

Bridging Bilingual and Special Education: Opportunities for Transformative Change in Teacher Preparation Programs

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Abstract

This article reports on the design and performance of ALAS (Acquisition of Language Skills and Academic Literacy) Teacher Education Project designed to bridge Biliteracy and Special Education teacher preparation. ALAS was designed by faculty in two higher education departments engaged in teacher preparation to respond to California's need for bilingual special education teachers, where less than 2% of special education teachers in California are credentialed in both bilingual and special education disciplines (CBEDS, 2013). In California about 1 in 4 students are identified as English Language Learners (ELLs). The ALAS project actively addresses the lack of academic programming to develop qualified bilingual special education teachers to meet the needs of K-12 ELLs via teacher education courses, specialized conferences, teaching practicum in the two disciplines of bilingual/biliteracy and Special Education Mild-Moderate emphasis. The article reports on five years of data (2008-2013) that examines the conceptual design of the ALAS two-year teacher preparation program, the use of seven standards to evaluate the program, and participants' perceptions on the strengths and needs of their training. The evolving results have implications for teacher preparation curriculum change and reform in addressing ELLs to match the needs of the client school communities.

Introduction

As the nation struggles to enhance access to the general education curriculum for English Language Learners (ELL) and students identified with mild to moderate (high incidence) disabilities, general and special education teachers are being tasked—due to increasing student linguistic, cultural, and learning diversity—to instruct students who are identified as ELLs with and without an Individualized Education Program (IEP). This shift requires general and special education teachers to have more knowledge of educating students who come to school speaking a language other than English. Additionally, general education teachers are also now being asked to have increased responsibility for special education students via full inclusion models for students with mild/moderate disabilities (Artiles, Klingner, Sullivan, & Fierros, 2010; Blanchett, Klingner, & Harry, 2009; Esparza & Doolittle, 2008;). Further, they face increased accountability in terms of documenting student needs prior to identifying students for special education via Response to Intervention (RtI) (Klingner, 2007; Orosco & Klingner, 2010).

Such shifts in both demographics and programs require K-12 instructional settings to develop highly qualified general, bilingual, and special educators that have the ability to utilize evidence-based best practices to work with ELL students, and students with mild to moderate disabilities and students who are both ELL and identified with a disability. This impacts most directly those students in urban and low-performing school settings (Lau v. Nichols, 1974; Lucas, Villegas, & Freedson-Gonzalez, 2008; Rance-Rodney, 2009).

In recent years, data indicate that more and more students with mild to moderate disabilities are receiving their special education services in general education classrooms as a result of full inclusion models of education where students are served within the general education setting and special educators enter the general education classroom to support those students. This has led to the increase of co-teaching models

that require changes in structure and processes in both general and special education programs. Over the past few decades teacher preparation programs in both general and special education programs have seen reforms in certification processes as well. Unfortunately there has been little coordination between these changes in instructional settings and in higher education. This lack of articulation between general education and special education teacher education programs has resulted in major gaps and weaknesses in both programs as teacher education strives to prepare teachers to educate students with mild to moderate (high incidence) disabilities in co-taught environments (Artiles et.al., 2010).

With the growing K-12 culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) non-white student population of California, the state continues to experience severe shortages of highly qualified bilingual and special education teachers in the area of mild to moderate (high incidence) disabilities (CBEDS, 2013). Less than 2% (563 out of 28,159) of special education teachers in California are credentialed in both bilingual and special education disciplines (CBEDS, 2013). Yet, approximately 11.16% of California students are designated as needing special education services, 29.4 % are ELLs (CBEDS, 2013).

In the urban schools of our nation, low-achieving students are five to six times more likely to have unprepared teachers. These unprepared teachers are often assigned to the state's lowest performing schools that serve a disproportionate number of CLD low-income students, ELLs, as well as students with disabilities (Gándara, Maxwell-Jolly, Driscoll, 2005; Hernandez, 2009; Menken & Klyen, 2010). As a result, in California and the nation, the qualified teacher gap of those with experience and specialized training in the fields of biliteracy and special education is greatly lacking (Hernandez, 2009; Menken & Klyen, 2010; Saunders & Goldenberg, 2010; Hibel, Farkas & Morgan, 2010). Furthermore, historically underserved poor, students with disabilities, and linguistically diverse student populations, have significantly low graduation rates and low academic performance, (Hernandez, 2009; Hibel, Farkas & Morgan, 2010; Saunders & Goldenberg, 2010).

If California is to address the shortages of highly qualified biliteracy and special education teachers in the area of mild to moderate (high incidence) disabilities serving the state's lowest performing schools, it must do the following: prepare mild to moderate (high incidence) special education and bilingual authorized teachers in the use of evidence-based best practices (Hernandez, 2009; Lucas, Villegas, & Freedson-Gonzalez, 2008; Saunders & Goldenberg, 2010).

Overview of Salient Research and Court Cases

Research continues to document that children whose first language is not English are disproportionately represented in special education programs due to the lack of training provided to teachers in distinguishing language difference from language disability (Baca & Cervantes, 2004; Hernandez, 2009; Saunders & Goldenberg, 2010; Valles, 1998). Among the concerns is the delivery of instructional services that are comprehensible and relevant to ELLs with special education needs, and the inappropriate testing of these students that led to PL.94-142 (1975). There are salient court cases and federal statutes pointing to the need for specialized bilingual school personnel. Before the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Bilingual Education Act of 1968, it was common practice for students whose first language was not English to be placed in classes for students with intellectual disabilities. There were thousands of children whose first language was not English, who indeed did have specific learning disabilities. These children were often lost in the system. Thus, in the arena of discrimination based on disabilities, legislation affirmed a disabled person's right to equal protection and equal educational opportunity under the 14th Amendment of the U.S. Constitution and to do so in a way that it did not violate either procedural due process or equal protection. This led to the passage of the federal law under Rehabilitation Act of 1973, with Section 504 protecting the civil rights of individuals with disabilities in programs and activities that receive federal financial assistance from the U.S. Department of Education.

Also in the 1970's, the courts turned to assessment procedures and processes for delivering educational services to culturally and linguistically diverse students. Four court cases involving Latino students examined the issue of overrepresentation and indicted the assessment methods used for determining who was and who was not mentally disabled (Figueroa, 1986). In *Diana v California Board of Education* (1970), the court mandated non-bias assessment procedures. In the case of *Guadalupe v. Tempe Elementary School* (1971), the court ruled that

other assessment procedures must be used in addition to intelligence tests in considering placement in educable mentally retarded classes, and that parental permission must be obtained for such placements. In *Covarrubias v. San Diego USD* (1971), the court ruled that monetary damages could be paid due to misclassifying Mexican Americans as disabled, and in *Jose P. v. Ambach* (1979), the court ruled that school districts must follow timelines for evaluation and placement of students in special education programs, and placement teams should include school personnel who are bilingual and bicultural. The outcome of the court cases in the 1970's led to the identification and assessment guidelines, which require that when cultural and linguistic factors apply in testing, more testing must be done (Hernandez, 2009).

Another educational tension is the treatment of language minority students with disabilities receive, most particularly their right to bilingual special education services. While federal laws have protected the rights of language minority students with disabilities, under the Education for All Handicapped Children Act, Public Law 94-142 (1975) and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (2004), culturally and linguistically sensitive mandates have been lacking (Cummins, 2009). While these laws secured the rights of language minority students with disabilities to receive proper assessment, treatment, staffing, parent participation, due process, and evaluation of services, congruency between individual student rights and relevant and appropriate services for ELL students has been significantly lacking. Of great concern is the limited training of teachers to service ELLs with disabilities (Cummins, 2009; Menke & Klyn, 2010).

Reflecting on the lack of institutional training that pre-service and in-service teachers receive to address the growing K-12 ELL population with disabilities, the existing research points to the importance of preparing special education teachers who are bilingual to meet the needs of ELL children. The resulting consequence for bilingual children, who are educated only in English, is the increased potential for these students to exhibit other learning disabilities (Cummins, 2009; Hernandez, 2009; Menke & Klyn, 2010; Orosco & Klingner, 2010; Reschly, 2004; Valles, 1998).

Creation of Dual Credential Program in Teacher Education

Based on the existing needs for bilingual and special education teachers in California and the nation, faculty from the Policy Studies in Language and Cross-cultural Education and Special Education Departments at San Diego State University in 1996-97 designed a two-year dual credential program named Acquisition of Language and Academic Skills (ALAS) and sought federal support to finance selected students to participate in the program. The ALAS program was designed to address the need for qualified bilingual (English-Spanish) special education teachers in California to teach K-12 English language Learners (ELLs) with special needs in both general education and special education settings. As previously mentioned, in California, less than 2% of the Special Education teachers are bilingual, while the state has over 1.4 million ELLs students (CBEDS, 2013). ALAS as a two-year dual credential program is informed and guided by a partnership with local school districts with large populations of ELLs and the two higher education departments specializing in bilingual and Special Education teacher preparation. At the end of the two-year program, teacher candidates receive the California general SB 2042 K-8 or 7-12 teaching credential, the bilingual authorization, and the Mild-Moderate Special Education Credential. This dual credential teacher preparation program is specifically designed for bilingual individuals proficient in Spanish and English, seeking a Bilingual Authorization K-8 or 7-12 credential who have demonstrated commitment to working in Special Education in the area of mild/ moderate disabilities, while also being dedicated to meeting the specific needs of ELLs in California.

The ALAS dual credential program philosophy is based on a pedagogy of empowerment that views all K-12 students from an educational benefits model (Banks, 2007; Cummins, 2009). The pedagogy of empowerment values democratic schooling and integrates the language, culture, and social context of the student into the school curricula giving equal status to home, community, and school experiences (Artiles, Rueda, Salazar & Higuera, 2005; Gonzalez, Moll & Amanti, 2005). In addition, the ALAS dual credential program is based on the belief that all students want to self-actualize, and that students, if properly nurtured, have high expectations of themselves to realize their potential (Delpit, 2006). Pedagogically, the ALAS program by design is guided by the following principles:

- (1) While students have different cultural and linguistic backgrounds, learning for all students involves four basic processes—experience, reflection, conceptualization, and affirmation of the student’s experiences—and all educational activities should contain elements of each.
- (2) Students learn when they have intrinsic motivation, i.e., when the subject matter is immediately relevant to their existence, and they set their own goals and actively participate in decision making in the learning environment. In such activities, they are the subjects of the learning process.
- (3) Students learn more easily in situations of mutual respect, cooperation, and trust. The affective aspects of individuals should not be divorced from their intellectual and cognitive growth.
- (4) Transformational learning occurs when students’ learning is interactive with the environment, community, and society in meaningful ways.

Program ALAS Teacher Education Framework

The ALAS dual credential teacher preparation program is specifically designed for bilingual individuals proficient in Spanish and English seeking a Bilingual Authorization K-8 or 7-12 credential and a demonstrated commitment to working in Special Education in the area of mild/ moderate disabilities, while also being dedicated to meeting the specific needs of English language learners in California. The program has four areas of emphasis that are covered in the two-year period, covering 31 courses (See Figure 1).

Quadrant I provides for the bilingual pedagogical methods that include: reading in the first language of ELLs (L1/Spanish) and second language (L2/English), math, social studies, science, SDAIE (specially designed academic instruction in English), and psychological foundations, plus practicum in bilingual classrooms.

Quadrant II provides foundational courses as part of the ALAS program that includes: bilingual teaching foundations, multicultural education, human exceptionality, typical and atypical learners, and public health for teachers.

Quadrant III focuses on the pedagogical methods and skills to work with ELLs with Mild/Moderate disabilities that include: applications of technology for individuals with disabilities, Rtl, assessment practices, behavioral strategies and support of students, ILPs, classroom assessment for special populations, adaptive basic skills instruction, issues of Autism, collaboration, legislation, and educational planning, advance special education adaptations, transition across educational environments, and practicum in classrooms with ELLs and students with mild-moderate disabilities.

Quadrant IV provides for bridging seminars between bilingual/biliteracy instruction and special education instruction that includes: specialized topics addressing pedagogical tensions and approaches to teaching ELL students with disabilities, social justice curriculum, biculturalism, cultural brokering, linking with school community, and developing home-school partnerships. Figure 1 illustrates the ALAS teacher education conceptual framework.

To assess its overall pedagogical program design requirements, ALAS uses the California Standards for the Teaching Profession (CCTC, 1997) consisting of six standards, plus an additional dimension that focuses on community and culture. The seven areas include: (1) Engaging and Supporting All Students in Learning, (2) Creating and Maintaining Effective Environment, (3) Understanding and Organizing Subject Matter, (4) Planning Instruction and Designing Learning Experiences, (5) Assessing Student Learning, (6) Developing as a Professional Educator, and (7) Link with the school community & A Mediator of Culture (See Figure 1).

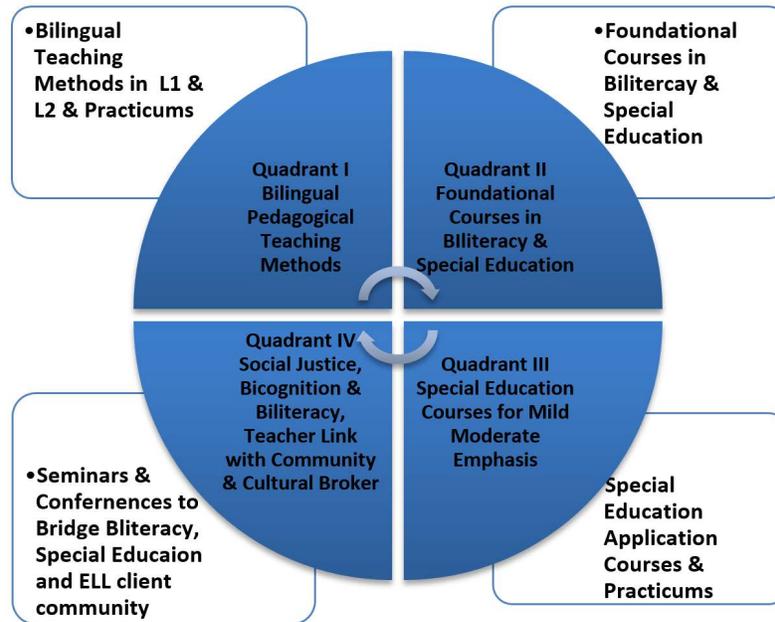


Figure 1. ALAS Teacher Education Framework: Preparing Educators for Dual Language/ Special Education Settings

Methods

A mixed method approach was used consisting of a quantitative analysis of a 36-item survey and qualitative interviews of its graduates of the two-year ALAS dual credential program. This study was conducted with the goal of answering two research questions:

1. What are the perceptions of program graduates in preparing them, as pre-service teachers, to work in the K-12 public school context, to provide academically based instruction to ELLs who have special needs and disabilities as based on the California Standards for the Teaching Profession (CSTP)?

2. What are the challenges facing the ALAS teacher preparation education program in bridging two disciplines, Bilingual/Biliteracy and Special Education Mild/Moderate, as a leading teacher education program?

Data Sources

A quantitative analysis of the 36-item survey based on the CSTP provided descriptive and inferential data, and t-test comparisons between Bilingual and Special Education programs was done with regard to perceived knowledge gained and perceived skills gained across the various teaching standards. The qualitative interviews were conducted as part of an exit program process that yielded documented statements of the graduates' perceptions of the program and their recommendations.

Approach to Evaluating the ALAS Teacher Education Program

The dual credential bilingual special education teacher preparation program focusing on the Acquisition of Language and Academic Skills (ALAS) in its exit interviews asked graduates about their perceptions of their training and specifically on the quality of the program that bridges two disciplines for preparing teachers to work with ELLs with special disabilities. To assess its impact on the preparation of specialized pre-service candidates, data was collected on 54 graduates from (2007-2013) using the CSTP.

The California Standards for the Teaching Profession (CSTP) standards were developed by the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (1997) to facilitate the induction of beginning teachers into their professional roles, responsibilities, and to provide a common language and a new vision of the scope and complexity of teaching. Six standards are used to guide pre-service and in-service teachers as they define and

develop their practice. The six standards plus a seventh that was added by the ALAS program, the teacher as a mediator of culture and link with community, represent a developmental, holistic view of teaching. Taken together the standards and processes are intended to prepare teachers and the diverse students they will serve in California. The content of these standards have some duplication and intersections between and among them. The CSTP addresses the following seven dimensions and 36 knowledge and skills indicators (number noted after standard indicates the sub skills under the standard):

- (1) Engaging and Supporting All Students in Learning – 5
- (2) Creating and Maintaining Effective Environment – 6
- (3) Understanding and Organizing Subject Matter for Student Learning -5
- (4) Planning Instruction and Designing Learning Experiences for All Students – 5
- (5) Assessing Student Learning – 5
- (6) Developing as a Professional Educator – 5
- (7) Link with The School Community and A Mediator Of Culture – 5

To answer these two questions, an empowerment evaluation process was used by the dual credential ALAS program that is based on the theory of action. Empowerment evaluation is the use of evaluation concepts, techniques, and findings to foster improvement and self-determination of programs and agencies. Empowerment evaluation places the primary responsibility for the pursuit of quality in the program staff and participants' hands (Fetterman & Wanderman, 2004). Three phases guided the ALAS empowerment evaluation to respond to the seven standards for the teaching profession: 1) taking stock using baseline data, 2) interim measures—to provide a feedback loop and midcourse corrections, and 3) taking stock annually using data points to improve the quality of the program. What is reported here is the data on the final exit interview findings of 54 dual credential graduates.

Programmatically, ALAS students completed one academic year of courses in Biliteracy Teacher Education and a second academic year in Special Education with a Mild/Moderate emphasis. As previously noted in Figure 1 (ALAS Conceptual Framework), in every academic year, the ALAS program held special monthly seminars to bridge the pedagogy of both programs that are guided by differing pedagogical philosophies and approaches (socio-constructivism and behaviorism).

Results

Using mixed methods, quantitative (survey) and qualitative approaches (interviews), the program data illustrates the patterns that have emerged in assessing the preparation of 54 pre-service teachers of ELLs upon completion of the two-year credential program in bilingual and special education between 2007-2013.

Table 1 reports on the overall ALAS students' perceptions of the seven-program evaluation standards, while focusing on the areas of Knowledge and Skills to discern how program components provided pedagogical support to ALAS participants. The results represent the perceptions and opinions of 54 graduates who completed the ALAS program with the focus on addressing ELLs with mild/moderate disabilities.

Overall, the 54 graduates rated all seven areas above 3.0, on a scale from 1.0 (disagree) to 4.0 (strongly agree), indicating that they were in agreement with regard to the overall knowledge and skills acquired in the ALAS program.

To ascertain graduates' opinions under knowledge and skills acquired by the 54 graduates, t-test comparisons were done between the Biliteracy/BCLAD program and SPED program components with regard to perceived knowledge gained and perceived skills gained across the various teaching standards. Table 1 notes that statistical significance was attained under Standards 1, 2, 3, and 7.

Overall, among the significant results (Table 1), the BCLAD program components were rated higher than the SPED program component. Gaining the ability to create and maintain effective environments for student learning (Standard 2) was rated the highest for the Overall ALAS Program, while Assessing Student Learning (Standard 5) was rated the lowest.

However, the SPED program was rated higher than the Biliteracy/BCLAD program in terms of skills gained for Standard 4.4 (Designing short-term and long-term plans to foster student learning), and in terms of knowledge and skills gained for Standard 5.2 (collecting and using multiple sources of information to assess

student learning) and Standard 5.4 (using the results of assessments to guide instruction).

Table 1

Results of Participant Overall Perceptions of Knowledge and Skills in the Two-Year Dual Credential Program in Bilingual (BLAD) and Special Education to Serve ELL Students with Special Needs (N=54) Scale of 1 (strongly disagree) and 4 (strongly agree)

California Standards for the Teaching Profession	OVERALL	
	ALAS Dual Credentials	
	Mean	SD
Standard 1: Engaging and Supporting All Students in Learning	3.79***	0.28
Standard 2: Creating and Maintaining Effective Environments for Student Learning	3.81*	.027
Standard 3: Understanding and Organizing Subject Matter for Student Learning	3.75**	.038
Standard 4: Planning Instruction and Designing Learning Experiences for All Students	3.76	0.33
Standard 5: Assessing Student Learning	3.69	0.36
Standard 6: Developing as a Professional Educator	3.79	.027
Standard 7: Link With the School Community and a Mediator of Culture (added standards by ALAS)	3.76***	0.34

*** $p \leq .001$, ** $p \leq .01$, * $p \leq .05$

Qualitatively, nine ALAS graduates using the end-of-the-year program exit evaluation interview SWOT process (evaluate the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats involved in a program) summarize their experience as follows:

“Both the SPED and Bilingual credential programs helped me learn a lot about students. The bilingual credential helped me learn about the different ways children acquire the English language, and how important it is to take into consideration their primary language. The SPED credential helped me gain knowledge in the different ways children need to be assessed. The Bilingual [credential], from the lens of a socio-constructivist, helped me understand the student’s funds of knowledge that s/he brings to school. From the Special Education M/M focus, from the behaviorist lens and direct instruction, helped me realize that special need students require a very structured learning approach” (Graduate 3).

Another graduate noted another benefit of participation in the ALAS program:

“As a Dual Credential teacher, I am able to support students, parents, and other educators when situations are presented. I work in collaboration with other teachers and every time we plan our lessons, I remind them to chunk information for contextualizing our lessons and units. I am reminded that when parents need support with students’ academic progress, I need to be ready and able to make recommendations to support their children at home” (Graduate 17).

Data for the five years of the ALAS project point to the 54 graduates’ recognition of the valuable preparation received as bilingual and special education teachers to serve ELL students with mild moderate disabilities. One of the noted:

“...I feel more empowered to serve multiple roles in school settings. Not only do I have that General Education perspective now in place but also know that as a bilingual educator and Special Education specialist, I can understand the struggles the students have. It is a beautiful thing to having both biliteracy and special education tools. I think it was a win-win situation for me” (Graduate 27).

On the pedagogical approaches under the two disciplines of Bilingual/Biliteracy and Special Education, a graduate commented:

“I think ALAS was able to provide a good balance of both [pedagogical perspectives]. The program was very direct in explaining the two different ideologies and I think as a teacher you’re always juggling between the two, because there are situations where a child needs direct instruction. But for the most part, I think in general, you want to approach the constructivist way of the model of teaching. I think it just depends on the child and what their needs are and that’s what you do” (Graduate 43).

ALAS graduates noted the importance of their professional experiences and on the formation of a community, which grew organically as participants sought to support each other through the two year rigorous program. S/he stated:

“...we have our team of people that we can trust and collaborate with and have a network of people to draw any ideas for curriculum” (Graduate 51).

Another graduate perceived strength of the ALAS program as being ultimately better equipped to respond to a wide variety of students’ needs:

“Through the ALAS program, I have been able to reach all students in my community, not just the English-speaking ones. I think that it is essential to involve all families in the educational process” (Graduate 23).

“I am able to differentiate instruction to meet the needs of all learners. Our high school serves students who have fallen through the cracks and therefore a high percentage need added support, even if they don’t have IEPs” (Graduate 33).

“Although I teach Special Education, many of my students come from families whose native language is Spanish. It is a huge population of students, who have language as well as individual academic and social needs. I love that I can speak with families, that I have a unique and holistic perspective in IEP meetings, and that I came from a credential program that prepared me for multiple diverse teaching environments” (Graduate 9).

“Acquiring the SPED ALAS dual credentials has allowed me to work directly with students in SPED programs who need culturally and linguistically competent teachers who can address their unique needs and communicate with parents” (Graduate 37).

Discussion

The ALAS data illustrates that when a teacher preparation program incorporates the key standards for the teaching profession as a key measure for both special education and bilingual teacher education candidates, for most standards, candidates develop critical knowledge and skills required to address the growing linguistic diversity of California, which includes Latino students who make up 53% of California’s K-12 students (CBEDS, 2013). In California, 504 of 1,131 school districts (45%) have enrollments that are more than 25% Latino, and 258 school districts (23%) have more than 50% Latino enrollments (CBEDS, 2013). English learners comprise about one-fourth of the entire public school population in California and San Diego County, and two out of three students in the elementary grades. In total, ELL students in California represent over 1.4 million students. Over 84% of the California ELL students speak Spanish as their primary language, and over 38% of the California population is Latino/Hispanic (CBEDS, 2013). With such demographics and educational needs, it is imperative that programs such as ALAS take flight and emerge as the model for preparing all teachers to be better prepared to teach the growing diverse population in our schools. In addition, such programs are essential for all general education teachers to be prepared to meet the needs of both ELL students and Special Education students in their classrooms.

Without clearer and more transformative models of teacher preparation that consciously bring together key stakeholders in the community, bridging of philosophical divides that have inherently kept bilingual and

special education as separate disciplines—and often times separate from general teacher education—we will not transform learning for this the 21st century and beyond.

Trends and Challenges

Trends and challenges have emerged in the work to improve the quality of the ALAS teacher preparation dual credential program and in institutionalizing the program into both the Bilingual and Special Education teacher preparation departments at San Diego State University. Among the challenges are the following:

- Engaging all faculty members in both programs to integrate elements of ALAS into the Bilingual and Special Education Department programs.
- Time to improve the program coordination and flow as students transition from the Bilingual ELL program to the SPED program and practicums.
- Enhancing and institutionalizing the dual credential program biliteracy and Special Education Mild/Moderate emphasis that pedagogically is guided by an educational benefits model value (non-deficit based) that is supported by the principles of democratic schooling.
- The need for ongoing dialogue between two departments that approach learning from two different viewpoints (socio-constructivist versus behaviorist) and the tensions for participants in negotiating both philosophical approaches of the programs. The tensions need to be addressed more frequently than in the monthly seminars in order to adequately bridge the disciplines of biliteracy and special education.
- Negotiating the tensions between the pedagogical needs of the school districts and in developing a model program for pre-service teachers in bilingual and special education in a culture that is often competitive rather than collaborative in the preparation of teachers.
- Recognizing and working with institutions and colleges of education that are often driven by institutional formulas that work best for the institution and not for its client school communities.
- Recognizing institutional cultural boundaries that work for and against the incorporation of the two disciplines (bilingual/biliteracy and special education) in modifying and adapting bilingual and special education instructional methods that are research based.
- Working with Higher Education Institutions to commit to building capacity to train dual credentialed bilingual and special education teachers to teach ELL students with Mild/Moderate disabilities that is often driven by conflict of policy and pedagogical philosophies.

Recommendations for Future Research

The following recommendations are provided to acquire a deeper understanding of ELLs with disabilities:

- What should be the measures to determine linguistic and cultural proficiency of bilingual special education teachers in order to facilitate academic rigor in the first and second language of ELL students with disabilities?
- Given the growing linguistic diversity of students in California and the nation, how are general teacher education programs preparing pre-service teachers to teach ELLs and special populations of students?
- The principle of student inclusion calls for teacher education programs in California and the nation to prepare teachers to be effective in working in ethnically and linguistically diverse school communities with special populations, how is the principle of inclusion being applied by teacher education programs? What are the guiding standards of teacher education programs that promote inclusion and academic rigor for ELLs with disabilities?

Overall, the intensive two-year dual credential program is highly promising in terms of contributing to our understanding of how to combine two disciplines (bilingual/biliteracy and special education), while having data to reflect on the strengths, weakness, opportunities, and tensions of the teacher-training program. Furthermore, the ALAS program contributes to the identification of skills necessary for teachers to be reflective practitioners, to be facilitators of critical inquiry, cultural mediators, and educators linked with the school community. Over the course of this dual credential program it is clear that ALAS graduates are bilingual/biliterate teachers who have the time, support and an educational program to develop both emotionally and intellectually as critical educational professionals, committed to socially just and equitable education for all students, specifically English Language Learners with special learning needs.

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