

Diverse Learners and Teacher Education: A Sociocultural Approach

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Linfield College

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Key Terms

- Sociocultural: being aware of students' backgrounds, personal histories, and that each student is “a product of the social, cultural, political, and historical forces that are present in any given time and place” (Marsh, 2005, p. 339)
- Diverse Learners: often defined as English language learners, students in special education, students in poverty and students who are considered to be minorities

Research Questions

- What are the needs of diverse learners in Oregon?
- What are the hiring preferences of school district administrators in Oregon?
- How are colleges and universities in Oregon preparing teachers of diverse learners?
- How do current programs meet the needs of college/university students, in light of *The College of 2020* report and research on current college/university student demographics, preferences, learning styles, and other needs?
- How can a multicultural education course for preservice teachers be redesigned with a sociocultural approach that takes into account all of the above and engages college students in multiliteracies—in a way that is measurable?

Literature Reviews

- Sociocultural teaching (including culturally responsive teaching)
- English language learners
- Special education
- Students in poverty

Demographics

Examined demographics of PK-12 students in United States and Oregon:

- Nation of origin
- Socioeconomic status
- Immigration
- Achievement
- Attendance
- Post PK-12 education

Hiring Preferences and Programs

Examined hiring preferences in Oregon

- District job vacancies
- Surveyed all Yamhill County administrators

Examined OACTE teacher education programs

- Endorsements, practica
- Online, face-to-face, hybrid

TSPC and College Students

Examined TSPC standards for endorsement programs

Reviewed *The College of 2020* report and conducted a literature review on current needs of college/university students

- Demographics, learning preferences/styles
- Multiliteracies

Surveys

Surveys: How well prepared are new teachers to meet the needs of diverse learners?

- Yamhill County administrators
- Linfield graduates
- Current Linfield students
- Social service agencies

2010 Education Graduates

- Linfield Education teaches strong philosophy about diverse learners and embracing differences; would have liked more teaching strategies and opportunities to use strategies in the classroom
- More training in creating IEPs and creating modifications
- Support purposeful use of technology in Linfield Education classes, including SMARTBoard, Blackboard, and class web pages

Current Education Students

- Accepted into Education Department as of June 2010
- Positive attitude toward diverse learners; concerned about meeting all needs; desired more strategies regarding special education and English Language Learners
- Valued second language acquisition for teachers for empathy; did not necessarily value learning Spanish
- Valued classroom experience (in PK-12 schools) and some wanted more
- Prefer classroom setting to online learning
- Felt technology can enhance classroom instruction for diverse learners

Yamhill County School Administrators

- Felt needs of diverse learners are being met or that there is continual improvement in doing so
- Staff is for the most part current in knowledge and skills in this area
- Hiring a diverse staff is somewhat important
- Desired more funding, school accountability, changes by the federal government, early childhood programs, preservice teacher preparation in ELL/Special Ed. classrooms, as well as jobs and job training for parents

Community Agencies

- Felt that needs of diverse learners are not being met in local schools
- Teachers are somewhat or poorly prepared with strategies to teach diverse learners
- Teachers need to improve methods by having an assets view of students, knowing students as individuals, differentiating instruction, and being flexible
- Suggest literacy tutoring, early intervention, and adult education
- Value a bilingual, diverse, or culturally aware teaching staff

Course Redesign

Redesign of EDUC 302 Multicultural Education

- Meaningful, purposeful service-learning component
- Student engagement with multiliteracies (which, in turn, will engage *their* students)
- More time and attention to special education and general differentiation strategies

Technology Syllabus

- Blogs
- Webspiration
- Wordle
- Voicethread
- Two-Minute Videos
- SMARTBoard

CBO Placements

- ELL and special education classrooms
- America Reads
- Kids on the Block in low SES schools
- Mentoring “at risk” youth at Duniway MS
- Mentoring at McMinnville HS with Public Health
- Creating curriculum and teaching life skills at YCAP Transitional Housing Shelter
- Parole picnic (research team)

Project Launch

- Contribution to critical question in field
- Scholarship (strong base for longitudinal study at Linfield and among Oregon teacher education programs)
- Program review (data behind suggestions)
- Service (connection with community)
- More effective teaching and learning in EDUC 302
- More effective Linfield teachers (sociocultural)
- Higher achievement among PK-12 students