

## ABSTRACT

### COLLECTIVE BARGAINING AS A POSSIBLE FACTOR IN TITLE I SCHOOLS' RESPONSE MEASURES TO CLOSE THE ACHIEVEMENT GAP BETWEEN WHITE (NONHISPANIC) AND LATINO STUDENTS

The achievement gap between White and Hispanic students persists despite large-scale state and federal reforms. Various factors are attributed to the achievement gap between nonminority and minority students. This qualitative study examined the problem of the achievement gap through the lens of the teacher union collective bargaining agreement. The research question was, Is collective bargaining a factor in how Title I schools with a collective bargaining agreement and Title I schools without one implement response measures to close the achievement gap?

The theoretical framework for this exploratory study used Emergent Theory to develop an inductively derived grounded theory that emerged from a systematic analysis of the data. Twenty personal interviews were conducted. The subjects included district and site administrators, and grades K-8 classroom teachers from two school districts, one with a collective bargaining agreement and one without. Quantitative data on student academic performance were collected and analyzed.

#### Findings

A core concept emerged from the analysis of the qualitative data: Culture Reflection. Culture Reflection is the subjects' beliefs, values, and practices reflected through their responses to the interview questions. Subjects from both districts believed that collective bargaining was a factor in how Title I schools respond to close the achievement gap. In the collective bargaining district, the organizational culture was one of tense relationships between administration and

teachers; in the noncollective bargaining district, the organizational culture was one of teamwork, high expectations for themselves and the students, and a commitment to doing the hard work. A finding regarding student academic performance was that the two subgroups (White and Latino) in the noncollective bargaining district outperformed the collective bargaining students.

#### Implications for Practice and Recommendations for Research

Through their responses, the participants reflected the mental model of how they manage the achievement gap in their organization. Educational organizations must recognize that the individuals are bound by invisible fabrics of interrelated actions and that it takes years to fully play out their effects on each other (Senge, 1990). It is strongly recommended that studies about the effect of collective bargaining on student achievement become a focus of further research.

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