



Effective practice instructional strategies: Design of an instrument to assess teachers' perception of implementation



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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research was to explore teacher implementation of effective practice instructional strategies. This included the creation of an instrument that can be used to assess how secondary teachers in the core content areas (English, math, science, social studies) in Minnesota, US, perceive implementation of effective practice instructional strategies. This instrument, The Minnesota Effective Practice Instructional Strategies Assessment (MEPISA), was developed using a four-step instrument development process, which included content domains, question creation, a review by a panel of experts, and a pilot. The MEPISA yielded a $S/ CVI = 0.72$ and a reliability score of 0.73. This instrument may contribute to mitigating the theory-practice gap in the effective practice of instructional strategies and can provide insight into how teachers perceive the frequency in which they use instruction strategies when considering demographic data.

1. Introduction

The idea of measuring and evaluating teacher effectiveness is not new (Gallagher, Rabinowitz, & Yeagley, 2011; Marzano, Schooling, & Toth, 2012; Reddy, Fabiano, & Jimerson, 2013; Tuckman, 1995; Van Petegem, Deneire, & De Maeyer, 2008). It is important to assess and evaluate teacher effectiveness and use of effective practice because of the connection between teacher effectiveness and student achievement (Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, 2013; Marzano et al., 2012; Tuckman, 1995). However, the gap between educational theory and its implementation in the classroom has continued to be an area of concern, notably since the 1980s (Darling-Hammond & Baratz-Snowden, 2007; Labaree, 1992; Soder, 1986). Even if a list of strategies or tools is provided to teachers, a guarantee that they will be implemented does not exist; nor is there a preferred tool to gauge this implementation. This lack of measurement furthers the theory-practice gap of effective practice instructional strategies.

After a thorough search of the literature, numerous instruments were found, but none met the needs for a study exploring teacher perception of effective practice instructional strategy use. Various assessments and rubrics attempt to measure whether or not effective practices are being used in the classroom, but the ambiguity of terms or instructional approaches identified within the instruments or scope do not easily allow for accurate measurement against specific effective practice instructional strategies (Hunt, Wiseman, & Touzel, 2009; Learning Sciences Marzano Center, 2015; Marchant, 1995; Marchant & Bowers, 1988; National High School Center, 2012). Perhaps the reason

for this is that standards can be met by using a variety of strategies and following strict instructional approaches does not fully allow for teachers' autonomy. Many possibilities exist; however, the vagueness does not offer an answer to a large-scale question of implementation of effective practices.

Instructional strategies along with curriculum development and classroom management make up three pillars of effective practice categories. Several times, I was able to find an instrument only to discover that it did not focus on instructional strategies alone (Gallagher et al., 2011; Hunt et al., 2009; Learning Sciences Marzano Center, 2015; Marchant, 1995; Marchant & Bowers, 1988). This supports the need for an instrument to assess confirmed implementation of effective practice instructional strategies in the classroom.

Additionally, a subtle theme discovered throughout the research about this theory-practice gap is the lack of teacher voice in the research, or the relationship between researchers and actual classroom teachers (Bowman, 2007; Day, 2012; Giannakaki et al., 2011; Greenwood & Maheady, 2001; Labaree, 1992; Perrow, 2013). Few studies or reports ask teachers on the front lines about their perceived use of effective practices.

One of these few studies is by Marzano, who is well known for his meta-analysis of effective teaching strategies. He completed a meta-analysis that considered specific strategies at various grade levels. Marzano provided an overview of effective research-based strategies in 2007 and founded the Marzano Center, which focuses on teacher assessment. He used his four domains and 10 areas as the foundation for his teachings and assessment (Learning Sciences Marzano Center,

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2015; Marzano, 2007). This is really his forte. His focus was on evaluation.

His organization produced an effective practices self-assessment of sorts, available with the purchase of Marzano's iObservation ([Learning Sciences Marzano Center, 2015](#)). Districts and schools that buy the iObservation software package may choose to utilize the teacher self-assessment, which asks teachers to reflect on their use of the recommended effective practices ([Learning Sciences Marzano Center, 2015](#)). Even though Marzano and his foundation support a mission of educational effective practices and promoting growth of teachers, do we know if these strategies are being implemented on a large scale, because only those who purchase the iObservation package have access to the self-assessment?

Self-report teacher voice instruments that already exist did not have the singular focus on instructional strategies. Asking teachers directly to self-report on their use of effective practice instructional strategies was one step forward to bridging the gap. Furthermore, a survey that asks for this data directly from teachers and not administrators did not exist. A new instrument was needed. This new instrument (see [Appendix B](#)), the Minnesota Effective Practice Instructional Strategies Assessment (MEPISA), was intended to measure how Minnesota classroom teachers perceived the implementation of effective practices ([Ford, 2016](#)).

2. Background

The state of Minnesota has mandated the use of effective practice instructional strategies by teachers in the classroom. As part of teacher licensure in the state of Minnesota, a statute lists the requirements and expectations of all Minnesota teachers ([Minnesota Administrative Rule, 2009](#)). The Minnesota Department of Education or the Minnesota Legislature was not the originator of a list of effective practices or standards for teachers. The *Nation at Risk* report, published in 1983, was the springboard for established and published teaching standards. Organizations that had existed for quite some time (National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education, established in 1954; Association of Teacher Educators, established in 1920), as well as newly established educational organizations ([National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, 2002](#)), began to publish and update standards for teachers and effective practices ([Association of Teacher Educators ATE, 2008](#); [National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, 2002](#); [National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education NCATE, 2008](#)).

The Minnesota rule includes 10 standards, which can fall into three best practice categories: classroom management, instructional strategies, and curriculum development. These 10 standards are subject matter; student learning; diverse learners; instructional strategies; learning environment; communication; planning instruction; assessment; reflection and professional development; and collaboration, ethics, and relations ([Minnesota Administrative Rule, 2009](#)). For purposes of this instrument, only the pillar of instructional strategies was examined. Not surprisingly, the Minnesota instructional strategies align with established effective practices. The instructional strategies heading contains 12 substandards (A–L) (see [Appendix A](#)). The content domains revealed in these standards are covered in the study's new instrument (see [Appendix B](#)).

3. Method

3.1. Design validity

The creation of this instrument followed [Benson and Clark \(1982\)](#) four phases as identified in their "Guide for Instrument Development and Validation." These phases included (1) planning, (2) construction, (3) quantitative evaluation, and (4) evaluation ([Benson & Clark, 1982](#)).

I developed the instrument by first carefully considering the 12 Minnesota instructional strategy substandards (see [Appendix A](#)). The strategies are not specific and are more categorical, so it was imperative

that I was able to connect specific instructional strategies that fit each category in order to ask relevant questions on the instrument.

Once the construct matrix was complete, the state instructional strategies were more closely evaluated for similarities. The 12 strategies were combined into six content domains. I then created questions based on the research reflected in the construct matrix. These questions represented the six content domains in proportion to the number of state instructional strategies represented in each domain. At this step in the process, the questions needed to be reviewed and validated. More details regarding this process of instrument validation are to follow.

3.2. Content domains

Educational domains have a strong association with Danielson and her *Framework for Teaching* (1996). In this text, she outlines 22 components of effective teaching distributed across four domains; the components are similar to other national frameworks ([Danielson, 1996](#); [National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, 2002](#); [INTASC, 1992, 2011](#)). [Danielson \(1996\)](#) correlates the INTASC standards with the *Framework for Teaching* domain components. As a result, it is not surprising that the content domains of the Minnesota Effective Practice Instructional Strategies Assessment (MEPISA) have similarities to [Danielson's framework \(1996\)](#). The [INTASC \(1992\)](#) also are represented in the Minnesota Administrative Rule.

The focus of the MEPISA was specifically that of effective practice instructional strategies. The 12 Minnesota instructional strategies (see [Appendix A](#)) fell into key areas closely related to [Danielson \(1996\)](#) Domain 3 (instruction): understanding instructional strategies, purpose, and use; intentional use of instructional strategies; variety of use of instructional strategies; and technology as it related to instructional strategies. This Minnesota legislation narrowed the content domain and was aligned with research supporting effective practices. These key areas were revealed in six more specific domains, which captured all of the 12 instructional strategies.

3.2.1. Domain 1: understanding how students learn

Substandard B was the only standard addressing the process and understanding of learning. This represented 9% of the 12 instructional substandards identified by the state.

3.2.2. Domain 2: understanding instructional strategies

Substandard C was the only standard addressing the understanding of process and guiding principles of instructional strategies, including advantages and limitations. This represented 9% of the 12 instructional substandards identified by the state.

3.2.3. Domain 3: nurturing higher order thinking skills

Instructional substandards D, G, and J referenced higher order thinking and critical thinking skills relating to problem solving and performance capabilities. They had considerable overlap. The nurturing of these skills (substandard D) was closely linked to the multiple teaching and learning strategies used to engage students (substandard G, J). This represented 27% of the 12 instructional substandards identified by the state.

3.2.4. Domain 4: using a variety of strategies to respond to students' needs

Each of the instructional substandards E and H addressed student needs and purpose of instruction. Adjusting and varying strategy use was linked to learner feedback and requires flexibility. This represented 18% of the 12 instructional substandards identified by the state.

3.2.5. Domain 5: using a variety of strategies to respond to instructional purposes

Instruction substandards F, I, and L spoke to the use of various instructional strategies and processes. Additionally, the various strategies were chosen with the intended student outcome in mind. This

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