An Agenda for Research on Inclusive Teacher Education

The Role of a Dynamic Guiding Model

Seminar on Teacher Education for the Changing Demographics of Schooling:

Policy, Practice and Research

University of Edinburgh, December 1, 2015

Linda P. Blanton, Florida International University

Marleen C. Pugach, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

Changing the Culture:
The Need for a Shared Research Agenda

- A natural next step in the ongoing development and maturity of the international community on inclusive teacher education

- Current research is fragmented and imbalanced

- Reforms for inclusive teacher education often lack a research component: Missed opportunity

- Prospect of having teacher education researchers place their work within a larger framework

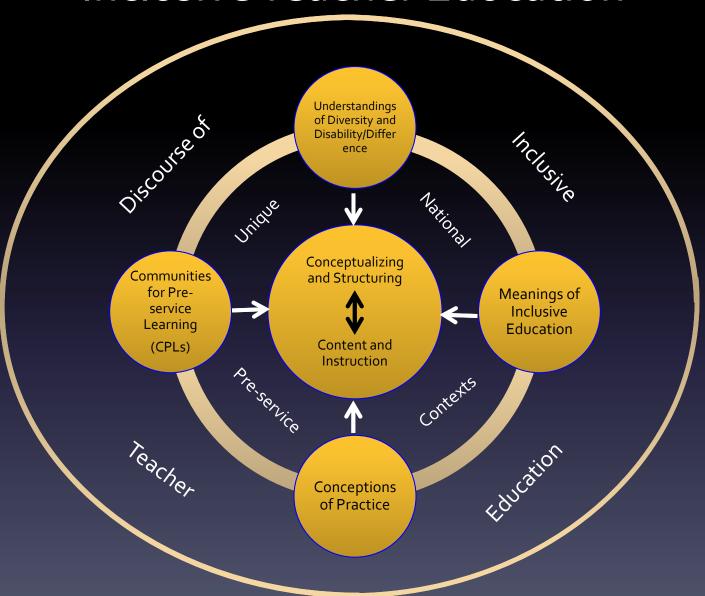- Potential for garnering resources to support the agenda

A Dynamic Model of Research: Guiding Assumptions

- Move beyond the current discursive comfort zone

- Foster greater transparency regarding the complexity of the issues

- Create individual and collective dissonance

- Uncover multiple ways of interrogating how to move the research agenda on inclusive teacher education forward

A Dynamic Model for Research on Inclusive Teacher Education

Unpacking the Model

- The work of preparing teachers for inclusive education is complex and contextualized, and takes place in unique national pre-service contexts

- Inclusive teacher education exists within a particular, but multifaceted, discourse community that needs interrogating

- The study of inclusive teacher education cannot be reduced to any single component without taking into account both the structures of pre-service teacher education and its content

A Time to Shift Conceptions in the Discourse of Inclusive Teacher Education

1. Understandings of diversity and disability/difference

2. Meanings of inclusive education

3. Communities for Pre-service Learning (CPLs)

4. Conceptions of practice

Understandings of Diversity and Disability/Difference

- Changing demographics—from inclusion to diversity

- How is disability positioned/privileged in relationship to all social markers of diversity?

- How do local programs reconcile diversity and "difference"? Is there one "inclusive" term?

- How deeply is the division between diversity and disability/difference embedded? (Or, overcoming the divide as default)

We think research on inclusive teacher education would be strengthened by rich, deliberative, ongoing discussions to develop common understandings about diversity and "difference" across the full complement of teacher education communities—especially at the local program level, but also at national and international levels.

Meanings of Inclusive Education

- While the meaning and intent of inclusive education may be consistent at a theoretical level, both within and across countries, the *operational* meaning of inclusive education may differ.

- Assuming that operational meanings may differ, how these local meanings are conveyed has implications for how research is designed and how research is interpreted across sites.

We think research on inclusive teacher education would be strengthened by greater transparency in articulating local meanings of inclusion and inclusive education.

Communities for Pre-service Learning (CPLs)

- Teacher education faculty typically do not function as, or view themselves as , communities of learning/learners

- Collaboration/co-teaching is typically the way we talk about community for inclusive teacher education

- Collaboration/co-teaching at the pre-service level tend to take place decontextualized from a local community dedicated to the continuous improvement of pre-service learning

We think research on inclusive teacher education would be strengthened by developing <u>robust, ongoing</u> local CPLs that include teacher educators across expertise in diversities, in curriculum, and in instruction, and who work within these communities to develop and carry out both programmatic redesign and research.

Conceptions of Practice

- The **focus** of preparation practices varies across countries, as well as within some countries. Priorities can differ, for example, the role of clinical experience.

- Because how teacher education programs are structured (e.g., length, level, traditional or alternative) across local, national, and international contexts, these different approaches influence how research is conceptualized and conducted.

We think research on inclusive teacher education would be strengthened by providing rich program descriptions in reports of research to foster greater cross-program understanding and interpretation.

How Elevating the Discourse Shapes the Components of Inclusive Teacher Education

The extent to which these four conceptions of discourse are moved forward – or not – influences not only how inclusive teacher education programs are designed, but also how research on inclusive teacher education is conceptualized and conducted.

The Dynamic, Complex Components of Research on Inclusive Teacher Education

Conceptualizing and Structuring
Framing the program
Level of program
Coherence of program components
Performance assessment
Clinical experiences and partnerships

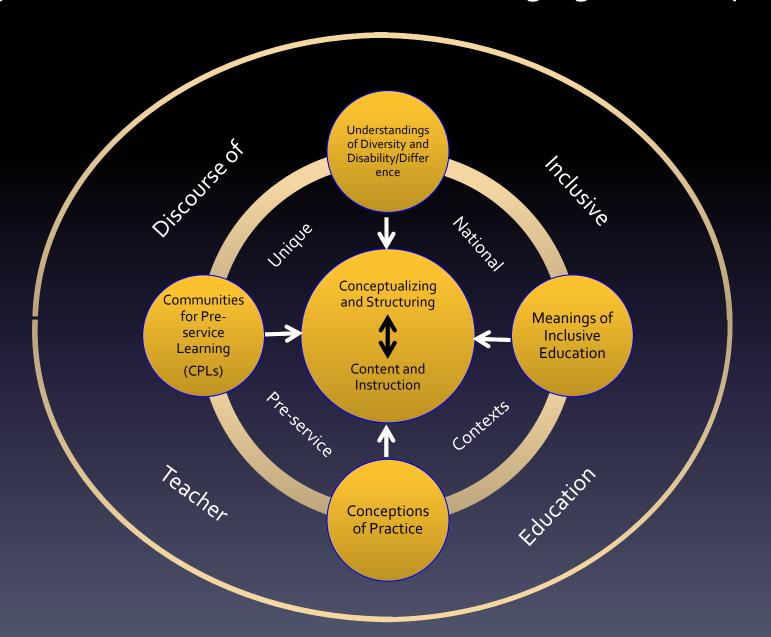| Essential Content and Instruction |
|---|
| **Content/Curriculum:**
Subject matter knowledge
Pedagogical practices
Knowledge of students, setting, collaboration |
| **Instruction** (examples only):
Time devoted to content
Time to practice
Approaches used |

So…given this model, what is it are we asking of the teacher education research community in terms of conceptualizing and situating research on inclusive teacher education?

A Dynamic Model for Research: Privileging the Complexity

Implications of the Model for Changing the Culture of Research on Inclusive Teacher Education

The model can:

- serve as a filter at the stage of designing research

- help in placing one's own research within a larger framework to better interpret: (1) what research is needed (and not needed), (2) the potential contributions of the work, and (3) how to compare research findings across countries

- serve simultaneously as a **_structure_** for research design and **_scaffold_** to reframe and push forward the discourse (and practice) of inclusive teacher education

- help to focus on each unique context; for example, the model exposes how essential it is to describe the program in which targeted instructional approaches are being studied

What Might Research on Inclusive Teacher Education Look Like Using this Model?

- Example 1:   Program structure

- Example 2:   Program content

- Example 3:   Diversity and difference/CPLs

A Thoughtful Minute...

Given the work that is ahead of you right now specifically, what aspect of this model might serve to guide, direct, or shape your future actions?

Contact Information

Please contact us if you have questions or comments:

- Email: blantonl@fiu.edu

- Email: mpugach@uwm.edu