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Inside this issue:

Practical Research for the Educational Community

Contents

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Editor's Perspective

Twenty-three years ago, Dr. Edwards Deming, eminent statistician, in his book, The New Economics for Industry, Government, Education (1994), established that service and production systems are not improved by measurement and testing. He affirmed that systems such as schools, hospitals and manufacturing enterprises improved as management increased the knowledge of workers, improved employee training and development, clarified the purpose of the system, planned actions, studied outcomes, and continued to improve inputs, process and outputs of a system. He ridiculed those leaders who thought that testing outcomes could improve a system. He stated that tests and measurements should be used to predict outcomes. The hard work of improving or replacing a system required objective observation, analysis, action plans, effective implementation, and thoughtful assessments.

Is it time to cease unnecessary testing? Do schools need state exams at all grades (K-10) to identify students in need of help or communities that lack the resources to improve learning in their schools? Are states with high numbers of Charter Schools or vouchers able to prove these alternative schools to community based public schools benefit children and communities? Diane Ravitch, historian of American Education and Professor of Education at New York University, has demonstrated the failure of vouchers and charter schools in Michigan and Wisconsin. We invite researchers who have identified processes that increase student learning to submit an article for this journal.

Our editorial board seeks research on character education and its benefits to students, parents and staff. Also, Lisbeth B. Schorr in her book, Common Purpose (1997), explained how strengthening families and neighborhoods were first steps to strengthen public schools and rebuild America's inner cities. Some politicians are realizing finally that testing will not make America's schools better and that the difficult work of improving neighborhood health and dental care, job training, adult education, addiction rehabilitation, and employment opportunities are foundational ingredients to better outcomes in schools and strong families that are the backbone of communities. As Dr. Deming taught so many years ago, a social system has to be understood before it can be improved. Finally, a few politicians are seeking long term and sustainable improvements in public school communities with multifaceted and well planned initiatives. Can you name one and where?

In this edition of the Journal, we present research on sustainable school improvement and school parent relationships that make a difference in student learning conducted by New York researchers. University of Nebraska researchers share how a system of professional development for teachers can improve teaching and learning. USA and Pakistan researchers present a collaborative study of effective teaching in the arts, humanities and the social sciences. A University of San Francisco researcher and several researchers from the State University of New York at Albany offer their separate research on factors that contribute to English Second Language learner success in schools. Finally, we offer research by two professors in Nigeria that explains the importance of self concept to boys and girls who are learning mathematics and how teachers promote or inhibit this foundational disposition related to student motivation and drive to learn.

I hope that you enjoy the research we share with you.

Robert J. Manley, Editor-in-Chief

Sustainable School Improvement:
Suburban Elementary Principals' Capacity Building

By Alison J. Clark, Ph.D.

Introduction

Current federal and state reform agendas, with their focus on funding, accountability systems, and mandates, are not sufficient to produce sustainable, meaningful change. Reforms however must focus on sustainability so that the overall system can continuously self-improve. Any reform work meant to sustain itself must be embedded directly into the school, changing teaching and learning practices as well as school culture (Copland, 2003; Levin & Fullan, 2008). Policies must go beyond competition and intense performance requirements.

Leithwood, Day, Sammons, Harris, and Hopkins (2006) concluded that leaders have the responsibility for revealing the abilities of teachers that potentially exist within the school setting. While there is no single model of successful school leadership, there is a common repertoire of actions and values used by effective leaders. Wahlstrom, Louis, Leithwood, and Anderson (2010) classified effective leadership practices into four broad categories:

- Setting directions - focuses on developing vision, goals, communication of the direction;

- Developing people - relates to increasing the knowledge and skills of faculty;

- Redesigning the organization - focuses on establishing positive relationships and supporting collaboration;

- Managing the instructional program - relates to teaching and learning, such as staffing, providing instructional support, and aligning resources.

Principals draw upon these basic leadership values and practices as they attend to school improvement and student achievement (Wahlstrom et al., 2010).

One way to support change is through capacity building. Critical to the change process, capacity building brings a group of people together to work toward a common goal, therefore strengthening their efficacy (Fullan, 2007). The effective leader directs and nurtures the ability of others through building capacity to support long-term school improvements. This type of reform begins at the building level, strengthening individual abilities while increasing the collective efficacy of the entire school. Raising capacity is a key task of principal change leadership efforts. Capacity building is a process to increase the individual and collective abilities of professional staff to continuously improve student learning.

Theoretical Framework

For nearly 30 years, researchers studied schools and leadership, developing models to determine the linkage between leaders and school improvement. Most models frame leadership as a one-way flow of influence and change whereby leaders influence school improvement indirectly through other variables between them. Another perspective of leadership is through the reciprocal effects model. Heck and Hallinger (2010) found that the reciprocal effects model, when compared to unidirectional models, demonstrated the most statistically significant findings. This perspective considers the interactive nature of people in schools emphasizing a mutually reinforcing relationship rather than a one-way flow of influence. It conceptualizes principals as changing in response to what is happening within the school. It is a dynamic, adaptive process that offers a contrasting, more comprehensive way to view leadership. Few studies have investigated leadership through a reciprocal effects model.

Figure 1 illustrates the reciprocal effects model as principals build capacity through the four leadership practices as described by Wahlstrom et al. (2010). The figure represents the indirect effects that leadership has on student and school growth. As a principal focuses on setting directions, developing people, redesigning the organization, and managing the instructional program, a change in thinking and behavior among teachers occurs. Subsequently, as capacity among teachers increases, the change cycles back to the principal resulting in new responses, interactions, and influence demonstrating a dynamic, mutual process of change.

Research Purpose and Questions

The increase of intense pressures to ensure long-term education reforms have created a challenge for school leaders as they direct and nurture the abilities of others. Researchers present the challenge of initiating school improvement efforts that support sustainable change (Century, 1999; Levin & Fullan, 2008; Heck & Hallinger, 2010). With the role of change leadership as a necessary component for school improvement endeavors, it is more important than ever to understand how principals build capacity.

Figure 1. Principal leadership practices within a reciprocal effects model

The purpose of this research was to understand and describe suburban elementary principals' practices and perceptions as change leaders related to capacity building through the leadership categories of setting directions, developing people, redesigning the organization, and managing the instructional program and subsequently how the principals reacted to the changing environment within the reciprocal effects model. The following research questions guided the study:

RQ1: How do elementary school principals who have led sustainable school improvement initiatives build capacity in their schools?

RQ2: What experiences have shaped these elementary school principals' leadership related to building capacity?

RQ3: How do these elementary school principals' capacity building practices align with the reciprocal effects model?

Methodology

The concept of building capacity is based on social interactions and processes. Using a descriptive case study approach provided a way to look in depth at the complex phenomenon of principals' capacity building processes by capturing details in context. This study took place within suburban elementary schools in New York State. Principals of schools having received New York State Reward School designation in the 2013-2014 school year were identified and needed to be tenured at their schools from 2010-2011 until the Reward School designation. Three principals, along with their superintendents and one teacher from each school, provided data for the three cases.

Data were collected through interviews and documents. Each principal was interviewed three times, while each superintendent and teacher had one interview. Interviews were independently reviewed and coded for concepts related to the research questions. Additionally, each case was explored for alignment to the reciprocal effects model.

Once each within-case analysis was completed, a cross-case analysis was used to build general explanations about how principals build capacity in elementary schools.

Findings

Research Question 1: How do elementary school principals who have led sustainable school improvement initiatives build capacity in their schools?

The findings suggest that building capacity is all encompassing. In other words, as principals seek to increase the individual and collective abilities of professional staff to continuously improve student learning, there are many interconnected actions. While each leadership category was unique and could be viewed individually, capacity building happened as the result of varied actions; change in one area connected to change in another. Each principal: established direction with input from teachers; nurtured a learner-centered community; provided professional development relative to teacher needs; fostered teacher reflection; and cultivated collaboration and shared responsibility.

Established direction with input from teachers. Each principal established a direction for their school based on district mission and state demands. The vision was communicated, discussed, and input was gathered from teachers, thereby establishing buy-in, a sense of commitment, and even inspiration. In some instances teachers helped to craft the schools' goals, while in other instances teachers identified individualized goals for their own growth that typically connected to the greater school or district objectives. In either case, everyone was working towards the same goals. In each case, the principal identified and communicated the overall direction for the school and kept it at the forefront of their work with teachers and communication with parents.

Nurtured a learner-centered community. The principals established themselves and the teachers as part of a learning community. They were responsive to what teachers needed and wanted to learn consistent with the overall

direction of the school. There was a clear value placed on continuous growth for the principals and teachers; principals shared their learning with teachers and supported teachers who wanted to learn more. Although the principals recognized that not all of their teachers sought out continued professional development, they made it clear that adult learning was valued.

Provided professional development relative to teacher needs. The structure and content of professional development was determined and delivered in various ways. Professional development was provided by the principal, other administrators, or outside consultants. Opportunities for learning also came from within and could be the most meaningful as teachers shared their knowledge with each other. Professional development also happened as principals provided clear and consistent feedback during the supervisory process of observation and evaluation. Not only was specific feedback provided, but principals ensured that resources were available for improvement as they held teachers accountable for follow-through. In schools with a capacity-building mindset, teachers appreciated the feedback and strived to implement recommendations. This process could only happen with a principal seen as supportive and one who encouraged growth.

Fostered teacher reflection. Each principal encouraged teachers to continually reflect on curriculum, data, and instructional strategies, indicating that opportunities were put in place to ensure conversations about their work with students. Furthermore, teachers were asked to reflect on their own learning. Reflection was encouraged throughout the formal supervisory process and during informal meetings and conversations with the principals. There was a constant focus on aspects of curriculum, instruction, and student learning as reflection was nurtured.

Cultivated collaboration and shared responsibility. Each principal cultivated a spirit of collaboration as structures were put in place to ensure that teachers were working together. Although the structures may have looked different in each context, teacher leadership was encouraged. Capacity was developed as teachers, along with their principals, planned, learned, and shared aspects of leadership together. Principals embraced the understanding that success depended on the collaborative efforts of the entire team, including the superintendent, teachers, and parents.

Research Question 2: What experiences have shaped these elementary school principals' leadership related to building capacity?

The second question sought information about experiences that shaped the elementary school principals' leadership related to building capacity. Results demonstrate varied practices, skills, and responsibilities used among principals and cited by Waters, Marzano, and McNulty (2003) as essentials to promote school improvement. Each principal: situated self as a learner; maintained focus on goals; established trust and honored relationships; reflected on input.

Situated self as a learner. Each principal situated her or himself as a learner and collaborator in achieving district, school, teacher, and student goals. Striving to be a model for learning, principals sought out information and brought it back to teachers. Each principal engaged with teachers as new curriculum and instructional strategies were learned.

Maintained focus on goals. Each principal kept a regular focus on district, building, and individual teacher goals. Maintaining consistent and specific communication happened as each principal remained on a steady course. Each principal demonstrated this as a critical aspect of supporting change as they kept goals at the forefront of the daily work through verbal and written communication.

Established trust and honored relationships. Each principal appeared to have engendered trust and confidence through consistently clear, honest, and candid communication that formed not only professional, but personal, relationships. The importance of relationships built around trust were evident as the principals, superintendents, and teachers spoke about their experiences. This research demonstrated how the principals were caring and committed individuals who placed the development of relationships as a priority.

Reflected on input. Each principal's experience demonstrated his/her willingness to gather, consider, and genuinely reflect upon input from teachers. Principals' ability to reflect was not only a model for teachers, but showed through in the decision-making process. As each principal was willing to make difficult decisions, it appeared to be done in the best interest of the school, teachers, students, families, and the district. Decisions ensured that teachers' use of time was purposeful, whether it was in the classroom with students or during professional time with colleagues. The principal's actions of gathering feedback and accounting for others' opinions furthered the teachers' belief and trust in the principal.
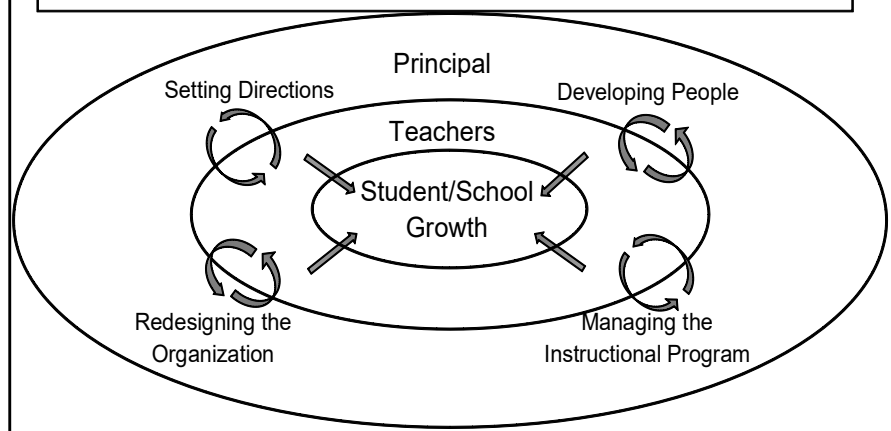
Research Question 3: How do these elementary school principals' capacity building practices align with the reciprocal effects model?

In the reciprocal effects model, leadership is viewed as an adaptive and developmental process as thinking and behavior change and develop based on the environment (Hallinger & Heck, 1996; Pitner, 1988). As each principal initiated a change, he or she was reflective and responded based on how the teachers responded. Each principal built teacher capacity, recognized change, and responded by: motivating teachers and self; supporting continued collaboration; recognizing and encouraging teacher leadership; and adapting to new circumstances.

Motivating teachers and self. Each principal had the ability to motivate others to achieve the district and school vision through communication, collaboration, and dedication in establishing school identity. As the principal inspired change in teachers, that in turn cycled back to motivate the principal creating a deeper understanding

and appreciation for the work taking place. As new demands were placed within the school, the principal responded and set a course of action with a greater awareness of the direct work of teachers.

Supporting continued collaboration. The development of meaningful collaboration has been identified by Fullan (2011) as a way to foster capacity building. Each principal embraced the understanding that success depended on the collaborative efforts of the entire team, including the superintendent, teachers, and parents. As the principals realized changes based on the collaborative work, they responded with new types of support and recrafted the goals based on new knowledge.

Recognizing and encouraging teacher leadership. As each principal initiated a change, whether it was curricular, instructional, or for the school culture, he or she observed development among teachers. Once new abilities developed, the principal often encouraged teacher leadership. In all three schools, the principals wanted to increase teacher participation. Teachers became more invested, motivated, and learned more when leading.

Adapting to new circumstances. Each principal was adaptable and responded to the school context since there is no true set of rules to follow when building capacity. Each principal worked towards curricular and instructional goals and approached his or her teachers as a whole group and as individuals.

The four themes that surfaced suggest reciprocal effects is a leadership model that recognizes the dynamic relationships among variables. This can only be seen through exploring the interactive encounters among people within their settings.

Conclusions

A comprehensive repertoire of actions and values were used by effective leaders. These findings confirm that capacity building is a key to sustainable school improvement. It is important for principals to be inclusive and collaborative. Although at times the principal as school leader may be the final decision-maker, capacity building happens when teachers are involved in the process of setting the direction, establishing individual and department goals consistent with the direction, and having choice. Furthermore, nurturing teacher leadership plays a critical role for the principal. When teachers are in leadership roles it is evident that capacity building is valued.

The findings confirm that principals' capacity building practices align with the reciprocal effects model as change flows back and forth evidencing a fluid model. For capacity building to be successful, individuals within the organization must believe that collectively they can bring about change. This type of reform begins at the building level, strengthening individual abilities while increasing the collective efficacy of the entire school. There is much potential for the idea that reciprocal effects is a more comprehensive theoretical model of school leadership, because it provides a broad and dynamic understanding of school improvement.

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Education Funding Crisis in the Suburbs:
The Impact of the 2007-09 Recession Recovery Policies and the New York State Tax Levy Cap on School District Financial Planning Practices

By John J. Galligan, Ed.D., and Anthony Annunziato, Ed.D.

Abstract

This article examines the impact of the fiscal recovery policies stemming from the 2007-09 economic recession and the implementation of the 2011 New York State Property Tax Levy Cap on the budgets of school districts located within a Long Island, New York suburban township. The research basis of this paper is based on two studies conducted by the New York State Council of School Superintendents and the New York State Council of School Business Officials and data collected from the Office of the New York State Comptroller and the New York State Education Department.

The quantitative budget data utilized for this study was collected from the Office of the New York State Comptroller and the New York State Department of Education and categorized three years prior to the enactment of the Property Tax Levy Cap (2008-09 to 2010-11) and three years after its enactment (2011-12 to 2013-14). This data encompasses the timeframe of the 2007-09 Great Recession government recovery policies and, the Gap Elimination Adjustment and the 2011 Enactment of the N.Y.S. Property Tax Levy Cap.

The recommendations of this study are separated into three parts, including the (1) the use of financial forecasting, strategic planning and fiscal tolerance assessment, (2) the recommendation for an adjustment to the New York State Tax Levy Cap modeled after other states, to provide districts with the ability to address mandated cost drivers in fiscally difficult times and (3) recommendations for further research.

Introduction

Traditionally school districts have shouldered the burden of funding programs relying on local property tax revenues and the willingness of local voters to approve capital bond issues for additional funding. Considering monetary demands of state and federal mandates, increasing healthcare contributions as a result of the Affordable Healthcare Act, and increased mandated Teacher Retirement System (TRS) pension contribution costs coupled with a 2% Tax Levy Cap, school districts are hard pressed to continue maintaining current educational services with increasingly limited revenue sources. Particular challenges that threaten the fiscal health of school districts include (1) the recovery efforts resulting from the 2008 global economic collapse, followed by short-term federal stimulus funds; (2) policymakers' responses to balance the budget and contain the growth of school revenues including the passing of a property Tax Levy Cap, (3) the Gap Elimination Adjustment; and (4) a limit on the growth of state school aid. Each of these events has impacted the actual and projected sources of funding for schools (New York State Association of School Business Officials, 2014).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine the impact of 2007-09 economic recession and the New York State Property Tax Levy Cap on the budgets of suburban school districts on Long Island regarding changes in total expenditures, state aid, district employee benefit (healthcare) contribution expenditures, per pupil expenditures, fund balances, instructional expenditures, TRS contributions, tax increases, and pupil population. A quantitative analysis of school district budgets between 2008-2009 to 2013-2014 was categorized. Data regarding school district budgets was collected from the Office of the New York State Comptroller and New York State Education Department.

Literature Review

Prior to industrialization, property taxes were considered an accurate assessment of the wealth of people living in the United States. This method of taxation was generally perceived as desirable due to its operation as a direct tax, ease of collectability, local control, impossibility to avoid, and ability to provide direct linkage between wealth and property value. Based on the ability-to-pay principle, the property tax at the local level was utilized to fund schools and operate other services of city, town, and local governments (Brimley, Verstegen, & Garfield, 2012).

In the post-industrial era, a majority of states have attempted to address disparities between personal income and property tax burden by providing property tax relief for certain groups of taxpayers as the tax is based on the value of the property and not on the ability of the taxpayers' individual economic welfare. Consequently, if the tax burden falls in greater percentage on the middle and lower class, then the tax is considered regressive and perceived as unfair. Since the 1970's, states such as California, Massachusetts, Illinois, Colorado, and New Jersey, have implemented Tax Expenditure Limitations (Property Tax Levy Caps) to ease the regressive burden of property taxes so people with low incomes do not exceed a stated percentage of their income, regardless of the value of their property. As of 2007, thirty four states utilize variations of circuit breaker programs and over forty states utilize the homestead exemption (Brimley, et al. 2012).

The Financial Challenges Facing New York State School Districts

In June of 2011 the New York State Property Tax Levy Cap was signed into law by Governor Andrew Cuomo. According to the New York Department of Taxation, the law was established to limit local governments to overall growth in the property tax levy to the lesser of 2 percent or the rate of inflation. Local town and county governments are permitted to exceed their tax levy cap by overriding the law locally with a 60% supermajority of elected representatives, and school districts can only override or "pierce the cap" with a supermajority of voters. The tax levy cap applies to all independent school districts and all local governments outside of the cities of New York, Buffalo, Rochester, Syracuse, and Yonkers. This law applies broadly to property taxes that support all local governments, including special districts that are independently governed, as well as special districts that are established, governed and administered by another municipality (NYS Department of Taxation and Finance, 2012).

In the wake of the 2007-09 recession and recovery, both the New York State Council of School Superintendents (NYSCOSS) and the New York State Association of School Business Officials (NYSASBO) conducted studies of the impending impact of the tax levy cap. The superintendents and business officials surveyed predicted a fiscally grim outcome with regard to the impact of the tax levy cap on the ability to generate revenue sufficient to maintain school district solvency and address impending cost drivers such as rising mandated pension and healthcare contributions.

A report by the New York State Council of School Superintendents in November of 2012, *Can't get there from here: A survey on school fiscal matters*, provided candid responses of superintendents who took part in the survey regarding the impact of the restraints of the tax levy cap and the effects on school district finances. The respondents indicated that between 2011-2012 and 2012-13 districts would have to eliminate an average of 9 percent of their total work force; second, 9 percent of superintendents reported that within two years their districts would not be able to ensure that their financial obligations would ever be paid; and third, superintendents reported that pension costs and health care alone rose 2.5 percent for the 2011 and 2012 school year necessitating the reliance on reserves to cover the costs (NYSCOSS, 2012).

In January of 2014, The New York State Association of Business Officials released a follow up study to their 2012 analysis titled, *The Road Ahead: School District Insolvency*, which examined the professional staffing losses and fund balances maintained by 671 New York State school districts. The original study concluded that high need school districts in rural, urban, and suburban communities were exhausting their fund balance at an alarming rate, representing the cumulative impact of the 2007-09 Recession and state efforts to contain school expenditures (NYSASBO, 2014). The findings of this study concluded, first, that 261 school districts exhibited signs of fiscal insolvency through a reduction in Unassigned Fund Balance (savings) from school year 2010-11 to 2012-13, 544 school districts showed signs of educational insolvency as a result of reduced professional staff, and 206 school districts showed signs of both fiscal and educational insolvency; second, districts were balancing their budgets at the cost of educational programs, as evidenced by cuts in professional staff. School districts had reduced staff 10 percent over the previous five years as pupil enrollment had declined only 3 percent; and third, approximately 40 percent of school districts depleted their fund balance (NYSABO, 2014).

In 2014, The New York State Association of School Business Officials released results of a survey of its members regarding the status of their fund balances titled, *School districts exhausting their fund balances*. This new survey was prompted by a previous report issued jointly with the New York State School Boards Association that reported 99 percent of school districts tapped their fund balances to plug holes in their budgets, due to limitations in state aid and the property tax levy cap. Officials from 250 out of 697 school districts in New York State responded and revealed the following; (1) 81% of respondents replied that they would exhaust or spend down their fund balances within five years if limitations on state aid and the tax levy cap remained in place; (2) 31% of respondents replied they would exhaust their fund balances within the next 18 months, and; (3) 56% of districts reported that at least 10% of their 2012-2013 operating budget consisted of monies from their fund balance (NYSASBO, 2014).

Research Methodology

A quantitative study was chosen to investigate the impact of the of the fiscal recovery policies stemming from the 2007-09 recession and the implementation of the 2011 New York State Property Tax Levy Cap on the budgets of school districts located with-in a Long Island, New York suburban township.

Instrumentation and Procedure

To accumulate the quantitative data for this study, school budget data from the Office of the New York State Comptroller and the New York State Education Department were analyzed and organized into tables comprising the quantitative changes in key categories related to student population, school district expenditures, reserves and revenue with regard to school district budgets between the 2008-09 and 2013-14 school years. Utilizing the Open Data link on the Open Book New York Local Government page on the Office of the New York State Comptrollers website, the researcher retrieved and analyzed revenues and expenditure reports as well as balance sheets from all school districts located within this Long Island township between 2008 and 2014. The expenditure categories examined were: total expenditures, district employee benefit (healthcare) contribution expenditures, per pupil expenditures, instructional expenditures, and Teacher Retirement System (TRS) contributions. The district reserve categories analyzed for this study were total fund balance and unassigned fund balances. The revenue categories examined were total state aid and property tax revenue. The student populations of these districts were also analyzed, as pupil population is a factor in the amount of state aid received by each district.

Research Question Used to Guide this Study:

To what extent have school district total expenditures, school district employee benefit contribution expenditures, per pupil expenditures, instructional expenditures, TRS contributions, district reserves, property tax revenue, New York State aid revenue, federal aid revenue, and pupil population changed from 2008-2009 to 2013-2014?

The data from the twelve school districts located within this Long Island township was analyzed and categorized into school district expenditures, reserves and revenue representing six years, from 2008-09 to 2013-14.

Findings

The findings of this study confirmed the findings of the New York State Council of School Superintendents (NYSCOSS) and the New York State Association of School Business Officials NYSASBO studies conducted between 2010 and 2014. The superintendents and business officials

Table 1

Long Island Town - School District Key Expenditure Increases from 2008 to 2014

District	Total Expenditures 2008-2014	Per-Pupil Expenditure 2008-2013*	Benefit Contributions 2008-2014	TRS Contributions 2008-2014	Instructional Expenditures 2008-2014
District A	$13,980,478	$ 3,387	$9,922,147	$4,991,467	$ 8,899,369
District B	$14,230,349	$ 4,419	$5,851,723	$2,635,770	$ 5,933,859
District C	$51,338,282	$ 1,039	$24,539,923	$10,477,933	$ 7,589,785
District D	$38,528,246	$ 2,231	$18,893,868	$6,267,452	$ 7,689,367
District E	$23,906,872	$ 4,479	$10,773,035	$4,689,195	$ 9,832,485
District F	$9,540,490	$ 5,388	$7,223,907	$3,909,217	$ 5,971,428
District G	$619,187	$ 27,388	$422,544	$117,851	**- $211,357**
District H	$11,109,881	$ 3,847	$7,090,051	$3,354,957	$ 4,387,550
District I	$11,402,139	$ 4,977	$4,460,557	$2,613,036	$ 4,288,383
District J	$14,467,866	$ 2,213	$14,673,689	$7,264,733	$ 2,831,258
District K	$14,521,707	$ 6,182	$6,357,442	$2,421,492	$ 3,703,116
District L	$13,490,013	$ 3,914	$8,211,382	$4,158,220	$ 6,131,906
Average	18,094,626	$ 5,788	9,868,356	$4,408,444	$5,587,262

Note. This data was retrieved from the Office of the New York State Comptroller's website at **http://www.osc.state.ny.us/** from Open Data link on the Open Book New York Local Government page.
*2014 Per Pupil Expenditures were not available at the time the data were collected.

surveyed in those reports predicted a fiscally grim outcome with regard to the impact of the tax levy cap on the ability to generate revenue sufficient to maintain school district solvency and address impending cost drivers such as rising mandated pension and healthcare contributions.

The findings of this research indicate that with regard to total expenditures, district employee benefit (healthcare) contribution expenditures, per pupil expenditures, district reserves, instructional expenditures, TRS contributions, and changes in tax revenue, school districts were faced with a variety of fiscal challenges still resonating from the 2007- 2009 Recession. According to both **Table 1** and **Table 2,** between 2008 and 2014, cost drivers such as district employee benefit contributions rose an average of $9,868,356 and TRS contributions rose an average of $4,408,444. From 2009-2011, three years prior to the implementation of the New York State Tax Levy Cap, the GEA was implemented causing a reduction in State Aid.

According to **Figure 1**, school districts began reserving less of an increased percentage and reducing their expenditure percentage prior to the implementation of the tax levy cap. Due to the enactment of the GEA resulting from New York State's budget deficit, the 2010-2011 school year saw the greatest reduction of average school district revenue. The enactment of the State Fiscal Stabilization Fund of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act and the 2010 Education Jobs Act offset the State Aid revenue shortfall between 2010 and 2012.

To offset the cost drivers of the school districts, lost state aid revenue from the implementation of the GEA, and in keeping property tax rates palatable to ensure the passing of budgets, school districts within this Long Island, New York township followed these strategies, (1) supplemented the lack of increased revenue by utilizing district reserves, (2) reduced the rate of instructional spending increases and, (3) reduced the rate of per pupil expenditure increases.

Conclusions

The research from this study indicates that the implementation of the property tax levy cap, coupled with the effects of the 2007-08 Recession has had and will

Table 2

Long Island Town - 2008-2014 District Key Revenue, Population, and Reserves Changes

District	Property Taxes 2008-2014	State Aid 2008-2014	Pupil Population 2008-2014	District Reserves
District A *	55% to 60%	32% to 26%	Declined by 152 students	**Decreased by $ 17,195,021**
District B	59% to 61%	29% to 23%	Declined by 108 students	Increased by $2,035,504
District C	19% to 24%	60% to 62%	Increased by 1,581students	Increased by $6,609,037
District D	38% to 39%	50% to 48%	Increased by 335 students	Increased by $26,005,178
District E	50% to 60%	27% to 26%	Declined by 611 students	Increased $5,615,476
District F *	48% to 55%	37% to 32%	Declined by 784 students	**Decreased by $1,088,106**
District G	89% to 92%	7% to 6%	Increased by 5 students	Increased by $1,602,809
District H	72% to 74%	16% to 13%	Declined by 164 students	Increased by $6,937,606
District I	52% to 61%	29% to 24%	Declined by 395 students	Increased by $1,839,581
District J*	45% to 49%	42% to 38%	Declined by 994 students	**Decreased by $22,120,127**
District K	53% to 59%	32% to 28%	Declined by 312 students	Increased by $6,554,448
District L *	53% to 58%	32% to 27%	Declined by 708 students	**Decreased by $2,278,938**
Note. This data was retrieved from the Office of the New York State Comptroller's website at **http://www.osc.state.ny.us/** from Open Data link on the Open Book New York Local Government page. * Districts mentioned in the 2014 NYSASBO Report.				
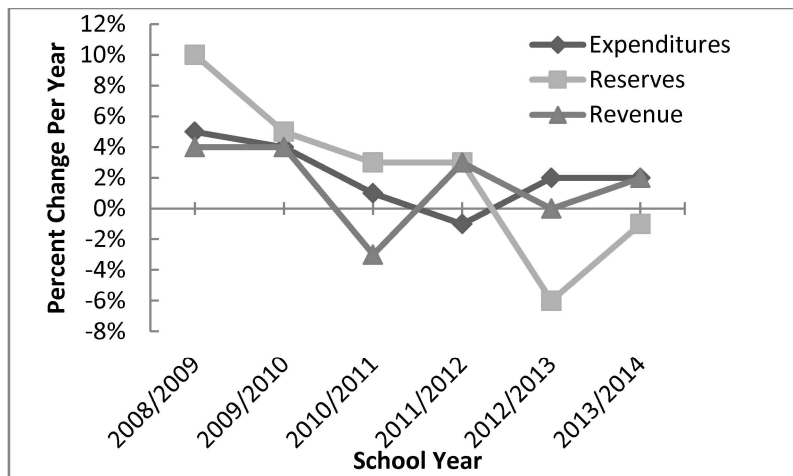
Figure 1: School District Budget Trends in the Long Island Town 2008-2009 to 2013-2014

continue to have economic consequences, necessitating school districts to reduce levels of service. Employee salaries, healthcare benefits, pension costs and government educational mandates have and will continue to increase. Without aid increases, school districts will deplete their fund balances and reduce services to offset cap-piercing tax increases forcing districts to make economic decisions based on maintaining solvency in the face of rising mandated cost drivers and a limited ability to collect revenue.

This study will help guide legislators and policymakers in evaluating the efficacy of the tax levy cap as well as provide guidance to boards of education, school district superintendents, and school business officials as they address cost drivers related to planning budgets and school district fiscal plans under the tax levy cap.

Recommendations

1. Financial Forecasting, Strategic Planning and Fiscal Tolerance Assessment

Strategic planning based off of an effective adequacy analysis is essential. School district leaders have a fiduciary responsibility as part of their governance duties that includes knowledge of ongoing financial conditions, compensation and benefits, and budgeting as they relate to the mission and goals of the organization. The practice of financial forecasting, strategic planning and the use of a relevant fiscal tolerance assessment should be standard policy among school district leadership as its vital need has been demonstrated by the impact of both the New York State Property Tax Levy Cap and the economic stressors related to the 2007-2009 Recession.

2. Adjustment of the New York State Tax Levy Cap Legislation

The residual effects of the Gap Elimination Adjustment coupled with the simultaneous implementation of the New York State Tax Levy Cap have created an untenable funding scenario for school districts to both maintain current levels of service and address mandated cost drivers. If aid increases are not a feasible option from New York State or the Federal Government, then a pragmatic "pressure release mechanism" adjustment to the New York State Tax Levy Cap must be considered to ensure that school districts can sustain current levels of educational service. This would allow districts to raise revenue to cover mandated cost drivers such as pension and healthcare increases. This study indicates that with a limited ability to increase tax revenue and a reduction in state aid, school districts have been forced to utilize fund balances and reduce instructional expenditure increases to address mandated rising TRS benefit-healthcare contributions. This strategy has led to four districts being identified by the New York State Comptroller as being in some form of fiscal stress.

In 2011, New Jersey adjusted its tax expenditure limitation law to a 2% increase with a majority override to enable school districts to seek increased property tax revenue during periods of fiscal difficulty (Chang and Wen, 2014). This was intended to provide districts with the ability to address debt payments, rising health benefit and pension costs and unforeseen emergencies. This in turn made the New Jersey Tax Expenditure Limit similar to Massachusetts's Proposition 2-½, which allows a 2.5 percent annual growth (Bradbury, Mayer, & Case, 2001).

3. Recommendations for Further Research

The results and research conducted for this study has revealed the possibilities for a multitude of follow up studies regarding the impact of Tax Expenditure Limits on school district leadership practices, educational finance policy, and school district financial planning practices.

Additional research is recommended not only on the effects of the New York State Tax Levy Cap, but also the impact of the 2007-2009 Recession on municipal and school district planning practices. The New York State Tax Levy Cap is a relatively new policy at the time of this research. It is recommended that researchers further study the impact and effect of the New York State Tax Levy Cap on school district financial planning within the next three to five years. As the economy recovers from the 2008 recession, an analysis of future budgets with a comparison to the findings of this study would provide further and in-depth analysis of the impact of the Tax Levy Cap on school district financial planning. It is also recommended that researchers conduct a comparative school financing analysis on the effects of the implementation of the New York State Tax Levy Cap to tax expenditure limitations that have been previously implemented in other states such as California, Massachusetts and New Jersey.

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The School-Parent Relationship Across Different Income Levels

By Alison Matthews, Sherry L. McPherson-Berg, Adalcy Quinton, Robert S. Rotunda, Ed.D., and Elsa-Sofia Morote, Ed.D.

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate how the school-parent relationship (volunteering, outreach, and communicating) in schools differs among the poverty level of students. One hundred eighty-nine middle school parents answered a parental involvement survey. Comparisons were made between the poverty level of students (free and reduced lunch) and the school-parent relationship. Parent respondents represented high and low poverty groups.

The school-parent relationship was categorized into three different variables; volunteering, outreach, and communicating. An independent sample t-test was conducted to compare the three variables. It was found that there was a significant difference in how schools communicate with parents from different income levels. Low income parents were less satisfied with the manner in which their child's school communicated with them. There was no significant difference in the other two variables (volunteering and outreach) across income levels. Cultural sensitivity training is recommended.

Introduction

The school-parent relationship can be defined in many ways. One vital component of this relationship is how parents interact with their child's school. This interaction can take place via at home activities or activities taking place at school. There are clear differences between parent participation at home and at school. There is also a clear distinction between the types of activities involved in both of these types of parent participation. "Parent involvement at school may include attending parent-teacher conferences, attending programs featuring students, and engaging in volunteer activities. Parent educational involvement at home may include providing help with homework, discussing the child's schoolwork and experiences at school, and structuring home activities" (Lee & Bowen, 2006, p. 194). The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (2001) identified parent involvement as a priority in the United States educational system because it was beneficial to students, especially low income students. These statements display the need for solid involvement of parents in their child's education. This study defined the school-parent relationship as how parents interact with their child's school rather than how the parent interacts with the child regarding school. There are notable differences in the school-parent relationship across different income levels. The level of the school-parent relationship, specifically in the area of communicating has been shown to be more positive with non-poverty parents. Park and Holloway (2013) noted that a key aspect of developing a supportive school-parent relationship is establishing effective and frequent communication between home and school.

A common misconception is that poverty level parents do not want to be involved with their child's school. Several researchers have disproved this notion. Bauch & Goldring (1995), explained that a family's poverty level impacts the school-parent relationship and Chavkin (1989) noted that poverty level parents want to be involved as much as non-poverty level parents in school activities and decision making. There are specific reasons why impoverished parents are not as involved as economically stable parents. Parents may desire to become more involved with their child's school but certain cultural factors may hinder them from feeling comfortable participating. Park and Holloway (2013) found it is likely that ethnic/racial differences in the school-parent relationship result in part from differences in the poverty levels of the parents.

This study examined how the school-parent relationship (communicating, volunteering and outreach) in schools differed among the poverty levels of students. This study is important because it is imperative that schools are aware of how the poverty level of the students impacts the school-parent relationship.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine how the school-parent relationship differs between the poverty level of students. The study is important because it can increase awareness about factors that can strengthen the school-parent relationship. This study evaluated the importance of volunteering, outreach, and communicating on the school-parent relationship across income levels.

This study defined the school-parent relationship as how parents interact with their child's school rather than

how the parent interacts with their child regarding school. This study focused on the differences between the school-parent relationship between non-poverty and poverty level parents. It is important to explore the obstacles that exist in creating strong school-parent relationships among different income levels and to determine how to improve these relationships.

Research Question

How does the school-parent relationship (volunteering, outreach, and communicating) differ between poverty and non-poverty levels?

Theoretical Framework

For the purpose of this study, the review of the research literature is divided into the following topical headings: volunteering, outreach, and communicating.

Volunteering

Volunteering is one aspect of the school-parent relationship where parents can be involved with their child's school. Eccles & Harold (1993) and Harris & Goodall (2008) found that studies have shown that students whose parents volunteer in their schools are more successful in their academic performance. In addition, students engage more in classroom activities and have a more positive mindset when they have actively involved parents (Mo & Singh, 2008), are more positive about school and learning (Shumow & Miller, 2001), and are more likely to enroll in honors classes (Henderson & Mapp, 2002). This is the case for students whose parents are in all income levels.

However, there is a difference in the manner in which the school communicates when the parent is from a level of poverty and when the parent is from a level of non-poverty or is considered economically stable. This often creates barriers for impoverished parents who may wish to volunteer in their child's school. Cullingford and Morrison (1999) explained the ways in which schools sanction parent involvement. However, when parents who come from poverty level incomes volunteered, their efforts were disregarded as per Lareau and Horvat (1999). Wallace (2013) stated that "parents would like to be more involved at the school and at home, but feel schools only encourage their passive support and they 'ought not to interfere with the job of teaching school curricula" (Smrekar & Cohen-Vogel, 2001, p. 90).

Furthermore, Wallace (2013) mentioned that "when each of these poverty level parents expressed their concerns about their child's school, such as the faculty's inability to meet the needs of ethnic minority children (who were included in the poverty category), the faculty's low expectations of Black children, and the faculty's unwillingness to test Black children for either learning disabilities or accelerated education programs,

their voices were silenced, their concerns overlooked, and their involvement criticized" (Wallace, 2013, p 196). This would indicate that parents may feel as if teachers diminish the importance of an impoverished parent's volunteer work because they have a low income; thus rendering the parent incapable of assisting their child educationally.

Outreach

Outreach is vital in building the school-parent relationship. Schools work better with consistent school-parent relationships. Research indicates that positive school-parent relationships make schools stronger. According to Henderson and Berla (1994) the most effective school-parent relationships occur when parents, especially those in low-income communities, partner with schools and the local community.

The inability to outreach to all parents may unintentionally exclude some students from receiving the benefits of a strong school-parent relationship. Schools use various methods to reach parents. However, "schools often have difficulty effectively bringing low-income, diverse parents onto school campuses even when they are involved in their children's education in the home" (O'Donnell, 2008, p.147). School-initiated parent outreach activities are very effective in targeting parents. The school-parent relationship is significantly stronger in schools that participate in numerous outreach methods. However, this outreach is not as effective when poverty level parents are involved. Frew (2012) identified the groups that are often unresponsive to school-initiated outreach activities. Those groups included: older students, non-Caucasian students, students from non-two-parent households, and students from lower income households. Schools often plan outreach programs that are targeted to non-poverty level parents not realizing aspects of this outreach may actually exclude poverty level parents.

School outreach programs that focus on community involvement are another outreach effort that schools can use to reach poverty level parents. These parents are not opposed to participating in activities that incorporate community involvement in the school-parent relationship but their main focus is usually on programs that would benefit their own child's learning and home environment. Frew (2012) stated that lower participation rates were not differentially higher in schools that offered a greater number of parent outreach activities. Therefore, it is not only important for schools to have various outreach methods but for schools to determine the types of outreach programs that are an effective means in reaching poverty level parents. O'Donnell (2008) discussed the results from a study that was done to determine the most effective types of outreach; the top suggestions were presentations at school meetings, outreach by involved consumers, and sign-up fairs in front of the school. Community organizations can be used as outreach partners with the schools as well. Local churches and community centers can be used as

intermediaries between the school community and parents. Furthermore, Smith (2006) suggested that partnerships with local agencies, businesses, and churches can increase parent involvement of low-income families. In short, an alternative to offering more programs could be focusing resources on improving the programs and outreach efforts that schools have found to be most effective. Many low income parents face barriers that prohibit them from being responsive to outreach efforts. There is a large segment of this population that does not speak English and even more that do not have appropriate childcare to attend some of these activities. Strong and effective outreach efforts allow parents, students, and the community to work together to improve the school-parent relationship.

Frew's (2012) research determined that the school-parent relationship was weaker in schools in which a higher percentage of students received free lunch and stronger in schools where numerous outreach activities were available. This research shows some results that may be alarming but could help schools increase outreach efforts tremendously. With some creativity and insight, outreach efforts can be appropriately customized to successfully reach poverty level parents.

Communicating

Communicating is the most pivotal factor in the school-parent relationship. "In today's society, schools and parents are responding to increased expectations, economic pressures, and time constraints" (Graham-Clay, 2005, p 117). Having strong communication is fundamental because it helps to build a sense of community between the school and home. Epstein (1995) described communicating with parents as one of the six major types of school-parent relationship practices critical to establishing strong working relationships between teachers and parents. Creating and building teacher-parent relationships is considered vital for both the development of schools and communities.

Involving families in the educational process is such an important and fundamental part of the school-parent relationship. School communication practices have increased by promoting teacher preparation and professional development programs to enhance the development of communication skills for teachers. Different avenues of communicating consist of one-way communication wherein "teachers seek to inform parents about events, activities, or student progress through a variety of sources" (Graham-Clay, 2005, p 118) and a two-way communication that involves interactive dialogues throughout the school year between teachers and parents. By incorporating both strategies, teachers will help to maximize sharing information with parents.

Since there are barriers that can restrict good communication from occurring between teachers and parents, educators have to understand that these barriers may exist at several levels and be able to address them appropriately. In order to create strong school parent partnerships,

it is essential to incorporate effective communication skills to help encourage open communication. Graham-Clay (2005) asserted that every communication exchange regardless of format, should reflect a thoughtful, planned approach and should be viewed as an opportunity for teachers to promote parent partnerships and ultimately to support student learning.

When parents are involved in their children's education out of school, their children do well academically. Many researchers have found associations between family factors and teacher-child relationship factors and academic performance and school outcomes, respectively (Englund, Egeland & Collins, (2008) (e.g., Burchinal, Peisner-Feinberg, Pianta, & Howes, 2002; Hamre & Pianta, 2001; Jimerson et al., 2000; Tucker et al., 2002; Vitaro, Larocque, Janosz & Tremblay, 2001). A teacher's competence of being able to have these communication skill sets is the primary resource for establishing an effective partnership with the family-school. Teacher-parent communications are most often described as the most important part of the school-parent relationship.

Communicating is a vital tool that educators have and they should exhibit extreme confidence when communicating with parents. As Gartmeier et al. (2016) states, in fact, teachers have to interact in professional ways in a multitude of different situations with (groups of) students, colleagues, parents as well as with external stakeholders of school education (e.g. representatives of political or economic institutions). "The degree to which parents get actively involved in school partnership practices is robustly predicted by different teacher variables, namely their sensitivity towards aspects related to parents' ethical and multicultural background" (Dotger, 2010) and their parent communication competencies (Denessen et al., 2009; Symeou et al., 2012).

If teachers manage to establish and maintain positive and functional relationships with parents, then students will benefit academically and socially. By doing this, teachers allow parents to give them feedback and allow for their perspectives and observations to be acknowledged. This helps shape and influence the communication with teachers and parents. Understanding students better is another extremely important factor that is important when stressing communication within the school-parent relationship. It helps teachers to get a complete picture of their students so that they could better understand them and provide them with positive support.

Equally important are parents' attitudes because if they feel as if their involvement is not taken into consideration by teachers or the school they are less likely to get involved and more likely to resist getting involved. Teachers should develop positive attitudes towards parental involvement and be able to establish a positive interpersonal relationship with parents. This communication between students and parents will help to strengthen the school-parent relationship.

For the purpose of this study, the definitions of the following terms provided meaning throughout the study.

Volunteering

Volunteering is recruiting and organizing parent help and support (Rotunda, 2005, p. 12). For the purposes of this paper volunteering includes examples of ways in which parents suggested opportunities to volunteer, but their suggestions were rejected by the economically stable teachers (Wallace, 2013).

Outreach

Outreach is a type of parental involvement. "Outreach programs help increase the incidence of parental involvement and higher performing schools regularly engage parents of various social backgrounds with coordinated programs that recognize and respect family needs and share responsibility and power" (Rotunda, 2005, p.45).

Communicating

Communicating is "design effective forms of school-to-home and home-to-school communications about school programs and their children's progress" (Rotunda, 2005, p.12).

Poverty income level

Poverty income level refers to "the eligibility of the family to receive free or reduced meals from the Federal School Meals Program" (U.S. Department of Education 2003a, p. 2). For the purpose of this study, poverty level was categorized as free or reduced lunch participation or non-free or reduced lunch participation (Rotunda, 2005, p.10).

Non-poverty income level

Non-poverty income level refers to the eligibility of the family to pay for their child or children's lunch. Economically stable is another term utilized within the paper to define non-poverty income level.

School-Parent Relationship

The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) definition of school-parent relationship was as follows:

1. That parents play an integral role in assisting their child's learning;
2. That parents are encouraged to be actively involved in their child's education at school;
3. That parents are full partners in their child's education and are included, as appropriate, in decision making and on advisory committees to assist in the education of their child; and
4. That other activities are carried out, such as those described in section 1118 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA) (school-parent relationship). (Department of Education, 2004, p. 3).

Epstein's Parental Involvement Types

Parental involvement consisted of six types of activities which are generalized under the headings: Parenting, Communicating, Volunteering, Learning at Home, Decision Making, and Collaborating with the Community (Epstein, 2001).

Methodology

This study is part of a larger study prepared by Dr. Robert Rotunda (2005). Dr. Rotunda analyzed variables that dealt with parental involvement at school and at home. Dr. Rotunda's survey instrument development was based on the work of Epstein and Salinas (1993), Epstein, Connors, and Salinas (1993), and Berla, Garlington, and Henderson (1993). The purpose of Dr. Rotunda's (2005) survey was to explore parental involvement attitudes. Rotunda's (2005) survey constructs were based on, "Epstein's Parental Involvement Types: Parenting, Communicating, Volunteering, Learning at Home, Decision Making, and Collaborating with the Community," (Rotunda, 2005, p 8).

Dr. Rotunda's (2005) study was conducted in a suburban Long Island, New York middle school which contained a wide variety of socioeconomic and racial/ethnic categories of students. Subjects for the study were 189 eighth grade parents in this suburban Long Island, New York middle school. The middle school was comprised of approximately 500 students per grade for a total of 1,486 students in the sixth, seventh and eighth grades in the 2003-2004 school year (as cited in Rotunda, 2005, p.52). The population was predominantly made up of 5.5 percent American Indian, Alaskan, Asian or Pacific Islander; 11.7 percent Black (not Hispanic); 13:7 percent Hispanic; and 69.2 percent White (not Hispanic) in the 2002-2003 school year. "Students eligible for Free or Reduced Lunch comprised 22.7 percent of population in the same year" (Rotunda, 2005, p 52). Free or reduced lunch was used as the operational definition of poverty level.

Instruments

Rotunda's (2005) survey was answered by 189 middle school parents. This particular study focused on the variables of Rotunda's survey that were part of the school-parent relationship (volunteering, outreach, and communicating). The objective of this particular study was to determine how the school-parent relationship factors of volunteering, outreach, and communicating differ among the poverty level of the parents involved. Using SPSS, an independent sample t-test was used to analyze this data to contrast the level of poverty the outlying variables. Cronbach alpha coefficients variables ranged from .62 to .81.

An independent - samples t-test (**Table 1**) was conducted to determine if there was a significant difference between the school-parent relationship (volunteering, outreach, and communicating) across income levels.

Table 1 - *Data Analysis (Design & Procedures)*

Student Parent Relationship factors across income levels

		N	M	SD	SEM	t	df	p
Volunteering	Non Poverty	152	27.53	3.79	3.07	-0.13	177.00	0.90
	Poverty	27	27.62	3.89	7.49			
Communicating	Non Poverty	153	21.71	2.104	1.70	2.15	180.00	0.03
	Poverty	29	20.75	2.68	4.97			
Outreach	Non Poverty	135	17.96	2.33	2.00	-1.04	159.00	0.30
	Poverty	26	18.50	2.96	5.82			

The test was significant in Communicating (MP=20.75, MNP=21.71) p <0.05, T (180) - 2.15. The results were significant at the .05 level. The test was not significant in the areas of volunteering (MP=27.67, MNP=27.53) and outreach (MP=18.5, MNP=17.96). The results were not significant at the .05 level.

Conclusion & Recommendations

In conclusion, when analyzing the school-parent relationship between parents' income levels, the data presented in this paper shows significance in the area of communicating across income levels. The school-parent relationship among income levels is similar in the areas of outreach and volunteering. Non-poverty parents tend to have more positive attitudes about communicating and more direct communicating with their child's school. It is important to identify why poverty level parents do not respond to school outreach efforts at the same level as non-poverty parents. Frew's (2012) research determined that the school-parent relationship was weaker in schools in which a higher percentage of students received free lunch and stronger in schools where numerous outreach activities were available. Even though the data presented in this paper did not show significance in the areas of volunteering and outreach, the literary review displayed data and research which is contrary to the data in this paper. There is significance in the areas of volunteering, and outreach. With regard to volunteering, Cullingford and Morrison (1999) explained the acceptable ways in which schools sanction parent involvement. However, when parents who come from poverty level incomes volunteered, their efforts were dismissed and disregarded as per Lareau and Horvat (1999). A way to ameliorate this practice is to have teachers engage in poverty simulation training. This seminar is offered through teacher centers such as the Mid-Eastern Suffolk Teachers Center (MESTRACT) located in Long Island, NY. It provides a way for teachers to develop empathy for people from impoverished backgrounds. This could assist teachers with understanding that the contributions from all students and parents are important regardless of their socioeconomic status.

These findings also call for cultivating cultural competency. This can be provided to teachers and administrators by social work agencies such as the JenTex Counseling Agency. Trainers can come to faculty meetings or meet with departments in schools to bring forth awareness of other cultures. If utilized effectively, this will benefit parents from cultures which are historically disenfranchised. This training can then also be used to foster relationships with parents from several cultures and socioeconomic levels.

Most importantly, schools need to continue to find ways to get all parents involved in their child's school, especially poverty level parents. It has been determined by this research study that poverty level parents want to be involved in their child's education but may not be comfortable getting involved or do not even know how to become involved. Schools need to use ways such as cultural sensitivity training and community involvement to increase volunteering, outreaching, and communicating efforts for all parents across different income levels.

When schools take the time to include the contributions from parents at all income levels, even the historically disenfranchised, they can empower all students to maximize their potential. Or, in the Gestalt paradigm, the whole is worth more than the sum of its parts; the child and his/her parents from all income levels and their contributions are valuable.

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Improving Teaching and Learning Using the Keeping Learning on Track Professional Development Program and Strategies

By Melisa Dobish, Jacqueline Griffiths, and Richard Meyer, Ed.D.

Abstract

This study examines the impact of implementing the professional development program, Keeping Learning on Track (KLT), on teaching and learning in a rural school in a Midwestern state. KLT was a program developed by Dylan William and his colleagues at the Educational Training Service and published by the Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA). Teachers and administrators in the district were surveyed after using the KLT model for one to two years to determine the effectiveness of the program on teaching and learning. Survey results indicated that teachers felt that KLT improved their instructional practice and that KLT has improved student learning for students in their classrooms. In addition, teachers agreed that formative assessment is valuable for improving teaching and learning.

Introduction

In a world where standardized test results have great power over teacher evaluation, school program ratings, and funding, "teaching for the test" has become commonplace. Teachers and students must cram as much of the needed material into the curriculum as possible. Despite the obvious effort to improve standardized test scores, U.S. students are still only average compared with students around the world (Chappell, 2013; Fensterwald, 2013). With this, many could argue that U.S. students are crumbling under the pressure. Therefore, the education system will need to address the deficits in its program and work toward progress.

Regardless of this seemingly difficult task to accomplish, some schools have been implementing a program to increase student understanding. This program has been called several names, but is commonly known as Keeping Learning on Track (KLT) (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Wiliam, 2005). Keeping Learning on Track is a professional development program designed to allow teachers to work with their colleagues in a Teacher Learning Community (TLC) focused on formative assessment. According to Dylan Wiliam and his colleagues at ETS (Black & Wiliam, 1998), there is one big idea: evidence of student learning is used to adjust instruction to meet the needs of students. There are five key strategies on which to focus in order to intervene in the way students think. These five strategies include: 1) teachers elicit evidence of student learning minute-to-minute and day-to-day, 2) teachers identify and share learning expectations with their students, 3) teachers structure opportunities for students to take ownership of their own learning, 4) teachers structure opportunities to activate students as instructional resources for one another, 5) teachers provide feedback to move learning forward and create a structure for students to act on it (Thum, Tarasawa, Hegedus, Yun, Bowe, 2015).

Review of Literature

Researchers have found that formative assessment has provided a positive experience for higher education students and teachers in both secondary and elementary settings (Torrance & Pryor, 2001; Weurlander, Soderberg, Scheja, Hult, & Wernerson, 2012). First, Weurlander et al. (2012) explored how medical students reacted to assessments both orally and written and as either a group or an individual task. More specifically, the researchers wanted to look at how students' perceptions differed for two groups, one being the control group which focused on "right/wrong answers, individual performance, and delayed feedback" (p. 749), and the other being an experimental group which "focused on understanding/problem-solving, group performance, and immediate feedback" (p. 749). The authors found three themes that emerged from the experiment including motivation, awareness, and tools for learning. First, students in both groups felt that the assessments, either individual or in a group, increased their motivation to study and learn. However, in the control group, students reverted back to memorization of terms and believed that understanding would come later. In contrast, students who were assessed as a group and received immediate feedback were motivated intrinsically by growing understanding and interest, and they were motivated extrinsically by pressure to keep up with their peers. Next, students in both groups reported an increase of learning awareness. The authors stated that students were more in tune with their own weaknesses and progress. Finally, through formative assessment, students changed

how they learned and what they learned. Thus, students in both groups perceived formative assessment to be a positive way to increase the learning experience. More specifically, students who were in the experimental group showed that they increased understanding through group assessment because they were more capable of seeing the whole picture.

Similarly, Torrance and Pryor (2001) looked at perspectives of formative assessment. However, these authors aimed to gain insight of teachers' perspectives of formative assessment in their own classroom. Torrance and Pryor (2001) conducted a program of two phases that collectively lasted a little over a year. During this time, teachers involved in the project underwent their own journey of learning and learning to teach using formative assessment strategies. In phase one, teachers took video and audio recordings of their class, then reviewed and critiqued them. In the second phase, the teachers used their new-found awareness and implemented changes within their classroom. Through this process, the teachers were able to interrelate their experiences and reveal common themes. First, the teachers explained that the heart of formative assessment is to create clear objectives for task and quality. Next, they found that questioning, observing for understanding of the process, reviewing the product, and finally, providing feedback for assignments were all connected to each other and to quality of education. In addition, the teachers explained that this process was a positive experience where they were challenged to change their old styles of teaching for a different and innovative way which fostered understanding of material for students. Thus, this study shows support for programs such as KLT from a teacher perspective, where the teachers were able to change their teaching style in order to increase student participation and understanding.

In addition to the positive experiences that have been documented, researchers have looked at the various factors of formative assessment and analyzed student outcomes. For example, in a study done by Bulunuz, Bulunuz, & Peker (2014), student science comprehension outcomes were analyzed based on the type of instruction given. In one group, instruction focused on hands-on learning. In the other three groups, instruction focused mostly on book work and terminology. The authors found that in the pre-test, all students performed poorly on physics-related concepts, such as law of motion and inertia. However, after the hands-on teaching of these concepts, students in the experimental group increased their scores significantly. In addition, they had significantly deeper understanding of these concepts than the students in the traditional setting. Thus, when a hands-on approach is used with instruction, students show better understanding of subject and score higher on assessments.

With this, it seems that some gaps in the research remain. For instance, formative assessment has been explored in isolation of individual classrooms and studies. In addition, outcomes for this type of learning have been documented for effectiveness and have been shown to create positive perceptions for both teachers and students. However, KLT is a fairly new program that involves using formative assessment school-wide, rather than in individual classrooms. Little research has been conducted on how KLT has impacted schools on a broad level. It is crucial to understand how teachers have been reacting to and perceiving this new program in their school. This is important because their attitudes and perceptions may impact the effectiveness of KLT and the future of this program.

Beginning in the 2013-2014 school year, the Midwestern district began utilizing KLT as the district professional development for certified staff members. The intent was for this to be a three-year process led by teacher-leaders in the district. To initiate the plan, Dylan Wiliam spoke with all certified staff members including administrators. Then a cadre of teacher-leaders was provided three additional days of training in order to learn how to facilitate the Teacher Learning Communities within their school buildings. Throughout the next years, the KLT teacher-leaders led certified staff members through activities and discussions centered around formative assessment.

Current Study

This study aims to understand the effectiveness of the KLT program in this Midwestern town through teacher perception by generating questions to stimulate quantitative and qualitative data that will reflect the attitudes, perceived effectiveness, struggles, and positive outcomes surrounding the KLT program. In addition, this study aims to determine teachers' perspective of the impact of KLT on teaching and learning in their school and classroom. Four main questions were addressed through this study.

1. What are teachers' perspectives on the impact of KLT on instructional practices?

2. What are teachers' perspectives on the impact of KLT on student learning?

3. To what degree do teachers agree that KLT has been valuable for improving teaching?

4. To what degree do teachers agree that KLT has been valuable for improving student learning?

Method

This is a mixed method qualitative and quantitative research study using a sample of convenience to complete an on-line survey. The survey included a five point Likert scale with choices ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree with neutral as an option. It also included open-ended questions in which participants could

share additional perceptions regarding the KLT model. Upon receiving IRB approval, participants were asked to complete a 22 question on-line survey. Survey questions were very similar to the survey questions used in the study Keeping Learning on Track: A Case-study of Formative Assessment Practice and its Impact on Learning in Meridian School District study (Thum et al., 2015).

Participants in this study included 319 certified staff members from the district. All participants were adults who were working in the Midwestern district and had been exposed to KLT over the previous two school years. Of the participants, 86.4% had been participating in KLT for two years. When reporting the number of years in education, 17.7% had been in education one to four years, 57% had been in education between 5-24 years, and 25.2% had been in education for 25 or more years.

Findings

Question 1: Is formative assessment valuable for improving teaching?

Eighty-seven percent of teachers agree or strongly agree with this belief. In further analysis, participants were grouped according to whether they were teaching elementary, middle, or high school students. Of the total respondents, 305 were teaching in one of these three areas; whereas 14 were preschool teachers or non-classroom specialists. Of the 144 elementary teacher respondents, 88.2% agreed or strongly agreed that formative assessment is valuable for improving teaching. 87.2% of the 86 middle school respondents were in agreement, and 85.4% of the 75 high school teachers agreed or strongly agreed with the statement (**See Figure 6**). Further analysis revealed that 90.1% of teachers who had taught 1-4 years believed formative assessment was valuable for improving teaching; whereas, 87.4% of teachers in the field from 5-24 years believed this statement and 87.1% of teachers teaching over 25 years believed this to be true **(See Figure 1)**.

Question 2: Is formative assessment valuable for improving learning?

Eighty-eight percent of respondents agree or strongly agree that formative assessment is valuable for improving learning. Total respondents for this question were 305 with 144 identifying themselves as elementary, 86 as middle school, and 75 as high school teachers. As shown in **Figure 6**, of the 144 elementary teachers, 88.2% agreed or strongly agreed with the statement. 88.4% of middle school teachers and 88% of high school teachers agreed or strongly agreed. Furthermore, 88.9% of teachers teaching from 1-4 years believed that formative assessment is valuable for improving learning. 88.6% of teachers teaching 5-24 years believe this to be true, and 88.4% of teachers with more than 25 years of experience agreed or strongly agreed. **(See Figure 2)**.

Question 3: Has KLT improved my instructional practices in the classroom?

Upon analysis of all teacher responses, 82.1% of the 319 respondents agreed or strongly agreed that KLT has improved their instructional practices. Of the 319 referenced, 299 respondents taught elementary through high school with 140 teaching elementary, 85 teaching middle school, and 74 teaching high school. **Figure 6** shows that 85.8% of the elementary teachers agreed or strongly agreed that KLT improved their instructional practices; whereas 88.2% of middle school respondents and 73% of high school respondents agreed or strongly agreed. As shown in **Figure 3**, 87.1% of teachers with 1-4 years of experience agreed or strongly agreed that KLT improved their instructional practices in the classroom. Of the teachers with 5-24 years of experience 79.9% agreed or strongly agreed; whereas 84.4% of the teachers with over 25 years of experience felt the same way.

Figure 1 - Formative Assessment Is Valuable For Improving Teaching
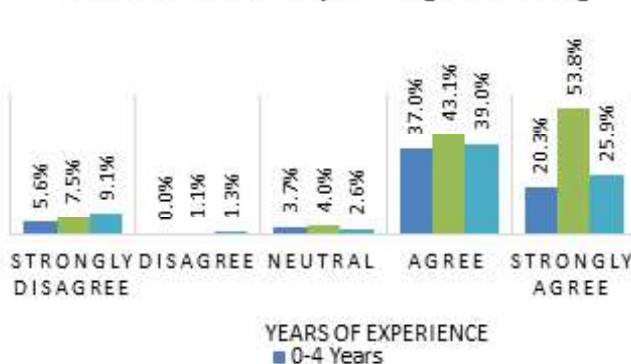
Figure 2 - Formative Assessment Is Valuable For Improving Learning
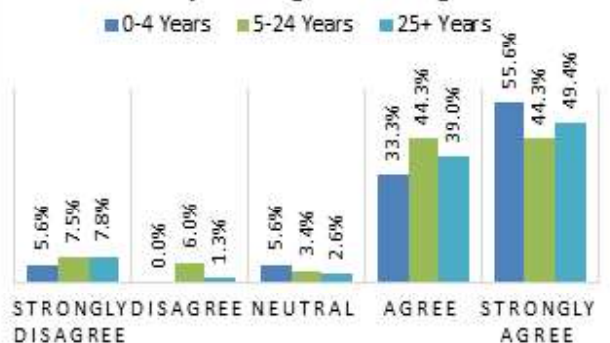
Question 4: Has KLT improved student learning in my classroom?

Teacher responses indicated that 75.3% of the teachers agree or strongly agree that KLT has improved student learning in their classroom. A total of 299 teachers responded to this question and identified as teaching at the elementary (140), middle school (85), or high school (74) level. 81.5% of elementary teachers, 85.9% of middle school teachers, and 56.8% of high school teachers agreed or strongly agreed that KLT has improved student learning in their classroom **(See Figure 6)**. Upon further analysis of the responses by high school teachers, only 9.5% of the 74 respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement while 33.8% responded that they were neutral. With this high percentage of respondents indicating a neutral response, it is theorized that high school teachers do not feel they can or should determine how students would feel about their learning. Because the high school percentage was significantly different than the results of the other groups of raters and was also significantly different from the responses to other questions, another analysis was completed to determine if there was a difference between the responses of teachers teaching in core academic areas including language arts, math, social studies/social science, science, and world languages and teachers teaching classes more geared toward vocational exploration including PE/health, English Language Learner, special ed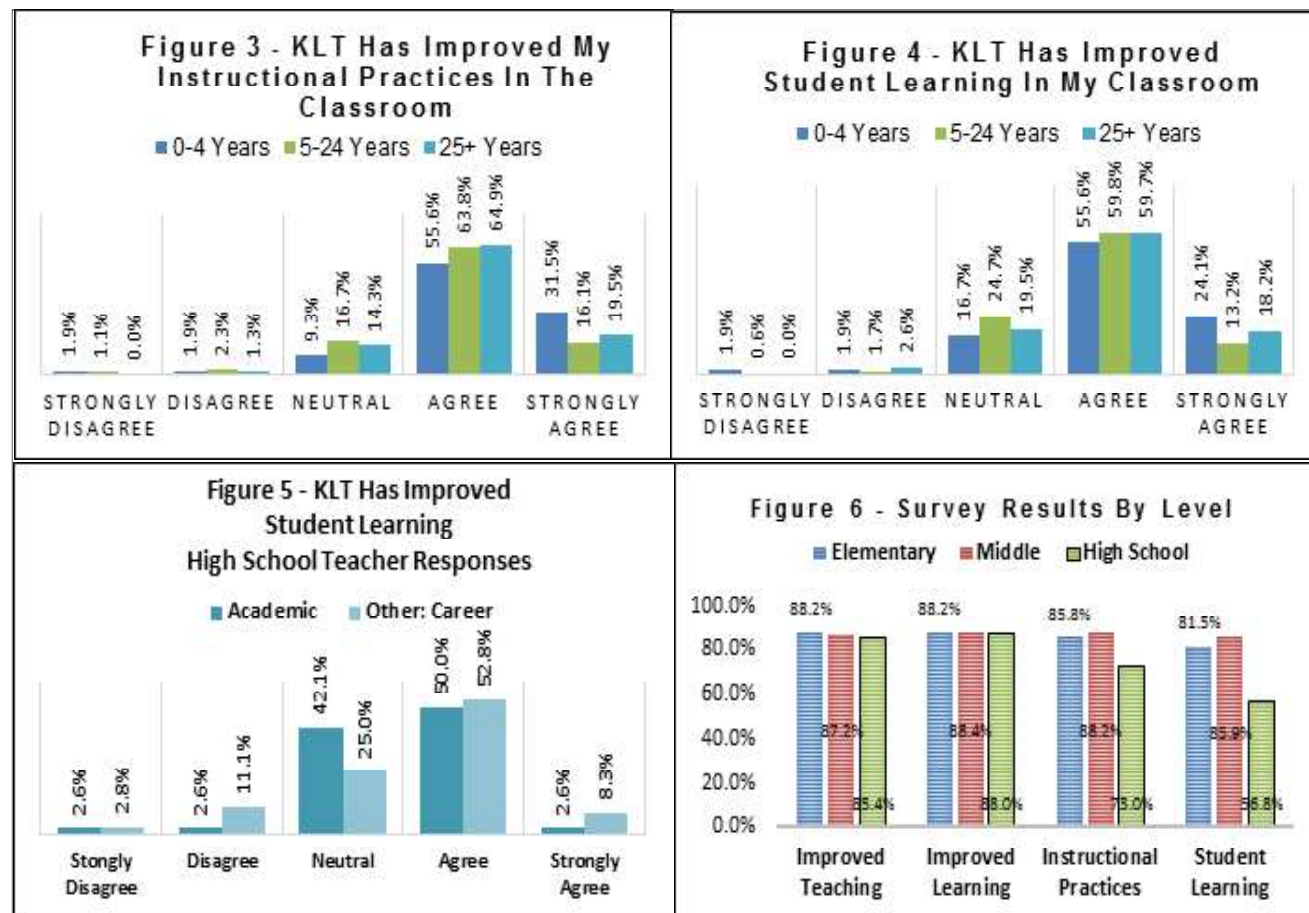ucation, art/music, career and technical education and other. Results of this analysis, as shown in **Figure 5**, indicated that 20 core academic teachers agreed or strongly agreed and 22 vocational-based teachers agreed or strongly agreed with the statement. In addition, 19 core academic teachers responded as neutral; whereas 9 respondents from the vocational-based group indicated a neutral response.

Teacher responses to this question based on years of experience yielded the following results as seen in **Figure 4**: 1-4 years, 79.7% agreed or strongly agreed; 5-24 years, 73% agreed or strongly agreed; and 25 or more years, 77.9% agreed or strongly agreed.

Discussion

This study suggests that teachers felt that KLT improved their instructional practice and that KLT has improved learning for students in their classrooms. In addition, teachers agreed that formative assessment is valuable for improving teaching and learning, and it is important to the work they complete on a daily basis.

Figure 3 - KLT Has Improved My Instructional Practices In The Classroom

Figure 4 - KLT Has Improved Student Learning In My Classroom

Figure 5 - KLT Has Improved Student Learning High School Teacher Responses

Figure 6 - Survey Results By Level

This was true regardless of the number of years a teacher had been teaching or if they were teaching elementary level, middle school, or high school.

According to one participant,

"I think this has been the most applicable, user-friendly, and time-worthy school improvement model I've participated in. I am strongly in favor of continuing working with these materials and this model. It is practical and can be implemented in all settings with all students."

Similar to the Keeping Learning on Track study, our study also found that overall, teachers and teacher-leaders had positive experiences with the KLT professional development model and using formative assessments (Thum et al., 2015). One teacher leader had the following comments:

"I am a KLT leader, so I may be a little biased because I am 100% vested into this experience, but I am a firm believer that this program has helped our school, and more importantly our students....I love that in KLT, we get to share our experiences, good and bad with our peer teachers....Also, in our large group sessions, we have had such rich discussions about teaching and learning and how to move our learners forward..."

Limitations

The present study did not involve gathering data from teachers prior to the use of KLT as a professional development program. Therefore, it is unknown how the participants felt about formative assessment prior to participation in KLT. In addition, the present study did not take into account student perceptions regarding the strategies being used to teach them and the impact they feel it has on their learning. Future research regarding student perceptions and student learning might include student achievement data prior to and after the implementation of KLT to further explore the impact of KLT on student achievement.

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A Model of Effective Teaching
in Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences

By Khazima Tahir, Ed.D., Hamid Ikram, Ed.D., Jennifer Economos, Ed.D., Elsa-Sophia Morote, Ed.D., and Albert Inserra, Ed.D.

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine how graduate students with undergraduate majors in arts, humanities, and social sciences perceived individualized consideration, Student-Professor Engagement in Learning (SPEL), intellectual stimulation, and student deep learning, and how these variables predict effective teaching. A sample of 251 graduate students responded to a survey posted in two professional associations, and four universities in the United States and other countries. A structural equation model analyzed the influence of the independent variables on the dependent variable, effective teaching. A multiple regression analysis indicated that individualized consideration, SPEL, and deep learning were significant predictors of effective teaching. Intellectual simulation was a predictor of deep learning, which in turn influenced effective teaching.

Introduction

Arts, humanities, and social sciences have provided an intellectual framework, and context for thriving in the world (American Academy of Arts & Sciences, 2013). These disciplines have taught students how to raise critical thinking questions, search for abstract answers, and identify what is most important to students (Pleshakova, 2009). Both scientists and the social scientists have relied upon the humanistic art of interpretation to make sense of even the most reliable data (Bloch, 2009). However, recent research reported that students have lost interest in humanities and social sciences (Barret, 2013). There has been a decline since the late 1960s when nearly 18 percent of all bachelor's degrees were earned in humanities. By 2010, the number of earned bachelor's degrees in these disciplines had fallen to less than 8 percent (Wilson, 2013). According to Bloch (2009), economics influenced the shift away from arts, humanities, and social sciences, as funding was allocated for science. Wilson has argued that the decline resulted from short attention spans among students, and others held professors accountable based on their teaching. Recent research has shown that professors continue to struggle with conducting research and reflecting on the philosophical principles that have guided their teaching practices. Many professors have lacked sufficient pedagogical training needed to teach their courses effectively (Husband, 2013).

Effective Teaching

The term *teacher effectiveness* has been defined as the collection of characteristics, competencies, and behaviors of teachers at all educational levels that have enabled students to think critically, work collaboratively, and become effective citizens (Hunt, 2009). Teacher effectiveness has been demonstrated through knowledge, attitudes, overall performance, and more interaction between students, and teachers (Regmi, 2013). Teaching effectiveness has been related to the ways in which students have experienced learning (Brookfield, 2006). Effective teaching has provided students with opportunities to explore ideas, acquire new knowledge, synthesize information, and solve problems (Hunt, 2009).

Student ratings have been the most widely used measure of teaching effectiveness in colleges and universities (Hunt, 2009). At college level, students do not evaluate a professor's effectiveness solely in terms of technique, rather students have wanted to feel confident they were learning something different, and being treated as adults (Brookfield, 2006). As a new generation of learners have entered higher education classrooms, effective teachers and professors have adapted strategies to match their student learning styles (Kraus & Sears, 2008).

Individualized Consideration

Harris (2011) found that professors have demonstrated individualized consideration by treating each student as an individual, and assisting them in their personal growth. Professors have also shown individualized consideration by listening to students' needs, and helping them become self-actualized (Boyd, 2009). Professors have to be willing to establish relationships with students that extend far beyond the current time period besides exceeding the official course requirements (Husband, 2013). Additionally, professors have to be willing to value and validate the perspectives of their students to improve the overall quality of teaching and learning in their courses, which in turn can lead to better teacher-student interaction in particular and enhance teaching effectiveness in general (Husband, 2013).

Student-Professor Engagement in Learning

Both professors and students share the responsibility of engagement in the classroom (Sidelinger & Booth-Butterfield, 2010). Overall, professors must create a learning environment for students to be academically successful, and supported. Additionally, professors must build relationships with students, and give students opportunities to build relationships with one another (Husband, 2013). Professors must be willing to deconstruct traditional boundaries between students and professors that position the professor as the primary source of knowledge in the classroom (Husband, 2013). Professors should adopt the notion that students are co-teachers in the classroom. The teaching and learning process is one in which both teachers and students co-construct knowledge, and learn from each other (Husband, 2013). Students are motivated to engage in learning processes when they view information, activities, and assignments as relevant, feel emotionally connected to course content, and experience positive interactions with their professor (Lukowiak & Hunzicker, 2013).

Intellectual Stimulation

Traditional passive learning environments were based on lectures, in which students listened, and took notes without active inquiry or engagement (Bloch, 2009). Intellectual stimulation in the classroom helps students challenge assumptions that limit their thinking, by exposing students to opposing viewpoints (Boyd, 2009). Professors of arts, humanities, and social sciences provided students with experiences in which their feelings and emotions were included in the process of learning (Pleshakova, 2009). For these students, learning and teaching patterns were affected by the way professors stimulated them intellectually. This intellectual stimulation was also associated with challenging students, encouraging independent thought, and using an interactive teaching style (Bolkan, Goodboy & Griffin, 2011).

Deep Learning

The most effective pedagogies that foster students' deep learning and metacognition included teaching students how to construct new knowledge, as well as engaging and motivating students. Learning adapted to individual students' needs, strengths and experiences, was more substantial and long lasting (Pang & Ross, 2010). Therefore, professors have had to move beyond seeing teaching as a process of merely transferring knowledge and skills, and move toward a view of teaching as process of intellectual change among students (Husband, 2013).

Purpose of the Study

With new research on effective teaching, and student learning (Almay & Tooley, 2012) educational institutions can also be more deliberate and strategic about creating environments that attract and retain students. Since arts, humanities, and social sciences have provided opportunities for integrative thinking, innovation, and citizenship (AAAS, 2013), insights could be gained into professor behaviors that helped the current generation of students feel connected and engaged in learning processes. This study will examine how graduate students with undergraduate majors in arts, humanities, and social science perceive individualized consideration, student-professor engagement in learning, intellectual stimulation, and deep learning as predictors of effective teaching.

Method

Economos (2013) collected data from 3,232 graduate business and education students enrolled in face-to-face and hybrid courses from two professional associations and four universities in the United States and other countries. Three hundred and sixty responses were received, reflecting a response rate of 11 percent. Out of three hundred and sixty respondents, this study focused on 251 students who majored in arts, humanities, and social sciences in their undergraduate programs.

Participants responded to a two-part survey. Part I of the instrument surveyed demographic information such age, gender, ethnicity, native language, undergraduate major, self-reported grade point average, parental educational attainment, years in program, enrollment status, learning environment, and primary professional area of interest. Part II of this survey contained 39 questions rated on a Likert scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 5 = strongly agree). The survey statements were adapted from research literature with permission from the authors. The statements were converted into items to measure all of the variables. A content analysis and axial coding were used to condense categories.

Nine items examined graduate students' perceptions of professor behaviors associated with effective teaching according to Kane, (2004). Twenty-one items examined graduate students' perceptions of professor behaviors associated with transformational leadership behaviors from the qualitative findings of Bolkan and Goodboy (2011). Six behavior statements were adapted to measure graduate students' perceptions of professor intellectual stimulation. Seven behavior statements were adapted to measure graduate students' perceptions of professor individualized consideration. Nine items examined graduate students' perceptions of professor pedagogical content knowledge from Shepherd's (2009) dissertation instrument. The items were adapted from Pintrich's (1988) study. Finally, seven items examined graduate students' perceptions of professor behaviors associated with deep learning from Nelson et al. (2005). Additionally, the statements were adapted from *The College Student* Report, and The National Survey of Student Engagement's survey instrument (NSSE, 2001-13). Cronchbach's Alpha reliabilities of the variables and number of items per variable used in this study are shown in **Table 1.**

Table 1

Scale Reliability of the Items

Dimension	Number of Items	Alpha Coefficient α
Effective Teaching (Pedagogical Content Knowledge)	9	.881
Individualized Consideration	8	.844
Student-Professor Engagement in Learning	5	.752
Intellectual Simulation	6	.776
Deep Learning	6	.825

(Economos, 2013)

Table 2

Pearson Correlation Analysis between Dependent and Independent Variables

		Effective Teaching	r^2	Individualized Consideration	Deep Learning	Student Professor Engagement in Learning
Individualized Consideration	r	.754**	56.85%			
	p	.000				
	N	234				
Deep Learning	r	.743**	55.20%	.699**		
	p	.000		.000		
	N	237		238		
Student Professor Engagement in Learning	r	.834**	69.55%	.808**	.739**	
	p	.000		.000	.000	
	N	234		234	237	
Intellectual Stimulation	r	.778**	60.52%	.754**	.668**	.938**
	p	.000		.000	.000	.000
	N	238		237	242	238

**p≤ 0.01.

Data Analysis and Results

A correlation analysis was conducted to determine the relationship among independent variables and with dependent variable (**Table 2**). After the correlation analysis, a structural equation model (**Figure 1**) was constructed to illustrate the variance accountability percentage, correlation coefficients, and regression coefficients.

All of the correlations among the variables SPEL, individualized consideration, deep learning, intellectual simulation, and effective teaching were statistically significant and were greater than .67 in **Table 2**. **Table 2** shows contribution to effective teaching were, individualized consideration (r^2 = 56.85%), deep learning (r^2 = 55.20%), SPEL (r^2 = 69.55%), and intellectual simulation (r^2 = 60.52%). The major contribution to effective teaching is from SPEL (r^2 = 69.55%). **Figure 1** also shows a strong correlation between intellectual simulation and SPEL (r = .94), intellectual simulation and individualized consideration (r = .75), and individualized consideration and SPEL (r = .81).

Figure 1

Structural Equation Model: Predictor of Effective Teaching (N=251)
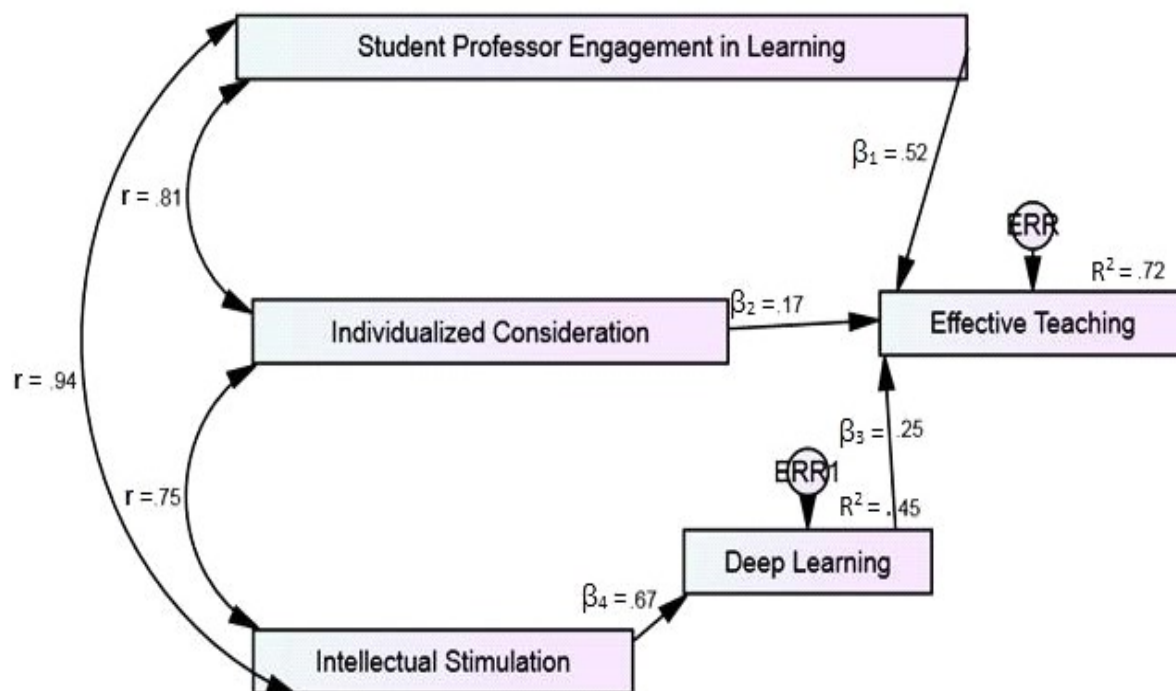
Researchers proceeded to develop a model using structural equation modeling concepts. **Figure 1** shows that a combination of three variables, SPEL (β_1 = .52), individualized consideration (β_2 = .17), and deep learning (β_3 = .25), accounted for 72% of the variance in effective teaching (R^2 = .72). The strongest predictor of effective teaching among social sciences, arts, and humanities graduate students was SPEL (β_1 = .52). In addition, deep learning was also identified as a dependent variable influenced by intellectual simulation (R^2 = .45). For that reason, deep learning acted as a modifier of intellectual simulation when researchers predicted effective teaching.

Conclusions

The present research study involved 251 arts, humanities, and social sciences students to determine whether individualized consideration, SPEL, intellectual simulation, and deep learning influenced effective teaching. The results indicated that three of the four independent variables were significant predictors of effective teaching. However, deep learning was dependent on intellectual simulation, which contributed to more strength in predicting effective teaching.

The findings of this research study indicated that SPEL is a predictor of effective teaching. It supported the findings of previous research, which showed student engagement was closely related to effective teaching (Lukowiak & Huzick, 2013). It implies that students' abilities to work meaningfully with their teachers determine their level of learning, and that ability can be honed through meaningful engagement in humanities and social sciences. Furthermore, Senge (2002) also advocated for a learning community where the teacher is a designer in learning processes in which he or she participates with the learner. This research highlights these alignments, and can inform educators about best practices for effective teaching. Likewise, students would have benefited from learning experiences in the classroom that are relevant to their realms of experience (Bolkan & Goodboy. 2011). Students would also likely gain from professors who keep up to date with the latest developments in the content area to promote SPEL in the classroom (Economos, 2013).

The results conclude that deep learning is a strong predictor of effective teaching. This research suggests that deep learning depended on intellectual stimulation to influence effective teaching. This research also suggests that deep learning is the result of intellectual stimulation,

that leads students to learn, and leads teachers to teach effectively. The correlation between deep learning and intellectual stimulation supports this finding as deep learning can develop students' critical thinking skills in the arts, humanities, and social sciences (Rowland, 2000). Professors should foster deep learning by encouraging reflective practices in which students can find ways to consider new perspectives. Additionally, professors are encouraged to integrate diverse perspectives such as race, religion, and politics into their courses, as students will likely obtain a higher level of deep learning (Economos, 2013).

Since the results indicated a strong influence of individualized consideration and intellectual stimulation, professors are strongly encouraged to incorporate these variables into their teaching. In previous research, Harris (2011) concluded that transformational leadership such as intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration produced increased performance, and satisfaction. This study supports these findings, and provides valuable information regarding teaching effectiveness.

Students would benefit if professors integrate the following behaviors in their classroom to foster individualized consideration including (a) availability; (b) individual feedback; (c) verbal immediacy; (d) personalized content; (e) conveying interest; (f) special considerations; (g) remembering student history; and (h) promoting participation (Bolkan & Goodboy, 2011). Additionally, professors who include students in the development of the course syllabus may foster a higher level of individualized consideration (Economos, 2013). If professors take an interest in students' personal lives, they will ultimately facilitate deep learning through confirmation behaviors such as (a) their responses to students' questions or comments (b) showing an interest in students and their learning and (c) style of teaching (Ellis, 2000) that mediate intellectual stimulation (Economos).

Limitations and Recommendations

It was unknown if the participants were enrolled in a teaching or research-extensive university for their undergraduate or graduate programs. Research must continue to investigate which professors' behaviors provide the best achievement possibilities for students (Polk, 2006). Subsequent research should also be conducted to determine whether the perceptions identified in this study are applicable to other academic disciplines.

The results of this study can be utilized to develop methods for effective teaching, and professional development workshops. Ongoing professional learning for professors is necessary to improve teaching effectiveness with respect to college, and career-ready standards (Coggshall (2012). This research can also be used in order to find ways to retain students of arts, humanities, and social sciences in classrooms by providing a teaching environment, which is based on their needs, interests, and experiences.

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Latino Parent Perspectives: How to Promote and Implement Additive Bilingualism

By Emily M. Enstice, Ed.D.

Abstract

There is limited research that investigates parent perspectives with respect to their early elementary school children's home language use. The findings reported in this article are part of a dissertation study on parent perceptions of bilingualism conducted in Northern California. To fill the gap in research, this study investigates how first generation Latino parents create an additive bilingual (English and Spanish) environment in the home. The findings include home language maintenance strategies that, in some cases, contributed to children's increased use of Spanish. Limitations to the study include selection of subjects was not random, the number of participants was limited to six parents, and the study took place in the researcher's school.

Introduction

Despite the fact that many Latino (people of Latin American origin) families in the United States speak Spanish at home, first generation immigrant parents are noticing that their children are losing fluency and interest in their home language (Brodie, Levin, Steffenson & Valdez, 2002). Research suggests that Latino families struggle to preserve intergenerational communication by incorporating the use of Spanish in the home (Schecter & Bayley, 2002). Latino immigrant parents have historically understood the necessity to learn English in order to have social, academic, economic and even personal success in the United States (Cummins, 2000; Portes & Hao, 1998; Valdés, 2001). They also want their children to gain competent academic English skills (Fishman, 1991; Schecter & Bayley, 2002; Suárez, 2002; Wang, 2009; Wiley, 2000; Wong Fillmore, 1991; Worthy & Rodríguez-Galindo, 2006).

Nonetheless, while research shows that Latino parents want their children to maintain the home language (Fishman, 1991; Lutz, 2006; Wong Fillmore, 1991), they often receive the message that English is preferable and more valued than speaking Spanish. As second and third generation Latino children speak less Spanish, while showing a preference for speaking English (Brodie et al., 2002), the ability and desire to use the home language begins to recede. This presents an enormous challenge to Latino parents who wish to preserve the home language and culture.

Background and Need

According to the California Department of Finance, 54% of K-12 public school students in California identified as Hispanic or Latino in 2015. This data does not speak to the numbers of families who choose to speak Spanish at home, but it is significant that the majority of students in California are Latino. A study conducted by Brodie et al. (2002), in which 3,000 Latino adults living in the United States participated, found the following: Almost three fourths (72%) of first generation Latinos speak Spanish as their primary language, but only one in four (24%) are bilingual, and 4% speak primarily English. "In contrast, second generation Latinos are mostly divided between those who are English dominant (46%) and those who are bilingual (47%). Third generation or higher Hispanics are largely English dominant (78%)" (p.16). One Mexican born grandmother living near her children and grandchildren in San Antonio, Texas lamented:

> It would be beautiful for … my granddaughters to truly understand what I wanted to say because it was a way of, getting closer to them and knowing them, or for them to know me … And it seems that it's SWEETER in Spanish, more emotional ...But, well, they don't understand me in, in Spanish, well, how am I going to tell them these things? (Schecter & Bayley, 2002, p.74)

The yearning for a lifelong, meaningful relationship with her granddaughter heard from this grandmother's voice resonates with Latino immigrant families throughout the United States.

Purpose

This study seeks to explore home language maintenance strategies used by Latino immigrant parents of elementary school children at a public charter school in the San Francisco Bay Area. Specifically, what exactly are Latino parents doing in the homespace to ensure that their children are speaking Spanish in addition to English? Moreover, this study may advise parents of all language backgrounds who wish to reverse home language loss or resistance. The following research question guides this study: What are parent perspectives on how to promote and implement additive bilingualism?

Reversing Language Shift

Fishman's theory of Reversing Language Shift (RLS) is one framework that takes an additive approach to bilingualism. An additive approach to bilingualism suggests that the home and dominant languages are both valued as resources, and are therefore worth preserving. Fishman (1991) and other researchers in the field of socio-linguistics (Lutz, 2006; Portes & Hao, 1998; Schecter & Bayley, 1997, 2002; Shannon, 1995; Tse, 2001; Wong Fillmore, 1991) have studied speech communities that are in danger of dying, as well as those whose language is widely used. Although the language is widely used throughout the United States, Portes and Hao (1998) argue that second-generation children of Latino immigrants are speaking less Spanish, and prefer to speak English. Therefore, RLS is an approach that speech communities have successfully utilized.

Subtractive Vs. Additive Bilingualism

Wallace Lambert (1981) first made the distinction between subtractive and additive bilingualism, noting that learning a second language can either lead to bilingualism or monolingualism as the home language erodes. Therefore, subtractive bilingualism refers to the learning of the dominant language, which replaces the home language (Lambert, 1981; Wong Fillmore, 1991). Additive bilingualism, on the other hand, would indicate a process in which the home language is maintained as the dominant language is learned. This approach and attitude allows children, not only to learn and develop proficiency in the home language, but to appreciate their parents and their roles in society (Cummins, 1994; Lambert, 1981). Lambert stressed that "mainstreamers" (majority group members) must first recognize the two faces of bilingualism – subtractive and additive. There are many effective and researched additive strategies, but perhaps mainstreamers must also embrace the attitude that accompanies the essence of these strategies for which Wilder Penfield once argued, "the bilingual brain is the better brain" (Penfield, 1965).

Family Efforts and Spanish Maintenance

Several researchers have explored effective strategies or approaches that Latino parents use in order to maintain the home language, while still supporting proficiency in English for their children. Schecter & Bayley (2002), who studied the language socialization practices of Mexican-background families living in Texas and California, learned that families in both locales "essentially concur in the view that school is a place to acquire academic competence in the dominant societal language … the responsibility for Spanish maintenance rests primarily with the family" (p. 188). Ultimately, bilingual immigrant families may differ from one another regarding how outside factors (i.e. school, media, law) affect their children's home language maintenance, but the role of family as vital and central to language maintenance is generally universal. In order to best understand how parents choose strategies to maintain the home language, I explored a variety of qualitative studies that include Latinos from different regions of North and Central America, and Puerto Rico. Moreover, the studies incorporated Latino families that now reside in various parts of the United States, as well as in Canada.

A study conducted by Worthy & Rodríguez-Galindo (2006) focused on Latino immigrant parents' perspectives about their children's bilingualism. These 16 parents (all except one were from Mexico) were involved in their children's education and language use, and employed the following strategies to help their children maintain Spanish: attended community and religious events held in Spanish; prohibited the use of English in the home; frequently visited monolingual Spanish relatives; provided opportunities for reading and writing in Spanish at home. The purposeful strategies in this study, and in others, would unfortunately not suffice in every family. Some parents were forced to remain resolute in the face of relatives who criticized the "Spanish Only" approach in the home, while others cut back significantly on visits to relatives in Mexico due to financial hardship. The low socioeconomic status and lack of English proficiency of all parents forced many to accept any available job opportunity, even if it meant losing time to actively enforce the maintenance of Spanish speaking and culture at home. This challenge resonates with bilingual families all over the United States.

Methodology

Research Setting

This study was conducted during the 2011-2012 school year on the campus and in the neighborhood of a K-8 public charter school in Marin County, approximately 20 minutes outside of San Francisco. The school, where I was one of two first grade teachers, is in a suburban setting, serving approximately 250 students at the time of the study. It is comprised of an ethnically and socioeconomically diverse group of families (Education Data, 2012), including the following percentages reflecting data at the time of the study: 38% Latino, 31% white, 18% African American, 8% Asian, and 5% two or more races. Also, 26% of the students are English Language Learners, the majority of whom speak Spanish as a native language. As for economic makeup, 53% of students receive free and reduced priced lunch, which is determined by family income.

Participants

The participants were selected from the school's pool of parents of English Language Learners (ELL) and Latino parents of children who are fully English proficient (FEP). Initially, a brief questionnaire in both Spanish and English was distributed to all parents of ELL students (Enstice, 2012, pp.163-165). In order to determine whether or not parents were eligible to participate they had to fulfill the following requirements: 1. Born in a Latin American country 2. Speak Spanish at home with at least one other family member 3. Available and willing to participate in this study 4. Want their children to learn how to speak, read and write

Spanish. Ultimately, all six participants - three males and three females - were parents of students in a first grade class and were born in the following countries: Chile, two from Nicaragua, Mexico, Guatemala and El Salvador. Two participants were also co-researchers who assisted with the following: transcribing selected text in both English and Spanish in order to identify emergent themes, analyze data sets once themes were identified, and organize analysis to align with the research question.

Participatory Action Research

A participatory action research design, with an emphasis on dialogue and narrative, allows for relationship building, questioning, reflecting on personal experiences, and most importantly, planning for action in order to address concerns of home language loss. Five group dialogues took place weekly or biweekly from January through March, 2012. During these meetings, the researcher followed up on previously asked questions, making time for written responses and oral sharing. Given the co-researchers' desire to rely more on dialogue and less on written responses, the latter form of sharing was used sparingly. In addition to group meetings, three individual interviews were conducted to clarify questions and to allow for elaboration. The researcher also attended a meeting with the school's English Language Advisory Committee (ELAC) and two of the participants. Finally, field notes were taken throughout the data collection and analysis period.

Findings

Not surprisingly, participants agreed that their children generally preferred to speak English with their peers, even when the family and the school tried to promote bilingualism. They noted the pervasiveness of English, and parents would need to have a plan if they aspired to home language maintenance. The participants agreed that their six and seven year old children were at an ideal age to either continue maintaining the use of Spanish at home, or to reverse the loss of Spanish. The researchers offered six specific and effective strategies.

Consistent Use of Spanish Only in the Home

Most of the participants had attempted to implement a Spanish Only rule in the home, however they had varying degrees of success with the rule. Some participants' own family members urged them to speak only English in the home, while others who came to the U.S. as children spoke mostly Spanish in their households. Other participants had feared that their children could be unprepared for school if they spoke only Spanish for the first three or four years before entering school. Those who were less strict in enforcing the Spanish Only Rule, which most had attempted, were seeing different results with their children. Henriette and Rubén, a married couple from Nicaragua, were perceived by others as having lots of success with Spanish maintenance. They encouraged others to enforce the Spanish Only rule, but to avoid punishing or criticizing their children when making mistakes.

Visit the Home Country

Some participants had their children visit the home country as a strategy to connect to their family's roots, but also with the intention of maintaining the home language. Nicolás, for example, explained that after becoming more strict about the Spanish Only rule in the house since our first meeting, his daughter "understands a little bit more now and she speaks a little bit more Spanish. She's in Mexico now [visiting a relative with her mom] … there nobody speaks English so she has to speak Spanish" (Enstice, 2012, p.110). He added that she became more interested in speaking Spanish after visiting with her extended family in Mexico.

Provide Written Homework in Spanish

Although most participants had not provided homework in Spanish to their children, Henriette and Rubén found that this was a very effective strategy. They emphasized the importance of age appropriate workbooks and reading material in Spanish, creating routines, being creative (i.e. offering rewards for homework completion) and persistent, offering praise and encouragement, and making learning fun in Spanish. While only two participants actually utilized this strategy and found it to be effective, all agreed that this would certainly help them reverse the loss of Spanish in the home.

Access to Music, Television, Video, and Print Materials in Spanish

Playing music, watching TV and movies, and reading books in Spanish appealed to all of their children, making this strategy somewhat easier to implement. In some cases their children's prior teachers had asked participants to start speaking and reading in English only at home. Assuming the teacher's advice was in their children's best interest, some participants followed that advice. After learning about the benefits of bilingualism during our dialogues and through their own research, all agreed that the teachers' advice was, in fact, misguided.

Explain the Importance of Bilingualism and Biculturalism

Speaking critically about valuing bilingualism and biculturalism with children helps them understand why parents speak to them in Spanish. Participants discovered that their children seemed to embrace the idea of bilingualism the more they had discussions about it. Explaining that others at work, for example, admired Henriette's bilingual skills provided a real world connection to her son about the benefits of bilingualism. Nicolás and Gloria, a married couple, would speak to their daughter after returning from Mexico. Would it be helpful to be able to speak Spanish to her grandmother and other relatives? They found this to be a catalyst for discussion about bilingualism with their daughter.

Older Children Speak to Younger Siblings in Spanish Only

Participants suggested having a plan in place before the birth of subsequent children. Henriette explained,

"I hear from other parents that when you have a second child, the first one will talk to the little one in English only. And then with the second child it's going to be harder" (Enstice, 2012, p.114). Hence, being proactive and having a plan early would hopefully make home language maintenance with a second child less challenging.

Action in the Community and Recommendations

The co-researchers and participants decided to share "Parent Perspectives on Strategies for Home Language Maintenance for Elementary School Children (Enstice, 2012, p.170) at a school English Language Advisory Committee (ELAC). As this meeting was small in attendance, it was collectively decided to share again at the first ELAC meeting of the following school year. The Assistant Head of School offered to include this document – designed by these researchers - in the school's ELAC Master Plan. Future studies might address home language loss amongst elementary school children within other language groups or geographic locations. Research focusing on the collaboration between elementary school teachers and parents who speak their heritage language at home may generate valuable findings from which parents, teachers and school administrators could benefit.

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Connecting the Dots for English Language Learners: How Odds-Beating Elementary School Educators Monitor and Use Student Performance Data

By Kristen Campbell Wilcox, Ph.D., Karen Gregory, and Lisa (Fang) Yu

Abstract

This article reports on findings from a multiple case study investigating the nature of educators' approaches toward monitoring English language learners' (ELLs) performance and using data to improve instruction and apply appropriate interventions. Six New York elementary schools where ELLs' performance was better than predicted (i.e. odds-beating) based on student assessment data were studied. The analysis revealed that several strategies were common among the schools studied and were associated with the schools' better ELL performance outcomes. These include: 1) connecting instruction and interventions to "real time" data based on multiple measures of student performance including benchmark and formative assessments; 2) communicating performance via technology among teachers and with family members and legal guardians; 3) collaborating through routines among teaching and support staff as well as school and district leaders. Implications for district and school leaders and teachers are discussed. Implications for district and school leaders as well as teachers and other instructional specialists are offered.

How Odds-beating Elementary School Educators Monitor and Use Student Performance Data

New York is one of the top 15 states with the highest density of English language learners (ELLs) in its schools (Ruiz Soto, Hooker & Batalova, 2015); in the 2015-16 school year more than 200,000 students comprising over 8% of the total school population were identified as ELLs[1]. This number has increased 20% over the past ten years (New York State Education Department, n.d.) and reflects a nationwide trend toward more linguistically diverse classrooms (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.).

This study presents data which was gleaned in a larger study conducted in the 2015-16 school year in six odds-beating elementary schools identified for ELLs' above-predicted performance. The researchers focus on ways educators in odds-beating schools approached monitoring and using ELL's performance data since this was found to be an important factor related to better outcomes. Other findings

and full case studies of the schools are available on the project website (see, Authors, n.d.).

While some ELLs arrive in school well-prepared to succeed, others have a variety of needs, social/emotional, physical, academic, and otherwise, that need close monitoring and appropriate and timely responses by teachers, as well as specialists and school and district leaders. By examining "odds-beating" schools (i.e. those with relatively better ELL performance outcomes taking into account school demographics such as poverty and diversity), this study sought to identify promising practices that support ELLs' success in school.

Related Literature

For this study the researchers briefly discuss the monitoring and use of data to improve instruction and interventions for ELLs. Performance data for ELLs falls into three main categories: language proficiency assessments, content knowledge assessments, and classroom-level assessments. Bailey and Carroll (2015) argue that "macro-level assessments," (i.e. standardized assessments that measure English language proficiency or content knowledge) are not meant to be used for instructional purposes and are inadequate for guiding instructional decisions. Rather, school-wide and district-wide processes and practices that systematize teachers', specialists', and school and district leaders' use of formative data are associated with better student outcomes for all students (Authors, 2013: Stosich, 2016).

While macro-level assessments are necessary and fulfill particular needs for inter-school comparisons and trend analyses, research studies have indicated that formative assessment data is essential in facilitating teachers' use of effective instructional strategies and application of appropriate interventions for ELLs. As a number of scholars have expressed, (Abedi, 2010; Heritage, Walqui & Linquanti, 2013, Bailey & Carroll, 2015; Durán, 2008, Heritage & Heritage, 2011) frequent formative assessment are particularly important for ELL students as many undergo

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[1] see https://data.nysed.gov/enrollment.php?year=2016&state=yes

significant change in their language competencies as compared to their monolingual peers in relatively short periods of time. Younger ELLs, in particular, may experience the language learning and socialization process especially quickly, requiring teachers to assess and adjust instruction frequently. In a study of four districts, Hakuta (2000) and her colleagues found that ELL students' oral proficiency improved much faster from grade one to grade three, than from grade three to grade five. A number of studies suggest that in general elementary-aged ELLs' learning patterns require teachers to pay close attention to their development by providing instruction based on constant monitoring of their performance (Hawkins, 2004, 2005; Oga-Baldwin & Nakata, 2014).

For formative assessment to be useful, research shows that several factors need to be considered. First, formative assessments, like all assessments, should be free of linguistic and cultural biases to provide an accurate measure of ELL's competencies and knowledge (Abedi, 2010). Second, English Second Language (ESL)/English New Language (ENL) teachers as well as mainstream classroom teachers and specialists need to understand how to create and use such formative assessments as well as

provide feedback to ELLs that focuses on content and quality versus an over-emphasis on "surface" level language competencies (i.e. those that do not affect understanding of the intended message) (Alvarez, Ananda, Walqui, Sato, & Rabinowitz, 2014; Bailey & Carroll, 2015).

Research Methods

In this multiple case study we utilized a replicated "unusual case" design to identify patterns in schools characterized by relatively better elementary ELL outcomes (Yin, 2014, p.57). Quantitative methods, specifically, regression analyses, were used to identify the sample.

Sample Selection

Schools were identified based on performance outcomes as well as a variety of other demographic criteria. Performance outcome measures included the 2012-13 and 2013-14 New York State Mathematics and English Language Arts assessments across grade levels. Schools classified as "odds beating" are ones in which ELLs exceeded expected average performance in ELA and mathematics at grade 3 through grades 5 or 6 on the two state

Table 1.

Demographics of the Odds-Beating Schools [2]

School	Total Enrollment	Urbanicity	% ELL	% Economically Disadvantaged [3]	PPE [4]
Catskill	760	Rural	3	62	$24,032
Schuylerville	718	Rural	2	31	$17,884
Fostertown	637	Urban	11	61	$21,878
Van Rensselaer	622	Urban	8	73	$19,870
Guilderland	548	Suburban	11	18	$17,995
Blue Creek	482	Suburban	6	24	$18,457
NYS average	N/A	N/A	8	54	$21,812

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[2] Data are from the 2014-15 State report cards.

[3] One measure of poverty, and the one used here, is economic disadvantage (see definition at https://data.nysed.gov/glossary.php?report=reportcards).

[4] 2013-14 districtwide total expenditures per pupil.

assessments. Using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software, an expected average performance level was generated for each subject at each grade level. By comparing expected to actual average performance, schools could then be classified as "odds beating" if the difference between expected and actual performance was close to one standard deviation greater than the mean difference for all schools in the state. Of 1,378 schools serving grade 3 through grades 5 or 6 outside of New York City, 127 schools were identified as potential "odds-beaters."

The sample was then investigated to identify only those schools in "good academic standing" for ELL performance and further winnowed into three categories: rural, suburban, and urban schools and those serving more or less economically disadvantaged and/or ethnically diverse student populations, favoring both higher poverty and higher diversity in the final sample to meet the criteria of "odds-beating." Finally, schools whose per-pupil expenditures, combined wealth ratio, and percentages of expenditures on instruction were above the norm were eliminated from the sample such that only schools with average to above average demographic challenges, yet higher than predicted performance would be studied (see **Table 1**).

It is important to note that the schools in this study are not the highest performing with regard to their ELLs' performance in NY state, but rather defy the typical performance pattern taking into account poverty and diversity. As displayed on the histogram in **Figure 1**, the case study schools are above the mean for ELLs' performance in comparison to other schools in the state taking into account school demographics such as poverty and diversity.

Data Collection

Once schools were chosen and site visits arranged, the research team, trained in using the instruments and in human subjects research, visited each school to collect documentary evidence and conduct interviews with the focal students, teachers, principals and other building leaders, and district administrators. Also, we also conducted focus groups with teachers and conducted classroom observations. Interviews and focus groups, which were audiotaped and then transcribed, followed a semi-structured protocol guided by the research questions. Documentary evidence included lesson plans, student work, curriculum maps, and other instructional materials. Class observations were guided by an observation protocol that prompted description of teaching and learning activities as well as a brief interview with teachers about the intent of their lessons. Before and during site visits researchers kept interpretive memos cataloguing questions raised, notes for follow up, and beginnings of interpretations.

In total, 25 administrators, 41 teachers, 7 support staff, and 17 student focus group or interview transcripts, as well as 28 classroom observation notes were collected and coded inductively using a constant-comparison method utilizing the qualitative software program HyperResearch (Strauss & Corbin, 2008). Using typical cross-case procedures, code reports by theme related to the research questions were produced and a matrix comparing themes was utilized to identify key patterns among the schools (Yin, 2014). The research team then engaged in axial coding in order to chunk major themes and their relationships as they related to the research questions (Strauss & Corbin, 2008). This was facilitated again through the use of HyperResearch and data matrices in Excel (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014).

Findings

"You can't get somewhere if you don't know where you're going." - Fostertown ETC principal

This study was foregrounded in literature that highlights the relationships between effective monitoring and use of ELL performance data and ELL performance outcomes. Through the analysis of interview, focus group, observation, and documentary evidence data the researchers identified a combination of performance monitoring processes and practices common among the odds-beating schools studied.
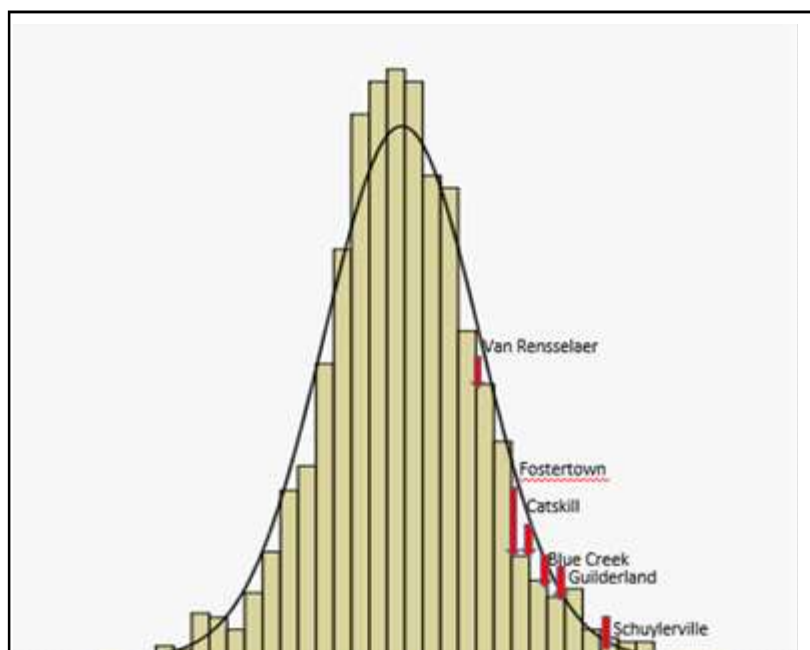
Figure 1. Odds-beating school ELLs' performance on ELA and Mathematics state assessments in 2013 and 2014 as compared to other schools in New York.

Fostertown School
Data Analysis and Planning Sheet

Student Name	Test Scores (Rigby PM, CKLA skills, SRI, SMI, Brigance, DIBELS, Dept. tests)	Areas of Concern	Goals	Teacher Action (What will happen to have the student reach the goal)

Figure 2. Fostertown ETC data analysis and planning sheet

Three characteristics of ELL progress monitoring in odds-beating schools were identified: (1) connecting instruction and interventions to "real time" data based on multiple measures of student performance including benchmark and formative assessments; (2) communicating performance via technology; and (3) collaborating on instructional and other interventions ELLs' need through routines among teaching and support staff as well as school leaders.

Connecting Instruction and Interventions to "real time" data

In schools with odds-beating ELL performance, teachers and leaders pointed to the weaknesses of relying upon state assessment and the New York State English as a Second Language Achievement Test (NYSESLAT) assessment data to inform instruction and interventions for their ELL students, as they do not provide actionable information needed to help their students grow and learn in real time. Instead, they reported relying upon frequent formative assessments, benchmark assessments and other data to inform them. **Figure 2** shows Fostertown ETC's "Data Analysis and Planning Sheet," which includes a list of seven different types of assessments that inform teachers about areas of concern, used to generate goals and specific teacher actions to meet those goals. Fostertown ETC's educators meet in Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) to dis-

cuss student performance and work together to develop lessons and materials to address the gaps in learning as displayed by the data. Response to Intervention (RTI) is also linked to this collaborative data analysis. When Tier 1 interventions are not producing any change, "real-time" classroom data informs teachers' next steps in referring students to a Tier 2 intervention.

Educators at Fostertown ETC and other odds-beating elementary schools analyze data for causes of students' poor performance and seek solutions. In Blue Creek ES, for example, a district leader described how the principal is "constantly looking and using her faculty meetings for [sharing data analysis]. 'Okay, here's a problem that I identified because of the data. What are some things that we can try?' For example, the principal noted gaps in attendance at open houses and parent teacher conferences and then engaged in an intervention. A district leader described the principal's approach:

> She [the principal] was looking at who is coming to open-house night, who's coming to conferences, who's not, and realizing which subpopulations and which families weren't able to get to those. So she worked with the transportation director to get a school bus to go to some of these

populated apartment complexes and bring the people, because they didn't necessarily have a way to get a ride to school for these things.

Complementing these strategies, Blue Creek teachers also gather a variety of benchmark and formative assessments, the same assessments as their non-ELL peers, with reading benchmarks administered in September, January, and May. These are used to identify, "sight word growth, letter sounds, knowledge of letters, and . . . progress with reading," according to a classroom teacher. In math, Blue Creek ELLs take chapter tests and a middle and end-of-year computerized assessment, at which time they are offered the accommodation of question read alouds. Altogether, these formative assessments provide teachers with a variety of information about ELLs' growth in language and content and allow educators to intervene in an appropriate and timely fashion so that each learner can make progress.

Collaborating through routines among teaching and support staff

Importantly, leaders in the odds-beating schools and districts valued teachers' desires to collaborate around instruction, assessment, and intervention for ELLs. As in the other schools studied, Fostertown ETC's educators benefit from a variety of opportunities to collaborate. Scheduled grade-level meetings are used to analyze students' performance data. In these meetings, principals, teachers, and specialists focus on classroom-level assessments as they believe them to be more meaningful for guiding instruction. A school leader explained how this is done:

> We went into using data protocols during meetings to really guide the meetings. We only have thirty-five minutes, so we need to be laser focused. So we started using data protocols and we're doing student work. A lot of the discussion I had with teachers when I first came in is, "How do you use data? How do you use data in your classroom, as a grade level or per building? And we have the over-arching New York State data assessments and those achievements, but what is real-time data? State data just tell us at the end of the year if you have mastered the state-level standards. But what is going on in your classroom in real time?" So we put protocols in place as far as reviewing student work. So the teachers bring in either exit tickets that they've done with their kids or any kind of work or problem sets they want to go over.

In addition, Fostertown ETC educators benefit from collaborative processes and practices centered on progress monitoring at the district level. The Superintendent initiated the practice of "DataCon" or "Data Conversations" in which all building and district leaders meet to discuss the results of local and state assessment data for each school. At this meeting, each principal is called to the table to discuss a variety of data points. All of the cabinet members and central

office administrators as well as all building principals are present and encouraged to ask questions of each principal in "the hot seat." A district leader described it as "a fishbowl conversation" that is "both evaluative and supportive in nature," as it often inspires new ideas for principals to try in their own buildings. This practice encourages consistency across the large urban district and holds building and district leaders accountable for making the best use of multiple measures of student performance.

Likewise in suburban Blue Creek Elementary, teachers provide "benchmark profile sheets" to the principal and upload their letter grades to the online portal that allows for the sharing of data district-wide. A reading specialist explained how classroom and ENL teachers collaborate by sharing their assessment data:

> Usually once we do assessments, we record all of our students on a class form and return it to the teacher, and usually at some point we end up touching base with the ENL teacher in person or through email to let her know about student progress.

In the smaller schools studied, some with only one ENL teacher in the school building, collaboration is less formal, but nonetheless recognized as essential to meet ELLs' learning needs. For example, because there are not many ELLs in the school and one ENL teacher in Schuylerville, the ENL teacher monitors the progress of ELLs' language development most closely. Yet, classroom teachers and ENL teachers say they keep each other informed of areas in need of more attention consistently. According to a Schuylerville teacher,

> We (classroom teachers) are monitoring all the time, whether it's regular assessments on tests or things like that. We're always doing informal assessments, just walking around and checking, and then I'm assessing them by collaborating with the service providers, the ENL, and the special ed teacher.

Through both formal and informal processes and practices that encourage collaboration around progress monitoring educators work synergistically to meet ELLs' academic needs.

Communicating Performance via Technology

Communication among mainstream classroom teachers, ENL teachers, special education teachers, and AIS teachers via technologies allow for communications to occur in a timely manner. Such data management systems as "Infinite Campus" or "School Tool" allow educators to share formative, benchmark, and assessment data with one another. For example, Blue Creek teachers use their school management system, "Infinite Campus," to communicate student performance on benchmark exams with the school principal. In addition, all grades and other data

(e.g. attendance) are stored there so that educators can easily share data with one another.

Similarly, in other schools like Guilderland ES, School Tool was identified as facilitating district-wide data analysis of ELLs' performance and also as a way to communicate with family members and legal guardians. Through an information night, Guilderland parents are invited to the school to learn how to use features of School Tool such as accessing their children's grades and state test scores, as well as other important school information. According to a teacher, the school district has worked hard at "communicating with parents to [use the program]. The ability to disseminate student data to families of ELLs was described as beneficial in developing a positive and open relationship between families and the school. Because "many families [of ELLs] believe very highly in education and they're very strong on their students," one school leader explained, "School Tool provided an effective avenue to learn about their children's progress without having to come to school or schedule a meeting with teachers".

Figure 3. Blue Creek apps

Teacher iPads	Student iPads
Drive	Sight Words
Calendars+	1000 sight words free
Stories 30	Flashcards
Futaba CG	Grammar Games
Epson iPrint	Fill the Gap
Booksource	Translate by Google
ABC House	Collins Big Cat - Playing
collins Big Cat-Playing	Elmo ABCs
qr reader for ipad	PBS Kids
SonicPics	Pocket Phonics
iBooks	SpellBoard- spelling words
English 1	TranslatorGo
Notability	Futaba CG
NG World	Sight words
Google Docs	Storia
iWrite Words	Stories 30
iDocs HD Pro	ABC House
Google Sheets	Spelling Bug 2
Spelling Game	Spelling Bug 2
Spelling City	Cimo Spelling Sight lite
Starfalls ABCs	Primary writer
Pages	Spelling city
Montessori- counting board	REading TRain
Dragon Dictation	Town Mouse
i like books	Dictionary.com
planbook.com	Quick voive
fun Rhyming	Alphabet Fun
Google Earth	Toddler games

In addition, instructional technologies such as clickers, Chromebooks, and apps (see Figure 3 for example of app offerings in Blue Creek ES), were reported to be used frequently to provide immediate feedback to students and formative assessment data to teachers. These data inform teachers as to the strengths and weaknesses of students so that differentiated instructional strategies can be planned as a next step.

Systematizing the communication of ELL student performance via technology allows principals, specialists, classroom teachers, and ENL teachers to provide a consistent and informed program of instruction for ELLs. In addition, sharing data with parents and guardians encourages families and legal guardians to participate actively in the education of their children and establishes a connection between home and school.

Recommendations

Although this study is limited to data culled in only six schools, and is thus, not generalizable to all schools in the state of New York, it suggests a few considerations for practice related to data monitoring and use, namely:

> Provide systems to carefully monitor the progress of ELLs using multiple measures- both formative and summative, connected to systems of interventions for students who need more support.

> Provide systematic progress reporting and communication/dissemination routines for all educators and specialists who interact with ELLs as well as their families

> Ensure that adequate ENL expertise is within each school building and that collaboration among ENL teachers, mainstream classroom teachers, and specialists across the school and district can occur on a regular basis.

Conclusion

While the number of ELLs in New York schools and in other states around the nation continues to increase, troubling trends of ELLs falling behind as they progress from elementary to secondary school persist (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.). Indeed, children's experiences of success in elementary school have been found to strongly correlate to their trajectories in secondary school and beyond (Akiba, LeTendre, & Scribner, 2007; Suárez-Orozco, Gaytán, Bang, Pakes, O'Connor, & Rhodes, 2010).

In some New York elementary schools, ELLs are beating the odds with better than expected performance outcomes. The findings from this study demonstrate that what educators do to monitor and use performance data can relate to better performance outcomes.

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Elementary Principal Wisdom: Teacher Perceptions of Leadership

By **Christopher Peterson, Paul J. DeSimone, Jr., Thomas J. Desmond, Brian Zahn, Ed.D., and Elsa-Sofia Morote, Ed.D.**

Abstract

The purpose of this study is to evaluate how the five variables that measure servant leadership (Altruistic Calling, Emotional Healing, Persuasive Mapping, Organizational Stewardship, and Team Learning) impact on teachers' perception of principal Wisdom. Participants were from fifteen moderate-need elementary schools located in southern New York State counties. One hundred and sixty-two teachers responded to a 36 item survey instrument. A structural equation model was used to evaluate which of the variables influenced wisdom. It was found that Altruistic Calling served as a mediator of Team Learning and Emotional Healing. Wisdom is predicted by Altruistic Calling (β =.331), Persuasive Mapping (β =.195), and Organizational Stewardship (β =.424). The three variables accounted for 81.4% of teachers' perception of principal wisdom. It is recommended that organizations that are interested in developing principal wisdom invest their developmental efforts into Altruistic Calling and Organizational Stewardship.

Purpose

A principal strong with wisdom is likely to recognize the importance of his/her improvement in any of the other variables. Coupled with wisdom is the principal's ability to self-monitor and self assess one's own sense of their strengths/weaknesses.

A school leader will naturally assume at least one style of leadership. Before gaining wisdom, the school leader needs to learn how to lead. The type of leader that needs to be present to gain wisdom is the servant leader. A servant leader is someone who wants to lead by helping others first and by placing oneself last.

The purpose of the study is to analyze how five variables of servant leadership (Altruistic Calling, Emotional Healing, Persuasive Mapping, Organizational Stewardship, and Team Learning) influence principal wisdom as reported by elementary teachers. Wisdom plays a major role in decision-making. It also serves as an umbrella for each of the other variables.

Research Question

To what extent do the five principal servant leadership characteristics of altruistic calling, emotional healing, persuasive mapping, team learning, and organizational stewardship have an impact on the sixth servant leadership characteristic of wisdom?

Literature Review

Research and practice confirm that there is little chance of creating and sustaining a high-quality learning environment without a skilled and committed instructional leader to shape teaching and learning.

The modern day servant leadership movement was started by Robert Greenleaf when he published his 1970 essay, "The Servant as Leader." (Zahn, 2011). In his 1970 essay, Robert Greenleaf coined the phrase "servant-leader," which led to the modern day servant leadership movement (Zahn, 2011). Robert K. Greenleaf (1970) once said, "The servant-leader is servant first… It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first". A servant leader is someone who wants to lead by helping others first and by placing oneself last. Robert K. Greenleaf (1970) described several functions that are critical for servant leaders: listening and understanding, language and imagination, acceptance and empathy, foresight, awareness and perception, persuasion, conceptualizing, healing, and community building.

An essential part of leading a school through the lens of a servant leader is the use of team learning. Team learning is not a direct characteristic of servant leadership, but an associate characteristic. Team learning is vital to a servant leader within a school because it will guide the work of professional learning communities. The use of professional learning communities is a method to form collaborative learning within a school or any other organization. Professional learning communities have been used to foster change and improve school climate and culture (Senge, et al., 2000).

Within a school, a servant leader can have a positive impact on school climate, school culture, and all

stakeholders. If teachers believe that their school leader has their best interest, then teachers will support or "buy in" to new initiatives and changes. The hardest part of being a servant leader is building trust within a school building, but once trust is gained, the servant leader builds wisdom.

Wisdom is defined by Webster (1961) as the faculty of making the best use of knowledge, experience, and understanding by exercising good judgment. School leaders strive towards positive goals by gaining wisdom from all members of the school community. Leaders who display high levels of wisdom are very observant and anticipatory across all settings (Bierly et al., 2000). By being observant and anticipatory, school leaders can adapt and modify their plan towards shared school visions and/or goals.

Does knowledge and wisdom come hand in hand? The relationship between knowledge and wisdom is complex. Generally speaking, knowledge is necessary but not sufficient for wisdom. One would not be considered wise if one is not knowledgeable, but knowledge does not always make one wise (Bierly et al., 2000).

Before examining wisdom as it pertains to the principal himself/herself, current research emphasizes Wisdom as an attribute of an organization. In Mark Hanson's article, Institutional Theory and Educational Change (2001), cultivating "smart" organizations is one way to attain positive educational reform. Throughout this work, Hanson used the term "knowledge acquisition" (p. 639). He likens an organization to a person and references George Huber's work regarding the term. Huber commented "An entity learns if, through its processing of information, the range of its potential behaviors is changed" (1991, p. 89). Here, both authors are noting the importance of gaining knowledge. Each writes about administrators and organizations interchangeably, highlighting the common thread that a strength in one area will undoubtedly, positively impact the other. Numerous times throughout each of their works, Hanson and Huber describe both the human and the organization gaining knowledge. Hanson also refers to the "human capital of people with the necessary expertise to exploit the intellectual capital effectively." (p. 638). This, in turn, illuminates the essential role that the administrator plays in an organization.

If a principal's strength is in the area of Wisdom, how exactly can this benefit a school organization? One way is to improve hiring practices. Baker and Cooper (2005) hypothesized that administrators who attended highly selective undergraduate colleges would be likely to hire teachers with a similar educational background.

Their conclusions were that this is especially true for high-poverty schools. They reported "Principals in high-poverty schools who attended highly or the most selective undergraduate institutions were 3.3 times more likely to hire teachers who attended similar institutions." (Baker, Cooper, 2005, p. 468). This is linked with the trend that they also discovered in their research "The distribution of principals by undergraduate preparation is quite similar to that for teachers...principals with stronger academic preparation are less likely to work in high-poverty or otherwise more difficult work environments" (2005, p. 453). If high-poverty schools attract principals of weaker academic preparation and they tend to hire teachers of a similar education, then it could be worth examining hiring practices.

Strauss (2003) is sure to note that the hiring process itself holds the potential to positively impact student achievement. The administrator's impact on this is indirect; he/she plays a role in the process but is not the most direct cause of the positive effect on students. Other variables related to the principal surely have an impact on his/her performance. According to an analysis by Papa, Lankford and Wyckoff (2002), there are a number of trends that began to emerge when examining some urban schools in the New York City area. They found that "urban schools are much more likely to have less experienced principals, and principals who received their bachelor's degrees from lower ranked colleges." Experience is also likely to play a major role in numerous facets of a principal's responsibility, including hiring new teachers.

Definition of Variables:

Altruistic Calling - Altruistic calling describes a leader's deep desire to have a positive influence and make a positive difference in others' lives. Leaders high in altruistic calling will put others' interest ahead of their own. An altruistic leader will go beyond the call of duty to meet others needs. Their ultimate goal is to serve (Barbuto & Wheeler, 2006).

Emotional Healing - Emotional healing refers to a leader's ability to be highly empathetic and an exceptional listener, thus making the leader able to facilitate a healing process. The leader "creates environments that are safe for employees to voice personal and professional issues" (Barbuto & Wheeler, 2006, p. 318). The leader has a commitment to and is skillful in fostering recovery from hardship (Barbuto & Wheeler, 2006).

Organizational Stewardship - Organizational stewardship refers to the "extent that leaders prepare an organization to make a positive contribution to society through community development, programs, and outreach" (Barbuto & Wheeler, 2006, p. 319). Leaders who display high levels of organizational stewardship strive to leave the organization better off than it previously was and seek to leave a positive legacy. Additionally, the well-being of the community is the driving force behind decisions made in the organization.

Persuasive Mapping - Persuasive mapping describes the "extent that leaders use sound reasoning and mental frameworks" (Barbuto & Wheeler, 2006, p. 319). Leaders who display high levels of persuasive mapping are able to conceptualize and visualize greater opportunities and are able to clearly articulate these opportunities to others. Additionally, these leaders offer compelling rationales for others to do things.

Servant Leadership - Servant leadership is defined as an understanding and practice of leadership that places the good of those led over the self-interest of the leader. Servant leadership promotes the valuing and development of people, the building of community, the practice of authenticity, the providing of leadership for the good of those led and the sharing of power and status for the common good of each individual, the total organization and those served by the organization (Laub, 1999).

Team Learning - Team learning is defined as "a discipline of practices designed, over time, to get a team of people thinking and acting together" (Senge et al., 2000, p.73). Where team learning is found to be present, efforts will move in a common direction, group members will understand and support one another completely, respect one another, and develop a sense of shared meaning and common purpose (Senge et al., 2000).

Trust - According to Nyhan (as cited in Hermann et. al., 2000), trust is the level of confidence that one individual has in another's competence and his or her willingness to act in a fair, ethical, and predictable manner.

Wisdom - When awareness of surroundings and anticipation of consequences are combined, leaders become able to pick up cues from the environment and understand their implications. Leaders who display high levels of wisdom are very observant and anticipatory across all settings (Bierly et al., 2000). Principal wisdom is defined as how a principal's faculty and staff view them as being a wise individual.

Methods, Techniques, or Modes of Inquiry

This study came from a larger study prepared by Zahn (2011). Participants were from fifteen moderate-need elementary schools located in southern New York State counties. One hundred and sixty two teachers responded to a thirty six item survey instrument.

The researchers used specific instruments such as Google Drawing, Google Docs, and Microsoft Word. To determine the evidence of validity and reliability, the researchers used SPSS and supporting research articles.

The research question sought to examine the relationship/effect five of the characteristics of principal servant leadership had/influenced the sixth wisdom. The researchers assert that wisdom is the most important characteristic necessary to be an effective principal. Therefore, our hope is that by exploring which variables have the greatest positive correlation with wisdom we can develop/look for those characteristics in current or aspiring principals.

This study was conducted in fifteen suburban, southern New York State elementary Schools. Subjects for this study were the five hundred and one licensed teachers (Zahn, 2011). Permission to complete the study by the Dowling College Institutional Review Board was granted prior to conducting the research. All five hundred and one teachers who held a valid New York State teaching certificate in each of the fifteen schools were given the opportunity to complete the survey instrument. School principals did not complete the survey instrument.

An initial correlation analysis determined a correlation between principal wisdom and five other characteristics of principal servant leadership. The researchers predicted that wisdom utilizes five variables, Altruistic Calling, Emotional Healing, Persuasive Mapping, Organizational Stewardship, and Team Learning. A correlation table showed that altruistic calling was a mediator. Additionally, a partial correlation was used with the remaining pieces (persuade/organizational stewardship). A structural equational model shows how these variables predict wisdom (**See Figure 1**).

Results

When analyzing the intercorrelation among servant leadership characteristics, altruistic calling was found to be a mediator variable to predict principal wisdom. A partial correlation was applied to evaluate this phenomenon. After this, we performed two multiple regressions. One multiple regression was used to predict Altruistic Calling using Team Learning and Emotional Healing. The second regression was used to predict Principal Wisdom using Altruistic Calling, Persuasive Mapping, and Organizational Stewardship. **Figure 1** shows that Altruistic Calling (R squared = 66.9%) was influenced by Team Learning (β = 0.168) and Emotional Healing (β = 0.750). Of the two variables, Emotional Healing is the stronger influence on Altruistic Calling. The data showed that Wisdom is connected to Organizational Stewardship, Persuasive Mapping and Altruistic Calling. A Multiple Regression analysis was used to determine that persuasive mapping, organizational stewardship and altruistic calling influenced wisdom, showing an effect size of 81.4%. Organizational stewardship has the greatest influence on Wisdom, as evidenced by a βeta value of .424.

Educational/Scientific Importance of the Study

This study can be used to inform principal preparatory courses. Surely, if the credentials of the undergraduate university cannot be a factor, course content can include information related to hiring practices. Especially in high-poverty areas, it may be helpful to outline important factors/attributes of teaching candidates that are likely to positively influence student learning.

Individuals responsible for hiring practices within a district can leverage these findings. Baker and Cooper (2005) shared that "educational leadership programs might be wise to (a) recruit candidates from more rigorous academic undergraduate institutions and (b) pay more attention to test scores and other indicators of general intelligence." (p. 470).

Figure 1: Correlation between Servant Leadership Characteristics
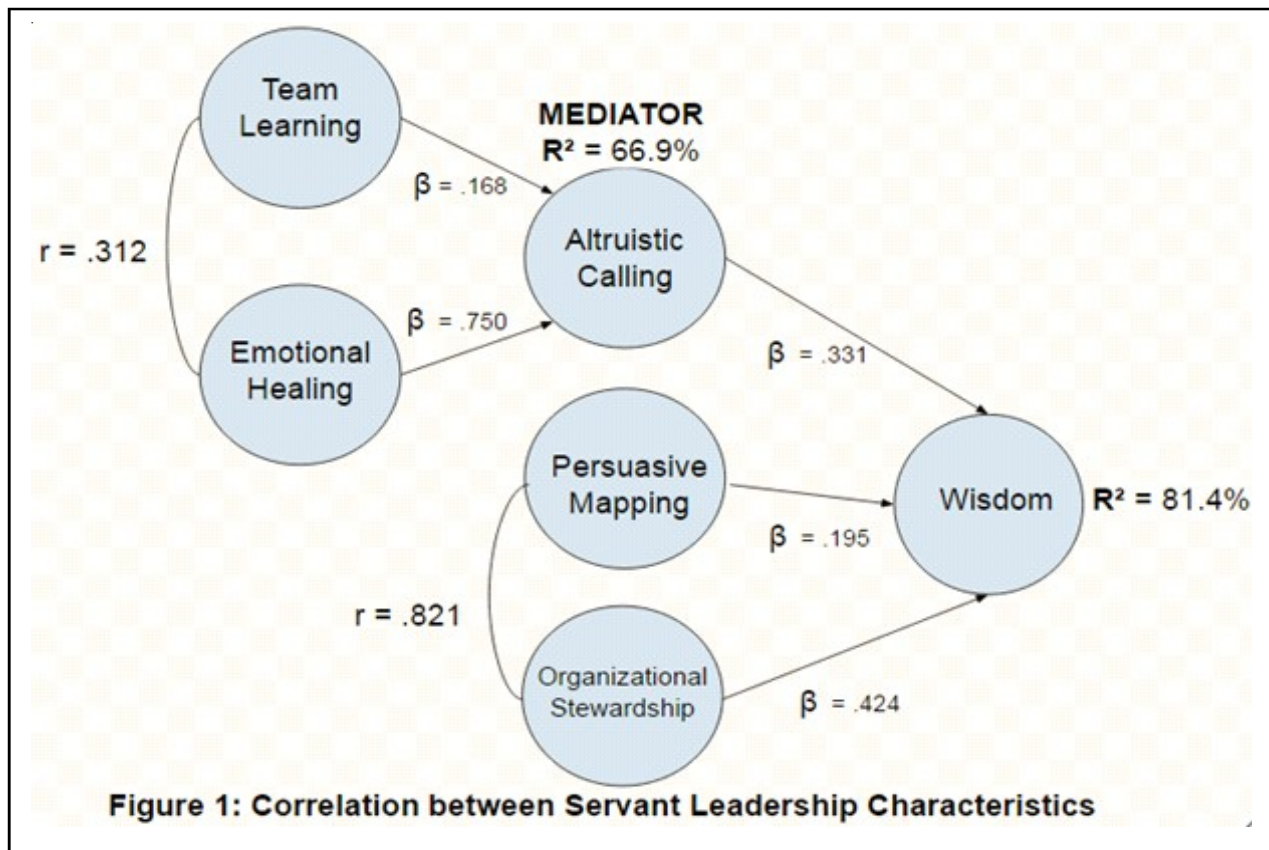
Additionally, professional development within an organization can build these skills in existing teaching staff. If the attributes sought after are effective for school leaders, then it will also be likely to benefit any teachers in that school. Future research can be done to further examine Organizational Stewardship and Altruistic Calling. By dissecting each of these broad areas, a researcher may be able to identify more specific facets of each variable that can be largely attributed to the development of Wisdom. These findings can help to further enhance the aforementioned areas of principal preparatory courses, professional development and hiring practices.

Within a school, a servant leader can have a positive impact on school climate, school culture, and all stakeholders. If teachers believe that their school leader has their best interest, then teachers will support or "buy in" to new initiatives and changes. The hardest part of being a servant leader is building trust within a school building, but once trust is gained, the servant leader can focus on the development of collective wisdom.

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Influence Of Self-Concept, Study Habit and Gender on Attitude and Achievement of Secondary School Students in Mathematics

By Professor Usman Kamoru, and Olosunde Gbolagade Ramon, Ph.D.

Abstract

This study examined the relationship between self-concept, attitude of the students towards mathematics, and math achievement. Also, this study investigated the influence of study habits on achievement; study habits on attitude of students to mathematics. The influence of gender and self-concept and study habit group on achievement and attitude towards mathematics were separately investigated. The method adopted was correlation design. Two hundred (200) Senior Secondary School 2 students (Male = 74 Female =126) were used in the study. They were selected from six secondary schools from Ibadan Metropolis. Random sampling was used to select the local government, while stratified sampling technique was used to select 200 students, (male and female) used in the six schools. Data were collected using 20 items Mathematics Self Concept Questionnaire (MSCQ r= 0,86) and 20 items Mathematics Study Habit Questionnaire (MSHQ, r = 0.70) and 30 items multiple-choice Mathematics Achievement Test (MAT, r= 0.76) respectively and analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) and t-test statistics tested at 0.05 level of significance. The result showed that there was a positive relationship between students' attitude and mathematics (P_{200} = 0.976; P< 0.05), study habit and academic achievement (P_{200} = 0.563; P< 0.05) for both self-concept and study habit groups. Also, there was no significant difference in gender for both self-concept and study habit group. However, it was suggested that teachers should develop in their students a positive self-concept towards Mathematics including good study habits and pleasant teaching experience to enhance higher self-concept, good study habit and better performance in Mathematics.

Introduction

In the field of education and psychology, learning has been described as a highly complex process. Several researchers have tried to explain it differently and the description of each is partially true. Practices of teachers, counselors, psychologist and school administrators as well student dispositions of self-efficacy, self concept, study habits, state of health, motivation, anxiety, a conducive environment for studying, availability of textbooks, and well-equipped libraries were designated as perceived factors for poor academic performance among Nigerian students (Oke, 2005).

As recent as 2012, the West African Examination Council (WAEC) stated academic performance has been very low among secondary school students in Nigeria (WAEC, 2012). This trend in low academic performance has been attributed to certain factors including social, economic, regional and psychological factors in which self-concept plays a role (Largea, Sanni and Brew, 2014). Bandura's studies of self concept among students in the United States established self concept as a major factor contributing to students' academic performance (Bandura, 1997).

Other researchers established a link between high school students' level of engagement in school, self-efficacy and goal orientation (Caraway, Trucker, Renike & Hall, 2003). Also, students' fears of failure in a variety of academic situations contributed to low effort while social supports, such as parents and teachers, could provide positive reinforcement for students' success and increase overall involvement in student learning activities to reduce negative feelings towards school (Lashawn, Catrice & Baco, 2011).

Another concept that influences student learning is study habit which combines study method and study skill. According to Gbore (2006) study habit refers to predispositions which students have developed towards private readings through a period of time. According to him, study habit is a gateway to successful achievement in studies.

Odiri (2015), observed that the study habits of students vary from one student to the other and from one place to another. It is an important aspect of learning because student achievement in school depends greatly on their study habits. Adeyemo (2005) and Gbore (2006) investigated study habits. They argued that study habits have strong relationships with the academic performance of students and certain study habits influence student learning more than others.

Constantine and Blackmon (2002) examined the relationship between Black American adolescent student self-esteem and academic performance by demonstrating how students with low self esteem tend to denigrate academic performance. Often, students may place different levels of importance on academics based on perceived personal or societal limitations, thus leading to diminished academic outcomes. Constantine and Blackmon (2002) identified characteristics of a person's self concept based on specific situations and experiences. They described self-concept as: a) organized or structured self perceptions based upon experiences and meanings associated with those experiences, b) multifaceted feelings and events in different areas of an individuals' life such as personal, familiar and societal and c) stable or established viewpoint.

Several researchers reported the relationship between gender and self-concept and consequently academic achievement (Skaalvik & Rankin, 1994, Wingfield & Ecceles, 1994). They reported that boys seem to have a more positive self-concept in a number of dimensions than girls in Mathematics. Meanwhile, researchers working in the areas of gender issues have not resolved the debate on gender difference in Mathematics.

This research into student low performance in mathematics indicates that many students fail mathematics because they have low self-concept and poor study habits and poor attitudes towards the subject.

In Nigeria today, almost all courses of study in universities require mathematical skills. The increasing failure rate of students in these subjects challenges researchers to understand and explain student mathematics self-concept, and their study habits in secondary school within Oyo State, Nigeria.

The following research questions guided this study:

RQ$_1$: What is the relationship between students' self-concept and study habit group on attitude and their achievement in mathematics?

RQ$_2$: What is the relationship between students' study habit and achievement in mathematics?

RQ$_3$: What is the relationship between self-concept and the students' achievement in mathematics?

RQ$_4$: How do male and female students differ for attitude toward mathematics?

Methodology

This study adopted a correlational design. The population for the study comprised all the secondary school students in Ibadan metropolis, Oyo state. Out of the population, a total of two hundred (200) students were randomly drawn from six secondary schools class (SS2). Also these students were stratified along gender (74 male and 126 female).

A standardized self-concept instrument and study habit was validated by researcher using a Cronbach reliability method with (MSCQ, r=0.84) and (MSHQ, r=0.70) respectively. Also, Mathematics Achievement Test (MAT) was validated using KR$_{20}$ with (r=0.76). MSCQ, MSHQ and MAT were administered on sampled students for the study. The exercise was carried out in each of the selected schools. The cooperation of the Mathematics teachers in each of the sampled schools facilitated the administration with the proper supervision of the researcher, research assistants and teachers. There were no reports of loss items and a 99% return rate was achieved.

Table 1: Relationship between self-concept and study habit group on student attitude and achievement in Mathematics.

Variable	N	Mean	SD	R	Sig
Students attitude	200	76.45	1.678		
Students performance	200	67.79	2.912	0.976	.000

Table 2: Relationship between student self-concept and study habit group on academic achievement.

Variable	N	Mean	SD	R	Sig
Students study habit	200	59.98	5.342		
Students achievement	200	67.79	4.657	0.794	.042

Table 3: Relationship between self-concept and math academic achievement.					
Variable	N	Mean	SD	R	Sig
Students self-concept	200	45.59	4.546	0.563	.049
Students achievement	200	67.79	2.786		

Table 4: Showing mean scores of the attitude of male and female students to mathematics.					
Variable	N	Mean	SD	T	Sig
Male	74	73.78	10.143	-0.295	
Female	126	72.72	10.989		NS

Data Analysis

The study adopted Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) and student gender comparisons for the analysis of data on the study.

RQ_1: What is the relationship between students' self-concept and study habit group on attitude and their achievement in Mathematics?

Table 1 displays the results of the relationships of the student attitude and their academic performance in Mathematics. The result (r_{200}= 0.976; p<0.05) indicates that there was a positive relationship between students' attitude and performance in mathematics which is significant at 0.05. The value of r which is 0.976 implies that their relationship between the two variables is strong.

RQ_2: What is the relationship between students' study habits and achievement in Mathematics?

Table 2 shows the results of the Pearson Product Moment (PPMC) between the students' study habits and academic achievement in Mathematics (r_{200}= 0.794; p<0.05) indicating that there is a positive relationship between students' study habit and performance in Mathematics which is significant at 0.05. The value of r which is 0.794 implies that the relationship between the two variables is strong.

RQ_3: What is the relationship between self-concept and the students' achievement in Mathematics?

Table 3 presents the results of the Pearson Product Moment (PPMC) between the students' self-concept and academic performance in Mathematics. The result (r_{200}= 0.563; p<0.05) indicates that there was a positive relationship between students' self-concepts and performance in

Mathematics which is significant at 0.05. The value of r which is 0.563 shows a moderate relationship between the two variables.

RQ_4: How do male and female students differ for attitude toward mathematics?

Table 4 displays the results of the independent t-test of the attitude of students towards mathematics by gender (t_{200}= -0.295; p>0.05). The results indicated that although male students had a slightly higher mean (X=73.78) in their positive attitude toward mathematics than female students with the mean of (X=72.72), the mean difference was not statistically significant.

Discussion of Results

The first Research question of this study reveals that there was a positive relationship between students' attitude and performance in Mathematics. This corresponds with the findings of (Hackett & Benz, 1989; Tella & Tella 2005) that there was a significant relationship between attitude toward mathematics and performance in mathematics.

Several studies support the belief that self-concept tends to produce a commensurable change in academic achievement and attitude towards mathematics (Yara, 2010 & Adeyemo, 2005) which the findings of this study support. Othe studies by Adeyemo, (2005) and Gbore, (2006) demonstrated that study habits have a strong relationship with the academic achievement of students. The implication is that a student who cultivates certain study habits will perform differently from a student who has a different and less effective set of study habits.

Secondly, this study reveals that there was a relationship between study habits and self concept which was

significant at 0.05. Adeyemo (2005) and Gbore (2006) revealed a significant relationship between mathematical study habits and good performance in mathematics.

Moreover, there was a significant relationship between student self concept and performance in mathematics. The findings of this study support those of previous researchers in other cultures (Bandura, 1997; Largea, Sanni and Brew, 2014; Lashawn and Bacon, 2011) the direct effect of Mathematics self concept on mathematical performance.

Also, the findings of this study revealed that the attitude towards mathematics of the male and female respondents was not statistically significant. Although Pajares (1996); Tella and Tella (2005) and Oke (2005) report that boys and men tend to be more confident than girls and women in academic areas related to Mathematics, science and technology, there was no difference in attitude towards mathematics for these male and female secondary students in the selected schools. Further research on these students' performance in math, their attitudes toward mathematics, their self concept and their math teachers' attitudes and family support seems warranted at this time.

Based on the various findings on this study, it seems reasonable to recommend that secondary school students should be encouraged to view math as a subject they can master, and that their teachers should promote positive academic self concepts in their students. It is when students have the notion of their own personal worth and strong capacity to learn in their conscious and subconscious mind that they can begin to do well in a subject.

Mathematics teachers in Nigerian secondary schools are also called upon to always make Mathematics classes very interesting and engaging for students. By so doing, self-concept, good study habits and performances of the students in Mathematics will no doubt improve.

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