

### Overview

This paper explores the dialogue between Disability Studies and curriculum theory as a framework for teacher education. Disability Studies is an interdisciplinary field that reconceptualizes disability as a social, political, and cultural construct, and rejects medical models that construct disability as an internal deficiency (Linton, 1994). Because ableism, the preference for a dominant, body type, or mode of learning (Linton, 1998) has long been the foundation for organizing educational systems, teacher education must take this implicit bias to task through critical preparation. Drawing on the work of Maxine Greene, I argue that the dominant model of teacher education curriculum operates along a special-general education binary that reinforces deeply held, historically and socially constructed normative frameworks that determine how teachers understand and define disability, and the ways in which they undertake teaching students labeled with disabilities.

### Research Questions

1. What is the history of the dialogue between DSE and teacher education?
2. In what ways has this dialogue been examined in the literature, both theoretically and through empirical study?
3. What guidance can Greene's work offer for extending a disability studies curricular framework in order to unify the field of teacher education?

### Method

For the literature review, an electronic search of Academic Search Complete, ERIC, Education Source, and PsychInfo was accessed through the author's university, and searched using the following key terms: disability studies AND teacher education OR teacher preparation, and dis/ability. Sources had to be peer-reviewed, and constructed as either analytic essays or empirical studies specifically exploring the relationship between teacher education, and DSE. Pieces that focused solely on pre- or in-service special educators were excluded from this review.

### Maxine Greene on Diversity and Inclusion

“There can only be a conversation drawing in voices kept inaudible over the generations, a dialogue involving more and more living persons.”  
*(Greene, 1993, p. 213)*



### Results

In general, the questions asked in this literature are presented in one of two ways:

- Group 1 asks questions that are grounded *within* a DSE framework as an approach to inquiry. In this sense, DSE guides and informs the study design (Maxwell, 2013).
- Group 2 asks questions *about* a DSE framework. These studies explored DSE theory as an intervention of sorts, and sought to understand its impact on shifting beliefs, conceptions, and practices surrounding disability.

This distinction seems to indicate two distinct agendas for research, one which explores aspects of education using DSE theory, and another that looks at the impact and implementation of DSE theory in practice. The studies were almost evenly split among the two categories.

These studies reflect the early stages of research in a still relatively new field. More than half of the studies asked questions pertaining to the impact of DSE-framed coursework on teacher beliefs or intended practices. While this is arguably a useful exploratory avenue of inquiry, there has been an excess of teacher education research exploring the constructs of attitudes and beliefs of teachers about diverse learners, with few meaningful findings (Cochran-Smith, et. al., 2015). As Cochran-Smith and colleagues (2015) found in their comprehensive review of teacher education research, more work is needed that goes beyond assuming that changes in beliefs yield substantive changes in actions or practice.

### Discussion

Greene's work, most known for her work on aesthetic education and the arts, offers a historical account of the public school movement (1965/1970). Greene offers three points particularly salient to the DSE-teacher education dialogue. First, her critical accounts of how the public school system developed, and the choices made by stakeholders and reflected in literature, poetry, and art serve as a model for questioning the nature of established structures such as ability groupings and labels. Second, and perhaps as a consequence of Puritanical and Enlightenment approaches to education, Greene emphasizes the importance of including voices that have traditionally been kept silent, as is the case with many who identify as disabled (1965/2006; 1986). Finally, Greene's emphasis on the arts, she argues is one way of considering possibilities not immediately obvious in systems that take-for-granted what is normal, who succeeds, and what it means to be human (1986).

Rather than looking at an outcome of transformation, Greene's vision requires that we see the transformation of teacher education as process of becoming. The framework I have proposed here is just such a process that asks pre-services and teacher educators to step outside what is traditionally considered “preparation,” and imagine an approach to learning to teach that is centered on disability, welcoming of different ways of knowing, and open to possibility.

### Selected References

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