

Bernhard, J. K. (1995). The changing field of child development: Cultural diversity and the professional training of early childhood educators. *Canadian Journal of Education*, 20(4), 415-436.

#### **ABSTRACT**

Current conceptualizations of child development rest on a “standard model,” based on North American standards and West European investigations. These have yielded norms without stated limitations on applicability; hence the implicit claim of a universal standard. Differences from the standard become deficiencies, disorders, or deviances. After graduation, early childhood educators apply their “knowledge” with widely varying results and face dramatic challenges in working with children of diverse linguistic, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds. Although theorizing on diversity in child development has shown three distinguishable phases, there are signs that a fourth may be emerging, one which rests on the principle of *fundamental heterogeneity* in human development. I argue that the fourth phrase reflects a valid and defensible approach to child development and briefly deal with issues surrounding specific classroom application of a developmental approach which takes culture and context to be fundamental.