


See discussions, stats, and author profiles for this publication at: <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/258160285>

Diversity in Teacher Education and Special Education The Issues That Divide


Article in *Journal of Teacher Education* · August 2012
DOI: 10.1177/0022487112446512

CITATIONS
69



2 authors:

 **Marilyn Cochran-Smith**
Boston College, USA
139 PUBLICATIONS 15,221 CITATIONS
[SEE PROFILE](#)

READS
680

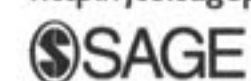
 **Curt Dudley-Marling**
Boston College, USA
465 PUBLICATIONS 6,558 CITATIONS
[SEE PROFILE](#)

Some of the authors of this publication are also working on these related projects:

-  Research on Teacher Preparation: Charting the Landscape of a Sprawling Field [View project](#)
-  Book chapters on the social construction of learning disabilities and the pitfalls of relying on the normal curve in educational research [View project](#)

Diversity in Teacher Education and Special Education: The Issues That Divide

Journal of Teacher Education
63(4) 237–244
© 2012 American Association of
Colleges for Teacher Education
Reprints and permission: <http://www.sagepub.com/journalsPermissions.nav>
DOI: 10.1177/0022487112446512
<http://jte.sagepub.com>



Marilyn Cochran-Smith¹ and Curt Dudley-Marling¹

Abstract

This article explores the enduring fissure between general and special teacher education by focusing directly on the issues that divide these two fields. In the first part of the article, the authors describe their individual and shared positionalities as scholars and practitioners. Then the article examines differences in the disciplinary traditions that influence the work of general teacher educators and special teacher educators as well as issues related to deficit perspectives and access to the general curriculum. The authors suggest that the lack of a common underpinning is the central cross-cutting reason for the continued deep division between the diversity communities in the two fields. Despite this deep divide, the article argues that it is imperative to find collaborative spaces that have the potential to unite the diversity communities and build new synergies in general teacher education and special teacher education.

Keywords

diversity, general teacher education, special education

Although there have been conceptual, program-based, and research-centered efforts to link diversity issues in general teacher education with diversity issues in special education for many years, these areas continue to be largely separate from one another. And, as this special issue of *Journal of Teacher Education* suggests, despite what appear to be common goals and commitments, the various “diversity communities” in teacher education and special education have generally not participated in the same professional, policy, and research conversations. In this article, we explore the enduring fissure between general and special teacher education by focusing directly on the issues that, from our perspective, divide these two fields.

In the first part of the article, we describe our individual and shared positionalities as scholars, teachers, and parents to give readers a sense of who we are and how our experiences and scholarship have shaped the frames we use to make sense of the discourses and controversies in our fields. Next, we unpack three of the major issues that have historically divided general teacher education from special teacher education, suggesting that the lack of a common underpinning is the central cross-cutting reason for the continued deep division. Despite this deep divide, it is imperative to find collaborative spaces that have the potential to unite the diversity communities and build new synergies in general teacher education and special teacher education. In conclusion, we suggest three of these.

the worldviews, perspectives, positionalities, and subjectivities of researchers. Thus, we begin by providing a sense of who we are as teacher educators and scholars. I (Marilyn Cochran-Smith) am a monolingual, White European American woman, who entered teaching right out of college as did many first-generation-to-college women from working-class families in the late 1960s and early 1970s. I worked for 6 years as an elementary teacher in urban and suburban communities in Ohio, teaching primarily English/language arts and social studies. I then went to graduate school in language and literacy, where I was profoundly influenced by sociocultural views of teaching and learning, by critical perspectives on educational and societal inequities, and by the then newly emerging focus on ethnographic and other qualitative approaches to education research.

For 30 years, I have been centrally involved in developing and theorizing initial teacher education at two research universities that prepare teachers for urban schools—the University of Pennsylvania, which serves west Philadelphia, and Boston College, which places teacher candidates in public and Catholic schools in greater Boston. The teacher education programs at both institutions have different, but explicit, social justice missions, which have shaped and been shaped by my work about teacher candidates learning to

A Sense of Who We Are: Position and Positionality

We work from the assumption that scholarly analyses are always (in part) political, value-laden, biased, and shaped by

¹Boston College, Chestnut Hill, MA, USA

Corresponding Author:

Marilyn Cochran-Smith, Lynch School of Education, Campion Hall, 111, Boston College, 140 Commonwealth Avenue, Chestnut Hill, MA 02467, USA

Email: cochrans@bc.edu

“teach against the grain” and learning to “teach for social justice” and, just as importantly, by my work with university- and school-based collaborators to figure out what this means in day-to-day practice.

In addition to my professional positionality, my own family history has had a dramatic influence on the frameworks I use to reason about diversity and special education. I have three native Korean children who are now in their 30s. My two sons came to the United States as Korean native speakers who quickly became what we today would call “English language learners.” My daughter arrived as a baby a year after the boys; she was later designated “developmentally delayed.” Although my daughter’s school history was positive in some ways, many of my seminal experiences with diversity in special education were tinged by frustration and anguish as a parent who has endured the never-ending Individualized Education Program (IEP) and Individualized Support Program (ISP) educational process from the other side. These have profoundly shaped my views about human variation, capacity, inclusion, appropriate educational environments, and empowerment.

I (Curt Dudley-Marling) am a monolingual, White male of European descent who grew up in the Midwest. I worked as a special education teacher for 7 years, first teaching students with intellectual disabilities for 5 years in Hamilton, Ohio, before teaching students with learning disabilities for 2 years in Green Bay, Wisconsin. In the early 1990s, after 13 years of working in university settings, I returned to the classroom for 1 year to teach third grade.

I did my doctoral work at the University of Wisconsin–Madison, where I focused on special education and linguistics, which had long been an interest of mine. Although I was an experienced special educator, I always felt a little out of place during my doctoral studies at Wisconsin. Overwhelmingly, the work of the special education faculty was underpinned by a behavioral view of learning while my own pedagogical views had been shaped by constructivist scholars like Jean Piaget and Jerome Bruner and language and literacy theorists like Noam Chomsky, Frank Smith, and Ken and Yetta Goodman. Although my perspective on learning was generally respected by the special education students and faculty at Wisconsin, it was also clear that my views on learning were not shared by any of them.

Since completing my doctoral studies, my professional identity has gradually become that of a literacy scholar rather than special educator. It’s telling, I think, that I consider the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE), not Council for Exceptional Children (CEC), to be my professional home. I continue to have a strong interest in students for whom school is a “struggle” but, overall, my scholarly work stands as a critique of the deficit thinking that I believe is at the heart of special education. This anti-deficit stance—informed by sociocultural theories of learning—has positioned me at the distant margins of the dominant (behavioral) special education discourse. My

interest in students with disabilities has been revitalized, however, by recent connections I have made with the field of disabilities studies, a community that includes other special educators who have explicitly rejected deficit perspectives and the behavioral model of learning that underpins deficit thinking.

Both of us have been faculty members in the “Teacher Education, Special Education, and Curriculum and Instruction” department at Boston College for more than 14 years. This department is unusual in that, despite its relatively small size (18-24 faculty members plus clinical faculty), it includes people who engage in scholarship and practice in general teacher education, special education, language and literacy, bilingual education, school leadership, and curriculum as well as elementary and secondary education in the subject areas. This context has foregrounded many of the issues that divide general and special teacher education. Reflecting larger divisions in our fields, we and our colleagues in special education look to different disciplinary traditions to inform our work, bring different meanings to the concept of *disability*, and tend to think differently about how best to create curricula that best serve the needs of *all* students.

The Issues That Divide

In the following sections, we examine three issues that we believe divide the diversity communities in general teacher education who work from a social justice perspective from the diversity communities in special education. We begin with differences in the disciplinary traditions that typically influence the work of special and general teacher educators and then consider issues related to deficit perspectives and access to the general curriculum.

Disciplinary Influences of Special and Regular Education

In general, special education has looked to behavioral psychology, medicine, and psychometrics for its theoretical grounding. The influence of behavioral psychology underpins the assumption widely held in special education that any behavior can be broken down into a finite set of component skills and subskills that, in turn, are the focus of remediation (e.g., Adams & Carnine, 2003; Engelmann & Carnine, 1991). In this formulation, learning to read, for example, is a developmental process involving the acquisition of skills such as recognizing that letters and letter combinations can be used to represent speech sounds, phonemic and phonetic awareness, fluency, acquisition of vocabulary, and comprehension skills (Kauffman & Sasso, 2006). Failing to learn in the expected way is a function of deficits (i.e., missing skills or abilities) and, indeed, deficit thinking is fundamental to dominant special education discourses (Trent, Artiles, & Englert, 1998). From a deficit

perspective, effective teaching of students with special needs is a matter of identifying the requisite skills that comprise learning to read, do math, or problem solve, for instance, determining the skills in which students are deficient, and then identifying the most effective methods (i.e., “best practices”) for teaching these skills.

The medical model, with its emphasis on diagnosis and treatment of disease, has also long influenced the practice of special education (Clark, Dyson, & Millward, 1998). In the case of special education, diagnosis has focused on the identification of disabilities (e.g., learning disabilities, speech and hearing disabilities, intellectual and emotional disabilities, and so on) and the specific skill deficits that presumably underlie these conditions. Learning disabilities in reading, for example, are often associated with deficits in phonological awareness (Snowling, 2000) and treatment of the learning disability typically focuses on the amelioration of learning deficits through direct (behavioral) instruction (Kauffman & Sasso, 2006). The medical model with its disease orientation reinforces the deficit thinking that permeates special education discourses.

Psychometrics is a third powerful historical influence on special education that fits well with its medical and behavioral orientation. Psychometric tools promise objectivity and precision in determining effective, research-based instructional strategies for ameliorating student deficits. Many special education researchers, for example, argue that a significant body of research supports the superiority of direct instruction (for a description of direct instruction, see Engelmann & Carnine, 1991) over holistic approaches to reading instruction that emphasize more than phonics in beginning reading instruction (e.g., Adams & Engelmann, 1996; Kauffman & Sasso, 2006; Watkins, 1988; but see Dudley-Marling & Paugh, 2005 for an alternative perspective on direct instruction). The most significant contribution of psychometrics to special education, however, is the concept of the normal curve that is a foundational construct in special education (Gallagher, 2010). The normal curve provides a presumably objective representation of the notions of “normal” and “abnormal,” which is statistically defined with reference to normal (or average). The normal curve also provides the basis for statistical decision making in experimental and quasiexperimental research favored by most special education researchers (Kauffman & Sasso, 2006).¹

In contrast, many general teacher educators who work from a social justice perspective, ourselves included, draw on entirely different disciplinary traditions to inform our work. Rather than behavioral psychology, medicine, or psychometrics, we look to anthropology, sociology, cultural psychology, and sociolinguistics for our influences. Informed by these perspectives, many social justice educators work from a sociocultural theory of learning, which holds that learning cannot be reduced to sets of autonomous skills stripped from the sociocultural contexts in which they are used. Here, the argument is that the context affects *how*

people learn (through participation in cultural activities) and *what* is learned (social practices), and the context itself is part of what is learned. From this perspective, the crucial point is that psychological (learning) processes are not independent of sociocultural contexts; indeed, they are constituted by the contexts of which they are a part of (Cole 1996; Gee, 2008). Therefore, neither learning to read nor learning to teach, for example, is something that is accomplished “once and for all” (Gee, 2008). Instead, readers and teachers learn a set of practices (e.g., learning to read particular texts in particular ways for particular purposes in particular cultural settings, or, learning to teach particular groups of students in particular ways for particular purposes in particular school settings) over the course of a lifetime (Gee, 2008).

Because they reject the possibility of separating learning from its social and cultural contexts, researchers working from sociocultural positions, make different methodological choices from those made by researchers working from behavioral perspectives. Socioculturally oriented researchers do not reject experimental and quasiexperimental methods per se, but they are far more likely to conclude that the most important research questions to ask are those for which qualitative methods are most appropriate. For instance, instead of comparing two reading methods to determine which is more effective, sociocultural researchers might ask instead, “What affordances for learning are created by different approaches to reading instruction?” Along similar lines, instead of examining the extent to which teachers implement prescribed curricula with fidelity, sociocultural researchers might ask instead, “What learning affordances are created when teachers and students co-construct curriculum using different kinds of texts and other materials?”

Teacher educators working from a sociocultural model of learning also differ from those special educators working from behavioral models of learning in their stance toward deficit thinking. As we argued earlier, the identification and remediation of learning deficits is central to the practice of special education. Educators working from a sociocultural perspective, however, explicitly reject deficit thinking because they view this stance as incompatible with sociocultural theory and because they believe it pathologizes individual students, their families, their languages and cultures, and the communities from which they come. We return to the issue of deficit thinking in the following section.

The “Dis” in Disability

A second issue that divides many special and general teacher educators is the meaning they attach to the “dis” in disabilities. The dominant discourse in special education emphasizes the “dis” in disability, a prefix which, at least in the sense of its dictionary definitions, has a negative connotation, as in “dis” meaning deprive of (e.g., disqualify), “dis” meaning to do the opposite of (e.g., disestablish), “dis” meaning expel from or exclude (e.g., disbar), or “dis”

meaning the absence or opposite of (e.g., displeasure). Focusing on the *dis* fixes attention on what students cannot do well, at least compared with their peers. Students in special education—that is, students with exceptionalities—are operationally defined with reference to their position on the normal curve. Students are identified as having intellectual disabilities, for example, if their tested IQs place them on the lower reaches of the normal curve (i.e., at least 2 *SDs* below the norm). Similarly, learning disabilities may be defined in terms of deficiencies in skills like phonemic awareness as evidenced by students' relative position regarding these skills on the lower end of the normal curve (i.e., significantly below average). Certainly, most special educators acknowledge student strengths, which, like student deficits, can be compared with a normal distribution, but the dominant discourse of special education concentrates on the amelioration of students' deficiencies.

Defining individual (dis)ability in terms of a presumed normal distribution of human abilities has the effect of reifying "normal" while representing human differences—behavior or abilities that diverge *significantly* from the norm—as *abnormal* or deviant. What counts as "significant" is, of course, completely arbitrary; therefore, there is a certain arbitrariness to the concept of disability. In 1973, for example, with considerable effort, the IQ cutoff for mental retardation was changed from one standard deviation below the norm (IQ = 85) to two standard deviations below the norm (IQ = 70), suddenly transforming a large number of students from "disabled" to "normal."

Equating disability with deficits firmly situates learning problems in the minds and bodies of individual students, which is, of course, consistent with the disciplinary roots of special education in medicine and behavioral psychology. This stance focuses instruction on fixing students (i.e., ameliorating their deficits), giving little reason to consider the role that other factors, such as poverty and discrimination, play in academic failure. From this perspective, social justice becomes a matter of equity through self-improvement, which has the effect of reinforcing an excessive individualism that holds that individuals are solely responsible for their achievements and failures. From this point of view, for instance, the poor are poor because they are deficient in effort and/or ability. In contrast, general teacher educators working from a social justice orientation, ourselves included, are committed to a social constructivist view of learning and learning failure. This social constructivist view situates human learning (and learning failure) in the context of human relations. From this point of view, no one can be disabled on their own. Rather, it takes an institutional context (like school) well organized for the production of disability (McDermott, 1993). In a context where 50% of students will necessarily be below average and it is expected "that everyone do better than everyone else" (McDermott, 1993, p. 274), it is all but assured that some proportion of children will fail in school. The institutional construction of disability also requires the

coordinated actions of a group of people (teachers, school psychologists, educational policy makers, and students) in the right time and place (classrooms rather than the playground) to produce a disability. Different tests, different curricula, different interactions between teachers and students, different organizational structures, different expectations, and so on will radically affect who is and who is not presumed to be disabled.

Teacher educators working from a social constructivist and social justice stance take a much different approach to *the problem* of disability. Similar to the scholars working from the disability studies tradition who have influenced our work as teacher educators, these teacher educators reject the fundamental idea that human behavior distributes along the lines of a normal curve (Dudley-Marling & Gurn, 2010; Gallagher, 2010). In this case, difference is seen as part of *normal* human variation; that is, it is normal to be different. To be clear, no one denies the existence of physical, cognitive, or emotional differences. It would be patently absurd to argue that the differences that are typically classified as "disabilities" do not exist. The issue is what we make of naturally occurring human variation.

In addition, instead of trying to fix individual students, teacher educators informed by social constructivism (and this includes teacher educators working from a disability studies perspective) begin with presumption of competence (Biklen, 2005) and of the widespread distribution of human capacity (Carini, Himley, Christine, & Espinosa, 2009). They then endeavor to figure out how to build on the language, culture, and background knowledge and experience all students bring with them to school to support their learning. These same teacher educators are also likely to work from critical perspectives on what produced so much failure in the first place. What is there about the ways we organize our schools, school curricula, testing, teachers' day-to-day interactions with students, and so on that contributes to widespread school failure among students perceived as different including second language learners, students of color, students living in poverty, and students with disabilities? For teacher educators like us, the problem of disability is a social justice issue that calls for careful examination of systemic and structural issues as well as thoughtful consideration of how individuals and groups relate within sociocultural contexts.

Curriculum Content and Access

A third issue that has traditionally divided discussions of diversity issues in general teacher education from those in special education has to do with the general school curriculum and access to that curriculum for all students. Gaining more access to the general curriculum for those with special needs has been a strong agenda in special education for many years, beginning with the practice of mainstreaming in the 1970s and continuing with the push for inclusion in

the late 1980s and throughout much of the 1990s (Pugach, Blanton, & Correa, 2011). Prompted by the passage of NCLB in 2001 and its requirements that all teachers, including special education teachers, be highly qualified in content areas, there is currently a strong emphasis on ensuring that all students, including those with disabilities, have access to the scope and content of the general curriculum, so that they are able to meet the academic standards associated with that curriculum (Pugach et al., 2011).

Along these lines, there are multiple efforts in the special education community to build classrooms and curricula that are accessible to all students. “Universal design for learning” (UDL), for example, is a framework for providing greater curricular flexibility in the presentation of information, in students’ ways of demonstrating knowledge and skills, and in students’ engagement (Rose & Meyer, 2006; Rose, Meyer, & Hitchcock, 2005). The concept of UDL is included in the reauthorization of the Individuals With Disabilities Act of 2004 and the Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2008. Borrowing the “universal design” language originally used in the field of architecture where it was discovered that alterations in building structures to accommodate those with disabilities also benefited many others, UDL is intended to reduce obstacles in curriculum and instruction and provide appropriate supports so that all students, including those with special needs, learn the general curriculum and achieve at high levels. The major assumption underlying UDL is that there is no single approach to ensuring that all students have access to the curriculum—In other words, the “universal” in universal designs is not about a single best practice for all students. Rather, it is assumed that multiple and flexible teaching methods, assignments, activities, assessments, technologies, and materials are essential (Rose & Meyer, 2006; Rose et al., 2005). In particular, UDL focuses on innovative ways of using digital tools and new technologies to scaffold and enhance students’ access to learning opportunities in the general curriculum (Hitchcock, Meyer, Rose, & Jackson, 2005; Meyer & Rose, 1998).

On its surface, the emphasis on greater access to the general curriculum is consistent with the perspectives of general teacher educators who work from a social justice stance. Certainly both communities reject the idea of universal best practices and accept the premise that multiple and flexible approaches are needed to meet the needs of diverse groups of students with multiple needs and experiences. However, there are also major issues here about curriculum content and the structures of schooling that divide the two communities. Although many special educators have advocated for greater access to the curriculum and the structures of normal schooling, members of the social justice community in teacher education have tended to seek a transformation of the existing curriculum in dramatic and fundamental ways and to challenge the “normal” structures of schooling that have perpetuated the oppression of various social groups, especially those that were historically marginalized.

From the perspective of social justice teacher educators, then, the curriculum and the structures of schooling need to be interrogated as “political texts” (Castenell & Pinar, 1993), which means calling attention to what is left out, implied, or veiled (Cochran-Smith, 2000, 2010; Ginsberg & Clift, 1990). This includes uncovering what is subtly signaled as the norm or default perspective in assumptions about whose knowledge is of most worth and also analyzing messages about race, class, culture, language, and ability that are sometimes explicit, but often implicit in the inconsistencies between the formal documents describing curriculum and what is actually conveyed through readings, written assignments, assessments, and materials. Along these lines, King (2008) called for incorporating into the curriculum the worldviews and social visions of marginalized groups with the intention of promoting the cultural well-being of diverse populations and countering dominant ideology. To bridge these perspectives, we would have to connect the struggle for “equality” of access and opportunity, which is emphasized in the special education and general teacher education communities, with strategies for broader participation by all social groups in the discourse about what is fundamental in the curriculum and what the purposes of education are in the first place, which are emphasized by social justice teacher educators. Otherwise, as King (2006) pointed out, we are left with the untenable situation in which “equal access to a faulty curriculum” (p. 337) is assumed by some to constitute justice.

The Issues That (Could) Unite

Some scholars suggest that there is a “divide” within special education that largely mirrors the divide between special education and general teacher education that we outlined above. Andrews et al. (2000), for example, suggested that the divide within special education is characterized by differences in

understanding of the notion of disability and its outcomes . . . perspectives on the purpose of special education . . . beliefs about expected outcomes of special education . . . understanding of the current state of special education knowledge. . . and views on the necessary steps for rendering special education an ethically defensible and effective entity. (pp. 258-259)

These authors conclude that these dramatically different views on special education can be reconciled. Others are less optimistic. Writing a decade later, for example, Baglieri, Valle, Connor, and Gallagher (2011) reached the conclusion that, “anything approaching consensus [in the field of special education] has, so far, eluded our grasp. It appears that achieving, if not a consensus then perhaps a rapprochement or détente, seems less, rather than more, likely” (p. 268). The hostility with which traditional special educators have responded to concepts like social constructivism, qualitative

approaches to research, and alternative disciplinary lenses (e.g., Anastasious & Kauffman, 2011; Kauffman & Sasso, 2006; Kavale & Mostert, 2003) is emblematic of the seeming intractability of the divides within special education and between general and special teacher education. The emergence of disability studies as an alternative to special education, rather than a stream of scholarship within it, can be taken as additional evidence of the inability of the field of special education to reconcile different views and, perhaps, evidence of the resistance of some traditional special educators to critique. The emergence of dual (parallel) certification programs, rather than integrated teacher preparation programs in general and special education (Pugach et al., 2011), further evidences the size of the divide we have described here.

Still, if there is any chance for general and special educators to collaborate on the preparation of tomorrow's teachers who will certainly encounter students with a wide range of (dis)abilities, we must find some common ground. The alternative is for general and special education teacher educators to continue to work from parallel perspectives that force emerging scholars and practitioners in these areas to choose between competing methodologies and disciplinary traditions. Below, we suggest three areas where at least some general and special educators may be able to come together.

Expanding Research Methods

Strong disagreement over appropriate research methodologies has been a flashpoint for divisions between special and general teacher educators. Many traditional special educators are adamant that experimental and quasiexperimental methods are the only way to achieve objective knowledge (Kauffman & Sasso, 2006). General educators working from a social justice perspective do not reject experimental methods. Surveys and statistical comparisons (e.g., to examine the proportion of students of color who are identified as having special needs) are important questions that are best addressed by quantitative research methods. However, other forms of inquiry are deemed to be necessary to address many of the questions that are of particular concern to many general educators working from a social justice stance. For instance, we are equally interested in *why* there are so many students of color in special education and *how* these students experience their schooling as a result of these placements. These sorts of questions are best addressed through qualitative methods.

A diversity of methods expands the range of questions we can address, and mixed methods studies, in particular, provide an opportunity to address research questions in a more complete and powerful way than a single method can do and also allow researchers to answer questions and generate theory in the same studies. According to Connor, Gallagher, and Ferri (2011), mixed method studies, which draw on quantitative and qualitative research methods, have produced some of the most interesting work in special education. They also report that nearly two thirds of

dissertations in learning disabilities over the last 10 years used qualitative methods. This suggests new possibilities for finding common ground among special and general teacher educators. Most important, acknowledging the legitimacy of a range of research methods could help to bring together researchers working from different traditions.

Diversity of Researchers

A second potentially collaborative space for the diversity communities in general and special teacher education is related to the practitioner inquiry movement and the growing emphasis in initial teacher education programs on teacher inquiry. Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1999, 2009) suggested that all versions and variants of practitioner inquiry (e.g., teacher research, action research, self study) share key features: Among them are practitioners simultaneously functioning as researchers; collaboration among participants, including "faculty members from different disciplines and research paradigms working together to interrogate the assumptions and values that underlie their practices and programs" (Cochran-Smith and Lytle, 2009, p. 41); and the assumption that practitioners are knowers, learners, and generators of knowledge, rather than simply the objects of others' research or the consumers/implementers of knowledge generated outside of the contexts of practice for use inside them.

An inquiry-centered approach has been implemented in a number of innovative initial general and special teacher education programs (e.g., Bruce & Pine, 2010; Hamre & Oyler, 2004; Oyler, 2011). Inquiry-centered teacher preparation rejects the idea that there are universally appropriate "best practices." Instead, the emphasis is on what Hamre and Oyler (2004) called "learning to teach inclusively" by generating appropriate local practice based on analysis of classroom and other data along with collaborative interrogation of key assumptions, such as progress, normalcy, capacity, and labeling. Collaborative inquiry among general and special teacher education faculty members along with collaborative inquiry among prospective general and special education teachers has the potential to open up new spaces for joint (and unifying) work.

Challenges to the University Role in Teacher Education

A third collaborative space that has the potential to help unite the diversity communities in general teacher education and special education is the university's currently uncertain role in initial teacher preparation. Fueled by state and national mandates and teacher shortages in certain areas and by market-based reform agendas, "alternate" pathways into teaching and nontraditional teacher education providers have proliferated over the last two decades, including many new providers such as Teach for America, The New

Teacher Project, and urban residency programs, which target particular previously untapped potential teacher populations, as well as online and for-profit certification routes that emphasize speedy and convenient job entry. Encouraged by the Secretary of Education's annual reports to Congress on teacher quality, which concluded that "traditional" (university) teacher education was a "broken system" (U.S. Department of Education, 2002), alternate routes and pathways now exist in all 50 states and produce at least 20% of the nation's teachers (Feistritzer, 2009).

These developments, coupled with intense and unprecedented policy and political attention to teacher quality, have created a crisis situation, and university-recommended teacher education programs now stand at a crossroads. Ironically, this crisis offers a potentially collaborative space for the diversity communities in general teacher education and special education to work together. There are many possibilities for these communities to work together to try to make it clear what universities are uniquely positioned to offer to initial teacher preparation, given their unparalleled knowledge resources, their expertise in multiple modes of research and inquiry, and their potential for cross-disciplinary and interdisciplinary collaborations of many kinds. These have the potential to prompt new hybrid initial teacher education programs that reject old dichotomies and forge new synergies between general and special education.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The author(s) received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Note

1. To be fair, the work of many general educators, especially those working outside a social justice perspective, is also influenced by the same disciplinary traditions that have dominated in special education. The work of many general educators is strongly influenced by behavioral models of learning and psychometrics, for example, and there are many special educators who have rejected the behaviorism and deficit thinking that dominates in special education. However, these special educators often find themselves at odds with the institution of special education and some have gravitated to the field of disability studies which, arguably, stands as a critique of the practice of special education.

References

- Adams, G., & Carnine, D. (2003). Direct instruction. In H. L. Swanson, K. R. Harris, & S. Graham (Eds.), *Handbook of learning disabilities* (pp. 403-416). New York, NY: Guilford Press.
- Adams, G., & Engelmann, S. (1996). *Research on direct instruction: 20 years beyond DISTAR*. Seattle, WA: Educational Achievement Systems.
- Anastasiou, D., & Kauffman, J. (2011). A social constructivist approach to disability: Implications for special education. *Exceptional Children, 77*(3), 367-384.
- Andrews, J. E., Carnine, D. W., Couthinho, M. J., Edgar, E. B., Forness, S. R., Fuchs, L., . . . Wong, J. (2000). Bridging the special education divide. *Remedial and Special Education, 21*, 258-260, 267.
- Baglieri, S., Valle, J. W., Connor, D. J., & Gallagher, D. J. (2011). Disability studies in education: The need for a plurality of perspectives on disability. *Remedial and Special Education, 32*, 267-277.
- Biklen, D. (2005). *Autism and the myth of the person alone*. New York, NY: University Press.
- Bruce, S., & Pine, G. (2010). *Action research in special education: An inquiry approach for effective teaching and learning*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Carini, P., Himley, M., Christine, C., & Espinosa, C. (2009). *Jenny's story: Taking the long view of the child, prospect's philosophy in action*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Castenell, L., & Pinar, W. (Eds.). (1993). *Understanding curriculum as racial text: Representations of identity and difference in education*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press.
- Clark, C., Dyson, A., & Millward, A. (1998). Introducing the issue of theorizing. In C. Clark, A. Dyson, & A. Millward (Eds.), *Theorizing special education* (pp. 1-5). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Cochran-Smith, M. (2000). Blind vision: Unlearning racism in teacher education. *Harvard Educational Review, 70*(2), 157-190.
- Cochran-Smith, M. (2010). Toward a theory of teacher education for social justice. In A. Hargreaves, M. Fullan, D. Hopkins, & A. Lieberman (Eds.), *Second international handbook of educational change* (pp. 445-467). New York, NY: Springer.
- Cochran-Smith, M., & Lytle, S. (1999). The teacher research movement: A decade later. *Educational Researcher, 28*(7), 15-25.
- Cochran-Smith, M., & Lytle, S. (2009). *Inquiry as stance: Practitioner research for the next generation*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Cole, M. (1996). *Cultural psychology: A once and future discipline*. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press.
- Connor, D. J., Gallagher, D., & Ferri, B. A. (2011). Broadening our horizons: Toward a plurality of methodologies in learning disability research. *Learning Disability Quarterly, 34*(2), 107-121.
- Dudley-Marling, C., & Gurn, A. (2010). Troubling the foundations of special education: Examining the myth of the normal curve. In C. Dudley-Marling & A. Gurn (Eds.), *The myth of the normal curve* (pp. 9-23). New York, NY: Peter Lang.
- Dudley-Marling, C., & Paugh, P. (2005). The rich get richer, the poor get Direct Instruction. In B. Altwerger (Ed.), *Reading for profit: How the bottom line leaves kids behind* (pp. 156-171). Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Engelmann, S., & Carnine, D. (1991). *Theory of instruction: Principles and applications*. Minneapolis, MN: Adi Press.

- Feistritzer, C. E. (2009). Teaching while learning: Alternate routes fill the gap. *Phi Delta Kappa Edge*, 5(2), 3-15.
- Gallagher, D. (2010). Educational researchers and the making of normal people. In C. Dudley-Marling & A. Gurn (Eds.), *The myth of the normal curve* (pp. 25-38). New York, NY: Peter Lang.
- Gee, J. P. (2008). *Social linguistics and literacies: Ideology in discourses* (3rd ed.). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Ginsberg, M., & Clift, R. (1990). The hidden curriculum of pre-service teacher education. In R. Houston (Ed.), *Handbook of research on teacher education* (pp. 450-465). New York, NY: MacWilliams Publishing Company.
- Hamre, B., & Oyler, C. (2004). Preparing teachers for inclusive classrooms: Learning from a collaborative inquiry group. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 55(2), 154-163.
- Hitchcock, C., Meyer, A., Rose, D., & Jackson, R. (2005). Equal access, participation, and progress in the general education curriculum. In D. Rose, A. Meyer, & C. Hitchcock (Eds.), *The universally designed classroom: Accessible curriculum and digital technologies* (pp. 37-68). Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press.
- Kauffman, J. M., & Sasso, G. M. (2006). Toward ending cultural and cognitive relativism in special education. *Exceptionality*, 14(2), 65-90.
- Kavale, K. A., & Mostert, M. P. (2003). River of ideology, islands of evidence. *Exceptionality*, 11(4), 191-208.
- King, J. (2006). If our objective is justice: Diaspora literacy, heritage knowledge, and the praxis of critical studyin' for human freedom. In A. Ball (Ed.), *With more deliberate speed: Achieving equity and excellence in education—Realizing the full potential of Brown v. Board of Education, 105th yearbook of the national society for the study of education* (pp. 337-357). Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- King, J. (2008). Critical and qualitative research in teacher education: A blues epistemology, a reason for knowing for cultural well-being. In M. Cochran-Smith, S. Feiman Nemser, & J. McIntyre (Eds.), *Handbook of research on teacher education: Enduring issues in changing contexts* (pp. 1094-1135). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- McDermott, R. P. (1993). The acquisition of a child by a learning disability. In C. Chaiklin & J. Lave (Eds.), *Understanding practice: Perspectives on activity and context* (pp. 269-305). New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Meyer, A., & Rose, D. H. (1998). *Learning to read in the digital age*. Cambridge, MA: Brookline Books.
- Oyler, C. (2011). Teacher preparation for inclusive and (critical) special education. *Teacher Education and Special Education*, 34(3), 201-218.
- Pugach, M., Blanton, L., & Correa, V. (2011). A historical perspective on the role of collaboration in teacher education reform: Making good on the promise of teaching all students. *Teacher Education and Special Education: The Journal of the Teacher Education Division of the Council on Exceptional Children*, 34, 1-18.
- Rose, D. H., & Meyer, A. (2006). *A practical reader in universal design for learning*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press.
- Rose, D. H., Meyer, A., & Hitchcock, C. (2005). *The universally designed classroom: Accessible curriculum and digital technologies*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press.
- Snowling, M. J. (2000). *Dyslexia* (2nd ed.). Oxford, England: Blackwell.
- Trent, S. C., Artiles, A. J., & Englert, C. S. (1998). From deficit thinking to social constructivism: A review of theory, research, and practice in special education. *Review of Research in Education*, 23, 277-307.
- U.S. Department of Education. (2002). *Meeting the highly qualified teachers challenge: The Secretary's annual report on teacher quality*. Washington, DC: Author.
- Watkins, C. L. (1988). Project follow-through: A story of the identification and neglect of effective instruction. *Youth Policy*, 10(7), 7-11.

About the Authors

Marilyn Cochran-Smith is the Cawthorne professor of teacher education and director of the doctoral program in Curriculum and Instruction at the Lynch School of Education, Boston College. Her research interests include teacher education research, practice and policy as well as issues of diversity and social justice in teacher education.

Curt Dudley-Marling is professor of education at the Lynch School where he teaches courses in language and literacy. His scholarly interests focus on students for whom learning to read and write is a struggle and the social construction of learning problems. He is also interested in the potential of academically productive talk to support student learning in K-12 and college classrooms.