Perceptual Differences in Quality Standards Among Teachers and Related Service Personnel Who Work with Students with Emotional/Behavioral Disorders

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Abstract

Current legislation requires school personnel to identify indicators of quality instruction for all students—including students with emotional and behavioral disorders (E/BD). While competency standards provide a measure of highly qualified teachers, questions remain whether or not there are inherent differences in what is expected by teachers and related service personnel within the classroom. Given present emphasis on inclusive education and, in light of a succession of reform initiatives it is time to reexamine perceived differences in level of relative importance attached to knowledge and skills statements based on standards established by the Council for Exceptional Children between teachers and related service personnel.

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Among the most potentially significant aspects of recent federal legislation was the introduction of the concept of highly qualities teachers. While the importance attached to highly qualified teacher in Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA, 2004) and No Child Left Behind (NCLB, 2001) is noteworthy, emphasis on quality teacher preparation is nothing new. For the past six decades, researchers have examined critically various facets of teacher preparation in an attempt to find ways to improve classroom instruction (e.g., Bullock & Whelan, 1971; Bullock, Ellis, & Wilson, 1994; Cullinan, Epstein, & Schultz, 1986; Mackie, Kvaraceus, & Williams, 1957; Meisgeier, 1965; Scheuer, 1971; Schwartz, 1967). In fact, current interest in what defines a quality classroom teacher can be

traced back to the turn of the century (Winzer & Mazurkek, 2002). Another milestone was a memo authored by Balow, (personal communication, 1971) and distributed by the United States Department of Education. That memo placed center stage the concept of competency-based special education teacher preparation and had a transformational effect on programs across the country (Shores, Cegelka, & Nelson, 1973). More recently, both the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE, 2005) and the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC, 2003) have spelled out the characteristics of a highly qualified teacher. Along with federal legislation, these standards reflect the movement of students with disabilities from more to less restrictive classroom settings and the importance attached to the general curriculum.

The roots of competency-based instruction can be traced to the frontier days when young women who with only a high school diploma were charged with the responsibility of teaching all students at all grade levels (e.g., Whelan & Kauffman, 1999). However, the notion of highly qualified teacher did not emerge as an integral part of American society until the industrial revolution (Kauffman, 2005; Landrum & Tankersley, 2002; Martin, 1957; National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, 1996; New York Institute for Special Education, 2002). Initially, the focus was on general education; later, it was enlarged to encompass special education as well.

A succession of studies focusing on students with emotional/behavioral disorders (E/BD) emerged in the late 1920s. (e.g., Martens & Reynolds, 1932; Wickman, 1928) contributed to the establishment of professional teacher standards. These early efforts to better understand quality classroom instruction led ultimately to emphasis on teacher competency (Connor, 1976; Shores et al., 1973). The confluence of various social and political pressures, along with dramatic demographic changes served to alter the composition and subsequently the needs of students with disabilities—including students with E/BD. As the same time, researchers and others were advocating for sweeping changes in teacher preparation (e.g., Bullock et al., 1994; Bullock & Whelan, 1971; Hewett, 1966; Mackie et al., 1957; Rabinow, 1960; Scheuer, 1971; Schwartz, 1967; Zabel, 1988). In addition, national organizations, including NCATE and the CEC, began to develop a series of knowledge and skills (K/S) statements expected by first year teachers that have continued to the present (e.g., Reynolds, 1966). Institutions of higher education (IHEs) began to draw upon those statements to bolster the quality of teacher-training programs through competency-based instruction (Gable, Hendrickson, Young, & Shokoohi-Yehta, 1992; Polsgrove, 2003).

Recently, the U.S. Congress authorized several pieces of legislation, a major goal of which was to boost the quality of teacher preparation. Two of the most far-reaching legislative acts were NCLB (2001) and IDEA (2004). NCLB (2001) introduced highly qualified teacher promoting a paradigm shift that would erase the legacy of an inadequate teaching force. The net result was that policy makers, teacher educators, and school personnel were charged with the daunting challenge of reaffirming quality indicators of effective teachers within educational programs for students with E/BD (Neel, Cessna, Borock, & Bechard, 2003).

One of the more formidable challenges regarding identification of what precisely constitutes a highly qualified teacher relates to longstanding desperate theoretical assumptions and resulting expectations for teachers and related service personnel. Wickman (1928) was among the first to investigate perceptual differences between those who taught students with maladaptive behaviors (currently considered to be students with E/BD) and clinicians who served students outside of the classroom. Wickman suggested that the field look critically at teacher preparation and clinical casework experiences of support personnel to resolve contrasting perspectives of teachers and clinicians.

Unfortunately, efforts to promote collaboration and coordination among teachers and related service personnel remained dormant until some decades later (e.g., Braun & Lasher, 1973; Friend, 2000).

At the close of World War II, the burgeoning number of individuals identified as manifesting some kind of disability (e.g., Bullock & Menendez, 1999; Menninger Institute, 2005) prompted a surge of interest in the field of special education (e.g., Armstrong, 2003; Reynolds & Birch, 1977). The upswing in the population of children and adolescents with disabilities changed the trajectory of special education, resulting in an increased tolerance of individual differences (Armstrong, 2002). In sum, knowledge that emerged from decades of research, along with a heightened sense of social consciousness and increased federal support (e.g., Bullock, 2004; Reynolds & Birch, 1977; Wilson, Flooded, & Ferine-Mundy, 2001), had a profound impact on the field of special education.

Historically, within our "two-box" system of public education—one for general education students and the other for special education students, special educators enjoyed a tremendous amount of autonomy---especially in classrooms for students with more severe behavior problems (Morse, Cutler, & Fink, 1964). Separated from their regular education counterparts, teachers of students with E/BD received limited administrative or other support (Balow, 1966). As Morse et al. (1964) documented, many special education programs for students with E/BD reflected a multidisciplinary approach to education and treatment. Within these settings, some clinical support personal were of the opinion that teachers should share some of the responsibility for dealing with student's personality problems, while others felt that involvement in this area would cause more harm than good (Thomas, 1967). However, Project Re-Ed, developed by Nicholas Hobbs in the early 1960s (Braun & Lasher, 1973; Hobbs, 1983) triggered renewed efforts to repair the philosophical rift between special education teachers and clinicians. Subsequent legislation (1965; 1975) helped to lower longstanding barriers to greater professional collaboration and, at the same time, to address various aspects of teacher preparation (e.g., PL 89-36 [National Technical Institute of the Deaf Act of 1965]; PL 89-329 [Higher Education Act of 1965]; PL 94-142 [Education of All Handicapped Children Act of 1975]; PL 102-119 [Individuals with Disabilities Education Act Amendments of 1991]; PL 105-17 [Individuals with Disabilities Education Act Amendments of 1997]; PL 108-446 [Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004].

Across time, neither major reform efforts nor national or state-level initiatives on behalf of students with E/BD did much to resolve perceptual differences among teachers and related service personnel. For example, Knitzer, Steinberg, and Fleisch (1990) reaffirmed the strained relationship between teachers and mental health professionals previously reported by Cullinan, et al. (1986). Knitzer and her colleague's (1990) condemned the poor educational services for students with E/BD and asserted that there was a desperate need for highly qualified professionals who possessed the knowledge and skills to address their unique needs.

With the recent passage of NCLB (2001), we witnessed a renewed push for consistent standards that define effective classroom practices (Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium [INTASC], 2001). In an effort to develop objective measures of effective teaching, INTASC merged into a single document the two lists of teacher knowledge/skill standards for special education and general education. The special education core values were adopted from the CEC, while the general education standards were adopted from the National Board of Professional Teaching Standards (CEC, 2003). The CEC restructured its standards for first-year, classroom teachers to more closely align with INTASC. In fact, the most current version of the CEC standards was developed around the same ten standards as INTASC. Both sets of standards delineate the minimum knowledge, skills, and dispositions required of all special educators (CEC, 2003; Peck, Keenan, Cheney, & Neel, 2004).

While competency standards provide a standard against which to measure highly qualified teachers, questions remain as to whether or not there are inherent differences in what is expected by teachers and related service personnel within the classroom. In light of longstanding philosophical differences among teachers and support personnel and the increased emphasis on inclusive education for students with disabilities—including students with E/BD, the purpose of the present study was to determine if differences in level of importance found within K/S perceived by teachers and related service personnel remain.

METHOD

As part of a larger, nation-wide study by Manning, Bullock, and Gable (in press), a comparison of the perceptions of teacher quality among educators within the field of E/BD was conducted. Fifty-nine carefully selected CEC K/S statements, arranged under the headings of six standards, were presented to teachers and related service personnel who work with students with E/BD. Using an on-line survey, educators were asked to rate what they perceived to be the top five K/S statements under the standards of instruction, learning environment and social interaction, language, instructional planning, assessment, and collaboration. The ranked K/S statements reported by teachers and the K/S statements reported by related service personnel were then compared.

Sample Selection

The population sample (N = 2,000) was randomly selected from 4,563 members of the Council for Children with Behavioral Disorders (CCBD). Potential respondents included educators from a variety of settings (e.g., teachers, educational support staff, and pre-service educators). The sample selection was conducted in accordance to research methods and included a target population that addressed the focus on the research, an unbiased selection process, and fidelity to the research (e.g., Hinkle, Wiersma, & Jurs, 2003; Rossi, Freeman, & Lipsey, 1999). At the conclusion of the selection process, a list of potential respondents was evaluated to ensure that each state was represented. An equal number of 500 invitations were allocated across the four regions outlined by the 2000 United States Census bureau. An invitation to participate in the study was mailed to potential respondents. Two invitations were returned reducing the total invitation distribution to 1,998.

Procedures

The researchers mailed the invitations using the United States postal service soliciting individuals to complete an on-line survey. Within the invitation, potential respondents were given a four-digit code required to gain access to the survey. The survey tool was placed on-line using Coldfusion software and open to respondents for six weeks. At the close of the survey, the data were analyzed using a spreadsheet program and statistical software. Level of disagreement (e.g., Case, 1990; Chevalier 2004, 2006) was used to determine perceptual differences among respondents regarding the K/S statements.

Data Analysis

Respondents included 199 educators from across the United States who were members of the CCBD and provided either direct or indirect services to students identified with E/BD. The representative sampling included all regions of the United within the 10% response rate. The response rate is demonstrative of previous studies that used on-line methods (e.g., Granello & Wheaton, 2004; Timmerman, 2002). As Sax, Gilmartin, and Bryant (2003) pointed out, as new evaluation methods, including on-line surveys necessitates that both researchers and consumers of that researcher recognize that response rates likely will fluctuate. Part I of the survey focused on demographic information while Part II of the survey evaluated the importance of individual K/S statements using a rank order scale.

Part I - Demographics

After evaluating the role of the educator, responses were divided into two groups:

(a) teachers

(b) related service personnel.

Teachers were defined as individuals who worked directly with students with E/BD in a classroom environment (i.e., self-contained, resource, and general education settings). Related service personnel were those who held positions that indirectly impacted students with E/BD (i.e., support staff, administrative staff, and pre-service educators) (see Table 1). Respondents identified personal characteristics including educational setting, age of the students served, years of teaching, and academic preparation of respondents.

Table 1

Educational Role of Survey Respondents (N = 199)

Role	n	%
Teachers	128	64
Self- Contained	65	50
Resource	43	34
General Education/Inclusion	20	16
Related Service Personnel	71	36
Support Staff	28	39
Administrative Staff	27	38
Pre-service Educator	16	23

Employment Environment

Over 80% of respondents within teacher groups indicated they worked in public school environments; whereas, 56% of related service personnel respondents indicated they worked within public school settings (see Table 2). Other settings reported by respondents included: alternative or private settings, residential treatment or psychiatric hospitals, or institution of higher education.

Table 2

Respondents by Educational Environment

Educational Environment	Educator Role of Respondents			
	Teachers		Related Service Personnel	
(N = 199)	(N = 128)		(N = 71)	
	n	%	n	%
Public School	103	80	40	56
Alternative/Private	19	15	10	14
Residential Treatment/ Psychiatric Hospital	6	5	5	7
Institution of Higher Ed	0	0	16	23

Age Range

Survey responses are closely aligned to the literature in the field regarding age ranges of students with E/BD. Literature in the field has demonstrated that the population of students with E/BD increases between the ages of 6-11 and peaks between the ages of 12-15 (e.g., Van Acker, 1995; Walker, Ramsey, & Gresham, 2004). Similar increases in teacher population were noted within the respondents as it related to student age groups. Fifty-nine percent of teachers reported they worked with students with E/BD, ages 12-15, and 37% reportedly teach students with E/BD, ages 6-11. However, related service personnel respondents did not vary greatly across the ages groups of the students; 23% noted they worked with students in ages ranging between 6-11, 24% worked with students ages from 12-15, and 38% worked with students between the ages of 3-21 (see Table 3).

Table 3

Respondents by Age Range of Students to Whom Educational Services Were Provided

Age Range of Students	Educator Roles by Age Range of Students			
(N = 199)	Teachers (N = 128)		Related Service Personnel (N = 71)	
	n	%	n	%
Ages 3-5	2	2	1	> 1
Ages 6-11	47	37	16	23
Ages 12-17	75	59	17	24
Ages 18-21	1	> 1	0	0
Ages 3-21	3	2	27	38

Academic Preparation

In regard to academic preparation, legislation (IDEA, 2004; NCLB, 2001) mandated that the minimum expectation under highly qualified teacher have at least a Bachelor's degree. About one third of the teachers responding to the survey (n = 39; 30%) indicated that their highest level of academic preparation was a Bachelor's degree. More important and somewhat surprising, the majority of respondents whose primary role was a teacher indicated they had a Master's Degree (n = 76; 59%) and an additional 6% (n = 8) had obtained a specialist certificate. Four percent (n = 5) of the teachers had completed a doctoral degree.

As expected, most of the related service personnel advanced degrees. Forty-three (61%) had completed a Master's degree. six (8%) of the related service personnel had a specialist degree and twenty (28%) had completed a doctoral degree (see Table 4).

Table 4

Respondents by Academic Preparation

Academic Preparation (N = 199)	Educator Role by Academic Preparation			
	Teachers (N = 128)		Related Service Personnel (N = 71)	
	n	%	n	%
Bachelor's Degree	39	30	2	3
Master's Degree	76	60	43	61
Educational Specialist Degree	8	6	6	8
Doctoral Degree	5	4	20	28

Part II – Knowledge Skills

Part II of the survey listed 59 K/S statements representing six CEC standards (i.e., instructional strategies, learning environments and social interactions, language, instructional planning, assessment, and collaboration). Respondents were instructed to select and rank the top five K/S statements listed under each standard. A corresponding list of all K/S statements within each standard was compiled using a weighted ranked order scale. Comparisons were made between the priority ranking identified by teachers and the priority ranking identified by related service personnel. Consensus between priority rankings was determined using level of disagreement discussed by Case (1990) and Chevalier (2004, 2006). Level of disagreement was conducted by dividing the total differences between same-element rankings by the maximum difference that could have been generated by the ranked lists. The level of agreement was formulated by evaluating the difference between the level of disagreement and possible total of 100% (see Table 5).

Table 5

Perceptual Differences Among Teachers and Related Service Personnel

Rank Order of Knowledge and Skills	Educational Settings		Diff.	Total
	Teachers n = 128	Related Service n = 71		N = 199
Instructional Strategies				
Teach students to use self-assessment, problem solving, and other cognitive strategies to meet their needs.	1	1	0	
Select, adapt, and use instructional strategies and materials according to individual student characteristics.	2	2	0	
Use strategies to facilitate maintenance and generalization of skills across learning environments.	6	6	0	
Use strategies that promote successful student transitions.	5	5	0	
Use of student responses to guide instructional decisions and provide feedback.	7	7	0	
Teach learning strategies and study skills to acquire academic content.	4	4	0	
Use strategies for integrating student initiated learning experiences into ongoing instruction.	8	9	1	
Use a variety of techniques to control targeted behavior and maintain student's attention.	3	3	0	
Use appropriate technology for students with disabilities.	9	8	1	
Disagreement (2/ max 40)				5%
Agreement (100%-5%)				95%

Learning Environments and Social Interactions				
Create a safe, equitable, positive and supportive learning environment in which diversity is valued.	1	1	0	
Identify realistic expectations for personal and social behavior in various settings.	2	2	0	
Design learning environments that encourage active participation in individual and group activities.	4	3	1	
Modify the learning environment to manage behaviors.	6	7	1	
Use performance data to make modifications in the learning environment.	7	5	2	
Teach self-advocacy and create an environment that encourages self-advocacy and increased independence.	5	5	0	
Use effective and varied behavior management strategies.	3	4	1	
Design and manage daily schedules and routines.	8	8	0	
Structure, direct, and support the activities of Para educators, volunteers, and tutors.	9	10	1	
Use and maintain assistive technologies.	10	12	2	
Structure the physical environment to provide optimal student learning.	10	9	1	
Plan instruction for individuals with disabilities in a variety of placement settings.	12	11	1	
Disagreement (10/92 max)				11%
Agreement (100%-11%)				89%

Language				
Use strategies to support and enhance communication skills of individuals with disabilities.	4	2	2	
Use communication strategies and resources to facilitate understanding of subject matter for students whose primary language is not the dominant language.	9	7	2	
Enhance student vocabulary development.	6	6	0	
Teach strategies for spelling accuracy and generalization.	10	11	1	
Teach methods and strategies for producing legible documents.	8	8	0	
Teach students to monitor for errors in oral and written communication.	7	9	2	
Plan instruction on the use of alternative and augmentative communication systems.	11	10	1	
Identify and teach essential concepts, vocabulary, and content across the general curriculum.	1	1	0	
Use reading methods appropriate for individuals with disabilities	5	4	1	
Implement systematic instruction in teaching reading comprehension and monitoring strategies.	2	3	1	
Teach students strategies for organizing and composing written products.	3	5	2	
Disagreement (12 / 60 max.)				20%
Agreement (100% - 20%)				80%

Instructional Planning

Identify and prioritize areas of the general curriculum and accommodations for individuals with disabilities.	2	7	5	
Develop and implement comprehensive, longitudinal individualized programs in collaboration with team members.	9	4	5	
Involve the individual and family in setting instructional goals and monitoring progress.	4	3	1	
Use functional assessments to develop intervention plans.	5	3	2	
Use task analysis.	12	10	2	
Sequence, implement, and evaluate individualized learning objectives.	8	9	1	
Integrate affective, social, and life skills with academic curricula.	3	2	1	
Develop and select instructional content, resources, and strategies that respond to cultural, linguistic, and gender differences.	11	11	0	
Prepare and organize materials to implement daily lesson plans.	6	11	5	
Plan instruction for independent functional life skills relevant to the community, personal living, sexuality, and employment.	10	8	2	
Plan and implement age and ability appropriate instruction for individuals with disabilities.	7	6	1	
Integrate academic instruction, effective education, and behavior management for individuals and groups with disabilities.	1	1	0	
Interpret sensory, mobility, reflex, and perceptual information to create or adapt appropriate learning plans.	13	13	0	
Disagreement (24 / 84 max.)				29%
Agreement (100%-29%)				71%

Assessment				
Gather relevant background information.	2	4	2	
Administer nonbiased formal and informal assessments.	4	3	1	
Use technology to conduct assessments as appropriate.	6	7	1	
Develop or modify individualized assessment strategies.	5	6	1	
Interpret and use assessment information from formal and informal assessments in making students eligibility, program, and placement decisions including those from culturally and/or linguistically, diverse backgrounds.	3	1	2	
Report assessment results to all stakeholders using effective communication skills.	7	5	2	
Evaluate instruction and monitor progress of individuals with disabilities.	1	2	1	
Disagreement (10/24 max.)				42%
Agreement (100%-42%)				58%

Collaboration				
Foster respectful and beneficial relationships among families and professionals.	1	1	0	
Assist individuals with disabilities and their families in becoming active participants and advocates in the educational team.	5	2	3	
Plan and conduct collaborative conferences with individuals with disabilities and their families and implement appropriate programs and assessment.	4	3	1	
Model techniques and coach others in the use of instructional methods and accommodations.	3	5	2	
Communicate with school personnel about the characteristics and needs of students with disabilities.	2	4	2	
Observe, evaluate, and provide feedback to Para educators.	6	8	2	
Collaborate with team members to plan transition to adulthood that encourages full community participation.	8	7	1	
Teach parents to use appropriate behavior management and counseling techniques.	7	6	1	
Disagreement (12/32 max.):				38%
Agreement (100%-38%)				63%

Results

There were three categories where notable differences resulted in a low level of agreement (n> 80%):

(a) instructional planning (71%)

(b) assessment (58%)

(c) collaboration (63%).

Within these categories, disagreement between what teachers perceived to be important and what related service personnel believed teachers should know was apparent. Within the standard of instructional planning, there were six K/S statements where a difference between teachers and related service personnel was greater than one:

(a) identifying and prioritizing areas of the general curriculum

(b) developing and implementing long-term plans

(c) preparing and organizing instructional materials

(d) using functional assessment plans to manage behavior

(e) using task analysis

(f) making plans for independent living, sexuality, and employment.

Within the standard of assessment, a level of disagreement greater than one was found in three K/S statements:

(a) gathering relevant background data

(b) interpreting and using assessment information

(c) reporting assessment results to all stakeholders.

Lastly, within the standard of collaboration, there were four K/S statements where disagreement was apparent:

(a) assisting individuals and families to become active partners

(b) coaching and modeling the use of instructional methods

(c) communicating with personnel about student characteristics

(d) observing, evaluating and providing feedback to paraprofessionals.

Discussion and Implications

As early as 1928, Wickman voiced concern over perceptual differences in professional roles and responsibilities of classroom teachers and clinician personnel. Although the level of professional collaboration has changed across time (e.g., Balow, 1966; Braun & Lasher, 1973; Friend, 2000; Morse et al., 1964, Thomas, 1967), Skrtic and Sailor (1996) noted that one of the biggest obstacles to a coordinated effort to better serve students with E/BD still lies within varying perspectives among professionals. The present study addressed perspectives among teachers and related service personnel by examining differences in the level of importance of K/S for teachers and others in the field of E/BD. Weighted scores from across all K/S statements within six CEC-related standards were rank ordered. Comparisons were made between the rank order identified by teachers and the rank order identified by related service personnel. Polarity between the varying rank orders of K/S statements by each group was determined using level of disagreement (e.g., Case, 1990; Chevalier, 2004, 2006). Level of disagreement was conducted by dividing the total differences between same-element rankings by the maximum difference that could have been generated. Level of agreement was formulated by evaluating the difference between the level of disagreement and possible total of 100%.
Within this analysis, there were 17 K/S statements across all the six CEC-related standards with notable differences among rankings greater than one:

(a) four in the standard on Language

(b) six in the standard on Instructional Planning

(c) three in the standard on Assessment

(d) four in the standard on Collaboration

The present study revealed variances between the K/S statements teachers perceived to be important and K/S statements that related service personnel felt should be important to teachers. The variances noted tended to lie within varying perceptual differences between teachers and related service personnel. Varying perspectives and perceptual variances similar to those presented in this study create dissidence among professionals (e.g., Skrtic & Sailor, 1996).

According to Skrtic and Sailor, the subjectivity by which educators and practitioners make their decisions is very difficult to overcome. They asserted that specialized knowledge contributes to K/S sets that are directly related to the needs of the students they serve and consequently can be difficult to set aside. It seems logical to assume that these perceptual differences play a significant role in determining what constitutes a highly qualified teacher.

Nougart, Scruggs, and Mastropieri (2005) stressed that government entities must do everything possible to ensure quality special education teacher education. Unfortunately, as past-to-present research attests, there is little unanimity among professionals representing different disciplines regarding teacher quality. Indeed, issues surrounding teacher quality continue to be widely and sometimes heatedly debated (cf. American Federation of Teachers and the National Education Agency, 2005; Connor, 1976; Kauffman, 1999; National Education Association, 2005; Nelson, 2000). Adding to the accumulated literature, results of the present study highlight which K/S statements teachers perceived as most important and which K/S statements related service personnel believed teachers should know within the educational environments.

By evaluating which K/S statements teachers feel are important and comparing them to the perceptions of related service personnel, it become possible to identify gaps between professionals that then can be addressed.

By examining critically perceptual differences between special educators and related service personnel, it is possible to identify specific areas of disagreement that are:

(a) most significant

(b) most likely to impinge upon services to students and, in turn, facilitate more effective and efficient education and treatment of students with E/BD.

As a number of experts have long asserted (e.g., Bullock & Whelan, 1977; Knitzer et al.1990; Landrum & Tankersley, 2002; Nelson, 2000; Polsgrove, 2003), the magnitude of the learning and behavior problems exhibited by students with E/BD requires the preparation of special educators capable of dealing successfully with the tremendous academic and behavioral challenges posed by this diverse population of children and youth.

Recommendations

Given the rapidity with which changes occur in general and special education, there is a need to further examine various issues surrounding competency-based instruction and teacher quality in the field of E/BD. With the nationwide disillusionment of category-specific teacher preparation and the placement of the majority of students disabilities in less restrictive educational settings, additional studies should be conducted to further reveal areas of agreement and disagreement among various professional serving children/adolescents with E/BD. With the elimination of traditional two-box system of public education, future investigations should include general educators, special educators, support personnel school administrators, and others who occupy decision-making positions. The knowledge and skill statements delineated by the CEC appear to be a useful standard by which to conduct future investigations. Finally, knowledge gained from these studies may help to pave the way for a nation-wide, streamlined compilation of standards and K/S that reflect evidence-based practices and contribute to enhancing the quality of preservice preparation of professionals across disciplines that serve students with E/BD.

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To Top