ELEMENTARY SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHERS' CULTURAL

AWARENESS AND BELIEFS IN ONE URBAN SCHOOL DISTRICT

REGARDING AFRICAN AMERICAN LEARNERS

A Dissertation

by

JANET ELAINE WILLIS

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies of
Texas A&M University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

December 2011

Major Subject: Curriculum and Instruction

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ABSTRACT

Elementary Special Education Teachers' Cultural

Awareness and Beliefs in One Urban School District

Regarding African American Learners. (December 2011)

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Today's urban schools are composed of students from diverse cultural backgrounds and varying levels of academic readiness. At the same time, approximately 88% of teachers are White and middle-class. The dispositions of teachers have important educational ramifications. Teachers' beliefs structure the classroom atmosphere, influence perceptions regarding the abilities of students, and impact how they teach and expect students to learn and behave. In order to foster an accepting and productive learning environment, teachers must have cultural awareness. To ensure that all learners receive a solid academic foundation, teachers must be able to instruct dissimilar students.

Special educators have been trained to work with students with unique, special needs, but the reality of today's demographics - and special education classrooms in particular - mandate that they also have the cultural knowledge to effectively serve diverse students. Perceptions and attitudes of elementary special education teachers

regarding their cultural awareness and beliefs need to be explored. This study examined the cultural awareness beliefs of elementary special educators working in urban school districts located in southeast Texas. The research also needs to ascertain whether ethnicity or length of service effected such teachers' cultural awareness beliefs.

Using the Cultural Awareness Beliefs Inventory (CABI) instrument, the investigator gathered self-reported data from 54 participants. The reliability and validity of the instrument were determined to be sound by previous investigators. The CABI contains eight major components: Teacher Beliefs, School Climate, Culturally Responsive Classroom Management, Home and Community Support, Curriculum and Instruction, Cultural Sensitivity, Cultural Awareness, and Teacher Efficacy. Data were analyzed using percentage analysis and one-way analysis of variance. The findings include: 1) Participants had favorable perceptions towards the School Climate, Culturally Responsive Classroom Management, and Cultural Awareness variables; 2) Participants had unfavorable perceptions regarding Teacher Beliefs; 3) In contrast to some previous research, it did not appear that teaching experience impacted cultural beliefs; and 4) Importantly, it was discerned that teachers' ethnicities yielded statistically significant effects on their cultural awareness and beliefs regarding African American special education students.

DEDICATION

     I would like to dedicate this dissertation to the Texas A&M University professors who facilitate and guide distance learners through program completion. Also, I dedicate this work to my son, Tyrone Donell Willis, Jr., for being patient and kind, and for understanding how important this research journey was to me.

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I would like to acknowledge members of my committee for providing the guidance and support that allowed me to reach this significant milestone. In particular, I would like to thank Dr. Patricia Larke and Dr. Norvella Carter for being role models whom I will never forget. Their expertise and time spent presenting papers at conferences in the United States were invaluable experiences never to be forgotten. A

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

In the United States, our democratic ideals highlight the importance of individualism. The founding fathers, in writing the U. S. Constitution, coined the phrase "all men are created equal" to signify that in the future America that they envisioned, no person would be deemed inferior or superior based on birthrights alone. More than 200 years after the writing of this seminal document, equality has come to encompass a much broader array of concepts. Since education is a primary means of personal advancement, the issue of equal educational opportunity has long been, and continues to be, a hotly debated topic.

Spring (2001) stated that, in part, equality of educational opportunity means that every person should have an equal chance to attend publicly supported schools. If the government provides services such as education, all classes of citizens should have equal access to those services. In this context, the provision of equal educational opportunity is a legal issue. However, the author points out, genuine equality of opportunities must also be considered an issue of social justice. Equality of educational opportunity requires positive recognition of the genders, races, and ethnic backgrounds of students. In

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This dissertation follows the style of the *American Educational Research Journal.*

addition, the educational system must also be able to meet the needs of students with special needs.

Special education was borne out of, and owes a debt to, the civil rights movement. By the 1960s, the civil rights movement encompassed students with special needs. These included students with physical handicaps; mental, emotional or behavioral disorders; and those with hearing or visual impairments. Yet, students with special needs can only potentially participate in schools on equal footing with other students if they receive some form of assistance. The inspiration for, and the strategies used by special education advocates resulted in this country's first national special education legislation (Smith, Ferguson, & Kozleski, 2005). As a result, special education has been an attempt to increase the fairness of universal public education. This means that all children have the right to an opportunity to learn in public schools, including exceptional learners (Kauffman & Hallahan, 2005).

Today's classroom teacher is believed to be the most valuable asset because he or she directly and immediately contributes to the improved academic achievement of students. If the child is in a safe and structured environment, where all students are supported and encouraged to explore the use of all their skills and talents, then the child is presumed to be able to obtain his/her potential abilities. A teacher is expected to be able to meet various federal and state mandates regarding equal educational opportunities. A major duty of the special education teacher, in particular, is to arrange learning experiences that present sensitivity to students with diverse needs (Teacher

Standards In Student Assessment, 1990). In 1986, Madeline Will, then the Assistant Secretary of Education, started the Regular Education Initiative. She advocated inclusion of special education children into general education classrooms. This has since become standard practice in an effort to increase such students' ability to cope in a flexible manner with change. Mainstreaming also encourages special needs children to graduate from our public schools as informed and educated citizens who are capable of more independent living than would otherwise be the case, and as productive, working adults (Hallahan & Keogh, 2001; Lipsky & Gartner, 1998).

Teacher preparation programs have also undergone changes reflecting attitudes towards equal educational opportunity. In the past, special needs children were sequestered and expected to learn little beyond basic coping skills. Today, a teacher planning on practicing as a special educator needs to know not only the regular curriculum, but an assortment of teaching techniques modified for the special education population (Brownell, Sindelar, Kiely, & Danielson, 2010). According to Owen (2010), it is essential for educators in teacher education programs to acknowledge, and respond to, potential educational access barriers. Social equity, justice and democracy for all students must be goals in all schools: Such ideals should not be overlooked, minimized or resisted. Movements like response-to-intervention (RTI) require a shift in thinking about how to prepare qualified special education teachers. Various layers of expertise are needed to be effective in today's special education classrooms (Brownell, Sindelar, Kiely & Danielson, 2010).

Special education teachers must be able to work in a variety of settings. Sometimes such teachers are in resource settings, and at other times they work together with general education teachers in regular education classrooms. Some reform initiatives over the years have created high degrees of role inconsistency for the special education teacher. School districts responding to reform initiatives and implementing new practices, such as inclusion, have ironically caused higher stress levels and lower senses of job satisfaction for many special education teachers (Bureau of Labor, Statistics, 2010). According to Gertzen, Keating, Yovanoff and Harniss (2001) the special education teacher is expected to be able to simultaneously juggle multiple teaching and non-teaching responsibilities that comprise the job. This means that he or she must not only educate his or her students with disabilities, but is expected to collaborate with other specialists to make the necessary adjustments in order to ensure students' success.

Special education teachers' heavy workloads, in addition to the expectation that they perform administrative tasks, can cause physical and emotional demands that lead to some special education teachers leaving the field. Fore, Martin and Bender (2002) acknowledge that the retention of special education teachers is a critical concern in many public schools across the nation. The annual attrition rate for special education teachers is between nine to ten percent, as compared to six percent among teachers employed in other areas. Billingsley's study (2004) concluded that one compelling reason for burnout of special education teachers is job dissatisfaction. Recent changes in job descriptions have exacerbated stress levels, including: expectations for inclusive instruction, discipline changes, and behavioral intervention plans or other paperwork demands. High

student caseloads, a lack of administrative support and overwhelming instructional assignments add to the special educator's burdens (Fore et al., 2002).

Court decisions have established the right of all children, disabled or not, to have the right to a free and appropriate education (FAPE). Many legal decisions have mandated that the public schools take whatever actions are necessary to provide quality education to disabled children (Kirk & Gallagher, 1979). There has been an explosion of provisions for the disabled. Notable is the mandate for inclusion, wherein a disabled child is educated in the same setting as his or her peers to whatever extent is possible in order to provide a learning environment that encourages his or her fullest development. The *Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act* (IDEA) (1990) specifically governs services for students served by special education, and provides federal funding to states and school districts for this purpose. Those who are eligible must be provided an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) developed to meet their unique needs. IDEA strengthened accountability for the education of students with disabilities by requiring their participation in state and district knowledge assessments, with their being provided whatever appropriate accommodations are necessary (Texas Education Agency, 2009).

The increasing ethnic, cultural, language, and religious diversity of the United States has raised new questions and possibilities about educating students for effective citizenship (Banks, 2007). The services for special education students have been adapted and designed to meet the needs of special education children though inclusive practices due to pressure to raise academic standards and to increase achievement among all students in the United States (Goertz, McLaughlin, Roach, & Raber, 2000). Changing

paradigms of teaching and learning have also required a knowledge of local cultures (Sage & Burrello, 1994). Some major trends and social forces that are responsible for or accompany these changes can be identified as multicultural education training and cultural awareness of educators.

According to one study, the paradigm shift in education included changes in perceptions of how people were viewed and valued in organizations, how those organizations were structured, and how they are changing from centralized to decentralized semi-autonomous workplaces (Peters, Richardson, Wilson & Wetherald, 1987). For example, how does leadership influence self-management? What is the role of parents with disabled children, and how has this concept changed over the years? Other issues to consider include changing legislation, additional professional resource requirements and court actions. The two main legislative laws for the improvement of conditions for students with disabilities and for students of color were the *Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act* (IDEA), and the *No Child Left Behind Act* (NCLB).

Over the years, the public education system has made significant changes and improvements. Years ago, any sort of education was solely the provenance of a select, elite few. Over time, a public education was legally afforded to all U. S. citizens. Currently, a parent can expect their child to have a free education from kindergarten through senior year of high school. This alone is a huge advancement from previous eras, when females and assorted categories of students of color were denied an education (Sage & Burrello, 1994). Despite a perhaps dubious history, today's educational environment recognizes the importance of raising the achievement levels of all students.

Race and social class in learning will always be critical factors. One means of helping all learners achieve their best is to acknowledge and embrace students' individualities. For example, culturally responsive pedagogy is an important element in improving the achievement levels of children of color. Another critical aspect which is essential to learning for children of color is that their culture should be acknowledged in all aspects of their learning (Ladson-Billings, 1994).

Statement of the Problem

Preparing culturally responsive teachers -- professionals with the willingness and ability to teach in today's diverse schoolrooms- - represents perhaps the most daunting task facing teacher education today (Gay, 2000; Villegas & Lucas, 2008). A contemporary teacher is responsible for the arrangement, management, and coordination of the total learning environment (Lewis & Richie, 2003). The teacher's cultural beliefs have implications for instruction and classroom environment, and can affect the mood of the students within the class. Demographic changes in the student population will require that diversity awareness becomes a reality of teacher preparation programs (Rodriguez, 1994). Teachers, via their words and actions, can model or communicate positive or negative feelings toward students with disabilities (Cartledge, Frew, & Zaharias, 1985; Garnett & Crump, 1994; Simpson, 1980). According to Kirk and Gallagher (1979), special education students should be instructed as a part of, not apart from, the school body. Special education learners represent one group of "high-needs" school children, and finding and keeping qualified teachers in urban districts is a perennial challenge (Darling-Hammond, 1995; Ladson-Billings & Brown, 2008). The equity concept

strongly endorses the notion that all students, regardless of their backgrounds, should have an equal opportunity to learn in school. Children learn to function in society partly through the process of socialization, wherein they learn culturally appropriate behaviors (Johnson, Dupuis, Musial, Hall, & Gollnick, 1994). Therefore, schools have a role and responsibility to students to provide equal educational opportunities, regardless of their backgrounds, so that each child may benefit from schooling.

Purpose of the Study

According to federal teacher standards, in order to provide an ideal and appropriate classroom environment teachers should respond tactfully to diverse groups of learners. Urban classrooms today include students with a wide range of abilities and differences that teachers must address in order to effectively meet students' academic needs. The purpose of this study was to examine data collected from an administration of the Cultural Awareness and Beliefs Inventory (CABI) instrument developed by Webb-Johnson & Carter (2005). The study sought to identify special education teacher perceptions, cultural awareness and beliefs regarding teaching African American students. Improving teachers' awareness regarding cultural diversity and of the special needs of students with disabilities will be beneficial for students with various sorts of differences, including; language, culture, religion and socioeconomic statuses that may differ from those of their teachers. More specifically, this study examined the perceptions of special education teachers in an urban school district regarding their own cultural awareness and beliefs concerning African American students. The following eight components were the focus of the Cultural Awareness & Beliefs Inventory

(CABI); teacher beliefs, school climate, culturally responsive classroom management, home and community support, cultural awareness, curriculum and instructional strategies, cultural sensitivity and teacher efficacy. The study examined if ethnicity or length of service had an impact on urban elementary special education teachers' regarding these eight components of the CABI instrument.

Research Questions

1. What are the cultural awareness perceptions of urban, elementary special education teachers regarding African American students?

2. What are the cultural awareness perceptions of urban, elementary special education teachers by ethnicity regarding African American students?

3. What are the cultural awareness perceptions of urban, elementary special education teachers by length of service regarding African American students?

Significance of the Study

Urban classrooms today include students with a wide range of abilities and differences that teachers must be able to effectively address (Ladson-Billings, 2001). Middleton (2002) concluded from his study that although pre-service teachers expressed a willingness to teach from a multicultural perspective, the participants of the author's study also exhibited misunderstandings of the intents of multicultural education or lacked the attitudes and skills necessary to successfully teach diverse learners. These teachers held very generic views of multicultural education. Such beliefs have been termed as a lack of critical consciousness surrounding issues of privilege and inequity. Improving teachers' awareness and expanding their knowledge bases of cultural

differences and of students with disabilities will enhance instruction for students with language, cultural, religious, and/or socioeconomic statuses that differ from those of the teachers, and assist them in providing equitable conditions in the classroom. Students' learning is valued by the instructional conditions provided by special education teachers.

Shifting perspectives on disabilities, effective practices, and the means of providing services to students with disabilities have led to changes in how special education is conceptualized and organized, and how special education teacher preparation programs are structured (Brownell et al., 2010). As a result, the special education teacher's job description has changed dramatically over the last few years, and they are expected to act as agents of positive change in public school systems. As facilitators of learning, the special education teacher should ideally model and encourage appreciation for students' cultural heritages, unique endowments, learning styles, interests, and needs. These teachers also design learning experiences that show consideration for these students' individual characteristics (Teacher Standards, 1990).

This study was guided by Albert Bandura's (1977) identification of key elements of self-beliefs and efficacy and by his Social Cognitive Theory (1986). This is a view of human functioning that accords a central role to cognitive, vicarious, self-regulatory, and self-reflective processes in human adaptation and change. Florian (2007) states that it is important to remember that special education is a product of social and political frameworks. Through self-reflection, people make sense of their experiences, explore their own cognitions and self-beliefs, engage in self-evaluation, and alter their thinking

and behavior accordingly. Because of self-efficacy beliefs, people's judgments of their own capabilities influence their actual behaviors and impact outcomes (Bandura, 1977).

Self-efficacy beliefs provide the foundation for human motivation, well-being, and personal accomplishments. This is due to the fact that unless people believe that their actions can produce the outcomes they desire, they have little incentive to act or to persevere in the face of difficulties. Self-efficacy beliefs also influence an individual though patterns and emotional reactions. Efficacy is defined as positive beliefs in the ability to change one's self, one's teaching, and/or ability to work with others (Guskey, 1987). In addition, this study examined the eight components of the Cultural Awareness and Beliefs Inventory (CABI). They were; teacher beliefs, school climate, culturally responsive classroom management, home and community support, cultural awareness, curriculum and instructional strategies, culturally sensitivity and teacher efficacy.

Assumptions and Limitations

In designing the study, it was decided that potential participants had to meet certain selection criteria. Also, to narrow the focus of the research, the study was conducted in one particular region. The following assumptions were presumed during the course of the investigation:

1. Participants understood the purpose and scope of the study, the language of the survey instrument, and in their self-reporting they responded objectively and honestly.

2. All of the elementary schools in the school district that participated had students with disabilities in attendance on their campuses.

3.	The scope of the study was limited to the southern region of the United States, namely districts in the Gulf Coast region of Texas.

Definitions of Terms

The following operational definitions are defined in order to provide clarity when these words or phrases are used throughout the study.

Mainstreaming. The social and instructional integration of handicapped students in a regular education class for at least a portion of the school day (Schulz & Turnbull, 1983).

Multicultural Education. An educational reform movement whose major goal is to restructure curriculum, pedagogy and educational institutions so that students from diverse social classes, racial, and ethnic groups – as well as both gender groups - will experience equal educational opportunities (Banks, 2007).

Cultural Awareness and Beliefs Inventory (CABI). A Likert-type four point scale that consists of forty-six items that measure urban teachers. This instrument measures the perceptions and attitudes of urban teachers' beliefs based on the factors of; teacher beliefs, school climate, culturally responsive classroom management, awareness, curriculum and instruction, home and community support, cultural sensitivity and teacher efficacy (Webb-Johnson & Carter, 2005).

Teacher Efficacy. The degrees that teachers believe that they have the ability to affect student performances (Ashton, 1984).

Culture. The ideations, symbols, behaviors, values, and beliefs that are shared by a human group (Banks, 2007).

Cultural Identity. An individual's subjective conception of self in relationship to a cultural group (Reber, 1985).

Cultural Sensitivity. Attitudes, beliefs and behaviors towards students of other cultural, linguistic, and socioeconomic backgrounds (Larke, 1990).

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy. An approach to teaching and learning that intellectually empowers students, using their particular cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes (Grant & Sleeter, 2007; Ladson-Billings, 1994).

Paradigms. Are mental models that we use to put opportunities and problems in perspective (Sage & Burrello, 1994).

Paradigm Shift. A change in the way that people view the world, which may include altered opinions regarding institutional practices or economic, political or social systems (Sage & Burello, 1994).

Restructuring. Integrating the work of students with planning, goal setting, and evaluation of student learning; involving internal and external audiences in clearly defined roles, relationships, and governance structures; and focusing on the actual functions of teaching and learning (Sage & Burrello, 1994).

Socioeconomic Status. A description of people who have a similar lifestyles or standards of living, based on income, occupation, education, values and behaviors (Banks, 2007).

Organization of the Study

This study is organized into five chapters. Chapter I consists of an introduction to the research goals, a statement of the problem, details on the purpose of the study and the research questions. Chapter II contains a review of relevant literature, including a

brief history of the following topics; special education, teacher beliefs, school climate, culturally responsive classroom management, home and community support, cultural awareness, curriculum and instruction, cultural sensitivity, teacher efficacy, special education teachers, disproportionality, and the overrepresentation of African American students in special education classes. Chapter III details the methodological framework used in the investigation. It addresses the methodology, including; type of research design, population and research setting, validity and reliability of the instrument, the data collection procedures, and the methods of statistical analysis used. Chapter IV presents the results obtained from the investigation. Chapter V provides a summary of the implications of the study's results. In addition, the significance of the findings are detailed, as well as suggestions for future avenues of research for scholars of the special education profession.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Recent changes in educational needs and legislative requirements have created a shift in teaching expectations (Rodriguez, 1994). The population of the United States is becoming more diverse. In addition, immigration is having a profound effect on American demographics (Yeo, 1997). The increasing diversity of the U. S. population is particularly pronounced among the school age population. Nonetheless, the teaching population among all categories of specialization continues to be overwhelmingly White and middle class (Marshall, 2002). Therefore, it is important to examine these changes in order to identify what features of an effective, new educational system should encompass. This is especially warranted for the special education population (Sorrell, Rieth & Sindelar, 2004). To best serve all pupils, the educational philosophy must focus on raising the achievement levels of all students and on providing opportunities for all students to become productive members of a democratic society (Sage & Burrello, 1994). Issues of personnel quality and instructional interventions are at the forefront of the special education debate.

This brief review of literature pertinent to the present investigation will discuss; the history of special education; the disproportionality and overrepresentation of students of color in special education; issues related to the retention of special educators; and the eights parts of the CABI (teacher beliefs, school climate, culturally responsive classroom management, home-community support, cultural awareness, curriculum and instruction,

cultural sensitivity, and teacher efficacy). The CABI was the instrument used in this study to assess the cultural awareness beliefs levels of elementary special education professionals in one urban district regarding African American learners in the southern United States.

Brief History of Special Education in the United States

In the last half of the twentieth century, changes occurred in multiple arenas of the educational system. The federal government dramatically increased its attention to and the amount of resources devoted to students with disabilities. Court decisions, as well as federal and state legislation, have fundamentally altered the expectations of public and private agencies regarding their mandates to serve students labeled as disabled. For the disabled children, the school and other public facilities became, at least in theory, more responsive to their needs and interests. The definition of disability itself underwent significant changes (Osgood, 2008).

Early Days

Free public education has its roots in European history, particularly in the eras of the French Revolution and the Enlightenment, when egalitarianism, reason, and science became dominant social forces (Kauffman & Hallahan, 2005). Public education in the United States can be traced back to the establishment of free public education in the early 1800s (Culatta & Tompkins, 1999). Universal public schooling began in the mid-1800s in areas with more dense populations, and over time additional grade levels were added and schools was established even in more remote locations. Universal public education meant that all children were able to and were required to go to school until

they reached a certain age, and that supposedly no student could be denied an education (Kauffman & Hallahan, 2005). However, this did not include schooling for children with disabilities. In the colonial and early national eras of the United States, persons with disabilities might have been kept at home, tolerated and even supported by communities, or they might be socially condemned and even prosecuted. Children with disabilities cared for at home were usually offered nothing at all in the way of formal education, unless their family could pay for the services of costly private tutors.

In the United States, the first formal attempts to provide special education occurred in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, when special schools were set up for children who were blind, deaf, or mentally retarded. These were typically due to the efforts of philanthropists (Florian, 2007). According to Brownell et al. (2010), the first teacher preparation programs in special education emerged in residential facilities and were directed by pioneering clinicians such as Seguin, Gallaudet, and Hard. Samuel Gridley Howe and Thomas Gallaudet represented different approaches to addressing disability. In 1817, the Institution for the Education of the Deaf and Dumb was founded in Hartford, Connecticut, followed by the opening of a similar school in New York in 1818, as private organizations started to address the educational needs of disabled students. The Asylum for the Deaf in Hartford opened in after Gallaudet traveled to Europe to learn teaching methods for the deaf and to recruit teachers as well as to obtain financial support. The Asylum for the Blind (1832) and Asylum for the Idiotic and Feeble-Minded Youth (1848) were opened in Massachusetts because of Samuel Howe's

widely publicized and highly celebrated teaching of deaf-blind child Laura Bridgman in the 1830s.

Such success stories helped generate optimism about the ability to teach children with severe disabilities. Howe's technique was the forerunner used for Helen Keller by Anne Sullivan (Sorrell, 2004), a deaf, blind and mute child. In 1838, "Schools for Special Instruction," whose purpose was to provide a segregated setting for older immigrant children who needed to learn to read and write English, were established. A short time later, Margaret Bancroft (1854-1912) opened the first private boarding school in Haddonfield, New Jersey for children with developmental delays. Yet even when private academies were constructed, there was no federal or state oversight guaranteeing a disabled child could receive an education. Such institutions were few and far between, and enrollment was based on parents' ability to pay for tuition and/or room and board fees.

Near the end of the nineteenth century, a massive change in thinking occurred. Assumptions about what education might be for and about what might make a child worthy of special education shifted (Thomas, 2007). Interest in educating, treating, and even curing persons with disabilities grew as the century progressed. Throughout the nineteenth century, the trend to view children as unique individuals in strong need of nurturing combined with a heightened academic interest in children helped plant the seeds of the childhood study movement. G. Stanley Hall, a leading psychologist, later developed theories about the nature of childhood and adolescence. Consequently, educators, doctors and other psychologists linked studies of the child with educational

theories that focused on children and their need for supportive learning environments both at home and at school (Osgood, 2008). Nonetheless, special needs children continued to be educated in private settings apart from other children.

There were, however, a few notable examples of parents who sought to have their disabled children educated in local school systems, but who were denied access. For example, in 1919 a Wisconsin court ruled in *Beattie v. Board of Education, Wisconsin,* that a handicapped student could indeed be excluded from regular public school classes because his handicap had a depressing and nauseating effect on the teachers and school children. Although, support for expanding the educational opportunities of special needs students was limited, the White House Conference on Children (1910) had as a primary goal the establishment of remedial programs for special needs children. During the 1930's, the number of programs and services actually decreased. According to Yell (1998), this may have been due in part to the economic conditions of the Great Depression, but may also be based on the fact that much of the public professed that education, as a democratic ideal, required high educational standards that could not possibly be met with the inclusion of disabled children.

By the late 19th century, large metropolitan school districts, such as the New York City public schools, were faced with several problems: large numbers of immigrant children who spoke little or no English; large numbers of truant, "wayward," and delinquent youths and substantial numbers of children who spoke English but could not learn the standard curriculum of the schools with typical teaching procedures. Faced with these dilemmas, some large metropolitan school districts instituted special classes

(Kauffman & Hallahan, 2005). Some of these classes were for "streamer children," recent immigrants who were learning English, other special classes were for truant and delinquent students, many of whom would be referred to as emotionally disturbed today, and the "laggards" or "slow children whose rate of learning was markedly slower than that of the typical student (today known as mild mental retardation or learning disabled) (ibid, p.5).

Twentieth Century

After World War II, special education became more common in smaller school systems as well, due in large part to the action of parents in pressing schools for special services via parent organizations such as the National Association for Retarded Children (now known as The ARC). The 1960s saw the first federal legislation involving special education. By the mid-1960s, federal laws had established a Bureau of Education for the Handicapped (BEH) in the Office of Education (now the Office of Special Programs, or OSEP, in the U.S. Department of Education). The Bureau (BEH) offered grants to states, college and universities, with the grants supporting special education through the establishment of state agencies and resource centers offering special materials and consultation to schools. Although special education expanded greatly in the 1960s, by the early 1970s many children with disabilities were still not receiving special services of any kind.

The special education movement had a critical turning point that was primarily due to a 1975, landmark education law that was passed by the U.S. Congress and signed into law by President Gerald Ford—*the Education for All Handicapped Children Act*

(referred to as Public Law 94-142, EHA or EACHCA). This federal law is often referred to as the Bill of Rights for the Handicapped. This law required that a state wanting to receive any federal education monies must have a plan offering special education services to all handicapped children. Public Law 94-142 allowed parents who sued for violations of this law to recover attorney fees and other legal costs, and intimated that federal funds would be made available to reduce state and local costs for special education programs. The drastic changes resulting from the 1970 legislation of the *Education for All Handicapped Children Act* were the requirements that states provide a free and appropriate education (FAPE) to special needs students, provide appropriate assessments, offer placement in the least restrictive environments (LRE), and that schools notify parents of their child's educational rights, as well as the procedures for identification, evaluation and placement.

The civil rights case, *Brown v. Board of Education,* (1954) along with the passage of EHA were vital steps toward guaranteeing the educational rights of disabled children. The United States Supreme Court's decision in *Brown* specifically addressed the issue of "separate but equal" as it pertained to racial minorities, but parents and advocates for special needs students began asking the courts to apply *Brown's* doctrine, that separation is inherently unequal, to the educational situations of disabled students. The *Pennsylvania Association of Retarded Citizens v. Pennsylvania (PARC)* in 1972 resulted in an anti-discrimination mandate that required a free education be provided to all mentally retarded children between the ages of six and twenty-one. The PARC ruling defined education as broader than pure academics, and the Supreme Court ruled that

mentally retarded children could benefit from schooling when "education" was defined in the proper context. Also, the court's PARC decision included language promoting the education of mentally retarded children in the least restrictive environment.

In the mid-1980s, some seeking to reform special education requirements and practices proposed a Regular Education Initiative, 1986 (REI). The REI was an attempt to return responsibility for many or most students with disabilities to regular classroom teachers. In addition, the *Americans with Disabilities Act,1990* (ADA), and Section 504 of *The Rehabilitation Act* prohibited discrimination against disabled persons and required employers to make reasonable accommodations if an employee was otherwise qualified to perform his or her job. Then, in 1990 Congress passed Public Law 101-476, which attempted to make the terminology more politically correct, and the name of the *Education for All Handicapped Children Act* (EAHCA) was changed to the *Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act* (IDEA) (Pankake, Littleton, & Schroth, 2005). P.L. 101-476, the *Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act* and its amendments provided a free, appropriate public education to all children and youth with disabilities (Culatta & Tompkins, 1999). IDEA (1990) required school districts to also include transition plans in the Individualized Education Plans (IEP's) for all special needs children once the child became 16 years of age.

In 1997, Congress amended special education legislation with the newly reauthorized special education legislation P.L. 105-17, emphatically stating that children with disabilities were to be full participants in school programming. Also included was the provision that transition planning involve interagency responsibility. This law placed

greater emphasis on improving results, delineated procedural safeguards, changed the composition of the IEP team and the content of the IEP document, and established voluntary mediation. It also added language regarding the discipline of students (manifestation determination), stating that special education is a service and not a place.

Twenty-First Century Challenges

One result of the 1997 revisions to the IDEA was that provisions were included as an attempt to bring students with disabilities into state assessment and accountability programs. The end of the twentieth century was replete with accountability measures, sometimes referred to as high-stakes testing. Districts, individual schools and the classrooms within them must now, as a result of such legislation, meet state standards on assessment measures, and federal law mandates inclusion of special needs students in the testing scores. As these requirements intersect, the current reality is that special education children's achievements and evolving indicators must be documented by each state to delineate their adequate yearly progress. Students with disabilities must be included in assessment programs, with appropriate accommodations being provided, and states and districts must develop and implement alternative assessment for those students who cannot participate in regular testing programs (Goertz et al., 2000).

IDEA was reauthorized in 2004 (P.L. 108-446) and renamed *The Improving Education Results for Children with Disabilities Act* (2004). This law included; extensively modified procedures (e.g., procedures related to evaluation, discipline, IEPs and learning disability eligibility), ensured that students with disabilities are included in accountability systems, established methods to reduce the numbers of culturally or

linguistically diverse learners who are inappropriately placed in special education, and clarified discipline procedures. Finally, at the core of all of these efforts is the desire to ensure public accountability for each student. Accountability means more than public reports of students test scores. School and district accreditation has been a primary tool by which states monitor the quality of their public schools. The dilemma for state special education authorities is how to balance the procedural demands of IDEA with the new emphasis on results or outputs (Goertz et al., 2000).

The Professional Special Educator

While the profession of special education historically has not devoted much attention to any concentrated examination of teaching conditions, seminal figures in the broader field of general education research, such as Lortie (1975) and Little (1982) initiated a profound revolution in thinking by arguing that in order to increase student learning, we need to understand and then improve the conditions in which many teachers work (Gersten et al., 2001). Another study by Rosenholtz (1989) documented the impact of working conditions on student achievement. Special education professionals believe in their abilities to help children conquer the limitations of their disabilities and thereby become productive learners and adults.

The special education teacher's role demands responsibility and the obligation of helping special needs children to develop and acquire knowledge (Byrnes & Miller, 2001). Teachers and researchers have struggled to identify and refine the practices that are most effective in increasing the academic achievement of children found to have disabilities. Applied to education, postmodernism connects with constructivist theories

of learning and multicultural education, both of which place a high value on the experiences of individuals as the foundation for learning (Kauffman & Danforth, 1999). Hallahan and colleagues (2002) stated that special education teachers are working harder than ever, but they are spending less time actually teaching. Special education teachers have lost their identity as teachers. Instead, many of them find themselves in a limbo-like state somewhere between special and general education. They often find themselves being glorified aides or paper-pushers.

Research has explored the major issues that have a direct impact on attrition, retention and transfer of special education teachers (SETs) in the United States (e.g., Billingsley, 2004). Empirically-based study (e.g. Plash & Piotrowski, 2006) report that critical issues in the burnout and/or attrition of special education teachers are; an enormous workload, professional role vagueness, a lack of administrative support, demanding job conditions, excessive amounts of paperwork, and fulfilling the requirements of IDEA mandates. The issues surrounding special education are so powerful, and the stakes for children are so high, it is imperative that we actively engage in finding ways to train and keep the best possible special education professionals. Therefore, parents and teachers must come to an agreement regarding practical ways to meet the demands of children with disabilities (Byrnes & Miller, 2001).

In 2008 there were 473,000 special education teachers in the United States, and the projected employment for 2018 is that there will be approximately 554,900 special education teachers needed at that time. On the elementary level alone, there were 226,000 in the 2008-2009 school year, with 100,300 middle school level special

educators. At the high school level, the same year saw 146,700 individuals employed as high school level special educators. In 2008-2009 there were approximately 623,000 special education students in the United States. According to the U.S. Census statistics, there are approximately 2.6 million teachers working at the elementary and middle school level. When the census information includes pre-schools, high schools, special education teachers and college instructors, the number climbs to approximately 6.5 million teachers. Our total population is currently approaching 306 million. So in estimated figures, teachers comprise about two percent of the total United States population. There were 34,000 special education teachers in the State of Texas during the 2009-2010 school year (U.S. Department of Education, 2010).

Cultural Sensitivity

Cultural sensitivity is a set of skills that enables individuals to learn about and appreciate people who are different from themselves. Cultural sensitivity enables people to better serve others. The term includes the knowledge, understanding, skills and protocols that allow an individual or system to provide services across cultural lines in the best possible way. Cultural sensitivity allows us to respond with respect and empathy to people of all nationalities, classes, races, religions, ethnic backgrounds in a manner that recognizes, affirms, and values their worth. Culture is a complicated concept, and few teachers have an opportunity to learn about it because most teacher education programs are founded on the social science discipline of psychology. Rarely do prospective teachers examine education through the discipline of anthropology.

Although it is important for teachers to understand their students' cultures, the real benefit in understanding diversity is to understand its impact on one's own life (Ladson-Billings, 2001). It is important to provide some specific indicators of cultural competence for teachers - both pre-service and in-service - to determine how they might improve their practice. The author describes what cultural competence in classrooms means, "the teacher understands their culture and its role in education; the teacher takes responsibility for learning about their students' culture and community; the teacher uses student culture as a basis for learning; and the teacher promotes a flexible use of students' local and global culture" (ibid, p. 147).

Learning about culture should daily permeate the curriculum and be a part of the natural context of the school community. Multicultural education is a life-style which promotes an inclusive citizenship in a changing America. According to Banks (2007), even in classrooms that are culturally homogeneous, a teacher has a responsibility to expand students' knowledge of other ethnic and racial groups. Embedded in all five standards established by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) are expectations for knowing, understanding, and supporting diversity (Bredekamp & Copple, 2009; Owen, 2010).

Cultural Awareness

Racial identity theory maintains that a person's self-conception of herself or himself, as well as one's beliefs, attitudes, and perceptions regarding racial groups other than one's own is influenced by the individual's "racial being" (Helms, 1994), and that this being or identity must be acknowledged. A person's conceptions of other groups can

be divided into two components; reference group orientation, and affiliative identity. Helms (1994) stated that reference group orientation is more culturally focused by suggesting that it is the person's adherence to cultural values, customs, and traditions, or the quality of the person's knowledge about the culture of his racial/ethnic group. She stated it is conceivable that the culture differences would exist and would exist even if racism did not. The second component, ascribed or affiliative identity describes a person's understanding of the particular sociopolitical issues of the racial/ethnic group(s) to which he or she is assigned to, and the extent to which the person believes that the group's issues also have personal relevance. Affiliative identity is often reflected in a person's friendships and political orientations.

Helms (1994) believes that during the formative years of childhood and adolescence, three aspects of racial identity can be shaped and influenced by a variety of environmental factors, including: 1) societal messages about the individual's worth as well as that of her or his group, 2) parental socialization concerning race relations, 3) peer influences, and 4) educators' communications about race and racial differences. It is important to recognize that a variety of types of educational experiences are likely to be beneficial to the child. Around the age of three or four years, a child generally knows to which group they have been socially assigned. Therefore, by the time the child enters elementary school, the implications of belonging to one group rather than another have already become salient to him. Helms (1994) stated that it is not clear to what extent pre-school school children have developed a racial identity of their own. It is believed that at this stage, the child reflects the racial identity climate in their home environment, and

adult role models have the most important initial influences on how the child feels about himself as a racial being (personal identity). Parental influences also impact what values the child deems worthy of imitating (reference group orientation) and the role the child has in his or her racial/cultural community (affiliative identity).

Helms (1994) elaborates that racial identity development is assumed to occur in a stage-like process in which personal identity, reference group orientation, and affiliative identity evolve to the point where a person can accept the racial aspects of self while respecting the diversity of other groups. The four stages of Helm's Racial Identity Theory include the following. During the pre-encounter stage, a White person for example, or even others, might be characterized by the general theme of a belief in the superiority of Whites and White culture and the denigration of the cultures of peoples of color. At this stage, a child of color must reject what involves confusion about how one regards one's own racial group. Even at a young age, there is considerable societal exposure to the theme "White is best," but because of some personally meaningful event or events, a child of color begins to realize that he or she is not really a member of the White group.

However, lack of exposure to the benefits of belonging to one's own group leaves the child or person with no racial group with which no identify. This stage, encounter, is expressed as euphoria during which the individual first realizes that his/her own racial group's culture offers an alternative to White culture. Third, the immersion/emersion stage's basic theme is idealization of the group of color and denigration of Whites, or of whatever is one's own culture at the expense of others. This

stage has two phases, and the first phase of immersion involves a withdrawal from everything assumed to reflect White/others' culture in response to anger generated by one's increasing awareness of the consequences of racial oppression. The second phase, emersion, involves the attempt to learn about one's own racial group. The emersion phase offers opportunity for caregivers to help the child evolve a positive view of his/her racial group, as well as self-awareness with respect to the group. During this stage, the child is receptive to the influences of positive role models from his/her own group. Fourth, the internalization stage sees the child positively interact with others, exhibiting a positive sense of self as a racial being. The values that are most important are those of his/her own racial group, and the child recognizes his debt to members of the group who preceded him. Finally, at this stage the child is capable of functioning across racial groups and is may be put in the role of mediator when racial conflicts arise among peers. Helms (1994) suggested that African Americans' feelings of as a minority status can be a crucial aspect of personality development for African Americans. Intrinsic to racial identity is the belief that individuals need an appreciation of group identification in order to maintain a healthy sense of personal identity.

Janice Helm's (1994) also outlined six states of White racial identity. During pre-contact, White individuals are not aware of themselves as racial beings and are oblivious to acts of individual racism. They have a color-blind view of race and racism. During disintegration, Whites or majority culture individuals have some sort of experience with race that leads him/her to the recognition that race does matter, that racism exists, and that are a member of society's dominant group. They may show empathy when Blacks

experience racial discrimination, but often fail to understand their justifiable anger. In the reintegration state, individuals believe consciously or unconsciously that Whites are superior to persons of color. During the pseudo-independence state, one begins the intellectual process of learning about and fighting against racism. One begins to understand that Whites have a responsibility for either contributing to or working to eliminate racism. At the point of immersion-emersion, in cases where this stage is reached, White individuals begin to grasp the need to challenge racism. They often experience feelings of guilt and shame for the racist ideas that they believed in the past. Finally, during autonomy, White individuals have abandoned cultural, institutional, and personal racism. They have gained a more flexible view of the world, their own whiteness, and other racial groups. They value and seek out cross-racial/cultural experiences. This discussion summarizes one seminal theory regarding the differences in how individuals view themselves according to their socially ascribed racial identities.

Supporting Academic Achievement

Odden (1990) stated that the target of contemporary educational challenge is to encourage the progress and improvement of student achievement among "all" learners. Such a process requires effective teaching, however several variables are believed to contribute to meeting such challenges. For example, Hanushek (1997), however, maintained that educational improvements were implemented to strengthen the economy. He further stated that the gaps in the standards of living were connected to the deficits of academic growth in the school system. Therefore, he asserted that in order to successfully foster a decrease in achievement gaps among particular groups of learners,

it was necessary to know how the deficit originated. Policy issues, poverty and perceived negative influences on the African American learners in general and special education impact educational services afforded learners.

Federal educational reforms direct state educational policy. State educational goals in turn direct the goals of the school districts. Educational climate drives the goals of the individual school. Also, it is necessary to examine other variables, including class size, poverty levels, teacher efficacy, and teacher years of experience (length of service). Research indicates that class size reduction in the early grades leads to higher student achievement. The ideal class size appears to be a classroom of no more than 15 to 20 students (Borman & Overman, 2004). In such circumstances, there are fewer distractions, students receive more individualized attention and the students can concentrate better on their lessons. However, all too often there is not enough funding available to employ the amount of highly qualified teachers for this situation to become a reality.

Educational research (e.g. Borman & Overman, 2004) states that children who grow up in poverty will start school at a disadvantage compared to children from higher income families. A lack of preparedness has been seen as early as the kindergarten level, and this disadvantage becomes more pronounced as the year progress. For example, low income students are more likely to make lower grades and post lower test scores compared to students from wealthy homes. In addition, children of color who come from families with lower socioeconomic statuses are less likely to have access to the kinds of resources at home that schools traditionally demand. This in turn makes them less

resilient in academic settings, and puts them at academic risk by way of discrimination, differential treatment, and unequal opportunity structures (Borman & Overman, 2004).

Jackson (2001) stated that many African American students have a home environment that is filled with negative influences. Some learners with economic hardships live in substandard housing or in government assisted areas. Some of these neighborhoods, sadly, are often blighted by criminal activities. These factors affect the achievement of learners, and even their very ability to stay in school at all. Children arrive at school having already undergone good or bad experiences. Therefore, in order for learning to occur, teachers should believe that all of their students are capable of learning. Teachers with a desire to make a difference in our urban schools teach with strategic and culturally responsive goals in mind and possess a sincere desire to make positive differences in the education of students.

The academic needs of African American children should be viewed holistically so that their strengths can be recognized, accessed, and understood (Broussard, Cummings, Johnson, Levi, & Bailey-Perry, 2006). These scholars asserted that when basic needs are met for students of color, then educators next step should be to begin building and encouraging students in developing a positive concept in a cultural and school context. As a result, the impact is teachers' building and being supportive of their developed cultural and academic excellence. Further, cultural and academic excellence is set firmly in an individual's self-esteem, self-concept, self-knowledge, self-awareness, and self-actualization. Issues associated with the quality, equity, and efficiency needs to educational "save" the African American child, must be continuous throughout their

educational years. This means general to specific issues, including social progress, school performance/gap identification, and teaching to the promise of African American learners, are targeted. (Broussard, et al., 2006).

To accomplish the goal of 'cultural and academic excellence,' educator's must sustain evaluations of the obstacles potentially faced by African American students' schooling and family life. The concerns about race have shifted to poverty since the *Brown (1954)* decision, and educators must continue to strive to magnify the African American child's experience with a meaningful background in educational settings. These authors strongly suggest viewing diversity as a strength, and suggested that the "J Curve" identified three factors in a teaching and learning situation proportional to the needs of students. can produce academic excellence. These factors are, (a) academic excellence; (b) quality teaching; and (c) positive experiences in the classroom and school. Education for African American students continues to be a "passport" for the future (Broussard, et al., 2006). Finally, to make a difference for African American learners, educators can strive to improve academic achievement, as stated in their acronym Build, Love, Embrace, Nurture, Direct and Divulge (B.L.E.N.D.) in order to facilitate meaningful academic growth.

Often good teachers have the desire to make changes as needed and to address the needs of their students, regardless of their own personal and sometimes negative background experiences pertaining to interactions with people of color or from poverty. Haberman (1991) noted, however, that some teachers who begin their careers intending to be mentors and caring sources of encouragement inadvertently become jaded over

time. As the pressures and realities of teaching, particularly in urban schools, take their toll over time, some teachers can lose sight of students' individual needs and become authoritative figureheads. The environment in the classroom is directed by the teacher's redirection and the student compliance, and there may be a passive resentment that sometimes arises into overt resistance (Haberman, 1991). Haines (2008) stated teachers should create a learning environment where all students feel the teacher has confidence in their abilities, and where students know what the teacher expects of them in order to succeed academically. An atmosphere of high expectations can be developed via teacher behaviors that demonstrate both confidence in students' intelligence and that at the same time grant patience in allowing students to advance at their own individual paces. Examples of such behaviors include providing adequate wait time when asking questions, and giving individualized, specific praise to the children.

A quality learning environment should be stable, structured, and should encourage all to think of the classroom as a community of learners. Choy & Gifford (1980) stated that the stability of a school's faculty is measured by the teacher's years of experience (length of service), and that this component is critical to the quality of education the students receive. Teacher consistency impacts educational achievement. Murnan and Phillips (1981) study discovered that teachers with fewer than three years of teaching experience tend to be less effective than teachers with more teaching experience. Darling-Hammond (1995) also concluded that teachers with more teaching experience and more education are more effective in the classroom. These teachers are

able to provide higher quality instruction that results in increased learning by the students.

Teacher Perceptions

In general and special education classrooms, students who behave, look, speak, or learn differently are placed at risk of being negatively evaluated by teachers. Students who do not conform to expected behavior patterns may be inadvertently labeled, or worse. Too often, these so-called problematic distractions among such students, are assume limited intellectual capabilities (Obiakor, 1999; Obiakor & Ford, 2002). Since a teacher is a significant, influential element in students' classroom interactional processes, how he or she is perceived by the students in turn affects learning outcomes and individual successes. For many students of color, how teachers understand and interpret their world views and how they are expected to perform affects the interpretation of motivation and self-concept among such students. In other words, when expectations of them are inappropriately lowered or raised, how they interpret their self-understanding, self-love, and self-empowerment may be affected. Rosenthal and Jacobson (1968) found that a positive relationship exists between teacher expectations and differential treatment, resulting in self-fulfilling prophecies. Later, Brophy and Good (1974) made similar findings. Then, in his review, Proctor (1984) confirmed that "low expectations are generally associated with students of color group membership, low SES [socioeconomic status] male gender, nonconformity personality, physical unattractiveness, nonstandard speech patterns, and low achievement" (p. 22). Based on

these findings, critical issues that affect students of color in general and special education programs are directly or indirectly linked to teacher expectations.

In light of ongoing and predicted demographic changes, general and special educators must confront the critical issue of teacher expectations as they explore innovative ways to maximize the performance of students of color and exceptional learners. As students of color interact with authority figures (teachers), their views of their "selves" are important. Since self-concept is a significant variable in human interactions (Brooks, 1991; Osborne, 1996), negative presumptions about self-concepts of students of color fail to value their efforts to succeed in today's schools. As Powell-Hobson and Hobson (1992) pointed out:

> A teacher's perception of a student leads directly to an expectation of the student. If the teacher perceives the student as intelligent, then he or she will expect above average work from the child. A student's performance tends to mirror the expectations of his or her teachers. (p. 54)

Teachers benefit from taking a introspective view at their own cultural backgrounds, understanding the effects their biases have when interacting with students. Only then can teachers examine the backgrounds and needs of their student population and understand their students' cultural backgrounds as well.

Brown and Medway (2007) conducted research on effective schools, school climate and teacher expectations, and instructional practices in an elementary school in South Carolina that produced effective achievement outcomes with poor students and students of color. Planned educational changes demonstrated success in serving poor,

rural African American students. The State of South Carolina's public schools present an interesting context in which to examine the impact of poverty and ethnicity on educational outcomes because there are few schools in the state that are objectively recognized as effective with students from lower SES and students of color populations. In the State of South Carolina, over 30% of the population is African American and 20% of the children live below the poverty level. The school studied in this research was one whose academic achievement, as measured by statewide achievement tests, was well above both the school district's and the state's average even though most students' families had incomes at the poverty level and over 70% of the students came from rural African American families. This school was also specifically selected because it was: a) the state's only school located in a high poverty area to win national recognition for its education of students of color, b) its promotion of high achievement, and c) its strong educational leadership.

The study sought to first examine the school's climate and teachers' beliefs regarding instructional practices, using surveys and quantitative methods. The study also sought to describe the activities, routines, themes, and behavior exhibited by teachers that might be associated with high academic achievement. These findings suggest that teachers can best address students' educational needs by; working to create mutually supportive educational environments, using flexible instructional approaches that utilize peer support to encourage close working relationships between schools and families, and advocating for additional training and in-service experiences to fully prepare teachers for the challenges of instructing diverse groups of children (Brown & Medway, 2007).

Noel (2000) points out that since the 1960s, teachers can be described as following one of two main viewpoints regarding student capabilities. One is the deficiency orientation, and the other is the difference orientation. Both outlooks represent an effort on the part of teachers to understand why it is that some students struggle in the classroom, but the views differ in how they understand the roles of students and of teachers, "The key distinctions between these two orientations are who is seen as needing to change or improve and whether or not there is a belief that there is one way of learning or solving a problem to which all students must adhere" (Noel, 2000, p. 115).

A teacher ascribing to the deficiency orientation views the student as lacking in some regard, and this lack of a certain quality makes the student ill-equipped to succeed in school. Often a teacher may assume that problems in a student's home life are the root of the problem. The teacher views such students as deficient and in need of remediation. Essentially, the teacher expects the student to change so that he or she can become "normal," behaving and learning in the particular manner that the teacher prefers and expects.

On the other hand, a teacher ascribing to the different orientation does not presume that the student's academic struggles can be attributed to a lack of some quality. Rather than blaming the student or his/her family, teachers holding this outlook see differences in cultural patterns and learning styles as potential strengths to utilize in improving student learning. The teachers build upon students' individual ways of knowing, and in addition they examine their own teaching styles in an effort to amend

their practices to better mesh with the learning styles of the students. So, rather than trying to "fix" the deficient child, teachers who follow the difference orientation try to change themselves in order to better serve their students.

Teachers and administrators must also learn to communicate effectively with parents, to make all parties invest in and work together towards meeting the school's goals. This means that parents and teachers need to take the time to understand each other, to slow down and form bonds in an effort to build trust and respect, and to listen and reach compromises for the good of children and youth (Ornstein, 2003). Research on teacher behavior has developed several categories of investigative interests. Foci include specific teaching behaviors, characteristics, or effects. Other inquiries have concentrated on either the processes of teaching (how the teacher was behaving in the classroom) or the products of teaching (student outcomes). According to Clark and Peterson (1986), the process of teaching involves two major domains; teachers' thought processes (i.e. teacher cognition) and teachers' actions and their observable effects.

Teachers' thought processes occur internally or subconsciously, and are therefore not directly observable. The patterns involved in the teacher actions domain include teacher behaviors, student reactions, and student achievement. Teachers' thought processes have been categorized into three fundamental types; teacher planning, teachers' interactive thoughts and decisions, and teachers' theories and beliefs (Clark and Peterson, 1986). These categories derived from Jackson & Lund (1968) conceptual distinction between the pre-active, interactive, and post-active phases of teaching. Also, Shulman (1986) developed three dimensions of teachers' general knowledge involved in

the process of teaching; subject-matter content knowledge, pedagogical content

knowledge and curricular knowledge. Later Beattie (1995) added a fourth dimension,

called personal practical knowledge, which was defined as teachers' experiential

knowledge of students' learning styles, interests, needs, strengths and difficulties and

their repertoires of instructional techniques and class management skills (Fang, 1996).

As the 1990's unfolded, the research on teaching examined the complex

attributes and context of teaching such as:

> … the relationship of teaching and learning, the subject-matter knowledge of the
>
> teacher, how knowledge was taught, and how it related to pedagogy. The new
>
> emphasis on teaching goes beyond what the teacher is doing; it explores teacher
>
> thinking from the perspective of teachers themselves. The teacher is depicted as
>
> one who copes with a complex environment and simplifies it mainly through
>
> experience by attending to a small number of tasks and synthesizing various
>
> kinds of information that continually evolves. (Ornstein, 2003, p. 95)

Increasingly, researchers are attending to the stories of teachers—their work and

how they teach. Teachers are also describing their own autobiographical teaching

experiences. Most narratives are descriptive in nature. This emphasis reflects the belief

that there is much to learn from teachers who offer authentic accounts of their

experiences. These stories represent an important shift in the way researchers are willing

to convey teachers' pedagogies and understandings of the teaching process. Individuals'

stories have an important social or psychological meaning. Stories of teachers allow us

to see the relationship between the application of and the human side of teaching. Such

stories illustrate their knowledge and skills in the real world of classrooms, and allow us

to be sensitive to teachers' emotional and moral interactions with the lives of the people

they teach. Too often romantic versions of teachers and classrooms, in which problems

are resolved artificially, are what the public thinks can really happen when a problem

arises, but such situations are hardly typical.

Teachers new to the profession have learned teaching theories in their teacher

preparation programs, but are often unable to put theory into practice, as they need more

professional experience to develop their own teaching styles. On the one hand, novices

may have a better understanding of the science of teaching because of their having been

recently been enrolled in methods courses, but they have not yet gained the experience

or maturity to appreciate the art of teaching along with imaginative, innovative, and

creative aspects of teaching (Ornstein, 2003). Teaching well means making ensuring that

students achieve not only academically, but that they develop a positive sense of

themselves, and develop a commitment to larger social and community concerns

(Ladson-Billings, 1994). Not all teachers, novice or experienced, realize the importance

of examining ones' own culturally-based perceptions. If these internalized views are

brought to a conscious level, we are less likely to misinterpret the behaviors of our

culturally different students and are more likely to treat them inequitably. All teachers

need to become aware of their unconscious assumptions (Weinstein, Tomlinson-Clark,

& Curran, 2004). Expert teachers tend to be aware of and integrate the scientific and

artistic elements of teaching as well as the theoretical and practical elements, but they

are not experts based solely on technical skills. Teachers who strive to assist all students

in the pursuit of excellence are referred to as "star teachers" by Haberman (1990), and as "dreamkeepers" by Ladson-Billings (1994). These authors have identified experienced teachers who know how to teach well in challenging circumstances.

Finally, teachers' theories and beliefs represent the general knowledge of objects, people, events and their characteristic relationships that teachers have what affects their planning and their interactive thoughts and decision, as well as their classroom behavior (Nisbett & Ross, 1980). Theories and beliefs make up an important part of teachers' general knowledge, being the means through which teachers perceive, process and act upon information in the classroom (Clark & Peterson, 1986; Murphy & Medin, 1985). Fang (1996) concluded that teachers' thought processes influence the judgments, decisions, and eventually, practices involved in instruction. This recognition has given rise to various forms of self-report procedures that focus on how teachers search for, select and represent information in memory (Armour-Thomas, Clay, Domanica, Bruno, & Allen, 1989).

Elementary Special Education Teachers

Many special education teachers entered their chosen field in a quest to help children with special learning needs or those who are otherwise challenged by the educational system. These teachers believe they can make a positive difference in these children's progress (Crutchfield, 1997; Emery & Vandenberg, 2010). Special needs children are at an increased risk for academic failure, depression and anxiety, and they may experience lower peer acceptance compared to their non-disabled peers (e.g., Bussing, Zima, & Perwien, 2000; Cook & Semmel, 1999; Maag & Reid, 2006; Sideridis,

Mouzaki, Simos, & Protopapas, 2006). Special education teachers are specialized in their training and account for about ten percent of public school teaching personnel. Special educators have been in short supply for more than two decades. Ironically, those who service high risk children become high risk themselves.

In 2006, more than 5.5 million children between the ages of six and seventeen received special education services in the United States (Data Accountability Center, 2007), requiring more than 400,000 special education teachers to address the needs of these children (Data Accountability Center, 2006). Trained professional are increasingly needed, as more children are diagnosed each year. Yet the attrition rate of special educators is 13 percent annually, the highest among all other teacher groups. (Boe, Bobbitt, Cook, & Terhanian, 1998). The current special educator shortages are thought to be primarily due to problem of attrition (Boe, Bobbitt, Cook, & Webber, 1997; Emery & Vandenberg, 2010).

Many issues are linked to the cause of high attrition rates of special educators including professional stress due to student-teacher characteristics and workplace manageability. The laborious tasks that special education teachers (SETs) are faced with today is a great challenge for the large student population that they work, in the demanding contexts of their educational working environments (Emery & Vandenberg, 2010). A study by Kaff (2004) found out that one of the major reasons special educators are leaving the field is due to their caseloads (cited by 57 percent of the participants), and paperwork demands, which were described as the bureaucrat's worst nightmare. Some teachers indicated that they spent as much time on paperwork as they did on

lesson planning. Paperwork demands and regulatory issues were also linked to increasing the attrition rate of (SETs,), even after controlling other for variables, in a study conducted by SPeNSE (2002). Another critical issue was time management. An investigation by Morvant, Gersten, Gilman, Keating, and Blake (1995) found that 68 percent of the special educators studied did not have enough time to do their work to their satisfaction due to overwhelming paperwork demands.

High attrition rates are also been attributed to burnout (Billingsley, 2004), which is a product of chronic situational stress (Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter, 1996; Maslach & Schaufeli, 1993) and of personal, emotional investment in one's job (Pines, 1993). Burnout is more than a generalized stress reaction. Rather, burnout happens when situational stressors interfere with the ability to experience meaning through one's work (Pines, 1993). Maslach and Jackson's (1981) definition of burnout is the most widely used in the literature. They define burnout as chronic emotional exhaustion, a reduced sense of personal accomplishment, and/or a sense of depersonalization or disconnectedness from others with whom one interacts. This first component of burnout, emotional exhaustion, occurs when one feels overextended, drained of emotional resources, and lacking in physical and emotional energy. Also, Maslach and Leiter (1997) found that special education teachers experiencing emotional exhaustion may grapple with a lack of energy and decreased motivation. They many come to dread going to work, invest less of themselves in their students, and distance themselves from others.

Depersonalization, the second component of burnout, is an attempt to protect oneself from exhaustion through a psychological distancing of one's self from others.

This is a means of avoiding individuals whose needs and demands are experienced as overwhelming (Emery & Vandenberg, 2010). In the classroom, depersonalization may interfere with collaborative working relationships between teachers/students, teachers/parents, teachers/colleagues, and teachers/administrators. Finally, the third component of burnout is a reduced sense of personal accomplishment. The third component involves a shift in self-appraisal, where negative thoughts of oneself and feeling of ineffectiveness dominate (Cordes & Dougherty, 1993). Professionally, the special educator may suffer a diminished sense of personal accomplishment and competence, and they may experience feelings of guilt. They may begin to doubt whether they should stay in the profession at all.

Burnout may affect the teachers' total well being and cause them to feel ineffective, overwhelmed by their jobs, and lack career motivation (Boe, Bobbitt, Cook, & Webber, 1997). Also, there are significant costs associated with burnout, for both the teacher and the educational system. Health problems, such as chronic fatigue, recurrent flu, infections, colds, and headaches may cause excessive absenteeism (Cordes & Dougerty, 1993; Pullis, 1992). Reduced job commitment (Billingsley & Cross, 1992; Leiter, 1991) and decreased job performance (Wisniewsk & Gargiulo, 1997) have been cited as issues involved in increased rates of turnover. For those teachers who decide to leave the field, or transfer to a general education classroom, burnout also impacts the educator via a loss of specialized training skills and the thwarting of initial career goals.

There are several forms of interventions used to target job stress and burnout associated with special educators. Mentoring is one intervention used to help target job

stress, burnout, and attrition. The procedure pairs a beginning teacher with a more experienced teacher, one who can offer tips on ways to eliminate the causes of job stress (Hauser & Zimmerman, 1996; Kennedy & Burstein, 2004; Odell & Ferraro, 1992; White & Mason, 2006). Another intervention used is stress management groups. These rely on cognitive behavior techniques and focus on developing coping skills to actively combat stress (Cecil & Forman, 1990; Cheek, Bradley, Parr, & Lan, 2003; Forman, 1982; Jenkins & Calhoun, 1991; Sharp & Forman, 1985). Another intervention technique is meditation training (Anderson, 1999) whose multiple components may include counseling, hypnosis, rational emotive therapy, relaxation, nutrition, exercise, electronic networking, and staff development workshops. The aim of all of these efforts is to decrease stress and burnout.

Existing interventions for job stress and burnout in teachers, in general, target the content and occurrence of private experiences (e.g., thoughts and feelings of the teachers) rather than their functions. Preparation programs for special education teachers should also be considered when examining causes of retention or attrition. SETs have so many responsibilities in their job, that researchers have found them to be unprepared for all that the job encompasses (Payne, 2005). In addition, special education teachers must develop leadership skills that will enable them to become effective advocates for the field of education. Special education professionals work diligently to fit a "one-size fits all" plan into a formula that, in actuality, does not work for everyone. Such expectations are unrealistic. This is especially true considering that the students under their care, by very definition, have special needs (Payne, 2005).

Teacher Quality

In 2001, for the first time the United States Congress took aim at teacher quality and sought to raise it, particularly in schools serving low-income students. The "highly qualified teacher" provision of the federal *No Child Left Behind Act* (NCLB) required that all teachers must have at least a bachelor's degree in order to gain full state certification, and that they must demonstrate knowledge of the subject matter that they teach. One of the act's goals was to ensure that the children of poor families had the same access to good teachers as do other students (Rothman & Pires, 2009). As Congress gears up to reauthorize the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act,* there is a broad consensus that the new law should address some of the loopholes NCLB created, by focusing on ensuring that teachers are effective in the classroom. This is a recognition of the fact that highly qualified teaching is a multidimensional concept.

There are certain things we know about teacher quality. For example, a correlation exists between a teacher's verbal ability and student achievement. Teachers who have majored in the content area they teach are better teachers of that subject than are those who have not specialized in that particular subject area. Pedagogy, specifically content-based pedagogy, has a positive impact on student achievement, and teachers with considerable experience are more likely to make progress in student success than are teachers with fewer years of teaching experience. According to Hanushek and Rivkin (2007), the best way to improve the quality of instruction would be to lower barriers to becoming a teacher, and to link compensation and career advancement more closely to teacher credentials and classroom performance. They argue, for example, that genuine

teacher quality should be measured by contributions such as advanced degrees, length of service, or scores on licensing examinations (Hanuschek & Rivkin, 2007).

The *Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA),* as amended, called for all core content classes to be taught by highly qualified teachers (HQT) by the end of the 2005-06 school year. In order to measure progress in meeting the HQT goal, the U.S. Department of Education (USDE) collects state-level data on the teacher quality provisions of ESEA through the Education Data Exchange Network's (EDEN) Education Submission System (ESS). EDEN is a centralized electronic portal through which states submit their educational data to the U. S. Department of Education. Ninety-six percent of core academic classes in our nation's public schools were staffed by HQTs during the school year of 2008-09. A slightly higher proportion of core academic classes were taught by HQTs in elementary schools (97 percent) than in secondary schools (95 percent). Classes in high-poverty schools were less likely to be staffed by an HQT than were classes in low-poverty schools. At the elementary level, 98 percent of core academic classes in low-poverty schools were taught by HQTs compared to 96 percent of classes in high-poverty schools. The gap was greater at the secondary level, with 96 percent of classes in low-poverty schools taught by HQTs compared to 93 percent of classes in high-poverty schools. However, the percentage of core academic classes taught by HQTs has been increasing since 2003-04 (United States Department of Education, 2010).

Elementary Special Education Students

Spring (2001) stated that equality of educational opportunity means that

everyone has an equal chance to attend publicly supported schools. Also, Johnson (2009) stated that the current educational environment is one of legislative, ethical, and moral imperatives, claiming that ideally all children shall have an equal and equitable opportunity to learn. This is only possible if the school leaders have the knowledge or experience necessary to make this happen. They need to meet and understand the needs and demands of students with unique learning needs, and be able to implement programs or actions that will serve these needs. Training programs and/or professional development activities must encourage knowledge development in the area of special programs and special populations. There is an urgent need for professionals whom are capable of working with diverse populations, including students with an increasingly broad range of emotional and educational disorders. These skills are vital if schools are to ensure successful learning experiences for all students, particularly for those with special needs.

In order to effectively educate special needs students, a collaboration must exist throughout the school system. All invested parties, not just the special education teachers, should ideally be engaged in providing the best possible learning environment. General population teachers, administrators, and parents all play a part (Osborne, DiMattia, & Curran, 1993; Villa, Thousand, Nevin, & Malgeri, 1996; Welch, 1998). Areas of concern include; a) the ability to engage in collaborative partnerships, b) to develop collegial relationships between special and regular educators, and c) support of family involvement in the learning programs of students. Current federal mandates require multiple stepping stones to be demonstrated. For example, Goal Three of the

Standards for Teacher Competencies in Educational Assessment of Students, developed

by National Education Association (1990) states that all students exiting grades four,

eight and twelve must have demonstrated mastery of all core subject areas. Goal Six

requires that all students shall graduate literate. Nonetheless, despite federal goals, these

aims have proved difficult to achieve. When it comes to special education students,

meeting federal standards becomes particularly problematic. Collaboration of all

invested persons can help meet these goals. This supports Villa et al.'s (1996) argument

for communication among stakeholders.

Valeo (2008) stated that the education of students with disabilities has been and

continues to be a focus of educational reform. The movement of students with special

needs from segregated/congregated settings, wherein students with special needs were

grouped together, to more inclusive settings where they are integrated with typically

developing peers has been a focus of meeting educational reforms. This movement is

known as mainstreaming, integration, and the Regular Education Initiative (REI).

Integration/ mainstreaming can be defined as the placement of learners with disabilities

into regular classes on a full-time or part-time basis with typically-developing peers.

Inclusion can be considered a positive step in the acceptance of students with special

needs into the regular classrooms of their neighborhood schools. Scruggs and

Mastropieri (2005), in their synthesis of teacher perceptions regarding inclusion, spoke

of teachers believing that they had insufficient time, skills, training, and/or resources for

inclusion of special needs children into their classrooms. No doubt this is true. As

previously discussed, special educators are overworked themselves, despite their

specialized training. The general education teacher, who has not typically received any such training, may be at a loss as to how to serve special needs students.

Valeo's (2008) study examined differences in perceptions of administrators and teachers by looking at how both groups interacted and comprehended the role of the school administrator in supporting regular classroom teachers with including/integrating students with challenging needs. This participants of the study consisted of six general education classroom teachers at the elementary level and five elementary school principals from a metropolitan school system in Canada. In his study, he used formal interviews as the research methodology and the participants used pre-set guided questions that took approximately 20 to 30 minute of the participants' time to complete. Teacher perceptions were defined according to seven categories developed by the author.

First, teachers defined their role in the integration/inclusion model in their schools. Second, teachers described problems they experienced with integration/ inclusion. Third, the teachers were asked to define successful integration/inclusion. Fourth, the teachers were prompted to describe who they felt had ownership for students with special needs. The fifth and sixth categories dealt with issues of administrator support. The seventh final category explored the teachers' overall beliefs about non-inclusive settings. The findings for regular classroom teachers offered a rather bleak picture. There was a focus on student needs as being beyond regular teachers' capacities. This was seen in the respondents' general opinion that students with special needs had to deal with the curriculum of the regular classroom as did other students, but were unable

to do so, and a belief that teachers simply did not have time to support these students academically and behaviorally (Valeo, 2008). Valeo (2008) would argue that research that advances inclusion goals must address collaborative relationships among general education and special education teachers. Researchers (e.g., Moberg, 2000) have found that teachers attitudes regarding integrated/inclusion programs have significant repercussions on the programs' success or failure. Another study spotlighted the significant role that principals can play in supporting integrated/inclusive environments.

Early intervention is an important factor in developing children's socialization skills, and helps them adapt to society (Cole, Dale, & Mills, 1991). Bailey, Wolery, Stallings & Strain (1992) that stated the earlier children with disabilities start their academic journeys, the higher their levels of progress and skills will be. Therefore, inclusive education should not be ignored in pre-school education. Kircaali-iftar (1992) cites basic benefits of special education services offered in early childhood and pre-school periods as; acceleration in children's growth, prevention of their disability from turning into a handicap, and a reduction in the family's emotional and social problems. Ersoy and Avci (1999) stated that inclusive education given in the pre-school period effects both children with handicaps and children without handicaps positively, and these effects are seen in children's attitudes, interactions and learning behaviors. Pre-school teachers' knowledge, emotions, and skills about inclusive education are of particular importance because at this age, pre-school is the only available educational option. Therefore, teachers' self-efficacy is seen as an important variable for inclusive education, no matter what the grade level (Sari, Celikoz, & Secer, 2009).

Overrepresentation of Minorities in Special Education

The demographics in the United States are changing rapidly. For example, one person in four is African American or Hispanic (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000). Researchers who seek to ameliorate cultural conflicts in the classroom advocate for the implementation of culturally responsive teaching and classroom management approaches in culturally and linguistically diverse classrooms (Siwatu & Starker, 2010). Federal law has been concerned with providing equity and academic parity for the nation's children. However, the disproportionate representation of particular racial or ethnic groups in special education is a national longstanding issue that has been debated, investigated, and litigated by advocacy groups, the research community, and policymakers:

> Disproportionality in the context of the *IDEA* refers to comparisons made among groups of students by race or ethnicity that is identified for special education services whether it is greater or lesser rate than all other students then that group may be said to be disproportionately represented in special education. (Donovan & Cross, 2002)

Disparities in the demographics of special education students have been noted for at least twenty years. Greater efforts are needed to prevent the intensification of problems connected with mislabeling minority children with disabilities. Higher numbers of minority children continue to be served in special education than would be expected from the percentage of minority students in the general school population. African American children are identified as having mental retardation and emotional

disturbance at rates greater than their White peers. African American children

percentage of the nation's school population aged six through twenty-one years, yet they

accounted for 20.2% of all children with disabilities served in our schools. Studies have

found that in schools with predominantly White students and teachers,

disproportionately high numbers of minority students have been placed in special

education.

Disproportionality

The disproportionate representation of students of color in special education has

been an important and persistent topic almost since the inception of special education.

The special education label suggests that there is some disorder within the child and,

accordingly, a need for more resources such as specialized instruction and other

therapeutic interventions. Ideally, special education will improve student performance;

however, positive outcomes have been seriously questioned for many students (e.g.,

Donovan & Cross, 2002; Dunn, 1968). Some authors posit that disability diagnoses are

likely to result in lowered expectations, thereby reducing special education simply to a

place where students are sent when they do not perform according to expectations

(Meyer & Patton, 2001) rather than a service elevating learners to higher levels of

performance. In an attempt to assess and remediate the problem, the 1997

reauthorization of the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA 97)* mandated

new state reporting requirements concerning both students of color enrollment in special

education as well as the suspension and expulsion rates of students with disabilities.

These new requirements make the issue of overrepresentation and school discipline a very pressing issue for state departments of education.

Disproportionality can be defined as an overrepresentation or under-representation of a particular demographic group in exceptional education. Exceptional education can be special or gifted education programs. An educational environment is disproportionate when there are too many or too little of a certain group of learners represented in either area (National Association for Bilingual Education, 2002). The U.S. Department of Education (2006) stated that approximately 13.5 percent of all students in K–12 schools receive special education services. African American learners receive services at rates that are significantly higher than those of Whites or other cultural groups.

According to *IDEA 2004*, all states are required to define the measurement of disproportionality. At the present time, there is not a set standard. Each state uses its own methods to measure disproportionality. Markowitz (2002) stated that 29 states utilized a method for measuring disproportionality involving a risk ratio comparing the percent of students with disabilities to the percent of students from that ethnic or racial group enrolled in the school or district. Disproportionate representation in special education involves comparisons made between groups of students by race or ethnicity who are identified as eligible for special education services. It includes both overrepresentation and underrepresentation and occurs when students from a particular racial or ethnic group are identified at a greater or lesser rate than all other racial/ethnic groups (National Research Council, 2002).

The disproportionate representation of students of color in special education is among the most critical and enduring problems in the field of special education. Despite court challenges (*Larry P. v. Riles*, 1979; *PASE v. Hannon,* 1980), federal reports (Heller, Holtzmann, & Messick, 1982; National Research Council, 2002) state that there needs to be more research on this issue (Hosp & Reschly, 2003), and the problem of the disproportionate representation of minority students as it relates to special education has persisted. Although the presence of students of color who have been overrepresentation has been consistently documented, unfortunately the full complexity of the problem has not yet been understood. Educational researchers still do not have a clear picture at the national level concerning the causes of disproportionality (National Research Council, 2002).

One must reflect on the case of *Larry P. v. Riles* (1979). This particular legal suit documented the number of elementary schools that were found to have academically discriminated against African American children. The California Circuit Court requested an injunction preventing the San Francisco school district from using intelligence quotia (IQ) tests to place any African American children in special classes for the developmentally delayed. Representatives stated that because the IQ tests themselves were biased, using the tests for placement purposes was a violation of the learners' Fourteenth Amendment rights. The problem of disproportionate representation of African American in special education is a complex and persistent one that must be examined in the context of larger societal and social phenomena. Additional research is needed to clearly document the ways in which White privilege and racism create and

maintain disproportionality at all levels (e.g., the individual, institutional, educational, research, policy, and practice levels) and to develop appropriate strategies and interventions to eradicate these practices (Webb-Johnson & Carter, 2007). Finally, additional research is needed to develop research, policy, and practice interventions that are designed to address issues of inadequate allocation of educational resources, the employment of inappropriate and culturally unresponsive curricula, inadequate teacher preparation, and to examine their impact on the problem of disproportionality over time and in a variety of settings.

Disproportionate representation of African American learners in special education is a problem because learners who are misplaced in special education are basically educated to underachieve. Since African Americans have traditionally been denied opportunities for academic achievement in our society, misplacing learners of African descent in special education is particularly problematic. These learners are often being treated as inferior and are being denied a free and appropriate public education. (Webb-Johnson & Carter, 2007). Bunch & Valeo (1997) stated that special education placement for students with disabilities has failed to demonstrate substantive advantages over general education classes despite lower teacher-pupil ratios and specialized teaching. Special education has not proven to be academically and socially stronger than general education placement. Hence, these learners are gradually being re-integrated into the general education population with an academic and social deficit. Teachers and parents are looking for assistance and resources within the school system that will gradually allow these learners to achieve academic success. There is a need for

professionals who will take the initiative to intervene and discover innovative research-based strategies. Such approaches will help in the progression of African American learners in both general and special education learning environments (Jackson, 2010).

In conclusion, *IDEA* (2004) has made numerous changes in how states and Local Education Agencies (LEAs) must now address disproportionality in special education. Changes in Part B regulations include more extensive remedies where findings of disproportionality occur, and there has been increased focus on the development of personnel preparation models that will ensure appropriate placement and services for all students. Hopefully, these newer measures will work to reduce overrepresentation of minorities in special education, as school personnel consider their eligibility and placement criteria.

Home and Community Support

Historically, U.S. society and schools have drawn support from the nuclear family (two parents living in the same home as their children). The traditional nuclear family has been described as highly child-centered, devoting its resources to preparing children for success in school and a better life in adulthood than was experienced by the parents. Today, the notion of family is very different. Given the realities of diversity, pluralism, and irregularity, the nuclear family is practically an anomaly. Overall, about half the youths under age 18, have been in single-parent family structures for at least some part of their childhoods (Ornstein**,** 2003).

The problems that some students experience in their personal lives create a whole set of problems, causing the children to feel different than their peers. As schools

become more wedded to psychological models, students are recruited into new categories of pathology. We (educators) need to consider students' racial, ethnic, cultural, linguistic, and socioeconomic characteristics because these will affect our perceptions in recruiting the students for special education services (Ladson-Billings, 2001). Coaching instructions do not arrive with students when they enter the classroom. So, each classroom and each student presents a new set of opportunities and challenges. By listening and learning from the students, the teacher understands the need to rethink and re-envision the curriculum and how one might best make modifications. Payne (2001) argues that a primary tool in raising the achievement levels of low income students is for teachers to create personal relationships with them.

Self-Efficacy

The concept of self-efficacy was derived from the theory of social learning proposed by Bandura (Bandura, 1977; Bandura, 1986). Self-efficacy is the individual's faith in his/her ability to successfully demonstrate behaviors required to attain an expected result. Bandura's (1986) self-efficacy perception affects an individual's; a) choice of activities, b) perseverance in the face of hardships, c) level of their efforts, and d) performance. According to Bandura (1986), individuals with high self-efficacy perceptions concerning a specific situation make a great effort to accomplish a task. They do not simply backtrack when they encounter trouble, and they act with persistence and perseverance (Askar & Umay, 2001). According to Soodak, Powell and Lehman (1998), the levels of self-image and self-efficacy of teachers effect the quality of work in their professional lives. It has been found that teachers with high self-efficacy tend to get

better accustomed to changes in their professional lives than do teachers with lower self-efficacy levels (Buell, Gamel-McCormick, & Hallam, 1999; Larrivee & Cook, 1979; Soodak, Powell, & Lehman, 1998; Weisel & Dror, 2006).

On the other hand, conflicting results have been obtained in studies predicting the relationship between the adaptation of effective teaching methods for children with handicaps and teachers' self-efficacy in teaching. When viewed from this perspective, it can be said that one of the most important factors in the success of inclusive programs is a teacher's attitude. Teachers' attitudes regarding inclusive education (Bacon & Schultz, 1991) are so important they affect a handicapped child's quality of life (Beckwith & Matthews, 1994). They also effect his/her ability to receive an inclusive education (Stewart, 1990), which in turn impacts the child's relations with mainstream students.

Bandura (1977; 1997) theorized four sources of efficacy expectations; mastery experiences, physiological and emotional states, vicarious experiences, and social persuasion. Mastery experiences are the most powerful source of efficacy information because the perception that a performance has been successful raises efficacy beliefs, contributing to the expectation that performance will be proficient in the future. Physiological and emotional states refers to the level of arousal, either of anxiety or excitement, adding to the feeling of either mastery or incompetence. If the success is attributed to internal or controllable causes such as ability or effort, then self-efficacy is enhanced. Vicarious experiences are those in which someone else models the skill in question. The degree to which the observer identifies with the model moderates the efficacy effect on the observer, "The more closely the observer identifies with the model,

the stronger will be the impact on efficacy (Bandura, 1977). Finally, social persuasion

may entail a "pep talk" or specific performance feedback from a supervisor or a

colleague, or it could involve the talk in the teachers' lounge or in the media about the

ability of teachers to influence students. The potency of persuasion depends on the

credibility, trustworthiness, and expertise of the persuader (Bandura, 1986).

Self-efficacy beliefs provide the foundation for human motivation, well-being,

and personal accomplishment. This is because unless people believe that their actions

can produce the outcomes they desire, they have little incentive to act or to persevere in

the face of difficulties. Much empirical evidence now supports Bandura's contention that

self-efficacy beliefs touch virtually every aspect of people's lives, whether they think

productively, self-debilitating, pessimistically or optimistically. How well individuals

motivate themselves and persevere in the face of adversities, their vulnerability to stress

and depression, and the life choices they make are also linked to their senses of self-

efficacy. Self-efficacy is also a critical determinant of self-regulation (Pajares, 2002).

Bandura's (1982) key contention as regards the role of self-efficacy beliefs in human

functioning is that "people's level of motivation, affective states, and actions are based

more on what they believe than on what is objectively true" (1997). For this reason, how

people behave can often be better predicted by the beliefs they hold about their

capabilities than by what they are actually capable of accomplishing, for these self-

efficacy perceptions help determine what individuals do with the knowledge and skills

they have. A capability is only as good as its execution (Bandura, 1986). Perceived self-

efficacy is concerned with judgments of how well one can execute courses of action required to deal with prospective situations.

The tenets regarding self-efficacy in social cognitive theory have been tested in varied disciplines and settings and have received growing support. Self-efficacy has been the focus of studies on clinical problems such as phobias and depression, social skills and assertiveness, on smoking behavior, on pain control and on health and athletic performance. During the past decade, self-efficacy beliefs have also received increasing attention in educational research, primarily in studies of academic motivation and of self-regulation. In this arena, self-efficacy researchers have focused on three areas. Some researchers have explored the link between efficacy beliefs and college major and career choices, particularly in science and mathematics. Results have demonstrated the mediating effects self-efficacy beliefs act in the selection of career choice. Two findings from this area suggest that the self-efficacy beliefs of teachers are related to their instructional practices and to various student outcomes. Teachers' beliefs of personal efficacy affect their instructional activities and their orientation toward the educational process.

Teachers with a low sense of self-efficacy tend to hold a custodial orientation that takes a pessimistic view of students' motivation, emphasizes rigid control of classroom behavior, and relies on extrinsic inducements and negative sanctions to get students to study. Teachers with high efficacy beliefs, on the other hand, tend to create mastery experiences for their students. This contrasts with teachers whose low instructional self-efficacy undermines students' cognitive development as well as

students' judgments of their own capabilities. In the third area, researchers have reported

that students' academic self-efficacy beliefs are correlated with other motivation

constructs and with students' academic performances and achievement. Constructs in

these studies have included attributions, goal setting, modeling, problem-solving, test

and domain-specific anxiety, reward contingencies, self- regulation, social comparisons,

strategy training, other self-beliefs and expectancy constructs, and varied academic

performances across domains. Finally, researchers have also demonstrated that self-

efficacy beliefs influence these attainments by influencing student effort, ambition and

persistence.

Teacher Efficacy

Teachers' sense of efficacy is attributed to the many variables that contribute to

the teacher's self-perception of their performance in the classroom (Denham & Michael,

1981), and has been related to student achievement (Armour-Thomas, et al., 1989),

teachers' classroom management strategies (Ashton & Webb, 1986), teacher adaptation

of innovations (Berman, McLaughlin, Bass, Pauly, & Zellman, 1977), teacher

competence (Trentham, Silvern, & Brogdin, 1985), and student performance (Midgley,

Feldlaufer, & Eccles, 1989) efficacy and environmental perceptions. Teacher efficacy is

defined as the degree to which teachers believe they have the ability to affect student

performance (Ashton, 1984). An awareness of and openness to issues of diversity is an

important prerequisite of teachers' ability to encourage social justice and equity, because

social justice envisions a vision of society in which the distribution of resources is fair

and in which all individuals are affirmed (Bell, Washington, Weinstein, & Love, 1997).

Brown (2004) states culturally inclusive education is inseparably linked to struggles for social justice. Respect for diversity entails advocacy, solidarity, an awareness of societal structures of oppression, and critical social consciousness (Freire, 1973). Theories of social justice in education address issues of economic injustice, as well as inequitable social conditions inside and outside the schools.

Teacher efficacy has been described as both context and subject-matter specific. A teacher may feel very competent in one area of study or when working with one kind of student, and feel less able in other subjects or with different students (Tschannen-Moran, & Hoy, 2001). Also, teacher efficacy beliefs impact their behaviors in the classroom. Efficacy affects the effort they invest in teaching, the goals they set, and their levels of aspiration. Teachers with a strong sense of efficacy tend to have strong planning and organizational skills, yet they are more receptive to innovative ideas and are more willing to try new instructional methods in order to better meet the needs of their students (Berman et al., 1977). Efficacy beliefs influence teachers' persistence when things do not go smoothly, and impact their resiliency in the face of setbacks. Greater efficacy enables teachers to be less critical of students when they make errors (Ashton & Webb, 1986), to work longer with a student who is struggling (Gibson & Dembo, 1984), and to be less inclined to refer a merely difficult student to special education (Meijer & Foster, 1988; Podell & Soodak, 1993). Teachers with a higher sense of efficacy exhibit greater enthusiasm for teaching (Guskey, 1984; Hall, Burley, Villene, & Brockmeier, 1992), have greater commitment to teaching (Coladarci, 1992; Trentham

et al., 1985) and are more likely to stay in teaching (Burley, Hall, Villene, &

Brockmeier, 1991; Glickman & Tamashiro, 1982).

Pohan and Aguilar (2001) remind us that studies have found ample evidence that

teachers' beliefs about students lead to differential expectations and treatment of students

based on their race and/or ethnicities (2001). Research has also shown that social class

(Cooper, Baron, & Lowe, 1975; Rist, 1970; Tom, Cooper, & Baron 1984), and gender

differences (Brophy & Good, 1970) of students influences teacher behaviors and

expectations. Clearly, if schools are to better serve the needs and interests of all students,

particularly students from groups that have not fared well in the U.S. educational system,

then low expectations, negative stereotypes, biases/prejudices, and cultural

misconceptions held by teachers must be identified, challenged, and reconstructed.

Teacher Beliefs

Teacher behaviors do not necessarily conform to simple rules, guidelines, or

developmental stages (Brown, 2004). The social context, an individual's overall

personality and perception of reality, and the individual's motivation to behave morally

are factors for consideration (Ornstein, 2003). Morality means different things to

different people. However, there are certain moral principles and values - such as hard

work, courage, compassion, teamwork, and patriotism - that can be agreed upon as being

positive traits by the vast majority of Americans (Ornstein, 2003). Also, honesty,

kindness, carefulness, and patience are words that we use to describe the aspects of what

an ideal teaching professional should model (Sockett, 1993). Cognitive and moral

messages must be infused in teaching. Knowledge and ideas that teachers discuss in class also have moral implications.

Sockett (1993) describes five virtues that are at the core of professional expertise in teaching:

> Teacher's deal in knowledge and trade in truth, questions of honesty and deceit are part of the logic of their situations. Second, both learning and teaching involves facing difficulty and taking intellectual and psychological risks that demands courage. Third, teachers are responsible for the development of persons, a process demanding infinite care of the individual. Fourth, fairness is necessary to the operation of rules in democratic institutions or, in one-to-one relationships. Finally, practical wisdom is essential to the complex process of teaching, and may demand the exercise of other virtues (such as patience) that are contingent to the teaching situation. (Sockett, 1993)

Professionalism can be defined as quality expressed in a complex moral role. Ornstein (2003), states that morality is taught by discussing and analyzing folklore, songs, poetry, art, film, and literature. It is our artifacts, methods of communication, and expressions of feelings and emotions that determine who we are as people in a society. The idea is to give students a way to begin reading and thinking about various emotions and feelings of self-respect, community, and social good. Brown (2004) states research suggests that beliefs are the best predictors of actual individual behaviors and beliefs influence teacher perceptions, judgments and practices, and their attitudes that are resistant to change. Understanding the nature of beliefs, attitudes, and values is essential

to understanding choices, decisions, and effectiveness regarding issues of diversity, social justice, and equity. From Dewey (1933) to Rokeach (1968) to Bandura (1986), researchers and scholars believe that beliefs directly impact expectations and actions. Fenstermacher (1979) proposed that it is through "reflection and challenge that individuals evaluate and adjust their thinking and turn from what is subjectively reasonable for them to believe to what is objectively reasonable for them to believe" (p. 167).

Beliefs play a major role in how educational leaders respond to and understand "communities of difference" (Furman, 1998; Murtadha-Watt, 1999). Larke's (1990) research study indicated the changing demographics of the student population in the nation's schools, and the stable demographics of the teaching force (middle class, White, female). Because of the growing disparity between the two sets of demographics, educators need to increase their knowledge and social responsibility regarding diversity and equity related issues. During the past decade, teacher education research has made significant strides in studying the complex relationships between teacher beliefs and practices. Fang (1996) states that the attention given to research on learning and teaching has signaled a shift in priorities that blends observable teacher behaviors with student achievements to focus on teachers' unobserverable behaviors, such as thinking, beliefs, planning and decision-making processes.

Teacher Expectations

Insights about expectations of what a teacher's job entails can be seen in the language used to describe their work. For example, teachers themselves use phrases such

as "pacing a lesson," "covering the content," or "moving on to the next part of the lesson". The role of teachers is often conveyed in metaphors, for instance calling teachers "bosses," "coaches," "comedians," or "mavericks." The notion of a "master" teacher, "lead" teacher, "star" teacher, "talented" teacher or "expert" teacher may be called up to describe outstanding or effective teachers. Linguistic choices are used to explain or interpret reality.

The impact of professional knowledge (that is, both pedagogical knowledge and subject matter-knowing what you know and how well you know it) is now considered important for defining how teachers and students construct meaning for their respective academics roles and perform tasks related to those roles (Ornstein, 2003). An alternative for understanding the nature of teaching and learning processes incorporates holistic practices, and goes beyond what teachers and students appear to be doing to inquire about what they are thinking (Ornstein, 2003). Now, recent research studies in the last ten years became to look at teaching from the "inside." It focuses on the personal and practical knowledge of teachers, the culture of teaching, and the language and thoughts of teachers. It also elevates their status and role as a practitioner-researcher, and thus enhances their professional role and professional development.

In Brophy and Good's study (1987), teacher expectations were defined as assumptions that teachers make regarding future behaviors or the expected academic achievement of their students, based on what they presume to know about these students at the outset. Teacher expectations effect student outcomes due to the actions that teachers take in response to their own expectations. The two types of teacher

expectations effects examined in Brophy and Good's study (ibid) were; a) the self-fulfilling prophecy effect, in which an originally erroneous expectation leads to behavior that causes the expectation to actually become true, and b) the sustaining expectation effect, in which teachers expect students to sustain previously developed behavior patterns and may fail to see and/or capitalize on changes in students' behavior patterns. It was discovered that the "self-fulfilling prophecy effects are more powerful than sustaining expectation effects because they introduce significant change in student behavior instead of minimizing change by sustaining established patterns" (Brophy & Good, 1987, p. 33). Research shows that teachers' performance expectations vary in terms of student characteristics other than achievement potential alone. The relationship between beliefs and behavior is complex, in part because teachers hold multiple beliefs and because students possess numerous characteristics.

Ladson-Billings (1994) stated the significance of teacher expectations on student achievement has been explored in a study by Winfield (1991) that suggested that a teacher's beliefs about inner-city students can be categorized along several dimensions. The dimensions are; a) seeking improvement versus doing maintenance, and b) assuming responsibility versus shifting responsibility. Winfield's (1991) cross-classification system yielded four possible teacher behavior patterns. Some teachers believe that students can improve and they believe that it is their responsibility to help them do so. Others, called general contractors, believe that improvement is possible, but they look for ancillary personnel to provide academic assistance rather than take on the responsibility themselves. Those called custodians do not believe that much can be done

to help their students, nor do they look for others to help them maintain the students at these low levels. Finally, referral agents describes teachers who do not believe that much at all can be done to help their students improve, and they moreover shift the responsibility for maintaining students at low levels to other school personnel by sending them off to the school psychologist or the special education teacher.

Teachers who practice culturally relevant methods can be identified by the way they see themselves and others. They see their teaching as an art rather than as a technical skill. They help students make connections between their local, national, racial, cultural, and global identities. Another level of Winfield's (1991) conceptualization in aiming for excellence - instead of just slight improvement or maintenance - is transforming the shifting responsibility into the idea of sharing responsibility. This category has teachers functioning as "conductors" or "coaches." Conductors believe that students are capable of excellence and they assume responsibility for ensuring that their students achieve that excellence. Like the conductors, coaches also believe that their students are capable of excellence, but they are comfortable sharing the responsibility to help them achieve it with parents, community members, and the students themselves. Coaches understand that the goal is team success.

School Climate

The purpose of schools is to educate, socialize, and help children and youth function in society. Cognitive learning and information-based skills are important, but they are not the be-all and end-all; they need to be tempered by moral constraints that recognize and distinguish between selfish behavior and proper behavior (Ornstein, 2003). The

character shifts among the middle class during the last fifty years were discussed in David Riesman's wrote in his book in *The Lonely Crowd* (1960). The most important change shaping American culture he identified was a move from a society governed by the imperative of production and savings, to a society governed by technology and consumption. He conceptualized and described these changes and new habits for inner-directed people who, as children, formed behaviors and goals (influenced by adult authority) that would guide them in later life, and for other-directed people, who became sensitized to the expectations and preferences of others (peers and mass media). A learning environment should be attentive to the ways teachers communicate with students (Brown, 2004).

The research on classroom climate makes clear that whenever students feel empowered, accepted, and safe in taking risks and trying things that are hard for them, the more students achieve in school (Saphier & Gower, 1997). Ladson-Billings' (1994) vision of a culturally relevant school climate argues for providing educational self-determination, honoring and respecting students' home cultures via accurate and fair representations of African American/or other cultures in the school curriculum, and helping diverse students understand the world as it is and equipping them to change it for the better. Ladson-Billings (1995) believes and hopes that if we can dream it, we can surely do it. Students want to be treated with respect and provided an opportunity to grow (Brown, 2004).

According to Jordan (1985), daily instructional practices must mesh with children's cultures in order to ensure that academic success and appropriate classroom or

social behaviors. Therefore, the goal of education becomes how to "fit" students constructed as "other," by virtue of their race/ethnicity, language, or social class, into a hierarchical structure that is defined as a meritocracy. Cultural responsiveness refers to a more dynamic or synergistic relationship between home/community cultures and school culture. Not only must teachers encourage academic success and cultural competence, they must help students to recognize, understand, and critique current social inequities, and teachers themselves must recognize social inequities and their causes (Ladson-Billings, 1995).

Culturally Responsive Classroom Management

The classroom management concept is larger than the idea of disciplining students. It consists of all the things teachers have to do in order to promote cooperation and student involvement in participation of activities in the classroom, and in forming a productive work environment (Sanford, Emmer, & Clements, 1983). The classroom is the place where children and youth must learn to get along with peers and to learn the rudiments of socialization and democracy. A student learns his or her own needs are not the only needs that have to be met and his or her own views are but one of many possibilities. Compromise, tolerance toward others, and positive peer relationships conducive to learning and future social living must be introduced and modeled by the teacher. The influence of peer consensus and teacher (adult) approval and subtle but are constantly in the background. Over time, these influences shape the students' attitudes and behaviors toward each other and impact how they respect and work with others (Ornstein, 2003).

Approximately 90% of public school teachers are European American . Although, in early years of American education males comprised majority of the workforce, this began to change at the Civil War. At that time, and at the end of that period women entered the profession. Over the years, the demographics of the teaching profession workforce have changed remarkably. Teaching was initially one of the very few employment avenues open to females. Overtime, women came to make up the majority of practitioner (Marshall, 2002). Anyone in the field of education even the casual observer (parent, administrator, student, etc.) would not be surprised to learn that the majority of teachers were women. Yet, all of these parties may not have noticed that 905 of all public school teachers are European American as well. For generations now, this has been the norm in education.

Weinstein et al. (2004) stated that multicultural competence can eliminate the difficulties that both novice teachers and experienced teachers have with classroom management. More than likely, when the teacher's and the students' cultural backgrounds are different, there may be conflicts because the behaviors and expectations of each are culturally influenced. Definitions and expectations of appropriate behavior are culturally influenced, and conflicts are likely to occur when teachers and students come from different cultural backgrounds.

For example, European American teachers are generally accustomed to a "passive-receptive" discourse pattern. They expect students to listen quietly while the teacher is speaking, and then to respond individually to teacher-initiated questions (Gay, 2000). However, many African American students traditionally behave in a more

"active-participatory" or "call-and-response" pattern, in which they provide comments and reactions at will. Teachers unfamiliar with this discourse pattern may consider such students to be rude and disruptive. Also, many Pacific Islanders value interpersonal harmony, so Anglo teachers may conclude that these students are lazy when they are actually just reluctant to participate in competitive activities (Sileo & Prater, 1998). Southeast Asian students might smile while being scolded, as they believe smiles are meant as sign of respect, an admission of guilt, or to show that there are no hard feelings (Trueba, Cheng, & Ima, 1993). Again, such responses may be misinterpreted by even well-meaning, but culturally unfamiliar teachers. Geneva Gay (2000) stated that because of the various situations that can occur in classroom interactions, while most teachers are not blatant racists, many probably are cultural hegemonists. They expect all students to behave according to the school's cultural standards of normality. Demographic data indicate that more than one-third of the children in our elementary and secondary schools are students of color (Ingersoll, 1997), one in five lives in poverty (Children's Defense Fund, 2001), and almost one in ten has limited proficiency in English (Kindler, 2002). Most teachers have no personal familiarity with these circumstances.

Weinstein et al. (2004) developed five components fundamental to culturally responsive classroom management; a) understanding one's own ethnocentrism and biases, b) consciousness of students' cultural backgrounds, c) comprehension of the broader social, economic, and political contexts of our educational system, d) competence and willingness to use culturally appropriate classroom management

strategies, and e) commitment to building caring classroom communities. Culturally responsive classroom managers recognize their biases and values, "The overall goal of classroom management is to provide all students with equitable opportunities for learning" (ibid, p. 27). The message here is that culturally responsive classroom management is classroom management in favor of social justice. In summary, the goal of culturally responsive classroom management is to create an environment in which students behave appropriately, not out of fear of punishment or a desire for rewards, but out of a sense of personal responsibility. Thus, teachers need to function as authority figures who are willing to set limits and guide students' behaviors, but must also recognize that focusing solely on control does little to teach students about making good choices (McCaslin & Good, 1998).

Cultural Affirmation

Human beings are a composite of our cultural affiliations. Although these identities are multifaceted, too often the cultural categories we use are crude approximations of individuals' actual cultures. Culturally relevant teachers know enough about the students they are teaching to help students make use of their multiple cultural identities. Those identities may span racial, ethnic, and national boundaries. Ladson-Billings (2001) developed a theory of culturally relevant pedagogy from working with experienced teachers who were successful teachers of African American students. She based her theory on three propositions about what contributes to success for all students, especially African American students. These propositions are; a) successful teachers focus on students' academic achievement, b) successful teachers develop students'

cultural competence, and c) successful teachers foster students' senses of sociopolitical consciousness.

Regardless of the subject matter, one of the most important things a teacher can do in the classroom is to make the students aware of their own meta-cognitive processes so that they can examine what they are thinking and how they are thinking about it in order to make distinctions and comparisons, to see errors in what they are thinking and to make self-corrections (Ornstein, 2003). It is believed that critical thinking is a form of intelligence that can be taught. The job of teaching is not only to provide students with knowledge and skills, but also to instill values and virtues to build character by shaping students' attitudes and behaviors. Teachers who maintain a well-managed classroom empower their students to gain control of their lives and to realize a sense of academic and personal fulfillment. This involves learning how to accept responsibility for their behavior, how to respect the rights of others, how to solve problems, and how to make choices and decisions that can benefit them or that are in the best interest of others (Connolly, Dowd, Criste, Nelson, & Tobias, 1995).

Curriculum and Instruction

Multicultural Education Training

Traditionally, the educational community has tended to view diverse students as coming from a deficit model. The purpose of learning is determined by the teacher, who delivers knowledge to the students, who are expected to be passive recipients of information (Diamond & Moore, 1995). This instructional model simply does not work well for many of today's students. Multicultural education has been promoted as a

paradigm for improving the experiences of culturally different and at-risk students, and as a means of addressing the realities of our diverse schools (Yeo, 1997). Banks (2007) outlines various multicultural approaches on the basis of both purpose and practice: they are contribution, additive, transformation, and social action. The three main principles of multiculturalism are based on democracy, equity and justice. According to Grant and Sleeter (2007), meeting the goals of the multicultural education approach is based on two ideals, namely equal opportunity and cultural pluralism. Equal opportunity does not mean ignoring differences or pretending that they do not exist. It means viewing differences as normal and desirable, and supporting them in such a way they do not hinder a person's ability to dream and strive to reach his or her goals.

To achieve equal opportunity, it is important to explore issues of power and privilege. Sometimes power and privileges are accepted as invisible norms or rights by members of the dominant group (e.g., males, Anglos), and this marginalizes the opportunity of other groups. Equal opportunity supports the second ideal of the multicultural education approach, cultural pluralism. Essentially, cultural pluralism means that there is no one best way to be a U.S. resident. Rather, there should be a sharing and blending of ethnic cultures and other forms of cultures. U.S. residents should have to give up their families' identities to be accepted as American or to be able to fully participate in society.

Equity deals with socioeconomic and political inequalities in the larger social order and how these impact school routines, procedures, curriculum and textbook adoption, and classroom pedagogies. Power relations should be explored by the leaders

in schools and by society by looking closely at differential schooling patterns, and critiquing social class stratifications (Brown, 2004). To move from awareness to practice, we need to reorganize our current school programs to increase general cultural awareness, to work with families, use effective communication strategies, conduct accurate assessments, and utilize multicultural methods and materials (Brown, et al., 2004).

Culturally Responsive Teaching

Ladson-Billings (1994) states that the primary aim of culturally responsive teaching is to assist in the development of a "relevant black personality" that allows African American students to choose academic excellence yet still identify with African and African American culture. Culturally responsive teachers (CRTs) know that it is their job to learn about the students' cultures and their communities. They know they need to bridge the division between the school and the students' homes. They do not assume that students have to learn their own particular communication styles or learning styles. Culturally responsive teachers understand that the interest they show in students' background and lives have an important payoff in the classroom. Culturally responsive teachers understand that learning is facilitated when we capitalize on learners' prior knowledge. Such teacher's relationships with their students are fluid, extending beyond the classroom:

> Culturally responsive teachers demonstrate a connectedness with all of their students and encourage that same connectedness between the students. They encourage a community of learners and encourage their students to learn

collaboratively. They help students develop that knowledge by building bridges and scaffolding for learning because they believe that knowledge is continuously recreated, recycled, and shared by both teachers and students. (Ladson-Billings, p. 72, 1994)

Our thinking is shaped not only by our home environment and community, but also by diverse people we come in contact with who reshape and expand our knowledge, ideas, and values. Culturally responsive pedagogy rests on three criteria or propositions expanded upon by Ladson-Billings (1995); a) students must experience academic success, b) students must develop and/or maintain cultural competence, and c) students must develop a critical consciousness through which they challenge the status quo of the current social order. Cultural competence is gained through culturally relevant teaching that allows students to maintain cultural integrity while seeking academic excellence. Culturally responsive teachers utilize students' cultures as vehicles for learning.

Length of Service/Years of Experience

Effective special education requires collaboration. Support from administrators and parents contribute to special educator job satisfaction and retention. Collaboration promotes a team approach to program planning. Hence, length of service/years of experience are important because nowhere is this more true or more important than in elementary special education. Experienced educators are needed to create bridges between not only general and special education classroom educators, but also between the parents and the students.

Teaching experience is an observable factor that leads to student achievement. Teachers who find motivation and satisfaction in their employment are more effective in helping their students. Also, experienced teachers tend to have more stability in their careers. For this reason, it is important for educational researchers to develop insight in the area of retention of special education teachers. Special education teachers work with a diverse and challenging population, and their job descriptions may vary over time and across settings (Busztyn, 2007).

The teaching profession is a very stressful occupation, and beginning teachers leave the profession at a rate far above the attrition rate experienced in private industry. In fact, special education teachers more likely to have an early career change (Thornton, Peltier, & Hill, 2005). The more problems new teachers encounter, the more likely they will leave the education profession (Blair-Larsen, 1998). Factors that influence a teacher's decision to remain in teaching often occur in the initial years of teaching, usually during the first three years of teaching. Teachers' intent to stay is a product of the successes of the initial years as well as the ability to face and deal with challenges. Teacher job satisfaction, as well as the connection between teacher values and the daily life of the school, influences a novice's desire to commit to a teaching career.

Presently there is no single best way to foster retention in the field of special education. There are, however, some discernible patterns that appear to be responsible for job dissatisfaction among special educators (Busztyn, 2007). Brownell et al. (2010) claimed that students learn more from experienced teachers than they do from less experienced teachers. Studies point primarily to the difference between teachers with

fewer than five years of experience (new teachers) and teachers with five or more years of experience (Murane & Phillips, 1981; Rivkin, Hanushek, & Kain, 1998). The benefits of experience, however, appear to level off after five years. For example, Darling-Hammond (2000) found no discernible differences between the effectiveness of teachers with five years of experience compared to teachers with ten years of experience.

Busztyn (2007) noted the following facts regarding special education teacher attrition:

-Inadequate support from school administration, student discipline problems, low salaries, and the limited input afforded to faculty regarding decision-making creates low morale and job dissatisfaction.

-In fact, job dissatisfaction and burnout play a greater role in teacher turnover than does teacher retirement.

- The data also shows that school characteristics and organizational conditions affect teacher satisfaction, burnout, and turnover.

- Also, special education teachers have increased paperwork requirements.

In addition to these issues, special education teachers have a distinct set of factors that affect satisfaction with their work, such as job duties, case workload, and having too little administrative support. We are in an era focused on standardized testing, and it is difficult to increase the scores of special needs students. Special education teachers (SETs) work often has an emotional component that is a factor readily associated with mental exhaustion and burnout. They are more likely to have more meetings with concerned parents. Usually, these professionals have a smaller social support network

within schools because special needs students are not deemed a priority. Also, collaboration with general education classroom teachers can be difficult. The general and special education teachers without years of experience are more likely to have difficulties with team teaching. General education teachers who have begun their careers before the push for inclusion are often not trained to work with special education students, and for this reason they are more likely to embrace the assistance of team teachers.

All of these stressful situations contribute to burnout and consequential problems of lower job satisfaction and high turnover. Regardless of special educators motivations in leaving their positions, vacant teaching positions are often filled by less experienced or less qualified teachers. The result is that students receive a lesser quality education. In the 1980s and 1990s, large numbers of teachers left the profession after teaching for just a few years. Moreover, many general education teachers are unprepared to cope with the diverse needs of students who fail to thrive in response to traditional classroom instruction. Studies of general education teachers demonstrate that they have difficulty differentiating instruction for students with disabilities and other at-risk learners (Baker & Zigmond, 1995), especially at the secondary level (Scruggs & Mastropieri, 2005).

Perhaps the most effective way to enhance teacher competence and teacher job satisfaction is through professional development. This is especially needed by beginning special education teachers who are setting out on a teaching career. Finally, as a teacher's experience in the classroom grows, his or her professional knowledge deepens

until he/she develops a highly personalized pedagogy - that is, a belief system that reflects the teacher's accumulated perceptions, judgments, and behaviors.

Summary

One purpose of this chapter was to provide a brief history of special education in the United States and a glimpse of some of the major legislative rulings that currently influence classroom procedures today. A main goal of education is to produce productive members of a democratic society. In the past, children with disabilities were cared for primarily at home. The trend to view children as unique individuals in strong need of nurturing came through various educational pioneers such as Samuel Howe, Thomas Gallaudet and Margaret Bancroft. It was discovered that in order to increase student learning, there was a need to understand and then to improve the conditions under which teachers and children work. A shift to special education programs being a component of public schools represented an attempt to offer quality educational to all students. Federal laws such as P.L. 94-142, the *Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act* and the *No Child Left Behind Act* helped revitalize special education policies and practices. The educational philosophy of equity provides opportunities for all, including special education students, by raising their achievement levels.

The issue of teacher quality has become a national concern, as has the recruitment and retention of highly qualified teachers, and Chapter II outlined some of the issues related to these topics. An issue of importance is how to increase the success of new special education teachers and the best methods for retaining these professionals. One of the key factors in special education teachers' job satisfaction is teacher

experience and age. Teachers who are more experienced tend to be more satisfied and stable in their employment. Research on teacher behavior has typically focused on the process of teaching (how the teacher behaves in the classroom, and the products of teaching (student outcomes). Bandura's (1986) self-efficacy theory and the teachers' sense of efficacy relates to their behavior in the classroom. The concept of classroom management is broader than the notion of student discipline, which also includes school climate.

Multicultural education has been promoted as a paradigm of change and the three principles that guide this concept are democracy, equity and justice. This theory was outlined in the above chapter because it provided the theoretical lens of the present study. A goal of teaching should be to not only provide students with knowledge and skills, but to instill in them positive values and virtues, thereby building their critical thinking skills and their abilities to interact with others in schools and society (Connolly et al., 1995). It is important for teachers to understand their students' cultures. A real benefit of cultural awareness is increased knowledge of one's own culture and its impact on pedagogy. Culturally responsive pedagogy recognizes that students bring unique cultural identities with them into their classrooms, and embraces differences among and between students and teachers. Culturally responsive teachers try to build bridges between students' home cultures and personal knowledge and the school curriculum, so that students see the relevance of what they are learning. It is clear that whenever students feel empowered, accepted and safe to take risks, they like school better and learn more (Saphier & Gower, 1997). Teachers who practice culturally responsive

methods can be identified by the way they see themselves and others. In Chapter III, the

methods of the present study are delineated for the reader.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study is to examine the perceptions of urban elementary special education teachers regarding their own cultural awareness and beliefs concerning African American students. Specifically, this study was concerned with the influence that ethnicity or years of service might have on the perceptions of urban elementary special education teachers regarding the eight aspects of the cultural awareness and beliefs inventory (CABI). These are: Teacher Beliefs, School climate, Culturally Responsive Classroom Management, Home and Community Support, Cultural Awareness, Curriculum and Instruction, Cultural Sensitivity and Teacher Efficacy.

Public schools must serve the educational needs of all children by helping them achieve a level of academic, social and vocational competence commensurate with their potential (Hockenbury, Kauffman, & Hallahan, 1999-2000). Today, special education is an integral part of the comprehensive general education system. Just because some students have highly individualized needs does not mean they can be ignored. Brownell et al. (2010) noted that best practices in teacher education must include a quality of cultural awareness, and that this trait is especially necessary for special educators. The research questions guiding this study were as follows:

1.   What are the cultural awareness perceptions of urban, elementary special education teachers regarding African American students?

2.   What are the cultural awareness perceptions of urban, elementary special

education teachers by ethnicity regarding African American students?

3.   What are the cultural awareness perceptions of urban, elementary special

education teachers by length of service regarding African American students?

In addition, this study investigated the differences in the perceptions of special

education teachers regarding cultural awareness and beliefs related to behavioral

management and racial, ethic, and/or socio-economic concerns as an educator. This

chapter discusses eight major areas of interest; 1) the type of research design, 2) the

population and research setting, 3) the sample, 4) a description of the instrument used,

5) validity of the instrument, 6) reliability of the Instrument, 7) details on the data

collection procedure, and finally, 8) information on the type of statistical analysis used.

Type of Research Design

A quantitative-descriptive research design was employed in this investigation to

collect and analyze the data. This type of design allowed the researcher an opportunity to

collect data from members of a population with respect to one or more variables.

Quantitative designs, like other kinds of research paradigms, have their methodological

weaknesses. One of the key weaknesses in a statistical design is that the information

generated often lacks sufficient depth. On the other hand, qualitative research designs

have also been criticized as being too limited to analysis of smaller populations, and thus

lack the strengths that accompany protracted observations (Gall, Borg, & Gall, 1996).

For this reason, a descriptive element was added. The descriptive design provided the researcher the opportunity to assess the attitudes, perceptions, opinions, behaviors, and motivations of individuals regarding a certain phenomenon or object. As Gay and Airasian (2003) noted, descriptive research methodology includes a variety of procedures. This type of research can be conducted by use of personal interviews as well as by mailed questionnaires. More often than not, descriptive research tends to utilize more than one kind of method in order to increase the reliability and validity of the data collected.

Although the descriptive research design can also have methodological limitations, there are several advantages to its use that tended to outweigh its disadvantages. These advantages, according to Selltiz, Wrightsman and Cook (2000) enable the researcher to do the following:

1. Collect detailed, factual information that describes existing phenomena about a population

2. Identify problems or justify current conditions and practices that are occurring within a population

3. Make comparisons and evaluations of a population

4. Determine what others are doing with similar problems or situations and thus benefit from their experiences in future planning decisions

In summary, as Gay and Airasian (2003) noted, the methodology of descriptive research can be conceived of as an inquiry in to the uniformity or regularity of some phenomena. The use of the descriptive design, in this case, provided the most effective,

efficient, and economic means for studying the perceptions of elementary special education teachers regarding their cultural awareness and beliefs regarding special education learners, and for accessing any impact length of service has on their beliefs.

Population and Research Setting

The population of this study consisted of special education teachers on the elementary school level, certified in special education and employed in an urban school district in Texas. This school district is located in the southern region of Texas. The school district is a predominantly composed of students of color in this school district. The demographics consist of 60.8% students of Hispanic origin, 32.2% students of African American origin, and 4.8% students of White origin.

Sample

According to Gall, Borg and Gall (1996), the best sample for any research study is the total population. Every elementary special education teacher employed in the target school district was invited to complete the Cultural Awareness & Beliefs Inventory (CABI), but only those who responded ended up being participants of the study. The data set was generated from the CABI instrument, which was developed by Webb-Johnson and Carter (2005). Permission to use the CABI data sets was granted by authors Webb-Johnson and Carter in 2009. Of the total schools in the urban school district under investigation, elementary teachers with certification in special education from 23 elementary schools responded. The sample population included 54 elementary teachers certified in special education.

Instrumentation

The CABI measured the perceptions and attitudes of urban teachers' cultural

awareness and beliefs. The CABI consisted of 46 items falling into four major areas.

These are illustrated in Table 3.1 below.

Table 3.1

Components of the CABI Instrument

CABI Components

Teacher Beliefs (TB)	School Climate (SC)	Culturally Responsive Classroom Manage (CRCM)	Home & Community Support (H & CS)
Cultural Awareness (CA)	Curr & Instr. (C & I)	Cultural Sensitivity (CS)	Teacher Efficacy (TE)

Section One consisted of eleven demographic items. These items measured the

teachers' gender, type of degree(s) attained, years of teaching experience, current grade

level(s) being taught, certification, and ethnicity. Items four through six measured

current grade level and were scored from one to five (1 to 5), respectively. Also, items

seven through nine measured certification, and were scored from one to five (1 to 5),

consecutively.

Additionally, in Section One of the CABI instrument, item two measured gender

and was scored as either a one or a two (1 to 2). Item two measured type of degree, and

it was scored from one to three (1 to 3). In addition, item three measured years of

teaching and it was scored from one to five (1 to 5) in order to distinguish between

newer and more experienced teachers. Finally, items ten and eleven measured ethnicity and were scored from one to five (1 to 5), respectively.

Section Two of the CABI consisted of 46 items in Likert-scale format. This section of the survey asked the participants to check one of the four structured responses: "Strongly Agree," "Agree," "Disagree," and "Strongly Disagree." These responses will be assigned the following weight for analysis purposes: Strongly Agree (4), Agree (3), Disagree (2), and Strongly Disagree (1). The items in this section were scored from one to four (1 to 4), with the highest score representing a favorable perception and lowest score representing an unfavorable perception with regard to cultural awareness and beliefs. Items 16, 23, 25, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 38, 42, 46, 47, 48, 49, 52, and 53 were reversed so that the higher scores would represent favorable perceptions toward cultural awareness and beliefs.

Section Three was the qualitative section of the instrument, and it consisted of three open-ended essay questions, as follows;

1) What is your greatest behavioral management concern as you reflect on your professional responsibilities and the learners you serve?

2) What racial, ethnic, and or socio-economic concerns do you have, as related to your role as a teacher?

3) What leadership concerns do you have as related to your school district?

Section Four contained the Reversed Scored Items. These were restated versions of variables delineated in Section Two, phrased as open-ended statements beginning with the prompt "I believe…" There were 15 such reversed statements. These were

included in order to allow participants the opportunity to provide information, in their own words, regarding the variables under investigation.

Item 46 of the CABI instrument was based on eight factors, and three open-ended questions (qualitative) were also completed pertaining to the teachers' concerns regarding behavioral management issues, racial, ethnic, and socio-economic constructs related to their role as teachers, and their concerns regarding the school district's leadership.

Validity of the Instrument

Content validity was previously established for the CABI in a study conducted by Roberts-Walters. Roberts-Walter (2007) administered the CABI to a group of experts to examine the content validity of each of the CABI components. The jury of experts agreed that the CABI measured what it was supposed to measure. In addition, Roberts-Walters established construct validity on the CABI using factor analysis. This type of validity check assessed the numbers of factors associated with the CABI. To establish construct validity, exploratory factor analysis was done.

Moreover, the Pearson product moment correlation revealed that Factors one through five and seven had high convergent and divergent validities. These items had high correlations among themselves ranging from .20 to .88 ($p<.01$) and low correlation among items of other factors. However, factors six and eight failed to have high convergent and divergent validities.

For the descriptive portion of the study, construct validity was accessed regarding internal consistency, content validity, as well as convergent and divergent

validity. Cronbach's alpha coefficient is a statistical procedure which determines the variance of all the scores for each item and then adds these variances across all items to get the sum of the variance of the item scores. These item scores produce the reliability coefficients for the subscales and the total test. Cronbach's alpha coefficient (0.83) was calculated to explore the internal consistency of the CABI.

Reliability of the Instrument

In the same study by Roberts-Walter (2007), the internal consistency reliability procedure was used to establish reliability of the CABI. This type of reliability check determines "how all items on a single test related to all other items and to the test as a whole" (Hinkle, Wiersma & Jurs, 2003). To determine the internal consistency reliability for the CABI, Roberts-Walters used the Cronbach's alpha coefficient. The alpha coefficients were computed for each subtest of the CABI as well as for the total test. All of the reliability coefficients were found to be significant at the .05 level or less. Thus, internal consistency reliability was previously established for the CABI instrument.

Data Collection Procedure

In the Spring Semester of 2009, permission was given to the researcher by Dr. Norvella Carter, one of the authors of the CABI instrument (Webb-Johnson & Carter, 2005), to use the instrument for this project. The CABI data set was downloaded by the researcher. Once the CABI was downloaded, the data was converted into the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) file format. After the data were entered into the SPSS software package, necessary changes to some of the variables were made. For

example, only the data concerning elementary level (K-4) special education teachers were selected for analysis purposes. The variable years of teaching experience were collapsed from a three-level variable to a two-level variable for analysis purposes. Inasmuch as the sample consisted only of 54 special education elementary teachers, collapsing the cells of this variable eliminated the chances of making a Type I error.

Statistical Analysis

The instrument yielded interval-ratio as well as nominal/ordinal data for this investigation. Thus, a parametric procedure was used. The parametric procedures employed in this study used the t-test of independent samples. The t-test of independent sample is a statistical technique that examines the differences between the means of two independent variables (Hinkle, Wiersma, & Jurs, 2003).

CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions of urban elementary special education teachers regarding their own cultural awareness and beliefs concerning their African American students. In addition, this study was concerned with the influence that ethnicity or length of service (years of teaching experience) might have on such teachers' regarding the eight components of the Cultural Awareness and Beliefs Inventory (CABI) (Webb-Johnson & Carter, 2005). The following research questions were explored in this investigation:

1. What are the cultural awareness perceptions of urban, elementary special education teachers regarding African American students?

2. What are the cultural awareness perceptions of urban, elementary special education teachers by ethnicity regarding African American students?

3. What are the cultural awareness perceptions of urban, elementary special education teachers by length of service regarding African American students?

A quantitative-descriptive research design was used to collect and analyze the data. The sample population of this study consisted of 54 elementary special education teachers. The information gained was divided into sections matching the eight components of the Cultural Awareness Beliefs Inventory instrument used to survey

participants. Percentage analysis and one-way analysis of variance were used to analyze the data.

Data Analysis

Demographic Profile of the Participants

The variable Length of Service (years of teaching experience) was categorized into two distinct groups. They were 28 (51.9%) elementary special education teachers who reported they had three or less years of teaching experience. On the other hand, 26 (48.1%) of the elementary special education teachers indicated they had four or more years of teaching experience.

Research Question One: What are the cultural awareness perceptions of urban, elementary special education teachers regarding African American students?

Reported in Table 4.1 are the mean results pertaining to the overall perceptions of elementary special education teachers regarding the eight components of the CABI instrument. As a group, the elementary special education teachers surveyed exhibited agreement of positive perceptions toward the school climate, with a mean of 3.09 for this component of the CABI.

Moreover, the elementary special education teachers possessed agreeable positive perceptions regarding Home and Community Support (mean = 2.85), Curriculum and Instruction (mean = 2.99) and Teacher Efficacy (mean = 2.54) components of the CABI. Finally, the special education teachers did not agree with respect of perception to Teacher Beliefs (mean = 2.11) and Cultural Sensitivity (mean = 1.80) components of the CABI.

Table 4.1

Mean Results: Level of Agreement with Components of CABI

Components	Individual Mean for each Component	Level of Agreement
Teacher Beliefs	2.11	Disagree
School Climate	3.14	Agree
Culturally Responsive Classroom Management	3.37	Agree
Home & Community Support	2.85	Agree
Cultural Awareness	3.09	Agree
Curriculum & Instruction	2.99	Agree
Cultural Sensitivity	1.80	Disagree
Teacher Efficacy	2.54	Agree

Results were tabulated using the following scale. A mean of 4.0 – 2.5 was considered agreeable (agreed with the pertinent statements). A mean of 2.4 or below was deemed to disagree (disagreed with the pertinent statements).

Research Question Two: What are the cultural awareness perceptions of urban elementary special education teachers by ethnicity regarding African American students? This information was captured by the bulk of the questionnaires' components, delineated in the subsections below.

Teacher Beliefs and Ethnicity

Reported in Table 4.2 were the one-way analysis of variance results pertaining to the differences in the Teacher Beliefs component scores of the CABI sorted by the elementary special education teachers' ethnicity. A significant difference was found between the teacher beliefs scores of the different ethnic groups of urban elementary special education teachers ($F = 5.240$, $df = 2/39$, $P < .01$) at the (.01) level. Thus,

teachers' ethnicities had a significant effect on the Teacher Beliefs scores of elementary special education teachers.

Further data analysis utilizing the Scheffe I Test (See Table 4.3) revealed that urban elementary special education teachers who self-described themselves as falling into the Other American category had significantly higher teacher beliefs scores than did African American teachers. No other mean differences were observed.

Table 4.2

Analysis of Variance Results: Teacher Beliefs Scores by Ethnicity

Source of Variance	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F	P
Between Groups	137.462	2	68.731	5.240	.010**
Within Groups	511.514	39	13.116		
Total	648.976	41			

** Significant at the (.01) level

Table 4.3

Scheffe' Results: Teacher Beliefs by Ethnicity

Mean 1 African Americans	Mean 2 Other Americans	Mean 3 European Americans	Observed Mean Difference	P
15.40	20.25		-4.85	.011 **
15.40		17.36	-1.96	.311
	20.25	17.36	2.89	.210

** Significant at the (.01) level

School Climate and Ethnicity

Indicated in Table 4.4 are the one-way analysis of variance results with regard to the influence that the ethnicity of urban special education teachers had on the school climate component scores of the CABI. No statistically significant differences were found between the school climate scores of the three ethnic groups of teachers at the (0.5) level (F = .768, df = 2/40, P > .05). Therefore, ethnicity had no influence on the School Climate scores of elementary special education teachers.

Table 4.4

Analysis of Variance Results: School Climate Scores by Ethnicity

Source of Variance	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F	P
Between Groups	13.244	2	6.622	.768	.471
Within Groups	344.756	40	8.619		
Total	358.000	42			

Culturally Responsive Classroom Management and Ethnicity

Reported in Table 4.5 are the single factor one-way analysis of variance findings regarding the effect of the variable ethnicity on the Culturally Responsive Classroom Management component scores of urban elementary special education teachers from the CABI. Statistically significant differences were not found between the Culturally Responsive Classroom Management scores of the three ethnic groups of elementary (F = 2.039, df = 2/41, P > .05) special education teachers at the (.05) level. Accordingly,

ethnicity had no effect of the Culturally Responsive Classroom Management scores of

urban elementary special education teacher.

Table 4.5

Analysis of Variance Results: Cultural Responsive Classroom Management by Ethnicity

Source of Variance	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F	P
Between Groups	8.231	2	4.115	2.039	.143
Within Groups	82.747	41	2.018		
Total	90.977	43			

Home and Community Support and Ethnicity

Presented in Table 4.6 are the one-way analysis of variance analyses with respect

to the urban elementary special education teachers' Ethnicity on their Home and

Community Support component scores on the CABI. A significant difference was not

found between the three ethnic groups of special education teachers (F = .148, df = 2/39,

P > .05) with regard to their Home and Community Support scores. Based on the above

findings Ethnicity had no impact on the Home and Community Support scores of urban

elementary special education teachers.

Table 4.6

Analysis of Variance Results: Home and Community Support by Ethnicity

Source of Variance	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F	P
Between Groups	1.794	2	.897	.148	.863
Within Groups	235.825	39	6.047		
Total	237.619	41			

Cultural Awareness and Ethnicity

The single variable analysis of variance was computed to determine the differences in the Cultural Awareness component scores of urban elementary special education teachers with regard to their Ethnicity. As indicated in Table 4.7, no significant differences were found between the Cultural Awareness scores (F = 1.353, df = 2/40, P > .05) of urban elementary special education teachers. Consequently, ethnicity had no effect on the Cultural Awareness scores of urban elementary special education teachers.

Table 4.7

Analysis of Variance Results: Cultural Awareness by Ethnicity

Source of Variance	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F	P
Between Groups	8.619	2	4.310	1.353	.270
Within Groups	127.381	40	3.185		
Total	136.000	42			

Curriculum and Instruction and Ethnicity

Illustrated in Table 4.8 are the one-way analysis of variance results regarding the impact of Ethnicity on the Curriculum and Instruction component. Among the scores of urban elementary special education teachers, no statistically significant differences were found (F = .176, df = 2/39, P > .05) between the Curriculum and Instruction scores of special education teachers at the (.05) level. Conversely, ethnicity had no significant influence on the Curriculum and Instruction scores of urban elementary special education teachers.

Table 4.8

Analysis of Variance Results: Curriculum and Instruction by Ethnicity

Source of Variance	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F	P
Between Groups	1.297	2	.649	.176	.840
Within Groups	144.036	39	3.693		
Total	145.333	41			

Cultural Sensitivity and Ethnicity

Included in Table 4.9 are the one-way analysis of variance findings regarding the impact of the variable Ethnicity on the Cultural Sensitivity component scores of urban elementary special education teachers on the CABI. Significant differences were not found between the Cultural Sensitivity scores of the three ethnic groups of urban elementary special education teachers (F = 1.613, df = 2/41, P > .05) at the (0.5) level.

Therefore, Ethnicity had no influence on the cultural sensitivity scores of urban

elementary special education teachers.

Table 4.9

Analysis of Variance Results: Cultural Sensitivity by Ethnicity

Source of Variance	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F	P
Between Groups	6.799	2	3.399	1.613	.212
Within Groups	86.383	41	2.107		
Total	93.182	43			

Teacher Efficacy and Ethnicity

Revealed in Table 4.10 are the one-way analysis of variance results pertaining to

the influence of Ethnicity on the Teacher Efficacy component scores of urban

elementary special education teachers. A statistical significant difference was not found

between Teacher Efficacy component scores ($F = 1.702$, $df = 2/39$, $P > .05$) of urban

elementary special education teachers at the (.05) level. Thus, Ethnicity had no statistical

influence on the Teacher Efficacy scores of teachers.

Table 4.10

Analysis of Variance Results: Teacher Efficacy by Ethnicity

Source of Variance	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F	P
Between Groups	9.738	2	4.869	1.702	.196
Within Groups	111.595	39	2.861		
Total	121.333	41			

Research Question Three: What are the cultural awareness perceptions of urban, elementary special education teachers by length of service regarding African American students? This information was captured by the bulk of the questionnaires' components, delineated in the subsections below.

Teacher Beliefs and Length of Service

Reported in Table 4.11 are the one-way analysis of variance results regarding the differences in the Teacher Beliefs components of the CABI, sorted by urban elementary special education teachers' Length of Service. No statistical significant differences were found between the novice teachers less than or equal to three years and the more experienced elementary teachers. ($F = .765$, $df = 1/42$, $P > .05$) at the (.05) level. Thus, teachers' years of experience had no influence on their Teacher Beliefs scores.

Table 4.11

Analysis of Variance Results: Teacher Beliefs Scores by Length of Service

Source of Variance	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F	P
Between Groups	14.205	1	14.205	.765	.387
Within Groups	779.682	42	18.564		
Total	793.886	43			

School Climate and Length of Service

Indicated in Table 4.12 are the analysis of variance findings pertaining to the differences in the School Climate scores component of the CABI, sorted by the urban

elementary special education teachers' years of experience. A significant difference was not found between the School Climate scores of the years of experience groups of urban elementary special education school teachers at the (.05) level (F = .015, df = 1/48, .05). Therefore, teachers' years of experience were deemed to have had no influence on their School Climate scores.

Table 4.12

Analysis of Variance Results: School Climate Scores by Length of Service

Source of Variance	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F	P
Between Groups	.115	1	.115	.015	.902
Within Groups	364.385	48	7.591		
Total	364.500	49			

Culturally Responsive Classroom Management and Length of Service

Presented in Table 4.13, below, are the ANOVA results with regard to the influence that Length of Service of urban elementary special education teachers had on the Culturally Responsive Classroom Management scores component of the CABI. A statistically significant difference was not found between the Culturally Responsive Classroom management scores (F = 3.162, df = 1/47, p > .05) and the years of experience groups of elementary teachers at the .05 level.

Table 4.13

Analysis of Variance Results: Culturally Responsiveness Classroom Management Scores by Length of Service

Source of Variance	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F	P
Between Groups	5.830	1	5.830	3.162	.082
Within Groups	86.660	47	1.844		
Total	92.490	48			

Home and Community Support and Length of Service

The analysis of variance was computed to determine the effect of years of experience on the Home and Community Support scores of urban elementary teachers on the CABI. As shown in Table 4.14, no statistically significant differences were found between the two different experience level groupings for the elementary teachers with regard to their Home and Community Support scores at the (.05) level (F = .153, df = 1/47, p > .05). Consequently, teachers' years of experience had no effect on their Home and Community Support scores.

Table 4.14

Analysis of Variance Results: Home and Community Support Scores by Length of Service

Source of Variance	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F	P
Between Groups	.434	1	.434	.153	.697
Within Groups	133.198	47	2.834		
Total	133.633	48			

Cultural Awareness and Length of Service

Shown in Table 4.15 are the ANOVA analyses regarding the effect of years of experience on the Cultural Awareness scores component of the CABI. A statistically significant difference was not found on the Culturally Awareness scores of the two years of experience groups of urban elementary special education teachers ($F = .091$, $df = 1/46$, $p > .05$ level). Based on the above results, teachers' years of experience had no influence on their Cultural Awareness scores.

Table 4.15

Analysis of Variance Results: Cultural Awareness Scores by Length of Service

Source of Variance	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F	P
Between Groups	.333	1	.333	.091	.764
Within Groups	167.583	46	3.643		
Total	167.917	47			

Curriculum and Instruction and Length of Service

Illustrated in Table 4.16 are the one-way analysis of variance results with respect to the differences in the Curriculum and Instruction scores component of the CABI by length of service. No statistically significant differences were found between the Curriculum and Instruction scores of the two length of service groups of urban elementary special education teachers at the (.05) level ($F = .659$, $df = 1/47$, $p > .05$).

Table 4.16

Analysis of Variance Results: Curriculum and Instruction Scores by Length of Service

Source of Variance	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F	P
Between Groups	1.646	1	1.646	.659	.421
Within Groups	117.333	47	2.496		
Total	118.980	48			

Cultural Sensitivity and Length of Service

Presented in the Table 4.17 are the ANOVA results with regard to the effect of Length of Service on the Cultural Sensitivity scores of elementary special education teachers on the CABI. A significant difference was not found between the Cultural Sensitivity scores of urban elementary special education teachers with three or less years in service and those with four or more years in service at the (0.5) level (F = 2.084, df = 1/42, p> .05). Thus, teachers' Length of Service had no influence on their Cultural Sensitivity scores.

Table 4.17

Analysis of Variance Results: Cultural Sensitivity Scores by Length of Service

Source of Variance	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F	P
Between Groups	4.610	1	4.610	2.084	.158
Within Groups	93.822	42	2.234		
Total	98.432	43			

Teacher Efficacy and Length of Service

Depicted in Table 4.18 are the analysis of variance results pertaining to the impact of Length of Service on the Teacher Efficacy scores of elementary special education teachers on the CABI. No statistically significant differences were found between the Teacher Efficacy scores of urban elementary special education teachers with three or less years of service and their counterparts with four or more years of service at the (.05) level (F = .205, df = 1/46, p > .05). Therefore, teachers' length of service had no influence on their Teacher Efficacy scores.

Table 4.18

Analysis of Variance Results: Teacher Efficacy Scores by Length of Service

Source of Variance	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F	P
Between Groups	.939	1	.939	.205	.653
Within Groups	211.040	46	4.588		
Total	211.979	47			

Summary

Three major research questions were addressed in the present study. Data were collected using the Cultural Awareness and Beliefs Inventory (CABI) instrument developed by Webb-Johnson and Carter (2005), which was administered to 54 elementary level special education professionals. All of the teachers worked in the southeast part of the state of Texas. Data were analyzed using percentage analysis and

one-way analysis of variance procedures to test for statistically significant links between the variables under study.

Regarding the eight components of the CABI (displayed in Table 4.1), the special education teachers held agreeable perceptions toward three of the variables: School Climate, Culturally Responsive Classroom Management and Cultural Awareness. Additionally, they exhibited an agreeable perception regarding three components: Home and Community Support, Curriculum and Instruction, and Teacher Efficacy. Finally, the special education teachers exhibited disagreeable perceptions regarding two components: Teacher Beliefs and Cultural Sensitivity. Furthermore, it was found that the elementary special education teachers' Length of Service (years of teaching experience) was found to have had no significant influence on their scores for those sections of the CABI instrument. However, there was a marked tendency toward significance with regard to the Cultural Responsiveness scales. The implications of these findings will be discussed in Chapter V.

CHAPTER V

FINDINGS, DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Findings

This chapter reiterates the purpose of the study and addresses the research questions. It outlines the findings, and draws conclusions about the significance of the study. Conclusions derived from the research findings are presented, with related discussion and implications for continued practice and potential future policy changes. Finally, recommendations are presented. These may be of interest to various people, including elementary public school educators and special education professionals, educational researchers, or other stakeholders seeking reform in special education practices.

The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions of urban special education elementary teachers regarding their own cultural awareness and beliefs concerning African American students. Specifically, this study was concerned with the influence that ethnicity and years of service might have on the perceptions of urban elementary special education teachers toward the eight components of the Cultural Awareness and Beliefs Inventory (CABI) (Webb-Johnson & Carter, 2005). These were: Teacher Beliefs, School Climate, Culturally Responsive Classroom Management, Home and Community Support, Curriculum and Instruction, Cultural Sensitivity, Cultural Awareness, and Teacher Efficacy.

A quantitative-descriptive research design was employed in this investigation to collect and analyze the data. Fifty-four (54) special education elementary teachers were selected to participate in this empirical study. The CABI instrument provided the basis of the questions asked of the teachers, and offered a chance to re-test the instrument on a new population. The CABI was previously found to have excellent content and construct validity, as well as a high degree of reliability. The data were then tested through the application of the one-way analysis of variance and percentage analysis methods. The following research questions were tested at the (.05) significance level or better in this empirical investigation.

Research Question One: Findings

What are the cultural awareness perceptions of urban, elementary special education teachers regarding African American students? The following findings were generated from the results of the study:

1. As a group, special education teachers possess positive agreeable perceptions regarding School Climate, Culturally Responsive Classroom Management, Cultural Awareness, Home and Community Support, Curriculum and Instruction, and Teacher Efficacy components of the CABI.

2. As a group, special education teachers possess disagreeable perceptions regarding Teacher Beliefs and Cultural Sensitivity components of the CABI.

Research Question Two: Findings

What are the cultural awareness perceptions of urban, elementary special education teachers by ethnicity regarding African American students? The following findings were gathered from the results of the study:

1. Ethnicity produced a significant effect of agreement on teacher beliefs of special education teachers.

2. Special education teachers' ethnicity did not produce a statistically significant impact on perceptions toward School Climate.

3. Ethnicity of special education teachers did not produce a statistically significant influence on perceptions of Cultural Responsiveness in Classroom Management.

4. The perceptions of special education teachers regarding Home and Community Support were not affected significantly by ethnicity.

5. Ethnicity did not produce a significant effect on the perceptions of special education teachers with respect to Cultural Awareness.

6. Special education teachers' ethnicity did not produce a significant impact on views of Curriculum and Instruction issues.

7. The ethnicity of special education teachers did not produce a significant effect on perceptions of Cultural Sensitivity.

8. Perceptions of special education teachers regarding Teacher Efficacy were not affected significantly by ethnicity.

Research Question Three: Findings

What are the cultural awareness perceptions of urban, elementary special education teachers by length of service regarding African American students? The following findings were obtained from the analysis of the data:

1. Length of service (years of teaching experience) did not produce a significant effect on perceptions of special education teachers with regard to Teacher Beliefs.

2. Special education teachers' length of service did not produce a significant impact on perceptions of School Climate.

3. Length of service of special education teachers did not produce a significant influence on perceptions of Cultural Responsiveness in Classroom Management.

4. Perceptions of special education teachers regarding Home and Community Support were not affected significantly by length of service.

5. The variable length of service did not produce a significant effect on perceptions of special education teachers with respect to Cultural Awareness.

6. Special education teachers' length of service did not produce a significant impact on views of Curriculum and Instruction issues.

7. The length of service of special education teachers did not produce a significant effect on perceptions of Cultural Sensitivity.

8. Perceptions of special education teachers regarding Teacher Efficacy were not affected significantly by length of service.

Discussion

General Cultural Awareness Perceptions

The purpose of this discussion is to explore the findings of this study in relation to both extant literature and their implications for various stakeholders associated with urban, special education students. Without regard for ethnicity or length of service, perceptions of the eight CABI dimensions were examined to determine whether the teachers under study viewed the dimensions favorably or unfavorably. Results showed that six of the dimensions were perceived positively and the remaining three negatively. With regard to teacher ethnicity and length of service, the same eight CABI dimensions were tested for differences among groups. Only with Ethnicity was one CABI dimension, Teacher Beliefs, found significant among groups. What follows is a discussion of these findings on a dimension by dimension basis, with interpretations of the results.

Teacher Beliefs

Participants of this study generally perceived Teacher Beliefs unfavorably. Teacher beliefs play a significant role in how people understand and interpret differences among communities (Furman, 1998; Murtadha-Watt, 1999). Findings here are supported in extant literature (Monroe, 2005; Webb-Johnson & Carter, 2005), suggesting that the behaviors of students of color, especially African Americans, can be perceived by teachers as inappropriate even though the students' actions are not intended to be so. These students may display culturally socialized behaviors, but some teachers fail to affirm the behaviors in an academically engaging manner. Evidence presented here also

suggests that ethnicity is associated with perceptions of teacher beliefs. It was found that Other American teachers hold Teacher Beliefs in higher regard than do African American teachers. Length of service, however, was not a factor that influenced Teacher Beliefs.

Although more research is needed, these results suggest that a teacher's ethnicity shapes his/her ability to understand and interpret differences among diverse special education students (Brown, 2004). As teacher and student demographics continue to change (Larke, 1990), teacher beliefs are likely to change in directions that cannot be predicted, complicating the study of the impact of Teacher Beliefs in diverse special education classrooms. Length of service was not a factor shaping teacher beliefs in the present study. These results suggest that more attention to teacher and student diversity is warranted if administrators and researchers want to understand how Teacher Beliefs influence the delivery of quality education to special education students (Busztyn, 2007).

School Climate

Findings concerning favorable perceptions of special education teachers toward School Climate are consistent with those of Ladson-Billings (1994), Saphier and Gower (1997) and Brown (2004), who suggested that teacher perceptions regarding School Climate are positive. The authors argue that for teachers to perceive their school climate favorably, they must feel connected and believe that the work environment allows them to be productive. In the present study, either Ethnicity nor Length of Service was found to influence teachers' perceptions of School Climate. Research suggests that instruction

corresponding to students' cultures is more likely to result in academic success and appropriate classroom behaviors (Jordan, 1985).

Teachers perceiving school climate positively is an essential ingredient to ensuring that the school climate is conducive to student success. However, more variables that correlate with academic success are needed; clearly teacher ethnicity and length of service are not the variables that should be given more attention. One recommendation is to consider not ethnicity per se, but the mix of ethnicity in the classroom in relation to the teacher. Larke (1990) suggests that the stable demographics of middle class, White, female teachers contrast with increasing diverse student demographics. In addition, not length of service but experience with diverse student populations may be a better variable to explore when predicting the effects and perceptions of school climate.

Culturally Responsive Classroom Management

Classroom management encompasses a wide array of concepts and behaviors that extend beyond discipline; it includes everything teachers do to promote cooperation, participation, and learning among students (Sanford, Emmer, & Clement, 1983). Weinstein et al. (2004) introduced components specific to classroom management that include cultural responsiveness. This study suggests that urban special education teachers view Culturally Responsive Classroom Management favorably, but ethnicity and length of service are not variables that influence this perception.

Research suggests that African American students operate tend to use active-participatory and/or call-and-response learning and communication patterns, in which

comments and reactions to stimuli are provided at will. Other cultures, alternatively, operate within other paradigms (Gay, 2000; Sileo & Prater, 1998; Trueba, Cheng, & Ima, 1993). As Larke (1990) points out, teacher demographics remain relatively stable, while classroom populations continue to diversify. This mismatch among teachers and their students creates a wider rift in a curriculum designers' and administrators' abilities to address cultural responsiveness in classroom management. Although more research is needed on this topic, it is clear that other variables besides teacher ethnicity and length of service are necessary to grasp the truth.

Home and Community Support

The traditional nuclear family with children at the center is giving way to contemporary families where diversity and pluralism are the norm and the traditional family structure is fading (Ornstein, 2003). Results from this study suggest that teachers perceive Home and Community Support favorably. However, there is no guarantee that such support exists or exists significantly enough to truly support the diversity found in contemporary urban special education classrooms. Since home and community support for students is called into question, such support for teachers is less likely.

This study demonstrates that teacher ethnicity and length of service are not factors influencing teacher perceptions of Home and Community Support. This is surprising given that teachers with more experience are likely older, and older teachers witnessed the transformation of the traditional family to contemporary structures. Older teachers are more likely to expect or rely on support from multiple sources, including home and community. African American teachers are more likely to identify with

African American students needs and behaviors, an important concept when creating

personal relationships to raise students' achievement levels (Payne, 2001). Clearly, more

evidence is needed to explore and understand the impact of teachers' positive

perceptions of home and community support on student outcomes. One avenue of

worthy research is studying the link between home and community support and the

influence of teacher diversity.

Cultural Awareness

This study suggests that urban elementary special education teachers perceive

Cultural Awareness positively. However, teacher ethnicity and length of service are not

variables that influence this perception (Gonzales, 1995; Johns, 1997). Racial identity is

developed early in life (Helms, 1994), and continues to influenced significantly by

environmental factors. Nowhere does cultural awareness play a more salient role than

when children are thrust into a variety of cultures during their early classroom years.

With cultural identity developing in stages (Helms, 1994), teachers must deal

with moving targets with respect to cultural awareness. The result can be an unaddressed

sense of belonging to one's group, leaving a child with no cultural or racial group with

which to identify. This issue is compounded with the notion that at a young age, many

children are exposed to society's message that white is best; this is the time when

children of color discover that they are not a part of that group.

Combating this lack of identity and coping with mis-identity is the culturally-

aware teacher, cognizant of the effects such identity problems have on special needs

children. Such students must find alternative ways to cope with these issues, (especially while coping with being different outside of race and culture).

Curriculum and Instruction

This study suggests that urban elementary special education teachers perceive Curriculum and Instruction favorably. Both teacher ethnicity and length of service appear to have no influence on this CABI dimension. The community of educators in this country tends to view diverse students as coming from a deficit model; wherein, learning flows out from the instructor, and students are passive recipients of knowledge (Diamond & Moore, 1995). As Larke (1990) argues, student demographics are changing while teacher demographics are largely unchanged. These factors make it increasingly difficult to reach the classrooms full of diverse students, especially when the students already have special needs.

Equal opportunity is a battle fought not in legislature, but in the minds of the teachers who teach and the minds of the students who learn. Curricula that support and embrace multicultural methods better prepare students to identity with their own cultures and adapt to changing cultures in the future (Yeo, 1997). Favorably perceiving curriculum and instruction is one step toward creating a learning environment where multiple cultures are more than recognized and tolerated; they become part of the everyday learning paradigm. Culture extends beyond social class stratifications (Brown, 2004) to include all of the cultures to which special education students must adapt on a daily basis.

Cultural Sensitivity

Results of this study suggest that urban elementary special education teachers perceive Cultural Sensitivity unfavorably. Furthermore, both teacher ethnicity and length of service do not influence this perception. Cultural sensitivity is what allows teachers and students learn about and learn to appreciate people who are different from themselves. More than just a lesson in cultural tolerance, it is what allows teachers to better serve their students.

Ladson-Billings (2001) suggests that it is essential for a teacher to understand a student's culture, but the real value of understanding diversity is the impact on one's own life. Part of valuing cultural diversity is understanding cultural sensitivity; it is not possible to value something without recognizing both extrinsic and intrinsic values. Banks (2004) notes that even in culturally homogenous classrooms, a teacher's responsibility includes broadening students' understanding s of diverse ethnic and racial groups. Cultural sensitivity is not just for culturally diverse classrooms; it extends into lessons that last beyond the classroom.

Teacher Efficacy

Results of this study suggest that Teacher Efficacy is perceived favorably by urban elementary special education teachers. Ethnicity and length of service were found not to influence this perception. Teacher efficacy has implications for both teachers and students; it has been found to relate to student achievement (Amour-Thomas et al., 1989) and to teacher self-perception of classroom performance (Denham & Michael, 1981; Midgley, Feldlaufer, & Eccles, 1989). Although student performance is a positive

outcome of teacher efficacy, perceptions of classroom performance may not translate into positive outcomes to students.

One of the problems of measuring perceptions is that they may not represent reality accurately. Perceptions of classroom performance, for example, may not actually increase student performance; it may be a misperception on the part of a teacher. The link between teacher efficacy and delivering quality education to special education students enduring challenges brought on by urban living and changing demographics in the classroom is not studied well. This study shows that ethnicity and length of service are not predictors of teacher efficacy, which was measured with teacher perceptions.

The present study's findings regarding perceptions of teachers toward Teacher Efficacy do, however, support those of Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2001) and Pohan and Aquilar (2001). Hall, Burley, Villene, & Brockmeier (1992) demonstrated that teacher efficacy is related to the perception of the entire educational process. This is especially true when working with groups of students characterized as having cultural differences. One explanation for positive teacher perceptions of teacher efficacy might be that the majority of special education teachers - because of their student clientele - have a better understanding of working with diverse student populations. Clearly more research is needed that targets these variables so a model can be developed that explains how teacher efficacy influences student performance in special education and culturally diverse environments.

Implications

The variables pertaining to ethnicity and length of service (years of teaching experience) and their apparent lack of influence on the perceptions of elementary special education teachers regarding cultural awareness and beliefs suggest that school officials need to take a look at sociological and psychological factors that could have a positive influence on how students behave in diverse educational settings. An understanding of how these factors influence the perceptions of teachers regarding cultural awareness and beliefs can enhance students' academic performance as well as the social adjustment of students of color, more specifically, African American students in educational settings.

Moreover, there is an apparent need for school districts in America, particularly in Texas, to pay attention to how teachers perceive cultural awareness and beliefs. School officials must find better approaches to assist teachers in dealing with cultural differences in our increasingly diverse school systems. It is suggested that some form of intervention be implemented to better equip teachers to work with students, especially students those of color whose behaviors maybe inadvertently interpret as being disruptive.

Future Research

Based on the findings of this study, the following are suggestions for further research:

1. A study should be conducted to examine the differences and similarities among students across ethnicities regarding cultural awareness and beliefs, using the CABI instrument in different settings.

2. A study needs to be done to develop models to explain the amount of variance in cultural awareness and beliefs that can be explained by academic, social and psychological factors not considered here.

3. A promising avenue for future investigations would be to survey global populations. Such research could provide additional information regarding the influence of length of service and other related factors on the perceptions of teachers toward cultural awareness and beliefs.

4. Finally, it would be beneficial to analyze the effect of culturally responsive classrooms on the academic and social behaviors of students of color in special education classrooms. Studies could be conducted among various grade levels.

In conclusion, in order to recruit and retain prospects, all stakeholders will have to be creative in redesigning special education so that teachers will once again value their jobs. Districts need to seriously address the issues of job description if they are going to retain qualified special education professionals (Gersten et al., 2001). Researchers have begun to focus more on gaining in-depth understandings that teachers should be cognizant concerning cultural awareness of special education learners. Also, the working conditions of special educators that lead to increased job satisfaction and a higher commitment to the field of special education, as opposed to merely trying to ascertain factors associated with longevity. The effects of teacher experience have found a relationship between teachers' effectiveness and their years of experience (Murnane & Phillips, 1981).

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APPENDIX

Webb-Johnson, Carter Survey – Copyright 2005 – Cultural Awareness & Beliefs Inventory

CABI - Teacher Perception Survey

Please give responses to the following survey using your scantron sheet. *Write only the name of your school on this sheet.* After writing the name of your school on this sheet, begin with question # 1 on the scantron sheet. Questions 1 – 11 are basic questions about yourself. Question # 12 starts the actual survey about your perceptions. This survey will assist us in understanding your perceptions of our current challenge in meeting the needs of "all" learners in your ISD. This is a voluntary survey and it is your choice to participate. Your responses will assist in constructing staff development that will meet the unique and immediate concerns of the district. It is important that your responses be truthful. **Do not write your name, all information from individuals will be kept confidential.** When completed, return the Survey and your scantron sheet to the designated person.

Write the name of your school here: _____

Basic information – write on scantron sheet:

1. Gender

    A. Female
    B. Male

2. Type of Degree

    A. Bachelor's
    B. Master's
    C. Doctorate

3. Years of Teaching

    A. 1-11 month
    B. 1-3 years
    C. 4-6 years

    D. 7-9 years

    E. 10 or more years

4. Current Grade Level

    A. Pre-K- 1st grade
    B. 2nd grade
    C. 3rd grade
    D. 4th grade
    E. None of the above

5. Current Grade

    A. 5th grade
    B. 6th grade
    C. 7th grade
    D. 8th grade
    E. None of the above

6. Current Grade

    A. 9th grade
    B. 10th grade
    C. 11th grade
    D. 12th grade
    E. Multiple secondary

7. Certification

    A. Early Childhood
    B. Elementary
    C. English/LA/Reading
    D. Science
    E. None of the above

8. Certification

    A. Social Studies
    B. Mathematics
    C. Special Education
    D. Gifted/Talented
    E. None of the above

9. Certification

    A. Bilingual Education
    B. The Arts
    C. Physical/Health Ed.
    D. Technology
    E. Other – not listed

10. Ethnicity

A. African American
B. Arab American
C. Asian American
D. Bi-racial American
E. None of the above

11. Ethnicity

A. European American
B. Hispanic American
C. Native American
D. Pacific Islander
E. Other – not listed

Answer the questions on the scantron sheet using the following scale:

(A) = Strongly Agree (B) = Agree (C)= Disagree (D) Strongly Disagree

1. I feel supported by my building principal. **A B C D**
2. I feel supported by the administrative staff. **A B C D**
3. I feel supported by my professional colleagues. **A B C D**
4. I believe I have opportunities to grow professionally as I fulfill duties at my ISD. **A B C D**

5. I believe we spend too much time focusing on standardized tests. **A B C D**

6. I believe my contributions are appreciated by my colleagues. **A B C D**
7. I need more support in meeting the needs of my most challenging students. **A B C D**

8. I believe "all" students in my ISD are treated equitably regardless of race, culture, disability, gender or social

   economic status. **A B C D**

9. I believe my ISD families of are supportive of our mission to effectively teach all students. **A B C D**

10. I believe my ISD families of African American students are supportive of our mission to effectively teach all students. **A B C D**

11. I believe the district has strong support for academic excellence from our surrounding community (civic, church, business). **A B C D**

12. I believe some students do not want to learn. **A B C D**
13. I believe teachers should be held accountable for effectively teaching students who live in adverse circumstances. **A B C D**

25. I believe there are factors beyond the control of teachers

    that cause student failure. **A B C D**

26. I believe the in-service training this past year assisted me in improving my teaching strategies. **A B C D**

27. I believe I am culturally responsive in my teaching behaviors. **A B C D**

28. I believe cooperative learning is an integral part of my ISD teaching and learning philosophy. **A B C D**

29. I develop my lessons based on Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS). **A B C D**

30. I believe African American students consider performing well in school as "acting White." **A B C D**

31. I believe African American students have more behavior problems than other students. **A B C D**

32. I believe African American students are not as eager to excel in school as White students. **A B C D**

33. I believe teachers engage in bias behavior in the classroom. **A B C D**

34. I believe students who live in poverty are more difficult to teach. **A B C D**

35. I believe African American students do not bring as many strengths to the classroom as their White peers. **A B C D**

36. I believe students that are referred to special education usually qualify for special education services in our school. **A B C D**

37. I believe it is important to identify with the racial groups of the students I serve. **A B C D**

38. I believe I would prefer to work with students and parents whose cultures are similar to mine. **A B C D**

39. I believe I am comfortable with people who exhibit values or beliefs different from my own. **A B C D**

40. I believe cultural views of a diverse community should be included in the school's yearly program planning. **A B C D**

41. I believe it is necessary to include on-going family input in program planning. **A B C D**

42. I believe I have experienced difficulty in getting families from African American communities involved in the education of

their students. **A B C D**

43. I believe when correcting a child's spoken language, one should model appropriate classroom language without further explanation. **A B C D**

44. I believe there are times when the use of "non-standard" English should be accepted in school. **A B C D**

45. I believe in asking families of diverse cultures how they wish to be identified (e.g., African American, Bi-racial, Mexican). **A B C D**

46. I believe that in a society with as many racial groups as the United States, I would accept the use of ethnic jokes or phrases

by students. **A B C D**

47. I believe there are times when "racial statements" should be ignored. **A B C D**

48. I believe a child should be referred "for testing" if learning difficulties appear to be due to cultural differences. **A B C D**

49. I believe the teaching of ethnic customs and traditions is not the responsibility of public school personnel. **A B C D**

50. I believe Individualized Education Program meetings or planning should be scheduled for the convenience of the family. **A B C D**

51. I believe frequently used material within my class represents at least three different ethnic groups. **A B C D**

52. I believe students from certain ethnic groups appear lazy when it comes to academic engagement. **A B C D**

53. I believe in-service training focuses too much on "multicultural" issues. **A B C D**

54. I believe I address inappropriate classroom behavior even when it could be easily be ignored. **A B C D**

55. I believe I am able to effectively manage students from all racial groups. **A B C D**

56. I believe I have a clear understanding of the issues surrounding classroom management. **A B C**

57. I believe I have a clear understanding of the issues surrounding discipline. **A B C D**

Please answer the following questions with a written response
on the back of your scantron sheet.

Question A.   What is your greatest behavioral management concern as you reflect on your professional responsibilities and the learners you serve?

Question B.   What racial, ethnic, and/or socio-economic concerns do you have as it relates to your role as a teacher?

Question C.   What leadership concerns do you have as it relates to your ISD?

VITA

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