

Self-Determination Instructional Delivery, Value and Knowledge of General and Special Education Teachers and Across Grade Levels

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The purpose of this study accessed the instructional delivery for each of the seven domains of self-determination and the value and knowledge of each domain as reported by both general education and special education teachers in elementary, middle, and high school settings.

Four elementary schools, three middle schools, and one high school in Connecticut agreed to participate in the study; 268 teachers completed the study.

Teachers were grouped according to type of teacher (general education or special education) and classroom level (elementary school, middle school, or high school). As a first step in answering the six research questions, profile analysis was performed on the seven self-determination domains of the Teachers' Perceptions of Self-Determination Questionnaire (TPSDQ): choice making, decision making, problem solving, goal setting, self-advocacy, self-management, and self-awareness. Profile analysis was used to compare the groups of teachers measured on the different domains of the TPSDQ simultaneously. Each of these seven components was examined from the perspective of instructional delivery, value, and knowledge.

General educators reported more instructional delivery than special educators in three domains: choice making, decision making, and self-management. However, they did not report higher value or knowledge than special educators for any domain. Special educators reported more instructional delivery than general educators in only one domain, goal setting, yet they reported higher value for six domains and higher knowledge in four domains. Special educators showed higher knowledge and value overall than general educators for the domains of self-determination.

Elementary teachers reported the most instructional delivery in five domains: choice making, decision making, problem solving, goal setting, and self-management. However, middle school teachers reported the highest levels of value and knowledge for the most

domains. High school teachers rarely reported higher levels on any of the three measures compared to the other groups.

Further research should document specific approaches to teaching skills that promote self-determined behavior in general education classrooms. Linking the components of the self-determination construct to academic standards might be helpful in increasing teachers' accountability.

Priority training in these instructional domains should be based on students' ages and grade levels. Some elements of self-determination have applicability to the elementary level and others are more applicable to the secondary level. Therefore, promoting self-determination as an education outcome requires a longitudinal curriculum with a specific purpose and one that coordinates learning experiences through students' educational experiences [1]. Teachers are encouraged to consider the current study's finding related to the curricular programs addressing these instructional domains.

If teachers are still not implementing self-determination practices, researchers should seek to understand the differences among being aware of self-determination; have training in self-determination; and implementation of best practices supporting self-determination. Research should further explore these findings to determine if a specific method of delivery of self-determination results in increasing teacher's ability to promote self-determination or their own orientation towards supporting autonomy. Students benefit from having teachers who are supportive of their autonomy and self-determination and who create autonomous supportive classroom environments [2].

References

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