

## TEACHING STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES IN MULTI-LINGUAL COMMUNITIES: WHY TEACHER EDUCATION MATTERS

CATHERINE LIPSON

University of California, Berkeley & San Francisco State University,  
United States

### Abstract

Teacher education and professional development programs have struggled to prepare qualified teachers to support learners with disabilities within multilingual communities in the United States (McCardle et al., 2005) and worldwide (Wickenden, 2013). This paper explains the challenges encountered when teaching students with disabilities within diverse language communities, with examples of teaching practices from the United States and South Africa. The recommendations of the Community Based Rehabilitation guidelines (WHO, 2010) encourage teachers to include local languages when implementing instructional curriculum for students with disabilities (Wickenden, 2013). Place-based educational approaches (Semken, 2005) and Community Based Rehabilitation efforts share the following principles: supporting educational equity and human rights in education for all students; providing teacher training to support bilingual/multilingual students; and teacher leadership in developing locally-based educational strategies. Evidence related to teacher training and locally-based leadership is provided with examples from native Yup'ik areas of Alaska, bilingual communities in San Diego, CA, and multilingual communities in South Africa to show how teachers adapt educational practices where students' home language, cultural background, and expectations about disability are not shared by the majority (Ball, 2009; Siekmann et al., 2013; Ochoa et al., 2014). Implications for practice include the benefits of learning from and building upon insights from teachers working within developing countries (Alant, 2007) and the effectiveness of "bilingual interventions for children with communication disorders" (Soto & Yu, 2014).

Keywords: disabilities, teacher education, multilingual communities, local language, rights in education, education policy, instructional practices

### Introduction

As described in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD, 2006), those with disabilities have the right "to health and education and to information and communication." Education policies based on human rights include learning in students' first or native language (L1) "to preserve their own cultures and identities" (Truong, 2012) because any policies that exclude

students can “affect all their other human and people’s rights” (Miti & Monaka, 2009, p. 214). Teacher education and professional development programs have struggled to prepare qualified teachers to support learners with disabilities within multilingual communities in the United States (McCardle et al., 2005) and worldwide (Wickenden, 2013). Teachers who support students with disabilities within multilingual communities have encountered many of the same challenges as those faced by any teacher working within a culturally diverse community.

In her 1995 article on “culturally relevant pedagogy,” Gloria Ladson-Billings described how teachers of low-income African-American students perceived the importance of “preparing the students for confronting inequitable and undemocratic social structures” (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Instead of trying “to ‘fit’ students constructed as ‘other’ by virtue of their race/ethnicity, language, or social class into a hierarchical structure,” the teachers interviewed by Ladson-Billings spoke about “pedagogical practices more consistent with their beliefs and values” that helped them link academic requirements with their students’ community experiences. Jim Cummins (2001, 2016) described a framework for school-based policies in multilingual schools to encourage academic achievement for students in environments that “have experienced social exclusion and discrimination” and to provide “considerable agency to educators” working within culturally and linguistically diverse communities.

Finding ways to connect global human rights policies with appropriate educational practices for students with disabilities has become a component of teacher education programs in the United States, filling a need for “culturally relevant pedagogy” (Courey & LePage, 2013). In the case of special education, research in teaching and learning has infrequently considered how providing curricula in local languages could improve support for children and young people with communication disabilities either in the “global south” or within linguistically diverse areas of countries providing development aid (Wickenden & Kembhavi-Tam, 2014; WHO, 2011).

To ensure full participation in the community, people with disabilities share in the “right to education,” one of the important human rights universals listed in international declarations and agreements signed by U.N. member countries. South African researchers Spreen and Vally (2006) explain how the “right to education” also includes “rights in education,” focusing on educational opportunity as a “necessary condition for citizens to exercise civil and political rights.” The authors describe a “re-conceptualisation of human rights in education” that encompasses both education quality and opportunities to learn. In a world where population diversity and immigration have created many multilingual communities, the language of instruction becomes an important consideration. Education policies that support reading and writing in local languages can help teachers draw upon local knowledge and ensure that students “maintain cultural identity and social equality” (Babaci-Wilhite & Geo-JaJa, 2014).

This paper will link human rights *to* education and *in* education with internationally recognized disability rights guidelines including Community-Based Rehabilitation (CBR), as described by the World Health Organization (2010). British researcher Mary Wickenden has described how people with disabilities throughout the world continue to be denied their human rights “to participate in education and work, community, and political life, to access healthcare, social protection, and jus-

tice” (Wickenden, 2013). To advance educational opportunity as a global human rights priority, educators must find ways to move beyond policy statements and guidelines. Providing appropriate services for students with disabilities in multilingual communities can involve communicating with families who might not speak the “majority or socially dominant language” (Soto & Yu, 2014). Without adequate teacher preparation and professional development to support participation in first language (L1) and second language (L2), students with disabilities may face isolation within their schools and could also lose access to social support within their own language communities.

There has been limited published research on the amounts and type of training and language development exposure that teachers and other support professionals would need to ensure that bilingual or multilingual students with disabilities can participate fully in educational opportunities. Using a human rights perspective, I will examine why teacher education matters and how it affects educational participation for students with disabilities. This paper will use teacher training and leadership initiatives from the United States and South Africa to illustrate the diverse roles of teachers and service providers who design and implement L1 instruction in multilingual contexts.

### **Teaching bilingual or multilingual students with disabilities**

The complex issues involved in supporting students with disabilities who are also English Language Learners include recruiting and employing teachers with specific expertise in both those areas (McCardle et al., 2005). Studies reviewed by Peggy McCardle and her co-authors showed a deficit in teacher preparedness for ELL’s who also qualify as having a disability as defined under the Individuals with Disability Education Act (IDEA, 2004). In addition to developing more effective teaching methods and interventions to support students whose first language is not English, the authors also recommended developing “more fruitful teacher training and professional development programs.” In environments where the language of instruction (LOI) is not the home or first language, both access to education and the effectiveness of instruction may be compromised when “the majority of the people are alienated by their own education systems” (Truong, 2012). Teacher education and professional development becomes more complex in multilingual communities where special education services “are often delivered only in the majority or socially dominant language” (Soto & Yu, 2014).

While all people with disabilities face human rights or civil rights challenges, an article by Wickenden and Kembhavi-Tam (2014) addressed the “hierarchy of exclusion” and described the differential treatment of those with “more challenging difficulties (learning, communication, behavioural and multiple impairments).” McLaughlin (2010) discussed policies that mandate equity in education for students with disabilities in the United States and explained how inequitable treatment arises whenever students lack “full access to those aspects of life available to persons without disabilities.” Disabilities that limit communication are perhaps the most acutely affected by the lack of special education teachers with a background in the local language (L1) and the language of instruction (LOI). Cummins (1984) developed a theory of “common underlying proficiency (CUP)” for second-language learners,

providing the opportunity for developing both L1 and L2. If the language of instruction is not a child's home language, the student may not benefit from the common underlying proficiency that supports overall language development. The possibility of language loss makes full access to education even more unlikely if the loss of L1 leads to "low academic performance and social marginalization" (Soto & Yu, 2014).

A study of language minority students and long-term academic achievement listed the design elements for effective bilingual programs:

*"bicultural community involvement, extensive training and support for school personnel, and the development of substantial bilingual/bicultural community resources to create meaningful and challenging academic curricula through the community's two languages" (Thomas & Collier, 2002).*

While no comparable long-term studies of bilingual/multilingual or ELL students with disabilities exist, there is evidence about effective models and strategies that support special needs students when the majority language is not the home language, as seen in Bernhard et al. (2006) and May (2008). Bernhard, Cummins and co-authors described the extensive teacher training and teacher leadership used for the Early Authors Program (EAP) program, including "on-site coaching and monitoring by literacy coaches or specialists" who in turn supported classroom teachers. The need to invest in community involvement and teacher training was a common theme across studies reviewed by Thomas and Collier (2002), McCardle et al. (2005), and Bernhard et al. (2006). These models and strategies were an important consideration in choosing studies to consider for comparative analysis.

Literature searches using keywords including disabilities, teacher education, multilingual communities, local language, and educational equity returned numerous studies, but few included detailed information about teachers who have implemented curriculum in local languages. As a result, I selected a small number of studies to support my analysis, based on the teachers' perspectives of the challenges they encountered when teaching students within diverse language communities. Each study or book chapter described how teacher preparation and ongoing professional development initiatives contributed to what May (2008) has called a maintenance approach—in addition to maintaining local languages, these programs also tried to strengthen cultural and linguistic identity.

Three primary sources will be considered in this analysis: the Siekmann et al. (2013) study of collaborative development efforts that supported Alaskan native language in the core curriculum; the Ochoa et al. (2014) report on the dual Bilingual/Special Education teacher preparation program at San Diego State University, and Arnetha F. Ball's writings on preparing teachers for diversity at the University of Cape Town (Ball 2006, 2009). One of these studies focuses exclusively on teaching children with disabilities, while the others highlight the importance "of local language in community building" (Ball, 2006, p. 10). The limited research available on bilingual or multilingual children with disabilities indicates that these children benefit from using their L1 skills to facilitate learning in all areas, including the addition of a second language (Wickenden, 2013; Soto & Yu, 2014). These findings are consistent with those of Umansky and Reardon (2014), who described how two-language classrooms provide access to academic content in a familiar language for students. The studies by Siekman et al. (2013) and Ball (2006) exemplify the need for teacher education to support all students who face educational challenges within

multilingual communities. As Ladson-Billings (1995) wrote, these cases describe “exemplary practice in those classrooms and communities that too many of us are ready to dismiss as incapable of producing excellence.” The article by Ochoa et al. (2014) provides an example of teachers who face the additional challenge of providing instruction for students with disabilities from non-dominant language communities.

### **Teacher education and awareness of cultural and linguistic rights in education**

Ball (2009) uses the term *culturally and linguistically complex classrooms* (CLCCs) to unpack the educational implications of children from different groups within a community receiving instruction from teachers who may only have received training to support language development in the dominant language. Using the model of Community Based Rehabilitation (WHO, 2010) can provide an opportunity for teachers to include local languages when implementing instructional curriculum for students with disabilities (Wickenden, 2013). Reaching out to local teachers fluent and literate in at least one local language makes it possible for them to use the CBR model to implement inclusive educational practices in their classrooms, not only for “extra” cultural activities but most importantly for the core academic curriculum. As Cummins (2016) stated, teachers within the United States need to move beyond defining English language learners “by what they lack, namely English proficiency” and gain a greater awareness of how cultural and linguistic factors help students develop skills in both L1 and L2.

In their article, Spreen and Vally (2006) recommended “participatory research with community-based researchers” to bring about policy changes in South Africa. These changes in policy must at some point be implemented in local educational contexts. Teacher education or professional development that includes participatory research can take existing teacher knowledge into account, as well as providing guidance for pre-service teachers to help them consider the needs of “diverse racial, ethnic, and language groups” (Ball, 2006, p. 60). This paper will explore the potential benefits and some possible barriers to providing teacher education and professional development to support community based education and rehabilitation in multilingual contexts.

One obstacle to implementing CBR in multilingual communities is that, throughout public and private education worldwide, students and teachers focus enormous efforts on preparing students for academic tests in L2. For example, in the Bangalore, India context studied by Shenoy (2015), rankings on examinations allow students to progress from primary to secondary education or to higher levels. Within low-income schools in Bangalore where the majority of families speak Kannada, teacher interviews suggested that because national-level school board exams are conducted in English, few teachers are willing to adopt L1 curriculum resources or assessments (Shenoy, 2015). This emphasis on English affects not only the language arts curriculum, but also the math, science, and social science content areas, which are increasingly offered only in L2. Although researchers including May (2008) and Cummins (2009) have presented evidence that teaching in L1 supports academic achievement and transfers proficiency to L2, teacher preparation and professional

development programs have not consistently emphasized this research or provided awareness of cultural and linguistic rights in education.

In the United States, many multilingual communities have been limited to English immersion programs as the only choice for their school-age children. In a study of reclassification patterns among Latino English Learner (EL) students, Umansky and Reardon (2014) compared advances by EL students in English immersion to EL students in two-language classrooms. They showed that although the EL students in English immersion showed more progress in early grades, by the time the two groups reached high school the EL students in two-language classrooms showed more progress. Umansky and Reardon described how the English immersion students “reach a virtual plateau as they enter middle school,” while two-language classrooms provide access to academic content in a familiar language for students who remain in those programs. Building on earlier studies including Cummins’ (2000) framework for multilingual education, Bernhard et al. (2006) found that for over 300 preschool participants, gains in national percentile scores from pre- to post- assessments indicated that children receiving the intervention in L1 were “gaining ground in terms of how they are comparing with other (nonpoor) children nationally.”

In South Africa, 423 public special needs schools enrolled over 100,000 students in 2010 ([www.southafrica.info](http://www.southafrica.info)). Private schools for children with severe disabilities are funded by a variety of sources including foundations and international charities. For example, the Khulani Special School near the town of Hluhluwe in the kwaZulu Natal area has been funded by several non-governmental organizations (NGOs) including the Africa Foundation (Tech for Africa, 2014). A July, 2014 training program at Khulani was funded by private donors, inviting teachers from a group of area schools to learn how Alternative and Augmentative Communication (AAC) can help students with severe communicative disorders. Apart from specialized training initiatives such as the Tech for Africa program, funding for the Khulani Special School reflects a pattern of NGO support to improve social, economic, and environmental conditions in rural areas near wildlife preserves and national parks (Africa Foundation, 2014). However, aside from these arrangements for some children with severe disabilities, most South African students with disabilities are likely to attend the same schools as their typically-developing siblings and neighbors. As Du Plessis (2013) explained in her report on the 2007 Community Survey, “the number of learners with disabilities in non-special schools is not known.” With South Africa’s official policy of inclusive education, many special-needs children are integrated into ordinary schools, but an article by Ngcobo and Muthukrishna (2011) questioned whether children who are mainstreamed get adequate special education services. The authors provided evidence that “teachers and school management were in dire need of professional development and support to implement inclusive education policy.”

### **Comparison of Program Implementation Outcomes**

Examples of teacher education and professional development programs from three different multilingual communities will illustrate how teachers developed and implemented inclusive educational practices in their classrooms. A comparative analysis of diverse teacher education solutions will provide guidance to those plan-

ning teacher education and professional development to support CBR and inclusion of students with disabilities. Place-based educational approaches (Semken, 2005) and CBR programs share some characteristics, since the solutions implemented at each local site reflect the diversity of the students, their communities, and their home languages. The goals of individual teachers can contribute to achieving the teacher education or professional development goals and outcomes that support human rights in education. Each of these examples was chosen on the basis of how it illuminates the following principles:

- Supporting educational equity and human rights in education for all students
- Providing teacher training to support bilingual/multilingual students
- Teachers participating in developing locally-based educational strategies

Each of these principles, in turn, promotes the successful implementation of Community-Based Rehabilitation. The CBR model positions teachers and schools as a community resource to support all “stakeholders to meet the basic needs and enhance the quality of life of people with disabilities and their families” (WHO, 2010).

### **Supporting educational equity for Alaskan natives**

The first example, the *Piciryarmta Elicungcallra* (Teaching our Way of Life through our Language) curriculum in Alaska, focuses on how teachers and university researchers in the Lower Kuskokwim and Lower Yukon School Districts “developed culturally responsive materials that would meet academic standards” (Siekmann et al., 2013). In 2009, the United States Department of Education provided a three-year grant to develop a partnership between researchers from University of Alaska, Fairbanks and teachers from the districts to develop teaching materials for culturally based thematic units (*Upingaurluta*). The participating teachers in the districts (listed as co-authors for the study) gathered “relevant cultural knowledge” from community elders among the 10,000 Alaska natives in the region who speak the ancestral Yup’ik language (Yugtun). Out of a total population of 21,000 central Alaskan Yup’iks in a region the size of Western Virginia, 3,900 students attend local schools in the Lower Kuskokwim district, with 64% of children from bilingual homes. University researchers on the project team included one Yugtun speaker (co-author T.A. John) while the remainder of the team included community members who were non-Yugtun speakers as well as monolingual English speakers.

The central task during the development phase was to incorporate the local view of the natural environment and important cultural practices within a series of lesson plans and materials for classroom use. A set of twelve thematic units was envisioned as an integrated social studies and science curriculum. The project team met weekly via audio conferences because the school districts were spread out across an area with few roads. The normal mode of transportation between towns is via small plane, so teachers also flew to some scheduled face-to-face weekend sessions held at the University of Alaska Fairbanks campus in Bethel.

During the first year, Siekmann et al. (2013) reported that the collaborative team of local teachers and university supporters were “functionally separate from other LKSD curriculum/materials.” This produced positive short-term results for the pro-

ject teachers and university faculty, who became “very successful and productive” when it came to developing *Upingaurluta* curriculum materials in content areas including science and social sciences. Students participating in the resulting lessons engaged in writing activities that supported core literacy and vocabulary development. For instance, a story about a traditional Yu’pik giving ceremony was aligned to focus on strategies and skills derived from state reading/writing standards. However, a longer-term result was that although the district recognized the need for culturally responsive materials, the day-to-day progress of the project team and their concrete deliverables were “not optimally aligned” with overall district goals and standards including No Child Left Behind (NCLB) assessments (Siekmann et al., 2013).

By the end of Year 1, several factors came into play that illustrated the challenges of providing core curriculum using a local language. As in any other school district in the U.S., administrators felt the pressure to perform on the NCLB standardized English language assessments, which place no value on local funds of knowledge or heritage languages. The collaborative team found that changing district curricular goals did not fully integrate the *Upingaurluta* materials as core curriculum (Siekmann et al., 2013). When curricula in a local language are not integrated into core elements of schooling such as assessment, they can more easily be eliminated or relegated to positions of marginality. Another factor was that English was becoming the medium of instruction at earlier grade levels, as the district shifted instructional practices from Yup’ik immersion in K-3 to a Dual Language model in K-6. The project team faced the possibility that “cultural elements could be minimized in favor of NCLB-defined content” (Siekmann et al., 2013).

When the team assessed the results at the conclusion of Year 1, they found “Yup’ik language and culture are not yet fully integrated” into academic content areas” such as science or social science (Siekmann et al., 2013). In addition, even though the culturally based curriculum was funded by a U.S. Dept. of Education grant, the “curriculum has to compete for time and acceptance with state and federal mandates” (Siekmann et al., 2013). The lessons carried forward into Year 2 & 3 caused project personnel to become more involved in the district-organized Yugtun (Yup’ik language) Core Reading Curriculum, used in sites across the district. As new curriculum materials were implemented, the collaborative team worked on refinement of materials based on teacher feedback.

As the project concluded, the *Piciryaramta Elicungcallra* team was able to show that classroom instruction in local languages contributed to increased academic achievement as measurable by standards-based assessments, including students whose home language was a non-dominant L1. Another benefit was an increase in local leadership for language programming through teacher agency, as the project implementation process changed how teachers viewed their positioning in the district. The final report by the collaborative team recommended “rigorous, long-term attention” to sustaining core curriculum including science and social science based in the local culture, while also satisfying national and state academic standards (Siekmann et al., 2013). While this study mentioned the challenges of teaching Special Education students in an environment dominated by the advent of NCLB and testing in English, its central focus on building teachers’ connections to the local language community is what best illustrates the WHO (2010) guidelines for Com-

munity Based Rehabilitation. This inclusive approach encourages teacher participation within the community to provide educational equity, consistent with findings by Umansky and Reardon (2014) about two-language classrooms and increased access to academic content for Latino English Learners in California.

### **Dual Bilingual/Special Education teacher education**

The second example examines the outcomes of a Bilingual/Special Education training program at San Diego State University (SDSU) to show how teacher preparation programs can lead to increased educational equity in multilingual communities. In the state of California, less than 2% of Special Education teachers are bilingual, while the state has over 1.4 million English Language Learner (ELL) students (CBEDS, 2013). The Acquisition of Language Skills and Academic Literacy (ALAS) Teacher Education Project at SDSU was designed to bridge Biliteracy and Special Education teacher preparation programs. As explained by Ochoa et al. (2014) there is an ongoing need for general, bilingual, and special educators to “utilize evidence-based best practices to work with ELL students, students with mild to moderate disabilities and students who are both ELL and identified with a disability.”

The ALAS program guides teacher candidates as they become participants within the bilingual or multilingual communities in southern California. English learners comprise about one-fourth of the entire public school population in California and San Diego County, with over 84% of ELL students speaking Spanish as their primary language (CBEDS, 2013). While research has found “emerging evidence of the benefits of bilingual interventions for children with communication disorders” (Soto & Yu, 2014), there exist few teacher preparation programs that prepare Special Education teacher candidates to serve the bilingual population. This lack of bilingual training becomes significant as families of children with disabilities face language barriers when interacting with professional Special Education service providers. While translators and/or L1 versions of diagnostic assessments are required for evaluating a student’s eligibility for Special Education services, most day-to-day classroom interactions are likely to occur in L2 because most teachers in California have been only trained in the “majority or socially dominant language” (Soto & Yu, 2014).

The ALAS program’s guiding principles are reminiscent of both the WHO (2010) guidelines for Community Based Rehabilitation and place-based education approaches (Semken, 2005) with a focus on teachers as community members. One of the ALAS guiding principles emphasizes educational outcomes by describing how “transformational learning occurs when students’ learning is interactive with the environment, community, and society in meaningful ways” (Ochoa et al., 2014). Teachers trained in sociocultural approaches to education can become “cultural mediators” as they align and integrate locally-based curriculum including science and social science with state-wide practices and national educational priorities. Teachers who become mediators in multilingual communities can help families avoid problems with L1 language loss and lack of access to education, since the loss of L1 can lead to “low academic performance and social marginalization” (Soto & Yu, 2014).

According to the teacher candidates and graduates of the ALAS program, the two disciplines represented by Special Education and Bilingual education often advocate two different educational approaches. Ochoa et al. (2014) describe the “the contrast between constructivist approaches in the Bilingual side of the program and the behaviorist approaches in the Special Education side of the program.” A survey of program graduates provided an opportunity for new teachers to reflect upon their experiences with the ALAS program, and describe how they applied the different educational approaches they encountered during their SDSU coursework. One program graduate observed,

*“The program was very direct in explaining the two different ideologies and I think as a teacher you’re always juggling between the two, because there are situations where a child needs direct instruction. But for the most part, I think in general, you want to approach the constructivist way of the model of teaching. I think it just depends on the child and what their needs are and that’s what you do” (Ochoa et al., 2014).*

Outcomes from the ALAS teacher education program show how education for students with disabilities can transition from being “marginalized and specialized” and become increasingly integrated into mainstream social development, with disabled people’s needs seen as connected to the concerns of all community members, service providers, and policy-makers (Wickenden, 2013). As Ochoa et al. (2014) reported, teachers who had the opportunity to develop expertise in both disciplines became “committed to socially just and equitable education for all students, specifically English Language Learners with special learning needs.”

### **Multilingual strategies for teachers in South Africa**

The concluding section of this discussion will consider the African context for inclusive education in multilingual communities, drawing upon published work from teacher educators at South African universities. Erna Alant, who has established teacher education programs at the University of South Pretoria in South Africa, provides a convincing rationale for special education services in local languages: “Socio-pragmatic rules governing interactions are culture-specific” (Alant, 2007). The Centre for Augmentative and Alternative Communication (CAAC) ([www.caac.up.ac.za](http://www.caac.up.ac.za)), the only center of its kind in Africa, conducts five different degree programs, new teacher preparation, and ongoing teacher education. For instance, CAAC provides ongoing outreach services to “teachers in the GaRankuwa region, an underdeveloped and under-resourced region in the North West Province of South Africa” (Alant, 2007).

Alant (2007) joins other advocates for local languages and cultures in recommending a community-based approach to disability services and adaptive education, saying, “intervention remains artificial and superficial when transposing Western notions of what comprises appropriate and successful interactions onto clients from an African cultural background.” The importance of local cultures and communities can also be found in Ball (2006), when commenting on course goals for teacher preparation at the University of Capetown in West Cape Province, SA: “literacies can be used in strategic ways to more effectively teach their content area materials to all students, including those from culturally and linguistically diverse back-

grounds” (p. 75). In a series of case studies, Ball (2006) examined how teacher candidates prepared themselves to work in culturally and linguistically diverse communities, and also followed some teacher education graduates during their first years as classroom teachers.

Graduates from the University of Capetown’s teacher education program provided insights into daily classroom challenges within multilingual communities. A teacher named Nomha said “she felt that students should be allowed to write in their mother tongue, but found that schools do not encourage this” (Ball, 2006, p. 144). Another teacher, Mosola, reflected the need for ongoing training, saying “teacher training is not a once-and-for-all thing. It should be a continuous process” (Ball, 2006, p. 146). These reports illustrate the difficulty of implementing educational recommendations from university teacher preparation programs after graduates have entered the teaching profession. As Ngcobo and Muthukrishna (2011) found, once teachers have begun working within a particular educational setting, they would benefit from ongoing training in “curriculum and assessment practices that would be responsive to the diversity in their classrooms.” Within these diverse environments, teachers often need to “make the appropriate pedagogical adjustments” while working outside their own “personal cultural and linguistic experience (Ball, 2009).

The “White Paper 6” on Special Needs Education specifies that the South African education system must “respond to the full range of barriers to learning and participation experienced by learners, including those that may arise from HIV/AIDS, language, disability, race, class, gender and socioeconomic status differences” (Dept of Educ., 2001). However, as Wickenden (2013) and Shenoy (2015) reported in the contexts of India and Sri Lanka, there is an ongoing need for teacher training and ongoing community support to ensure full participation in education for those with disabilities. Findings from Siekmann et al. (2013) showed that when implementing curriculum materials in a local language, teachers may also be required to align their culturally-based practices with educational guidelines originating outside the local community. Alant (2007) observed “we need to increase our understanding of the richness as well as the limitations of the socio-cultural contexts in which our clients and families operate.”

### **Teacher Roles Within Community Based Rehabilitation**

This comparative analysis explored three examples of teacher education and professional development within multilingual environments and described how the Community Based Rehabilitation approach helped teachers and service providers support educational equity for all students. A range of potential benefits and possible barriers were found in descriptions of existing programs that support full participation in education for those with disabilities. The diverse roles of the teachers and service providers as they designed and implemented L1 instruction included:

- Participation in local language and cultural practices to provide educational equity and human rights in education for all students (Ball, 2006; Alant, 2007; Siekmann et al., 2013; Ochoa et al., 2014)
- Teacher preparation programs and ongoing professional development opportunities focused on teaching/learning strategies to include students with disa-

bilities and bilingual/multilingual students (Ball, 2006; Alant, 2007; Ochoa et al., 2014)

· Participatory research by teachers to plan and develop culturally-based curriculum for content areas in a local language (Spren & Vally, 2006; Siekmann et al., 2013)

Within the diverse multilingual environments discussed in this paper, teachers needed appropriate professional development experiences to help them “make the appropriate pedagogical adjustments” while working outside their own “personal cultural and linguistic experience (Ball, 2009). Teachers who design inclusive instruction and support full participation for students with disabilities can model the moral and ethical imperative underlying human rights, “preserving the autonomy and dignity of every individual” (Courey & LePage, 2013). Teacher education and participatory research models matter because these experiences help ensure that all students can participate in education.

### **Challenges and Future Trends**

While the Community Based Rehabilitation guidelines (WHO, 2010) hold out the possibility for more inclusive practices, many special education service providers still face an unmet need for “systemic and sustained structural and administrative supports for service delivery, including increased time for collaboration and service coordination” (Soto & Yu, 2014). Another ongoing challenge arises from inequality of educational resources, since many multilingual communities also face a wide range of socioeconomic disparities affecting teachers and students. As Semken (2005) observed, “most place-based programs have thus far been implemented in regions with few or no Native inhabitants, probably because these communities lack the financial and human resources needed to reconfigure their school systems.” If school funding relies on donations from non-government organizations or international development aid, the educational goals attached to the funding source might not reflect the needs of local communities. To counter this barrier to equity in education, Spren and Vally (2006) recommend locally-based participatory research, saying that “participation empowers communities to identify problems, develop plans for comprehensive and long-term solutions to them, and finally, take action.”

Ball (2006) noted the challenge of retaining teachers after initial teaching experiences with culturally and linguistically diverse students, and described how classrooms with underprepared or uncommitted teachers provided “significantly less engaging and less effective learning experiences” (p. 29). To counter this problem, the Community Leaders Education Fund (CLEF) program supported by the Africa Foundation requires scholarship recipients to share their knowledge and skills in ways that benefit their communities. According to the CLEF program mission statement, “in an African economy, tertiary education makes all the difference between employment and unemployment – more so for people from rural communities” (Africa Foundation, 2014). Within teacher education programs in both the U.S. and South Africa, university faculty also must re-examine educational priorities that promote a dominant culture “that is often competitive rather than collaborative in the preparation of teachers” (Ochoa et al., 2014).

Recommendations for further studies in developing Community Based Rehabilitation in multilingual environments provide insights into the diverse roles of teachers, special education service providers, and teacher preparation programs. Researchers Soto & Yu (2014) reviewed the “benefits of bilingual interventions for children with communication disorders” and also focused attention on personnel preparation to help “both monolingual and bilingual practitioners gain relevant knowledge and skills in the delivery of culturally competent services.” Wickenden (2013) emphasized the need for special education providers to engage in Community Based Rehabilitation using a “cross-sectoral approach” to become capacity builders within a network of service providers, rather than working “solely as clinicians working with individual clients.” Ball (2009) addressed the “international challenge” of teacher preparation by calling for “a better understanding of the processes of teacher change and professional development in cross-national contexts.”

To move beyond research recommendations into meaningful community support for students with disabilities, a global focus on human rights in education can provide the benefits of learning from and building upon insights from teachers working within developing countries (Alant, 2007). Participatory research on teaching and learning is a common theme that highlights the importance of ongoing professional development and support for teachers in multilingual communities.

### Acknowledgements

I wish to acknowledge and thank Dr. Zehlia Babaci-Wilhite for teaching an excellent course on human rights in education, especially her explanation of how these rights extend to cultural and linguistic rights. I also thank Dr. Claire Kramsch for her insights into the experiences of multilingual language users and how these experiences affect education.

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**Author's Brief Bio**

Catherine Lipson, University of California, Berkeley and San Francisco State University.  
Email: [clipson@berkeley.edu](mailto:clipson@berkeley.edu)