RETHINKING THE ROLE OF SPECIAL EDUCATION WITHIN TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAMS

B. Pohl, J. Kelly

University of Houston-Downtown (UNITED STATES)

Abstract

Instead of occupying a marginal space within teacher preparation programs, special education courses should occupy a meaningful and formative space for students. Rethinking the role of special education within teacher education programs enables students to cultivate new values and attitudes that can enrich the student experience in their certification program.

There is a problem with many teacher preparation programs. The special education component, which could serve a powerful teaching and learning purpose, instead seems to be overlooked and certainly under-imagined. In teacher education programs, special education often takes two forms, either as required courses for certification in special education or, in most cases, as electives or a one-course requirement for non-special education teacher certification. In either of these cases, special education seems to occupy a relatively small space within teacher certification programs (Allday, Nielsen-Gatti, & Hudson, 2013). Yet, as we will argue, special education holds rich potential for serving a meaningful purpose to students enrolled in teacher education programs, and it should not be overlooked, given the big role that special education, individualized education plans, accommodations, and modification play in the general education classroom.

Keywords: Special education, teacher preparation.