

School Diversity Practices Promote Adaptive Teaching Through Teachers' Self-Efficacy in Multicultural Classrooms: Cross-National Analysis Using TALIS 2024

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Research Overview

Utilizing TALIS 2024 data, this study examines whether teachers' self-efficacy in multicultural classrooms (TSMC) mediates the association between school diversity practices (SDP) and adaptive teaching (AT). Results from a multilevel model identify TSMC as a key mechanism linking SDP and AT, clarifying how school-level diversity commitments reach classroom teaching practices.

Purpose of Study

As classrooms become increasingly culturally, linguistically, and socially diverse, schools are expected to develop practices that support teachers in responding to diverse learners. However, the pathway through which SDP become connected to teachers' AT remains insufficiently understood. Our study addresses this issue by examining whether TSMC functions as a mediator linking SDP to AT.

In this study, SDP refer to school practices that promote ethnic-cultural diversity through multicultural activities, anti-discrimination education, and culturally inclusive learning experiences. TSMC refers to teachers' belief in their capacity to effectively teach students from diverse cultural, ethnic, and linguistic backgrounds. Although grounded in multicultural teaching, TSMC extends beyond cultural differences because multicultural education is also concerned with equity for all learners. AT refers to teachers' efforts to tailor instruction to students' prior knowledge, learning needs, and diverse backgrounds.

Drawing on social cognitive theory, institutional theory, and multicultural education research, this study argues that SDP may shape AT only when teachers feel capable of translating diversity-oriented expectations into responsive instruction. Although schools may adopt practices that recognize cultural diversity and address discrimination, these commitments are unlikely to affect classroom teaching automatically. Their influence may depend on whether

they strengthen teachers' confidence to work effectively in multicultural classrooms. This study was thus guided by two research questions:

- (1) What are the relationships among SDP, TSMC, and AT?
- (2) To what extent does TSMC mediate the association between SDP and AT?

Research Methods

This study used pooled cross-national data from the TALIS 2024 (lower secondary education level). After applying TALIS adjudication criteria, merging teacher and school datasets, screening focal variables, and excluding schools with fewer than three usable teachers, the final sample included 92,181 teachers nested within 8,720 schools across 43 countries.

SDP were measured using five principal-reported TALIS items (TC4G43A-E), recoded as binary indicators and summed into a strict 0-5 composite, with higher scores indicating more implemented practices. TSMC was measured with four teacher-reported items (TT4G28A/C/D/E; 1 = not at all to 4 = a lot), and AT with five teacher-reported items (TT4G55A-E; 1 = never/almost never to 4 = always).

The analysis proceeded in three stages. First, a supplementary school-only CFA examined whether the five diversity-practice indicators reflected a common school-level construct. Second, a joint multilevel CFA was estimated for TSMC and AT. Third, a two-level complex MSEM with robust maximum likelihood estimation, teacher and school weights, and country-based stratification was used to test the latent mediation pathway. SDP were specified at the school level, whereas TSMC and AT were modeled as teacher-level latent constructs with within- and between-school components. The indirect effect was tested at the between-school level. The model controlled for teacher age, teaching experience, class size, target-class composition, school type, school location, and school composition.

Results and Discussion

The supplementary school-only CFA supported the five-item SDP construct, $\chi^2(5) = 88.248$, RMSEA = .044, CFI = .973, TLI = .947 (loadings ranging from .721 to .824). The joint multilevel CFA for TSMC and AT also showed good fit, $\chi^2(52) = 1768.476$, RMSEA = .019, CFI = .974, TLI = .964, SRMR-within = .029, SRMR-between = .072.

The main latent mediation model fit the data well, $\chi^2(141) = 2298.443$, RMSEA = .013, CFI = .966, TLI = .957, SRMR-within = .021, SRMR-between = .057. TSMC was positively associated with AT at the within-school level ($\beta = .382$), while at the between-school level, SDP were positively associated with TSMC ($\beta = .246$) and TSMC was strongly associated with AT ($\beta = .808$), all $ps < .001$. The indirect effect from SDP to AT through TSMC was significant, $B = .017$, $p < .001$, whereas the direct path was smaller and marginally significant, $B = .004$, $p = .041$.

Overall, these findings provide stronger evidence for the indirect pathway through TSMC than for a direct association between SDP and AT. This pattern suggests that SDP may promote AT not simply through formal adoption but by reducing ambiguity about how diversity should be addressed and signaling institutional support for inclusive responses to student differences. Under such conditions, teachers may develop stronger TSMC, which in turn supports AT for diverse learners.

For practice and policy, these findings imply that developing teachers' AT requires attention not only to whether SDP are present but also to how schools cultivate TSMC. School efforts that foster dialogue and clarifies diversity goals may help translate SDP into supportive conditions for teachers' AT.

Keywords: school diversity practices, teacher self-efficacy in multicultural classrooms, adaptive teaching, Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) 2024, multilevel mediation model