



# Teacher Perceptions and Practices of Effective Teaching in Racially Diverse Kindergarten Classrooms

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# Research Topic and Purpose

- Research Topic: Understanding Effective Teaching Perceptions/Practices in Racially Diverse Kindergarten Classrooms
- Purpose Statement: To understand teacher perceptions and practices of effective teaching and the impact of contemporary accountability measures.

# Justification

- Focus on teachers' perceptions and practices of effective teaching in racially diverse classrooms.
- Accountability measures are now evident in Pre-kindergarten and Kindergarten classes: The accountability measures beginning in third grade have trickled down to PK/kindergarten and the pressure is on teachers and schools to have students begin reading earlier than in previous years (Bassok, Latham, Rorem, 2016).
- Today's accountability measures: Schools are focusing more on teaching effectiveness in terms of practices and pedagogies (Center for Public Education, 2007).



# Positionality

- Current School Principal of Pk-5 classes containing racially diverse students
- Five of my twelve years as a school administrator were in a school with a very high percentage of racially diverse students
- Conducting this study gave me an opportunity to understand the perceptions of teachers in terms of effective teaching in racially diverse classrooms with today's accountability measures

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# Research Questions

1. How do kindergarten teachers in a North Florida elementary school define, perceive and implement effective teaching pedagogy and practices in their racially diverse classrooms?
2. How do contemporary accountability measures in terms of student outcomes shape teachers' perceptions and practices of effective teaching in racially diverse kindergarten classrooms?

# Data Collection

- A qualitative case study (September 2017-December 2017) was used to explore perceptions that the kindergarten teachers have regarding effective teaching practices in their racially diverse classrooms
- Case study took place in a North Florida school district in a school with kindergarten classes composed of racially diverse students. I observed 3 out of the 5 kindergarten teachers during their reading and math blocks of instruction.
  - 3 Interviews with each of three teachers & 1 Interview with Principal Willow
  - \*7 Class Observations with each teacher
- 70% of students in this North Florida school are classified as economically disadvantaged and 90% of all students at this school are racially diverse (African American, Hispanic and Multi-Racial) students.

\*There were six observations in one of the teacher participants' classroom instead of seven. This difference was due to a scheduling conflict.

# Theoretical Framework

- Characteristics of CRP and scholarship on effective teaching practices guided my study as I observed the teaching practices and pedagogies in the three racially diverse kindergarten classrooms.
- Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1995):
  - Teachers should set clear behavior expectations, develop positive relationships and high expectations for students.
  - Teachers should communicate with students in culturally consistent ways such as incorporating elements of students' home, personal and community lives in the classroom (Milner and Tenore, 2010).
- Scholarship on effective teaching practices (Ferguson, 2012):
  - Small group work to differentiate instruction
  - Managing instruction to keep students on task for most of the lesson
  - Scaffolding or providing coaching
  - Providing explicit (clear instructional targets, clear purpose for learning, and adequate modeling) interactive strategies for students to use



# Summary of Main Finding

- Main Finding: The schools' accountability paradigm shaped the teachers' definition and perceptions of effective teaching
- Accountability paradigm based on the following 3 factors:
  - Student achievement through the lens of the kindergarten standards (Principal analyze current student performance in comparison to grade level standards)
  - Principal monitors teacher's instructional practices (progress monitoring meetings and observations conducted by the principal and assistant principal)
  - Teacher evaluations completed by principal and assistant principal (observations by principal and assistant principal)





# Summary of Sub-Findings

- Sub-Finding One: The different terms that were used by the teachers to define effective teaching all reflected the central values of the accountability paradigm implemented at the school.
  - Being reflective
  - Providing reminders about the expectations
  - Building positive relationships
- Sub-Finding Two: The teachers' teaching practices were aligned with the expectations that were outlined in the accountability paradigm.
  - Teacher's Personalities
  - Communication of high expectations
  - Engagement of students
  - Reflective and flexible

# Findings and Research Questions

- How do kindergarten teachers in a North Florida elementary school define, perceive and implement effective teaching pedagogy and practices in their racially diverse classrooms?
- How do contemporary accountability measures in terms of student outcomes shape teachers' perceptions and practices of effective teaching in racially diverse kindergarten classrooms?
  - The results of this study reveal that the school's accountability paradigm led by Principal Willow did indeed shape how the participating teachers defined, perceived and implemented effective teaching in their racially diverse kindergarten classrooms.
  - Despite being shaped by the same accountability paradigm, teachers' implementation of effective teaching in their classrooms varied reflecting different personalities, modes of communication, and classroom management styles of the three teachers.

# Conclusion

- The main message of this study is that in this accountability era, teachers' definition and perceptions of effective teaching are shaped by the accountability paradigm developed at the school level.
- These findings help us understand the central and important role of school leaders in creating institutional norms and context that shape the perceptions and practices of teaching and learning at a school.
- Teachers were using effective teaching strategies, but did not mention the scholarship on effective teaching within the interviews as they described their definition and perceptions of effective teaching.
- This qualitative case study showed what effective teaching and perceptions looked like in a particular context. It offered some insight into notions and practices of effective teaching; however, if further studies were conducted, there may be variances regarding the perceptions of effective teaching in racially diverse classrooms. Those variances would be based on the leadership of the school and the teachers' personalities.



# Recommendations for Stakeholders

- Recommendations for stakeholders (district leaders, school principals and teachers):
  - Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (CRP) Professional Development for teachers and school administrators – This type of professional development would be beneficial to help teachers and school administrators understand and determine ways to implement it in their respective schools.
  - Develop Cadres/Professional Learning Communities (PLC's) – These support groups would be beneficial for teachers and school administrators to network as they implement and learn more about culturally relevant pedagogy. These support groups would also become an avenue for district leaders to participate so they can identify strengths and weaknesses of schools and offer feedback and support to sustain the efforts in implementing culturally relevant pedagogy.
  - Visit Model Schools – Schools that would be identified as effectively implementing traits of CRP. Other school administrators and teachers would be given opportunities to observe in the classrooms of these schools so they see the practicality of implementing traits of CRP.



# Future Plans

- Revise my accountability paradigm for the 2018-19 school year based on results of this study.
- The results of this study will be shared with the district leaders in anticipation of the following:
  - School leaders will be given additional support and professional development on culturally relevant pedagogy and scholarship on effective teaching that will enhance the learning of all students.
- Conduct further research on culturally relevant pedagogy in today's high accountability public school classrooms.

# References

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