

The Complexity of Middle School Principals' Culturally Relevant Leadership and Multilingual Population Program's Characteristics

by

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research study was to utilize the theoretical framework of acculturation theory and learning theory to examine the culturally relevant leadership of three middle school principals in relation to the multilingual population programs' (MLP) characteristics in their schools. The study specifically looked at some of the factors that influenced the culturally relevant leadership on student achievement. These factors included the complex set of connections between the principals' perceptions of the MLPs and their culturally relevant leadership and the links between leadership and how it affected the program characteristics implemented to address the needs of the MLPs. The study concluded that culturally relevant leadership capacity was important because it provided educational support

to MLP through the types of MLP programs selected and professional development choices for school staff to enhance the MLP support.

Data used for this study included: principal interviews, observations, surveys of teachers and students, and extant data. Examination of the influence of middle school principals on the academic success of the MLPs was provided via personal, educational, and professional experiences as articulated in the interviews. Teachers and students participated in surveys of their MLP program based on its characteristics, which included the type, delivery, and performance of the program. Students' scores on the Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP) and English Language Proficiency Assessment (ELPA) of spring 2009, 2010, and 2011 and their Grade Point Averages (GPAs) were also examined as part of the program's performance.

The results of the study revealed the complex nature of how leadership and program characteristics interacted, with the data suggesting that there were many factors that influenced the MLPs' academic success. In addition, the results of the research shared some insights on how the principals may perceive themselves as culturally relevant leaders, and how their perceptions related to the MLP program's characteristics.

INTRODUCTION

The U.S. Supreme Court decision in *Lau v. Nichols* (414 U.S. 563, 94 S. Ct. 786, 1974) requires that school districts provide English language learning (ELL) services and programs to students with limited English proficiency. Since that time, school districts have been reevaluating their effectiveness in meeting the educational needs of ELL students. Researchers

have identified effective ELL programs that demonstrate best practices in instructional strategies and examined the leadership abilities that contribute to the success of these programs (Moodian, 2009). This research will further explore the role of leadership in contributing to the academic success of multilingual populations (**MLP**), looking through the lens of program effectiveness. Historically, MLP programs have had various levels of success depending on the educational needs of the targeted audience. Factors shown to influence success include English language level, educational background, and MLP make-up within the school or district (Michigan Department of Education, 2010). According to Crawford (1989), a study entitled, "The Case-Studies Curriculum Model" focused on the role of MLPs' social integration. Unlike traditional bilingual programs, students in this model were grouped by language proficiency, grade level, and reading ability for core subjects. They were then combined with non-ELL students during electives (p. 134). This model resulted in positive academic outcomes or language proficiency progress for students. The results indicated that the model used effective educational practices. Crawford (1989) credited its success, during the five-year period of the program, to its basis in a fundamentally sound theory of sheltered English language learning. He believed that MLP students made social gains because they interacted with other students. Likewise, Brisk (2000) defined a successful educational program as one that nurtures social integration, which develops students' language and literacy proficiency and leads to academic success.

The success of an MLP program depends on varied factors, one being the program's design. One transitional bilingual program in a southeastern county of Michigan has been restructured to better meet the needs of MLPs. The program's original model is referred to as *pull-out*, in which multilingual students were taken out of their classes to be tutored. This model

apparently worked when it was first implemented, but an astronomical increase in MLPs necessitated a program overhaul. The revised program was designed to provide bilingual instructional assistants and offered schools the option to use a resource center for those who required additional language support in their content classes. For newly arrived MLPs with no English language ability, the newcomer center is available as an expanded option. This particular program has been re-designed to meet the diverse educational needs of many multilingual students.

Leadership is another factor relevant to the effectiveness of programs designed to meet the educational needs of multilingual populations. To prepare their schools and students for the future, principals and other educational leaders must understand and be skilled in their role of shaping and creating an excelling educational environment (Marx, 2006). According to Marx, successful leaders are those who have specialized knowledge and skills and are able to see things in context. They understand forces that affect society, including their own system of education and the needs of their individual students. Thus, they have a strong sense of connectedness and are enthusiastic about preparing their schools and students for a global future.

A crucial factor in creating a successful program for multilingual populations is quality educational leaders who provide culturally relevant leadership. According to Lindsey, Robins, and Terrell (2003), culturally relevant leaders, such as principals, possess a quality called *cultural proficiency*. Based on their attitudes and personal experiences with multilingual populations, these leaders demonstrate an understanding of the dissonance that students from diverse cultures might experience in a school setting. They also recognize that they may not necessarily have intimate knowledge about each culture represented in their schools, but they strive to learn more. Thus, these leaders develop a conscious awareness of the cultures within their communities and

schools (Terrell & Lindsey, 2009). By increasing their awareness and understanding, they become culturally relevant leaders and may begin to discover harmony within diversity. Thus, this type of leadership supports high quality programs that serve MLPs.

Principals strive to improve their school's learning environment for all students, including MLPs. However, there is often a gap between their desire to help MLPs and the actual academic success of these students. The study analyzes this link by examining the principals' attitudes, personal experiences, and educational background relating to MLPs. This link may be the key to bridging the gap between a principal's desire to help through program implementation and the actual academic success of MLPs.

The research specifically focuses on case studies of three middle school principals. The case studies were designed to contrast different MLP programs' characteristics, which include type, delivery, and performance of the programs. The program characteristics constituted the setting in which the culturally relevant leadership of the three principals are examined.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

In this research, I used a mixed method design that combined features of both qualitative and quantitative research methods. A qualitative methodology consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. As Denzin and Lincoln (2005) explain, " ... Qualitative researchers deploy a wide range of . interconnected interpretive practices, exploring ways to get a better understanding of the subject matter at hand" (pp. 3-4). In other words, qualitative research involves the collection of a variety of empirical materials, such as personal experiences, case studies, life stories, interviews, results of introspection, and artifacts (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).

A quantitative method, on the other hand, is designed to collect and to analyze numbers that inform a directional research hypothesis (Greene, Caracelli, & Graham, 1989). Quantitative research is not concerned with finding absolute truth. The hypothesis may not be the statement of an absolute truth, but the researcher certainly may seek to determine whether or not the facts support the hypothesis (Creswell, 2009).

I chose to use a mixed-method design because it allowed an analysis of my central question from a number of angles, enabling a triangulation that helped to fully understand the complex issues at play. Greene et al. (1989) defined a mixed method design as "those that include at least one quantitative method designed to collect numbers and one qualitative method designed to collect words, where neither type of method is inherently linked to any particular inquiry paradigm" (p. 256). My mixed method conceptual framework was triangulation. Triangulation is a design that uses multiple methods to investigate the same phenomenon in order to support the validity of inquiry results. The key principle of triangulation is that all methods have inherent limitations and biases. By using only one method, the results will likely be limited. But, when more than one method is used, the validity of the findings is improved (Greene et al., 1989).

The research used a comparative case study approach to examine the connection between principals' cultural proficiency and the characteristics of their MLP programs. According to Robert Stake in *The Art of Case Study Research* (1995), "a case study is the study of the particularity and complexity of a single case, coming to understand its activity within important circumstances" (p. xi). For my dissertation research, a case study approach was an appropriate research methodology because it allowed me to focus on the process, discovery and context, which contributed to our knowledge of individual, group, social and political organizations

(Merriam, 1988; Yin, 1994). Three cases were selected to contrast the different programs' characteristics: type, delivery, and performance of programs. These characteristics constituted three different settings in which culturally relevant leadership was examined.

Population and Sampling Procedure

Settings

Three middle schools participated in this research study. These schools were selected based on their MLP population and the types of MLP/ELL implemented programs. School 1 has a student population of approximately 635 students and 30 teachers. There are over 27 languages spoken in this school. The community members come from diverse backgrounds. According to the principal, the community used to be predominantly Polish, but now the community consists largely of members who are from Southeast Asian and Middle Eastern countries. The MLP students are White, Native American, Arab, Chaldean, African American and Southeast Asian. The school is considered a large school teaching grades six through eight.

School 2 has a student population of approximately 625, served by about 35 teachers. The language demographics include Arabic, Bengali, Chaldean, French, Hmong, Spanish, and Vietnamese. School 2 is situated in a White, African American, Arab and Hmong community. The MLP students are from the Middle East, Asia, Southeast Asia, and Africa. Some of these MLP students left their home countries due to wars or political upheaval and, consequently, have a history of interrupted schooling. School 2 teaches sixth through eighth grade.

School 3 is situated in a small and older suburban community that, in the past, was a

White community. With the influx of new immigrants from Asia, Southeast Asia and the Middle East, the face of the community has changed dramatically. There are over 650 students and approximately 37 teachers. In School 3, the MLP includes Arabs, Bengali, Hispanic, Hmong and Polish students. School 3 also serves sixth through eighth grades.

Participants

Three groups of participants participated in this study: middle school principals, middle school ELL students, and middle school English teachers. Each group is described below.

Principals. The criteria for selection of the three middle school principals were that they have a multilingual student population in their building that closely resembled other districts in the county. Each of these principals had MLPs that ranged from 15 to 60 students, which categorized each school as having small, medium, and large MLPs based on the percentage of MLPs in each school.

Each of the selected principals has been in the educational field for more than 15 years. Each brought with them a variety of background experiences when working with MLP students. All three principals had worked with MLPs during their early educational years. Principal 1 had worked in a Detroit Public School for four years, while Principal 2 had past experience of working with migrant students. Principal 3 had several opportunities to travel abroad and experience different cultures. Regarding their levels of education, two principals had Educational Specialist degrees while the third principal was working on a PhD. All three principals have had experience in working with a diverse student population throughout their

educational careers.

Teachers. The second group of participants were English teachers at the three middle schools who had taught ELL students in any of those three school years. English teachers were specifically chosen because of the English language content factor. ELL students were likely to be placed in English classes to increase their English language skills.

The selected teachers were those who have taught English Language Arts and have had MLP students in their classes. Most of the teachers had been in the teaching field for more than 10 years, although some of them had less than ten years' experience. Most teachers were certified in their content areas, and some held other specialty endorsement such as ESL certification. Several of these teachers have received training in a specific ESL instructional model like Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol. Overall, these teachers were selected because of their experiences working with MLPs. While they had varying degrees of educational training for working with MLPs, all taught English Language Arts to MLP students.

Students. The third group of participants were multilingual students who have attended one of the three middle schools for three consecutive school years. To be included in the study, these students must also have taken the state English Language Proficiency Assessment (ELPA) and the Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP) each school year between 2008 and 2010.

The participating MLP students ranged from newly arrived to the United States to being

here for more than 5 years. When looking at their educational background, some of these students may have experienced interruption in their schooling prior to coming to the United States. Their English proficiency also varied. Based on their Spring ELPA results, all students had not reached English proficiency. Most of the students came from the Middle East and Southeast Asian countries. All participating students had been in their middle school since sixth grade.

Data Collection Materials

Three types of instruments and data-gathering methods were used in the study: an interview questionnaire, a collection of existing records and observations of meetings, and two surveys.

Interview Protocol

The interview questionnaire was derived from the pilot interview protocol that I conducted. The interviewing protocol was designed to shed light on how the participants viewed their own culturally relevant leadership skills. The protocol included nine questions, divided into three categories. The first two categories addressed the participants' personal and professional experiences with MLPs. The third category shifted the focus to professional development and addressed issues of diversity, including the barriers that principals perceived in supporting MLPs. The wording of this category came from Lindsey et al. (2008). In addition, principals were given an opportunity to share their ideas on an ideal school environment to support MLPs' academic achievement.

To create the final interview protocol, a pilot interview process was used and broken

down into two parts: focus group interaction and the field test/principals' interviews. The focus group collaborated and shared their opinions and ideas to solidify the final interview questionnaire. I revised the interview questions to include three categories - those parts of the middle school principals' personal and professional backgrounds and professional development opportunities related to cultural/diversity issues. I then conducted a field test of interviewing, using the pilot interview questionnaire, to interview two middle school principals. I later evaluated the process, concluding that the interviewing instrument was valid for the purpose of this study.

The final version of this interview questionnaire had nine questions. The first question was related to personal experiences with people from diverse cultures and languages. The second question focused on attitudes about MLPs, and the third aimed at a sense of advocacy for MLPs. The fourth question was about the professional background and experience of the principals in working with MLPs. Question five focused on professional development opportunities that addressed issues of cultural identity, and question six inquired the extent to which school staff professional development addressed cultural issues. Question seven asked about the types of professional development that promoted and modeled the use of inquiry and dialogue related to multiple perspectives and issues arising from diversity. The final questions determined the extent to which the professional learning at each principal's school facilitated change to meet the needs of the community, while shaping the policies and practices that met the needs of a diverse community.

Existing Records and Observation Notes

Along with an interview, a collection of notes or public records of principal/staff meetings was collected as another data source. I attended school functions and staff meetings to observe and take notes on the principals' interactions with staff members in a meeting capacity. I used the information to observe the principals' leadership capacity through interaction with staff/teachers, MLP parents and MLP students. In addition, examination of records of principal/staff meetings revealed whether the issues of MLP were discussed and addressed throughout the school year.

Survey Instruments

Two surveys were also done for this research. A survey is considered appropriate as it can measure the aspects of trends, attitudes, or opinions of a population (Vogt, 2007). One of the surveys used in this study solicited the multilingual/ELL students' overall attitudes toward their middle school and the multilingual program. The other was given to English/Language Arts teachers to explore their perceptions of how well these ELL students have adjusted to school through program services.

Both surveys included 13 questions that provided options for the participants to respond with: Strongly agree (6) to strongly disagree (1). As a whole, the surveys were designed to assess program effectiveness as well as general satisfaction. For overall coherence, the teacher and student surveys paralleled each other, with teachers being asked about their perceptions of the impact of the program on MLPs and students being asked about their own experiences within the program.

In the teacher survey, the first two questions asked about the types of MLP programs implemented in their schools. The third question focused on perceptions of the participants regarding the MLPs' school adjustment. Questions four through eleven concentrated on their perceptions of the students' academic progress, based on the performance of MLP programs. This information included how well they were doing in four language domains of reading, writing, speaking, and listening with the support of ELL programs. Questions twelve through fifteen addressed program delivery. These questions focused on benefits that the multilingual students received beyond academic support. For example, question thirteen referred to citizenship instruction. Questions twelve and fifteen focused on participants' satisfaction with the types of program services support. The final two questions on the teacher survey asked about overall perceptions of the success of MLP students in their school and additional support they felt that the MLP needed.

The student survey, as mentioned above, paralleled the teacher survey. The students were asked about the types of programs in their schools, their adjustment to the educational environment, their perceptions of academic progress and feelings concerning program delivery. The two final questions for the student survey were open--ended allowing students to write about what other support they would like to receive and also to express whether they would recommend the program to other MLP students.

Data Collection Procedures

During the data collection, all data sources were maintained in a comprehensive and detailed manner (Heck, 2006). The data sources were collected and stored in a safe, locked

location. As described previously, the study data sources included an interview questionnaire and two surveys.

Interview Procedures

The interview questionnaire included three case studies of the middle school principals and a district administrator. The principals and a district administrator were interviewed.

The principals were initially contacted by emails and received the attachments of the cover letter that explained what the research was about and a consent form for them to sign and send back via district email if they agreed to participate. A sample interview protocol was also emailed so they could view the questions. Once they agreed and sent back the consent form, the meeting/interviewing dates were set. A district administrator was contacted at a later time due to challenges in completing the interview process with Principal 3.

For school 1 and 2, the principals' interviews took place at each of the administrative/school buildings in a private area without interruption. The sessions were audio recorded with their permission. Principal 3 sent in their question responses via email. Once the initial interview was completed, I set up another date to do an informal, follow-up session. The follow-up was to review the first interview and to have an opportunity for further clarifications for both the participants and the interviewer. Principals 1 and 2 participated in the follow-up sessions, but Principal 3 did not. Principal 3 was not available to complete the follow-up interview process, leading to a district administrator continuing and completing the process. As a result, the interview portion for School 3 had two interview participants.

Survey Procedures

In each school, multilingual students were given a survey. English teachers who had

instructed multilingual students at any time during the 3-year period were also surveyed. The survey for the students took place at their schools at a designated time and place assigned by the principals. Multilingual students who met the above-stated criteria for inclusion in the study first received a letter of explanation of the research purpose along with a consent form to be signed by their parents. A copy of the letter of explanation and consent form were also sent home to the parents of each multilingual student. The documents were translated into the student's native language to ensure that their parents fully understood them. Students whose parents provided the written consent form then filled out the surveys in school when they saw their bilingual instruction assistant or ELL teachers during their tutoring session, with native language support provided to those who needed it. Once they were completed, the bilingual instructional assistant or ELL teacher collected the surveys and delivered them to the principal. The principal then mailed the responses through the district's mailing system to the researcher.

The English teachers' surveys were administered simultaneously with those of the students. Each teacher was sent a consent form and a copy of the survey. After completing the survey, they were asked to sign the consent form and return it with the survey via district mail to the researcher.

The overall rate of the returned surveys from both teachers and students was excellent. In the first school, six teacher surveys were distributed with all completed and returned for a response rate of 100%. Fifteen student surveys were administered, and 14 were completed for a response rate of 93%. The second school also had a 100% teacher and student response rate, with five completed teacher surveys and returned. Six student surveys were given, and all were completed and returned for a response rate of 100%. The third school also had a teacher and student response of 100%. Of the student surveys, four were administered and four were

completed and returned.

Additional Data Collection Procedures

Finally, the extant data of the chosen multilingual students were collected. All data collection, excluding the extant data collection, took place after IRB approval. Observational site visits were also completed at all three schools. The extant data of the participating multilingual students (MLPs) was collected and analyzed. The extant data included MEAP and ELPA reports for three consecutive years, as well as three years of school progress reports. The two assessment reports were collected at the Intermediate School District (ISD) level, with the help of the assessment consultant. The progress reports were collected at the school level through the counseling department.

RESULTS

Analysis of the data listed above rendered a summary of individual cases, exploring the attitudes of three individual middle school principals, determining the connection between their culturally relevant leadership, and their multilingual population (MLP) program characteristics.

The study examined the perspectives of three middle school principals in relation to culturally relevant leadership and the characteristics of their schools' multilingual population (MLP) programs. The findings indicate that principals' attitudes significantly shape the selection and implementation of MLP programs. These programmatic choices, in turn, influence the academic success, motivation, and social integration of multilingual students across the schools. The summary of the three individual cases, addressing all data sources available from each school, are as follows:

School 1 Summary

For School 1, data from the principal interview, surveys, student GPAs, MEAP scores, and ELPA results were analyzed to assess program types, modes of delivery, the principal's cultural literacy, and the overall effectiveness of the services provided. The school offered a six-level service program designed to support multilingual population (MLP) students across all levels of English proficiency, as measured by the state English Language Proficiency Assessment (ELPA). These levels were: Basic Level 1, Basic Level 1 ESL Transitional Program, Low Intermediate Level 2 ESL Transitional Program, High Intermediate Level, Proficient Level 4, and Advanced Proficient FLEP (Formerly Limited English Proficient).

The delivery of the program consisted of ESL or bilingual certified instructors and the Language Acquisition Aide Support. The certified instructors provided the students with across-the-curriculum content area instruction. In this self-contained classroom environment, students had opportunities to participate with peers of the same age in the school while developing literacy in both academic and social situations. The Language Acquisition Aide Support, under the supervision of the classroom teacher, provided ESL tutorial services to MLP/ELL students of other English levels.

The interview with Principal 1 reflected their self-assessment of their cultural literacy ability. Based on their personal and professional experiences along with the professional development rubric rating, Principal 1 described themselves as a competent cultural leader. They believed that they demonstrated their ability by providing professional development for their staff/teachers when dealing with the cultural issues within the school and community.

Performance of the program was examined using extant data and through the survey results of the teachers and MLP/ELL students. The overall responses of both teachers and

students concerning the program services at school 1 indicated a positive outcome. Both teachers and students believed the program benefited the students and they would recommend it to other MLP students.

School 2 Summary

For School 2, data from the principal interview, surveys, student GPAs, MEAP scores, and ELPA results provided insight into the school's culturally relevant leadership capacity, as reflected in the characteristics of its MLP/ELL programs and the academic outcomes of multilingual students.

Principal 2's interview reflected the overall rating of their personal and professional experiences as *Culturally Competent*, which is a category from *Culturally Proficient Inquiry* by Lindsey, Graham, Westphal, and Jew (2008). As such, they noted that they had demonstrated their culturally relevant leadership capacity, their awareness of MLPs' educational needs, and their commitment to the educational success of students.

However, Principal 2 indicated that there was room for improvement. Program services offered three options of pull-in, push-out, and a Sheltered Resource Center providing support for MLP/ELL students. The school had the option to choose the best model to fit its MLP/ELL educational needs. Based on the selections, MLPs received the maximum support, which helped them do well in their English language development while succeeding in their content classes.

School 3 Summary

For School 3, data from interviews, surveys, student GPAs, MEAP scores, and ELPA results revealed the types of programs offered, modes of program delivery, the principal's cultural literacy, and the effectiveness of the services provided.

The district administrator's interview responses reflected their indication that the overall

rating of School 3 and their district as being *Culturally Competent*, which is a category from *Culturally Proficient Inquiry* by Lindsey, Graham, Westphal, and Jew (2008), reflecting the three themes of culturally relevant leadership capacity, awareness of MLPs' educational needs, and commitment to MLPs' educational success.

The surveys and the extant data demonstrated the type of programs and delivery.

The services program offered an alternative language program model. MLP/ELL students received support through an ESL certified teacher and a bilingual paraprofessional who used their native language to assist MLPs in learning English. Students had a one- or two-hour block to attend the English basic skills class with an ESL certified teacher. All MLPs also worked with bilingual paraprofessionals who used their native language to support the MLPs in learning English and to assist them with their content subjects.

Based on the survey results and the extant data, both teachers and students were satisfied with the program's performance, stating they would recommend the program to other MLP/ELL students. There were areas in the program that showed a need for improvement and participants offered useful suggestions and recommendations.

DISCUSSION

The research study by Collier and Thomas (1995) suggested that it takes MLP/ELL students 5-7 years of exposure to language learning to barely reach the English proficiency level of native speakers. Most of the students in Schools 1, 2 and 3, who took the MEAP and ELPA tests, had approximately four years of exposure to English (MISD Bilingual Program Data, 2011). According to the research study by Center for Applied Linguistics(CAL,2009), other factors that affected student's second language acquisition included motivation, first language development,

language distance and attitude, access to the language, age, personality and learning style, peers and role models, quality of instruction, and cultural background/goals. These factors were not part of this study but may have influenced the students' assessment results of the three schools.

Principles and Practice in Second Language Learning and Acquisition by Krashen (1982), reported that the concept of a linguistic exchange at a level slightly higher than that of the ELL student, also known as "comprehensible input," is necessary for developing understanding. Most MLP students in this study agreed that the quality of work was challenging and just a little above their level, but they also reported that they received support with their personal and academic situations.

The Contextual Interaction Theory by Cummins (1979) explained that there are two levels of learning, similar to an iceberg. The upper or top level is referred to as the basic interpersonal communicative skills (BICS), which is the communicative level. Students can acquire this level within 2 - 6 months, depending on their backgrounds (Hill & Flynn, 2006). The second level or lower part of the iceberg is referred to as cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP) of reading and writing level, or academic level. The cognitive processes at this level of functioning include analysis, synthesis, and evaluation (Cummins). Students must master this level of proficiency in order to understand textbooks, write papers, solve math word problems, and take tests. In this study, 8th grade MLP students across all three schools had subject contents that were significantly more challenging than the first two years. Thus, MLP students' grades may have been impacted by these factors - the academic demand and not reaching proficiency in English.

English Language Development Programs

In this study, the three participating schools each implemented some combination of the three Sheltered English Instruction models: (1) the pull-out model, (2) the push-in model, and (3) the Sheltered Instruction class, which followed the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) model.. Collier and Thomas (1995) described the Pull-out model as a model that gives administrators and teachers some flexibility in arranging a student's schedule to maximize participation in their regular classes. In addition, the model provides students with a small-group language instruction, an instructional activity that focuses on English language development, academic skills development, literacy, and content-area support. In the study, Schools 1 and 3 used this program model to support some of their MLP students in meeting academic needs. The program services focused on assisting students in the following areas: language skills, communication skills and the students' overall abilities to do schoolwork.

According to DeCapua et al. (2007, 2005 & 1994), Push-in programs are designed to place MLP students in mainstream classes while receiving language support from ESL instructors or a bilingual paraprofessional in their content subjects. In this study, Schools 1 and 3 both implemented the Push-in program model as well.. MLP students benefitted from this program model because they received the language support needed while participating in their regular classes.

A longitudinal research study, Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) was a 7-year nationwide project which operated from 1996 to 2003 at the middle-school level (Echevarria et al., 2008). Echevarria, Vogt & Short, along with the National Center for Research on Education, Diversity and Excellence (CREDE) spearheaded the project. The study's goal was to identify key practices for sheltered instruction and to develop a professional development model to allow more teachers to use the model effectively in their classrooms. The SIOP model is an

instructional model that integrates content and language instruction in a regular classroom.

According to the principals, ELL teachers, mainstream teachers, and bilingual paraprofessionals in all three schools received training, to varying degrees, to integrate the model's components into their instruction. Based on their survey responses, most teachers recognized the importance of helping MLP students to be successful in the core content classes.

Based on the survey responses, the MLP/ELL programs in each school reflected a combination of the three instructional models, designed to provide services that address the needs of MLP students. (MacSwan and Pray, 2005). This process takes a concerted effort to advocate for MLP students, something that was revealed by the teacher and student survey data. The data also reflected that some teachers understood the need for better communication and collaboration among all teachers who have MLP students in their classrooms. On a whole, schools, principals, and teachers all make a difference, and all must be involved.

Culturally Relevant Leadership

According to Marx (2006), educational leaders are constantly shaping the educational future. They "are those who have specialized knowledge and skills and are able to see things in context ...they understand forces that affect the whole society, including their own system of education and its impact on their individual students" (p.16). Principal 1 indicated that they had knowledge and skills to be able to see things in context, which impacted their decisions regarding meeting the educational needs of their students, including the MLPs. In addition, they believed that they consistently communicated with staff and teachers to ensure that they received the professional learning opportunities needed to meet the needs of their MLP students. Overall, Principal 1 strived to steer their school toward a culturally proficient model. This model provided

school leaders with ways that assisted them in working with a diverse population to develop positive and productive responses to the diversity in their schools, thereby promoting culturally relevant leadership (Lindsey et al., 2008)

Terrell & Lindsey's (2009), *Culturally Proficient Leadership* states that culturally proficient leaders are anchored in the belief that they have a clear understanding of their own assumptions, values, and beliefs about different people and cultures. Based on Principal 2's continuing efforts to implement programs that met the academic and cultural needs of their diverse student population and community, they displayed an awareness that can be connected to *Leadership for Diversity* by Lumby and Coleman (2007). This article states that such leaders displayed commitment to promoting diversity, equity, and social justice through working with those who may be perceived by the majority as different, whether in their views, beliefs, or actions.

The Culturally Relevant Leadership (CRL) components, adapted from the books by Lindsey and colleagues: *Cultural Proficiency: A Manual for School Leaders* (Lindsey et al., 2003) and *Culturally Proficient Inquiry* (Lindsey et al., 2008), emphasize the main idea that culturally relevant leaders acknowledge their limitations and continue to learn and expand their knowledge of cultural diversity. Principals learn by formal knowledge and learning, direct observation and experience. In their interview, the district administrator of School 3 shared a cultural mismatch incident. They referred to it as "a well-intended plan that fell flat." At one of the parent-teacher activity nights, teachers assumed that MLP parents knew how to play a simple literacy game like "Go Fish." It was an eye opener for both teachers and administrators when they realized how difficult that game was for someone who did not speak English and for someone who came from a culture that did not play Go Fish. Such a cultural mismatch is

discussed in The Cultural Competence Model by Moule & Diller (2005), which aims to provide strategies that help educational leaders know how best to provide education for the linguistically or culturally diverse population. In this fashion, the district administrator gained awareness, knowledge and sensitivity that helped them to pave a foundation for becoming a culturally relevant educator and leader (Cross et al., 1989).

This study demonstrated that all three principals were sensitive to the challenges faced by the diverse populations in their schools. When principals base their program choices on the needs of their MLPs, they show commitment and awareness of their student population's educational needs. However, their attitudes in conjunction with MEAP, ELPA and GPAs demonstrated that a feeling of culturally relevant leadership may not always be enough. While an awareness of the challenges is an important place to start, the data demonstrate there are still challenges being faced by MLPs. Overall, when examining different components that included principal behavior, student, and teacher perceptions of MLP programs, and extant data, this study revealed that there were many factors which contribute to school and student success.

Discussion of How the Findings Relate to the Theoretical Framework

This study was based on two theoretical frameworks of acculturation and language learning as they relate to culturally relevant leadership's positive influence on student achievement. The theoretical concept of culturally relevant leadership and language learning provided a framework for examining the complexity of middle school principals' culturally relevant leadership and the multilingual population program's characteristics in this study. The study added some insights on how the principals may perceive themselves as culturally relevant leaders and are aware of the challenges facing them. These educational leaders have demonstrated actions and behaviors that are associated with the levels of cultural precompetence, cultural

competence and cultural proficiency, adapted from Culturally Proficient Inquiry (Lindsey et al., 2008). They demonstrated their commitment to better meet the needs of their MLP students through program selections and some professional development geared toward improving the academic achievement of their MLPs. In addition, there was general agreement from all participants about the need to do more for MLP students. In general, principals and teachers from each school felt that they were making a positive difference for MLP students.

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