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Instructional Communication in Secondary Education

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by Sarah Downey & Sara LaBelle, PhD

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Background Research

- Several early instructional communication studies (e.g., McCroskey & Richmond, 1983) focus on a wide range of participants across what Fredriech and Nussbaum (2005) call the "developmental continuum,"(p. 580) however, the vast majority of work has been centered in a college classroom.
  - The purpose of this study is to identify the communicative needs of secondary education teachers in the United States.
- Teachers' responses will be analyzed using the principles of grounded theory as a framework (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). This approach will allow meaning to emerge from participant responses, rather than subjecting them to pre-existing frameworks.

> "Clearly communicating expectations and providing feedback to students helps to strengthen both classroom environment and student success. How I communicate with my students (verbal or non-verbal) is also a big part of how I manage the classroom. I had to learn that communication with students can be supportive and assertive while never being authoritarian."
> -Teacher describing their strengths in communication with students

Research Questions & Findings

- **RQ 1: What are some of your strengths in communicating with your students?**
  - Technology Used Outside the Classroom
  - Front Loading Communication
  - Building a Student Centered Relationship
  - Personal Teacher Centered Qualities

- **RQ 2: As a teacher, what are some of the difficulties or challenges that you face in communicating with your students?**
  - Technology Used Inside the Classroom by Students
  - Student's (lack of) Responsible Behavior
  - Educational School Structure
  - Student Attitudes About Education

- **RQ 3: What resources would help you communicate more effectively with your students, if any?**
  - Meaningful Diversity Training
  - Smaller Class Sizes
  - More Time With Students

Methodology

Procedure
- 21 Voluntary Online Survey Responses
  - Areas of study include but are not limited to strengths and weaknesses of communication with students, parents, and other teachers. However, this poster will discuss the findings of the strengths and weakness in teacher-student communication.

Participant Demographics

	M	SD
Age	39.67	9.96

Gender	#	%
Male	9	42.86%
Female	12	57.14%

Ethnicity		
White/Caucasian	19	90.48%
Hispanic	2	9.52%

Highest Degree Earned		
B.A. or B.S.	3	71.43%
M.S. or M.S.	15	14.29%
Ed. D. or Ph. D.	2	9.52%
Other (M.D/D.O)	1	4.76%

Years Teaching		
1-5 Years	3	14.29%
6-10 Years	3	14.29%
11-15 Years	8	38.10%
16-20 Years	3	14.29%
21+ Years	4	19.05%

Subjects Taught:

english history environmental chemistry art band skill subject study social science math special music physiology education biology

> "I struggle to truly emphasize with students whose background is substantially different from my own. I absolutely try, but it's hard to walk the line between asking for clarification and forcing a child to instruct you about something an adult struggles (or refuses) to explain."
> – Teacher emphasizing challenges faced in their communication with students

Implications

- When teachers build a student centered relationship (i.e., developing trust with a student, making an effort to understand a student's background, maintaining mutual respect, etc…) communication is considered to be successful.
  - Teacher training should not only include diversity training but also how to create a student centered relationship.
- As society and how students learn change, schooling should too because the classic educational structure is getting in the way of a teachers full potential to communicate successfully with students.
  - Having smaller class sizes and more class time would allow for communication to to prosper.

Future Directions

- **Fall 2019:**
  - Redesign survey to be more student focused.
    - Tie authenticity into interview and see if the teacher believes it is his/her job to be authentic with students.
  - Conduct in person interviews to have more elaborate answers.
    - Have teachers elaborate on what type of diversity training would benefit them most & how authenticity ties into teaching.
- **Spring 2020:**
  - Expand survey and interviews to professors at a collegiate level.
    - See if there are overlaps in responses.

References

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