists while cultural pluralism includes beliefs and values associated with promotion of equality for all people (Stanley, 1992, 1996). Cultural diversity issues focus on conditional states related to age, race, ethnicity, gender, religion, language, socioeconomic status, and exceptionality (Grant & Ladson-Billings, 1997). Cultural pluralism is an ideology that advocates the preservation and development of diversity within a society. "Cultural pluralism requires that the diversity of students and communities be understood, valued, and integrated in all aspects of the educational process" (Grant & Ladson-Billings, p. 65). However, according to Butt and Pahnos (1995), teaching in a multicultural society and providing excellence and equality in education is not easily accomplished.

According to James Banks (1993b), University of Washington professor of education, multicultural education consists of three major components: (a) an idea or concept, (b) an education reform movement, and (c) a process. "As an idea or concept, multicultural education maintains that all students should have equal opportunities to learn regardless of the racial, ethnic, social-class, or gender group to which they belong" (Banks, 1995, p. 390). As a reform movement, multicultural education aims to reform schools so that all students have an equal opportunity to learn. And, multicultural education is a continuous process with a goal to create "within schools and society the democratic ideals ... such as justice, equality, and freedom" which are never totally achieved (Banks, 1995, p. 390).

During the 1960s, black civil rights movements in the United States inspired similar actions throughout the Western world. A major goal of these ethnically-motivated events was empowerment and liberation through education (Banks, 1987). A variety of educational and curricular programs, projects, and innovations have been employed to encourage the acceptance, inclusion, and growth of multiculturalism within the public schools (Banks). However, much of the educational reform that has been implemented into American education is superficial, fragmented, and tends to encourage racism through cultural misconceptions and stereotypes (Banks). Educational structures continue to focus on Anglo and European development (Banks). The ideologies of American schools and educational programs have remained mostly homogeneous while the student population has grown enormously diverse (Latham, 1997). Furthermore, despite the efforts of 40 years of desegregation in American schools, most students still attend schools that remain racially segregated (Gay & Howard, 2000).

Progress has been made in the multicultural preparation of teachers, with a significant number of today's teachers having completed a required course in multicultural education when in college. A standard for multicultural education

initially adopted in 1979 by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) has been a major factor in stimulating the growth of multicultural education in teacher education programs. The original standard stated: "The institution gives evidence of planning for multicultural education in its teacher education curricula including both the general and professional studies components" (NCATE, 1977, p. 4). Today, unit standards identified by NCATE include a *Diversity* category. The standard in this category states: "The unit designs, implements, and evaluates curriculum and experiences for candidates to acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary to help all students learn. These experiences include working with diverse higher education and school faculty, diverse candidates, and diverse students in P-12 schools" (NCATE, 2001, p. 10). Even though NCATE remains committed to diversity preparation for teachers, Gay and Howard (2000) contend that preservice teacher education programs continue to fall short when "...preparing teachers to meet the instructional challenges of ethnically, racially, socially, and linguistically diverse students in the 21st century" (p. 1).

Banks (1987, 1993a) identified some of the most prevalent reasons for persistent deficiencies in multicultural education: (a) schools that are not ethnically diverse or do not experience racial problems do not need educational reform; (b) lack of administrative support, effective teaching materials or inservice training; and, most importantly, (c) basic ideology. In many instances, teachers do not share the same economic or residential history as the students they teach (Gay & Howard, 2000). Therefore, teachers need preparation in being effective as teachers of culturally- and ethnically-diverse students. Teachers preparing our youth for the workforce of this new millennium must possess ideologies that serve all students and are characterized by culturally-pluralistic knowledge, preparation, and commitment.

Theoretical Framework

Schools with a rich multicultural focus share a variety of foundational dimensions (Banks, 1993b; Birkel, 2000). The first dimension, content integration, is the extent to which teachers use examples, data, and information from a variety of cultures to illustrate the key concepts, principles, generalizations, and theories in their subject area (Banks). It is the positive interaction and integration of cultures into school subjects (Birkel). Teachers who understand and respond within this dimension are able to extrapolate and infuse contributions from many cultures into their teaching.

The second dimension, knowledge construction process, encompasses the procedures by which social, behavioral, and natural scientists create knowledge in their disciplines. "A multicultural focus on knowledge construction includes discussion of the ways in which the implicit cultural assumptions, frames of reference, perspectives, and biases within a discipline influence the construction of knowledge" (Banks, 1993b, p. 24). This dimension provides for discussions about the affects of stereotypes within our society.

The third dimension, prejudice reduction, focuses on the characteristics of children's racial attitudes on strategies that can be used to help students develop more positive racial and ethnic attitudes. Cultural pluralism is accepted as the best model for the school and is applied through a democratic and equitable process (Birkel, 2000).

The fourth dimension, equity pedagogy, is evident when teachers use techniques and teaching methods that facilitate the academic achievement of students from diverse racial and ethnic groups and from all social classes. It includes a variety of teaching strategies designed to encourage participation and achievement from all students (Birkel, 2000). An understanding and appreciation for cultural differences is infused throughout the curriculum.

Finally, the fifth dimension, an empowering school culture and social structure, requires the restructuring of the culture and organization of the school so that students from diverse racial, ethnic, and social-class groups will experience education equity and a sense of empowerment. This dimension is the building of positive attitudes about the ideals of American democracy; the democratic process ensures equality and opportunity for all people (Birkel, 2000).

In this study, these dimensions were used to construct a theoretical framework for analyzing the attitudes of business and marketing teachers. The constructs (Appreciate Cultural Pluralism, Value Cultural Pluralism, Implement Cultural Pluralism, and Uncomfortable With Cultural Diversity) of the survey selected for this analysis emerged from multicultural literature (Stanley, 1996) and modeled the dimensions associated with schools identified as having a rich multicultural focus. Statements posed in the construct, Appreciate Cultural Pluralism, dealt with issues related to equality of all students and respect for oneself as well as different cultures. The Value Cultural Pluralism construct dealt with issues about integration and interaction of cultures. Implement Cultural Pluralism, focused on the infusion of differing cultures into the curriculum and educational processes. Uncomfortable with Cultural Diversity was a construct that brought to surface prejudices and resistances that may impede a democratic and equitable school environment.

Purpose

Student populations in business and marketing education, like our nation, continue to grow increasingly diverse (Foxman & Easterling, 1995). Business and marketing education has been successful at responding to the needs of a changing American society and workforce. It is now necessary for business and marketing education to meet the needs of an increasingly-diverse student population (Foxman & Easterling). Information about attitudes of business and marketing teachers towards cultural pluralism and diversity is essential in developing an educational environment responsible and responsive to a culturally-diverse nation, its students, and its workforce. Therefore, an assessment of business and marketing teachers' attitudes toward issues related to cultural pluralism and diversity was warranted, especially since a majority (88.5%) of career and technical education teachers, of which business and marketing teachers are apart, are Caucasian (U.S. Department of Education, 2000).

The purpose of this study was to examine business and marketing teachers' attitudes toward issues related to cultural pluralism and diversity using the Pluralism and Diversity Attitude Assessment (PADAA). Specifically, the study sought answers to the five research questions.

1. How will business and marketing teachers respond to statements about cultural pluralism and diversity?
2. Do business and marketing teachers appreciate cultural pluralism?
3. Do business and marketing teachers value cultural pluralism?

4. Are business and marketing teachers willing to implement cultural pluralism into their classroom processes?
5. Are business and marketing teachers comfortable with diversity?

Methodology

Participants

The target population for this study included 1,400 business and marketing teachers in a southern state. Six hundred surveys were mailed to randomly selected business and marketing teachers during the spring of 1999. A total of 315 business and marketing teachers responded to the survey generating a response rate of 52.5%.

The research sample included 79 (25%) male participants, 233 (74%) female respondents, and 3 (1%) respondents who did not identify their gender. Of the business and marketing teachers represented in the research sample, 38 (12%) taught middle school, 274 (87%) taught high school, and 3 (1%) teachers did not indicate their teaching level.

Instrumentation

Stanley (1992, 1996) originally developed the PADAA survey instrument used in this study to assess the attitudes of preservice physical education teachers toward multicultural education. The PADAA includes 19 statements that can be separated into four subscales (Appreciate Cultural Pluralism, Value Cultural Pluralism, Implement Cultural Pluralism, and Uncomfortable with Cultural Diversity). Survey statements were modified to reflect vocational education teachers rather than preservice physical education teachers. For example, a statement that originally read: "Physical educators should help students develop respect for themselves and others" was altered to read: "Vocational [career and technical] educators should help students develop respect for themselves and others," (refer to question #7 of the survey instrument). For the purpose of this study, business and marketing teachers were targeted even though the survey was revised so that any career and technical teacher could complete it. A six-point Likert-type scale, as originally developed by Stanley was used as the response mechanism. Business and marketing teachers were asked to select one reply for each statement: 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = slightly disagree, 4 = slightly agree, 5 = agree, and 6 = strongly agree.

Reliability measures performed by Stanley (1992, 1996), included tests of internal consistency and test-retest analysis. The complete instrument had an alpha reliability coefficient of .91, and its test-retest reliability coefficient equaled .84. The alpha reliability calculated for the data collected in this study equaled .86.

Stanley (1992, 1996) assembled a panel of multicultural education experts to determine the definitions associated with the subcategories. Panel members also examined the validity of each statement presented on the PADAA. For the purpose of this study, a panel of career and technical education teachers determined that statements presented on the PADAA were applicable to issues present in career and technical education.

Procedure

Each business and marketing teacher selected as a sample member was mailed

an informational letter and PADAA survey including two additional demographic questions (gender and teaching level). Business and marketing teachers were asked to return the instrument within two weeks and were provided a postage-paid, self-addressed envelope for their convenience. According to Krejcie and Morgan (1970), a sample size of 302 was required to be representative of the opinions of a population including 1400 individuals. Since 315 surveys were returned within four weeks of the initial mailing, no survey follow-up was conducted. The number of surveys returned met the sample-size standards described by Krejcie and Morgan. Furthermore, percentages of respondents' gender and teaching level closely approximated their percentage in the overall United States business and marketing teaching population as well as the state in which the study was conducted (U.S. Department of Education, 2000). Early respondents (those returned within two weeks) were compared to late respondents (those returned after the two week deadline) to evaluate inferred differences between respondents and non-respondents (Hill, 2001). No significant differences were found.

The reported attitudes of business and marketing teachers to the 19 statements included on the PADAA were analyzed using baseline frequencies and percentages. Means and standard deviations have been calculated for each statement provided on the survey instrument. Scores on the four subscales have been calculated, adding the point values of the statements identified by Stanley (1992, 1996): (a) Appreciate Cultural Pluralism (Items 1, 5, 7, 11, and 15; reverse statement 15), (b) Value Cultural Pluralism (Items 2, 6, 12, 16, and 19), (c) Implement Cultural Pluralism (Items 4, 8, 10, 13, and 17; reverse statement 8), and (d) Uncomfortable With Cultural Diversity (Items 3, 9, 14, and 18). Score interpretations established by Stanley were used to interpret the data.

Results

It was the purpose of this study to generate findings regarding business and marketing teachers' attitudes toward issues of cultural pluralism and diversity. Means and standard deviations associated with each statement are included in Table 1.

According to Stanley (1992), scores obtained on the four subscales (Appreciate Cultural Pluralism, Value Cultural Pluralism, Implement Cultural Pluralism, and Uncomfortable with Cultural Diversity) of the PADAA can be evaluated as described in Table 2. Scores generated by business and marketing teacher participants were interpreted using Stanley's guidelines for the four subscales of the PADAA. The means and standard deviations associated with each subscale also were calculated.

In the subscale, Appreciate Cultural Pluralism, 93% of respondents strongly appreciate the ideals of cultural pluralism and 7% of respondents moderately appreciate the ideals of cultural pluralism. No respondents obtained a total score value in this subscale lower than 20. The mean score calculated for this subscale equaled 28.01 with a standard deviation of 2.01.

In the subscale, Value Cultural Pluralism, 76% of respondents strongly valued the ideals of cultural pluralism, 21% of respondents moderately valued the ideals of cultural pluralism, and 3% of respondents did not value the ideals of cultural pluralism very much. No respondents obtained a total score value in this subscale lower than 16. The mean score calculated for this subscale equaled 26.14 with a

standard deviation of 2.86.

In the subscale, Implement Cultural Pluralism, 32% of respondents indicated they would implement the ideals of cultural pluralism, 40% of respondents might implement the ideals of cultural pluralism, 27% of respondents would not likely implement the ideals of cultural pluralism, and 1% of respondents would not implement the ideals of cultural pluralism. The mean score calculated for this subscale equaled 21.93 with a standard deviation of 4.58.

In the subscale, Uncomfortable with Diversity, 59% of respondents were comfortable with diversity, 36% of respondents were not very uncomfortable with diversity, and 5% of respondents were moderately uncomfortable with diversity. No respondents obtained a total score in this subscale greater than 17. The mean score calculated for this subscale equaled 8.16 with a standard deviation of 2.95.

Table 1

Business and Marketing Teachers' Responses to the PADAA Survey (N = 315)

Survey Statements	Mean	SD
Each student should have an equal opportunity to learn and succeed in vocational education.	5.77	0.64
Each minority culture has something positive to contribute to American society.	5.55	0.72
There is really nothing that educational systems can do for students who come from lower socioeconomic groups.	1.53	0.78
Vocational educators should plan activities that meet the diverse needs and develop the unique abilities of students from different ethnic backgrounds.	4.84	1.14
Students should be taught to respect those who are different from them.	5.75	0.52
Students should feel pride in their heritage.	5.68	0.55
Vocational educators should help students develop respect for themselves and others.	5.65	0.56
Minority individuals should adopt the values and lifestyles of the dominant culture.	3.33	1.50
Minority individuals are hard to work with in vocational education.	2.40	1.35
The perspectives of a wide range of ethnic groups should be included in the curriculum.	4.56	1.20
In vocational education, it does not matter if a student is rich or poor, everyone should have the same chance to succeed.	5.81	0.47

I enjoy being around people who are different from me.	4.86	0.95
Vocational educators are responsible for teaching students about the ways in which various cultures have influenced the various vocations in this country.	4.23	1.17
I am uncomfortable around the students whose ethnic heritage is different from my own.	2.22	1.43
Students should give up their cultural beliefs and practices to fit in with other students.	1.98	0.95
Cultural diversity is a valuable resource and should be preserved.	4.99	0.95
Vocational education activities should be representative of a wide variety of cultures.	4.63	1.15
Cultural diversity is a negative force in the development of American society	2.02	0.98
All students should learn about cultural differences.	5.09	0.94
<i>Note. 6 = strongly agree, 5 = agree, 4 = slightly agree, 3 = slightly disagree, 2 = disagree, and 1 = strongly disagree.</i>		

Table 2

PADAA Scale Score Interpretation for Subscales

Subscale	Score Values
Appreciate Cultural Pluralism	
Strongly appreciates the ideals of cultural pluralism	5-30
Moderately appreciates the ideals of cultural pluralism	0-24
Not very appreciative of the ideals of cultural pluralism	0-19
Does not appreciate the ideals of cultural pluralism	-9
Value Cultural Pluralism	
Strongly values the ideals of cultural pluralism	5-30
Moderately values the ideals of cultural pluralism	0-24
Does not value the ideals of cultural pluralism very much	0-19
Does not value the ideals of cultural pluralism	-9
Implement Cultural Pluralism	
Would implement the ideals of cultural pluralism	5-30

Might implement the ideals of cultural pluralism	0-24
Would not likely implement the ideals of cultural pluralism	0-19
Would not implement the ideals of cultural pluralism	-9
Uncomfortable with Cultural Diversity	
Very uncomfortable with diversity	0-24
Moderately uncomfortable with diversity	4-19
Not very uncomfortable with diversity	-13
Comfortable with diversity	-8

Discussion

This study sought to provide an analysis of the attitudes of business and marketing teachers toward cultural pluralism and diversity, components important to the multicultural education process. It sought to delve into topics that have been in the forefront of educational discussions for the last 40 years. It was determined from the baseline frequencies and percentages generated from the data that a majority of the business and marketing teachers responding to the survey had positive attitudes about cultural pluralism and diversity. However, as is the case with most research studies, caution should be applied when interpreting the findings and generalizing the findings to other populations.

The study uncovered some areas (implementation of ideals associated with cultural pluralism and diversity comfort levels) where improvement, additional education, and enhanced preparation and development would be justified if business and marketing is to have a positive impact on the education of our children and our workforce during the 21st century. For example, business and marketing teachers will need to develop instructional strategies that include and encourage pluralistic cultures, views, and contributions. Business and marketing teachers will need to undertake professional development strategies designed to enhance their abilities to effectively teach and prepare students from diverse cultures as well as lessen their feelings of discomfort when dealing with diverse student populations.

Business and marketing teachers appreciate the ideals of cultural pluralism. Based on this positive finding, it was concluded that these teachers have the ability to respect diversity and individual student differences. Business and marketing teachers appeared to understand that there might be more than one appropriate way to behave (Stanley 1992). A teacher's appreciation score does not indicate or measure his or her willingness to discuss this attitude in the classroom environment. Therefore, this appreciation, while an excellent foundation for growth, does not necessarily indicate that these teachers practice what they believe.

A teacher's value score, according to Stanley (1992) explains the value given to cultural pluralism and individual expressions of cultural influences. This score illustrates a teacher's willingness to express value for cultural pluralism. However, it does not indicate a value for changing teaching methods. A majority of business and marketing teachers appeared to express a value for cultural pluralism. They were accepting of cultural differences but may or may not be willing to alter their

instructional strategies.

Implementation conveys the teacher's desire to adapt and use a variety of teaching methods applicable to the needs of individual learners (Stanley, 1992). Business and marketing teachers showed some resistance to implementing educational strategies that would include methods conducive to cultural pluralism. Some possible reasons for this reluctance may include lack of appropriate educational preparation for dealing with a variety of cultures within one classroom, lack of useful materials and resources, and lack of administrative assistance and support.

Uncomfortable with diversity illustrates a teacher's comfort level with students from culturally-different backgrounds and experiences. Business and marketing teachers did appear to experience some uncomfortable feelings regarding diversity. However, this study did not identify specific areas causing this discomfort.

The following conclusions and recommendations are made based on business and marketing teachers' PADAA responses in this study as well as their representative scores on the four subscales.

Conclusions

1. Business and marketing teachers believe that all students should be provided equal opportunities for educational success.
2. Business and marketing teachers believe that educational systems are able to assist diverse groups of students.
3. Business and marketing teachers believe that diverse cultures make positive contributions in our society.
4. Business and marketing teachers believe that cultural pluralism and diversity should be preserved and recognized as a positive educational resource.
5. Business and marketing teachers believe it is appropriate for students to feel pride in their cultural heritage.
6. Business and marketing teachers believe that students should learn to respect themselves and others.

Recommendations

1. Business and marketing teachers may need to gain education and training in developing and infusing teaching strategies that emphasize the needs of diverse learners in their classes and programs.
2. Business and marketing teachers may need assistance developing instructional practices that appeal to diverse student populations.
3. Business and marketing teachers who feel uncomfortable when dealing with diverse student populations may need to obtain additional educational guidance preparation, and sensitivity regarding multiculturalism and diversity.
4. Teacher educators need to emphasize multicultural education in their teacher preparation programs, increasing educational focus on the development and delivery of curriculum and activities appropriate and valuable for diverse student populations.

Implications

Cultural pluralism and diversity are elements important to the success of multicultural education, an ideology that seeks to encourage unity among a nation's people rather than separation (Birkel, 2000). Contemplating the diversity that now encompasses our nation and schools, business and marketing teachers will need to provide their students with the education resources and vitality essential to meeting the challenges incumbent of a multicultural society.

The findings of this study have important implications for teacher educators preparing future business and marketing teachers. There is a gap between how teacher education programs prepare preservice teachers about designing curriculum and instruction and the difficult and diverse "lived experiences" of learners (Breitborde, 1996). As Ladson-Billings (1991) noted, the challenge for teacher educators is not unlike the classroom teacher who "must meet the students where they are (vis a vis multicultural knowledge, skills, and attitudes) and help them to move to where they need to be" (p. 187). Taking students from where they are to where they need to be can be done in various ways. Examples for teacher educators include modeling the kind of attitudes and social interactions they want to see preservice teachers develop, finding ways to integrate preservice teachers into the communities and schools where they will teach, and preparing preservice teachers to learn from and about the communities where they will work (Ladson-Billings). "This a formidable but not insurmountable challenge. It requires a commitment to a society that is both democratic and multicultural and it requires us to look carefully at what knowledge, skills, and attitudes today's teachers will need to teach tomorrow's children" (Ladson-Billings, p. 194).

Business and marketing teachers will need increased preparation in preservice and inservice programs if they are to develop and deliver curriculum and educational activities conscious of a variety of multicultural perspectives and populations. Cultural barriers will need to be expelled in business and marketing education if it is to have an impact on the educational and workforce structures of the future.

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