An Exploration of the Relationship Between Leaders' Cultural Competence and Academic Outcomes in Texas Public Schools

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Academic Outcomes in Texas Public Schools

School leaders have the daunting task of ensuring a safe and nurturing learning environment, especially in terms of culturally diverse student populations. Thus, cultural competence is essential for school leaders to effectively meet the needs of all students. Cultural competence involves an understanding and appreciation of cultural differences as well as an ability to create equitable systems that embrace diversity while also addressing potential inequities resulting from said differences. Further, cultural competence is an essential and integral component of effective school leadership. It necessitates an understanding of the impact of culture on education, learning, and teaching. Through the development of cultural competency, school leaders can become aware of their own biases and perceptions while developing an appreciation for the unique needs, perspectives, backgrounds, and experiences of their students.

Texas schools have experienced a noticeable shift in their demographics over the past few decades, which is indicative of broader socioeconomic changes in the state. This phenomenon has been driven by immigration and other demographic shifts that have affected populations across the state, resulting in a sharp increase in both minority student populations as well as non-native English speakers. These fluctuations can be seen in enrollment figures from many Texas school districts, with certain areas experiencing more pronounced changes than others. This shift has had a significant impact on the demographics of its schools, resulting in more diverse student bodies and teaching staff. In response to these changes, many Texas school districts have invested in new programs and initiatives aimed at helping school leaders and teachers better meet the needs of their students.

The impact of school leaders is far-reaching and can be seen in the way educational organizations function. School leaders have the potential to act as a catalyst for positive change, providing guidance and support to meet the needs of a diverse school population, setting an example for all personnel within the organization, and implementing systems that effectively create an environment where all students can succeed. For these reasons, it is critical we prepare school leaders who are equipped to address the unique challenges of diverse schools.

Statement of the Problem

Cultural competence of southern school leaders is an integral component of the educational landscape in this region. It requires a more comprehensive and holistic understanding of the multifaceted nature of culture, as well as a commitment to recognizing, respecting, and accommodating cultural diversity in all aspects of school operations. This necessitates an awareness of the cultural capital of various groups and an acknowledgment of the influence that culture has on student learning, teacher effectiveness, and ultimately school success.

Purpose of the Study

This quasi-experimental quantitative study aimed to explore the cultural knowledge and cultural skills levels of rural school leaders in Texas and to determine if there is a relationship between cultural knowledge and cultural skill. Further, the study sought to identify if a relationship existed between cultural knowledge or cultural skill and student academic outcomes in rural k-12 schools in Texas.

Significance of the Study

Cultural competence of southern school leaders refers to the capacity of educational administrators to effectively work with and understand the various cultures, values, and beliefs that exist among the student body in southern schools. It is imperative for school leaders to be

aware of and sensitive to the cultural nuances within their schools to provide equitable opportunities for all students. This involves the ability to build relationships with diverse populations, critically analyze institutional policies from an intercultural perspective, and foster a climate of inclusion and respect.

Theoretical Framework

The concept of cultural competence is based on an ecological model which posits that culture is a dynamic and interactive process, comprised of multiple layers of influence. These factors include individual differences, intergroup dynamics, social structural determinants, and macro-level forces.

The cultural competence theoretical framework is a conceptual model used to analyze and guide the efforts of organizations in their pursuit of providing culturally competent care (Liu et al., 2021). It is composed of four interacting components: awareness, knowledge, skill, and attitude. For this study, these components shall be defined as follows: awareness includes recognizing individual values, beliefs, and behaviors as well as understanding the impact of social systems on one's own culture; knowledge entails understanding the historic and cultural contexts of various populations including one's own skill, which involves using appropriate communication techniques which represent one's own culture, as well as being able to work effectively with culturally diverse clients; and attitude involves valuing the diversity of individuals and groups in society. Cultural Competence is an essential precursor to clinical competence, and Liu et al. (2021) noted there is a gap in cultural competence that is preventing us from connecting with the communities we are serving.

Review of Literature

When examining cultural competence in Texas school leaders, it is important to understand the factors with the most significant impacts. This review of literature will focus on

demographic information for Texas students, teachers, and principals coupled with the accountability system for Texas public school districts and schools. Additionally, the ideas of diversity, cultural competence, and social justice will be examined individually and in the context of their impacts on Texas school systems.

Demographics

As of the 2020-2021 school year, Texas had more than 1,200 school districts, 9,000 schools, 369,00 teachers, and 5.3 million students (Texas Education Agency, 2021). Districts ranged in size from less than one square mile to more than 5,000 square miles. Student populations ranged from as few as five total students to more than 196,000 students (Texas Education Agency, 2021). Not included in these statistics are state-sponsored school districts such as those administered by the Texas Juvenile Justice Department and the Texas Department of Aging and Disability Services.

The Texas Education Agency (TEA) collects data on race and ethnicity utilizing two parts. The first part questions ethnicity by determining if a person is Hispanic/Latino or Not Hispanic/ Latino. The second part classifies a person's race into one of six categories: American Indian or Alaskan Native, Asian, Black or African American, Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander, or multiracial.

> "The racial/ethnic categories are defined as follows. Hispanic/Latino includes
> students of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central American, or other
> Spanish culture or origin, regardless of race. American Indian or Alaska Native
> includes students having origins in any of the original peoples of North and South
> America (including Central America), and who maintain a tribal affiliation or
> community attachment. Asian includes students having origins in any of the

original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, or the Indian subcontinent. Black

or African American includes students having origins in any of the black racial

groups of Africa. Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander includes students having

origins in any of the original peoples of Hawaii, Guam, Samoa, or other Pacific

Islands. White includes students having origins in any of the original peoples of

Europe, the Middle East, or North Africa" (TEA, 2021, p. 2).

In the 2020-2021 school year, 5,371,586 students attended Texas public schools. Students

classified as early education totaled 20,991, prekindergarten totaled 197,093, and

kindergarten totaled 361,349. Students in grades 1-5 totaled 1,923673, students in grades

6-8 totaled 1,258,209, and students in grades 9-12 totaled 1,610,271. By ethnicity,

African American students totaled 681,401 (13%), American Indian students totaled

18,755 (<1%), Asian students totaled 254,163 (5%), Hispanic students totaled 2,840,982

(52.9%), Pacific Islander students totaled 8,271 (<1%), White students totaled 1,424,251

(27%), and multiracial students totaled 143,763 (3%). In the 10-year time period from the

2010-2011 school year to the 2020-2021 school year, all minority ethnic student groups

increased in population with the only exception being the American Indian group. In that

same time period, the number of White students decreased. From 2008-2018 the

percentage of Hispanic student enrollment increased from 48% to 52%, while White

student enrollment decreased from 34% to 27%.

In 2020-2021, there were a total of 375,222 classroom teachers in Texas. The

ethnic breakdown of Texas teachers was as follows: 1,263 (<1%) were American Indian,

6,735 (2%) were Asian, 41,737 (11%) were African American, 106,212 (28%) were

Hispanic, 627 (<1%) were Pacific Islander, 214,242 (57%) were White, and 4,387 (1%)

were multiracial (TEA, 2022). In 2020-2021, there were a total of 8,719 principals in

Texas. The ethnic breakdown of Texas principals is as follows: 25 (<1%) were American

Indian, 61 (<1%) were Asian, 1,239 (14%) were African American, 2,222 (25%) were

Hispanic, 19 (<1%) were Pacific Islander, 5,073 (58%) were White, and 80 (1%) were

multiracial (TEA, 2022).

Accountability

In Texas, school accountability ratings are issued to all public schools annually.

Accountability ratings for student achievement are based on three key indicators: performance of

state standardized tests, graduation rates, and college, career, and military readiness.

Accountability ratings further examine student achievement, yearly progress achieved by

schools, and whether schools are closing gaps in achievement for various student groups. Data

for accountability ratings are presented in annual reports known as the Texas Academic

Performance Reports (TAPR). Student achievement is based on performance across all subjects

for all students on assessments, College, Career, and Military readiness, and graduation rates.

School progress is based on the number of students who grew at least one academic year as

measured by state standardized tests, and the achievement of all students related to other schools

and districts with similar economically disadvantaged percentages. Closing achievement gaps

uses data to compare differentials among ethnic groups, socioeconomic backgrounds, and other

factors (TEA, 2021).

Accountability ratings are provided for districts and campuses. A district and campus

receive a rating of A, B, C, or D based on their performance in each area. If a district or campus

does not satisfy the minimum requirements to earn a D rating, they are awarded an F. A rating of

"not rated" can be issued for districts that lack sufficient data for any subset, residential facilities,

or juvenile justice education programs, or if the Commissioner of Education determines a campus or district should not be rated. A rating of "not rated: Data integrity issues" can be issued if data has been compromised and often results in an investigation into testing procedures (TEA, 2021). A rating of "not rated: Annexation" is issued to campuses in their first year of annexation by another district and is not rated. A rating of "not rated: Declared state of disaster" is issued for extraordinary public health or safety concerns that inhibited the state from accurately measuring district and campus performance such as the COVID-19 global health pandemic.

TAPR reports information on school demographics, staff, programs, students, and state standardized testing scores are based on grade level, subject area, and various student populations related to gender, ethnicity, and special program classifications. In terms of state assessments, the TAPR reports state standardized testing scores for high school students in Biology, U.S. History, English I, English II, and Algebra I. Middle school students are tested in Grade 6 reading and mathematics, Grade 7 reading, mathematics, and writing, and Grade 8 reading, mathematics, science, and social studies. Elementary students are tested in Grade 3 reading and mathematics, Grade 4 reading, mathematics, and writing, and Grade 5 reading, mathematics, and science. Ratings for these assessments include approaches grade level or above, meets grade level or above, and masters grade level. Scores for these assessments are reported by district and campus. Scores are further disaggregated by ethnic group and special populations which include Special Education, economically disadvantaged, and English Language Learners.

Other information contained in TAPR includes attendance rates, SAT/ACT data, dual-credit course data, student, teacher, and administrator demographic data, and other special program demographics related to disabilities, instructional programs, and residency status.

Principals' Impact

In the last two decades, the role of a principal has shifted from manager to leader. Tasks such as facilities, transportation, and discipline evaluations have been supplanted with instructional leadership duties which include being the cultural broker of a schools (Horner & Jordan, 2020). School administrators seek to balance the fulfillment of instructional leadership tasks and school management tasks effectively (Jackson et al., 2021; McBrayer et al., 2018).

The principal's ability to lead is directly correlated to the success of a school, specifically as related to student achievement (Allison, 2019). The ability to lead school centers not only around the traditional leadership ideas related to organization, systems, and others, but perhaps more significantly around relationship building with students, faculty, and parents. Rieg et al. (2008) suggested that when principals build trusting relationships, the school learning community will be one with a positive culture leading to increased student achievement.

Leadership preparation programs are tasked with preparing future school leaders. The need for adequate preparation is highlighted by Horner and Jordan (2020) when noting the need for well-trained principals has been identified as one of the more critically important factors for students' academic success. Furthermore, the role of the principal should include setting the direction of the schools, shaping the academic vision, creating a hospitable climate, and cultivating leadership in others (Horner & Jordan, 2020). Principal leadership is significant in creating the experiences for teachers, students, and the school climate. Baptiste (2019) explains that principals can influence job satisfaction and student performance through the leadership characteristics they possess and by understanding the politics of their position to meet the different needs of all stakeholders, specifically students and teachers.

The impact of principals can be positive or negative based on the principal themselves. This impact can be more significant on student academic success than the instruction students receive. According to the Center for the Study of Education Policy (2011), while high-quality instruction is necessary for improving student learning, high-quality leadership is what creates conditions necessary to improve instruction. In a study funded by the Gates Foundation and conducted in 2001, 96% of the 40,000 teachers surveyed ranked supportive leadership as essential for retaining good teachers (Center for the Study of Education Policy, 2001). Effective leadership is one factor that can allow for school improvement over time. Bluestein and Goldschmidt (2021) found that effective leadership can result in a 25% to 40% improvement for schools. Their findings further show that principals' behaviors and practices impact school success both positively and negatively (2021).

Changing demographics in schools have brought about more research on the gaps that may exist between school leaders and students. Principals must be able to address these differences and provide equity for all students. This aspect of leadership can have as significant an impact on student learning as instruction (Grissom et al., 2021). More specifically, the authors' findings show that equity must not only be present in school practices, policy, and instruction, but also in the actions of principals and teachers. As the representation gap between principals and students has continued to grow as related to ethnicity, principals' attention to equity continues to become more necessary (Grissom et al., 2021).

Diversity and Cultural Competence

Diversity refers to the practice of including all individuals from different backgrounds regardless of race/ethnicity, gender, socio-economic status, sexual orientation, and other characteristics. When focusing on the educational system, diversity is often broken down through

the lenses of standardized testing first, and then the social aspect of schools. In Texas, the

relationship between diversity and standardized testing is noted in the reporting of testing scores

for campuses and districts (TEA, 2021). Texas reports scores by subject and grade level but

further breaks them down by ethnicity. Even more significant is the fact that accountability is

based partly on these ethnic sub-groups as well as the closing of gaps in minority groups (TEA,

2021). As the Hispanic population has become the majority in Texas schools, the need to focus

on and address diversity in schools has become a focal point for school leaders.

The social aspect of schools refers to the non-academic factors that impact student

outcomes. Having at least one teacher who shares their race or ethnicity positively impacts

students (Lindsay, 2021). In Texas, where minority students have become the majority, one in

five students leave before graduation. The single biggest contributing factor to this statistic is the

lack of interpersonal influences from teachers to whom they can relate (Perry, 2021). Students

from diverse backgrounds, while not done purposefully, are placed at a disadvantage in the

educational system. Lindsay (2021) acknowledges this by pointing out that by using diversity as

a dimension in analyzing education, the system is automatically asserting privilege for White

students. One way to combat this privilege is to provide teachers and leaders of color who can

help elevate students from diverse backgrounds.

For school principals, understanding diversity and cultural competence is not just about

interpersonal skills in dealing with students on a daily basis, but also about developing teachers'

skills in these same areas. The National Education Association defines cultural competence as

having an awareness of one's own cultural identity, understanding differences, and being able to

build on varying cultural norms (2022). Simply acknowledging diversity without possessing

cultural competence, does not positively impact student success. School leaders and teachers

must do more than simply learn about music or use slang language, they must become competent in other cultures by first recognizing their biases and stereotypical beliefs (Farmer, 2020). In schools, this idea of cultural competence must begin with the principal. Perhaps the most valuable skill a principal possesses is their ability to manage teachers' cultural intelligence (Cobanoglu, 2021). The shift from managers to leaders includes understanding the influence and impact of the principal not only on the school as a whole, but also on each individual member of the faculty, staff, and student body. School leaders must create more inclusive and equitable public schools while understanding the complexities of differences in students and their own belief systems (Pollock & Briscoe, 2019). Through these actions, principals provide the best opportunity for student success.

Social Justice

Social justice refers to a political and philosophical theory focusing on fairness in the relationship between individuals and access to wealth, opportunities, and social privileges (Corporate Finance Institute Education Inc. (CFI), 2022). The origins of the social justice movement date back to the Industrial Revolution and the exploitation of marginalized groups. Specifically, the focus was on the extreme inequities in the distribution of capital, land, and wealth. In more recent times, the social justice movement has shifted its focus to combating human rights and discrimination against individuals based on gender, ethnicity, age, wealth, religion, sexual orientation, and other factors (CFI, Education, Inc, 2022). When attempting to understand social justice, the following five principles are key areas of concern: access to resources, equity, participation, diversity, and human rights. Social justice movements center around the denial of access to any one of these five principles (CFI Education Inc., 2022).

Amnesty International (2020) identifies the #MeToo, Black Lives Matter, and marriage equality as three of the most recent social justice movements.

Social justice and social justice movements also exist in schools across the country. Addressing racism and police violence through education can be a key to reducing and eliminating the school-to-prison pipeline in many inner-city schools (Grace Nelson, 2019). Adults in today's schools are integral in advancing or impeding social justice for America's youth (Welton & Harris, 2022).

Among the social justice issues facing minority students are equity in education and educational opportunities. Many recognize lower student achievement in minority groups but providing equitable learning opportunities and environments seems to be slow in addressing the issues. School leaders and teachers are key in creating the equity necessary for all marginalized groups to experience success. The community schools movement focuses on the role of the teacher as part of the community, together working to provide students with all necessary educational and social tools. Quartz et al. (2020) noted that teachers must inject themselves into all aspects of students' lives to contribute to their learning and development by providing opportunities and services. Through community education, not only are educational inequities able to be addressed, but human rights and other social inequities are also being combatted.

Principals equally play a role in the various aspects of social justice for students. In Texas, and across the nation, there are many districts and schools with large immigrant student populations. Leaders in these schools are tasked with developing a vision that is inclusive of all students and their families (Slater et al., 2021). By understanding the diverse educational and social needs of all students, immigrant or native, principals are better able to address the

challenges that exist in providing resources, equity, participation, diversity, and human rights inside and outside of the school setting.

Methodology

Participants

The participants for this study included 184 public school principals from across the state of Texas. Of the 184 participants, 79% ($n = 146$) served in Title I schools, and 21% ($n = 38$) served in non-Title I schools. Thirty-five percent ($n = 62$) of all schools were elementary schools, 21% ($n = 39$) were middle schools, 24% ($n = 45$) were high schools, and 19% ($n = 35$) were classified as other. Further, 78% ($n = 144$) of schools were classified as rural, 8% ($n = 14$) were classified as urban, and 14% ($n = 26$) were classified as other.

Of the 184 participants, 63% ($n = 115$) identified as a member of a traditionally marginalized group, 29% ($n = 53$) identified as a member of a non- marginalized group, and 9% ($n = 16$) preferred not to identify with a group. Moreover, 43% ($n = 78$) identified as female, 57% ($n = 104$) identified as male, and less than 1% ($n = 2$) identified as non-binary.

Instrumentation

In this study, we used the Cultural Competence of Educational Leaders (CCEL) and the Educators Scale of Student Diversity (ESSD) to assess each participant's cultural knowledge and cultural skill. The combined instrument contained 46 questions that were divided into two groups: cultural awareness and knowledge which yielded their cultural knowledge (CK) score and culturally responsive pedagogy which yielded their cultural skill (CS) score. The instrument also collected demographic information from each participant. Participant demographics collected included gender and marginalized group association. Participants were given two options for reporting school information. Participants could identify the name of their school or

self-report school level, school locale, school socioeconomic classification, and student

assessment data. All participants in this study provided the name of their school.

Data Collection

The survey was emailed to the Texas Rural Education Association (TREA) for

distribution to its members. The survey was also sent to the National Leadership Development

Consortium (NLDC) for distribution to its members who are school leaders in Texas to recruit

schools from other locales. The combined effort produced 184 survey results; however, the

response rate is unknown as we do not know how many members are in each organization.

Participants self-reported their demographic information, and since all participants

provided their school's name, we collected the school demographics and student assessment data

from publicly available datasets on the Texas Education Agency (TEA) website.

Data Analysis

Using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), we conducted a descriptive

analysis of the CK and CS scores of Texas school leaders and the relationships between

participants' CK, CS, and demographic data. Further, we conducted a Pearson's Product Moment

Correlation to determine if CK or CS scores were statistically correlated. We also explored

whether a statistically significant correlation existed between CK or CS scores and student

academic proficiency levels.

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Findings

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Descriptive analysis of the survey data revealed participants' mean CK scores were

higher than CS scores. Overall CK scores (M = 2.54, SD = .46) were slightly higher than overall

CS scores (M = 2.35, SD = .69). Mean CK scores were higher than mean CS scores in each

participant group as well. The mean CK score (M = 2.53, SD = .42) for participants who were

members of a traditionally marginalized group was .17 points higher than their CS score (M = 2.36, SD = .55). Mean CK scores (M = 2.49, SD = .50) for participants who identified as members of a non-marginalized group were .27 points higher than their CS scores (M = 2.22, SD = .84). Participants who chose not to disclose their group identity scored highest in both CK (M = 2.79, SD, .51) and CS (M = 2.60, SD = .71) while participants who identified as members of non-marginalized groups scored the lowest in both CK (M = 2.49, SD = .50) and CS (M = 2.22, SD = .84).

Rural (M = 2.53, SD = .45) and urban (M = 2.53, SD = .68) school leaders had the same CK score mean; however, rural leaders scored .14 points lower on CS (M = 2.39, SD = .70), and urban leaders scored .36 points lower on CS (2.17, SD = .37). School leaders serving in other locales outscored, both, rural and urban leaders in CK (M = 2.57, SD = .44) but not in CS (M = 2.24, SD = .70).

School leaders serving in non-Title I schools and those serving in non-Title I schools both scored higher in CK than CS. Non-Title I school leaders (M = 2.62, SD, .45) scored .10 points higher in CK than their counterparts serving in Title I schools (M = 2.62, SD = .48), but leaders in Title I schools (M = 2.39, SD = .70) scored .19 points higher in CS than non-Title I school leaders (M = 2.2, SD = .56).

Similarly, school leaders at all school levels scored higher in CK than CS. Among the groups related to the school level, high school leaders (M = 2.58, SD = .49) scored the highest in CK, closely followed by other (M = 2.56, SD = .39) and elementary (M = 2.55, SD = .48). Middle school leaders (M = 2.46, SD = .38) scored the lowest in CK. Other school leaders (M = 2.53, SD = .85) scored the highest in CS among the school level groups while middle (M = 2.28,

SD = .63) and high school (M = 2.28, SD = .52) leaders tied for the lowest CS score. Table 1

presents the CK and CS scores by participant group.

Table 1

Cultural Knowledge and Skill Scores by Participant Group

Participant Demographic	*N*	CK Score (*M*)	Standard Deviation	CS Score (*M*)	Standard Deviation
Group Association					
Marginalized Group	115	2.53	.42	2.36	.55
Non-Marginalized Group	53	2.49	.50	2.22	.84
No Group Assn	16	2.79	.51	2.60	.71
School SES Status					
Title I	146	2.52	.45	2.39	.71
Non-Title I	38	2.62	.48	2..20	.56
School Locale					
Rural	144	2.53	.45	2.39	.70
Urban	14	2.53	.68	2.17	.37
Other	26	2.57	.44	2.24	.70
School Level					
Elementary	65	2.55	.48	2.35	.73
Middle	39	2.46	.38	2.28	.63
High	45	2.58	.49	2.28	.52
Other	35	2.56	.39	2.53	.85

Note. N = 184 for each participant group.

Descriptive analysis of school academic outcomes included proficiency levels for all student assessments included in the state accountability model and proficiency levels by traditionally marginalized subgroups including economically disadvantaged (ED), African American (AA), and English Language Learners (ELL). Overall proficiency levels reflect the proficiency of all students whose state assessments counted towards the state accountability rating, and each subgroup level reflects all student members of that subgroup who counted towards the state accountability rating. This means all relevant state assessments were included in the mean proficiency levels.

Schools led by leaders who identified as members of a traditionally marginalized group had higher overall student proficiency levels and higher proficiency levels in all subgroups than schools led by those who identified as members of non-marginalized groups. However, schools led by participants who did not identify with either group had higher proficiency levels in all student groups than leaders who claimed group association. African American students had the lowest proficiency levels among all student subgroups regardless of leader group association. Table 2 presents the school proficiency levels by leader group association.

Table 2

School Proficiency Level by Leader Group Association

Leader Group Association	*N*	Overall Proficiency (%)	ED Proficiency (%)	AA Proficiency (%)	ELL Proficiency (%)
Marginalized Group	115	68.33	68.81	56.89	61.87
Non-Marginalized Group	53	65.49	60.55	55.64	56.35
No Group Association	16	81.95	77.45	66.00	67.27

Note. N = 184

Further, Title I schools had higher proficiency levels than non-Title I schools in every demographic category, despite the fact their leaders had higher CS scores. Elementary schools had the highest overall proficiency level (M = 73.62, SD = 15.83) and the highest ELL proficiency level (M = 71.84, SD = 15.99). Middle schools had the highest ED proficiency level (M = 72.26, SD = 58.57) while high schools had the highest AA proficiency level (M = 62.06, SD = 19.98). Despite having the highest CS score (M = 2.53, SD = .85), Other school-level leaders did not have the highest student proficiency level in any category. Further, rural schools had higher proficiency levels in every category than urban schools, but their leaders had the same score on CK and similar CS scores. Table 3 provides school proficiency level by demographics.

Table 3

School Proficiency Levels by Demographic

School Demographic	N	Overall Proficiency (%)	ED Proficiency (%)	AA Proficiency (%)	ELL Proficiency (%)
SES Status					
Title I	146	66.76	66.91	55.08	60.31
Non-Title I	38	75.43	69.58	65.57	64.88
School Locale					
Rural	144	68.13	67.77	56.90	60.58
Urban	14	38.45	36.69	34.59	37.94
Other	26	79.91	72.59	66.29	70.69
School Level					
Elementary	65	73.62	69.45	59.13	71.44
Middle	39	66.54	72.26	53.93	58.92
High	45	68.64	65.06	62.06	53.07
Other	26	79.91	72.59	66.29	70.69

Note. N = 184 for each participant group.

Results from the Pearson's Product-Moment Correlation indicated a statistically

significant moderate positive correlation between CK score and CS score, $r = .30$. Results further

indicated a negative correlation between CK score and every student proficiency category but a

positive correlation between CS score and every student proficiency category. Further, there was

a moderate to strong positive correlation between every student proficiency category. Table 4

presents the results of the Pearson's Product-Moment Correlation.

Table 4

Correlations Between Leaders' Cultural Competence Scores and Student Proficiency Levels

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Overall Proficiency	–					
2. ED Proficiency	0.57**	–				
3. AA Proficiency	0.88**	0.46**	–			
4. ELL Proficiency	0.81**	0.44**	0.70**	–		
5. CK Score	-0.03	-0.01	-0.11	-0.10	–	
6. CS Score	0.17	0.09	0.10	0.19	0.28**	–

** Correlation in significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)
* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

Discussion

Cultural competence is a process of developing and sustaining an understanding of,

respect for, and appreciation of the beliefs, values, practices, histories, and languages of

individuals or groups who are culturally diverse. It implies the ability to interact effectively with

people from different cultural backgrounds, including those whose beliefs and values may be

vastly different from one's own. Within the context of this study, we measured Texas school

leaders' cultural knowledge and cultural skill. Cultural knowledge refers to the understanding

and familiarity with the customs, beliefs, practices, and social behaviors of a particular group or society. It includes knowledge of their history, language, values, and traditions, as well as an understanding of the ways in which these elements shape and are shaped by the broader context of the culture. Cultural skill refers to the ability to navigate, interact with, and understand people from different cultures effectively. It includes the ability to communicate effectively across cultures, the ability to be sensitive to and respectful of cultural differences, and the ability to adapt to different cultural norms and expectations.

The results of this study indicated there was a statistically significant, positive correlation between CK and CS scores. This implies that there is a direct relationship between the two variables wherein individuals with higher levels of cultural knowledge tend to demonstrate higher levels of cultural skill scores. The strength of this correlation suggests that increased cultural knowledge can be beneficial in terms of improving one's ability to perform tasks related to their culture. Consequently, it could be argued that learning about and understanding different cultures is necessary for developing effective intercultural communication abilities.

Further, results revealed that CK scores were higher than CS scores in all participant groups. This could imply that the individuals who responded had a greater understanding of cultural information than the ability to apply it in a practical sense. Depending on the context, it could also imply that the people surveyed have a foundational educational background with limited opportunities to have cultural experiences.

The results of this study suggest a disparity in the cultural knowledge of principals in schools which differ in terms of wealth and funding. Specifically, we found that principals in affluent schools achieved higher scores in cultural knowledge than those at Title I schools. This discrepancy could be attributed to two primary factors: access to resources and exposure to

socio-cultural phenomena. With regard to the former, it is possible that those in affluent schools have access to more resources, including books and the Internet, which afford them greater exposure to a variety of sources. As for the latter, it may be that leaders in affluent school districts are more likely to have access to educational resources to learn about diversity issues.

The results of this study demonstrated that principals in Title I schools achieved a higher degree of proficiency in cultural skills than those operating in affluent schools. This phenomenon in which principals in Title I schools scored higher in cultural skills than their counterparts in affluent schools can be attributed to the unique contextual factors associated with Title I-designated institutions. These could include a heightened sense of awareness for socio-economic disparities, an increased emphasis on culturally competent instruction, and a greater appreciation for social diversity. Such conditions create a learning environment conducive to cultivating developed cultural skills among school leaders.

Results further indicated school leaders who identified as a member of a marginalized group scored higher in CS but slightly lower in CK than leaders who did not identify as a member of a marginalized group. This phenomenon can be attributed to the fact that school leaders who identify as a member of a marginalized group possess an enhanced understanding of intersectionality and the implications of power dynamics in educational contexts. This suggests that a greater understanding and appreciation of diversity can be cultivated through personal experience or identification, thus providing an advantage in the field of educational leadership. Furthermore, it underscores the importance of hiring educators from diverse backgrounds who are representative of the student population they serve, as Lindsay (2021) noted.

Cultural Knowledge scores were negatively correlated with proficiency levels in marginalized student groups. This could imply that having higher cultural knowledge of school

leaders does not lead to better student outcomes or even may have a negative effect on student outcomes. This outcome could be because school leaders might not be able to translate their knowledge into effective actions, or the school leader's cultural knowledge might be overwhelming the students causing them to feel uncomfortable and not perform well. It is also worth noting that correlation does not imply causation, so this result cannot be used to conclude that having higher cultural knowledge scores causes lower student outcomes. Conversely, CS scores were positively correlated with proficiency levels in marginalized student groups. This outcome could be because school leaders with higher cultural skills may be able to create a more inclusive and culturally responsive environment, which would help students to feel more comfortable, understood, and motivated to learn.

Implications for Practice

Allison (2019) noted that the principal's ability to lead is directly correlated with the success of the school thus the cultural competence of school leaders is of paramount importance to guarantee the success of students in diverse settings. Cultural competence entails a comprehensive understanding of the cultural and socio-economic context in which students are situated, to develop effective and inclusive instructional strategies. This implies that they must possess cognitive and affective awareness of their own beliefs and values, as well as those of their students, which will enable them to appropriately adjust their leadership styles and strategies to meet the varying needs of a culturally diverse student population. The implications of these outcomes are crucial, as educational institutions must be equipped with the capacity to provide comprehensive instruction which includes an understanding and appreciation of different cultures, and school leaders must recognize and accommodate differences among different groups of students if they are to create an equitable learning environment for all.

School leaders require additional training in cultural competency to ensure equitable and inclusive education for all students. To do this, school leaders must possess a solid foundation of cultural competence which can be achieved through an educational program that focuses on the exploration and promotion of intercultural understanding. Moreover, a comprehensive understanding of *diversity* needs to be developed to provide appropriate support to students and staff, as well as promote a sense of inclusion. The development of cultural competency is a critical component in the facilitation of an environment that supports diverse perspectives and cultures, allowing for accessible educational opportunities regardless of background or identity. This is particularly pertinent in light of the increasing prevalence of globalization, with cultural understanding essential to the navigation of an increasingly interconnected world.

Recommendation for Future Research

To fully comprehend the scope of school leaders' cultural competency and its impact on student outcomes, further research utilizing an array of additional data and information is essential. This data should include a wider variety of perspectives, so as to more accurately capture the complex dynamics of the social context in which school leaders find themselves. Further, additional research and data collection on the topic of cultural competence in school leaders would provide a deeper understanding of the subject. This could include studies on the impact of cultural competence training for school leaders, evaluations of the effectiveness of diverse leadership teams, and surveys of both staff and students to assess perceptions of inclusivity within the school environment.

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