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Preparing Special Education Intern Teachers Remotely During The COVID-19 Pandemic

By

NAIADE VIANA DOURADO

DISSERTATION

Submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree of

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to investigate the effectiveness of remote teacher preparation during the COVID-19 pandemic, specifically special education teachers participating at an Intern Credentialing Program in Northern California.

In addition to remote teacher preparation, the study explored how intern teachers experienced delivering special services remotely, how they perceived the Intern Program prepared them compared to traditional programs, and how they experienced their preparation to become agents of change in public education.

Data for this study was collected through field journals, surveys and interviews. The findings of this study revealed that Intern Teachers experienced remote Teacher Education as having more benefits than challenges, however the delivery of services to students with disabilities had more challenges than benefits. The interviews indicated that the Intern Teachers believe they are not well prepared to be agents of change.

Implications of the study include recommendations to continue teacher education remotely, to develop a tool to determine student benefit from delivery of special services remotely, and to add to teacher education programs curriculum and activities that support diversity, inclusion, and belonging in the classroom through the frameworks of Emancipatory Pedagogies, Critical Race Theory, Culturally Relevant Pedagogy, Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy and Discrit.

Keywords: remote learning, remote teacher education, remote special education, teaching during COVID-19, learning during COVID-19, education in the pandemic

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my mother, Iaci Lopes Viana, my greatest teacher and one of the sharpest intellects I've known, who will always be my academic inspiration in addition to being the most dedicated, adoring, and all-encompassing caretaker. Mom, you have always been the most colorful and joyful rosebush in the garden, and you will be forever my guiding moon in the dark, infinite sky.

To my daughter, Penélope Guayí Pugh Dourado, my Good Seed, my fallen start, my miracle who is just starting her academic journey as I am at my peak. My greatest accomplishment will always be to have given you to the light. I will sing your lullabies as prayers long after you are no longer a child.

To my sister on Earth and Water, Nereida Viana Dourado, my mermaid companion, my partner in crime(s), in joy, in sorrow, and in infinite memories, good and bad, always there stable or unstable with her beautiful balancing dance. I would not have survived the past years without you.

To my nieces, Maitê and Iana Dourado Costa, the first beings I fully watched growing from seed to maturity, you are like my own daughters to me. I am proud of you always, and I love you endlessly.

To all who struggle with a disability in a system that is one-size-fits-all, and which fits no one. You have taught me more than I could have ever taught you. May I be helpful to you and all who find the public education system to be a wall and not a bridge. May I help you climb that wall, go around it, find another way, make it smaller, or smash (and rebuild) it entirely.

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Chapter One

INTRODUCTION

Background

On March 16th, 2020, the Yolo County Superintendent of Schools, Garth Lewis, determined that all Yolo County Office of Education schools and programs in the county (Davis, Esparto, Washington, Winters, and Woodland school districts) would be closed beginning Monday, March 16, 2020, through April 12, 2020, in an effort to aggressively slow the spread of COVID-19. This research is directly related to the school closure and the remote learning that followed the onset of the pandemic, and in particular, how the pandemic changed how we teach our teachers in training and how they teach their students.

The Pandemic of COVID-19

COVID-19 is the name of a novel coronavirus which originated in Wuhan, China, causing respiratory tract infections, including the common cold, and more serious infections like SARS. The Chinese government announced the new coronavirus on December 31st, 2019, and by January 30th, 2020, the World Health Organization had declared a global health emergency. A month later, on Feb. 29, 2020, the United States declared its first death from the virus, and by March 26th, we were the country in the world with the most confirmed cases. By December 18th, when the Food and Drug Administration (F.D.A.) approved Moderna's COVID vaccine for use in the United States, we had reached over 300,000 deaths (Taylor, 2020). At the time of the beginning of the writing of this dissertation, in April 2021, the number of deaths had surpassed 560,000 people in the United States and 3,000,000 in the world. By the time the dissertation writing was finalized in May of 2022, there were over one million reported COVID-19 deaths in the United States according to Johns Hopkins Coronavirus Resource Center (Donovan, 2022).

Since March of 2020, most education institutions in California remained operating only under a distance-learning model for over a year, until the summer of 2021, including the University of California at Davis and the Yolo-Solano Center for Teacher Credentialing (CA Safe Schools for All, 2021). Teacher Educators had to adapt quickly to provide training remotely, and this study aims to investigate how teachers at the Yolo Solano Center for Teacher Credentialing's Intern Program perceived the remote teacher education they received in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Teaching Credentials and The Yolo Solano Center for Teaching Credentialing (YSCTC)

An Intern Program is an alternative teaching certification pathway in California for individuals interested in entering the teaching profession and was established to address teacher shortage in identified credential areas. According to the State of California Commission on Teaching Credentialing (Special Education Credentials, 2018), the Education Specialist Instruction Credential Requirements for teachers prepared in California follows a two-level system: Preliminary and Clear. The requirements to apply for a Preliminary credential include the following: (a) to be in possession of a baccalaureate or higher degree; (b) to verify basic skills proficiency; (c) to provide verification of subject-matter competence by passing the appropriate subject-matter examination(s) or subject-matter program; to pass the Reading Instruction Competence Assessment (RICA); to complete a course or pass a test in the provisions and principles of the U.S. Constitution; to complete an approved Education Specialist Credential program in an education specialist specialty area. An intern program allows individuals that meet all of the previous requirements, with the exception of coursework, to hold "teacher of record" positions while going through coursework, given that they are offered such positions at a participating school district.

An Intern Credential is issued by the Commission on Teacher Credentialing upon application when an approved teacher preparation intern program at a school district, charter organization, or county office of Education (also known as an LEA-Local Education Association) employs a new teacher who is eligible, given the conditions cited in the previous paragraph, and it agrees to provide support as required by program standards and regulations. The Intern Credential is a collaboration between the Commission approved alternative certification program and the LEA, with both parties bearing responsibilities for support and supervision of the intern while they are employed and on the credential. An LEA can hire an intern teacher only when a suitable fully prepared teacher is not available. In addition to meeting the eligibility requirements, candidates seeking this alternative route to a teaching credential must be enrolled and participating in a Commission approved intern program, including participation in required support and supervision activities and employment as the teacher of record.

Once candidates finish the intern program satisfactorily, they will become eligible to hold a Preliminary Education Specialist Instruction Credential. At that point, teachers must complete an additional two-year job-embedded individualized Induction Program, focused on extensive support and mentoring to new teachers in their first and second year of teaching. Once the Induction Program is completed, one is eligible to obtain a Clear Education Specialist Instruction Credential. The Teacher Induction program described here replaced the BTSA (Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment) program in the 2016-2017 school year.

The Yolo-Solano Center for Teacher Credentialing, hereon referred to as YSCTC, is a California Commission on Teacher Credentialing approved Intern Program started in 2018, with Davis Joint Unified School District acting as the Local Educational Agency for a regional

consortium of ten TK-12 educational institutions, a number of private and charter schools, and University partners (Yolo-Solano Center for Teacher Credentialing, 2021). YSCTC initially delivered training to teachers through a blended format of in-person and online learning, but since the COVID-19 school closure, it has migrated to a fully remote program. The Yolo-Solano Center for Teaching Credentialing also offers the Induction Program.

Special Education

The California Education Code states that “each child is a unique person, with unique needs, and the purpose of the education system of this state is to enable each child to develop all of his or her own potential” (Cal. Educ. Code §33080). There are currently 6,220,413 students enrolled in California public schools, with 717,961 of those receiving special education (California Department of Education, 2018). While the statewide graduation rate for the class of 2017 was 82.7 %, students with disabilities’ graduation rate was 65%. A lower graduation rate is only one indicator that students with disabilities are not being properly served by our education system.

Thurlow, Quenemoen, & Lazarus (2011) indicate that 80% to 85% of the students in special education can meet the same achievement standards as other students if they are given specially designed instruction, appropriate access, support, and accommodations, as required by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) of 2004. According to Darling-Hammond (2003), teacher training in subject matter, classroom strategies and serving diverse students has a direct impact on student achievement.

Educating students with disabilities is an expensive enterprise. The California Legislative Analyst Office indicates that local education agencies spend more than twice as much per student with disability than per nondisabled students, or about \$10,000 more per student (Overview of

Special Education in California, 2013), therefore special education related research regarding increasing achievement for all students is valuable not only due to a legal need to fulfill the promise of educating all students, but also due to its impact on public funding resources and the tax paying population. Adults with disabilities are less successful in the areas of employment, standard of living and many other quality-of-life indicators when compared to persons without disabilities (Field, Sarver & Shaw, 2003). Finding best practices in inclusive public education matters not only to special education staff involved in educating children with disabilities, but also to general education teachers who also have these students in their classes, to site and district administrators that need to implement and oversee programs, to local businesses interested in creating a skilled workforce from high school graduates, and to the families and children interested in the self-fulfillment, independence and happiness of individuals with disabilities.

Remote Learning

In 1996, the US Department of Education published a report titled “Getting America's Students Ready for the 21st Century: Meeting the Technology Literacy Challenge.” This document presented a framework for states and districts to support the use of technology in achieving high standards of teaching and learning in all classrooms for all students. Since the 1996 report, the digital divide amongst both teachers and students was listed as one of the main obstacles to overcome in order to provide equitable, quality education. This obstacle kept remote education on the backburner for two decades, until the unexpected pandemic of COVID-19 forced the education system to adopt remote education broadly and abruptly.

In 2020, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, institutions of education across the country were required to become proficient in what they were not able to master during the previous

quarter of a century: to provide quality remote instruction overnight, during an uncertain, threatening time. We soon learned that there were other issues beyond the digital divide. According to Reich et al. (2020), it's not only the digital divide, but the social inequity that impacts remote learning, and even when comparing individuals who are equally technologically savvy, the differences in home environments have an impact on learning and teaching remotely. Lack of tech-savviness and home circumstances may have caused teachers to lose a sense of professional competence and efficacy, especially in emergent bi- and multilingual students in English instruction settings. At the same time, individuals with social anxieties may have benefitted from working from home and gotten a boost that enhanced their performance (Reich et al., 2020)

In Teacher Education (TE), the need for unstructured, socially connected, learner-centered, and multi-modal teacher preparation and professional development had to be adapted in a remote setting (Hartshorne, et al., 2020). Quezada, Talbot, & Quezada-Parker (2020) in a study developed in California during the pandemic point out that the willingness to change itself was challenged in this mandatory, emergency situation, and that we, as teacher leaders, have the important role of taking initiative and being in the forefront of the necessary methodological change that will lead to flexible, creative and participatory teaching education and improved learning for our students. According to Garrison, et al. (2003), besides the flexibility it offers, remote TE online has the ability to create critical communities of inquiry, which was absent in previous distance-learning programs. Moore's Theory of Transactional Distance, published in 1997, already perceived the geographical and psychological separation between the teacher and students as cause to communication gaps and misunderstandings, invaluable to successful

instruction (Moore, 1997). This theory and others will be further discussed in the framework section of this document.

Significance and Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study is to investigate the effectiveness of remote special education teacher education during the pandemic of COVID-19 through the lens of the Intern Teacher's experiences, using data from the YSCTC where I have been an instructor for the past three years. This study is significant because it gives voice and visibility to special education intern teachers, and because it produces findings that will make recommendations to improve teacher education.

Research Questions

This dissertation is a case study on how second year intern teachers in the YSCTC Education Specialist Mild/Moderate and Moderate/Severe Intern Teacher Program experienced remote teacher preparation and how they experienced teaching students with disabilities remotely throughout the unprecedented restrictions imposed by the pandemic of COVID-19. It also investigates the interns' perceptions of how the Intern program prepared them in comparison to a traditional program, and how they perceived their preparation to become agents of change in the context of public education through investigation of the following research questions:

1. How did intern teachers experience their remote preparation to meet the needs of students with disabilities in a remote setting within the context of the COVID-19 pandemic?
2. How did intern teachers experience delivering instruction and services to students with disabilities in a remote setting within the context of the COVID-19 pandemic?
3. How did intern teachers experience the Internship Program when compared to a traditional program?
4. How did intern teachers experience their role as agents of change?

Researcher's Positionality

My history with students with disabilities started in 2003, when I signed up to be a substitute teacher at a district in the central coast of California. I was looking for work as a full-time ESL teacher and took a temporary substitute job with no commitments, while actively searching for other opportunities. I knew absolutely nothing about special education. With zero experience or training, I was placed in different classrooms every day, from preschool to adult classes (ages 18-22). One day I would find myself helping students with mild learning disabilities with their math assignments, and the next day I would be aiding students with severe disabilities perform basic life skills; I would spend one week supporting students with below average functional skills who presented dangerous behaviors to self and peers, and the next week assisting a completely different population of students to manage their stress level and busy schedules of AP classes at high-performing high schools. That job was my first time closely interacting with individuals with disabilities. It seems unbelievable now, but it was the first time I heard the word autism. Where I came from, Brazil, we didn't have special education. Or, at least, I didn't know about it.

I always loved school. I was successful during my academic experience, and that gave me self-confidence and a certain assurance that I would be okay in life. However, upon moving to the United States, my education, credentials and history became less important given the absence of a permanent resident status. Life was a struggle for many years, until I eventually found my way into special education classrooms. Being exposed and getting to know individuals with learning differences turned my world upside down, changed my life and purpose. My work ever since has been to provide visibility and assistance to this group of individuals who are as

deserving to fulfill their potential and experience life and happiness as their fellow typical developing human beings.

Somehow, my history of schooling success brought me closer to students who had experienced failure in our educational system. I became a credentialed teacher specialized in teaching students who were able to learn but learned differently. I believe my personal experience of feeling invisible, or perhaps of speaking a language that is not comprehended by others and sometimes presenting what can be (culturally) considered undesirable behavior brings me closer to the marginalized population of students with disabilities. Our differences are what unites us.

When COVID-19 hit the global population with sickness, death and fear, it seemed that the world would be forever changed. And it is, for the ones who didn't survive or had financial turmoil. For students with disabilities who survived the pandemic, it is still to be seen what long-lasting impacts the sudden changes in their education will have in their lives. I wrote this study as an attempt to shed light at how to better prepare the adults who serve these children now and in the future. My biggest satisfaction as a teacher has been to see a few of my former students experiencing success in higher education, where they get an opportunity to not only acquire marketable knowledge and consequent financial success and independence, but a place where they can explore and find out who they are, and what the world is. Students with disabilities who made it to college didn't do it alone, and my professional goal as an educator is to be one of the steppingstones in their path to fulfillment, success and happiness. I have a bias, and that bias is that I believe students with disabilities can become productive, happy members of society, and I am invested in finding models that will at the end benefit, above all, those students.

As a school leader and teacher educator I am committed to supporting the development of skillful teachers, who will stay in the profession and provide nothing short of excellent education for all students. As a researcher and scholar practitioner, I am drawn to examine how remote teacher education has impacted staff entering a new profession in the field of special education. As a disability activist, I seek to make research in this area more visible to our typically abled scholarly community, often more focused with general education, and to contribute meaningfully to the field of disability studies. As a special education teacher and an English as a Second Language teacher, I work to have the best quality services delivered to the most vulnerable minority children. As a global citizen, I believe that everyone should experience life to its fullest potential, “jeder nach seinen Fähigkeiten, jedem nach seinen Bedürfnissen” (from each according to their ability, to each according to their needs) (Marx et. al,1970).

Chapter Two

LITERATURE REVIEW

The areas of research examined to inform this project include analysis of the several models and pathways in Teacher Education, including remote teacher education; Working from Home(WFH) Pre and Post COVID; Open and Distance Learning (ODL); how COVID-19 has disproportionately impacted students with disabilities in their rights for a Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE), and teacher educators' beliefs and practices.

Different Pathways to Special Education Teacher Preparation

In the introduction of this dissertation, I presented an overview of the Intern Teacher Program. In this section I present a more detailed description of what that program entails in comparison to more traditional pathways.

The District Intern Program was instituted in California in 1983 as an alternative path to certification for secondary teachers only, posteriorly expanded in 1987 to grades K-12th. This option was a response from the California Department of Education to address teacher shortage (McKibbin, 1988). From its humble start with less than 20 districts in the entire state of California, in the past 5 years, District Intern Programs are on a sharp rise (see Table 1). In 2018-2019, 553 credentials were issued, an increase of 35.5 percent from 2017-2018. (Suckhow, 2019)

Table 1*New Teaching Credentials Issues in California by Pathway, 2014-2015 to 2018-2019*

Pathway Type	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	Percent Change from 2017-18
California IHE - Prepared*	11,215	11,105	11,752	12,178	12,787	5.0%
District-Prepared**	308	346	570	408	553	35.5%
Out-of-State/ Out-of-Country Prepared	3,679	3,982	4,183	3,929	3,679	-6.4%
Total	15,202	15,433	16,505	16,515	17,019	3.1%

Note. * IHE prepared includes both traditional and intern delivery models.

**District prepared includes only the intern delivery model.

Since its inception, the District Intern Program sought to attract professionals who would not choose to complete more conventional teacher training programs or were interested in making career changes but unable to afford a conventional university teacher preparation program. I am an example of such a person. At age 29, having recently migrated to the United States with a bachelor's degree in Computer Science, seeking to move to a career in education but unable to afford life on a student visa and unable to obtain citizenship through same-sex marriage, I took the plunge and entered a District Intern Program that took 10% of my teaching salary monthly. It was the best deal in town.

While Darling-Hammond, Shields et al. (1998) have expressed the fear that such on-the-job training programs may bring un- or under-qualified teachers into the classrooms, according to McKibbin (1988), district programs attract people with signs of academic talent, some even

with advanced degrees, including doctoral degrees, many with degrees from the University of California (UC) system with previous academic preparation in English, natural science, social science, humanities, and foreign languages. Many district intern candidates had some experience with teaching, either as substitute teachers, emergency teachers, or community college teachers, and the careers of those who had not been teachers were predominantly in business and technical occupations, such as engineering. Again, I fit the profile perfectly, having a background in ESL and Portuguese tutoring, a degree in the field of engineering and having worked as a classroom aide and substitute teacher.

Intern teachers are an older and more diverse group than other pathways, attracting demographics that are underrepresented in the teaching workforce. According to McKibbin (2001), interns are twice as likely to be from minority ethnic, linguistic, or racial groups when compared to conventional programs, and three times as likely to be a male elementary teacher. According to Wright et al. (1987), more than a third of these individuals have stated they wouldn't have made the career change if it wasn't for the intern option. This alternative pathway brings diversity to our teacher workforce.

The California Commission on Teaching Credentialing (2021) lists 69 Teacher Education approved institutions in the state in the areas of Special Education (Mild/ Moderate and Moderate/ Severe Credentials): 22 in the California State University (CSU) system; two in the UC system (Riverside and Santa Barbara); 30 Private/ Independent institutions, and 15 LEAs (Intern programs). In the Sacramento Metropolitan Central Valley, there are five institutions that can provide training leading to those credentials: CSU Sacramento, Fortune School, Placer County Office of Education, Sacramento County Office of Education, and Davis Joint Unified School District (YSCTC). The program at the CSU in Sacramento is also an intern program,

which means that there are no traditional programs in this area, as defined by undergraduate or graduate programs with a student-teacher component. In Yolo County, the only Special Education program is YSCTC. None of these programs offered fully remote Teacher Education (TE) until the pandemic of COVID-19.

Working from Home(WFH) Pre and Post COVID

Work From Home (WHF) studies in all areas of employment have abounded since the onset of the pandemic. Brynjolfsson et al. (2020) collected data about WFH in the early stages of the pandemic (April to May 2020), and found that, at that point, 50% of the individuals who were employed before the pandemic were now WFH, and 10.1% had lost their jobs. 15% of the individuals researched were already WFH pre-pandemic (Brynjolfsson et al., 2020). Geographic variations were present, with the Northeast presenting the highest percentage of the regions' WFH and the South, the fewest. By gender, men were only slightly more likely to continue commuting than women, and by age, the 25-34 age group to the 65-age group and older were the least likely to continue to commute, with the younger range being more likely to WFH. By occupation, careers in management, professional, and related occupations were more likely to WFH. Bick, Blandin, & Mertens (2020) point out that WFH looks very different within specific socioeconomic groups, being most dominant amongst the highly educated as well as white workers with high incomes, and being much less present amongst minorities, workers with only high school degrees, and those with lower incomes.

The study incurred by Barrero et al. (2021) shows that a year after the pandemic started, the initial mandatory inconvenience of WFH had turned into a demand in many sectors: 40% of the participants in the research having stated that they would quit and find something else if required to go back in-person fully, and would consider switching to other jobs that offer even

two to three days a week at home for the same pay. This information is relevant to this study because of teacher shortage. While teachers are in the highly educated category, they will eventually be required to go back to worksites, even if other categories of workers were able to continue to work remotely, because schools have the double duty of teaching and childcare. In the Davis area, in-person teaching at public and non-public schools, even if not full-time, began as early as the summer of 2020, according to the Interns who participated in this research.

Dugger (2021), in her dissertation, shares the same concern that I have, and she indicates that there is no literature available that has looked into the impact of COVID-19 on the well-being of teachers, the effects that the pandemic may have on teacher job satisfaction, and its influence on teacher attrition. Collins et al. (2021) found that, in dual-earner, heterosexual married couples with children, women were more likely to have working hours reduced four to five times more than their male counterparts, which widened the gender gap and posed yet another disadvantage to mothers in the workforce.

Zamarro and Prados (2021) confirmed that women have provided most of the childcare during the COVID-19 crisis, despite having to WFH as much as men. Additionally, they have found that higher levels of psychological distress were reported by women who had school-age children. Bick et al. (2021) found that not all workers receive the same flexibility in remote work, and that in some occupations, the changes may become permanent. However, school districts in California, in general, are not continuing to offer remote instruction, and YSTC will resume its teacher education program with a back to in-person format. It is still to be determined if the teachers that specifically initiated their career in these unprecedented times will stay or join the Great Resignation, as defined by the unprecedented number of workers quitting their jobs

due to the pandemic, which was evaluated to be over 47 million Americans according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2021).

Open and Distance Learning (ODL)

Quezada, Talbot & Quezada-Parker (2020) indicate that all Teacher Education programs in California quickly initiated new plans for instructional methods, technologies and tools to continue instruction and supervision during the pandemic by without a specific theoretical framework for online education and through using a combination of synchronous and asynchronous-learning. While distance learning did not start with the pandemic, it changed entirely in scope and volume as a result of it. The study conducted by Marek et al. (2021) had participants who indicated that the workload and stress had increased, when compared to in-person classes, but the experiences widely varied. They state that true ODL is not a simple conversion of in-person classes, which is what mostly happened in our schools due to the emergence of the pandemic, and that emergency ODL put together ad-hoc under an emergency, was not based on instructional designs that have been studied and tested and are therefore only mitigating strategies and not true ODL. Marek et al. (2021) also state that instructors found the task of converting lessons from in-person to remote was intimidating and that, in addition, unstable internet connections, sparse training, and lack of ability to add personal touches which teachers take pride in, all contributed to a less than ideal ODL experience for instructors.

Teacher Educators' Beliefs and Practices

Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1999) make a distinction between three main approaches in teacher education: knowledge-*for*-practice, knowledge-*in*-practice, and knowledge-*of*-practice. The first approach describes knowledge researchers would provide for teachers as far as new methodologies and strategies in most traditional pathways at universities. The second approach is

characteristic of student-teaching programs, in which the teachers-to-be learn under the supervision of an experienced teacher. The third approach is what is mostly present in intern programs, where the new teachers learn the craft of teaching along with their practice, with each of their classrooms. This, therefore, is the approach that this study will focus on.

To be clear, knowledge-for-practice doesn't invalidate or replace the need for formal research, or for mentoring. It is also not a synthesis of the former approaches. It is solely an approach that acknowledges that the distinction between knowledge and practice is not that clearly defined, but that knowledge is collectively constructed within the community and is transformative. This approach creates a new construct, "inquiry as stance", a broader concept that invites questioning as the way to produce knowledge instead of merely providing answers and inviting listening to students as a way to create knowledge, instead of talking at them. Practice is not always practical, and theory may be developed in the act of teaching itself.

The reality of teacher shortage does not always allow for the necessary preparation time required for an approach of knowledge-*for*-practice or knowledge-*in*-practice. Knowledge-of-practice is sometimes the only available option. Brownell et al. (2005) identified the following common characteristics in special education teaching programs: extensive field experiences, heavily based on collaboration, evaluations for effectiveness, focus on inclusion and diversity, and a positivist approach. According to the 2005 study, these are characteristics in common with general education teacher preparation programs that were considered exemplary. According to Brownell et al., what seems to be missing in special education teacher programs that are present in general education teacher programs are a clearer programmatic vision and a better integration of content, theory and practice.

There is just not much research out there in special education TE, a very complex field, and one under high legal scrutiny. I believe this makes this current study an important reflection on our local practice, promotes collaboration between the university and an LEA-based program, and above all, presents an opportunity to improve teacher preparation and service to students with disabilities in Yolo and Solano Counties and perhaps even beyond.

Disproportionate Impact of COVID-19 on FAPE and LRE

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act established that all students should receive a free and appropriate public education (FAPE) in the least restrictive environment (LRE) (IDEA, 1997), meaning that students with disabilities should receive their education in the same neighborhood schools and in the same classrooms as their nondisabled peers as much as possible.

In a brick-and-mortar environment, LRE means to include students with disabilities in classes with a majority of fully abled students. This interpretation of the legislation is not without opposition. While Huberman et al. (2012) indicate that inclusion has a positive impact to both disabled and non-disabled peers, and that special education and general education teachers co-teaching in the same classroom can be implemented successfully if staff including administrator are well-trained, St. John and Babo (2015) point out that non-disabled peers may have a decrease in their achievement scores when placed in inclusive classes and argue that the use of specialized academic instruction in separate classes may still be the best option for both students with disabilities and typically-able peers. The value placed on ableism makes children with atypical development seek to perform typically, to speak rather than sign, to have desired behaviors, to hang out with nondisabled kids as opposed to other disabled kids (Hehir, 2002).

Devine and Parr (2008) developed an interesting study at an inclusive youth camp with individuals, ages 12-16 (four with disabilities and four without), in which the concept of placing students with disabilities as much as possible with typical peers as an effort to contribute to the least restrictive environment was challenged. This study affirms that such contact doesn't benefit the formation of social capital. Contact theory establishes that not all contact is positive, such as, when there is structure, respect and reciprocity occur, but when there is competition, more paternalistic perceptions of persons with disabilities may take place. Inclusive contacts may impede the sense of social capital in an emerging society marked by a greater diversity but weaker social capital. What makes it possible for students with disabilities to function in general education are accommodations made in the general education setting. According to Abedi (2016), accommodations must meet the following conditions: (a) Effectiveness, (b) Validity, (c) Differential Impact, (d) Relevance, and (e) Feasibility. The researcher notes that for both students with disabilities and English language learners, there is not enough research indicating that many of the most common accommodations are effective.

During remote instruction due to COVID-19, parents and staff shared with me in informal conversations that they believe LRE should not mean that students with disabilities are in the same remote classes with typically abled peers, due to issues of access. Part of the current study will be to inquire about teachers' opinions about how to best serve students with disabilities in a manner that ensures they continue receiving a FAPE in the LRE.

Theoretical Framework

My theoretical framework was selected to examine the experiences of special education teachers-in-trainings through variables that go beyond training in typical special education teacher skills such as classroom behavior management and curriculum delivery strategies and

technology, although it does include these areas. This research primarily aims to investigate how existing inequalities in teacher education in the brick-and-mortar models are perpetuated and perhaps exacerbated in remote settings. I believe an intersectional approach must guide any TE discussions within the diverse community of Yolo County, and that is the multiple direction I have taken here.

My investigation as a scholar practitioner is exercised in this study through the main lens of Emancipatory Theory derived from Paulo Freire's work, Critical Race Theory (CRT) as developed by Ladson-Billings, as well as Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (CRP), Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy (CSP), and Disability Critical Race Studies (DisCrit).

Additionally, as this investigation is related to remote learning, I will also be referencing Moore's Theory of Transactional Distance to examine remote Teacher Education offered through the YSCTC Intern Teacher Program.

Emancipatory Theory

Emancipatory Theory, or Liberatory Pedagogy, is an approach to education that focuses on its role to create a just and democratic society. Nouri and Sajjadi (2014) provide a good summary of emancipatory pedagogies and their three tenets:

1. Humanization: Education needs to enable both the teacher and the student to critically think about their relationship with the world and become aware of their context as human beings. According to Freire (1970), humanization of education happens through a true dialogue that includes:
 - love for the world and for human beings,
 - humility in naming and re-creating that world without arrogance,

- faith in humanity's power to make and remake, to create and re-create, and in its vocation to be more fully human, the birthright of all people,
 - trust between the dialoguers, as a consequence of interacting with love, humility and faith,
 - hope rooted in human beings' incompleteness and search for communion with others,
 - critical thinking that understands the indivisible solidarity between the world and humans, admits of no dichotomy between them, perceives reality as a process of transformation rather than as a static entity, and which does not separate itself from action, immersed in temporality without fear of the risks involved (Freire, 1970).
2. Critical Conscientization: A process in which students and teachers become aware of social, political, and economic contradictions in which they are immersed, and then act against the oppressive elements of reality.
 3. Problem-Posing Education System: An education that aims to discover reality, in opposition to the banking model of education that kills creativity. Here, teachers are not the holders and providers of knowledge, but they also learn from students.

An Emancipatory Pedagogy broadens the student's view of reality, is transformative, political, empowering, and based on true dialogue. The curriculum should be focused on every day, informal, and popular culture to bring to light how historical patterns of power form individual subjectivity and identity. Curriculum should not be used to cover standards, but to help students deal with issues in their daily lives. In the emancipatory classroom, students will fully exercise their citizenry and overcome disempowerment, apathy, and alienation (Gordon,

1986). The role of teachers is to assist in this transformative experience. Assessment of learning is performed through self-assessment and peer-assessment, so that students can critically analyze and reflect on their knowledge and experience and do so in exchange with others.

Gordon (1986) lists three benefits to applying emancipatory pedagogies to TE: First, we need to provide present and future teachers with the heuristic tools they need to analyze the crucial dynamics of the relationships between students and their teachers, including the problems of student/teacher conflict and student resistance. Second, to provide student teachers with an opportunity to experience and experiment with a new critical perspective on education and a new intellectual awareness of their role as teachers which they would be able to convert into pedagogical materials and classroom activities and experiences. Third, to offer a new epistemological perspective, an alternative or competing paradigm, which views conventional classroom knowledge itself as problematic. Critical and emancipatory pedagogy also poses key questions about the classroom and its place in our society.

Twenty-first century TE continues to be trapped in 19th-century concepts of social efficiency and scientific determinism, and psychological models of authoritarian teaching and passive learning. According to Gordon (1986), if teacher education is to move forward, it must begin to re-examine the most fundamental questions concerning the goals and purposes of education, the nature of the learning process, and the role of teachers and schools in society.

Critical Race Theory (CRT)

In this section, I first address the framework of Critical Race Theory (CRT) and then I continue the discussion by addressing Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (CRP) and Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy (CSP).

Critical Race Theory is a complex discipline, derived from critical legal studies, critical pedagogy, and radical feminism. The following paragraph is a summary of CRT as described in Delgado and Stefancic (2017). CRT has 5 main tenets:

1. Racism is ordinary and not aberrational; it permeates the norm.
2. The system of white-over-color ascendancy serves important purposes, both psychic and material (Interest Convergence or Material Determinism).
2. Race is a product of social thought and relations (Social Construction Thesis).
3. Dominant society racializes different minority groups at different times, in response to shifting needs such as the labor market (Differential Racialization, Intersectionality and Anti-Essentialism).
4. Minority status brings with it a presumed competence to speak about race and racism (Unique Voice of Color).

Ladson-Billings (1998) believes that CRT can help explain the inequities that people of color experience in the public education system. However, while CRT can shed light into the issues, it doesn't necessarily produce solutions that are easily applicable to American classrooms, a task that Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (CRP) and Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy (CSP), try to accomplish.

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (CRP), Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy (CSP) and DisCrit. CRP was introduced by Ladson-Billings as committed to collective, not merely individual, empowerment (Ladson-Billings, 1995). In her 3-year study of successful teachers of African American students, she looked for the thread that connected the success of those teachers. What she discovered was that, while at the surface those teachers seemed to be very different, a closer look revealed that they all had important characteristics in common: all of the

teachers in the study had teaching as a piece of their identity that made them proud, and they all taught a minoritized profile of student by choice and commitment for their own community. For the teachers in her study, teaching was an art more than a science, and they believed in the potential and value of each of their students.

Muñiz (2019) developed eight common competencies of culturally responsive educators from Ladson-Billings work and examined how teaching standards promote CRP in all 50 states. For example, the California Standards for the Teaching Profession (CSTP) expectations are aligned to CRP's competencies among other things by requiring that teachers connect learning to students' prior knowledge, backgrounds, life experiences, and interests; create a rigorous learning environment with high expectations and appropriate support for all students; engender respect for student diversity in the classroom and engage families as leaders and sources of information about students' cultural strengths.

Paris (2012) coined the term Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy (CSP) as an addition to the conversation around CRP, with the argument that CSP went further by seeking to sustain a pluralist society through multilingualism and multiculturalism to strengthen the democratic project of schooling. CSP is an asset-based critical pedagogy that believes in developing a positive cultural identity at schools as a tool that can be used pragmatically for example in anti-bullying policies. CSP is also applicable to TE by advocating that such programs must foster teachers who enable students to act as ethnographers of their own reality. How the CSTP is fostering these qualities in our teachers, and how our YSCT interns and teachers are experiencing training in that area will be examined in my research.

Annamma et al. (2016) merged CRT with the field of Disability Studies to propose a new theoretical framework named Dis/ability Critical Race Studies, or DisCrit.

The seven tenets of DisCrit are listed in Annamma et al. (2016) as follows:

1. DisCrit focuses on ways that the forces of racism and ableism circulate interdependently, often in neutralized and invisible ways, to uphold notions of normalcy.
2. DisCrit values multidimensional identities and troubles singular notions of identity such as race or dis/ability or class or gender or sexuality, and so on.
3. DisCrit emphasizes the social constructions of race and ability and yet recognizes the material and psychological impacts of being labeled as raced or dis/abled, which sets one outside of western cultural norms.
4. DisCrit privileges voices of marginalized populations, traditionally not acknowledged within research.
5. DisCrit considers legal and historical aspects of dis/ability and race and how both have been used separately and together to deny the rights of some citizens.
6. DisCrit recognizes whiteness and Ability as Property and that gains for people labeled with dis/abilities have largely been made as the result of interest convergence of white, middle-class citizens.
7. DisCrit requires activism and supports all forms of resistance.

DisCrit views dis/ability as a social construct, a negative way to label a normal human variation, which needs to be deconstructed (Denhart, 2008). According to Baglieri et al. (2011), we cannot address racism without addressing ableism.

The importance of DisCrit in this framework is that students experience the different categories of disabilities very differently depending on their culture, social economic status (SES), race, gender, sexuality, etc. and therefore, how teachers teach them can't be uniform, but needs to consider the complex intersectionality of these identities. Any overlapping of these

variables results in a different experience that is not equivalent to the other, and this fact needs to be explicit in TE.

There are also other categories that need to be addressed in school curriculum that go beyond race and disability, which can be addressed through the lens of LatCrit and QueerCrit. These frameworks will also be taken into consideration in this study given the aggravated circumstance and heightened stress due to the social isolation of the pandemic.

Theory of Transactional Distance

Michael Moore's Transactional Distance Theory is one of the first educational theories that looks at the distance learning experience. While it was developed at a time when distance learning meant mail-based classes, it is still relevant today. The three tenets of Moore's Transactional Distance Theory (Moore, 1997) are:

1. Dialogue: Includes all communication and interactions between student and teacher with the intent to solve the learner's problem.
2. Structure: The level of a course's flexibility and rigidity, and how it accommodates students' needs.
3. Learner Autonomy: The amount of self-direction, self-determination, and independence the learner is allowed to have.

These tenets influence one another and the transactional distance between teacher and student. The main focus of my study is not to check the viability of distance learning itself, given that during the pandemic, it was not a choice, and it was implemented broadly and on a mandatory basis during an emergency situation. However, I believe that investigating the theoretical framework of distance learning is necessary to get to the most accurate conclusions regarding successes (or failures) of the YSCTC Intern Teacher Program as implemented.

Chapter Three

METHODS

Research Design

This chapter describes the research methodology and design used in this study, the recruitment process, the actual data collection methodology, and a description of which instruments were used. The data analysis, research findings, discussions and conclusions will be presented in the following chapters.

For this study, I chose to use a qualitative research method, specifically in the format of a case study. According to Creswell (2007), qualitative research is a method that explores the meaning that individuals in the study ascribe to a problem being studied. Case study is described by Creswell as a methodology in which the researcher investigates a system using information obtained through processes such as observations, interviews, questionnaires and documents, and then reports its description and main themes found within that system. The system investigated in this study is the YSCTC Cohort of Special Education Teacher Interns of 2019-2021.

Ladson-Billings (1995), in observing teachers for three years, realized that teacher success went beyond teaching strategies and was tied to the philosophical and ideological underpinnings of their practice. Inspired by Ladson-Billings' research, my dissertation is also based on a program that I have been a part of for three years, in which I have informally observed my students. Both investigations are under the classification of intrinsic case study.

Study Participants

Study participants comprised a cohort that I had worked with for three years. This is the third cohort of intern teachers that YSCTC has led to credential achievement, and the first cohort to have the entirety of its instruction online. I have been with the YSCTC since its inception, and

taught classes in person to the first and second cohorts. Because of the pandemic, I did not have a chance to meet with the third cohort in person.

My first contact with the 2019-2022 cohort was at the beginning of the pandemic, in March of 2020, right after the schools in California were closed by the governor's determination. We met for the previously scheduled Positive Behavior Management class, which had been prepared to deliver training in-person for teachers to work with students in-person. Neither of those circumstances were possible at the time of delivery. The interns and the instructors, I included, were all still adapting to virtual classroom environments, and we had numerous conversations in regard to how our students would deal with attending classes on the computer. Since those early days, we noticed that student online attendance was low and that the kids didn't interact much with the online instruction, if at all, while the families themselves struggled to adapt to what had not sunk in yet as the "new reality" that would last over a year in many school districts in our state. Therefore, I started collecting informal data and having conversations with the interns about online teacher training and online delivering of especially designed instruction in March of 2020. In May of 2020, I met again with this cohort, now more settled into the remote learning environment, for a class about IEP Case Management, and again we had informal conversations about the difficulties encountered, but also how some students were beginning to thrive when they did not have to be on campus. We started sharing how difficult it was to work from home, without proper space and structure, but at the same time how much time and money was being saved by not having to drive to work. It seemed to me at that point that something very important was taking place, and by the end of that class, I decided to focus my doctoral dissertation on the case of intern teachers going through their education remotely.

I met again with this cohort only in the Spring of 2021, after a full year had passed. At that point, the interns were settled into the remote environment, and only a few had gone back to teaching kids in person. The interns started sharing that it had become clear to them that, while some kids needed in-person interaction to make progress, others didn't. The issue, as reported in conversations at the beginning or during class breaks and office-time, was not the format itself (remote x in-person), but more dependent on other structures that could be present or not, such as adult assistance at home and the overall health of their family. During that class, I shared with my cohort that I would be finalizing my data collection methods over the summer, and that I would be ready to collect formal data from them in the fall of 2021, which I did.

The 2021-2022 school year started with much anticipation, with the majority of the school districts functioning completely in-person. When I met Cohort 3 in October of 2021, as the instructor of Creating Healthy Learning Environments, they were all back in their classrooms, some for the first time. Our informal discussions continued, and my interns shared that they were really happy to continue to receive *their* instruction remotely, and that with the threat of the COVID-19 infection still rampant, not only did they feel safer, but also less stressed and with more time to dedicate to their own families. I shared with them that I would be sending the invitation for them to participate in my research after the end of our class and after the grading period was finished to avoid any conflict of interest.

Regarding demographics, the majority of interns are over 34, which indicates that interns are an older crowd than student-teachers. Nine of the 17 interns identify as female and seven as male. Only one intern identified as LGBTQ. Interns are heavily from California (12 of the 17). Half of the interns identified as white or Caucasian, while the other half identified as other (three Hispanic or Mexican American, two black, and two Asian). 25% of the interns shared that they

have a disability. Twelve interns have degrees in the humanities, four in science. Thirteen interns received their degrees from the CAL system, three from private universities. Only two interns have master's degrees, both in humanities at private universities. Ten of the interns were paraprofessionals, tutors or held other positions in the education system, three were in social services, three were in sales.

Only one intern had a different classroom teaching assignment during the second year. When asked, "Why did you choose Special Education?", three interns answered they have children with disabilities, eight shared they have always been passionate about helping students with disabilities, five shared that it was accidental, but that they became passionate about it. Six teachers reported to have no experience with online learning whatsoever, four shared they had taken a few online classes, two earned a higher degree fully online. All teachers reported to believe they are comfortable with technology in general.

Data Collection

I collected informal data while I was the instructor for this cohort from the fall of 2019 to the fall of 2021, when I observed classroom discussions and held conversations with intern teachers regarding remote education and kept a field journal during my time as an instructor by using a Google Doc file.

Formal data collection was performed using the surveys & interviews, and those took place after the grading period of our final class together in the end of 2021. All twenty one students enrolled in the cohort were invited to participate in the project. Seventeen of them accepted to complete the survey, six accepted to be interviewed and four of those proceeded to complete the interviews. Upon completion of surveys & interviews, I performed data analysis and summarized the results of this study in the winter of 2022.

Recruitment

During our last course together, I discussed my project with my students and mentioned to them that they would be invited to participate, after the grading window was closed to avoid conflict of interest. When that time arrived, I sent to all twenty-one intern teachers an invitation via email to participate in my study right before Thanksgiving break. The email had a link to a Google Form, a tool familiar to all my students, which explained the study and had a box to check and sign for consent (See Appendix A). Of the twenty one interns enrolled in the class, seventeen accepted to complete the survey and filled out the consent form. The window to sign the consent closed within the week, and interns received the survey to be completed within two weeks (November 29th to December 12th). Once all seventeen surveys were finalized, an invitation to participate in a 30-minute interview was sent out. Six of the seventeen interns accepted to be interviewed. The interviews were scheduled during winter break, between December 20th and December 31st of 2021.

Surveys

The survey consisted of 20 Likert-type statements on a 10-point scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 10 (*strongly agree*). The surveys were delivered by using the Google Form platform. The statements included statements in the areas Teacher Preparation, Delivering Instruction & Service, Knowledge-for-practice, Knowledge-in-practice, Knowledge-of-practice, Emancipatory Pedagogies, COVID-19, Demographics and Professional Background. All surveys were analyzed using descriptive statistics. Please see Appendix A for survey and interview questions as submitted to the IRB and Appendix B for graphics of the results.

Interviews

The interviews consisted of seven open-ended questions delivered using the Google Meets platform. The interviews were designed to complement the survey questions, adding depth to the discussion of the constructs and following the same structure. The interviewees arrived on time, usually a few minutes early, and the conversations lasted from 20 to 45 minutes. Because we had a previous rapport as instructor and student, the format was comfortable to both interviewer and interviewee.

On the construct of teacher preparation, interns were asked to elaborate on the belief that an intern program prepared them better than a traditional program would have. About delivering instruction & service, they were asked to elaborate on their beliefs regarding whether students in special education are able to receive instruction and services remotely. Regarding emancipatory pedagogies, we discussed the lens of teachers as agents of creation of a just and democratic society. Teachers were directly asked what their thoughts were about the role of teachers in assisting students in their transformative experience through education, what their approach was to bring real-world issues into the classroom and when designing lesson plans, how they address bias, stereotyping, and assumptions about disabilities through their instruction. In regard to learning how to be a teacher and teaching during a pandemic that forced us all to isolate from each other and to heavily rely on technology, they were asked how COVID-19 had impacted their path to becoming a teacher and how COVID-19 had impacted their students' ability to be successful in school.

The answers to these questions and what they mean to remote teacher education will be reviewed in the next section, but I can share here that, beyond answering the interview questions, all teachers shared that “teaching is hard work”. As a scholar practitioner, I couldn't agree more.

Data Analysis

To analyze the data under the umbrella of an interpretive case study methodology that sought to investigate intern teachers' perceptions of remote TE, I utilized data-collection tools consistent with such qualitative studies such as surveys and interviews.

The Google platform was used in all phases of the research: field journals on Google Doc, recruitment via Google Email (Gmail), consent via Google Docs, surveys via Google Forms, and interviews via Google Meet. All surveys were analyzed using descriptive statistics. All the interviews obtained through Google Meet were transcribed using speech-to-text software. Once the transcripts were ready, they were compared to the audio originals by a human. After the transcripts were checked and copied into an editable Google Doc file, I applied deductive analysis to identify themes to be described in the results section of this document. The emerging themes were originally divided into "positive" and "negative". These themes were organized through a spreadsheet (Google Sheet) as they related to the research questions. Tables for each research question were drafted with the subheadings: Theme, Subtheme, Code, Definition and Quotes. The information from these groupings were then reverted back to paragraphs, with the conclusions they provided, and added to my written analysis.

Chapter Four

RESULTS

As stated in the previous section, seventeen of the twenty one interns invited completed the survey, six of the seventeen agreed to be interviewed, resulting in four completed interviews. The survey consisted of 20 Likert-type statements on a 10-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 10 (strongly agree). The interviews consisted of seven open-ended questions asked using the Google Meets platform.

Analysis of Surveys

The analysis of the survey responses and subsequent coding explained in the previous section resulted in the emergence of the following themes: Remote Teacher Education is Better; Intern Programs are Suitable for Career Changers; Intern Teachers Feel Prepared to Deliver Content; Intern Teachers Feel Unprepared to Write IEPs, BIPs, and Assessment Reports; Beginning Teachers are Required to Support More Experienced Professionals in General Education; Knowledge Comes From Practice; Teachers Create a More Just and Democratic Society; and Special Education Can Be Delivered Remotely in a Case-by-Case Basis.

Remote Teacher Education is Better

The analysis of the 1st Likert-type survey statement: “I believe remote teacher education has more advantages than disadvantages”, showed a clear tendency towards believing that remote education has more advantages than disadvantages in teacher preparation, with only 2 respondents rating it a 3 or less. These answers are in full alignment with informal classroom conversations in which interns shared with the group how satisfied they were with receiving instruction remotely: flexibility in their own schedules, less commute, and more availability to be with family lowers their stress level and makes them more productive, even with the distractions

at home and connectivity challenges. Other studies support the conclusions of my study: Serhan (2020) indicates that, while participants indicated the move to remote was not easy, flexibility was listed as a main advantage. Carver-Thomas, Leung, & Burns (2021) indicate that the shift to remote may have impacted experienced teachers who had a repertoire of lessons produced for in-person instruction and had to reinvent their own wheels, but that remote teacher preparation seems to be a win for the teachers-in-training experiencing full-time learning while working a new, challenging full-time job. The study of Israel, Carnahan, Snyder & Williamson (2013) had as one of their findings that beginning teachers spend most of their time in the first few years managing relationships with collaborators, dwelling on behavior plan design and organizing their workflow instead of developing data-driven lessons or evidence-based practices, and that makes remote Teacher Education less cumbersome for them.

The 2nd survey statement: “I believe becoming a teacher during the pandemic has negatively impacted my teacher preparation”, was agreed upon by only a few interns who believe that becoming a teacher in the pandemic has negatively impacted their teacher preparation. When asked to list two to three advantages you see in remote teacher education, the answers were: less commute, more time with family, affordability, quiet setting, Universal Design for Learning (UDL) friendly, flexibility, more prep time, smaller group work. The environment and health safety were the reasons listed. When asked to list two to three disadvantages they see in remote teacher education, teachers answered that online learning might not work for everyone, especially if they struggle with technology, class interruptions due to connectivity issues are a problem, loss of community building, no kinesthetic learning, no in-person peer interactions, no in-person interactions with instructors, group work is not the same,

people aren't as engaged as they would be in person, there are many instances of silence when instructors ask questions, and interns not using video can be an issue.

Intern Programs are Suitable for Career Changers

The 2nd and 3rd Likert-type survey statements investigate the Intern Teachers' opinions about the Intern Programs (in which teacher candidates with bachelor degrees in any areas are placed in classrooms as teachers of records while still receiving teacher training) in comparison to Traditional Programs (in which undergraduate or graduate teacher candidates must go through a period of being student-teachers) Interns indicate that they would not have chosen a traditional path to credentialing if that was a possibility at this moment. This result did not surprise me, as all three cohorts over the years have shared such information. Interns are grateful to have the opportunity to change careers and receive on-the-job training with a full salary. Some of the answers provided in the later part of the survey, for example in response to: "In a sentence or two, why did you choose an Intern Program and not a traditional path to obtain your teacher education?", shed some light on the reasons why interns answered as they did: interns simply can't afford a traditional path because they need to earn a salary. In summary, while the intern approach is overwhelming to many, a traditional path is simply not an option for this profile of adults who, given this alternative path, are now available to provide a much-needed service to our public-school students. All teachers shared in a posterior survey question that they chose the intern path due to the full salary while receiving on-the-job training. Interns chose special education because of the employment opportunities because they believe intern programs prepare teachers as well as a traditional program would have. Interns are not only grateful for the opportunity of receiving on-the-job training, but they also believe that their training as a teacher in the alternative path is just as good if not better than the traditional path. However, there is

some dissonance. Some Intern Teachers shared that they felt thrown in the water and that they had to sink or swim, meaning they didn't feel adequately prepared for the task of teaching children with disabilities and the many tasks associated with it besides the teaching itself, such as chairing meetings, designing individualized education plans, and interpreting complex psychoeducational and behavioral reports. Others share that a slower start by having more direct support in the classroom in the first month of school could be beneficial for the anxiety level of new teachers. This is something to consider to lower teacher attrition rates.

Intern Teachers Feel Unprepared to Write IEPs, BIPs, Assessment Reports

Likert-type survey statements 4-7 and 10-11 are related to a few very important skills for the special education teacher in the classroom that most likely were not part of their previous professional experience, even if they were in the classroom. Those are the areas that may be entirely new to an Intern Teacher, and the interns are many times required to deliver one or more of those skills on day one on the job: implementing and writing behavior plans and IEPs, performing academic assessments and writing reports, using Assistive Technology, and chairing IEP meetings. Their answers align with my observations in the field that special education teachers in general don't feel equipped to write behavior plans and from research such as Moore et al. (2019) in which Bay Area special education teachers indicated that pre-service classes didn't have much impact on their confidence to manage challenging behaviors. From my experience as an instructor, I heard frequently over the years from Interns that they don't feel knowledgeable enough to successfully address students' behaviors. Baker's (2005) study finds a relationship between self-efficacy and readiness when it comes to managing behaviors. Even though Intern Teachers don't feel completely sure about how to write behavior plans, interns believe they can implement them. For example, when interns receive a BIP (Behavior

Intervention Plan) for a student, which states the behaviors that need to be addressed, along with a list of events that usually lead to the behavior (antecedents) that should be avoided, and a list of rewards and consequences that should be implemented for students appropriately or inappropriately following the plan, Interns feel comfortable applying the plan. In some schools, a professional called a BCBA (Board Certified Behavior Analyst) writes such plans, but due to staff or budget shortage, teachers are many times asked to collect data and write the BIPs themselves. Interns have shared that they feel unprepared to write such behavior plans. This item shows that interns feel capable to manage behaviors in their classrooms if they have guidance but feel unequipped to make determinations related to behavior in the beginning of their career. The area of academics is in stark contrast with their beliefs in the area of behavior. According to the answers on Question 6 in the survey, all interns believe that they are able to assess students in their academics. This is reassuring and indicates a success in this area of instruction. According to the answers to Question 7, Intern Teachers seem to feel somewhat insecure about their knowledge in the area of Assistive Technology, but not as much as in the area of behavior. All the interns are very confident in their ability to perform one of the most important tasks of their jobs, which is to write individualized educational plans for their students. Chairing IEP meetings should be the role of a site or district administrator, but in reality, special education teachers take the lead. New teachers feel insecure being in a position of leading a team of experienced professionals. In conversations, I have heard from interns that site administrators are often not knowledgeable in regard to special education, and teachers feel obligated to be in command. Baker (2005) indicates that the role of administrators is key for teacher success, but they need to apply a situational leadership approach and thoughtful professional development.

Intern Teachers Feel Prepared to Deliver Content

The answers to the Likert-type survey statement 8: “I can teach reading”, shows that all interns are confident in their abilities to teach reading. This shows special education teachers’ self-perceived strength in academic areas more than in social-emotional learning.

The answers to the Likert-type survey statement 9: “I can teach ELL students”, indicates that the majority of teachers are confident in their abilities to teach the ELL population.

The answers to the Likert-type survey statement 12: “I can support general education teachers”, is reassuring as well, even though some teachers have shared in conversation that they are not able to support general education teachers, the majority of them believe in their ability to do so.

Beginning Teachers are Required to Support More Experienced Professionals in General Education

The answers to the Likert-type survey statement 13: “I receive support from school administration”, indicates that the majority of interns feel supported by their administrators.

Knowledge Comes From Practice

The answers to the Likert-type survey statement 14 are in the area of the construct of knowledge-for-practice: “I believe university research should have more presence in public school classrooms”. There was not a very strong positive response here in regard to university research presence in public school classrooms. The answers to the Likert-type survey statement 15 are in the area of the construct of knowledge in practice: “I believe being a student-teacher for one year instead of a teacher-of-record would have prepared me better to perform my role”, indicates that the interns believe the quality of the alternative path as interns having on-the-job training prepares them for their role as teachers. The answers to the Likert-type survey statement 15 are in the area of the construct of knowledge of practice: “I believe on-the-job training is the

best way to become a more effective teacher”, show that interns believe on-the-job training is the best way to learn the special education teacher profession.

Teachers Create a More Just and Democratic Society

The answers to the Likert-type survey statement 16 are in the area of the construct of Emancipatory pedagogies: “I believe teachers have a role in creating a more just and democratic society”, shows that teachers believe their role is as crafters of citizens, and not only instructors of subjects. However, during the interviews they shared that they feel untrained to perform this role, and that they mostly let students bring up real-life topics and lead discussions while teachers sit back and facilitate the conversations.

Special Education Can Be Delivered Remotely in a Case-by-Case Basis

Likert-type survey statements 17 to 20 were directly related to delivering special services in the times of COVID-19: “I believe students with disabilities are able to receive FAPE (Free and Appropriate Public Education), as required by IDEA, in a remote setting”, shows a split, and during the interviews, teachers shared the reasons why teachers believe students can’t receive FAPE remotely. From the interview responses, teachers believe that some students can, and others are not able to attend remotely depending on the type or severity of their disability. Also, others who are capable of attending remote instruction can only do so if there is in-home support with executive function (attending class on time, being ready for class, taking timed breaks). The remote platform itself is not an impediment to many students, however they do need accommodations. The survey statement “I believe having separate remote sessions with students with disabilities is not an infringement of their right to LRE (Least Restrictive Environment), as required by IDEA”, also shows a split, with a tendency to believe that students with IEPs should receive instruction with typical peers. What has been shared during interviews is that students

should receive instruction with their typical peers, but with varied appropriate accommodations, and that they should also receive specialized instruction as needed to supplement general education. Responses to Statement 19 of the Survey (“I believe learning loss during COVID will take longer to recover for students with disabilities”) show that the majority of teachers agree that students with disabilities will take longer to recover than other students, but that in their opinion, the learning loss varies immensely within the population with disabilities, depending on the type of disability they have.

Analysis of Interviews

My first observation of the interviews is that teachers appreciate being heard. Teachers are laborers of knowledge and are therefore particularly keen to have a say in their work, even more so than other salaried professionals. From my informal conversations, what I heard often were sentences such as, “They make us do all this stuff and never ask our opinions”, “They change the regulations too often”, “They don’t know what they are doing”, “They keep adding more and more for us to learn and do”, in referring to school district administration and the CDE (California Department of Education). As critical thinkers themselves, teachers can’t help but to reflect on their own practices, and on the impact they have on their students and on society in general. As 21st century citizens, they also reflect on their own wellbeing, mental health, and their rights as caretakers of the next generations. Teachers are very aware of the importance of their roles in society.

The interview questions were structured following the flow of my four research questions. In the following paragraphs, I analyze the interview responses as related to each research question.

In regard to RQ1, “How are current second year YSCTC intern teachers experiencing their preparation to meet the needs of students with disabilities in a remote setting within the context of the COVID-19 pandemic?”, the interns reported their experience as having Benefits and Challenges as compared to in-person teaching.

Remote TE Benefits

Within the Benefits Category, three main themes emerged: (a) Time, (b) Money and (c), Stress. In regard to Time, sub themes included (a) Having more Time with Family, (b) Having More Time in General, (c) Saving Money on Gas, (d) Saving Money on Childcare, (d) Less Stress Managing Life, and (e) Feeling at Ease Online. Remote TE had the benefit of allowing Interns to spend more time with their families by allowing them to be home between work and class, during dinner breaks, and by allowing them to be available to their family sooner by not having to drive home after class. They also save time commuting, as stated by Participant A: “I work in Vacaville and classes would be in Davis. The 30-minute drive and then hopping on Zoom is different from the 30-minute drive in trying to get to an actual class”. Less commuting also saves money on gas by allowing them to stay home. According to one Intern, saving money on childcare was another bonus, because being at home allowed them to be with their children during class time. Above all, according to the interview responses, remote TE had the benefit of allowing Interns to feel less stress by making life tasks more manageable. As Participant A shared,

Having the ease of having everything over Zoom and in distance learning has made it all very manageable and, made it, a lot more accessible for us as adults. Because we all have lives. We all work full time and then have to come home and have to take these classes. COVID moving to distance learning has helped make it a little easier.

Additionally, remote TE had the benefit of allowing Interns to feel comfortable by allowing them to be in a virtual environment in which they already had previous experience.

Remote TE Challenges

Within the Challenges category, one main theme emerged which was Poor Engagement, as defined as Interns not fully participating in their remote Teacher Education. Within the main theme of Poor Engagement, two reasons were listed: Remote TE had the disbenefit of poor engagement by allowing Interns to be distracted with home-related issues, and also by allowing Interns to be preoccupied with health-related issues due to the fear of COVID-19. Participant B shared that, “I think even for us, it's easy to get distracted when we're in class”. Participant A reminded the interviewer that it was not all easy with a deadly disease hovering: “I think just the extra stress that COVID gives, impacts my teaching and my path, because it's just an extra thing to think about that kind of blocks your brain”. Therefore, while remote TE was experienced by Interns mostly as having benefits, they are aware that the context of the pandemic made even positive experiences a challenge. The benefits of remote Teacher Education could not be fully experienced within the context of a pandemic caused by a novel virus.

The second research question: “How are current second YSCTC intern teachers experiencing delivering instruction and services to students with disabilities in a remote setting within the context of the COVID-19 pandemic?”, elicited very lively discussions. Interns perceived remote instruction delivery of special education services as having both Benefits and Challenges as compared to in-person delivery of services.

Delivering Instruction Remotely – Benefits

Within the Benefits category, one main theme emerged: online instruction lowered some students’ anxiety levels. As Participant C shared, “A lot of special ed students benefit from being

at home and being away from the anxieties that come along with school and the stressors that being in school have". Participant D was more detailed in their analysis:

I think remote learning is definitely beneficial and there's definitely a lot of upside to it. There's definitely a huge group of students that would rather, you know, I think the mornings are really tough getting up every morning, doing the routine is really tough for a lot of our students. So, if they were just able to log in, maybe even not, not even exactly at 8 or 8:30 in the morning just giving students that opportunity to just login and see their work that's done or post it online and they can do that at home instead of coming in, I think it's very beneficial to have the remote learning. They don't have to already start the day knowing that they're late. They don't have to be already frustrated.

Participant A specifies that, in their opinion, the type of disability a student has will determine if remote learning is beneficial or not:

I think that students in special education can receive services remotely depending on how they qualify for special education services. For example, some of my kiddos are able to stay in their seats and look at the screen, and they have more processing deficits and not attention. So, I can give them instructions through Zoom given the right technology, I'm able to screen share and send manipulatives home and things like that. I'm able to instruct them and they're able to learn, attention's not a difficulty, so they're able to attend and pay attention. Students who qualified because they have inattentive tendencies and things like that, it's a little bit harder for me to provide services remotely because oftentimes I would, I can't go up next to them and just tap their desk and say, Hey, remember, this is what we're doing.

Interns also had suggestions to increase the Benefits of remote instruction delivery. Participant B mentioned that “It would be helpful if we had an after school or seventh period program like a math lab where students can come and get help. A hybrid system could have worked better”. Participant B brought up one interesting benefit: Remote Delivery of Instruction had the self-perceived benefit of masking students' disability by allowing students to disappear in the crowd.

Delivering Instruction Remotely – Challenges

Within the Challenges category of delivering instruction remotely, the two main themes that emerged were Family Inequality and Poor Engagement. Remote Delivery of Instruction had the disbenefit of increasing the inequality in learning because of the effect of family inequality in the following ways: some students had parents helping at home, others didn't; some family members had COVID, and others didn't, some students simply lacked an adequate family environment or space that was conducive to learning:

During the virtual learning, I had students who had their parents right there with them, and so, they were able to actually receive instruction. However, there were students who were home alone and didn't have any adults there to help them get on the computer or make sure they were doing it. (Participant ???)

Within the Poor Engagement subtheme, Interns shared that some students were not engaging properly due to their disability, others due to poor instruction in the subject areas (not all teachers are tech savvy), and by simply not being there:

There's not a way to really keep track or you can't really enforce attendance because of the pandemic. Perhaps if you were not in a pandemic, and you have a student who is able to log in, you can check their attendance and they could actually be able to participate.

The remote platform is not the issue. There are other issues that led to remote instruction not working. (Participant ???)

Finding out my Interns' perception of their program was important to me and to my overall area of study which is teacher preparation. In regard to the third Research Question: "How did second year YSCTC intern teachers perceive the Internship Program when compared to a Traditional Program?", as expected, some teachers believe the Internship model is better while others believe the Traditional Path is better.

Internship Path is Best

According to Participant D, the Intern Program is better than Traditional Programs by providing on-the-job-training experience:

I felt like the inter program has prepared me, uh, cuz, I do have other friends who are teachers who went through the traditional path where they had to do the student teaching for a year. And I found out that when you're doing student teaching, you're, you know, obviously you're shadowing a teacher plus you don't get paid.

The fact that Interns get a full teacher salary was mentioned by all four participants.

Three participants mentioned that they would not be able to afford a traditional program.

Participant A shared that,

I think my program has prepared me better than a traditional program because I already have a bachelor's and a master's degree and it wouldn't have worked very well for me to go back and do a whole other degree program. I feel like I'm able to use my knowledge and education and apply it towards teaching.

Participant B shared that,

My biggest thing was I've changed my career year into teaching like late. So I changed when I was 40 years old. So, I can't be without a job. So. an intern program gave me the opportunity to have hands-on teaching experience as well as being the teacher of record.

All Interns had suggestions to improve the Internship program. Participant A suggested that, I think what would be really, really helpful is if we had a mock IEP meeting and everyone could hear the instructor run the IEP meeting and go through everything and obviously it can be really fake, but that way we can see how it's done and what information needs to be there beforehand. And, you know, making sure that you, um, have everyone introduce themselves at the beginning of the meeting, and at the end ask the parents, do you think we facilitated your involvement? Like all those little details that we wouldn't know to do.

Interns also made suggestions for pre-service classes, with requests for more instruction on how to write IEPs. Participant B shared that,

Pre-service classes were more general classes, technology, creating a positive learning environment, things like that, which applied, but weren't specific to, how do I write my IEP? I think they gave us a general understanding of an IEP, but it wasn't enough that I felt like I knew what I was doing when I walked in.

Traditional Path is Best

Some Interns believe the Traditional Program is better than the Intern Programs by providing more time to learn the job. Participant C shared that,

I think that the intern program, well, I don't know if it would have better prepared me than a traditional one, because I haven't been a part of a traditional program, but at the same time, I do think that if I weren't a part of an intern program, and I had already done

student teaching, I wouldn't have felt as thrown in to just a classroom. Because as interns, we took classes during the summer and then we didn't get to shadow or anything before we were just accepting positions and starting the first day at a school without knowing what to really do. So, in that sense, I don't think that the classes that I took prior to accepting the position really helped me know what my job was, like, what do I go in and do on day one.

Teachers as Agents of Change

Questions related to the fourth and last research question: “How did second year YSCTC intern teachers experience their role as agents of change?”, also promoted a fruitful and open-hearted discussion. Under the topic of Teachers as Agents of Change, two main subtopics emerged: Teaching Critical Thinking when addressing world news in the classroom and Teachers as Social Workers. Participant A shared that,

You don't wanna ever wanna bring in your own political beliefs into it, but you always wanna encourage things to students to, you know, look it up or investigate for themselves. Knowing how to deal with police is maybe not something that's ever explicitly told to children. And I think it's important. And so those kinds of real-world issues I like to address 'em when they come up organically.

Participant B didn't think their teacher training prepared the Interns to address those issues:

To be honest, like I don't think our teaching program does prepare you for it because really there is nothing to prepare you. Like how do you answer these really tough questions? How do you, um, give them an answer, or that that's not so controversial or even, but let them understand, like let them know, that it's okay.

Participant C mentioned news topics that come up often in the classroom at this moment in history, and how difficult they perceive them to be addressed,

I think there was an issue they were talking about, I think women there was a huge thing with, Black Lives Matter as well. We also had a student who was like trans and wanted to be transition from a male to a female. So those are very touchy, very, um, maybe even controversial issues. Like, when we talk about history, if we talk about, um, slavery and whether it was right or wrong and like bigger things like that, which the district always doesn't like us bringing up, but when it does come up in conversation, I think that we play a really big role in teaching them that, hey, like mistakes, like there were things that were, that were not okay and that were wrong. And, um, I think that because the greatest influence at home is parents, teachers do the job of being another adult that can show kids a different perspective if their parents don't agree with, um, whatever we're teaching. So yes, I think that we play a really big role and sometimes they're so sheltered at home that school is the only place where their bubble is broken. And so, they get to see kids who, um, are not as well off or they get to see teachers who are struggling, or it just depends like whatever they're seeing. Um, they might not be exposed to it at home, but it might give them a different perspective. I try to walk the line so that I don't, um, piss my principal off, but at the same time, I don't feel like I'm not teaching these kids anything about the real world.

Chapter Five

DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND CONCLUSIONS

Discussion

The following is an integrated analysis of the results of observations, surveys, informal conversations and interviews using a holistic data analysis approach. I will use the data analysis incurred in the last section and proceed to elaborate on my conclusion and recommendations derived from this study and in combination with the results of other studies that connect to my research.

Given the findings of the studies cited and my own findings and given the difficulties imposed by an overnight shift of in-person to remote work and learning, the results of my study reveal that the YSCTC Intern Program is being successful in accomplishing its goals of training interns remotely, at least from the perspective of the Intern teachers. Aligned to what was presented in the literature review regarding Wright et al. (1987), which states that more than a third of individuals participating in an intern-type of program wouldn't have made the career change if it wasn't for the intern option, our interns at YSCTC are adults in their thirties or beyond who are career-changers and have families, and none of them could afford the cost of a traditional path. This much-needed workforce for the California public schools comes to our classrooms mostly without or with little teaching experience, but with a bachelor's degree, mostly from state schools, and with varied work experience and a passion for teaching. They are fairly diverse, mirroring the demographics they will find in the classrooms, also as predicted by results of other studies reviewed (McKibbin, 2001). They are mature individuals that have an approach to teaching that younger teachers in their 20s may not have, with many having the added perspective of being parents themselves, and they are grateful to learn while being paid.

So, while there is room for improvement on some elements of the program (please keep reading for recommendations), the conclusion is that the YSCTC Intern Program is offering a viable and satisfactory option to provide the State of California with new teachers, and it was able to do so under a remote model implemented on an emergency basis during the pandemic.

In regard to remote teacher education, the data show almost unanimously, the advantages that remote learning has for adults: it saves time and money, lowers stress, allows for better eating habits and more family time, and therefore it is a healthier model. The conditions of a pandemic affected the intern teachers' personal lives, but not the quality of the instruction the interns received, according to their own analysis of cost-benefit. All of the interns agreed that the remote model should continue even once COVID-19 is under control.

However, there is room for improvement. As stated by the Theory of Transactional Distance (Moore,1997), lack of engagement does lead to lack of quality in remote teaching and learning. The three tenets of Moore's Transactional Distance Theory are dialogue, structure and autonomy. While interns reported satisfactory interaction between the instructors and the class, and flexibility in structure and autonomy allowed for interns to develop their learning, still, in order for remote instruction to be more successful, the classes would need to be even more interactive. To do so, investment in training and research will be necessary in a scenario post-pandemic, including non-emergencial, but perennial, long-term teacher training.

As far as teaching students with disabilities remotely, the perception is different. Also aligned to Devine & Parr (2008), the interns report that the simple presence of students with disabilities along with typical students is not a guarantee for inclusion. Unlike adults, according to the participants, children need to socialize with others in order to learn and grow as individuals. Children, especially children with learning disabilities and atypical behaviors, need

the presence and redirection of adults plus typical peer-modeling that is absent in remote environments. While a specific range of population with anxiety or other social-emotional issues may benefit from the remote model as discussed before, this advantage doesn't apply broadly or to the majority of the students with disabilities, and a remote model to deliver special services must be individualized.

When it comes to teachers as agents of creation of a just and democratic society, which is the focus of Liberatory Pedagogy and one of the frameworks guiding this investigation, interns agree that they perceive themselves to have such a role, and they are aware of the impact they have in children's lives. However, the interns shared that they are not trained properly on how to perform this role to its full potential or how to facilitate conversations about difficult topics when they are brought up. Most teachers shared that they either avoid the conversations altogether, or that they just manage the students' interaction without feeling confident on how to intervene properly. We, educational leaders, need to address that. If we are to require that teachers act as agents of change, we must create space for deep dialogues that include real-life topics such as racism, sexism, genderism and ableism that come up in the classrooms. We must go beyond mandatory beginning-of-the-year professional development and embrace teachers in their own humanity year-round, with humility, faith, trust, hope and solidarity, as Freire (1970) has so skillfully explained. Student conscientization is a process, and not a ready-to-print strategy. It is transformative, and it doesn't happen overnight. As listed by Gordon (1986) and explained in the framework section, teachers need heuristic tools, opportunities to experiment and then to be able to offer new epistemological perspective. If educational leaders such as I seek to keep human teachers within highly technological spheres, we must allow their uniqueness and humanity to flourish, otherwise content can be delivered automatically. Issues such as racism need to be

addressed as described by CRT: racism permeates the norm, it serves a purpose, it is a construct (Delgado and Stefancic, 2017). Ladson-Billings (1995) discovered in her research that the one thing teachers of minoritized students had in common was their commitment to such population and their beliefs in the potential of each of their students. Why are we as educational leaders not taking advantage of that? The State of California has its Standards for the Teaching Profession already aligned to CRP's competencies, but we as teacher educators must make these competencies come to life going beyond simply mentioning them in our credentialing programs, in the same way that the multiculturalism that CSP seeks to sustain goes beyond "Cinco de Mayo" Celebrations with tacos and plastic sombreros. Positive cultural identity is not strengthened by turning culture into entertainment. Lastly, given this research is within the field of educating students with disabilities, we must address the fact that, as Denhart (2008) has stated, students with disabilities are a very diverse group, and they experience their conditions depending on other unrelated factors such as their race, gender, sexuality and social economic status.

In summary: in order for teacher education to reach its full potential, whether remotely or in-person, within a pandemic or not, educational leaders must implement direct teaching of Humanization, Critical Conscientization, and Problem-Posing Education System discussions to wholly prepare teachers to have the discussions that are unavoidable, desirable, and actually mandatory in the 21st Century American public educational system (Nouri & Sajjadi (2014).

Limitations

This study took into consideration only one of the current cohorts at YSCTC. Its results could be more widely generalized if there had been a broader data collection, including the other

cohorts of YSCTC that had the opportunity to compare in-person instruction to remote instruction.

In addition to expanding the recruitment within YSCTC, in order to make solid recommendations to the broader scenario that is under the scope of the California Department of Education, other Intern Programs in Northern, Central and Southern California should be researched. The demographic differences present in rural, suburban, and dense areas make it difficult to generalize the results of the mostly rural area where YSCTC is located and expanding the sample to every corner of the state would provide more comprehensive data.

Implications for Policy and Practice

Based on my data, discussion, conclusions and considering the limitations listed above, I have a few recommendations to the California Department of Education derived from this study.

My first recommendation is that the CDE expand the reach of intern programs to make them available in a remote or at least a hybrid model, with only summer in-person classes complemented by a remote learning environment during the regular school year. Using such a model would benefit the well-being of the teachers, which has a direct consequence to the service they provide to our vulnerable population and would expand the reach of the intern programs to more remote areas.

My second recommendation is in regard to specific pre-service classes based on what teachers shared in the surveys and interviews. The California Commission on Teaching Credentialing (CTC) states as Pre-Service Requirements that “Each Multiple and Single Subject Internship program must include a minimum of 120 clock hour (or the semester or quarter unit equivalent) pre-service component which includes foundational preparation in general pedagogy including classroom management and planning, reading/language arts, subject specific

pedagogy, human development, and specific content regarding the teaching English Learners pursuant to California Code of Regulations §80033” (CTC, 2021). While YSCTC does offer all the classes as required such as Preservice Classroom Management and Environment, Preservice Reading and Language Arts, Teachers as Learners, Preservice Best Practices for Special Education, Preservice Human Development and Typical/Atypical Behaviors, Preservice English Language Learners, Preservice Technology for the Classroom, Preservice Cognitive Science and Teaching, Preservice Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment (Pre-Service Courses-Intern, 2022), the Interns have shared that they need even more practical items such as setting up classrooms, reading and writing IEPs, and participating in performing assessments, and reading and writing reports.

Interns have contracts in place by the time they participate in pre-service and should therefore have access to school buildings to set up their classes, under the guidance of their district and/ or program supervisors. The interns shared they didn’t understand IEPs upon beginning their jobs. It is recommended that interns have access to their caseloads during the summer whether on paper or through the online IEP system used by their district, and they read all IEPs under the guidance of a mentor and prepare a summary for general education teachers as part of their summer pre-service experience. As far as assessments, interns should have hands-on training with academic assessments, ideally observing assessments being performed over the summer, whether remotely or in-person, and writing assessment reports. Interns should be provided with each district’s expectations for assessment reports, as determined by each Special Education Local Plan Area (SELPA). In the area of getting ready for IEP meetings, during the summer interns should prepare their IEP schedule for the year ahead, participate in mock-IEP meetings, and have training on writing present levels and goal updates. Interns should also

receive training in the role of leaders of an IEP team and learn how to position themselves as such. Interns should receive training in the area of AT (Assistive Technology) in the beginning of the program, as well as in implementing and developing behavior plans. For teachers of students, ages 15 and above, training on writing transition plans should take place during pre-service. Additional recommendations for pre-service classes that are aligned with emancipatory pedagogies is to invest in teacher training on how to effectively address real-life issues in the classroom such as bias and stereotyping, and how to develop lesson plans to actively teach students such important civic skills as well as developing basic curriculum in social-emotional learning.

My third recommendation is to have the CDE develop a statewide assessment tool that can quickly determine if remote instruction is appropriate to a specific student, as an additional special service option to find out which students would benefit from the remote platform even after the pandemic has been resolved. Such an option could have a cap of days, in the same manner that the model of home-hospital does. More research is necessary to draft such an assessment.

A few interns suggested I recommend to the state to try to place new interns as co-teachers as defined as classrooms with one general education teacher and one special education teacher that are able to deliver standardized based curriculum in a manner and at a ration that makes content accessible to students with disabilities. Placing interns as co-teachers both in general education classes or special education classes, working under the guidance of a master teacher but with a teacher-of-record status and a full beginning teacher salary, would ease the burden on both general education and special education teachers.

Another item that came up frequently was the lack of staff trained in behavior strategies at schools. One recommendation is to train and hire at least one Board Certified **Assistant** Behavior Analyst (BCaBA) per school site, who will work under the guidance of a district level BCBA (Board Certified Behavior Analyst), a school psychologist or an experienced classroom teacher. Social workers should also be hired to supplement support at school sites and lessen the load teachers perform in the area of social work.

All the recommendations above will be made available to CDE and to the YSTC for consideration.

Recommendations for Future Research

As I performed this study, many more questions than answers have risen, and make excellent areas for further research. A few of these are:

1. Should some special education students be allowed to attend classes remotely as part of their accommodations? Which assessments should be used to make such decision?
2. Could effective remote teacher education affect teacher attrition?
3. Have public school teachers been part of the Great Resignation?

Summary of Conclusions

In summary, this study answered its four research questions in the following manner:

1. Intern teachers experienced their remote preparation to meet the needs of students with disabilities in a remote setting within the context of the COVID-19 pandemic having more benefits than challenges, with most of the benefits being listed as flexibility in their schedules.
2. Intern teachers experienced delivering instruction and services to students with disabilities in a remote setting within the context of the COVID-19 pandemic as

having more challenges than benefits, mostly due to the nature of some students' disabilities that require in-person individualized attention.

3. Intern teachers experienced the Internship Program as a better option for them than a traditional program due to the ability inherent to intern programs to provide teacher candidates with a full teacher salary.
4. Intern teachers experienced their role as agents of change as mostly unfulfilled due to lack of guidance on how to appropriately address real-life issues that come up in the classroom.

Despite my list of recommendations in previous sections, the YSCTC intern program seems to be successful from the intern teachers' perspective and experience. Intern programs are the only viable option for career-changers, and/or for adults who can't afford to go to school full-time, and such programs do help bringing new teachers into the workforce. Teaching continues to be a career that accommodates parents' needs for a paycheck while offering availability and flexibility so that they can attend to their own children's needs. The intern program at YSCTC is filling a gap in the Sacramento-Davis area. If a remote option can be made permanent, I believe based on my research that an even wider gap can be closed, and more students will have more quality teachers in their classrooms delivering instruction and services, and an overall positive experience in our schools.

At the final writing of this document, the YSCTC Intern Program has decided to go back to in-person classes.

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Appendix A

CONSENT University of California at Davis Consent to Participate in Research

Title of study: Preparing New Special Education Teachers During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Investigator: Naiade Viana Dourado

Introduction and Purpose:

You are being invited to join a research study. The purpose of this study is to understand the best practices on training new special education teachers remotely.

If you agree to participate in this research, you will be asked to fill out a survey and possibly selected to participate in an interview. You will be asked questions about your experience receiving and delivering instruction remotely. Surveys and interviews are expected to take 20-30 minutes each to complete.

When you participate in this research you will be audio & video recorded, but your name or any other information will not be included on the final transcription of the content. All audio & video materials with identifiers will be destroyed after content is transcribed into unidentifiable data.

Participation in research is completely voluntary. You are free to decline to take part in the project. The risks of this research are minimal. Some of the questions might make you feel uncomfortable or upset. You do not have to answer any of the questions you do not want to answer. Whether or not you choose to participate, or answer any question, or stop participating in the project, there will be no penalty to you.

There is no direct benefit to you from taking part in this study. We hope that the research will further develop our field's understanding of how to prepare special education teachers remotely. All data will be used to make programmatic recommendations.

Questions

If you have any questions about this research, please feel free to contact the investigator at (925) 322-1477 or ndourado@ucdavis.edu

If you have any questions about your rights or treatment as a research participant in this study, please contact the University of California Davis, Institutional Review Board at 916 703 9158 or HS-IRBEducation@ucdavis.edu.

If you agree to take part in the research and allow the interview to be recorded, please print a copy of this page to keep for future reference, then click on the “Accept” button below.

What are my rights when providing electronic consent?

- California law provides specific rights when you are asked to provide electronic consent:
 - You have the right to obtain a copy of the consent document in non-electronic format
 - You have the right to provide consent in a non-electronic format.
 - If you change your mind about electronic consent, you have the right to request your electronic consent to be withdrawn and you can then provide consent in a non-electronic format; however a copy of your electronic consent will be maintained for regulatory purposes. If you wish to withdraw your electronic consent please tell the study team
- This agreement for electronic consent applies only to your consent to participate in this research study.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR RESEARCH INVOLVING SURVEYS/INTERVIEWS AND/OR FOCUS GROUPS

1) Objectives

This study aims to understand the best practices on training new teachers remotely to teach students with disabilities who have an Individualized Education Plan.

2) Background

In 1996, the US Department of Education published a report titled “Getting America’s Students Ready for the 21st Century: Meeting the Technology Literacy Challenge.” This document presented a framework for states and districts to support the use of technology in achieving high standards of teaching and learning in all classrooms for all students. In 2020, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, institutions of education across the country were required to become proficient overnight on what they were not able to master during the previous quarter of century.

3) Indicate the procedures that you will use to collect data.

Surveys – Attach all surveys you will use in this study.

Interviews – Attach an interview script with the questions that will be asked during the interview.

Focus groups – Attach a summary of the questions and issues that will be discussed during the focus sessions.

Observation of public behavior – Describe the behavior you will be observing below.

Click here to enter text.

Other – Describe any other data collection or research procedures you will be conducting

Click here to enter text.

4) **Will you record any information that directly or indirectly identifies the individual on the data collection form (survey, interview responses or documentation of observations)?**

Yes – Provide justification for recording identifiers. In other words, why do you need to record the identifiers?

Surveys will be done through Google Forms, and there is identifiable information which will however be eliminated after data coding. Interviews will be recorded via Zoom, and will also be destroyed after coding of data.

No

I am collecting data through more than one survey, interview or observation. Responses obtained from only the following will include direct or indirect identifiers:

Click here to enter text.

5) **Participants' will be:**

Audiotaped

Videotaped

Recordings will be labeled with direct or indirect identifiers: Yes No

Zoom identifies participants, however this information will be destroyed after coding.

6) **Data Management and Confidentiality**

I understand that if this study involves the use of the UC Davis Health Electronic Health Record (EMR/EPIC) also contains the clinical data for Marshall Medical Center (MMC). I understand that MMC patient data cannot be accessed for research purposes and that I must take the necessary steps to ensure that MMC data is not accessed, used, or disclosed for UC Davis Health research purposes.

I understand that if this study involves use of UC Davis students' educational records (including records in the PI's own possession such as course exams/assignments), I must consult with the Registrar's office to see if all requirements of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) are satisfied.

Indicate how you will protect the data that you obtain and/or the information you record while conducting this study from disclosure to any individual who does not have a right or a need to access the information (*check all that apply*)

Individual's responses/statements will not be linked to their identity. (No identifying information will be included on the documents/recordings and the documents/recordings will not be coded and linked to the individual's identity.)

Individual's responses/statements will not include any information that identifies the individual, but the responses/statements will be coded and linked to their identity on a separate document or in a separate database.

All identifiable electronic data will be maintained on an encrypted device requiring a password for access. Passwords will not be shared and will be protected from access.

If the research includes review of medical or education records: Identifiable information from medical or education records will be stored on an encrypted device, investigators will follow applicable university policies (UC Davis Hospital Policy 1313, UCDHS P&P 2300-2499, and UC Business and Finance Bulletin on Information Security (IS-3)).

All paper records will be stored in a locked room/file-cabinet with access limited to only individuals who have a right and need for access.

Other – (e.g. how will you manage the confidentiality for visual images and/or audio/video tapes?) *All audio and video recordings will be destroyed after data coding.*

7) Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Inclusion Criteria:

25 Teacher Interns who have completed one year of remote teacher education and are currently in their second year at the YSCTC will be invited to participate in the surveys. One quarter of the participants that complete the surveys will be selected for the interviews.

Exclusion Criteria:

Interns who have not experienced one year of remote education (“year 1 interns” or who have experienced in-person training will not be invited to participate.

Age Range: All participants are between 21 and 65 years of age.

8) Study Timelines

The duration anticipated to enroll all study subjects for prospective data collection only:

I will be enrolling subjects until: December 2021

Click here to enter text.

The estimated date for the investigators to complete this study (complete primary analyses):

May 2022

9) Data Banking

Will data be banked for future use? Yes No

If yes, will the data that are banked be identifiable?

Yes, the data will be identifiable

No, the data will be completely anonymous.

No, the data will be stripped of identifiers and will be coded. The link to the individual’s identity will not be made available to those requesting data from the data bank and will be maintained separately from the data bank.

Where will the data be stored? N/A

N/A

How long will the data be stored? N/A

Click here to enter text.

Who will have access to the data? N/A

Click here to enter text.

Describe the procedures to release data, including: the process to request a release, approvals required for release and who can obtain data. N/A

10) Risks to Subjects

This data collection study poses the risk of loss of confidentiality. The risk will be minimized through the processes described above. This study will abide by all applicable law, regulations, and standard operating governing the protection of human subjects, student information and protected health information.

Other – Describe: *Click here to enter text.*

11) Potential Benefits to Subjects

The participants who complete surveys or participate in interviews, focus groups or observation of public behavior are not likely to receive any benefit from the proposed research but others may benefit from the knowledge obtained.

Other – Describe: *Click here to enter text.*

12) Sharing of Results with Subjects

Results will not be shared with subjects.

Results will be shared with subjects – Describe: Results of the study will become public domain

13) Review Requirement

Are there any contractual obligations or other considerations that require IRB review of this research, or review at intervals other than those required by the Common Rule or FDA? If yes, check box:

Yes

No

Appendix B

SURVEY PROTOCOL

Please rate the following from 1 to 10, based on how much you agree:

Survey Questions by Construct

Their teacher preparation:

- I believe remote teacher education has more advantages than disadvantages.
- I would have chosen a traditional path to credentialing if that was a possibility at this moment.
- I chose special education because of the availability of positions.
- I believe my intern program has prepared me better than a traditional program would have.

Delivering instruction & service

- I can write behavior plans.
- I can implement behavior plans
- I can assess students in their academics
- I can implement assistive technology
- I can teach reading
- I can teach ELL students
- I can write IEPs
- I can chair IEP meetings
- I can support general education teachers

- I receive support from school administrators

Knowledge-for-practice

- I believe university research should have more presence in public school classrooms.

Knowledge-in-practice

- I believe being a student-teacher for 1 year instead of a teacher-of-record would have prepared me better to perform my role.

Knowledge-of-practice

- I believe on-the-job training is the best way to become a more effective teacher.

Emancipatory Pedagogies

- I believe teachers have a role in creating a more just and democratic society.

COVID-19

- I believe students with disabilities are able to receive FAPE (Free and Appropriate Public Education), as required by IDEA, in a remote setting.
- I believe having separate remote sessions with students with disabilities is not an infringement of their right to LRE (Least Restrictive Environment), as required by IDEA.
- I believe learning loss during COVID will take longer to recover for students with disabilities
- I believe becoming a teacher during the pandemic has negatively impacted my teacher preparation.

Demographics

- Age:
- Gender:
- Do you identify as LGBTQ?
- Place of birth:
- Ethnicity:
- Do you have a disability?

General

- Where did you obtain your Bachelor's degree? Which major?
- Do you have any degrees beyond a bachelor's degree? Which? Where did you obtain it?
- Please list any jobs you have held previous to being a teacher:
- What was your teaching assignment during your first year as an intern? What is your role now during your second year?
- In a sentence or two, why did you choose an Intern Program and not a traditional path to obtain your teacher education?
- In a sentence or two, why did you choose Special Education?
- What work experience did you have before becoming an intern teacher?

Appendix C

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Preparing New Special Education Teachers Remotely During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Welcome, General Housekeeping Items, and Forms

Welcome. My name is Naia Dourado. I am a graduate student at UC Davis and will be conducting today's interview. Thank you for taking the time to share your views and experiences.

You have already completed the consent form for the survey and the demographics form. After I review the interview process, I will only need you to provide your verbal informed consent before we begin this interview, since I will be audio & video recording the interview for research purposes.

Consent

Please remember your participation today is voluntary and you should only discuss things you feel comfortable discussing with me. You may leave the interview at any time.

I will keep all information you provide today confidential. To protect your confidentiality, your comments will not be linked with personally identifying information. I will be audio and video recording our discussion so I can listen to your comments later. These recordings and my notes will be deleted at the end of the study. To protect your confidentiality, please use your first name only.

Additionally, your personally identifying information will not appear when I present this study or publish its results.

Do you have any further questions about this interview process? (Pause for response). Do you give me consent to proceed with the interview, and to record audio & video as explained? (Pause for response).

Purpose of Interview

The purpose of my research is to evaluate special education remote teacher education during the pandemic, and this interview is an important part of this study. I am interested in hearing what has been helpful or gotten in the way of teacher education on a remote platform, through the framework of teachers as agents of change in education. I will use the information that you share today to create recommendations for policy and practice to hopefully improve remote teacher education. For the purpose of today, please share your experience as it relates to remote teacher education only, as that is the focus of my study. Our conversation will last approximately 30 minutes.

Teachers as Agents of Creation of a Just and Democratic Society.

The California Standards for the Teaching Profession (CSTP) expectations requires that teachers connect learning to students' prior knowledge, backgrounds, life experiences, and interests; create a rigorous learning environment with high expectations and appropriate support for all students; engender respect for student diversity in the classroom and engage families as leaders and sources of information about students' cultural strengths.

- In a previous survey, you answered a question regarding your beliefs whether your intern program has prepared you better than a traditional program would have. This time, please answer the question and also explain why or why not: Do you believe students in special education are able to receive instruction and services remotely? Why or why not? Can you please give me an example.
- Through the lens of teachers as agents of creation of a just and democratic society, what are your thoughts about the role of teachers in assisting students in their transformative experience through education?
- What is your approach to bringing real-world issues into the classroom?
- When you are designing your lesson plans, how do you address bias, stereotyping, and assumptions about disabilities in your instruction?
- How has COVID-19 impacted your path to becoming a teacher?
- How has COVID-19 impacted your students' ability to be successful in school?

Closing

I appreciate you taking the time to meet with me and share your experiences. Your input and participation is critical to this project and I value your perspectives, insight and experiences. Is there anything else you would like to share regarding your experience receiving and delivering remote instruction during the COVID-19 pandemic? (Pause for answer). Please feel free to contact me via email if you think of anything else you would like to add once we have finished this interview. Thank you again for all you do.