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Case Study of the Accommodation Readiness Spiral as an Evaluative Framework for Action Research Plans

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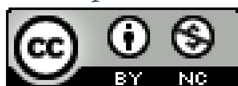

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Abstract

This study utilized qualitative research to examine student work for evidence of language exemplifying the progressive levels of the *Accommodation Readiness Spiral* (ARS). The goal of this research is was to consider how the ARS could be utilized as a purposive framework for the assessment of professional, capacity building potential as related to a teacher's readiness for the accommodation of culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) students. Thus, we intended to explore the question, what examples of text within ECM participants' action research plans appear to correspond to levels of the ARS if used as a framework of evaluation for professional capacity building potential?

The student text used for these purposes was a culminating action research plan required for graduation in a masters program in education. The topic of the project was unique to each student, but was constrained to addressing a social/educational issue in their home country and preparing an action research proposal capable of exploring such an issue, including their role as an advocate for the marginalized population. The findings of content analysis conducted on one such proposal indicate the utility of this six-level theoretical framework for analyzing readiness within scholarly work. The particulars of even the most complex levels appeared to organize the author's thinking about challenging aspects of the action research plan. Such scaffolding may prove especially beneficial for teacher preparation programs and professional development for practitioners in areas related to teaching CLD students, reflective practices regarding teacher perception, and the role of an educator as an advocate.

Keywords

action research, Accommodation Readiness Spiral, professional capacity building potential, etic framework for assessment

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Case Study of the Accommodation Readiness Spiral as an Evaluative Framework for Action Research Plans

Stephanie McCutcheon, Erica Sponberg, Judith Mena Pazmiño, Kevin Murry, & Socorro Herrera

This study utilized qualitative research to examine student work for evidence of language exemplifying the progressive levels of the Accommodation Readiness Spiral (ARS). The goal of this research was to consider how the ARS could be utilized as a purposive framework for the assessment of professional, capacity building potential as related to a teacher's readiness for the accommodation of culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) students. Thus, we intended to explore the question: What examples of text within ECM participants' action research plans appear to correspond to levels of the ARS if used as a framework of evaluation? The student text used for these purposes was a culminating action research plan required for graduation in a master's program in education. The topic of the project was unique to each student but was constrained to addressing a social/educational issue in their home country and preparing an action research proposal capable of exploring such an issue, including their role as an advocate for the marginalized population. The findings of a content analysis conducted on one such proposal indicate the utility of this six-level theoretical framework for analyzing readiness within scholarly work. The particulars of even the most complex levels appeared to organize the author's thinking about challenging aspects of the action research plan. Such scaffolding may prove especially beneficial for teacher preparation programs and professional development for practitioners in areas related to teaching CLD students, reflective practices regarding teacher perception, and the role of an educator as an advocate.

Introduction

A variety of educational reform initiatives spearheaded by the Ecuadorian government since 2007 are aimed at enhancing teachers' qualifications and readiness to provide high-quality differentiated instruction. In 2013, such goals prompted the funding of the inaugural cohort of 43 Ecuadorian master's students at Kansas State University (KSU). In response to the diverse challenges facing Ecuadorian teachers, the Ecuadorian master's (ECM) program at KSU was developed to bolster participating teachers' capacities for biography-driven, culturally responsive teaching, content and language acquisition strategies, and action research on theory-into-praxis applications in the classroom and community. Associated service learning, as well as field and practicum experiences were designed to ensure the immediate applicability of strategies, theories, and concepts to the context of classroom teaching and community service in Ecuador.

Among essential outcomes of the ECM program was an individualized, action research plan, applicable to the ECM participants' professional practice or sphere of influence in Ecuador. Necessarily, each plan (at minimum) incorporated: (a) an annotated and targeted literature review, (b) one or more purposive research questions, (c) information on site and sample, (d) information on the research methods to be employed, (e) an explication of data collection to be completed, (f) detail on data analyses to be completed, (g) applicable criteria for trustworthiness of the research, and (h) plans to disseminate findings/outcomes of the research. Since the action

research plan was intentionally designed for implementation in-country, it was not possible for participants to conduct their research during the KSU program, or for KSU faculty to evaluate the efficacy of the plans in situ. Nevertheless, the action research plans accomplish more than a singular research purpose.

Lewin (1946) argued that action research is as much about *action learning* as it is about a new perspective on social research. Elliot (1991) asserted that knowledge production and utilization are subordinate to and conditioned by the *improvement of teaching practice* through planning for and conducting action research. Action research broadens the professionalism of teachers by presenting opportunities to participate in educational research and curriculum theorizing. Today, action research has evolved toward a socioconstructivist model that places as much emphasis on educative and professional capacity building purposes for teacher researchers as it does on the discovery and data building processes of the act itself. The socioconstructive perspective (e.g., Matsumura, Slater, & Crosson, 2008; Palinscar, 1998) maintains that learning and capacity building are social processes through which individuals construct knowledge and perspectives in tandem with interactions involving significant others in the social milieu. Accordingly, recent reconceptualization of the phenomenon has variously featured a wide variety of capacity-building emphases for the researcher, including: knowledge building, professional development, critical thinking, differentiation of practices for cultural and linguistic diversity, and advocacy (MacDonald, 2012; Ryan, 2013). Thus, within the EMC program these capacity building emphases play an important role in the design of curriculum and instruction for master's students. However, a framework for comprehensive evaluation of such personal development in abstract areas has proved difficult. This research explores the use of a purposive framework that aligns with the capacity building emphases previously mentioned.

Theoretical Framework

The *Accommodation Readiness Spiral* (ARS) is a framework developed by Murry and Herrera (2005) that emphasizes six levels of teacher readiness for differentiated practice with culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) students (Herrera & Murry, 2014). This article introduces a case study from the ECM program wherein the ARS, as a purposive framework, is applied to analyze an action research report in order to evaluate students' level of accommodation readiness. Accommodation in this sense refers to the teachers' capacity to appropriately and situationally differentiate her/his practices for the multiplicity of both assets and needs that CLD students bring to instruction. Readiness is the current product of ongoing capacity building for six levels of differentiated professional practices. These six levels of professional readiness are presented in Figure 1.

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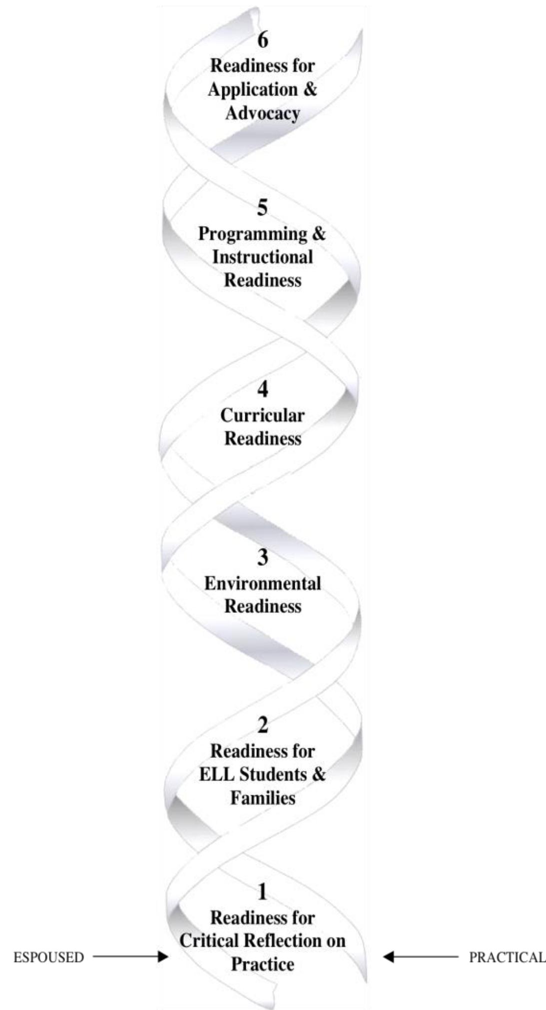

Figure 1. Accommodation Readiness Spiral. Reprinted from *Mastering ESL and bilingual methods: Differentiated instruction for culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) students*, by S. G. Herrera & K. G. Murry, 2014, Boston: Pearson. Copyright [2014] Pearson Education. Reprinted with permission.

The ARS is pictured as a double helix (Figure 1). The levels are hierarchical, as capacity building is considered progressive. Therefore, advancement from the first level of the helix, *Readiness for Critical Reflection on Practice*, to the second level, *Readiness for CLD Students and Families*, requires mastery of level one. Subsequently, each level is essential preparation for the next. However, movement along the levels is not necessarily continuous and regression to prior levels is possible. Herrera and Murry (2014) state multi-directional movement along the spiralis possible because, "building a capacity for consistent, critical reflection on practice often requires radically different perspectives in thinking as well as a great deal of reflective practice with CLD students in the school and/or in the classroom" (p. 142). Therefore, as the practice dynamics change, the educator's capacity may become insufficient to enable effectiveness at a particular level of capacity building for best practice. In this case, the educator may (albeit temporarily) revert. Herrera and Murry (2014) explain further:

> This is so because effective and productive interactions with CLD students and families require reflection on the range of cross-cultural assumptions in which teachers may engage as they interact with individuals of a culture and situational practice contexts different from their own. Such interactions also require a capacity for critical reflection because it is one's prior socialization in a particular culture (a culture different from that of the CLD student) that is typically at the core of misconceptions and incorrect assumptions about CLD students and their family members. (p. 134)

However, as teachers learn situations of practice from their cross-cultural and cross-linguistic interactions with CLD students and families, regression along the many levels of the spiral tends to become progressively less recurrent (Herrera & Murry, 2014).

The spiral aspect of the illustration is related to the intertwining, but distinctly discrete concepts of espoused readiness and practical readiness. Herrera and Murry (2014) describe espoused readiness as a teacher's perception of their own readiness for accommodation, whereas practical readiness exemplifies their actual readiness for accommodation. Espoused readiness can be easily altered as it operates at a conscious level. With new data, or experience, teachers can gain new espoused readiness. Practical readiness is more difficult to transform as it is dependent on socialization and professional practices, some of which are so ingrained as to be undetectable; frequently, practical readiness guides action and is dependent on teachers' unrecognized assumptions and beliefs (Herrera & Murry, 2014). Thus, the difference between espoused and practical readiness is essentially thoughts versus actions. Practical readiness (actions/practices) may not correspond to espoused readiness (thoughts/beliefs), and as educators attempt to progress through the levels of the ARS it is important for their espoused and practical readiness to equally advance (Herrera & Murry, 2014). Otherwise, when only the espoused readiness advances and the practical readiness does not, the structure of the double helix of the ARS collapses.

The levels of the ARS were described originally in work by Herrera and Murry (2014). Level 1 of the ARS describes readiness to surface assumptions about practice with cultural and linguistic diversity, test the validity of those assumptions, and examine whether their origin lies in the teacher's prior socialization in a culture different from that of the student. Level 2 describes the capacity to acknowledge, assess, capitalize upon, and share those assets (i.e., value placed on education, bilingualism, cross-cultural biography) that CLD students and their family/extended family members may bring to the learning environment. Level 3 describes the capacity to pre-assess, monitor, and maximize both the internal (i.e., classroom arrangement, literacy support) and external (i.e., status of CLD students' native languages in the community, family/community involvement) environments for learning. Level 4 describes readiness to emphasize those curriculum essentials (i.e., focus on adopted curriculum, benchmarking, access to the curriculum) that are critical to the classroom success of CLD students. Level 5 describes readiness to evaluate the efficacy of programming (i.e., bilingual, dual language, ESL) for CLD students and differentiate classroom instruction for these students. Finally, level 6 describes readiness to advocate for critical facets of student rights, appropriate programming in the school, accommodative classroom instruction, authentic assessment practices, and more.

Research Question

The purpose of this research was to investigate the use of the ARS as a purposive framework for evaluation of accommodation readiness, an essential outcome of ECM programming. Therefore, the guiding question for the study was: What examples of text within

ECM participants' action research plans appear to correspond to levels of the ARS if used as a framework for evaluation?

Methodology

Content analysis was selected as the appropriate qualitative methodology to approach the guiding question. Content analysis is commonly viewed as a qualitative mode of analysis by which analytical categories are used to construct a coding frame to be applied to data. It is typically a systematic, objective methodology couched in a positivist perspective that is primarily concerned with statistical analysis of content (Hardy, Harley, & Phillips, 2004). However, this same understanding of applying a coding frame to textual data can be applied in a qualitative sense. Qualitative forms of content analysis do not operate within a positivist perspective. They extend beyond fixed-meaning frequency counts, and include a more complex, interpretive perspective. It acknowledges the context in which the text is found, a sensitivity to the usage of words, and reflexivity regarding interpretation (Hardy, Harley & Phillips, 2004; Rossi, Serralvo & João, 2014). Such a qualitative approach is appropriate when the research outcomes surround descriptions and interpretations (e.g., researcher interpretations of participant descriptions within action research plans) (Yin, 2003). This interpretive form of qualitative content analysis is compatible with a discourse analytic approach in that they are "exercise[s] in creative interpretation that seek to show how reality is constructed through texts" (Hardy et al., 2004). The researchers' used content analysis to examine the performative links between participant language, and espoused understanding and practical readiness. The study intended to model ARS use as a framework to analyze the complexities of knowledge construction represented in student language; particularly to analyze abstract notions, unchecked biases, or readiness for the classroom.

The action research plan of an ECM participating teacher was selected primarily due to her willingness to participate in the research, but also embodies a common representative of the cohort. The ARS served as the theoretical framework from which the coding frame was formulated for data collection. The ARS paradigm guided the analyses of capacity building for practice in diverse and complex educational settings. The necessity for participant anonymity was superseded by the permission of the participant to study the text and the reciprocating inclusion of the participant as a reviewer and an author of the study.

Methods

To analyze the text, *hypothesis coding* (Saldaña, 2013) of the student's action research plan was conducted. According to Saldaña (2013), *hypothesis coding* consists of applying predetermined codes formulated from a theory. Here, the theory describing the codes is the ARS, and the six codes utilized correspond to the six levels of the ARS. Saldaña (2013) noted that this process of data collection and analysis is appropriate for content analysis, which parallels the purpose of using the ARS as a framework for understanding and evaluating student development of practical readiness for accommodation, as well as the more abstract, espoused readiness for advocacy, through analysis of action research plans.

Trustworthiness criteria are the relevant benchmarks for establishing the truth value of qualitative research (Shenton, 2004). Research design in this study targeted the trustworthiness criteria of transferability and credibility. The former was addressed through *thick description* (Korstjens & Moser, 2017) of the EMC program purpose and goals, the intent and context of the action research assignment within the program, the levels of the ARS framework, and the

systematic effort to document the context of the findings, and nature of the interpretations of discourse in relation to the theoretical framework. Credibility was established through member checking via the ECM student author of the action research plan. Such checking afforded her the opportunity to confirm or disconfirm researchers' interpretations of her vernacular.

The narrative which follows is a synopsis of the participant's action research plan. This annotated (433-word) plan encompasses the research context, relevancy arguments, the theoretical framework, the research question, and the methodology. The student's complete version for implementation in country was a 5,023-word action plan. The annotated version is presented here to provide context for increased understanding of the analysis and findings.

Context: Participant's Abbreviated Action Research Plan

English now plays a significant role in Ecuadorian society, as it does in much of the world. The government has accelerated formal education for English acquisition, K-16. Absent, however, is such education within the prison system. Yet, research (e.g., Vacca, 2004) indicates that prisoners who participate in these programs while incarcerated are less likely to return to prison. The University of Illinois has developed a college-in-prison program, the *Education Justice Project* (EJP), that demonstrates the positive impacts of higher education upon incarcerated people, their families, the communities from which they come, the host institution, and society in general (Ginsburg, 2014). Were EJP implemented in Ecuador, well-educated, bilingual and productive citizens are likely and significant outcomes.

Therefore, action research is proposed, in a prison setting, which would emphasize the research question: How might English language instruction be implemented in an Ecuadorian prison to facilitate post-release opportunities for occupational and personal productivity and sustainability? Proposed research outcomes will target improvement in the quality of life of this group of underrepresented people, through education. The prison context for the study houses 569 inmates and is located in the capitol. About 87% are aged 18-45 years – a comparatively young target population for Ecuador.

The participant researcher for this qualitative, action research will also lead the collaborative tutoring sessions where inmates with high English language proficiency will be trained to teach their language skills to other inmates. Through session observations, the researcher will develop a full training curriculum with the lessons and academic content to be taught according to students' profiles – that is biography-driven instruction (Herrera, 2010).

Observation, as well as demographic and biographical data on the participants, will be analyzed according to repetitive coding and categorization toward the identification of themes. Coding will begin using the ETP model and will end with themes in participant voice and/or action. Selected interviews will address gaps in the data arising from initial coding. The credibility of the study will be sought through prolonged engagement -- transferability through the researcher's thick description of the study.

Potential challenges and limitation of the research include: (a) Bureaucracy -- Permits, approvals, and documentation can take considerable periods of time and patience to obtain. (b) Space and risks in the facility -- Prior fieldwork suggests that there is not a functional area to conduct instruction, observation, or interviews. This must be addressed with the Director. It will be essential to follow security protocols inside the prison. (c) Altruism -- The researcher must explore what economic incentives will be sufficient to obtain the necessary cooperation and assistance, when creating and using the *budget for this study.*

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Thematic Research Outcomes

ARS Level 1: Readiness for Critical Reflection on Practice

Readiness for Critical Reflection on Practice is the first of the six levels of the ARS. The tenet of this level is the ability to reflect. However, reflection in this sense requires more than introspection. Herrera and Murry (2014) provide a five-step process of reflection on practice that begins with *assumption checking*, *reflection* and *critical reflection*.

First, it is important to understand how Herrera and Murry (2014) differentiate between introspection and reflection. Introspection is an examination of one's own mental state as objective but fails to examine the mental state as subjective to our background and cultural/sociological influences that are responsible for the development of our state of mind. Assumption checking not only requires introspection, but also takes it one step further by requiring the participant to consider how their mental processes have formed and in doing so what assumptions are they making in their mental processes. These added attributes, *assumption checking* (a willingness to search for potential assumptions), *reflection* (confronting assumptions and testing their validity), and *critical reflection* (validity testing focused on prior socialization) differentiate introspection as traditionally defined from the authors' understanding of reflection for the purposes of the first level of the ARS. The fourth and fifth steps of this level are *applications to personal growth* and *applications to professional development*, in effect, development of a new or altered worldview and changing actions to match the new worldview, especially in relation to improving efficacy as a professional educator.

Several findings were found to support one or more of the five steps of level one of the ARS, consider the following excerpts:

Participant excerpt 1. *However, this weakness can become a strength if that bilingualism is taken advantage of, which means that incarcerated people with this language skill, would . . ., spread their, which leads to the achievement of a successful transition from prison to employment. (p. 3)*

There is indication that the author recognizes a common assumption that bilingualism is treated as a disadvantage within the U.S. context and asserts her own assumption that bilingualism can aid in a successful transition from prison to employment in Ecuador. Understanding that there is a difference in assumptions regarding second languages or bilingualism in a U.S. context versus an Ecuadorian context indicates that she has acknowledged her own assumption as it pertains to the culture in which she participates. This is suggestive of critical reflection, i.e. validity testing focused on prior socialization.

Participant excerpt 2. *The Select Committee on Narcotics Abuse and Control (SCNAC) conducted a study to determine the uses and usefulness of prison literacy and vocational programs of 65,000 inmates in the Federal Prison System in the USA. The results of this study showed that ex-prisoners who participated in employment and vocational education programs in prison had a better chance of maintaining their jobs and earning slightly more money than similar ex-prisoners who had not participated in those programs (SCNAC, 1991). . . . Gerber and Fritsch (1993) evaluated the outcomes of the adult education programs in prison and concluded that besides lower recidivism rates in participant inmates, in contrast with those who did not participate, education programs lead to a reduction of criminal behavior, continued education after release from prison, and fewer disciplinary problems in the prison setting. (p. 5-6)*

In this excerpt she participates in assumption checking of her research hypothesis regarding the improvement of life after incarceration by developing English abilities and

promoting bilingualism as she provides empirical evidence from research in the field supporting her hypothesis and ultimately the foundation of her action research plan. Her validity testing of the critical assumptions related to her action plan exhibit reflection. The final excerpt represents her application to personal growth and professional development.

Participant excerpt 3. *In the case of Ecuador, the same pattern occurs: the access to education in prisons is scarce (Gallardo & Nuñez, 2006). Nevertheless, in December 2013, the new Ecuadorian Criminal Code was approved with a chapter related to rights and guarantees of inmates, where it establishes that the State recognizes their right to education, culture, and recreation and ensures their conditions for the exercise of these rights and the reduction of the limitations arising from the deprivation of liberty. The implementation of this section of the Code is the responsibility of the Ecuadorian National Education System, which will provide mandatory academic services to inmates: initial and basic education plus bachillerato, with a necessary adaptation of the pedagogical methodology to the special circumstances of penitentiaries (Entenza, 2012). In this context, a positive picture is shown: an open door for the development of academic programs in Ecuadorian prisons.*

Within this discourse, she illustrates personal growth and professional development as she recognizes the need for a change within her country's educational practices. These changes directly relate to educational access for prison populations by altering her perception of adequate education to include a marginalized community (personal growth). Additionally, the author suggests the possibility for enacting change under the new criminal code, which is the essence for her action research plan (professional development).

ARS Level 2: Readiness for ELL Students & Families

Level 2 of the ARS describes development of teacher professionals in acknowledging the importance of the sphere of influence affecting each student. Understanding the variety of experiences, relationships, and educational levels that students bring to school that affect learning, motivation, and academic outcomes is the main tenet of this level. Readiness at this level would be indicative of maximizing student potential by incorporating schooling with cultural and language experience into the classroom. Doing such increase instructional relevancy and student interest (Herrera & Murry, 2014). It emphasizes semi-structured conversations with such stakeholders (including the students themselves) to gather information, form relationships, and promote engagement (Herrera & Murry, 2014).

Participant excerpt 4. *Previous collections of general statistics about prisons in Ecuador do not show enough information for a baseline for this study. Specific data is required, such as inmates' country of origin, legal status, reasons for incarceration, levels of instruction, and language. . . . through a demographic survey including close-ended questions. (p. 10)*

Participant excerpt 5. *[Semi-structured conversations will be] concentrated on inmates' thoughts about sharing their language skills with their peers. . . . receiving instruction in a second language. . . . their awareness of the benefits of their contribution and participation. . . . focus on the possible opportunities for their professional and personal sustainability post-release. (p. 11)*

Participant excerpt 6. *All. . . . data obtained. . . . will be displayed on [the students] personalized. . . . Student Biography Card. This instrument, due to its flexibility, will be adapted to the purpose of the study in order to get integral insights about inmates' sociocultural, linguistic, cognitive, and academic dimensions. (p. 12)*

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Excerpts 4, 5, and 6 show the participant's capacity for recognizing the need to gather information about her target population so that she can create an effective and beneficial program on their behalf. She compensates for the lack of information gathered by the prison system by organizing a demographic survey (Excerpt 4). In addition to the demographic survey, she seeks information regarding inmate perceptions through semi-structured conversations about the program (Excerpt 5) and asks the inmates to participate in developing the curriculum. Excerpt 6 illustrates her capacity to use the data gathered as a reference tool for the continuous maturation of relevant curriculum with careful consideration for inmates' sociocultural, linguistic, cognitive, and academic dimensions.

ARS Theme Level 3: Environmental Readiness

At the Environmental Readiness level, the educator must be able to consider and analyze both internal and external environments. Students draw meaning from their experiences, previous learning and socialization, and interactions; thus, the internal and external environments become the context from which students make meaning. As a teacher it is important to know these contexts, both internal-"atmosphere of the school and classroom" and external-"sociopolitical context of the community, state, and country" (Herrera & Murry, 2014, pp. 155-156).

Two excerpts from the participant's work illustrate this level, or code:

Participant excerpt 7. *Studies show that "prisoners who attend educational programs. . . . are less likely to return to prison" (Vacca, 2004, p. 297). Unfortunately, this type of research has not been conducted yet in Ecuador, which means that there is a huge gap related to the influence of education in jails and its post effects. . . . Every year. . . . prisoners return home. . . . after having spent long periods of time in jail with reduced access to education and [no access to a] training program that could assist in their transition upon release (Lynch & Sabol, 2001). (p. 2-4)*

Participant excerpt 8. *Appropriate instruction of English as a second language has developed many key dimensions which has enabled prisoners in this correctional center demonstrate self-confidence and self-esteem, critical thinking skills, effective self expression, commitments and behaviors as agents of positive change in the environment in which they live: prisons, and for those released, within their home communities (Education Justice Project, 2014). (p. 7)*

These excerpts from the participant's action research plan demonstrate that she has explored both the external (Excerpt 7) and internal (Excerpt 8) contexts of the environment for education in prisons. Her evaluation of the former reflects appropriate attention to the sociopolitical environment for programming and the need for such programming within the context of society. The latter reflects her analysis of socioeconomic threats to participants' reintegration into the workforce after education and the particular needs of this underserved minority group.

ARS Level 4: Curricular Readiness

The essence of level 4 is captured in a statement from Herrera and Murry (2014), "The curriculum must be adapted to meet students' needs rather than requiring students to fit the curriculum" (p. 163). Critical reflection (see level 1) is emphasized here as a necessary action of all teachers when considering curriculum and instruction in the classroom. Curricular issues are not simply constrained to planning, scope, sequence, and consistency. They pertain to complex

concerns of multiculturalism. Educators must be able to critically reflect on the curriculum to make it relevant and also consider differentiated learning opportunities. Herrera and Murry (2014) explain that, at this level, educators utilize materials and make curriculum decisions that represent their students' histories and lived experiences. Therefore, evidence of readiness in this area would represent a movement away from teacher-centered curriculum, wherein the teacher is the expert and deliverer of information, to a student-centered curriculum wherein students' backgrounds and biographies are an important aspect driving the curriculum and instruction within the classroom. The following excerpts exemplify this critical reflection in the participant's work.

Participant excerpt 9. *[For] foreign inmates whose first or second language is English. . . . this weakness can become a strength if that bilingualism is taken advantage of. (p. 3)*

Participant excerpt 10. *The programs should be participatory and they should use the strengths of the learner to help them shape their own learning. Literacy should be put into meaningful contexts that address the learners' needs (Kerka, 1995). Instruction should involve engaging topics that motivate and sustain the inmates' interest. It should also use literature that is written by prisoners because it provides relevant subject matter as well as writing models. (p. 6)*

Participant excerpt 11. *The teacher/researcher will have to develop a. . . . training curriculum with the lessons and academic content to be taught according to the students' profile. (p. 9)*

From these excerpts, the participant has critically reflected on how to establish a program that can accommodate the needs of her target population. She recognizes that for this program to be effective it needs to utilize and maximize the prisoners' assets while building their confidence. She identifies multilingualism as a positive attribute and requires active participants in order to tap into their interests and needs. Finally, she not only considers the unique needs of the target population, but also recognizes her commitment to individuals within the group by acknowledging the need to adjust curriculum according to individual profiles.

ARS Level 5: Programming & Instructional Readiness

Readiness at level 5 of the ARS is represented by a teacher who is informed of programming, or lack of programming, for CLD students in their school/district and can maximize site-specific effectiveness while working to advocate for improved, research-based programs to accelerate academic achievement. Important aspects of this level are collaboration and implementation of evidence-based best practices (Herrera & Murry, 2014). Consider the following excerpts as examples of the participant's understanding of programming option for inmates in Ecuador:

Participant excerpt 12. *There is a huge gap related to the influence of education in jails and its post effects. . . . there are not any academic programs being executed in the Ecuadorian penitentiary system (Gallardo & Nuñez, 2006). (p. 2)*

Participant excerpt 13. *The researcher. . . . will. . . . lead the collaborative tutoring sessions where inmates with certain English language proficiency will be trained to teach their language skills to other inmates. (p. 9)*

Participant excerpt 14. *The Ministries of Interior, Coordination of Social Development, Social and Economic Inclusion, and Labor and Employment have not developed a program to reintegrate ex-prisoners into a work-life. They should be aware of this study in order to envisage a plan for the entrance of prisoners into the labor market, according to their new skills. (p. 16)*

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In Excerpt 12, the participant notes that there is no current program model in place for inmates in Ecuador and asserts the need for a program model for this marginalized group. Her intent to create a collaborative environment with the population in order to implement best practices is expressed in Excerpt 13. In Excerpt 14 she acts as an advocate by identifying stakeholders' lack of programming for this group and her intent to share her research-based programming ideas through action research wherein her biographical findings on inmates become pivotal to responsive programming and instruction.

ARS Level 6: Readiness for Application & Advocacy

As the levels are hierarchical, it is important to carefully consider the sixth level, Readiness for Application and Advocacy, when arguing that that ARS model can be used as a purposive framework for evaluating professional capacity-building potential. This level emphasizes transferring theory into practice by positioning teachers as critical researchers and advocates for students and continual progress within the field of education. This level of personal and professional development exemplifies the teacher as a leader, advocate, and activist, and is the level all educators should strive for continually.

Professional capacity building at the sixth level of the Accommodation Readiness Spiral has two tenets, application and advocacy (Herrera & Murry, 2014). When referring to the application aspect, there are three realizations required of teachers to successfully transfer theory into practice. The first is a critical lens of educational models and theories. Teachers must become critical analysts of the plethora of education related theories, practices, and models. Secondly, teachers must ground practice in the needs of the student population, this will require flexibility in developing accommodations from theoretical, research-based models to fit the specific learning requirements of a population. Lastly, teachers with a readiness for application must understand sociocultural dynamics and consider how culture and language interplay in the socialization in the classroom.

When considering the second tenet, advocacy, three characteristics must be evaluated. Currency as a feature of readiness for advocacy is the extent to which a teacher's understanding of best practices is grounded in contemporary research and supported by empirical data as well as recognition of the obstacles to provide adequate accommodation (Herrera & Murry, 2014). The second aspect, defensibility, requires teachers to articulate and defend rationales for the accommodations and best practices employed. They must have a philosophy of teaching and learning that reflects the importance of accommodation and differentiation, while also be willing to advocate that colleagues and administrators develop culturally and linguistically sensitive thinking. Finally, futurity requires teachers to act as leaders in educational communities, reflecting on the inequitable opportunities for culturally and linguistically diverse students and the implications of such inequity within the larger society.

Using the Accommodation Readiness Spiral for the 6th level as a framework to assess the capacity building of participants must consider both application and advocacy. Consider the following excerpts:

Participant excerpt 15. *Kerka (1995) highlights that successful prison literacy programs are learner centered and they should be tailored to the prison culture. Ripley (1993) suggested that moral education, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills should be included in any academic programs for inmates. Newman, Lewis and Beverstock (1993) recognized different learning styles, cultural backgrounds, and multiple literacies of inmates. The programs should be participatory, and they should use the strengths of the learner to help them shape their own*

learning. Literacy should be put into meaningful contexts that address the learners' needs (Kerka, 1995). Instruction should involve engaging topics that motivate and sustain the inmates' interest. It should also use literature that is written by prisoners because it provides relevant subject matter as well as writing models. Most of all the programs must enable inmates to see themselves and be seen in roles other than that of prisoners (Paul, 1991). (p. 6)

In this excerpt the author demonstrates her ability to modify and apply general educational practices to benefit a target population as well as to conduct research regarding the specific population. She supports common educational practices such as student-centered, differentiated and contextual learning, but uses researchers who have worked specifically with prison populations and their findings to support the use of such practices in a prison setting. This reflects a degree of critical research and flexibility grounded by student needs, as well as *currency,* an aspect of advocacy, as she references contemporary educational practices and authors who have had success with such practices with her target population. Finally, she addresses sociocultural dynamics and culture and language when she considers using literature written by inmates to have relevant subject matter and writing models, and also when she expresses the importance of the program to empower the prisoners by cultivating identities beyond the label of prisoner.

Participant excerpt 16. *Unfortunately, the penitentiary system in Ecuador does not include education practices as a policy. For this reason and according to the supportive literature, a study of this type might lead to deep understandings about the impact of English language instruction in Ecuadorian prisons, not only to enhance rehabilitative aspects of inmates within jail, but also to provide them a tangible tool for success after their release. Therefore, a project of these characteristics might be the first glimmer of hope for ex-prisoners to escape the cycles of poverty and violence that have dominated their lives. (p. 7)*

Here the author explicitly defends the need for such a program by stating that prisoners are an educationally marginalized group in Ecuador. They are not afforded educational opportunities and implementation of a program such as the one she proposes would lead to better understanding the effects of English language instruction on both the rehabilitative process and as preparation for the workforce. Her ability to articulate how an English language program could benefit the prisoner population is related to the capacity for *defensibility* within the ARS. She also shows a capacity for futurity as she discusses the lack of educational opportunities afforded to the prison population in Ecuador. Her excerpt not only considers inequity in education for those in prison, but how accommodating education within this setting can affect the ex-prisoners as they are released, their families, and the sociocultural and socioeconomic cycles in Ecuador that are perpetuated by such inequity. It becomes evident by analyzing the participant's action research plan that evidence for each aspect of application and advocacy can be found in the author's work.

Conclusions

The findings of this qualitative content analysis indicate that the ARS can provide a purposive, evaluative framework for assessing the capacity-building potential of proposed research, as reflected in teachers' action research plans. The action research plans are designed specifically to elicit educators' notions of accommodation readiness by requiring that they apply their learning to a real-world context involving CLD students, thus the ARS framework is applicable for analysis. As demonstrated, the particulars of even the most comprehensive level (six) appear to organize the author's thinking about challenging aspects of the action research

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plan. This would support the argument that the participant is capable of practicing espoused concepts of application and advocacy as an educator; signifying that the ARS could be used as a purposive framework with which to evaluate the personal and professional capacity of teachers to connect theory to practice as they participate in a master's program.

While this research only considered the ARS as a framework for evaluation for action research plans, the complexity of each of the six levels allows for diversity of content that may align and be applicable to the ARS. The authors postulate that the ARS may be a useful evaluative tool in other such settings pertaining to the assessment of teacher readiness such as teacher preparation programs, professional development for practitioners in areas related to teaching CLD students, reflective practices regarding teacher perception, and the role of an educator as an advocate. Further research across various settings and participants is needed to better define the applicability and capability of the ARS to be an evaluative framework. However, this analysis provides evidence of how it may be effectively used when considering and evaluating participant text as an indicator of accommodation readiness. The authors call for those interested to utilize the ARS as an evaluative framework within their respective educational settings.

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