**Research Summary: Academic Disparity among English Language Learners**

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Research Methods and Systematic Inquiry I – ED.883.718.1D.SP25

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Hi Mirzohid,

This is a good start to your proposed empirical project! You communicated your POP, provided many research questions that relate to your POP, considered how to define and measure several of the constructs from your research questions, and discussed your initial ideas regarding your population and sampling plan. For Assignment 3, I’d like you to prioritize narrowing your list of research questions to ensure your study will be manageable.

I left a range of comments in your document to help further your thinking about your study in preparation for Assignment 3. Some comments relate to technical notes, some to APA guidelines, and others to the content of your research plan so far. Please bring your questions about my feedback to our meeting on 4/1. I look forward to talking with you then!

Jamie

Score: 23.5/25

**Research Summary: Academic Disparity among English Language Learners**

Today, English learners represent more than 10% of the total K-12 student population in U.S. schools (Mang, 2021; *PISA 2022 U.S. Results*, n.d.; Rutkowski & Rutkowski, 2016, p. 264). English learners (ELs), due to limited language proficiency, are reported to be underperforming academically (Rosen et al., 2018; Tong et al., 2014) either domestically or transnationally (Mang 2021; “PISA 2022 U.S. Results,” n.d.). The ELs I encountered in my POP context had previously matriculated in a public school system, albeit for a short periods of time, where they were identified as belonging to one or more “at-risk” status groups (Callahan 2013), or misidentified in the process of language curricularization (Kibler & Valdez, 2016), and faced increasing academic achievement accountability (Ruiz-de-Velasco and Fix 2000) in each grade, and even were placed in “sink or swim immersion” (Chang, 2015; Wortham et al., 2001) instructional settings.

English learners in my POP context usually have limited English language proficiency (Molloy Elreda et al. 2022), poor academic records, and are behind in their mastery of STEM subjects. At present, state legislators responsible for adopting academic standards, district and school administrators, instructional leaders (Ndura, 2004), and content developers all recognize the existence of this problem. Additionally, schools encounter difficulties in creating content that is both socially and culturally pertinent (conscious), aligns with state standards, and is tailored for language learners with bilingual or even multilingual socio-cultural backgrounds.

To better examine and understand the academic disparity, scholars must study the connection between institutional perspectives and the components that are causing it.

**Purpose of Study and Potential Research Questions**

The purpose of my proposed study is to identify the institutional and instructional factors that are contributing to academic disparity among the English Language Learners. I’ve composed the following potential research questions to help guide this research study:

1. How do school principals’ perceptions of instructional leadership versus organizational management influence ELs’ academic performance and language development?
2. How do policies related to test-based accountability and teacher evaluations affect teacher retention, burnout, and instructional practices in schools serving ELs?
3. What role does culturally responsive school leadership play in fostering inclusive and equitable learning environments for bilingual and multilingual students?
4. How does socioeconomic status (SES) influence English Learners’ (ELs) academic performance and sense of belonging in educational settings?
5. In what ways does language curricularization contribute to the classification and categorization of ELs, and how does this process impact their academic trajectories?
6. What institutional challenges do administrators, teachers, and curriculum developers face in balancing language policies, instructional practices, and standardized assessments while supporting ELs’ academic success?
7. What are the unintended consequences of accreditation-driven accountability measures on instructional practices, particularly regarding the balance between compliance and fostering meaningful learning experiences?
8. How does the concept of “educational triage” shape resource allocation in schools under high-stakes accountability systems, and what are its implication for students who are either far behind or exceeding proficiency expectations?
9. How does the standardization of educational practices under accreditation and state accountability policies influence teacher autonomy, instructional innovation, and student learning outcomes?

**Operationalization of Constructs**

The constructs of interest in my proposed research along with operational definitions and potential indicators are summarized in Table 1.

**Table 1**

Summary of Constructs of Interest

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Construct** | **Operational Definition** | **Indicator** | **Citation(s)** |
| School leadership | Strategies, actions, and decision-making processes undertaken by school administrators to influence and improve teaching and learning outcomes | Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI) 10-point Likert response scale  Survey | (University of Chichester, United Kingdom and Kurowski 2020) |
| Teachers’ efficacy | Teachers’ belief in their ability to positively influence student outcomes, including academic achievement, motivation, and behavior | Teachers Self Efficacy Scale (TSES)  Qualitative interview questions | (Klassen et al. 2009) |
| Assessment-based accountability policies | State or national tests used to evaluate and hold schools, educators, and students accountable for academic performance and outcomes | Adequate Yearly Progress (IDOE) | (Shin 2022) |
| Socio-economic status | An indicator of family income, parental education, and access to resources | Surveys | (Fernández Sanjurjo, Arias Blanco, and Fernández-Costales 2018) |
| Language Curricularization | Standardized content development and assessment practices aimed at achieving specific and measurable language outcomes | Survey – Participatory Action Research (PAR)  Teachers’ Sense of Efficacy Scale | (Sosnowski 2021) |
| School accountability | The process of evaluating school performance on the basis of student performance measures | WIDA, iLearn, AYP, ESS | (Turkan and Buzick 2016; Jennings and Lauen 2016) |
| School compliance and funding | Educational Institution’s adherence to legal, regulatory, or policy standards mandated at state or federal level | Survey | (DeAngelis, Burke, and Wolf 2021) |

**Description of Participant Population**

The population for my proposed study comprises the Legacy Learning Center staff and faculty. As an ex-principal and a counselor at LLC, both the administrative and instructional staff at LLC are ex-colleagues and fellow parents.

**Population Description**

The population consists of 20 teachers and administrators, most of whom are either 1st or 2nd generation immigrants. I’ve carefully selected teachers from all grade levels and a select of subject area teachers and 2 administrative staff members. I’ve also expressed my intention to interview the school principal. He agreed to participate in my research study barring any unexpected circumstances that might either defer his decision. In Table 2, there is a breakdown of the population demographics of this proposed study.

**Table 2**

*Summary of Study Population*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Role | Gender | Count |
| KG Teachers | Female | 2 |
| Elementary/Classroom Teachers | Male | 1 |
| Elementary/Classroom Teachers | Female | 5 |
| Science Teachers | Female | 1 |
| Science Teachers | Male | 1 |
| Math/Algebra Teachers | Female | 1 |
| Math/Algebra Teachers | Male | 1 |
| English Teachers | Female | 2 |
| Social Sciences Teachers | Female | 1 |
| Social Sciences Teachers | Male | 1 |
| World Languages Teachers (Arabic and French) | Female | 2 |
| Office Administrators | Female | 1 |
| Office Administrators | Male | 1 |

**Appropriateness of the Population**

Legacy Learning Center is a state-accredited private school located in downtown Indianapolis, Indiana. Serving as a K-12 institution, it accommodates over 240 students, the majority of whom are immigrants with multilingual and multicultural backgrounds. Students from elementary to high school levels are classified as English Language Learners until they meet the World Class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA) benchmarks. The school was established in 2015, during which I held the position of Principal for the 2015-2016 and 2016-2017 academic years. Subsequently, I transitioned into the role of volunteer academic advisor. Legacy Learning Center also serves as the professional context for my Place of Practice (POP).

Moreover, the majority of school teachers and administrators are also immigrants, whether they were born in the U.S., moved at a young age, or immigrated more recently. This makes them a highly suitable population for my proposed research.

**Access to the Population**

Both as an immigrant and as an ex-school member, I have a unique access to the population. I also attend the Friday congregational prayers and am acquainted with the teachers, students, and the school administrators, who are all my ex-colleagues. I don’t foresee any potential barriers or blockers to conducting my study at LLC by the time I engage in my needs assessment, however, the principal's involvement remains uncertain due to his unpredictable schedule at this time.

**Implications of the Population Size**

The primary goal of this study is to gain a deeper insight into the factors contributing to academic disparities among ELLs. This research specifically focuses on a U.S.-based population, with a carefully considered relatively smaller sample size. To thoroughly examine all aspects of the study, I have determined that a mixed-methods approach is the most appropriate for conducting the needs assessment as indicated in summary of constructs of interest.

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