

Public school teachers' perceptions of students' diversity, cultural, and linguistic needs in the United States

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ABSTRACT

The need for culturally and linguistically sustaining teaching has become more apparent as school communities across the United States continually grow in cultural and linguistic diversity. This study investigated equity-based instruction for Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CLD) students by examining public school teachers' perceptions of preparation for diversity and inclusion of CLD students. A CLD research-based survey was designed and administered to 200 elementary and secondary school teachers in ten public schools in the United States. The study examined teachers' perceptions, attitudes, self-awareness, and preparation toward CLD students' cultural and linguistic needs. The analysis of the data uncovered evidence related to the themes of CLD instructional awareness and preparation in participants regarding their gender, race, age, ESL experience, highest degree, and years of teaching. The major findings of the study revealed the role of CLD-related training and awareness on the effectiveness of teacher preparation and their perceptions of the diversity of the students. The study concluded by providing implications for teachers, schools, educators, and policymakers on providing an equity-based educational environment for all students including the CLD ones.



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1. Introduction

Teachers' perceptions of teaching CLD students play a significant role in their curriculum and assessment design (Bryan & Atwater, 2002; Johnson & Atwater, 2014; Irvine, 2003). Unfortunately, many teachers are not aware of their misconceptions or negative attitudes toward the diversity of students. In many cases, teachers believe they have positive or neutral attitudes to the diversity of the students that are not reflected in their curriculum and assessment design (Mellom et al., 2018; Russell et al., 2014). Extensive discussions exist in the literature on diversity, multiculturalism, and globalization. Many countries have welcomed the demographic changes and their impact on education as widely reported in American schools (Batt, 2008; Bodur, 2012; Edwards, 2011; Flores & Smith, 2008). Numerous demographic changes are reflected in schools as they are also changing rapidly including the population of English language learners (ELLs) (Hodgkinson, 2002). Indeed, America's public schools are increasingly faced with the complex task of addressing the needs of CLD students (Samson & Collins, 2012), which makes the research in this area considerable.

1.1. Linguistically and Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy

Teachers' awareness of CLD students' cultural and linguistic needs is important as the number of students classified as English Language Learners (ELL) is still increasing in U.S. schools (Mellom et al., 2018). Linguistically and culturally sustaining pedagogy aims to maintain

linguistic and cultural diversity as a valuable part of the equity-based schooling system (Paris, 2012). Based on a linguistically and culturally sustaining pedagogy, the teachers should be well-prepared for the linguistic and cultural diversity of the students. In the face of current policies and practices that have the explicit goal of creating a monocultural and monolingual society, research and practice need equally explicit resistances that embrace cultural pluralism and cultural equality.

In 2002, Darling-Hammond surveyed 3000 new teachers and found out teachers generally considered their training for teaching ESL and CLD students inadequate (Darling-Hammond, 2002). The findings in another study by Walker and colleagues showed the possibility of increasing negative attitudes due to the increase in a diverse population, lack of cultural awareness, and professional expertise for mainstream teachers to teach culturally and linguistically diverse students (Walker et al., 2004). Later in 2010, Durgunoglu and Hughes declared in their study that teachers' preparation had a direct relationship with their attitude; teachers with a greater sense of awareness and preparation had more positive attitudes to having CLD students in classrooms and the ones with lower perceptions of their preparation held more negative beliefs. The teachers with more sense of preparedness for teaching ESL students made higher scores on a knowledge test about ESL pedagogy, and those who felt less prepared not only scored lower on the ESL knowledge test but also, during classroom observations, were neglecting their ESL students (Durgunoglu & Hughes, 2010).

In 2016, in a study by Taylor, Kumi-Yeboah, and Ringlaben, pre-service teachers agreed on the need for training and practices to be more prepared to teach diverse students. The situation did not seem to have changed much in later years either (Taylor, Yeboah, & Ringlaben, 2016), as in 2018, Mellom and colleagues reported that in many parts of the United States, "ESL and diverse students are enrolled in schools that do not have teachers experienced in serving the students" (Mellom et al., 2018). Similarly, in 2020, Wright et al. reported on the high population of teachers who were ill-equipped or unprepared to address the rising population of CLD students. They extended the notion that CLD students are struggling through English Language Arts classes without proper support in scaffolding or differentiated instruction because teachers' beliefs affect their classroom instruction, management, and culture (Kibler & Valdés, 2016; Wright et al., 2020).

The literature review reveals the fact that still after many years of discussions around diversity and the cultural and linguistic needs of diverse students, most teachers feel inadequately prepared to teach CLD students and lack the necessary awareness of their diverse needs. Many educators and teachers are not even aware of the differences and the jargon associated with teaching CLD and bilingual students, and research shows that teachers across U.S. public schools still have negative attitudes, perceptions, and theories about mainstream CLD students' ability to learn the content (Cummins, 1997; Gándara et al., 2005; Garcia, 2015; Carley Rizzuto, 2017).

1.2. Teachers' Perceptions and Awareness of Their Attitudes

Although schools are continually becoming culturally and linguistically diverse in the United States, the pre-service and in-service teachers still have different opinions and perceptions about the required awareness and training to teach CLD students. To build cultural, linguistic, and social diversity in their classrooms, teachers should recognize their own beliefs, perceptions, assumptions, and experiences about teaching and learning to promote healthy discourse and culturally sustaining teaching (Cochran-Smith, 1995; Kozleski & Proffitt, 2020; Lambeth & Smith, 2016; Sallı & Osam, 2017; Tonbuloglu et al., 2016). Teachers' awareness of multicultural education and diversity in school settings. Eurasian Journal of Educational Research, 64, 1-28). In a study conducted by Walker, Shafer, and Liams (2004) at the University of North Dakota, the relationship between teachers' attitudes about language minority students and student outcomes was investigated and revealed a crucial role of the attitudes in teachers' instructions and practices. The research reveals some negative attitudes toward the increase in the ESL population, the lack of professional expertise for mainstream teachers to teach ESLs, and teachers' accountability criteria (Shah & Coles, 2020; Scott, 2019; Mellom et al., 2018; Walker, Shafer, & Liams, 2004).

1.3. Teachers' Awareness of the Need for CLD-related Courses and Training

In 2004, Walker and her colleagues conducted research on the need for professional development in which 87% of the teachers stated that they had never received any ESL- related professional development and 20% of the participants directly objected to making modifications for CLD students in the classroom instruction. In another study by Reeves (2006), although 90.3% of teachers had not received training to work with ESL students, they were still not sure or disagreed to participate in professional development or any ESL- related courses.

According to Hansen-Thomas and his colleagues, only twenty of the U.S. states require some ESL-related training for teachers without even a clear definition for training (Hansen-Thomas et al., 2014). Most teachers do not feel that professional development will provide them with any educational reform and see it as the responsibility of ESL teachers to work with bilingual students (König et al., 2017; Reeves, 2006; Siwatu et al., 2016). The findings of a survey conducted by Batt (2008) revealed the mainstream teachers' awareness of their lack of training and knowledge to understand CLD needs in instruction and assessment. In another study conducted by Hansen-Thomas et al., (2014), only 3.4% of their participants were holding a degree or certificate in bilingual education, while 25% of the teachers indicated their lack of knowledge in literacy strategies for ESLs, and 28% of teachers introduced themselves not being competent to teach CLD students. In recent studies, in-service and prospective teachers found CLD practices significant for their teaching preparation and cultural awareness and professed a crucial need of training to increase teachers' awareness and preparation to work effectively in culturally and linguistically sustaining education context (Miller & Mikulec, 2014; Moore et al., 2021; Özüdoğru, 2018; Thomassen & Munthe, 2021; Yıldırım, 2019; Yuan, 2018; Zorba, 2020).

1.4. Teachers' Awareness of the CLD Students' Resource Needs

Although student diversity is increasing, the Eurocentric curriculum and pedagogy are still the dominant curriculum design in the education system. In Eurocentric curriculum and pedagogy, the students should accept the dominant ideologies, political patterns, economic norms, and social structures that may lead to the gradual loss of the values of their home country and identity. They learn and practice the values and norms of the target language in a community that seldom would consider providing any resources in their native language and culture. The backlash pedagogies do not accept or welcome diversity and differences as a resource for learning but regard them as a problem in the education system that should be eliminated or remediated (Gutierrez et al., 2002). Bilingual students need access to rich opportunities and resources to learn in meaningful ways and think critically to succeed academically (Foulger & Jimenez-Silva, 2007; Lachance et al., 2018). CLD Students should not lose their identity but gain knowledge from their cultural values to keep them as a part of their identity (Nieto, 1999). Teachers and policymakers should avoid the assumption that whatever works for one segment of student populations will necessarily support another (Coady et al., 2003)

1.5. Teachers' Awareness of the Importance of Home Language and Parental Involvement

Families can provide a rich resource of cultural and personal experiences to the educational system that should be noticed and valued (Protacio & Edwards, 2015). According to the United States Department of Education, districts and schools should value all CLD parents and families as partners in education and involve them effectively in the education of their children (USDE, 2014).

Unfortunately, in many educational programs, the importance of parental involvement in CLD's academic, cultural, and social success is neglected. In 2020, Herrera and her colleagues presented a recent review of over 100 mission statements of school districts across multiple states, where "only nearly 20% of the statements were found to incorporate the word *family*" (Herrera & Porter, 2020). One of the important elements is the lack of communication and partnership between teachers and parents and the teachers' lack of awareness of the ways they can support newcomers to the U.S. community (Good et al., 2010). Turner (2007) reported two specific blind spots that may limit teacher effectiveness with CLD students: classroom management assumptions and beliefs about CLD parental involvement. Results of their study indicated that emergent teachers believed that classroom management difficulties would be eradicated if

culturally responsive pedagogical practices were in place, and 85% of respondents perceived CLD parents to be “unsupportive and lacking strong educational values” (p. 82).

Teachers’ awareness of the importance of the native language and parental involvement will provide a safer community for the students. Teachers’ transition of information to school staff about their students will assist schools to demonstrate a safe and caring culture to all members of this educational community (Good et al., 2010; Zimmerman-Orozco, 2011). Teachers usually make pre-judgment or have misconceptions about CLD parents and recognize them as non-proficient in English, uneducated, or unknowledgeable about education. When teachers misinterpret the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse students and see them as incapable of learning or think students’ parents do not care about their children, teacher education will encounter holes that will take years to fill (Milner, 2011). Research shows that improving connections between students’ homes and schools can create a positive learning community that certainly impacts learning outcomes in the school environment (Nieto, 1999). CLD families immigrate to the U.S. to provide better opportunities for their children, and this is a sign of parents’ awareness as mentioned in Zimmerman-Orozco’s (2011) research about Hispanic families.

2. Method

The study aimed to explore teachers’ perceptions of their preparation to teach culturally and linguistically diverse students by analyzing the research questions focusing on the relationship between teachers’ demographics and their perceptions of ESL students’ diverse, cultural, and linguistic needs. Research centered on examining public school teachers at both elementary and secondary levels to investigate teachers’ perceptions, beliefs, and attitudes toward the inclusion of CLDs in the mainstream classroom through a quantitative study. The research focused on mainstream teachers because most of the former studies focused on ESL teachers, ESL students, or ESL programs (Guerrero, 2004; Umansky and Reardon, 2014). In a few studies, the lack of ELL resources and school-supported programs were examined, though they described the impact of teacher beliefs and perceptions about the inclusion of ELLs in the mainstream classroom, not CLD students (Leavitt & Ahn, 2013; Mohr & Mohr, 2007). The field of study needs more research to explore the perceptions and attitudes of the teachers toward the inclusion of CLDs in the mainstream classroom (Reeves, 2006), so the study focused on mainstream teachers and their perceptions of the inclusion of these invisible groups in schools.

2.1. Context and Participants

The study examined public school teachers’ perceptions of the inclusion of CLDs in the mainstream classroom through a quantitative study. The data collected by the surveys examined teachers’ perceptions of the diverse, cultural, and linguistic needs of CLD students. A consent form was prepared and approved by Institutional Review Board (IRB) and the school district stating that participation was voluntary, and teachers could decide not to participate or leave the study at any time. The IRB and the school district approvals were emailed to each school principal with the invitation letter including a link to the survey. Each participant received an email from the school principal with the link to the survey and consent information at the beginning of the survey. The quantitative approach of the study lead to collecting, analyzing, interpreting, and recording the outcomes of the data (Creswell, 2003). The study applied descriptive statistics to analyze public school teachers’ perceptions of the diversity of the students and their cultural and linguistic needs.

Participants in this study were 200 public school teachers of all content areas in elementary and secondary schools in the United States. As a top-rated public school district, it included 8,738 students in grades K-12 with a student-teacher ratio of 18 to 1. The school district was ranked within the top 10% of all 138 school districts in the state based on the recent data for the 2019-2020 school year (USDE, 2020). The study targeted 499 participants in 13 schools with a total number of 8,738 students. All content area teachers were invited to participate in this study with the assumption of having CLD students randomly in their classes during their years of teaching. The school district teachers were 69% White, 17% Black or African American, 9% Hispanic or Latino, and 4% Asian. There were 42

languages spoken by the students. The most common languages were Hispanic or Latino (50%), Asian or Native Hawaiian (21%), and a diverse population of other languages (7%). More than 27% of the district's students qualified for free or reduced lunch (NCES, 2020).

2.2. Data Collection Instrument

The survey of the study investigated teachers' perceptions of CLD students' cultural and linguistic needs. The survey consisted of five dimensions with 20 Likert-style questions, six demographic questions, and a section for comments. The survey dimensions were: (a) Diversity [4 questions], (b) Cultural Needs [4 questions], (c) Linguistic Needs [6 questions], (d) Teachers' Awareness [2 questions], and (e) Teachers' Preparation [4 questions]. The survey was conducted using Qualtrics software and the teachers could have access via the anonymous link, or QR Code from any device. The survey questions exploring teachers' perceptions of diversity (questions 7, 8, 15, 23) were inspired by Gay (2002), Pereira and Oliveira (2015), and Gollnick and Chinn (2017) and their theoretical framework. The survey questions investigating teachers' perceptions of students' cultural needs (10, 14, 17, 26) were inspired by Curtin (2005), Turner (2007), Flores and Smith (2008), Reyhner and Cockrum (2016), and their theories on cultural values. The survey questions exploring teachers' awareness of the linguistic needs of CLD students (11, 12, 13, 16, 24, 25) had evolved from Garcia and Cuellar (2006), Lucas and Villegas (2008), and O'Neal et al. (2008). The questions surveying teachers' awareness of CLD students' diverse needs (21, 22) were inspired by Darling-Hammond et al., (2002), Lambson (2010), and Wilder (2019). The survey questions studying teachers' preparation to teach CLD students (9, 18, 19, 20) were inspired by Boyd et al. (2009), Dunst et al. (2013), and Sleeter et al. (2011). The instrument was constructed on a Likert scale with 20 statements and five possible answers (Strongly Agree, Agree, Undecided, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree). The survey was validated by a pilot study on a group of prospective teachers to ensure construct and content validity. All questions were analyzed carefully to align with the five dimensions of the study, and the researcher checked the clarity of the questions by peer debriefing.

Table 1. Dimensions of Survey Questions

| Dimension | Questions | Research |
|----------------------------|------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Diversity | 7, 8, 15, 23 | Gay (2002), Pereira & Oliveira (2015), Gollnick & Chinn (2017). |
| Cultural needs | 10, 14, 17, 26 | Curtin (2005), Turner (2007), Flores & Smith (2008), Reyhner & Cockrum (2016). |
| Linguistic needs | 11, 12, 13, 16, 24, 25 | Garcia & Cuellar (2006), Lucas & Villegas (2008), O'Neal et al. (2008). |
| Awareness of diverse needs | 21, 22 | Darling-Hammond et al., (2002), Lambson (2010), Wilder (2019). |
| Teachers' CLD preparation | 9, 18, 19, 20 | Boyd et al. (2009), Dunst et al. (2013), Sleeter et al. (2011). |

2.3. Data Analysis

Research questions were analyzed using Mann-Whitney U and Kruskal-Wallis H for each domain of gender, race, ESL experience, age, highest degree, and teaching experience. The data were analyzed in descriptive statistical methods with an Alpha level of .05. Descriptive statistics were applied to better examine the basic features of the data in the study with the participants (Fraenkel, Wallen, and Hyun, 1993; Peatman, 1947). The frequency of distributions, awareness, and preparation was also analyzed in descriptive statistics reflecting the target domains of the study.

3. Findings

As presented in Tables 2, 3, and 4, the mean rank scores showed that female teachers had slightly more positive attitudes than male teachers ($MR = 107.19$ versus $MR = 84.51$) indicating the relationship between the teachers' demographics and their perceptions of the diversity of the students. To analyze the relationship between teachers' age and their perceptions of the diversity of the students, the researcher divided them into three groups (Group 1: 22-34, Group 2: 35-47, and Group 3: above 47); There was no statistically significant difference of the teachers' perceptions towards diversity of the students regarding the teachers' age ($MR = 0.672$; $p > 0.05$), race ($MR = 1473$; $p = 0.267$; $p > 0.05$), and highest degree ($MR = 0.516$; $p > 0.05$).

To analyze the relationship between the years of teaching and teachers' perceptions of the diversity of the students, the researcher divided them into three groups based on the years of teaching (Group 1 < 10, Group 2: 10 – 20, Group 3 > 20). There was no significant difference between the years of teaching and teachers' perceptions of the diversity of the students ($MR = 0.323$; $p > 0.05$).

To analyze the relationship between the teachers' ESL background and their perceptions of the diversity of the students, the participants were divided into two groups: the teachers with ESL background and the teachers without ESL background. The ESL background was defined as their past experiences with any ESL workshops, ESL certificates, ESL conferences, or any ESL- related programs. The mean rank scores indicated that the teachers with ESL backgrounds had slightly more positive perceptions of the diversity of the students than the other group ($MR = 106.22$ versus $MR = 82.99$).

The data analysis of the relationship between teachers' demographics and their perceptions of the diversity of the students presented that the female teachers and the teachers with some ESL background had a more positive perception of student diversity. The findings on the relationship between teachers' demographics and their perceptions of the diversity of the students confirmed the previous research on the critical role of ESL training and professional development (Batt, 2008; Flores, 1996; Wright et al., 2020), and revealed that more teachers participate or are interested in CLD-related activities than the past (69 %).

Table 2. Teachers' Demographics and Their Perceptions of Students' Diversity

| Variable | | N | MR | Test Statistic (MW) | Sig |
|--------------------------|-------------------|-----|--------|---------------------|--------|
| Gender | Male | 59 | 84.51 | 5103 | 0.01* |
| | Female | 141 | 107.19 | | |
| Race | White | 180 | 98.48 | 1473 | 0.267 |
| | African | 20 | 84.18 | | |
| | American | | | | |
| ESL Experience | ESL background | 151 | 106.22 | 4562 | 0.012* |
| | No ESL Background | 49 | 82.89 | | |
| Age | 22-34 | 68 | 102.03 | 0.795 | 0.672 |
| | 35-47 | 79 | 103.13 | | |
| | Above 47 | 53 | 94.61 | | |
| Highest Degree | Bachelor | 53 | 98.15 | 1.324 | 0.516 |
| | Master | 137 | 102.79 | | |
| | Ph.D. | 10 | 82.55 | | |
| Years of Teaching | < 10 yrs. | 76 | 92.89 | 2.260 | 0.323 |
| | 10-20 yrs. | 69 | 104.22 | | |
| | > 20 yrs. | 55 | 106.34 | | |

Note: N = 200

* $p < .05$

As presented in Table 2, female teachers and teachers with ESL background had slightly more positive attitudes towards the diversity of the students than the other groups (107.19 versus 84.51), (106.22 versus 82.89); however, there was no statistically significant difference of the teachers' perceptions towards diversity of the students regarding the teachers' race, age, the highest degree, and years of teaching.

Table 3. Teachers' Demographics and Their Perceptions of Students' Cultural Needs

| Variable | | N | MR | Test Statistic (MW) | Sig |
|--------------------------|-------------------|-----|--------|---------------------|------|
| <i>Gender</i> | Male | 59 | 95.82 | 4435 | .454 |
| | Female | 141 | 102.46 | | |
| <i>Race</i> | White | 180 | 98.70 | 1436 | .209 |
| | African-American | 20 | 82.32 | | |
| <i>ESL Experience</i> | ESL background | 151 | 103.09 | 4091 | .260 |
| | No ESL background | 49 | 92.51 | | |
| <i>Age</i> | 22-34 | 68 | 102.03 | 3.426 | .180 |
| | 35-47 | 79 | 107 | | |
| | Above 47 | 53 | 88.05 | | |
| <i>Highest Degree</i> | Bachelor | 53 | 91.71 | 2.337 | .311 |
| | Master | 137 | 104.79 | | |
| | Ph.D. | 10 | 91 | | |
| <i>Years of Teaching</i> | < 10 yrs. | 76 | 99.92 | .814 | .666 |
| | 10-20 yrs. | 69 | 96.75 | | |
| | > 20 yrs. | 55 | 106 | | |

Note: N = 200

* p < .05

As presented in Table 3, there was no statistically significant difference in the teachers' perceptions towards the cultural needs of the students regarding the teachers' gender, race, ESL background, age, highest degree, and years of teaching.

Table 4. Teachers' Demographics and Their Perceptions of Students' Linguistic Needs

| Variable | | N | MR | Test Statistic (MW) | Sig |
|--------------------------|-------------------|-----|--------|---------------------|--------|
| <i>Gender</i> | Male | 59 | 84.94 | 5077 | .014 * |
| | Female | 141 | 107.1 | | |
| <i>Race</i> | White | 180 | 99.76 | 1462 | .042* |
| | African-American | 20 | 73.10 | | |
| <i>ESL Experience</i> | ESL background | 151 | 106.74 | 4641 | .007* |
| | No ESL background | 49 | 81.29 | | |
| <i>Age</i> | 22-34 | 68 | 100.54 | 6.482 | .039* |
| | 35-47 | 79 | 110.94 | | |
| | Above 47 | 53 | 84.89 | | |
| <i>Highest Degree</i> | Bachelor | 53 | 89.38 | 2.337 | .240 |
| | Master | 137 | 104.93 | | |
| | Ph.D. | 10 | 101.85 | | |
| <i>Years of Teaching</i> | < 10 yrs. | 76 | 100.38 | .006 | .997 |
| | 10-20 yrs. | 69 | 100.92 | | |
| | > 20 yrs. | 55 | 100.15 | | |

Note: N = 200

* p < .05

As presented in Table 4, female teachers, teachers of White ethnicity, the teachers with ESL background, and teachers of the second age group (Group 2: 35-47) had slightly more positive attitudes toward the linguistic needs of the students than the other groups; however, there was no statistically significant difference of the teachers' perceptions towards linguistic needs of the students regarding the teachers' highest degree, and years of teaching.

Table 5. Teacher Awareness of Cultural, Linguistic, and Diverse Needs of Students

| | N | Minimum | Maximum | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|------------------------------|------------------|---------|---------|----------------|-------------------------|
| <i>Awareness Mean</i> | 200 | 1 | 5 | 4.13 | .777 |
| <i>Awareness Frequencies</i> | <i>Responses</i> | | | <i>Percent</i> | <i>Percent of Cases</i> |
| | <i>n</i> | | | | |
| | 1 | 5 | | 1.3 | 2.5 |
| | 2 | 21 | | 5.3 | 10.5 |
| | 3 | 30 | | 7.5 | 15.0 |
| | 4 | 204 | | 51.0 | 102.0 |
| | 5 | 140 | | 35.0 | 70.0 |
| <i>Total</i> | | 400 | | 100 | 200.0 |

As presented in Table 5 through a descriptive analysis, 70 % of the teachers (n = 140) demonstrated awareness of the cultural, linguistic, and diverse needs of CLD students. By answering survey questions of teacher awareness (questions 21 & 22), they declared they are aware of the CLD students' needs and they ask assistance from ESL teachers and experienced colleagues regarding the diverse needs of the CLD students.

Table 6. Teacher Preparation for Cultural, Linguistic, and Diverse Needs of Students

| | N | Minimum | Maximum | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|--------------------------------|------------------|---------|---------|----------------|-------------------------|
| <i>Preparation Mean</i> | 200 | 2.00 | 10.00 | 7.625 | 1.47658 |
| <i>Preparation Frequencies</i> | <i>Responses</i> | | | <i>Percent</i> | <i>Percent of Cases</i> |
| | <i>n</i> | | | | |
| | 1 | 15 | | 1.9 | 7.5 |
| | 2 | 77 | | 9.6 | 38.5 |
| | 3 | 143 | | 17.9 | 71.5 |
| | 4 | 373 | | 46.6 | 186.5 |
| | 5 | 192 | | 24.0 | 96.0 |
| <i>Total</i> | | 800 | | 100 | 400.0 |

As presented in Table 6 through a descriptive analysis, more than 90 % of the teachers (n = 192) demonstrated awareness of the preparation for cultural, linguistic, and diverse needs of CLD students. By answering survey questions of teacher preparation (questions 9, 18, 19, and 20), they declared they are aware of the need for preparation, and they showed interest in participating in ESL training and practices regarding the diverse needs of the CLD students.

4. Discussion

Teachers' perceptions and attitudes to teach CLD students play a significant role in their curriculum and assessment design. In a culturally and linguistically sustaining education system, teachers' attitudes, awareness, and perceptions of the student's cultural and linguistic needs are essential (Gay, 2002). By the survey questions of the study, teachers could revisit their perceptions of the diversity of the students and include CLD students in their curriculum design and instructions.

While the literature review of the study echoed some negative attitudes and perceptions of inclusion and diversity (Cummins, 1997; Gándara et al., 2005; Garcia & Weiss, 2015; Carley Rizzuto, 2017), the current study designated a growing interest in teachers' stance for pre-service and in-service preparations for CLD students. As summarized in tables 5 and 6 regarding teachers' awareness and preparation for the diverse needs of CLD students, the current study highlighted the role of ESL programs and professional developments in teacher education as was established by the previous researchers (Wright et al., 2020). The current study endorsed the former research on the role of teachers in validating cultural values and providing resources for their diverse groups in keeping their backgrounds, culture, and identities alive (Gay, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 2009). The current findings also ratified the previous studies on the role of teachers' awareness of parents' linguistic needs and parental involvement in assisting teachers and students (Cooley, 2014; Garcia & Cuellar, 2006; Lucas & Villegas, 2008; O'Neal et al., 2008).

The findings did not demonstrate age as a key element in teachers' perceptions of the diversity of the students which was heightened in previous research as well (Sharma et al., 2007). The results indicated that teachers with ESL backgrounds were more inclined to be positive towards inclusion than participants without any ESL backgrounds. The positive perceptions of the teachers with ESL background in the findings and teachers' awareness and willingness for ESL preparation confirmed the need for effective professional development as was expressed by many researchers in the review of the literature (Flores, 1996; Mellom et al., 2018; Paine et al., 2016; Reeves, 2006; Walker et al., 2004; Wright et al., 2020)

5. Conclusion

Every year educators meet and teach students with diverse backgrounds and cultures. The increasing change in demographics demands a system in which all teachers are prepared to teach culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) students. Teachers should be aware of the cultural and linguistic needs of their diverse students. With the increase of CLD students in public schools, teachers must be prepared to provide multiple learning modes and quality instruction to support academic success for all students including diverse groups. Teachers' awareness of their sociolinguistic consciousness, acceptance, and appreciation for linguistic and cultural diversity is critical (Pereira & Oliveira, 2015). Teachers are the primary advocates for CLD students through culturally and linguistically sustaining teaching.

The results of the study indicated that the participants demonstrated some awareness of the cultural and linguistic needs of the diverse students by declaring their respect and interest in the diversity of the students through survey questions. The participants stated they enjoy teaching CLD students, prepare to understand diverse cultures, value parental involvement, and try to communicate with CLD students' parents in a variety of strategies. They also showed interest in taking more actions toward the preparation of the cultural and linguistic needs of their diverse students through dynamic ESL professional developments and productive workshops. The teachers stated they value cultural and linguistic differences and apply different strategies for teaching diverse students as well as asking ESL teachers' assistance but also needed more opportunities to be well-prepared for a culturally and linguistically sustaining pedagogy. The effect of ESL training on the positive perceptions of diversity reveals the advantage of ESL courses, programs, and workshops. As the world is changing into a virtual system and technology integration is being intertwined into education, future research can focus on more virtual modes of training for prospective and in-service teachers. More CLD courses can be included in teaching programs to increase the level of global competence of the teacher candidates. Mainstream teachers and ESL instructors can cooperate on various platforms to create a more efficient curriculum and assessment for the education systems.

The number of CLD students in public schools will continue to increase throughout the United States. Policymakers, professional development designers, and teacher educators can integrate innovation and technology to ensure that prospective teachers are provided with culturally and linguistically sustaining instruction for all content areas. Lack of effective training and the mismatch between professional development and need assessment will bring more challenges to teacher education, CLD students, public schools, and the entire society. There should be an increase in collaboration and partnerships between policymakers, teacher educators, university administrators, mainstream teachers, ESL teachers, and parents.

The course protocols provided for teacher candidates can be revisited for reflecting the CLD needs of the students. Prospective teachers should find opportunities to practice CLD instructional methods and access CLD resources. Teacher trainers and professional development designers should evaluate the need assessment in each step based on the scope of training and create multiple modes for different needs. Policymakers, teacher educators, professional development trainers, mainstream teachers, and ESL instructors should work as a team to preserve time and energy to create the most productive programs.

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Declarations

- Author contribution** : Sedighe Zamani Roodsari was responsible for the entire research project. She led the writing of the manuscript, data collection, data analysis, and the final revision.
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