

Leading with Cultural Responsive: A Systematic Review of the Literature

Tara Indar¹  Marie Byrd² 

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Abstract

Purpose: The lack of meaningful cultural connections between students, teachers, and educational leaders is a significant factor contributing to the academic underperformance of Black/African American and Hispanic student populations. This disconnect exacerbates the academic achievement gap, hindering students' progress and future prospects. A systematic review of the literature will be provided centering on the role of culturally responsive leadership in research-based best practices of effective educational leadership.

Methods: This study presents systematic literature using the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA). A rigorous search was conducted of the following key concepts: effective educational leadership, effective school leadership practices, leadership for diverse student populations, and culturally responsive leadership. The results were utilized to create a summary of current terminology used to describe the research-based leadership practices. The methodology for a systematic literature review is rigorous and transparent, and it is similar to the standards used in primary research.

Findings: The results indicate that culturally responsive leadership is limited in its contribution to effective educational leadership and effective school leadership practices, as it was mentioned only once each. In contrast, when examining effective leadership for diverse student populations, the concept emerged more frequently, appearing four times.

Implications for Research and Practice: Our findings suggest that culturally responsive leadership should be included in educational research as a foundational skill set for effective school leadership. Its significance extends beyond addressing diversity; it underscores a comprehensive approach to fostering inclusivity and enhancing educational outcomes for all student populations.

Keywords

culturally responsive leadership; ethnic/racial; Black/African American; Hispanic; minority student populations; inclusive leadership, cultural responsiveness, intrapersonal leadership, interpersonal leadership

¹ **Corresponding Author:** University of South Florida, USA, taraindar@usf.edu

² University of South Florida, USA, marieb@usf.edu

Introduction

For educational leaders in K – 12 settings, the dramatic change in the racial/ethnic and cultural demographics of many school communities across the United States (U.S.) requires a shift in the lens through which effective leadership is viewed. Researchers have previously identified the absence of culturally responsive school leadership practices as a contributing factor to the persistent gap in academic attainment outcomes among Black/African American and Hispanic students and their White/non-Hispanic counterparts (NCES, 2022; Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Ladson-Billings 1995). This analysis systematically reviews the research to explore the inclusion of culturally responsive leadership (CRL) in published research-based manuscripts that address effective educational leadership, school leadership practices, and leadership for diverse student populations. This investigation is critical given the persistent disparities in high school graduation rates among varied racial groups in the U.S. (NCES, 2024). Currently, the national high school graduation rate for Black/African American students is 81%, while for Hispanic students, it stands at 83% (NCES, 2024). However, White/non-Hispanic students maintain a national high school graduation rate of 90% (NCES, 2024). The data of the public schools in the country specifies disparities in dropout rates categorized by race: Asian (1.8%), White (4.1%), two or more races (5.1%), Black (5.6%), Hispanic (7.7%), Pacific Islander (8.0%), and Native American (9.6%) (U.S.DOE, 2021). These disparities arise from various factors, including one of the most significant being the lack of cultural connections between students and their educational leaders and teachers (Gay, 2010). A significant number of educational leaders, 77.1%, identify as White/non-Hispanic (NCES, 2022), mirroring the demographic trend among teachers, with 80% identifying as White/non-Hispanic (NCES, 2023). The incongruity becomes apparent when the teacher and leader demographics are juxtaposed with the student body, where ethnic and racial minorities constitute the majority of 55% (NCES, 2022). Khalifa and colleagues (2016) indicate that as the population demographics of the school community shift, school leadership practices must also shift to align with the unique needs of the student populations served. However, a striking dissonance emerges in the racial and ethnic makeup and leadership practices of public school leaders across the U.S. A manner in which to address the disparities is to elevate the development of culturally responsive leaders who have the capacity to cultivate an inclusive school culture, thereby addressing the disparities faced by students of diverse racial/ethnic identities. This qualitative analysis will examine the level of inclusion of cultural responsiveness among published research centering on effective school/educational leadership.

Background

The acknowledgment and value of cultural diversity are pivotal in shaping students' success within the education system, as research indicates that students thrive academically when their cultural identity is integrated into their learning experiences (Ladson-Billings, 1994). However, the prevailing educational norms predominantly cater to the cultural experiences of White, middle-class students (Jack & Black, 2022). The lack of alignment between the school culture and the diverse backgrounds of its students leads to misunderstandings and misinterpretations in their interactions (Ware, 2006). This disconnect often hampers effective communication between teachers and students. Student learning may be enhanced within a nurturing and inclusive environment (Watson, 2001). As the racial/ethnic diversity of the student population continues to increase, school leaders' pivotal responsibility may be viewed as cultivating and

maintaining a positive school climate while ensuring an atmosphere conducive to effective learning through CRL and teaching practices.

Terms such as cultural responsiveness, cultural relevance, and cultural competence have centered the focus of effective school leadership on research-based best practices for the diverse school community population served. Barakat et al. (2019) define a culturally competent leader as one who possesses cultural knowledge, beliefs, motivation, and skills. According to Brooks and Brooks (2019), culturally relevant leadership fosters positive student engagement by emphasizing high expectations and developing organizational policies and structures that empower both students and families, particularly those from diverse backgrounds. Similarly, Khalifa et al. (2016) describe CRL as shaping the school environment and addressing the cultural needs of students, parents, and teachers. These leaders support and develop school staff and cultivate a welcoming, inclusive, and accepting atmosphere for minoritized students. The literature review will explore the four dimensions of CRL: critical self-reflection, community advocacy and engagement, school culture and climate, and instructional and transformational leadership (Campos-Moreira et al., 2020; Khalifa, 2013, 2016; Marshall & Khalifa, 2018).

Literature Review

Culturally Responsive Leadership

Culturally responsive methodologies encompass a resilience-oriented perspective, emphasizing leveraging ecocultural assets to mitigate risks and foster positive outcomes (Perez-Brena et al., 2018). The "responsiveness" in cultural responsiveness encapsulates a comprehensive aspect of the term, signifying the capacity of school leaders to foster educational environments and curricula that effectively address the multifaceted educational, social, political, and cultural needs of students while remaining contextually relevant (Khalifa et al., 2016). This comprehensive analysis will provide insight into the research highlighting culturally responsive school leadership while emphasizing four identified dimensions: critical self-reflection, community advocacy and engagement, school culture and climate, and instructional and transformational leadership (Marshall & Khalifa, 2018; Villegas & Lucas, 2002; Sleeter, 2012).

Effective CRL includes critical self-reflection, which allows leaders to identify and comprehend their personal biases and assumptions rooted in their cultural backgrounds (Young & Laible, 2000). This introspection equips them to effectively recognize and address social justice issues within their roles as educational leaders (Furman, 2012), thereby fostering a heightened sense of critical consciousness that, in turn, nurtures equitable educational practices and policies (Brown, 2005). As previously indicated, practices are critical in the education of minoritized student populations, who represent the majority of current public school students in the United States.

The capacity of educational leaders to discern, comprehend, and champion community-based concerns has been extensively discussed in the literature (Khalifa, 2012; Walker, 2009). Historically, Black/African American segregated schools and their symbiotic relationship with communities provided a comprehensive background to this interaction (Epstein & Sanders, 2006). Previously, the interplay between families/communities and schools facilitated mutual benefits for both entities, wherein the school harnessed the community's support and expertise. In contrast, the community relied on the school's academic direction and guidance (Siddle-

Walker, 1993). This symbiosis aligns with Epstein's theory of overlapping spheres, which posits that student learning and success are maximized when home, school, and community collaborate to support holistic development (Epstein & Sanders, 2006). By cultivating these partnerships, educational leaders can create a more inclusive and supportive educational environment that recognizes and utilizes community strengths, ultimately enhancing all students' educational experience and achievement.

Moreover, Ladson-Billings (2002) asserts that CRL is pivotal in facilitating teachers' and students' intellectual, social, and emotional growth, creating a positive school culture and climate. This is achieved through the adept use of cultural references to transmit knowledge, skills, and attitudes (Ladson-Billings, 2002). Influential educational leaders in diverse communities also create organizational structures that foster positive teacher-student relationships, promote students' socioemotional growth, and nurture a conducive school culture (Bower et al., 2015; Jennings & Greenberg, 2009; Leyden & Shale, 2012). Roeser and colleagues (2000) highlight the indispensable role of school leaders in nurturing enduring relationships that facilitate genuine interactions and meaningful bonds between teachers and students. Such interactions are vital in establishing a nurturing and supportive educational environment where all students thrive. Ultimately, the success of CRL lies in its ability to bridge cultural gaps and promote an inclusive and equitable educational experience, empowering students to achieve their full potential.

Transformational and instructional leadership represents integral components of CRL (Khalifa et al., 2016). Transformational school leadership embodies influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. This form of leadership facilitates the development of a shared vision, motivating constituents to work collectively toward the school's objectives (Anderson, 2017). Li (2020) affirms the influential impact of transformational leadership on student outcomes. Instructional leadership, conversely, centers around optimizing teaching and learning processes, encompassing students, teachers, and the curriculum (Kazak & Polat, 2018). The alignment of transformational and shared instructional leadership has significantly influenced school performance, as evidenced by pedagogical quality and student achievement (Marks & Printy, 2003). Together, these leadership approaches create an empowering environment that supports student success, underscores the importance of a collaborative educational culture, and aligns with the principles of CRL.

Gaps in Culturally Responsive Leadership Research

Although CRL is widely acknowledged in research, it is often not prominently featured in the literature unless one actively seeks it out. Khalifa et al. (2016) provided a synthesis of the existing literature on CRL, offering a framework aimed at making the entire school environment more responsive to the educational needs of minoritized students. This analysis aims to conduct a systematic literature review on CRL and critically analyze whether CRL is recognized as an effective approach to educational leadership, a best practice in school leadership, or a suitable model for leading diverse student populations. A systematic literature review on CRL and this analysis has yet to be addressed.

Additionally, there is a significant gap in professional development related to culturally responsive practices. Many educators and school leaders receive minimal to no training in CRL, which hampers their ability to effectively address the needs of diverse student populations

(Scherer, 2016). Research indicates that ongoing professional development focused on cultural competency is crucial for leaders to successfully implement CRL practices (Cochran-Smith et al., 2016).

Purpose and Research Questions

This systematic review examines the descriptors provided in published research-based manuscripts that center on effective educational leadership as a practice and a guiding framework for school leadership tailored to diverse student populations. This systematic literature review addresses the underrepresentation of diverse educational leaders and teachers through a critical examination of how research defines effective leadership for today's diverse public school populations. CRL is presented as a potential pathway to bridge the gap that students of color often experience within public schools. This review seeks to explore whether CRL is considered an effective leadership practice in peer-reviewed manuscripts. In addition, this systematic analysis delves deeply into the educational leadership research landscape, exploring effective practices of leading schools with majority racially/ethnically or culturally diverse student populations. This analysis categorizes the inquiry into four key domains:

- effective educational leadership,
- effective school leadership practices,
- effective leadership for diverse student populations, and
- culturally responsive leadership practices

These domains serve as guiding pillars, directing our examination of scholarly discourse to ascertain the integration of diversity and culture within educational leadership studies. Each domain undergoes independent scrutiny, beginning with the broader concept of effective school leadership and progressively focusing on specific facets, culminating in the nuanced exploration of CRL. This systematic literature review will assess whether CRL is recognized as an effective approach to educational leadership, a best practice in school leadership, or an appropriate leadership model for diverse student populations in educational leadership research.

Research Question

How is CRL perceived in the educational leadership research according to the following:

- its effectiveness as a leadership approach,
- its integration as best practice within educational leadership research
- its inclusion in research-based discussions of effective school leadership in diverse contexts?

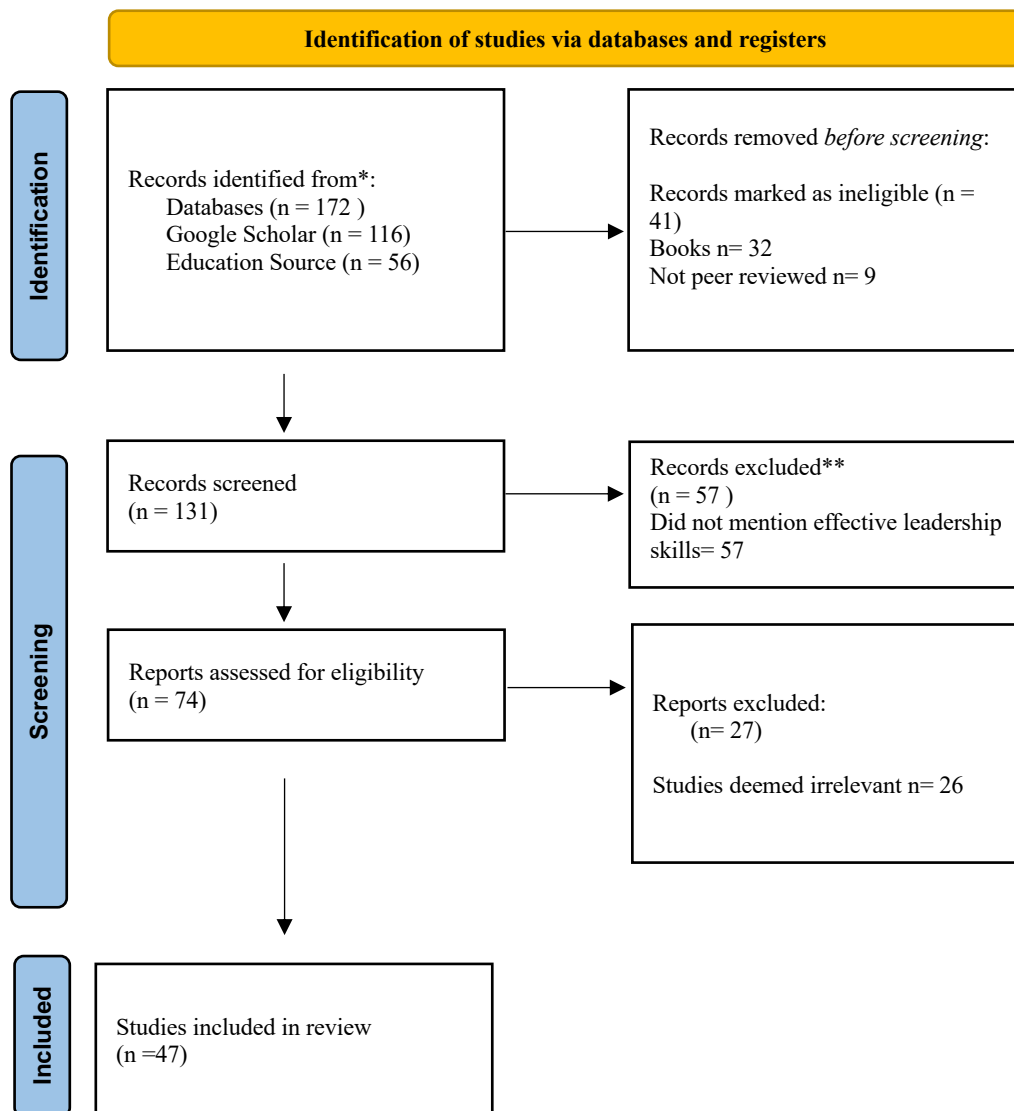
Methodology

The present research adhered to the 2020 recommendations of the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA), as outlined by Page et al. (2021). The PRISMA method was selected for its ability to enhance the rigor and reproducibility of our research process. It facilitated a comprehensive search, enabling the ability to examine peer-

reviewed research manuscripts to determine the level of inclusion of CRL in discussions centering on effective leadership practices. A comprehensive rationale for any noteworthy restrictions to study eligibility is provided. Following the initial identification of studies and exclusion of book entries, our methodology encompassed a meticulous multistep approach. This includes an initial screening phase to assess relevance and alignment with our predefined guidelines. For clarity, Figure 1 illustrates a visual representation of the studies identified, employing a PRISMA-compliant flow diagram.

Figure 1

PRISMA diagram



Data Collection

Searches were conducted using Google Scholar and Education Source databases. The search terms were:

- effective educational leadership,
- effective school leadership practices,
- effective leadership for diverse student populations, and
- culturally responsive leadership

The publication year criteria were established as 2004 to 2024, ensuring a comprehensive overview of CRL published research. The database search for records was completed up to April 2024, thus including the most recent available studies. Furthermore, we exclusively included studies that underwent a rigorous peer-review process. Exclusions comprised other types of reports such as unpublished manuscripts, online reports, doctoral dissertations, conference abstracts, and other forms of grey literature. Additionally, to maintain coherence within the diverse landscape of educational settings, only studies focusing on CRL within K–12 settings were incorporated into the review.

Article Screening

Full-text research articles meeting the following criteria were included in the review: a) peer-reviewed, b) published in English, and c) addressed effective educational leadership strategies. Research articles were excluded if they fell into any of the following categories: a) to increase the rigor of the manuscript, peer-reviewed (such as dissertations or theses), b) inaccessible via Google Scholar, subsequent internet searches, or the authors' university library systems; c) published in languages other than English; or d) to increase the rigor of the manuscript, peer-reviewed manuscripts that were outside the scope of the research questions. Research articles were deemed outside the scope of the research question if they did not address strategies to enhance effective educational leadership. The screening process initially began with 172 articles and involved three stages. In the first stage, 32 books and eight non-peer-reviewed articles were excluded. The second stage eliminated research articles that did not cover effective leadership practices. In the third stage, 27 articles deemed irrelevant to the research question were excluded.

Data Analysis

The selected research articles underwent Nvivo analysis following the screening process to identify recurring themes regarding effective educational leadership. These themes, drawn from the conclusions and recommendations sections of the articles, were subsequently organized within each respective table. In the ensuing discussion, we explore the extent to which CRL is included in published manuscripts as an effective leadership practice.

Results

Table 1

Effective Educational Leadership

Citation	Population	Purpose	Methodology	Conclusions/ Recommendations
Santamarfa, et al. (2015)	K-12	The findings from an assessment of the personal and professional development of leaders involved in the Maori Success Initiative	Qualitative	Employ CRL
Blaik et al. (2022)	K-12	The methods and resources transformational leaders use when confronted with challenges related to emotional intelligence	Qualitative	Employ transformational leadership Develop professionally across various emotional and social intelligence domains Facilitate school transformation
Özdemir (2020)	K-12	The key competencies and sub-competencies educational administrators should hold	Qualitative	Oversee educational programs and environments Establish effective communication and work environment
Crippen (2004)	K-12	The concept of servant leadership to Manitoba's educational community	Review of literature	Employ servant leadership
Leahy & Shore (2019)	K-12	The journey of two highly successful, long-serving charter school leaders that transformed underprivileged, struggling schools with at-risk student populations, making a resounding impact on their institutions and significantly boosting student achievement within their communities	Qualitative	Establish and nurture a school to success could be likened more to a visionary undertaking than conventional school leadership
Intxausti, et al. (2016)	K-12	The optimal practices observed in highly effective schools within the Autonomous Region of the Basque Country (Spain)	Qualitative	Employ positive leadership Create a unified and well-defined mission embraced by all staff Develop a favorable attitude toward training and continuous learning Cultivate dedication and enthusiasm among the teaching staff for a collective school vision Support teaching and learning procedures Promote a peaceful and harmonious coexistence and a well-coordinated organization Foster collaboration and trust
Fisher (2021)	K-12	The leaders' behaviors should be aligned with the cultures present among staff	Qualitative	Adjust decision-making frameworks

Table 1 showcases the results of 7 studies delving into *effective educational leadership*. Four overarching themes emerged:

- leadership approaches: noted four times
- professional development and support: noted four times
- organizational practices: noted six times
- mission and vision: noted twice

These results showcase that CRL was not found to be an effective educational leadership approach in the literature. Within this array, the themes centered on leadership approaches,

professional development and support, organizational practices, and mission and vision. Incorporating professional development programs strategically designed to augment the effectiveness of educational leaders emerged as a prominent theme within this inquiry. Fisher (2021) suggests a lack of professional development opportunities for current leaders concerning the skills, tools, and comprehension necessary to lead culturally diverse communities effectively. Furthermore, Santamarfa (2015) advocates for effective, CRL, emphasizing the importance of adapting leadership practices to diverse cultural contexts.

Table 2

Effective School Leadership Practices

Citation	Population	Purpose	Type of Study	Conclusions/ Recommendations
Odhiambo & Hii (2012)	K-12	The perception of effective leadership through the lens of teacher, student, and parent stakeholders	Qualitative	Ensure teaching and learning quality Employ relational leadership
Turan & Bektas (2013)	Primary	The correlation between the leadership practices of school administrators and the prevailing school culture	Quantitative	Create vision Encourage staff
Crum & Sherman (2008)	Secondary	The common themes of school leadership and instructional practices of high school principals at successful schools in Virginia	Qualitative	Foster personnel development and leadership Delegate effectively Empower team members Acknowledge ultimate responsibility Foster communication and rapport Facilitate instruction Navigate change
Crum et al. (2010)	Primary	The theories of action embraced and internalized by school principals, enabling them to function as effective leaders within the challenging landscape of accountability	Qualitative	Lead with data Have integrity and relationships Nurture ownership and collaboration Identify and nurture leadership qualities Engage in instructional awareness
Salfi (2011)	K-12	The effective leadership practices among secondary-level head teachers in Pakistan that contribute to school improvement	Mixed-methods	Share a common vision Cultivate a culture of collaboration, support, and trust Engage various stakeholders in decision-making Foster strong relationships among school personnel Prioritize teacher and self-development Involve parents and the community in advancing school improvement efforts
Naicker, et al. (2013)	K-12	The instructional leadership practices of school principals within high-performing schools situated in challenging environments	Qualitative	Employ instructional leadership Enhance feedback quality to ensure superior outcomes
Ghavifekr, et al. (2020)	Secondary	The determinants impacting principals' behaviors within private schools	Qualitative	Establish shared visions, missions, and goals Arrange professional development initiatives Foster an innovative, collaborative, and team-oriented culture Oversee an active and forward-thinking teaching and learning environment
Bouchamma (2012)	K-12	The leadership practices within successful schools situated in economically disadvantaged areas across three Canadian provinces: Ontario, Quebec, and New Brunswick	Qualitative	Set objectives and expectations Allocate resources strategically Plan, coordinate, and assess the curriculum Encourage and engage in teacher supervision and development

Shriberg, et al. (2010)	K-12	The key attributes and behaviors of effective leaders in the field	Qualitative	Maintain order and provide support Exhibit competence, expertise, and upstanding interpersonal skills, along with genuine personal character
Huff et al. (2018)	Secondary	The Practices that set apart leaders' approaches in highly effective high schools catering to significant numbers of at-risk youth from those in less effective high schools	Qualitative	Monitor feedback to enhance the quality of teaching Align the curriculum Establish support systems for students Implement systematic measures to promote personalized learning for students
De Nobile, et al. (2016)	Primary	The aspects of leadership practices that are likely to encourage well-executed whole-school behavior management	Qualitative	Implement a whole-school behavior model
Intxausti, et al. (2016)	K-12	The optimal practices observed in highly effective schools within the Autonomous Region of the Basque Country (Spain)	Qualitative	Implement positive leadership Create a unified and well-defined mission embraced by all professionals, Implement a favorable attitude toward training and continuous learning Cultivate dedication and enthusiasm among the teaching staff for a collective school vision Support for teaching and learning procedures Focus on promoting peaceful and harmonious coexistence and well-coordinated organization
Hayes & Derrington (2023)	K-12	The effective leadership strategies adopted by school principals when managing a crisis within a school setting.	Qualitative	Demonstrate high emotional intelligence, collaborative skills, concern for others, and attentiveness to the specific context of the school community
Ghamrawi (2023)	K-12	The policy review of school leadership in the State of Qatar	Qualitative	Create school autonomy
Du Plessis (2017)	K-12	The challenges and complexities in rural leaders' work and how they navigate the position	Qualitative	Implement instructional leadership Acquire a rural lens
Leithwood (2021)	K-12	The school leadership practices are likely to facilitate equitable school conditions and outcomes for diverse and traditionally underserved students	Review of research	Participate in ongoing professional training Build productive partnerships among parents, schools, and the larger community, as well as encourage teachers to engage in forms of instruction with all students that are both ambitious and culturally responsive
Mombourquette (2017)	K-12	The degree to which personal and school-based vision are used to impact the student learning experience	Qualitative	Create a vision for the school

Table 2 presents findings from 17 studies exploring *effective school leadership practices*. The studies unveiled six predominant themes:

- leadership development, noted four times
- vision and mission, noted four times
- communication, noted one time
- support for teaching and learning, noted four times
- community engagement, noted twice

- CRL, noted once
- data-driven decision-making, noted once

These results showcase that CRL is not seen as a best practice within educational leadership research, as it was only notated once.

Table 2 presents the outcomes of 17 studies delving into *effective school leadership practices*. These studies revealed three overarching themes: teaching and learning quality, school culture, and instructional leadership. The seamless integration of teaching and learning quality with school culture is evident in the research findings of Ghavifekr and Ramzy (2020). Their study underscores the pivotal role played by effective school principals in enhancing teachers' academic excellence through strategic leadership practices. These practices encompass guiding shared vision planning, organizing professional development, fostering innovation and collaboration, and overseeing the teaching environment. This emphasizes the influential role principals have in fostering the success of teachers.

Furthermore, Intxausti and colleagues (2016) emphasize the integral connection between school culture and leadership. They highlight the importance of school leaders in cultivating dedication and enthusiasm among teaching staff, nurturing a collective school vision, providing support for teaching and learning procedures, promoting peaceful coexistence, and ensuring a well-coordinated organization. Together, these insights underscore the intricate interplay between leadership practices and school culture, emphasizing their collective impact on educational excellence.

In aligning with these perspectives, Naicker and colleagues (2013) shed light on the imperative for a comprehensive reevaluation of instructional leadership practices. Their argument centers on the necessity of shaping the school's structures and cultures in direct response to the unique realities within the environment of the school community.

Table 3

Effective School Leadership for Diverse Student Populations

Citation	Population	Purpose	Type of Study	Conclusions / Recommendations
Szeto et al. (2019)	K-12	The experiences of two principals in China as they navigate diverse leadership approaches to address these challenges amidst substantial education reform	Qualitative	Center on inclusivity Incorporate innovative and adaptable interventions to ensure equitable student learning Support development from all facets of the school community: the school's sponsoring body, the teaching team, and parents
Furney et al. (2005)	K-12	The capacity of schools to support students with diverse needs in general education classrooms	Qualitative	Foster shared vision Create collaborative processes Use data to make decisions about curriculum and instruction Understand and utilize policy to create comprehensive school systems
Andersen & Ottesen (2011)	K-12	The investigation into how school leaders address inclusion challenges in two Norwegian upper secondary schools	Qualitative	Create platforms for collective learning and exchanging experiences regarding teaching students from diverse ethnic and linguistic backgrounds are needed
Leithwood (2021)	K-12	The school leadership practices and attitudes that are probable contributors	Review of research	Forge effective partnerships between parents, schools, and the broader community

		to enhancing equitable school conditions and outcomes for diverse and traditionally marginalized students		Encourage teachers to employ ambitious and culturally responsive instructional approaches with all students Adopt a critical view of schools' policies, practices, and procedures while cultivating a deep understanding of the cultures, norms, values, and expectations of their students' families
Haar & Robicheau (2007)	K-12	The initial findings from two surveys focused on the following areas: The ethnic and gender composition of Minnesota school leaders The professional development requirements of school leaders concerning cultural diversity and English Language Learners	Qualitative	Eradicate stereotypes Enhance training related to the diverse learning needs of all students Emphasize students' backgrounds as assets for enriching learning Comprehend family dynamics and their impact on addressing the achievement gap Implement a curriculum and instructional approach suitable for a diverse school Support for teachers in fostering a supportive learning setting
Madhlango & Gordon (2012)	K-12	The strategies used by a culturally responsive school leader to foster equity within a racially and linguistically diverse school	Qualitative	Employ CRL across three dimensions: personal, environmental, and curricular Demonstrate care Establish relationships Display persistence and persuasion Be actively present and communicative Set an example in cultural responsiveness Promote cultural responsiveness, among other aspects
Jacobson & Johnson (2011)	K-12	The elements of successful school leadership	Review of literature	Employ CRL
Khalifa, et al. (2016)	K-12	The framework for literature focused on developing a school environment responsive to the needs of minoritized students	Synthesis of literature	Employ CRL
Minkos, et al. (2017)	K-12	The practical suggestions regarding culturally responsive strategies and practices that school administrators might employ in leading diverse school communities	Conceptual paper	Employ CRL
Crum et al. (2010)	K-12	The actions that help principals serve as successful leaders in the tumultuous accountability climate	Qualitative	Lead with data Create an honest environment and cultivate relationships Foster ownership and collaboration Recognize and develop leadership Employ instructional awareness and involvement
Szeto & Cheng (2017)	K-12	The exploration of principals' leadership journeys in response to social justice issues arising from specific contextual changes during times of uncertainty	Quantitative	Plan and implement innovative and flexible interventions to ensure equality in students' learning development
Villavicencio (2016)	K-12	The investigation into the methods used by school leaders to establish and sustain student diversity in charter schools	Qualitative	Formulate curriculum-focused missions Execute targeted student recruitment Adopt a broader interpretation of state charter enrollment guidelines to enhance inclusivity
Liou et al. (2017)	Secondary	The prevailing high-stakes accountability initiatives have inadvertently resulted in many school leaders perpetuating an environment fostering deficit perspectives and maintaining low academic expectations in classrooms	Qualitative	Understand the importance of student perspectives Reevaluate low classroom expectations Identify significant barriers to achieving schoolwide excellence in our nation
Young (2015)	K-12	The UCEA Developing Leaders to Support Diverse Learners (LSDL)	Qualitative	Foster school improvement Ensure quality teaching

		curriculum modules for educational leadership preparation		Develop and sustain a positive learning-centered environment Maximize opportunities to learn and to engage stakeholders in student success
Huguet (2017)	K-12	The examination of existing literature on the impact of effective leadership on school performance, providing a foundation for schools to pursue similar outcomes in comparable educational settings	Critical review of literature	Foster collaboration Empower teacher leadership Hire educators deeply passionate about teaching and dedicated to children

Table 3 summarizes findings from 15 studies exploring effective school leadership practices for diverse populations. These studies unveiled six recurring themes:

1. inclusivity and equity, noted four times
2. collaborations and partnerships, noted three times
3. CRL- noted four times
4. data-driven decision-making, noted three times
5. leadership development, noted three times
6. continuous improvement, noted four times
7. create shared vision, noted once
8. community, noted two times

These results showcase that CRL was included in research on effective school leadership in diverse contexts, as it was notated four times. Szeto et al (2019) emphasize the significance of school leaders providing essential support for leadership strategies aligned with the principals' value systems. This approach allows the exploration of alternative methods for evaluating student learning, participation, and development and underscores the importance of involving the community, teachers, and parents in this process.

Leithwood (2021) asserts that equity-oriented school leaders can have a profound impact by establishing genuine partnerships among schools, families, and communities to ensure student success. These partnerships not only improve home conditions, benefiting student success in school, such as raising parent expectations, but also have the potential to engage hesitant parents in collaborative decision-making about how the school can better contribute to their children's success.

Additionally, training teachers can positively influence students. Madhlangobe and Gordon (2012) propose that cultural responsiveness can serve as a framework to shape how teachers are trained to address the diverse needs of the contemporary classroom, regardless of their cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

Table 4

Culturally Responsive School Leadership

Citation	Population	Purpose	Type of Study	Conclusions/Recommendations
Madhlangobe & Gordon (2012)	K-12	The description of how a culturally sensitive school leader advocated for fairness in a racially and linguistically diverse school	Qualitative	Employ culturally sensitive leadership across three domains: personal, environmental, and curricular Employ compassion, relationship-building, perseverance, effective communication and

Johnson (2007)	Primary	The research on culturally responsive teaching and African American female principals in urban schools	Qualitative	presence, modeling cultural sensitivity, and nurturing cultural awareness among others Establish inclusive and empowering connections with diverse parents and community members
Genao (2021)	K-12	The analysis of Culturally Responsive Teaching and Leading (CRTL) among aspiring school leaders and how the implementation contributes to the social justice experienced by marginalized students, families, and communities	Qualitative	Emphasize cultural responsiveness as an intrinsic quality Acknowledge self-identity Learn from diverse community perspectives Embrace inclusive celebrations Challenge practice through disruption
Johnson (2006)	K-12	The concept of CRL	Qualitative	Develop skills of a public intellectual, curriculum innovator, and social activist Employ social justice leadership Scrutinize the context of historical, political, and social circumstances where it is applied
Khalifa, et al. (2016)	K-12	The framework for the literature that seeks to make the school environment responsive	Synthesis of literature	Employ CRL
Lopez (2015)	K-12	The leadership practices of six school leaders within a major school board in the Greater Toronto Area, Ontario, Canada.	Qualitative	Be insightful, introspective, intentional, and bold
Brown, et al (2022)	K-12	The elements and participants that may impede or aid the development of these practices across four European countries: Austria, Ireland, Russia, and Spain	Qualitative	Comprehend students' lived experiences, from their initial reception to their integration and inclusion within a school setting or otherwise
Cager & Garibaldi (2022)	K-12	The leveraging of CRL to enhance learning opportunities for African American students through the federally mandated support of the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) fund under the American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act of 2021	Qualitative	Incorporate data walls for planning Invite stakeholders to serve on committees that develop vision, mission, core values, strategic goals and plans, and other foundational documents Incorporate stakeholders' voices into the foundational structure and guiding principles of the organization which will promote buy-in, transparency, and trust to mitigate the disenfranchisement that African American families often feel when it comes to their children's education
Leithwood (2021)	K-12	The school leadership practices likely to help improve equitable school conditions and outcomes for diverse and traditionally underserved students	Review of research	Build productive partnerships among parents, schools, and the larger community
Vassallo (2015)	K-12	The case for an innovative and dynamic model for CRL	Conceptual paper	Employ effective and transformational leadership Encourage teachers to engage in forms of instruction with all students that are both ambitious and culturally responsive
Taliaferro (2011)	K-12	The exploration of social capital and CRL theories as a means to understand and bridge differences that arise in diverse educational settings for public school leaders	Conceptual paper	Employ social capital and CRL
Khalifa (2013)	K-12	The CRL practices for students with Hip-Hop identity performatives	Qualitative	Take a lead role in promoting an inclusive space
Minkos, et al. (2017)	K-12	The practical suggestions regarding culturally responsive strategies and practices that school administrators might employ in leading diverse school communities	Conceptual paper	Employ CRL

Mayfield & Garrison-Wade (2015)	Intermediate	The culturally responsive practices schoolwide in a middle school that is successfully closing academic opportunity gaps between White and Black students	Qualitative	Foster ongoing dialogue on race by actively involving teachers in professional development sessions Build the cultural competency of staff
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Table 4 summarizes the results of 15 studies investigating culturally responsive school leadership. The identified themes encompass various aspects:

1. CRL - noted six times
2. communication - noted three times
3. cultural responsiveness and awareness - noted six times
4. community - noted three times
5. leadership and advocacy - noted three times
6. data-driven decision-making - noted once
7. shared vision - noted once
8. professional development - noted once

The results reveal that CRL encompasses multiple themes, but these themes only became evident when the search term "culturally responsive leadership" was used. Genao (2021) found that prospective administrators emphasize the importance of personal and professional skills for creating effective educational experiences, particularly in the context of diversity. Understanding the broader school community is crucial for determining what to teach, how to learn, and how to lead. Acknowledging the impact of cultural relevance on curricula led to a sense of empowerment through embracing community voices. Utilizing personal perspectives on cultural understanding played a crucial role in initial discussions about redefining cultural relevance, contributing to the pursuit of equitable education.

Data Analysis

To comprehend the fundamental principles of effective educational leadership, we undertook a systematic literature review consisting of the following key terms:

effective educational leadership, effective school leadership practices, effective school leadership practices for diverse populations, and culturally responsive school leadership.

The intention was to discern the variations among these distinct search terms to provide insight into the correlation between diversity and culture. The selected peer-reviewed articles were imported into NVivo for qualitative analysis. The software was used to systematically code the data, allowing for the identification and categorization of common themes across the articles. This process facilitated a deeper analysis of recurring patterns and insights, ensuring a comprehensive examination of the selected literature. Through this exploration, the key thematic elements that emerged from the four searches included CRL, vision, professional development, community, communication, and data-driven decision-making. The results revealed key themes indicating that CRL was notably absent from the literature. However, the findings do offer valuable insights into what is broadly considered effective educational

leadership and school leadership practices. Table 5 provides the total frequency of each theme identified during the search for each term.

Table 5

The Total Frequency of Each Theme

<i>Theme</i>	<i>Table</i>	<i>Times mentioned</i>
<i>Culturally Responsive Leadership</i>	1	1
	2	1
	3	4
	4	11
<i>Vision and Mission</i>	1	2
	2	4
	3	1
	4	1
<i>Professional Development</i>	1	2
	2	4
	3	3
	4	1
<i>Community</i>	1	0
	2	2
	3	2
	4	4
<i>Communication</i>	1	1
	2	1
	3	0
	4	2
<i>Data- driven Decision-making</i>	1	0
	2	1
	3	2
	4	1

Culturally Responsive Leadership

CRL was referenced a total of eleven times in the literature review. Notably, six instances were found under the search term *CRL*, while four were identified within the search results for *effective school leadership practices for diverse populations*. Consequently, it is noteworthy that both *effective educational leadership and effective school leadership practices* yielded only one published manuscript centered on CRL. Three manuscripts were qualitative (Santamarfa et al., 2015; Madhlangobe & Gordon, 2012; Genao, 2021); three were reviews of the literature (Leithwood, 2021; Jacobson & Johnson, 2011; Khalifa et al., 2016), and two were conceptual papers (Minkos et al., 2017; Taliaferro, 2011). Each of the twelve manuscripts focused explicitly on educational contexts within the United States. In essence, the systematic review identified twelve references to CRL, primarily within the domains of effective educational leadership and practices for diverse populations and CRL, underscoring the limited research on this crucial topic despite its significant relevance in shaping the educational landscape of the United States.

Vision and Mission

Eight manuscripts addressed the role of vision and mission as an effective educational leader. Six manuscripts were qualitative (Intxausti et al., 2016; Leahy & Shore, 2019; Ghavifekr et al., 2020; Furney et al., 2005; Cager & Garibaldi, 2022; Mombourquette, 2017); one was quantitative (Turan & Bektas, 2013), and one was mixed methods (Salfi, 2011). Four manuscripts addressed public schools in the United States (Mombourquette, 2017; Turan & Bektas, 2013; Furney et al., 2005; Cager & Garibaldi, 2022). One manuscript addressed charter schools in the United States (Leahy & Shore, 2019). One addressed private schools in the United States (Ghavifekr et al., 2020), one addressed schools in Spain (Intxausti et al., 2016), and one addressed schools in Pakistan (Salfi, 2011). A recurring theme observed throughout each study was the critical importance of a shared vision and mission within the school as a fundamental component of effective leadership.

Professional Development

Seven manuscripts addressed the role of professional development as an effective educational leader. Six manuscripts were qualitative (Blaik et al., 2022; Crum & Sherman, 2008; Ghavifekr et al., 2020; Haar & Robicheau, 2007; Mayfield & Garrison-Wade, 2015; Szeto et al., 2019), and one was quantitative (Szeto & Cheng, 2017). Four addressed public schools in the United States (Blaik et al., 2022; Crum & Sherman, 2008; Haar & Robicheau, 2007; Mayfield & Garrison-Wade, 2015), one addressed private schools in the United States (Ghavifekr et al., 2020), and two addressed China (Szeto et al., 2019; Szeto & Cheng, 2017). A dominant theme embedded within each manuscript highlighted the critical importance of continuous professional development for school leaders and the cultivation of their staff.

Community

Five manuscripts addressed the role of the community as an effective educational leader. Three articles were qualitative (Hayes & Derrington, 2023; Szeto et al., 2019; Genao, 2021), one was a review of research (Leithwood, 2021), and one was mixed-methods (Salfi, 2011). Four addressed public schools in the United States (Hayes & Derrington, 2019; Genao, 2021; Leithwood, 2021), one addressed Pakistan (Salfi, 2011), and one addressed China (Szeto et al., 2019). A recurring theme across these papers was the importance of inclusivity, particularly in engaging the community and parents while establishing meaningful partnerships.

Communication

Four manuscripts, each representing qualitative inquiries conducted within the educational landscape of the United States (Mayfield & Garrison-Wade, 2015; Madhlangobe & Gordon, 2012; Crum & Sherman, 2008; Özdemir, 2020), collectively emphasized the paramount importance of communication skills for educational leaders. These studies corroborate the fundamental role of effective communication in leadership and accentuate its multifaceted impact on fostering positive relationships, facilitating collaboration, and driving organizational success within educational contexts.

Data-Driven Decision-Making

Three qualitative studies conducted in the United States (Crum et al., 2010; Furney et al., 2005; Cager & Garibaldi, 2022) converged on the critical role of data-driven decision-making within effective leadership within educational settings. These studies underscored the imperative to utilize data for informed decision-making concerning curriculum, instruction, and strategic planning, advocating for practices such as data walls to facilitate comprehensive analysis and strategic planning processes.

Discussion

The comprehensive exploration covering effective educational leadership, effective school leadership practices, and effective school leadership practices for diverse populations revealed a limited presence of CRL in the literature. CRL was scarcely mentioned in discussions of effective educational leadership and school leadership practices, but it was more prominently featured in effective school leadership practices for diverse student populations. Ylimaki and Jacobson (2013) conducted a case study examining principals to compare organizational leadership, instructional leadership, and culturally responsive practices. Their findings revealed that culturally responsive practice leadership development often remains separate from organizational and instructional leadership. The authors assert that given shifting demographics, future leadership preparation programs must explicitly integrate CRL, recognizing that culturally sensitive leadership complements, rather than conflicts with, effective organizational leadership and instructional leadership (2013). This perspective aligns with the findings of this study, which highlight the lack of CRL practices in both the literature and principal viewpoints. The study suggests that this gap results from the insufficient focus on CRL in professional development and educational programs for leaders.

Furthermore, Brown et al. (2021) completed an international review of literature relating to how CRL is conceptualized and defined. Brown et al. (2021) argue that effective school leadership and CRL share essential characteristics. However, CRL goes further by requiring leaders to empathize with marginalized groups and address inequities (Brown et al., 2021). CRL must ensure that every voice is heard, incorporate diverse cultural values, and support teachers in responding to the needs of students from various backgrounds (Brown et al., 2021). Although Brown et al. (2021) recognizes CRL as essential for effective educational leadership, it remains notably absent from much of the existing literature on effective leadership practices in education. CRL received limited attention in the search for effective educational leadership, as it was mentioned only once in Santamarfa (2015). Although aspects related to CRL, such as emotional and social intelligence and transformational leadership, are touched upon by Blaik and colleagues (2022), a comprehensive exploration of CRL remains notably absent from the literature. Thus, CRL remains underrepresented in the literature, as Khalifa (2020) argues in *Culturally Responsive School Leadership*. He explains that CRL struggles to thrive due to systemic barriers, including the dominance of traditional leadership models that neglect cultural responsiveness, insufficient professional development on CRL, and institutional resistance to change. Khalifa (2020) also points out that many leaders lack the training and awareness needed to address the needs of marginalized communities, preventing CRL from being fully integrated into schools. Without deliberate efforts to promote and institutionalize CRL, Khalifa (2020)

warns, schools will continue to perpetuate inequities, hindering the widespread adoption of this leadership approach.

Exploring effective school leadership practices underscores the pivotal role of instructional leadership, including responsibilities such as promoting quality instruction and fostering a positive school culture. While aspects of CRL were not explicitly mentioned, elements of the term were evident in the literature. Huff et al. (2018) emphasized the importance of established routines and practices, prioritizing faculty development and personalized learning connections, which are aspects of CRL. CRL focus on professionally developing teachers to be culturally responsive and to advocate for a curriculum that promotes personalized learning connections. Odhiambo and Hill (2012) highlighted the principal's multifaceted responsibilities as an instructional leader, from teacher evaluations to fostering a forward-thinking vision. This aligns with CRL, as culturally responsive leaders adopt an instructional leadership standpoint. Furthermore, Intxausti and colleagues (2016) emphasized the vital connection between school culture and leadership. CRL maintains that fostering a positive school culture is essential. CRL received limited attention, with Klar and Brewer's (2013) study being a rare mention. The authors highlighted the importance of cultural responsiveness and adaptability in navigating complex challenges and leading effective school-wide reform efforts. Thus, while many aspects of CRL were implicit in this search, they were only explicitly mentioned once.

Exploring effective school leadership practices for diverse populations has revealed manuscripts advocating equitable education, emphasizing various aspects of CRL. Liou and colleagues (2017) underscore the importance of educators maintaining high expectations for all students, aligning with CRL principles. Andersen and Ottesen (2011) propose integrating culturally familiar content into educational materials for enhanced engagement. Additionally, Leithwood (2021) and Madhlangobe & Gordon (2012) outline essential aspects of cultural responsiveness for educational leaders, emphasizing valuing parents' perspectives and facilitating professional development. Leithwood (2021) highlights that equity-oriented school leaders foster partnerships among schools, families, and communities to ensure student success. Moreover, as Madhlangobe and Gordon (2012) proposed, training teachers in cultural responsiveness contributes to addressing diverse student needs. Overall, these research articles show evidence of a close alignment with CRL principles.

The investigation into culturally responsive school leadership also unveiled research vividly illustrating the qualities and practices inherent in a culturally responsive leader. Genao (2021) underscores the importance of cultural responsiveness thriving in social justice environments, where the leader's identity, rather than just their actions, plays a pivotal role. This involves an emphasis on the awareness that social identity is integral, extending understanding beyond the school premises to learn about the broader school community while celebrating diversity and encouraging classroom conversations that foster the emergence of new ideas on culture, race, and space. These elements significantly contribute to enriching the inclusive practices of teachers and leaders. Fostering this foundation, Johnson (2006) delineates the multifaceted roles of a culturally responsive school leader, encompassing responsibilities as a public intellectual, curriculum innovator, and social activist.

The investigation into effective school leadership practices for diverse populations and culturally responsive school leadership revealed the fundamental principles of CRL, community engagement, and the promotion of equitable education. These findings underscored

the crucial role of CRL as an essential practice. Community involvement and data-driven decision-making are critical aspects of CRL. Engaging with the community and parents and utilizing data are essential for effectively supporting diverse student populations. However, as shown in Table 5 community engagement and data-driven decision-making were not mentioned in discussions of effective educational leadership. This highlights the notable absence of CRL in the effective educational leadership literature.

Recommendations

Development of Intrapersonal Skills

In the professional environment of public schools, the focus on the intrapersonal skills of educational leaders, along with interpersonal skill development, is foundational for authentically engaging with students from diverse socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds. “Interpersonal and intrapersonal processes interrelate: that is, responding to culturally diverse populations will be influenced by intrapersonal processes, such as one’s own biases” (Sakata, 2024, p.244).

Authentic cultural responsiveness embodies intrapersonal awareness, which involves understanding one’s own personal worldview (Jones, 2009; Sakata, 2024), self-awareness, and recognizing and managing emotions. Leaders are able to transform their frames of reference through critical reflection on their personal assumptions that serve as the foundation of interpretations, beliefs, and habits of mind and critical self-reflection (Mezirow, 1997). Critical self-reflective skills are vital in the process of fostering cultural responsiveness (Saadatmand et al., 2019) as they involve empathy, problem-solving, and respectful communication (Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 2012). Additionally, intrapersonal skills entail recognizing and managing feelings while engaging in critical self-reflection (Giraldo-García et al., 2023). By engaging in critical self-reflection while consciously employing cultural awareness, educational leaders may address systemic issues while creating nurturing environments, particularly for diverse student populations (Gay & Kirkland, 2003).

Critical cultural self-reflection is a term that focuses on fostering respect, embracing cultural insights, and challenging personal biases (Ball et al., 2010), which are integral factors when interacting with individuals from diverse cultures. Intrapersonal skills complement interpersonal skills during these interactions by enabling culturally responsive leaders to recognize and consciously appreciate differences. Campos-Moreira et al. (2020) proposed a CRL framework that emphasizes the value of accentuating cultural differences during interactions with diverse populations. As such, CRL allows leaders to leverage their understanding of diverse cultural populations through acknowledging and appreciating differences (Rice-Boothe, 2022).

Essentially, CRL transforms educational institutions into inclusive spaces that honor diverse identities (Bonanno et al., 2023). Proficiency in cultural responsiveness may enhance the authenticity of leadership, paving the way for transformative change internally and externally within the school community. This necessitates that school leaders continuously engage in critical self-reflection while seeking to comprehend the societal dynamics within educational systems to ensure student equity (Furman, 2012). Thus, nurturing intrapersonal skills is pivotal

for leadership authenticity as they strive to foster a positive and inclusive educational environment where each student is acknowledged, valued, and supported.

Establishment of an Inclusive School Climate and Culture

By embracing cultural differences, the school leader may create a more cohesive school community where all are acknowledged and appreciated for their uniqueness. Thus, establishing an inclusive school environment that prioritizes and practices empathy involves cultivating culturally responsive school staff (Grayson, 2017). The school's climate is a critical facet of educational institutions, encompassing various domains such as teaching and learning quality, intra-school relationships, organizational structures, and broader institutional and structural features of the school environment. Inclusive school climates have been shown to enhance student achievement, diminish disruptive behaviors, and lower dropout rates (Wang & Degol, 2015). When distinguishing the significance of an inclusive school climate, the National School Climate Council (2007) outlined five fundamental principles to cultivate such an environment (*see Figure 2*). The principles encompass the following: 1) the assurance of social, emotional, and physical security, engagement, and respect for all members; 2) collaborative efforts among students, families, and educators towards shared objectives; 3) the fostering attitudes that underscore the value and gratification of learning; and 4) the active involvement of all stakeholders in the functioning of the school (2007).

Cultural responsive leadership embodies the concept of a sustainable and positive school climate by supporting teachers' development as culturally responsive practitioners (Khalifa, 2018; Khalifa et al., 2016), utilizing cultural knowledge and experiences to deliver effective instruction to all students (Gay, 2000; Minkos et al., 2017; Jones & Nichols, 2013), fostering inclusivity (Khalifa & Delpit, 2018; Riehl, 2000; Khalifa et al., 2016; Magno & Schiff, 2010), and strengthening the dedication to social equity and justice in education (Lopez, 2015). Culturally responsive leaders perform a vital role in cultivating a positive school environment by fostering the integration of culturally relevant pedagogy within classrooms and using cultural references to create meaningful learning experiences and increase student engagement.

Figure 2

Inclusive school climate



National School Climate Council (2007)

The school climate and culture establish the guiding principles and shared vision that steers the expectations of all engaged within the school community (Hall & Hord, 2015). This level of school climate and culture is omnipresent, extending its influence across each facet of the whole school community. It represents a critical role in the attitudes and behaviors of students, staff, faculty, and leaders. Corbett's (1999) (*see Figure 3*) delineation of the four fundamental principles underpinning an inclusive school culture is a roadmap for fostering a prosperous and inclusive environment. These principles, such as actively listening to perspectives beyond personal experiences, advocating for diverse intelligences, ensuring equitable opportunities, and emphasizing the prioritization of core values, lay the foundation for a vibrant and cohesive school community. Culturally responsive leaders support inclusive school communities by leveraging diversity positively to enhance school culture and enrich the educational experience of all students (Magno & Schiff, 2010). Such leaders also foster an environment where educators are empowered to champion these principles (Khalifa et al., 2016; Khalifa & Delpit, 2018) by cultivating a culture of inclusivity, understanding, and respect among all educational community members through guidance and mentorship. The school's climate and culture should intricately weave a fabric of foundational norms, values, and beliefs while shaping the collective mindset, behaviors, and connections among individuals within the school community.

Conclusion

This research underscores the necessity of CRL in public school landscapes, particularly in institutions where a substantial portion of the student body represents culturally, racially, and/or ethnically diverse communities. The absence of authentic cultural connections among students,

teachers, and educational leaders has emerged as a significant barrier and may contribute to the academic underperformance of diverse student populations (Ladson-Billings, 1995). This disconnect perpetuates an alarming academic achievement gap and widens the opportunity gap, severely impeding students' educational progress and prospects.

The study unequivocally unearthed the limited research centering on effective leadership practices in culturally, racially, ethnically, and socioeconomically diverse public school communities that entail CRL practices that may address the pervasive racial/ethnic and socioeconomic disparities related to student achievement. The urgency of the topic lies within educational institutions, including public schools and leadership preparation programs, to prioritize educating school leaders with the knowledge, skills, and administrative abilities to bridge the academic attainment gaps while ensuring a culturally responsive school environment and classroom culture. This necessitates a shift in focus on the view of effective school leaders that centers on high student standardized test scores to a perspective that aligns with research-based best practices that foster cultural awareness, sensitivity, and inclusivity while ensuring the outcome of student academic achievement and cultural affirmation. The integration of culturally responsive educational leadership into leadership preparation programs and practicing leader professional development opportunities has the potential to achieve this goal.

Additionally, ongoing efforts to diversify the teaching and administrative staff may contribute significantly to creating a more inclusive and equitable learning environment. By fostering genuine cultural understanding and connections, school leaders may create nurturing school cultures where all students, regardless of race/ethnicity, culture, socioeconomic status, or primary language, have equitable opportunities to excel academically and realize their full potential.

Limitations

The limitations of this research centered on the published manuscripts that addressed the topic of concern. Thus, manuscripts were eliminated if they did not meet the following criteria: 1) written in English, 2) research-oriented, and 3) sourced from academic databases such as Google Scholar and Education Source.

Declarations

Acknowledgments: We, Tara Indar and Marie Byrd, hereby declare that the research paper entitled "Leading with Cultural Responsiveness: A Systematic Review of the Literature" is our own original work, and to the best of our knowledge, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due acknowledgement is made in the text. We further declare that all sources used in the preparation of this paper have been properly cited and have followed all ethical guidelines regarding research conduct.

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Ethics Statements

This systematic literature review adheres to the highest ethical standards as indicated in the methodology section.

Conflict of Interest

There are no conflicts of interest to report.

Informed Consent

This qualitative study did not require informed consent. All research included has been duly cited within the manuscript.

Data availability

The present study adhered to the 2020 recommendations of the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA), as outlined by Page et al. (2021).

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