

# Transforming California Teachers: A Biliteracy Program in Mexico

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*Caminante no hay camino,  
se hace el camino al andar.*

Traveler, there is no road.  
You make the road by walking it.  
--Antonio Machado

## Introduction

California in 2002 is the most culturally diverse state in the United States and one of the most diverse places on earth. People from the entire planet are continuously arriving, especially from Latin America and the Pacific, bringing many cultures and languages together in communities, businesses and especially schools. As part of complex, sometimes circular migration, many families, Latin Americans especially, spend periods in two “home” countries. These trends of diversity and transnationalism create new opportunities for teachers of English learners to enhance language development by incorporating the immigration experience more completely.

The 6.3 million K-12 student population projected in California in the next ten years will be far more linguistically, ethnically, and racially diverse than in the year 2000. In the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, the Latino school population is projected by the California Department of Finance to increase by 20%, whereas the White population may decrease by as much as 16%. In 1996-97 Latino enrollment surpassed White enrollment, with each group accounting for about 40% of 5.5 million California K-12 students. By 2007, the Latino student population of California is projected to account for half of all enrollment, with White, Black and Asian students projected at 30, 7.5 and 8.5 percent respectively (Demographics Research Unit: 2002). Mexican heritage students, both US-born and immigrant, constitute the vast majority of Latino students, although birth, national origin and language fluency statistics are not kept in this database.

Additionally, many students spend part of their school years in Mexico and part in the US. Teachers on each side accuse the opposite educational system of slowing down academic progress. Teachers often overlook the difficult work of negotiating cultural discontinuities that transnational students must do, and underestimate the effect of English-only and Spanish-only education, not knowing that students in such transition may not attend or fully comprehend instruction during their sojourn. The challenge for teachers of English Learners in Mexico and

Latin America, as well as the US, is to promote academic growth knowing that two languages, cultures and educational systems converge and sometimes compete in the lives of students. With this in mind, biliteracy is an obvious, but unacknowledged solution. We need to prepare qualified teachers to work effectively with the large Spanish speaking population in US society. Additionally, teachers of English in Mexico need to understand the bicultural demands on students, who may be ESL in the US at one moment and EFL in Mexico at another. The program described in this article exemplifies one pathway to provide high quality teachers to meet the needs of these students. The Bilingual Cross-cultural Language and Academic Development (BCLAD) international program has operated in Mexico and California since 1994, preparing teachers with intensive immersion experiences in language and culture. Its goals are linguistic development resulting in a professional level of biliteracy, cultural understanding that includes the immigration experience, and a clear view of both US and Mexican schooling options. As one candidate wrote upon reflection:

*Being bilingual and bicultural means that I will be more effective as a teacher because I have more of an understanding of where some of my students will be coming from and where they will be going. -Veronica*

Educational innovations such as the BCLAD Mexico program can offer valuable ways to address the new social situation, by blending experience with formal study so that multicultural, bilingual and critical social justice are lived not just learned. The teachers prepared by this program emerge with a better understanding of their role, internalizing the constructivist principle articulated by John Dewey that schooling is both determined by and a determinant of broader sociopolitical conditions. Dewey postulated: "the fundamental factors in the education process are the learner, the society and the organized subject matter" (Dewey, 1916: 4). He called for the "educative process" to be a comprehensive dynamic with an interaction among these fundamental factors. Yet, the last century of history and politics in American education attests to a fragmented pendulum of models, usually emphasizing subject matter to the neglect of students and societal issues. The most recent version of that approach focuses on the most effective way to reach subject matter standards and high-stakes achievement testing, primarily benefiting elite groups of students preparing for college. Meanwhile, large numbers of students primarily low income, racially, culturally, and linguistically diverse, increasingly immigrant and binational continue to be underserved by the public schools (Apple, 1996; Kozol, 1991; Oakes, 1985).

Dewey was a key educational social constructivist at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and Paulo Freire, the main exponent of socially critical pedagogy at the end of the century, proposed that education should not consist of "banking" (the deposit and withdrawal) of fixed ideas, but rather should involve a transaction between teacher and learner in dialogue, freeing the learner to think critically and independently. Freire challenged teachers to become progressive educators:

*A progressive teacher, in contrast to a reactionary one, is always endeavoring to reveal reality for her/his students, removing whatever keeps them from seeing clearly and critically. Such a teacher would never neglect content simply to politicize students.... Whether a progressive teacher works in Latin America or the US, we cannot neglect the task of helping students become literate...However, reading and writing words encompasses the reading of the world, that is the critical understanding of politics in the world, a fact I have noted many times.... The act of studying, learning and knowing is difficult...But learners discover and feel the inherent joy [in]...the process of learning. The teacher's role in nurturing this discipline and joy is enormous. Authority and competence both play a part...On the other hand, this...is not the result of something the teacher does to the learners....the discipline has to be built and internalized by the students (1987: 214)*

Freire proposed that the liberating, critical and self-actualization practices that succeed with elite and suburban students should also be available to students of working class and immigrant families that populate urban and rural public schools. The critical approach, combining social analysis, student-centeredness and academic standards, is essential for both student success, and more importantly, as a corrective perspective for future teachers. These principles underlie teaching for biliteracy for today's student and tomorrow's society. Many colleagues in Latin America and the US share this quest for progressive education, and have jointly developed a unique teacher preparation experience. The BCLAD Mexico program blends a critical pedagogical perspective with best educational practices that include study abroad, cultural experiences, building on background knowledge and working with highly competent teachers in international settings. The net result, as will become evident from the voices of graduates of the program, is a new corps of committed teachers who can achieve Dewey's educative process and Freire's critical pedagogy with success.

### **The BCLAD Mexico Program**

The teachers who have graduated with California credentials from the BCLAD Mexico program (approximately 116 from 1995-2002) have undertaken professional preparation in linguistic and cultural competence, teaching ability and most significantly in political and ideological clarity. In contemporary diverse settings, teachers' ideological stance with respect to bi-literacy and cultural development has a most profound impact in coping with the contradictions and competing interests in educating increasing numbers of children with decreasing resources. Through this transformational binational program, teachers have engaged in the process of praxis, integrating theory and practice on several levels. They exhibit what Bartolomé calls ideological clarity, where bilingual pre-service teachers examine socio-political hierarchies within educational institutions, and more importantly, develop their own philosophy and practice of biliteracy so they may become accomplished educators:

*Ideological clarity requires that teachers' individual explanations be compared and contrasted with those propagated by the dominant society. It is to be hoped that the juxtaposing of ideologies forces teachers to better understand if, when, and how their belief systems uncritically reflect those of the dominant society and support unfair and inequitable condition. (Bartolomé 2002: 168)*

The Mexico BCLAD experience can make a difference not only in the thousands of students graduates will teach over their careers, but in their schools, faculties and communities, not to mention the “intercambio” (interchange) experiences they have developed with their Mexican colleagues. The relationships and interconnectedness are evident in the following reflections:

*By learning more about a language and a culture other than mine I think I have become more open minded towards bringing the home experiences into school.*

-Debra

*In Atacomulco, Mexico, I made many friends and it was then that I felt comfortable and not so American that I didn't fit in. I was just me because by then it was a part of me.* -Veronica

In the decade since the conception of the program, the benefit to faculty and teachers on both sides of the exchange has been significant. Team teaching, joint curriculum development, research and publications have been possible. US and Mexican teachers have seen and negotiated varied curriculum philosophies and analyzed differences in response to instructional styles. The development of standards in both settings has been a recurring theme, as has pedagogical style. Exploration of models of supervision and implementation of constructivism has been the theme of symposia, exchange visits and numerous planning sessions. Although it will become clear that the greatest beneficiaries of this program have been the candidates and the Mexican children in the schools of California, the exchange has many ramifications, with benefit on both sides. This article will primarily discuss the effect on US students who participate in the program. Their voices attest to the transformative nature of a teacher preparation program that combines intensive immersion in a Spanish-speaking milieu, an extended living experience in the Mexican culture, with a rich variety of field experiences. The program, unlike other Spanish study abroad programs, follows a specific curriculum approved by the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CTC) to help address the need for appropriately prepared teachers to meet the needs of diverse students.

## **Background**

Looking at the current population in California, it is clear that the challenges of the future are already present. For the past ten years, California has experienced an average growth of 100,000 children annually whose first language is not English. In the 2000-2001 school year, there were 1.51 million English

language learners (ELLs) in California (California Department of Education, 2002), comprising 23.3% of the approximately 6 million K-12 students in the state (about the population of Indiana). Latino students comprise almost 1.26 million (or 83.4% of this group).

In 1998, California passed Proposition 227 which advocated for ELLs to be placed in intensive English programs (called Structured English Immersion) for no more than one year. Through parent waivers, however, these children could remain in bilingual classes. In the wake of Proposition 227 (California Department of Education, 1999), the number of students in bilingual programs has decreased dramatically but the need for certified bilingual teachers remains a priority in the state. The children still speak Spanish and need teachers who can communicate with them and their parents, even when bilingual programs are no longer in place.

*I also feel that learning Spanish fluently is helping me a lot with keeping parent-teacher communication open and to make the parents feel welcome in the classroom. -Debra*

The teaching force in California is approximately 270,000 (about the population of Wyoming). Of these, 29,000 are working without credentials, and although half that number are newly-certified annually, retirement, attrition and student population growth have maintained these numbers unchanged over the last three years. The number of teachers prepared to teach bilingually is approximately 11,000 and another 13,000 are prepared to teach Structured English Immersion (English as a Second Language). Another 10-15,000 teachers of both types are still needed. Teachers who can address the linguistic and cultural diversity of California's growing student population are clearly in demand. (Official correspondence has called for the maintenance of present bilingual certification [BCLAD], during a period of redesign). Among the more than 70 languages represented in large numbers in schools, Spanish stands out as the greatest need. Every teacher who possesses sufficient linguistic skills for legally permitted explanation, parent communication, special education and communication with bilingual teacher assistants is an asset. Every teacher who possesses professional literacy skills in two languages is a prize hire in the eyes of hundreds of districts in California.

Type of Educational Service for English Language Learners	1997-1998 pre-Prop. 227 Total ELL students: 1.4 million	1998-1999 post-Prop. 227 Total ELL students: 1.4 million
Bilingual Education	406,000 (29%)	168,000 (12%)
English Development + bilingual assistants	308,000 (22%)	420,000 (33%)
English Development	462,000 (33%)	546,000 (39%)
No Services	224,000 (16%)	224,000 (16%)

\*Source: Language Minority Research Institute (2000).

## **California Bilingual Teacher Preparation**

In 1992, the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CTC) completed a renovation of its basic credential, adding a Cross-cultural Language & Academic Development emphasis (CLAD), and the Bilingual CLAD (or BCLAD) counterpart. The BCLAD teacher is prepared to teach in the student's home or first language (called the primary language) and to develop English as a Second Language, using both English Language Development (ELD) and Sheltered English (SDAIE) methods for teaching academic content. The term Specially Designed Academic Instruction in English [SDAIE] refers to when subject matter is the focus of instruction but is adapted to meet the needs of English learners, e.g. by spending extra time explaining terminology. ESL/ELD applies when teaching language is the objective. As a result of the 1992 and other more recent changes in California credentialing, most teachers in California should be able to work with English Learners and have training in (1) language structure, acquisition and development; (2) culture and cultural diversity; and (3) pedagogy for ELD and SDAIE. In addition, BCLAD teachers have specialized training in (1) pedagogy for teaching in two languages; (2) the culture of emphasis; and (3) have advanced levels of expertise in the primary language (e.g., Spanish-English and Latin American-US Latino culture).

In 2001, over seventy institutions in California offered approved programs for elementary and/or secondary CLAD/BCLAD teacher preparation. However, BCLAD preparation programs continue to have relatively low enrollments, compared to CLAD programs. As well, teacher preparation and instruction in California is a continued area of conflict, with more students, greater need, fewer resources and high-stakes testing driving a performance index that controls rewards. At the same time, in spite of Proposition 227, which intended to eliminate bilingual programs in California and institute an era of English-only, parent waivers have allowed approximately 11% of eligible students to continue in transitional bilingual programs, and dual-language programs appeal especially to middle class families. Sheltered instruction also calls for the management of first language use, so the English-only era is as fictional as the threat to English that motivated it. Teacher interest in biliteracy remains strong, and school districts value bilingual professionals even if they have eliminated many bilingual classrooms. The issue, rather, is the academic language skills of teacher candidates. Many teacher candidates have some Spanish language ability, but are not proficient. One of the largest teacher preparation programs in the state, San Diego State University, for example, prepares approximately 100 elementary and 45 secondary Spanish-English bilingual teachers per year. Clearly this is not enough to meet the need for thousands in the present and foreseeable future.

## **The Development of Mexico BCLAD**

In order to increase the number of bilingual teachers prepared in California, approximately ten years ago Dr. Richard Sutter, then Director of the International Programs (IP) Office of the California State University (CSU), along with a few

interested faculty began investigating the possibility of sending CSU bilingual teacher candidates to Mexico for all or part of their credential preparation so as to enhance their language and cultural experience. This would help meet the needs of those teacher candidates mentioned above who are interested in becoming bilingual teachers, but are not sufficiently proficient in Spanish. These people are generally from three populations: first, those who have acquired Spanish through academic means, but have little oral fluency; second, those whose home language is Spanish, but whose academic skills in Spanish have not been developed. The third group is native speakers of Spanish who have either had substantial experience in schools in Mexico, and/or had the benefit of well-developed bilingual programs in the United States. These latter tend to be fully bilingual and biliterate. The first group usually also has not had any extensive experience with the culture of the language group, while the second may have had such an experience in the home, but not necessarily in the country from which the majority of California Latino students come. The third group has not had the opportunity to study the Mexican system of teacher preparation.

The process of creating the Mexico BCLAD credential program was a long one. First, a cadre of faculty in the CSU system was gathered to discuss what the curriculum of such a program should include. They formed the International Teacher Education Council (ITEC) in order to collaborate in a formal way. It was decided by the ITEC that the Mexico model should follow the new BCLAD competencies. However, the courses students would take would not match exactly with those at any one of the original four campuses included in the project, (CSUs at San Diego, Long Beach, Fresno and Sacramento). Also, some of the coursework would be taken in California while the remainder would be in Mexico.

The curriculum itself was a challenge from the beginning in terms of its creation. This was a creative and dialogical process, but the original four campus representatives reached consensus. The content area courses advocate personal discovery with a curriculum that is student centered and constructivist in nature.

While the details of curriculum were worked out in California, the next step was to begin the process of obtaining permission for the program in Mexico. It was decided to use the Universidad Ibero-Americana in Mexico City, since the CSU International Program already was in place there for undergraduates. Negotiations were held over several months with various levels of the Mexican Ministry of Education and the Ibero-Americana and agreements were eventually reached.

A proposal was then written and submitted to CTC for the Mexico BCLAD credential. The expansion of the program was foreseen in providing for the approved document to be appended to any participant university's CTC approved BCLAD credential program. Initially four university campuses began BCLAD Mexico; in 2002 nine campuses of the CSU participated. In essence, summer sessions ("bookends") would be held in California at San Diego State University (SDSU), and the academic year would be in Mexico. Student teaching

was programmed for both locations, with the Spanish language experience in public and private schools in Mexico, and the English development and biliteracy student teaching experience during the second summer in San Diego. Course content that was universal, e.g. math methods and psychological foundations, would be taught in Mexico, while California specific methodologies, standards and frameworks would be handled at SDSU by U.S. Professors.

Another important aspect of the program was the intent to have this program be a “two way street”, in other words, while the benefits for California students were great, the benefits for our Mexican colleagues should be equally great. This intent has been realized with limited teacher and student exchange, but has developed in a variety of ways, which will be articulated in the section on *Intercambios* (Exchanges) below.

The initial program document was approved by CTC in April, 1994. That document has been continually revised and updated during the running of the program. Two new options for inservice teachers will begin in Summer 2003. One allows in-service teachers with CLAD Certification (or equivalent) to earn a BCLAD Certificate through coursework in Mexico, while the other allows teachers to earn a B/CLAD Specialist/M.A. The California Commission on Teacher Credentialing has approved both programs.

The Mexico BCLAD program was innovative in that, for the first time, a consortium of university campuses joined with a system office to propose a credential program for approval. Before BCLAD Mexico and ITEC, only individual campuses or institutions were approved for teacher preparation. In this model, each CSU campus approved a common international pathway for its Multiple Subject (elementary grades) BCLAD Credential, to be monitored by representative faculty and hosted through San Diego State University and institutions in Mexico. The consortium model was later utilized by several Los Angeles area campuses to provide BCLAD preparation in multiple Asian languages, but without an international component.

The following is a summary of the program since its inception, with more detail given to the first two years in Mexico City and years 7-8 after the program moved to Querétaro. It concludes by discussing specific areas of development (faculty, curriculum, language proficiency), and finally with the voices of graduates regarding the overall experience.

### **The First Year Model**

The first cohort began coursework in June, 1994 at San Diego State University. In August they moved to Mexico City where they spent a month in intensive Spanish. A full load of coursework in Spanish began in September. While there were several minor problems, both at SDSU and in Mexico, for the most part the program worked well. Some of these problems included



homesickness (even in San Diego!), adjusting to living with a family in Mexico and isolation from Mexican students, since the cohort took all of their courses together. In addition, the reality of taking all coursework in Mexico in Spanish, needing to understand and participate in classroom discussions in Spanish, and reading texts and writing papers created a major challenge for the students.

In January, 1995 the students began eight weeks of student teaching in Mexican public schools. They taught in Spanish to Spanish speakers. They found many differences between the schools in Mexico and those in California in terms of curriculum. This was part of the expected experience. The Mexican faculty and supervisors of the student teachers also had adjustments to make due to the differences in the California students and Mexican teacher candidates in terms of expectations and models. The nine candidates in this group returned to California in May and all completed the California specific courses needed for the BCLAD credential, including eight weeks of student teaching in bilingual classrooms. With modifications, this was the model used for the first five years of the program.

## Evaluation

**Year 1.** Evaluation of the first year was formative. Candidates kept daily journals, reacted to personal adjustments and professional experiences and completed course evaluations. Candidates had two language assessments, one that was performed before the beginning of the academic year, and the final one at the end. Faculty and competencies were both evaluated at the end of the first summer session and were repeated after each segment. Informal and formal group discussions took place and were invaluable in making adjustments to the overall program. A summative evaluation occurred at the end of the year. At the end of Year 1, all nine candidates received their BCLAD credentials. Two of them have served as master teachers for student teachers in the San Diego-side of the Mexico BCLAD program. One has now completed her M.A. at SDSU and is teaching in the San Diego side of the program. Several others have become principals and other administrators in their school districts throughout California.

**Year 2.** The second-year cohort was moved to the Universidad Pedagógica Nacional (UPN) in Mexico City which has a stronger focus on pedagogical issues than the Universidad Ibero-Americana, which only had a graduate program in education and was not prepared to meet the needs of pre-service teachers. The program remained at the UPN until it was moved from Mexico City in 2000 to Querétaro.

During this second year, ITEC expanded to include CSU Hayward and San Bernardino. The program also added three weeks of student teaching experience in one of two indigenous schools, located in the states of Puebla and Oaxaca. The teacher candidates lived at rural boarding schools or in nearby villages. Students often completed projects in the communities in which they were student teaching, e.g. murals, and organizing libraries. In this way there was a true "intercambio" of experiences. All students considered that to be the most significant, and culminating experience of the year. This feature has become a stalwart of the program.

**Evaluation of Year 2.** A similar evaluation was used in the second year as in the first with similar results. Candidates who had begun with an intermediate level of Spanish were now fully bilingual and biliterate. However, this year was unique in that several students dropped the program while in Mexico due to personal and/or financial reasons. ITEC held many discussions as to why the students dropped and what could be done to prevent this in the future. More in-depth interviews of prospective candidates was suggested, similar to those used by the CSU undergraduate International Program and SDSU piloted an interview protocol that was later adopted by other campuses. It was also determined that ITEC needed to find additional financial support for their students, beyond what normal financial aid could provide.

In **Years 3 and 4**, the program remained at the Universidad Pedagógica Nacional, with the program and faculty becoming solidified. Small changes were continually made to update and modify curriculum both in California and Mexico.

**Year 5.** By the end of the fifth year (June, 1999) approximately 55 candidates had completed the program. However, during this last year in Mexico City (1998-99), ITEC began discussing and investigating a move to Querétaro due to congestion, health and safety issues. Querétaro is a colonial city of approximately 1,000,000 (as opposed to the 22 million in Mexico City) located about 125 miles north of Mexico City. It is a very clean city, virtually smog-free and much quieter than the frenzy of the Federal District, yet only two hours away by bus.

After the final decision on the move was made, the CSU resident director for the program then worked diligently during this year to make a smooth transition, identifying faculty in Querétaro, schools that could be used for student teaching, and negotiating with the office of the Secretaría de Educación de Querétaro for approval to have the students study at the Escuela Normal and continue their student teaching in public and indigenous schools.

**5 year Evaluation.** During the first five years of the program, approximately 55 students completed their credentials; the vast majority are teaching in California schools. Even if each graduate has only 20 students/year, these teachers are affecting 1200 children each year. Given the five years of the program by that time, the program had impacted over 3000 children. While the enrollment numbers were low, the quality of the teachers was exceptionally high as attested to by California school district personnel. The program took teacher candidates who were at an intermediate level of Spanish, who had little hope of ever becoming qualified BCLAD teachers, and provided them with the opportunity to achieve full fluency in academic Spanish through their coursework and teaching experiences. The cultural experiences of these students are unlimited; the stories they tell are incredible. These teachers have completed a transforming experience unlike any other. They are a very special breed.

## Querétaro

**Year 6.** The program went on hiatus during 1999-2000 to allow for negotiations with the office of the Secretaría de Educación de Querétaro to be completed and to make the physical move. This also allowed ITEC to take the time to reflect on the first five years of the program, specifically what should be retained and what perhaps should be done differently.

To further support this year of reflection, in July of 1999, ITEC received a five year Title VII Professional Development grant from the U.S. Office of Education, Office for Bilingual Education and Minority Affairs (OBEMLA) (now Title III, Office of English Language Acquisition- (OELA). These monies have been primarily used to support the students in the program and are worth approximately \$1.5 million dollars.

The hiatus year (1999-2000) ended with a Symposium and Convenio in April, 2000 at which time the official agreement between the CSU and the Secretaría de Educación de Querétaro was signed. The Symposium was attended by dignitaries from both sides of the border, including the Director of Education for the Estado de Querétaro, the Directors of the Escuela Normal and the Instituto Tecnológico y de Estudios Superiores de Monterrey-Campus Querétaro (ITESM) where Spanish classes are held, the Director of the International Programs Office for the CSU, and deans and faculty from the CSU. Presentations and workshops were held on a variety of topics and issues related to the program and to the future of education in both countries. This again provided opportunities for faculty and classroom teachers to exchange ideas, methodologies and discuss critical issues faced by students in both countries.

**Year 7: Curriculum changes.** Several things changed as the program resumed in Summer 2000. A decision was made to move the students directly to Querétaro after a brief one-week orientation at SDSU, rather than the six-week summer session in San Diego of previous cohorts. This would ease the financial obligation for those who did not live in San Diego (dormitories were available very inexpensively for the one week), and students would very quickly begin their Mexican living experience. Another change was that CSU faculty would go to the Querétaro site and teach some of the initial classes that had previously been offered at SDSU. This would provide opportunities for CSU faculty to meet and interact with their Mexican counterparts, as well as ease the students into the Mexican curriculum. The students would remain in Mexico until the end of March each year, when they would return to San Diego for an extended period (approximately ten weeks), to complete California-based coursework and student teaching.

In the curriculum itself, some courses were added to the California portion of the program to ensure that recently approved standards were addressed by the BCLAD teacher candidates. An additional unit of ELD/SDAIE methods was added in the Mexico portion of the program, as many of the student teachers have been asked to teach small groups of children the basics of English, to act as role models for English in the classroom, and to tutor Escuela Normal students in English while the Escuela Normal students reciprocated by helping the California students

improve their Spanish. This provided additional opportunities for a true exchange between the California students and their counterparts in Mexico.

The Mexico BCLAD program began in its new environment with 19 students. A new location was found for the indigenous (*internado*) experience in Atlacomulco, approximately two hours from Querétaro in the Estado de Mexico. Since the students would need more time in San Diego, the program began at the end of June and the students returned to San Diego at the end of March. During the summer, they took intensive Spanish language classes at the ITESM, where the undergraduate program is housed, and their BCLAD courses at the Escuela Normal, primarily from Escuela Normal faculty. Students were integrated with the Normal students in a variety of ways. Another change was that the applicants for the program tended to have a higher proficiency in Spanish than their predecessors in Mexico City. Regardless, students' level of Spanish and knowledge of the community and culture all were enhanced by the experience.

**Year 8: Second Year in Querétaro.** Again, changes were made after a year in Querétaro. All of the public school teaching experiences were moved to the central part of the city, where many rural students are brought for their education. A week-long rural experience was added at the end of the fall semester, allowing the BCLAD students to live and work with Normal students in Jalpan, a town in the Sierra Gorda, approximately four hours from Querétaro. This was deemed a highlight of the year, as was the experience in Atlacomulco. Also, in order to intermix the BCLAD and the Normal students, an attempt was made to have them share the math methods course. This was not overly successful due to conflicts in both groups' schedules, and it was decided to investigate other avenues for exchanges. Graduates of the program, however, were again in high demand in the schools in California and were fully prepared to meet the needs of bilingual/bicultural classrooms. One of the graduates from this year remained in Querétaro and has obtained a teaching position in one of the local private schools.

**Year 9: Third Year in Querétaro.** The current group of 19 BCLAD Mexico candidates have just begun their preparation. They have benefited from knowledge gained during each of the past years, and yet they still will encounter change. They have named themselves "El Grupo con ganas" (The Enthusiasts) and indeed they are.

### **Key Aspects of Program Development: Faculty**

Working with Mexican faculty colleagues has presented special challenges. The faculty, who have been talented academics and many have strong background knowledge in constructivism, also have needed to understand the California requirements for the teaching profession. This was initially solved by working with teacher educators at the Universidad Pedagógica Nacional in Mexico City, and later by working with professors at la Escuela Normal del Estado de Querétaro and others involved in teacher development. Nonetheless, without imposing a "California system", dialogue ensued to reconcile the credentialing needs of US institutions, which often are different from those used in Mexico, with the standards, style and strengths of teacher formation in Mexico. In addition,

much planning and discussion was required to develop the roles of supporting teachers at school sites and the university supervisors for the varied student teaching experiences in Mexico. After three years in Querétaro, these issues have been largely resolved. The faculty and supervisors in Querétaro have attended several workshops on clinical supervision, and several have had the opportunity to visit their counterparts in California, visiting schools, teacher preparation classrooms and exchanging ideas with their peers.

### Intercambios

As mentioned throughout this paper, an underlying agenda for the Mexico BCLAD program is to provide avenues for exchanges of a general educational nature, among student teachers of both countries, and among the teachers/professors in both countries. It is also intended to "give back" to Mexico, in a way to thank the Estado de Querétaro for this unique learning opportunity for our students. This has occurred in a variety of ways. As mentioned, several Mexican faculty have been hosted by their counterparts in California. When CSU faculty visit the Mexico sites, they share perspectives with their colleagues here.

More specifically, the experience of curriculum development has helped educators from both the US and Mexico understand the passions and challenges of "the other side." U.S. educators have been impressed with the perseverance, flexibility and fervor of Mexican educators who give beyond the normal bounds of work hours and energies to the development of both program and students. Mexican educators have learned new techniques from faculty and students, including field experience coaching and supervision models. The bridge from theory to practice has been a key element of the exchange, facilitated by meetings, visits to schools and cooperation in the planning and delivery of classes. A case in point is the notion of "constructivism," a key concept with roots in Dewey's social development, Vygotsky's proximal development, and Freire's critical pedagogy theories. At the theoretical level, parties on both sides of the international exchange understand the concepts, but at the practical level, sometimes the notion of constructivism has meant using construction paper and manual arts, rather than concrete academic examples of concepts. On the other hand, the practice of reliance on mechanical views of standards has been mediated by more realistic expectations, grounded in the social life of students. In both cases the exchange has created a better foundation for educational activities which each group with its own limitations had previously implemented in isolation from the foundation of students' social and developmental context.

Students have other opportunities to mix with Mexican students through the *talleres* (workshops) that are offered at both the ITESM campus, and at the Escuela Normal. At the ITESM these *talleres* are usually either in the sports (e.g. soccer, basketball), or in the arts (e.g. Ballet Folklórico, guitar). At the Escuela Norma, the *talleres* cover a broad range of areas but are specifically applied to the field of education. These may include using arts and games in the classroom, or issues of human sexuality. One *taller* provides instruction in Hñähñv (Otomí), an indigenous language spoken widely in the region.

The students themselves have also "left their mark" in a variety of ways, from sharing music of both countries, to helping to make school campuses more environmentally conscious. Many of the California students have shared housing with their Mexican peers, and a few have married Mexican nationals whom they have met here. During their indigenous experiences, now in Jalpan and Atacomulco, they live with the families of Escuela Normal students or teachers and have exciting exchanges of life experiences, and complete community projects together at their school sites. This too is a major purpose of the program.

The exchange seems to have benefited US students and faculty more, if numerical count is the measure. Fewer Mexican students and faculty have visited the U.S., and over 115 students and a dozen U.S. faculty have visited and taught in Mexico. But the conversations and exchanges among colleagues in Mexico have positive effects: broadening the horizons of Mexican educators, sharing methods in symposia and developing projects. As the exchange enters new phases of teacher development and involves more institutions, the possibilities of research, short-term teaching, study visits in the U.S., and team instruction hold great promise. Clearly, the exchange has untapped potential, and the trust engendered over the past 10 years will allow international cooperation to expand.

These experiences have promoted teachers' probing beneath the surface of their intellect and emotions to the following questions:

- What kind of teacher do I want to be?
- What are the origins of what I know?
- What are the political, social, cultural, linguistic, gendered, and emotional circumstances in which I have learned?
- What kind of changes do I need to make to my teaching that will enhance students' learning?

These intercambios engage teachers in professional learning that is different from other forms of learning in California universities. It involves far more than the traditional teacher preparation program where most of the emphasis is on meeting the standards.

The major purpose of the Mexico BCLAD program is to position students in environments that require them to learn from a wide array of experiences and sources, including their own past experiences and pre-conceived notions. Through this process they come to understand the importance of the whole person in the act of learning, unlearning, and knowing.

## **Bilingual Development**

### **Formal Instruction**

Students begin their time in Mexico with an intensive three-week summer session of Spanish language instruction. The ITESM now is the site for this coursework. This is followed in the fall semester by an additional course in Spanish and one in Latin American Culture, taught in Spanish. In addition, those

that test "advanced" on the ITESM examination, are able to take additional advanced courses, e.g. in Spanish literature and drama. Finally, in the short winter semester, students take a course in Children's Literature, again taught in Spanish. At the ENEQ, in the summer and/or fall they take a special course in Spanish for educators. This course varies in content, but generally includes discussion of the key influences on education in Mexico, the history of curricular changes, and may also include vocabulary specific to the discipline of education. In addition, virtually all of the methods classes taught at the ENEQ in the fall semester are taught entirely in Spanish, while some of the texts may be in English.

### School Experiences

In the fall semester, CSU BCLAD student teachers spend one day per week in a private school, observing the teacher, helping with small group work and perhaps giving some instruction in the English language. They are able to listen to both the teacher and the children as they interact in Spanish. This again provides another opportunity to enhance their Spanish language skills.

In the spring semester, candidates begin their formal student teaching in public schools in Querétaro. In the fourth and fifth weeks, if they are ready, they take full responsibility for teaching in the classroom, including preparing lessons, evaluating, and instructing the students all in Spanish. This again pushes the student to higher levels of Spanish language usage. This experience is followed by three additional weeks living and teaching in the Atlacomulco area of the State of Mexico. Living with the families of students or teachers they also have ample opportunity to practice using Spanish on a daily basis.

### Informal Experiences

CSU students are encouraged to get to know their Mexican counterparts as much as possible. This experience begins with a one month "home stay" with a Mexican family. In this more informal environment, students are pushed to learn to use everyday Spanish and to get to know the ways and household practices of the Mexican family. They are then encouraged to either stay with their "families" for the remainder of their time in Querétaro, or to find independent housing with ITESM or Escuela Normal students. When CSU students share apartments together the tendency is to fall back into using English. Since the students are typically social and young, they often attend fiestas and go to the local discos where they have the opportunity to meet Queretanos, often outside the field of education. This provides a great opportunity to expand their language skills and to make new friends.

### Formal Evaluation of Spanish Language Development

The California students, as mentioned at the beginning, come with a variety of knowledge of Spanish. Some are fluently bilingual and biliterate; others (about one third) are competent in oral language, but lack competency in literacy skills, and a small number are challenged at all levels. They have a variety of opportunities to enhance their Spanish language skills, regardless of their level.

Here are some of their comments on the process:

*I remember feeling a significant difference in my language ability after I returned to Querétaro in January. All of a sudden I could go back and forth between English and Spanish with out really thinking about it. Then, when we started teaching in the public schools I was even giving class in Spanish in my sleep! The biggest growth in my professional vocabulary in Spanish was both in the public schools in Querétaro and my student teaching in San Diego. In both situations it was necessary to develop language that was more specific to subject matter. - Debra*

*I felt like I made a significant improvement in my Spanish language abilities after the Fall semester. After taking that intensive class with Dr. Gomez, I felt that I could have written a dissertation in Spanish (okay, I would have still had some mistakes, but still) because of his attention to detail in teaching us to write. I still know that there is a lot of improvements that I need to make with my Spanish and for that reason, I wanted to stay in Mexico longer, but I am more than happy because I can now say that I am fluent in Spanish. The most significant experiences I had were speaking to friends in Spanish and taking classes in Spanish all day. Those two aspects were without a doubt the two major contributions to my speaking Spanish fluently. - Trichette*

*Somewhere along the line, probably in the spring, I realized that it no longer pained me to read a book in Spanish. I could read and understand just as if it were in English. I felt very successful because being able to read in two languages equally opens many doors. - Veronica.*

Student growth in Spanish language competence can be clearly seen in this program, based on the assessment of participants over seven completed years. We now have some 100 students to assess this experimental program, making it amenable to in-depth analysis of student growth. Students have arrived with Spanish skills roughly of four types: (1) nearly native speakers, with varying literacy skills, (2) good formal skills but lacking fluency, (3) intermediate skills with many mistakes and hesitations, and (4) weak productive skills, but able to comprehend. Students who compose the first two groups are typically Latino students and students who have studied Spanish extensively. Some of the second group had already lived in Spain or Latin America during their undergraduate years. These two groups of students parallel the bilingual program students in California State University campus-based BCLAD (bilingual) teacher preparation programs. Although they might otherwise pass the assessments and achieve certification, the chief benefit to them is the intensive living and study in Spanish which rapidly and dramatically increases their skills. Typically, about one-third to half of the students have been in the first or second group. They have shown gains in the pre-post assessment that are not numerically high (improving 3-9 points on a 30 point scale for oral fluency, and 4-16 points on a 100 point scale for all skills), but have moved impressively from mastery in the 80% range to mastery in the 90% range (Attinasi & Rutter, 2002).



The gains of the third and fourth group, however, demonstrate the benefit of the program among students who otherwise would not improve to professional literacy levels of Spanish within the one year typical of credential programs. In one year, many students who were at the low-intermediate level, moved from struggling to speak complete sentences, and inability to read with difficulty and fatigue after a half-hour lecture in Spanish, to living the life of Latin American students. They discussed topics as easily and deeply in Spanish as in English. They read textbooks and hungered for interaction with Mexican culture at the level of working families, university professionals and student peers. These groups are composed of white, black and Asian American students, and Latinos raised in the U.S, mostly in English. In the pre- and post-test numerical data, students from these groups gained 15-22 points on the 30 point oral component (300-500% improvement in one year!) and 30-50 points on the 100 point scale, moving typically from 40% to 80% mastery of speaking, writing, oral reading comprehension in one year (Attinasi & Rutter, 2002).

In addition to the quantifiable increase in Spanish language skills, these candidates also became teachers able to provide instruction in diverse cultural settings. Their Spanish courses and immersion experience were not aimed at general language mastery and cultural contact. Rather, they were placed in specific teacher preparation and school practicum settings. From these elements of the program, they became capable in the educative process, working with several approaches to curriculum, in-school environments, several community settings and most importantly, the kinds of working-class background Latino students who represent a significant part of the demographic increase, the pedagogical challenge, and the societal commitment to equity education in California and U.S. schools.

## Conclusion

The remainder of this article will be from the voices of past students regarding their becoming bilingual, bicultural and biliterate through their experience in Mexico. Their accounts show that what they learned through this program is intimately connected to what they already knew and to their development as accomplished bilingual teachers.

*Así que este mensaje es producto de las varias invasiones de la nostalgia. Cada vez que veo las fotografías de nuestra estancia en México me trae varios recuerdos de ustedes, todos agradables por supuesto. Me conmueve ver imágenes de las tantas cosas maravillosas. Lo que a mí me sorprende es el logro de haber tenido contacto con tantas cosas y personas tan dispares tanto en la cultura mexicana, el arte, la literatura, la política o la polémica, el cine, la crítica, la música como el ámbito académico que es nuestro campo profesional. - Gabriel*

*My participation in this program has allowed me to view life through multiple perspectives, I came into this program with a couple of windows to my house, I now have multiple windows. - Jessica*

*This program has allowed me to come to know teaching as a relational activity by becoming a caring, empathetic teacher, which includes care for self, students, their language, culture, parents, and their communities.- Jay*

*My experiences in the private, public, and indigenous schools, both in and out of class, have helped me to realize that teaching in all its grandeur, is plainly about making personal connections with students and their communities.-Gisela*

*The entire process taught me to "think like a teacher" in two worlds, Mexico and California. It taught me the interconnectedness of the intellectual, spiritual, emotional, social, and moral dimensions involved in teaching.-Larry*

*My involvement with this program developed me as a professional, but more importantly as a human being.-Daniel*

*I remember this program in a bitter-sweet manner, when things got tough, in a country that I was unfamiliar with, and trying to improve my language skills, I got to know who I really was first as a human being, then a professional. It's in moments of discomfort that you come to know who you really are. I was transformed!-Paul*

*I learned so much about teaching and learning. This experience opened my eyes to "critical pedagogy." I continue to question what is happening in the area of bilingual education. Because of this I continue to develop political clarity and have proceeded to a leadership position in bilingual education.-Linda*

Our graduates' voices depict how this program has allowed them to develop beyond what traditional teacher education programs can provide in California. Through this program teachers have gone through the process of learning about the Mexico and California standards for teaching. Most significantly, they have become reflective practitioners by developing not only in the areas of teaching strategies for second language learners, content area standards, and classroom management, they have developed in the area of "self-knowledge." To attain self-knowledge required their participation in a shared cultural metaphor and the continuity of knowledge, perception, wisdom, and experience afforded to them through this program. Teachers become empowered through the realization that they are part of a greater human story of being and becoming. They learn to expand their vision of themselves and their teaching, and that their contributions to education reach beyond the California Standards for the Teaching Profession. They come to the place that educators talk about.

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