

The Impact of National and State Policy on Elementary School Foreign Language Programs: The Iowa Case Study

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Abstract: *This article reviews selected national policy recommendations and examines their impact on state policy making in Iowa, specifically in terms of the number and quality of Iowa elementary school foreign language programs and teacher qualifications from the mid-1980s through the 1990s. Understanding the effect that these policies have had on early language programs in Iowa may help the profession determine the impact of national policy on state educational programs. This study suggests that future research on the impact of national policies in other states can help professionals design strategies for shaping policies in support of foreign language programs that begin in the early grades and continue through secondary school, building skills across levels.*

Introduction

Historical Perspective

A historical review of U.S. elementary school foreign language programs in the last half of the 20th century reveals that, although these programs grew rapidly in popularity and number in the 1950s and early 1960s (Andersson, 1969), many disappeared in the late 1960s and 1970s. In the early 1980s, encouraged by the report of the President's Commission on Foreign Language and International Studies (1979), support for early language programs revived. As new programs were established, educators who had examined research on earlier programs urged schools to avoid the mistakes of the past. These mistakes included beginning programs without well-defined curriculum content, articulation across levels of instruction, program evaluation, and funding; and hiring unqualified teachers (Curtain & Pesola, 1994; Heining-Boynton, 1990; Lipton, 1988; Rosenbusch, 1992).

Recent Interest

In a major breakthrough for the foreign language profession, the Goals 2000: Educate America Act (1994) named foreign languages as one of the core curricular areas. This resulted in the development of student standards that encouraged a long sequence of instruction from early elementary school through high school and college (National Standards, 1996, 1999). Brain research provided new insight into language learning, and articles in popular magazines, such as *Better Homes and Gardens* (Holman, 1998) and *Child* (Dumas, 1999), that address this research intensified parental interest in foreign language study. A 1997 survey provided clear evidence of the growing interest in early language learning, reporting an almost 10% increase from 1987 (22%) to 1997 (31%) in U.S. elementary schools offering foreign language instruction (Rhodes & Branaman, 1999).

Although Met and Rhodes (1990) and Tucker (1999) suggested priorities for research in

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early foreign language education, they did not identify the impact of policy decisions on early language programs as one of these research priorities. Yet since the 1990s, eight states have mandated the study of foreign languages at the elementary school level.¹ Research on how these mandates have affected the number and quality of programs would provide invaluable information to the profession. Similarly, research on the impact of policy decisions in the other 42 states is needed because, although less dramatic than mandates, these decisions also affect the number and quality of programs.

Purpose

In *Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies* (1984), a classic work in the field of public policy, John Kingdon defines policymaking as a process that includes setting an agenda, specifying possible options, choosing among those options, and implementing the chosen options. This article reviews selected policy recommendations for foreign language education at the national level, assesses their impact at the state level, and examines how the resulting state policies affect elementary school foreign language programs. Through this analysis, the profession may gain a better understanding of the impact of national and state policies on the number and quality of program — an understanding that can help educators identify ways of shaping a supportive climate for foreign language programs from the early grades throughout elementary and secondary school.

Elementary school foreign language programs in Iowa have been well documented since the mid-1980s; the state's programs have been surveyed four times since 1985 and the resulting data have been compared with two national surveys. In addition, the nature of state-level policies and their impact on early language programs have been documented from the mid-1980s through the 1990s. No connection has been made, however, between the recommendations of the President's Commission on Foreign Language and International Studies (1979) and Iowa policy, a relationship that is highlighted in this article. In the pages that follow, data collection is described first, followed by an analysis of policy and school program data, and then by discussion, conclusions, and suggestions for future activities.

Data Collection

Data on Policy Decisions

To examine the relationship between national and state policy recommendations, the report of the President's Commission on Foreign Language and International Studies (1979) was reviewed and the impact of those policy recommendations on the report of the Iowa Governor's Task Force (1983) was examined. To identify policy deci-

sions significant to Iowa elementary school foreign language programs, data were collected from surveys, newsletters, and reports from 1983 through 1999. In addition, interviews were conducted with the Iowa Department of Education (DE) Foreign Language Consultant and Iowa educators involved in foreign language education from the mid-1980s through 1999.

Data on Elementary School Foreign Language Programs

Surveys of Iowa elementary school foreign language programs were conducted in 1985 (Rosenbusch, 1986), 1988 (Rosenbusch, 1989), 1991 (Rosenbusch, 1993), and 1999 (Rosenbusch, 2000). The first two surveys were distributed through the *Iowa FLES Newsletter*; therefore, although they provide a sense of early foreign language education in the state, they were not rigorous in their administration. The 1991 survey, which was administered and analyzed by the Iowa Department of Education, was sent to all superintendents of public school districts and principals of accredited nonpublic schools with elementary and/or middle schools in Iowa. The 1988 survey was adapted with permission from the 1987 U.S. survey conducted by the Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL), Washington, DC (Rhodes & Oxford, 1988). The 1999 Iowa survey, which was the most thorough, was adapted with the permission of CAL from its 1997 national survey. Because of the similarity of the instruments, Iowa results can be compared with 1987 and 1997 national results.

The 1999 Iowa survey was conducted by the National K–12 Foreign Language Resource Center in collaboration with the Iowa Department of Education, which provided its mailing service. In December 1998, 558 surveys were sent to 375 superintendents of Iowa public school districts, 182 principals of accredited nonpublic schools that teach students at the K–6 level,² and one principal of a school governed by the State Board of Regents. Of the 558 responses, 251 were returned by mail or fax and 307 were completed in telephone interviews, for a total response rate of 100%.

Results

Policy Decisions in the 1980s

Background for Decisions

During the late 1970s, foreign language study in Iowa at the secondary level was at a low level. In 1979/1980, 14.7% of grade 9–12 public school students were enrolled in foreign language study (Department of Public Instruction, 1986). No documentation of elementary or middle school foreign language programs is available for this year because the Iowa Department of Education (DE) did not collect data on programs at these levels of instruction.³ At that time, Iowa did not have a state foreign language consultant; that position

had been eliminated earlier in a reorganization of the DE.

National Policy Recommendations

In 1979, the President’s Commission on Foreign Language and International Studies reported that “America’s incompetence in foreign languages is nothing short of scandalous, and it is becoming worse” (p. 5). The Commission recommended that “corrective action must be the concern of all levels of the educational system, from kindergarten through graduate training and research” (p. 10).

Among the 65 principal recommendations of the Commission were nine foreign language recommendations, including, “All State Departments of Education should have Foreign Language Specialists. Every state should establish an Advisory Council on Foreign Language and International Studies to advise and recommend on ways to strengthen these fields in their education systems” (p. 13).

In response to the President’s Commission report, Iowa’s governor created a task force on foreign language studies and international education in 1983. One of the first steps the task force took was to review the recommendations of the President’s Commission on Foreign Language and International Studies (Governor’s Task Force, 1983, p. v). At the conclusion of its study, the Governor’s Task Force stated that it wished to “acknowledge its indebtedness” to the President’s Commission report (p. 34). Thus, the report and policy recommendations of the President’s Commission had a direct influence on the work of the Iowa Governor’s Task Force.

State Policy Recommendations

The Governor’s Task Force report included seven recommendations; Recommendations 1, 2, 3, and 5 were especially related to the teaching of foreign languages in kindergarten through grade six (K–6):

Recommendation 1: Promote a comprehensive foreign language and international studies program for Iowa.

Recommendation 2: Promote and assure articulation and cooperation among the various level of foreign language teaching.

Recommendation 3: Strengthen programs of teacher preparation, teacher certification, and continuing education for teachers in foreign languages and international studies.

Recommendation 4: Promote international exchange programs between “sister” cities and among educational institutions, students, faculty members, teachers, business professionals, and families.

Recommendation 5: Develop pilot programs for implementing specific recommendations in the Task Force’s report.

Recommendation 6: Develop and exploit the benefits

of a productive relationship among educational institutions and the business community and encourage efforts to explore these benefits.

Recommendation 7: Request the Governor, the State Board of Regents, and the Department of Public Instruction to establish a Commission on Foreign Language Studies and International Education with a continuing charge to implement the recommendations of this report. (Governor’s Task Force, 1983, pp. 17–31).

Impact of Recommendations on Decisions

As a result of the policies recommended by the President’s Task Force Commission (1979) and the Governor’s Task Force (1983), in the mid-1980s the Iowa Board of Education, the Iowa Board of Educational Examiners, and the Iowa Department of Education (DE) took action to support foreign language education at all levels and, specifically, to encourage the establishment of elementary school foreign language programs. Over the next six years, the Iowa legislature allocated funds in support of these policy decisions. The result of these decisions was a positive impact on K–6 foreign language education in the state (P. Hoekstra, personal communication, October 31, 2000).⁴

The first of these funded policy decisions was the reestablishment of the position of the DE Foreign Language Consultant in 1985. As recommended by the President’s Task Force Commission (1979), Iowa Governor established the Iowa Commission on Foreign Language Studies and International Education in 1988. The first of the Commission’s charges was “coordinating and enhancing efforts to inform and educate Iowans on the importance of foreign language study and international education” (Executive Order Number 135, 1988). Other important policy decisions included the following:

Grant Funding. The DE Foreign Language Consultant

Table 1

TOTAL K–6 GRANT FUNDS PER YEAR (IOWA 1985 – 1991)	
Academic Year	Amount of Grant Funds
1985/1986	\$56,577
1986/1987	\$83,908
1987/1988	\$97,943
1988/1989	\$65,907
1989/1990	\$63,784
1990/1991	\$69,841

Source: P. Hoekstra, personal communication, July 6, 1996

designed an elementary school foreign language grant program that was funded for a six-year period (1985–1991). This program offered two types of grants: (1) program planning (up to \$1,000) and (2) program implementation (up to \$10,000) for a total of \$437,960. (See Table 1.) (P. Hoekstra, personal communication; July 6, 1996).

The Iowa FLES Newsletter. This newsletter, which was

published from 1985 through 1994, received partial support (\$500/year) from the DE from 1986 to 1990. Serving as a link among educators, it published articles on policy, professional development opportunities, grant funding, curriculum, and teaching materials. The newsletter had over 1,000 subscribers.

Professional Development Workshops. Iowa elementary school foreign language teachers were offered these workshops annually from 1987 to 1991. The workshops received full or partial funding from the DE at amounts ranging from \$1,000 to \$2,450. National leaders in early language learning provided all but one workshop, which was provided by Iowa teachers.

Model Professional Development Institutes. These were funded by the DE in the summers of 1986 and 1987. Offered to certified foreign language teachers (grades 7–12), the Institutes provided professional development opportunities that helped qualify the participants for the new K–6 foreign language licensure endorsement.

K–6 Foreign Language Licensure Endorsement. The requirements of the K–6 foreign language licensure endorsement were designed by a committee invited by the Foreign Language Consultant, recommended as part of the

Figure 1

NUMBER OF ELEMENTARY SCHOOL FOREIGN LANGUAGE PROGRAMS (IOWA 1985 TO 1999)

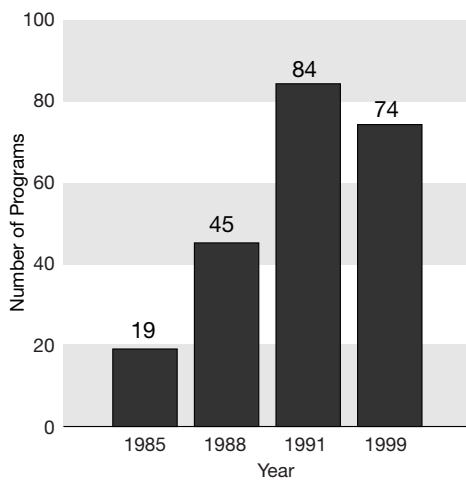


Figure 2

PERCENTAGE OF PUBLIC AND PRIVATE ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS TEACHING FOREIGN LANGUAGES (U.S. 1997, CENTRAL STATES 1997, AND IOWA 1999)

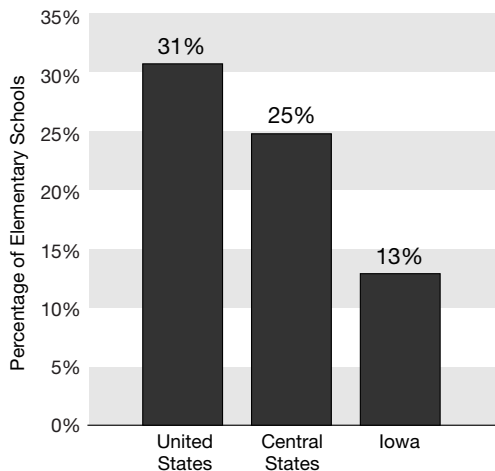
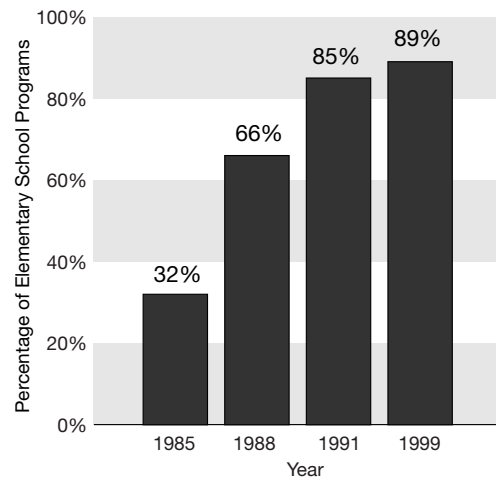


Figure 3

IOWA ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS WITH FOREIGN LANGUAGE PROGRAMS THAT TEACH FOREIGN LANGUAGE DURING THE REGULAR SCHOOL DAY (1985, 1988, 1991, 1999)*



*In 1985, questionnaire was distributed by direct mail to known programs; in 1988, questionnaire was distributed by direct mail to known programs and through publication in the *Iowa FLES Newsletter*; in 1991 and 1999, questionnaire was distributed by Iowa Department of Education to all school districts in Iowa.

restructuring of teacher licensure by the DE, and accepted by the Iowa Board of Educational Examiners in 1988K-6.⁵

In response to the requirements of the new K-6 licensure endorsement, Iowa colleges designed courses and filed programs for meeting the endorsement with the Iowa Board of Education. When a filed program met the approval of the Iowa Board of Education, that college could begin recommending those students who had completed the required program of study to the Board of Educational Examiners for approval for the K-6 foreign language licensure endorsement.

Policy Decisions in the 1990s

Most of the factors, including funding by the state legislature and certain DE policies, that positively impacted elementary school foreign language programs in Iowa in the 1980s disappeared in the 1990s. The following timeline marks the reversal of policies that from 1985 through 1989 had encouraged elementary school foreign language programs:

- 1990: Last partial DE funding for the *Iowa FLES Newsletter*
- 1991: Last Professional Development Institute funded by DE
Last DE grants awarded for elementary school foreign language program planning and implementation
- 1992: DE Foreign Language Consultant assigned to some generalist tasks unrelated to foreign language education
- 1995: Last issue of the *Iowa FLES Newsletter* published
- 1996: DE Foreign Language Consultant assigned only to generalist tasks
Last meeting of the Iowa Commission on Foreign Language Studies and International Education
- 1998: DE Foreign Language Consultant resigns; position is left vacant.

Elementary School Foreign Language Program Data

Data from four Iowa surveys (1985, 1988, 1991, and 1999) and two national surveys (1987 and 1997) are used to describe the nature of Iowa elementary school foreign language programs in comparison with national programs from the mid-1980s through the late-1990s. All of the Iowa surveys and the two national surveys include both curricular and extracurricular programs as well as public and private programs in the total program numbers.

Number of K-6 Foreign Language Programs

The 1985 Iowa survey identified 19 elementary school foreign language programs, 14 of which had been organized since 1983 (Rosenbusch, 1986). The 1988 survey revealed that the number of programs in the state had more than

doubled, increasing to 45 (Rosenbusch, 1989). By the 1991 Iowa survey, the number of programs had almost doubled again to a total of 84 programs (Rosenbusch, 1993).⁶ The 1999 survey showed a decrease in the number of programs; just 74 programs were reported (Rosenbusch, 2000). (See Figure 1.)⁷

The 1997 national survey revealed that 31% of the nation's elementary schools offered foreign language programs and that in the 16 states of the Central States Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (CSC), 25% offered programs (Rhodes & Branaman, 1999).⁸ By 1999, 13% of Iowa elementary schools offered programs, less than half of what was reported nationwide and just over half compared with the CSC region. (See Figure 2.)

Curricular vs. Extracurricular Programs

One positive trend, which has continued in Iowa since 1985, is the shift in program type from extracurricular to curricular programs (taught during the school day). The most dramatic change came during the three-year period from 1985 to 1988 in which the percentage of curricular programs more than doubled, from 32% to 66%. (See Figure 3.) The percentage of curricular programs in Iowa continued to increase through the 1990s and by 1999 most of Iowa's programs were curricular (89%). These percentages are close to those reported in the U.S. survey (92%).

Program Models

The 1987 U.S. survey defined four types of elementary school foreign language program models and reported the percentage of elementary schools offering these types of programs (Rhodes & Oxford, 1988).⁹ In the 1988 Iowa survey, respondents were asked to identify their schools' program model(s) using these same definitions. (See Figure 4).

Most of the Iowa programs in 1988 (94%) were of the less intensive types — FLEX (31%), FLES (44%), and a combination of FLEX and FLES (19%). The 1987 U.S. survey reported a smaller percentage (86%) of less intensive programs — FLEX (41%), FLES (45%). In Iowa, just two programs (4%) were typical of Intensive FLES; no immersion programs were reported in Iowa. Nationally, 12% of the programs were Intensive FLES and 2% were Immersion (Rhodes & Oxford, 1988).

A comparison of the types of programs offered in Iowa in 1991 and 1999 reveals a small trend toward more intensive programs (Figure 4). The percentage of elementary schools offering FLEX programs decreased from 1991 to 1999 by 16% and the number of FLES programs increased by 4%. In addition, neither Intensive FLES nor Immersion programs were reported in 1991, while 3% of the programs in 1999 were Intensive FLES and 1% were Immersion.

In comparison with the U.S. data, in 1999 more of

Iowa's early language programs (96%) were of the less intensive types (FLEX and FLES) than were 1997 U.S. programs (79%). (See Figure 5.) Only 4% of Iowa's programs defined language proficiency as a program goal (Intensive FLES and Immersion), compared with 21% of U.S. programs. Of these, just one Iowa program (1%) provided instruction that encouraged students to gain a high level of proficiency (Immersion), whereas 8% of U.S. programs offered this type of instruction.

Funding Sources

In 1985, 8 of the 19 Iowa programs (42%) required parents to pay tuition. By 1988, parent tuition was the funding source identified as the least frequently used. In 1988, regular school funds were the most frequently named funding source. This trend continued in 1999, when funding for Iowa programs was reported to come most frequently from the regular school budget (73%), somewhat more than for U.S. schools (68%).

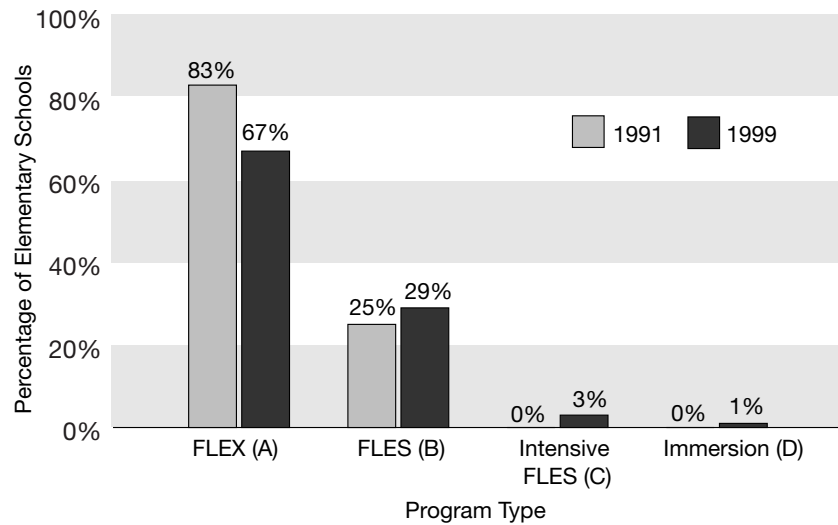
In 1988, the third-ranked source of funding for elementary school foreign language programs was state and/or federal grants.¹⁰ By 1991, 38% of programs reported having received grant funding from the Iowa Department of Education at some time between 1985 and 1990 (Rosenbusch, 1996). By 1999, a much smaller percentage of Iowa schools were accessing federal or state grants (11%); this was less than what U.S. schools reported in 1997 (15%).

Teacher Qualifications

In 1999, more teachers in Iowa programs (30%) were certified for foreign language teaching at the elementary school level than were 1997 U.S. teachers (19%). (See Figure 6.)¹¹ Also, twice the percentage of teachers in Iowa pro-

Figure 4

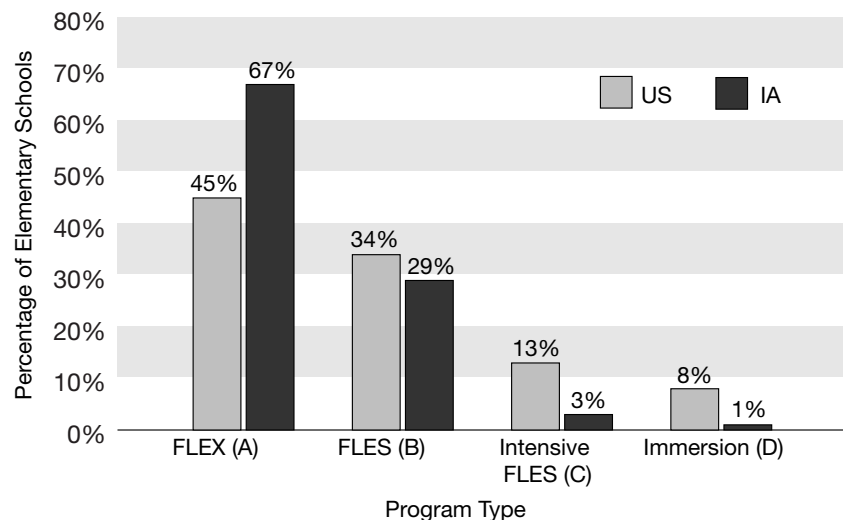
TYPES OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE PROGRAMS OFFERED BY IOWA ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS (1991 AND 1999)*



*Some schools have more than one program type. Programs were classified according to the program descriptions used in the 1988 and 1999 questionnaires. See Appendix A for descriptions of program types.

Figure 5

PROGRAM TYPES OFFERED BY ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS WITH FOREIGN LANGUAGE PROGRAMS (U.S. 1997 AND IOWA 1999)*



*Some schools have more than one program type. See Appendix A for descriptions of program types.

grams (30%) than in the U.S. generally (15%) were certified both for elementary school and for elementary school foreign language teaching.

In U.S. schools in 1997, the largest percentage of elementary school foreign language teachers were native speakers of the language (46%), whereas only 7% of Iowa teachers in 1999 were native speakers. This is a decrease from 27% in Iowa in 1988.

The percentage of certified elementary school teachers who were teaching but who were not certified in a foreign language was similar for Iowa (30%) in 1999 and the U.S. (26%) in 1997. In 1999, Iowa had twice the number of secondary certified teachers who were not certified for teaching foreign language at the elementary school level (30%) teaching in its programs than did the United States in 1997 (15%), an increase for Iowa from 1988 (23%). In Iowa in

1988, just 3% of the teachers fit this category.

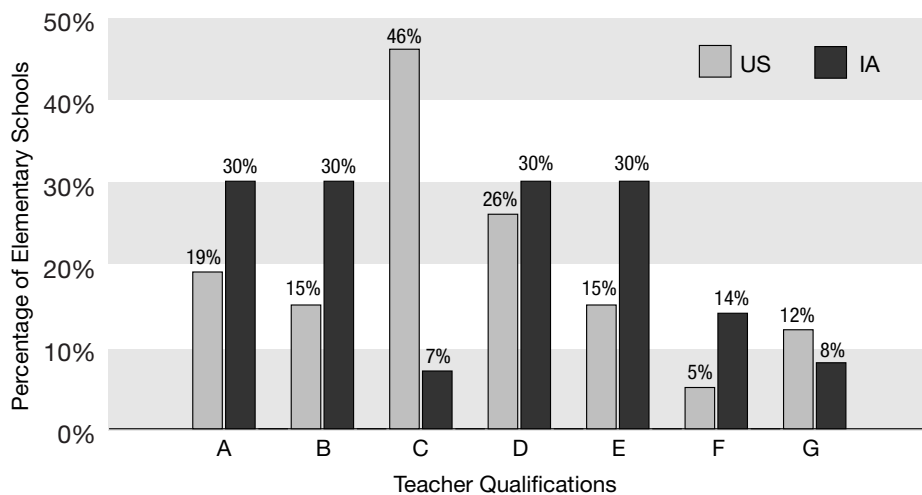
In 1999, Iowa programs reported almost three times the percentage of high school/college students teaching in its programs (14%) than 1997 U.S. programs reported (5%). This is a decrease from the 39% reported in Iowa in 1988. Both 1999 Iowa (8%) and 1997 U.S. (12%) programs also reported that others who were not certified taught in their programs.

Discussion

The impact on elementary school foreign language programs of the funding provided by the Iowa legislature and the policies of the Iowa Department of Education (DE), the Iowa Board of Education, and the Iowa Board of Educational Examiners can be observed most clearly in program numbers and quality, and in teacher qualifications.

Figure 6

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHER QUALIFICATIONS (U.S. 1997 AND IOWA 1999)*



*Totals add up to more than 100% because respondents could check more than one response.

Teacher Qualifications:

- A: Certified for foreign language teaching at the elementary school level
- B: Certified for foreign language teaching at the elementary school level and for elementary school teaching
- C: Native speakers of the language being taught
- D: Certified for elementary school teaching but not specifically for foreign language teaching
- E: Certified for foreign language teaching at the secondary school level but not at the elementary level
- F: High school or college students
- G: Others who are not certified

Program Numbers and Quality

During the 1980s, the DE reestablished the position of Foreign Language Consultant, provided funding for annual professional development workshops and model summer professional development institutes, and provided partial support for the *Iowa FLES Newsletter*. All of these decisions provided strong support for elementary school foreign language programs. The most direct impact on early language programs, however, was the grant-funding program.

The Iowa legislature allocated funding in the fall of 1985 “to design and implement foreign language programs for elementary school students” (Baugher, 1986). In the first three years of this grant-funding program, 1985 through 1988, a total of \$238,428 (54% of the total funds) was allocated to elementary school foreign language programs

(Table 1). During this time, the number of programs increased almost two and a half times (240% increase), from 19 programs in 1985 to 45 programs in 1988 (Figure 1). During the next three-year-period, 1989 through 1991, fewer funds were allocated, \$199,532 (46% of the total). During this period, the number of Iowa programs increased less rapidly but still almost doubled (190% increase), to 84 programs. These data suggest that the increase in numbers of Iowa elementary school foreign language programs was closely related to the amount of grant funding available.

The Foreign Language Consultant designed the implementation grants to ensure the quality and continuity of the programs funded. All grants were awarded to applicants that had planned curricular programs — programs held within the regular school day. In addition, applicants were required to provide (1) a statement of school board support for continuing the program after funding ceased and (2) evidence that teacher(s) in the program were certified for teaching K–6 foreign languages.

There is evidence of the effectiveness of the grant-funding program related to the establishment of curricular programs. In 1985 when the DE established the grants, the majority of Iowa programs were extracurricular (taught outside of the school day) (Figure 3). Yet, curricular programs have been the most common type of program in the state since 1988.

Rosenbusch (1996) reports that schools that had received grant funds tried to maintain their programs when the grant funds were no longer available:

A full 53% of those (grant) funds were awarded to programs that continued to provide instruction into 1991. These data suggest that the process of program selection for the grant program was well-conceived and the money was well-invested, resulting in elementary school foreign language programs that continued beyond the year of grant funding (p. 1).

Although teacher qualifications will be addressed in the next section, the fact that the DE grant funding program required teachers to be certified for the K–6 level of instruction encouraged Iowa teachers to seek the K–6 foreign language endorsement (J. Borich, personal communication, October 3, 2001; A. VanBergen, personal communication, October 5, 2001).

From 1991 through 1999, when the grant funding program for elementary school foreign language programs was no longer available and funds for the supporting initiatives had disappeared, the number of Iowa elementary school foreign language programs decreased from 84 to 74 programs, a decrease of 12% (Figure 1). This was in direct opposition to the national trend, whereby there was an almost 10% increase in programs from 1987 to 1997. The result of this decrease in Iowa programs means that by 1999 just slightly more than one Iowa elementary school in

ten offered foreign language study. According to the 1997 U.S. survey, more schools in other midwestern states offered foreign language study (one in four), as did elementary schools nationally (almost one in three) (Figure 2).

Funding for elementary school foreign language programs is an important concern of programs both in Iowa and the United States. In fact, almost half (48%) of the 1999 Iowa elementary school foreign language programs cited the amount of funding needed for a program as “an important concern” (Rosenbusch, 2000).

Of the Iowa schools that did not have a program in 1999, almost three-quarters reported that they would like to add a program. Thus, the 12% decrease in the number of elementary school foreign language programs in Iowa from 1991 to 1999 may not have been related to schools’ lack of desire for programs as much as to difficulty in funding them. Program funding is also an important obstacle to programs nationally. Rhodes and Branaman (1999) report in the 1997 U.S. survey that 46% of schools were not pleased with the amount of funding that they had for their program.

Teacher Qualifications

In 1999, almost one third of the teachers in Iowa’s elementary school foreign language programs were certified for teaching foreign languages at the elementary school level, in contrast to almost one fifth nationally (Figure 6). In addition, almost one third of Iowa teachers were certified both as elementary school teachers and as elementary school foreign language teachers, while nationally, less than one sixth were certified for both. These data suggest that Iowa was doing almost twice as well as the nation in providing licensed elementary school foreign language teachers.

The high percentages of certified elementary school foreign language teachers in Iowa in 1999 resulted from the fact that the Iowa Board of Educational Examiners established a licensure endorsement for K–6 foreign language teachers in 1988. By the 1999 school year, 21 of the state’s 31 colleges and universities offered Iowa Board of Education–approved programs that met the K–6 foreign language licensure requirements (State of Iowa Department of Education, 2000). Had the licensure endorsement not been established, it is unlikely that Iowa’s colleges and universities would have established K–6 foreign language teacher preparation programs, because the programs of study offered by colleges of education respond to state licensure requirements as their first priority (J. Blount, personal communication, January 23, 2002).

Yet the 1999 survey also revealed that Iowa had twice the number of secondary certified foreign language teachers who did not have the elementary school endorsement

but who were teaching a foreign language in the elementary school than was found nationally in 1997. In fact, almost one third of Iowa's early language programs use secondary teachers.

With the endorsement to teach foreign language at the elementary school widely available in Iowa, it is surprising that there was such a high percentage of secondary teachers teaching in elementary school programs without the required certification. In fact, since 1998, one university has offered the methods course required for the endorsement by fiber-optic distance education, making the course readily available throughout the state.

Another difference between Iowa and national programs is the high percentage of high school or college students that teach or assist with elementary school foreign language programs (Figure 6). Iowa has three times the number of teachers of this type as is found nationally. This difference may relate to the fact that Iowa has small rural districts in which upper-level students may be housed nearby or in the same building as the young students. An advantage of using high school or college students to teach, or supplement the teaching in a program, is in the recruitment of future teachers. A disadvantage is that the quality of a program suffers from not using qualified teachers.

Conclusion

Based on longitudinal data on elementary school foreign language programs in Iowa, this study provides evidence that federal policy recommendations influence state policy decisions, and that state policy decisions influence the number and quality of elementary school foreign language programs as well as the qualifications of K–6 foreign language teachers.

During the years when state policies supportive of early foreign language education were in place and fully funded, the number and quality of elementary school foreign language programs increased dramatically. When funding diminished, the DE reversed supportive policies and gradually changed the Foreign Language Consultant position to that of a full-time generalist, several years after which the Consultant resigned. The reversal of state policies and funding resulted in a decrease in the number of elementary school foreign language programs in the state.

Two state policies, however, had a positive impact on Iowa elementary school foreign language programs — an impact that was still evident in 1999. The first of these was the licensure endorsement for teaching a foreign language in kindergarten through sixth grade. Licensure, although difficult to establish, is not easily reversed. The second policy was the requirement that grant funds for implementing elementary school foreign language programs be awarded only for the establishment of curricular programs held within the school day. This policy may have endured

because it was in line with the national focus on making programs available for all students.

Some policies continue to affect programs in spite of changes in political support and funding. Therefore, in times when there is considerable support for elementary school foreign language programs, educators would be wise to advocate for the establishment of policies that will endure when support has waned.

Future Direction

Few researchers have examined the impact of policy on elementary school foreign language programs at the state or national level. Further longitudinal studies are needed, especially in those states that mandate elementary school foreign language programs. Besides quantitative studies, case studies of how educators impact policy are needed.

Our profession has been reluctant to enter the political arena in the past. Yet, those who work to influence policy decisions at the local, state, or national level can provide valuable insight into the impact of advocacy on policy if they maintain careful records of their work. If these educators collaborate with those who gather program data, and if together they analyze the impact of policy on programs over time, we could find evidence that would convince us as a profession that we can influence policy.

An important experiment in advocacy is being carried out in North Carolina, which mandated in 1985 that all students study a foreign language in grades K–5 as part of its Basic Education Program. In part because this mandate had not been enforced or fully funded, the Foreign Language Association of North Carolina and the Foundation for International Education collaborated to establish the nonprofit Alliance for Language Learning to advocate foreign language study in an articulated sequence for students in grades K–12. Business and community leaders, former college presidents, foreign language teachers, and leaders in higher education who are concerned about the need to improve opportunities for foreign language study in the state have since become members of the Alliance (M. L. Redmond, personal communication, January 21, 2002).

The executive director of the Alliance, who is an active state advocate for foreign language education, has reported on her accomplishments during her first year of work as she learned how to communicate effectively with legislators (Hodges & Redmond, 2000). If the Alliance analyzes its influence on policy and the impact of policy on North Carolina K–5 and K–12 programs over time, it may find that its efforts have resulted in positive outcomes for foreign language education. By following the North Carolina experience in advocacy, as well as similar efforts in other states, the profession can learn how to effectively change state policy.

If we can influence state policy, we might also find that we can influence national policy. Perhaps then we, as a profession, will no longer need to wait for world events such as World War II or Sputnik to shape our future. We will have learned strategies for shaping the state and national policies that influence our foreign language programs.

Notes

1. Lewelling and Rennie (1998) identified six states with mandates: Arizona, Arkansas, Louisiana, Montana, North Carolina, and Oklahoma; in 1999, New Jersey established a mandate (J. Jensen, personal communication, September 18, 2001); and in 2001, Wyoming did (A. Tollefson, personal communication, May 18, 2001).
2. There are 210 accredited nonpublic schools but not all teach at the K–6 level.
3. In 1986, the Iowa Department of Public Instruction changed its name to the Department of Education (DE), which is the name that is used for the department in this article.
4. These funds also impacted 7–12 foreign language education, but this article will focus on the impact at the K–6 level.
5. The K–6 foreign language endorsement requires applicants who have licensure at the elementary school level to complete 24 semester hours of a single foreign language, a course in methods of teaching a foreign language at the elementary school level, and a practicum in teaching foreign language at that level. Teachers with licensure at other levels must also complete a course in child development for the elementary school age child and, instead of the practicum, must student teach in the foreign language at the K–6 level.
6. The article referenced reports only on the 72 public school programs; in addition, there were 12 programs in private schools.
7. Data on Iowa programs will continue to be reported by the year of the survey throughout the Results section; however, the references for the surveys, as indicated in this paragraph, will not be repeated.
8. Data on the 1997 U.S. survey will be cited throughout the Results section; however, the reference for this survey, as indicated in this paragraph, will not be repeated.
9. Data on the 1987 U.S. survey will be cited throughout the Results section; the reference for this survey, however, will not be repeated. See Appendix A for definitions of the four program types.
10. All of the state funding provided from 1985 to 1991 for elementary school foreign language programs was allocated to curricular programs.
11. Because the endorsement for teaching foreign languages in elementary schools was not established until 1988, the data on teacher qualifications of most interest are those of the 1999 survey because sufficient time had elapsed to see the impact of that endorsement.

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Appendix A

Definitions of Program Types (Based on Descriptions Included in the Survey)

FLEX (Program Type A)

The goals of this program are for students to gain general exposure to language and culture, learn basic words and phrases, and develop an interest in foreign language for future language study. The aim is not fluency but rather exposure to other language(s) and culture. Portions of this program may be taught in English. (This type of program is often called Foreign Language Experience/Explorations, or FLEX.)

FLES (Program Type B)

The goals of this program are for students to acquire listening and speaking skills, gain an understanding of and appreciation for other cultures, and acquire limited amounts of reading and writing skills. The teacher in this type of program may speak some English in the class. (This type of program is often called Foreign Language in the Elementary School, or FLES.)

Intensive FLEX (Program Type C)

The goals of this program are the same as program B above, but there is more exposure to the foreign language and more focus on reading and writing as well as on listening and speaking skills. This greater exposure includes language classes taught only in the foreign language (sometimes subject content is taught through the foreign language). (This type of program is often called intensive FLES.)

Immersion (Program Type D)

The goals of this program are for students to be able to communicate in the language with a high level of proficiency and acquire an understanding of and appreciation for other cultures. At least 50% of the school day is taught in the foreign language, including such subjects as mathematics, science, social studies, and language arts. (This type of program is called partial, total, or two-way immersion, depending on the amount of foreign language used and the make-up of the student body.)