

DEVELOPING TEACHERS, COMMUNITY MEMBERS, AND ACADEMICS FOR MULTILINGUAL LEARNERS



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Background

In the US, over one-third of children speak multiple languages at home, and five million public school students are English language learners or MLs (NCES, 2022). However, a critical shortage of MLs teachers (U.S. Department of Education, 2017) and limited resources hinder their support (Horsford & Sampson, 2013). Academic expertise for MLs is limited, with few higher education institutions offering relevant teacher preparation programs (King, 2020; Menkin & Antunez, 2001). Supporting MLs is vital due to their language barriers and low self-efficacy (Deng & Trainin, 2020). This study, funded by the US National Professional Development Grant Program, enhances multilingual instruction in high-need school districts, exploring the teacher-academic-community relationship to boost ML instructional capacity. Academic development (AD) is a holistic approach impacting teaching, learning, and research with community involvement (Geertsema, 2016; Leibowitz, 2016; Sutherland, 2018). Collaboration is essential for professional development (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). This study uses design-based research (DBR) to foster collaboration and teacher voice (Philippakos et al., 2021; Reinking & Bradley, 2008). We discuss collaboration from the perspectives of teachers and community members, its impact on us as academics, and our resulting creation of resources to return to the ML community.

Theoretical Framework

This study is informed by the Dual Capacity Building framework (DCBF) (Mapp & Kuttner, 2013), a model for refining education systems by taking a holistic approach to educational improvement. DCBF recognizes how improvements in one area (e.g., professional development, teaching) can benefit others (e.g., student learning). It addresses challenges like minimal training for educators and negative family-school experiences. To achieve lasting improvements, opportunity conditions (process and organizational) are vital. Process conditions involve trust-building, collaborative learning communities, and enhancing stakeholders' skills and partnerships. Organizational conditions are systemic initiatives integrated into all programs. Additionally, we explore the role of higher education institutes (IHE) in capacity building.

Research Question

How can DBR further enhance PD collaboration among academics, teachers, community members?

Method

This is a Design-Based Research (DBR) study that utilizes mixed methods.

Participants: The study involved 30 in-service teachers in an online MEd program for ESOL and literacy certification, an academic team, and a community advisory council. The research team included two co-principal investigators, two doctoral students, a caregiver liaison, and two external evaluators. The advisory council represented organizations in law, business, administration, and the arts serving the MLs community.

Data sources: During the MEd program, teachers provided feedback on course topics for MLs caregivers. The advisory council contributed feedback to ensure course comprehensiveness. We collected **quantitative data** through two teacher surveys on confidence in offering caregiver course suggestions. **Qualitative data** included teacher suggestions and research logs documenting advisory council feedback. The research team met weekly to discuss progress and changes.

Data analysis: We analyzed qualitative data using grounded theory and constant comparison methods (Saldana, 2016). We compared survey responses chronologically, identifying changes between sets, and correlated teacher feedback with advisory council and academic development data.

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For presentation slides scan here



Data Analysis

| Theoretical | Focused | Initial |
|-----------------------|---|------------------------------|
| Needed Framework | Need for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion | Culturally Relevant Pedagogy |
| | | Deficit Language |
| | | No suggestions |
| K-12 Need | Literacy Foundations | Phonics/Phonemic Awareness |
| | | Fluency |
| | | Vocabulary |
| | | Language |
| | | Comprehension |
| | Digital and disciplinary literacy | Multimodal Instruction |
| | | Writing |
| Dialectic interaction | Home literacy | Daily reading |
| | | Support at home |
| | Dynamic access | Access |
| | | Communication |
| | | Educational policy |
| | | |

Results

Findings revealed a dynamic development process that informed both the researchers and the community giving feedback across three groups: teachers, community members, and researchers. The teachers made suggestions for literacy that supported the best practice recommendations (Baker et al., 2014) that the researchers hoped to include in the caregiver course. Yet, teachers also showed a need for PD in diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) topics.

The community members represented by the advisory council led to the researchers' development by suggesting topics for the caregiver course the academics had yet to identify. It also showed academics' own need for inclusion in the conversation about instructional development for MLs by suggesting a synergy that did not yet exist between community programs, schooling, and research.

Finally, the researchers realized their PD regarding the caregiver course, the relationship with the community, and the teacher PD through constant interaction with both teachers and advisory council members and designing resources to follow up on their suggestions.

Discussion

The DCBF emphasized the importance of involving caregivers and educators for effective ML education.

The teachers require dynamic relationships with caregivers based on valuing DEI perspectives and considering power and voice representation..

This design highlights the importance of involving diverse perspectives in the research process.