Examining Pre-Service Educators' and Educators' Self-Efficacy in Culturally Responsive Instruction

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If I interview educators and pre-service educators about self-efficacy beliefs and these educators also self-rate regarding educator efficacy and confidence, in what ways, if any, could that information inform teacher preparation programs about pre-service teacher self-efficacy development and Culturally Responsive Teaching?

Abstract

This mixed methods pilot study examined self-efficacy and confidence of preservice and inservice educators regarding Culturally Responsive Teaching. Quantitative data, collected through the Culturally Responsive Teaching Self-Efficacy Scale (CRTSES), informed qualitative data, which were collected through interviews with participants. Interviews examined components of CRTSES which participants self-rated least confident.

Introduction

Culturally Responsive Teaching is "a teacher's use of strategies that support a constructivist view of knowledge, teaching, and learning, assists students in constructing knowledge, building on their personal and cultural strengths, and examining the curriculum from multiple perspectives, thus creating an inclusive classroom environment" (Krasnoff, 2016, p. 2). Students in the United States are culturally, ethnically, and linguistically diverse; the teacher population does not necessarily reflect this diversity (U.S. Department of Education Equity and Excellence Commission, 2013; NCES, 2020). In order for teachers to use best practices, they need to be made aware of the impact culture has on learning. If teachers are not prepared to teach students who are culturally different from themselves, a cultural gap will be created (Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 2009). If teachers ignore and exclude culturally diverse materials in curriculum, culturally diverse students are not receiving the same learning experiences as their White peers. By embracing differences rather than turning a blind eye toward them, teachers can change classroom experiences for diverse learners.

CRT is "neither simple nor static" (Borrero & de la Cruz, 2016, p. 30). It's constantly evolving and changing as new information is learned and presented. Essentially, CRT is a process, not a final destination (Borrero & de la Cruz, 2016). Students must be exposed to different cultures and practices early in life so they will experience an accurate representation of what it means to live in a multicultural society (Ladson-Billings, 2005). Additionally, culturally diverse learners deserve to see themselves represented in professional contexts in order to "boost the self-worth of students of color and motivate this population of students to strive for social success" (Villegas & Irvine, 2010, p. 177). If diverse learners see themselves represented in the classroom in a positive manner, such as being in leadership positions, this will inspire and motivate them to set expectations for themselves that White students already have due to curriculum materials and many academic leadership positions being representative of their culture.

Methodology

Study Setting and Participants

This study gathered data from four participants. Two of these participants were enrolled in the Doctor of Education program and are current educators with more than ten years of teaching experience each. The remaining two participants were enrolled in the preservice Elementary Education program. All four participants have taken classes in the College of Education at the same small, private university. All four participants identified as female and shared an educational background. These participants were diverse in age, ranging from 20 years old to 50 years old, and had various backgrounds in teaching experience. Data were gathered through a two-step process: first, a 41-question survey was given for the participants to fill out and return to the researcher (see Appendix A). Following the dissemination of the survey, an interview was conducted via Zoom with the participants to discuss their responses on the survey.

Data Sources

This pilot study used two data sources: Culturally Responsive Teaching Self-Efficacy Survey (Siwatu, 2007) and a subsequent interview. The use of multiple sources of data in this pilot study increased reliability and validity.

Data Collection Procedures

- Participants recruited by request to Education Department Chair
- Informed consent form was signed by all participants
- Approved by university Institutional Review Board
- Survey disseminated
- Interview conducted
- Two emergent themes: virtual learning & relationships

Term	Definition
Culture	The characteristics and knowledge of a particular group of people. Culture encompasses race, socioeconomic status, nationality, gender, family status, housing status, language, communication modality, or sexual preferences (Tochluck, 2009)
School to prison pipeline	Process in which students are pushed out of schools and into prisons; criminalizing youth by carrying out disciplinary policies and practices that put students into contact with law enforcement (Tochluck, 2009)
Constructivist	Theory in which learners construct knowledge rather than passively take in information; using experiences to incorporate new information into pre-existing knowledge (Tochluck, 2009)
Preservice program	A program in which students are guided and supervised by a mentor or cooperating teacher; these students are studying education in a post-secondary education setting (Tochluck, 2009)
Redlining	Denial of governmental services by placing criteria and selectively raising prices on certain goods will affect certain communities (Tochluck, 2009)
Discipline gap	The gap between White and Black students in discipline rates, especially in regard to suspensions and expulsions (Tochluck, 2009)
Universal Design for Learning	An educational framework based on research that guides the development of flexible learning environments and spaces that can accommodate learning differences (Smith et al., 2017)

Results

Data Analysis Results for Quantitative Data

One of the preservice educators self-rated with the lowest scores of all four participants, with five survey questions rated with a score of 30 or below, and six survey questions rated between 40 and 50. The other preservice educator participant self-rated the highest scores out of all four participants, self-rating only one question below 80. This is particularly interesting because typically preservice teachers feel the most confident and efficacious prior to entering the field (Woolfolk Hoy, 2000).

One of the inservice educators self-rated nine responses a score of 70 or below. The other inservice educator self-rated four responses a score of 80 or below. Interestingly, these two inservice educators self-rated the same three survey questions low (although they provided different scores for each question). Two of these survey questions involved using English Language Learners' native language in the classroom. The other survey question was about highlighting how other cultural groups have made use of mathematics.

Data Analysis Results for Qualitative Data

Interview transcriptions were reviewed multiple times. The preservice educator with the most confidence was asked why she felt so confident in implementing CRT. When asked what made this participant feel confident going into student teaching, she responded "I'd say what makes me feel the most confident is having the knowledge base to do these things…a lot of this is stuff I have learned in classes and I have had assignments over". However, when the second preservice educator was asked about confidence in adapting instruction, she responded "I guess that just like comes with teaching…but I don't feel confident in my ability to do that" and "I think like reading through the list, I feel like as I teach, I'll learn this stuff and get more used to this stuff".

Alternatively, the inservice educators discussed virtual learning and how it impacted relationships with students. For example, one inservice educator discussed how virtual learning has affected adaptation and differentiation to instruction: "…right now I'm thinking in terms of virtual instruction so that's probably…you know it's a little bit intimidating now so that's probably why I rated that one a little bit lower". The other inservice instructor spoke of how relationships are impacted by virtual instruction: "I was thinking of like my virtual setting right now and that it's Covid time and I feel like a lot of things are skewed in how I see things and even how my students are interacting with me".

Conclusion

Two overarching themes were noted: virtual instruction and relationship with students/families. A third possible theme was adaptation and differentiation of instruction in the classroom; however, more research must be conducted to conclude this due to questions asked about this particular topic during the interview for some participants.

Existing literature supports the notion that teacher preparation programs should provide strong CRT curricula for preservice teachers (Gay, 2002; Gorski, 2008; Siwatu, 2007; Sleeter 2008). This pilot study sought to identify in which areas of Culturally Responsive Teaching preservice teachers felt the least confident and efficacious. This information is especially useful when compared to inservice educators' responses because the areas in which preservice and inservice educators' lowest amounts of confidence and efficacy overlap must be the areas targeted first in CRT education in teacher preparation programs.

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