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Abstract

Decades of federal and state education legislation enacted to increase student academic achievement and enhance school quality have pronounced impacts on teachers and their instructional practice. That impact is captured in the term intensification. Intensification is multifaceted and manifests as additional tasks accomplished simultaneously, with no monetary consideration, constricting the curriculum, losing voice about curriculum, restricting teachers' classroom autonomy, and de-professionalization. This research had the three-fold purpose of determining (a) teachers' perspectives about Florida's educational standards relative to curricular autonomy, instructional autonomy, and professional expertise, (b) the extent to which teachers' experiences meet the criteria of intensification of curricular autonomy, instructional autonomy, and professional expertise, and (c) the degree to which teachers experience pressure from increased accountability to years teaching English Language Arts, Mathematics, Reading, Science, Social Studies, and Technology. Four research questions were framed to guide the inquiry, and data were collected from 356 high school teachers. Data were analyzed using Pearson's chi-square (χ^2) test of independence and multinomial logistic regression. Results revealed that teachers' instructional experiences meet the criteria of intensification to instructional autonomy, curricular autonomy, and professional expertise.

Introduction

In the United States, passed legislation, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 plus Goals 2000: Educate America Act, No Child Left Behind Act, 2001, and Race to the Top (RTTT), 2009 were federal responses to the public's concerns about education. It is a fundamental premise that each student is unique and may need different delivery methods from teachers. The lack of student academic achievement precipitated legislation in education and the teaching profession. More recently, policymakers have addressed stakeholders' concerns by advancing high standards and accountability directives to address students' academic performance (Elmore, 1996; Twight, 1996; Thomas & Brady, 2005). States have kept pace with federal legislation, increasing the volume of policy mandates intended to influence teaching and learning outcomes. In Florida, alarm about education outcomes triggered the 1968 Educational Accountability Act. Goals for Education in Florida, 1971, the Florida Statewide Assessment Program and its ten renditions, and the 1974 Accountability Act followed. In 1996, the Florida Legislature launched the Sunshine State Standards and implemented the Florida Comprehensive Achievement Test (FCAT) in grades 4, 5, 8, and 10, which dominated the state's educational enterprise until 2015.

In 2022, students were administered the Florida Standards Assessment for the last time. New examinations were signed into law as Florida's Assessment of Student Thinking (FAST) test to be administered three times a year and replace the Florida Standards Assessment to be implemented in 2022 -2023 as Florida's Benchmarks of Excellent Student Thinking (B.E.S.T.) Standards.

Standards, assessment, and accountability have been a primary focus of education legislation. What students should know and be able to do, measures to indicate how well they perform, and credentialing and evaluation to hold educators accountable for student performance were the momentum behind the maelstrom of legislative activity. What impact has the flurry of legislation had on improving student academic achievement and the quality of schools on teachers? Policy implementation inevitably engenders unanticipated consequences that must be apparent at the enactment. Hence, federal and state legislation intended to improve student academic performance and hold teachers accountable for their teaching practice has a counterproductive dimension. Immediately recognizable is that teachers have become implementers of educational policy, which is fused with accountability measures rather than fulfilling the profession's calling. Todd-Smith and Campana (2022) concluded that teachers' success in educating children is critical to the nation's social and economic vitality. Wallace (2012) stated that independent pedagogical practices decreased when teachers were required to use federal and state-mandated educational resources such as a national curriculum, textbooks, benchmarks, worksheets, and tests. Henkin and Holliman (2009) asserted that the power of mandated curriculum decreased teachers' ability to make professional and autonomous decisions in their classrooms. Apple (1986, 1992, 2004); Ballet and Kelchtermans and Loughran (2006); Gallagher (2003); and Hargreaves (1992, 1996) reported that because of high-stakes accountability policies, intensification diminished teachers' control over curriculum content.

Intensification is a term that describes education legislation's impact on teachers. Hargreaves (1996) defined intensification as the bureaucratically driven escalation of pressures, expectations, and controls concerning how much and what teachers should do. Intensification is characterized as an increase in the number of tasks, implementation of new pedagogical initiatives, and assumption of leadership responsibilities beyond the usual and reasonably expected work assignments. Intensification has also been explained as an expansion in curricula and teaching from externally pre-specified lists of behaviorally defined competencies and objectives, which diminish teachers' meaningful involvement in curriculum development (Apple, 1986, 2021; Ballet, Kelchtermans & Loughran, 2006). Penrice (2011) recognized intensification as work expected within the classroom driven by accountability demands and the compliance demands of numerous innovations. In this era of education legislation, accountability, and standards, teachers are separated from the enthusiasm, creativity, and spirit of the profession and what it means to be a teacher and have become policy implementers.

Teachers have reported experiencing stress, insecurity, and guilt regarding educational policy implementation. According to Pearson and Moomaw (2006), regulating autonomy with accountability policies illustrates a lack of control or powerlessness, leading to teacher pressure and stress. Intensification is embodied in the loss of instructional autonomy and de-professionalization. Apple and Jungck (1990) and Wallace (2012) acknowledged that education legislation mandates require teachers to undertake more administrative tasks and assessment responsibilities with lengthened workdays to increase student academic achievement. Educational accountability

legislation increases pressure on teachers through more regulations, performance measures, assessments, and guidelines teachers must adhere to when implementing instructional practices. Accordingly, teachers experience intensification differently as they seek to satisfy accountability policies.

Accountability Policies and Use of Standardize tools

In 2007, the Next Generation Sunshine State Standards (NGSSS) became another Florida accountability measure that included the core content curriculum for knowledge and skills that kindergarten-12 public school students were expected to accomplish. The NGSSS was used as a curriculum and assessment of student achievement (Florida Department of Education, 2007). Replacing the NGSSS in 2022, the Florida academic standards are named Student Assessments. Teachers are the implementers of all the standardized assessments.

Additionally, teachers were required to use the same standardized curricular and instructional materials for all learners regardless of the student's skill level. Florida's Benchmarks of Excellent Student Thinking (B.E.S.T.) Standards, in 2022, track student progress. These new standards are administered three times a year. Ultimately, it means more testing for pre-kindergarten through 10th-grade students.

In concert with the accountability movement, Florida rates its schools and districts using letter grades A, B, C, D, or F. Schools that receive an "F" are deemed failing, and grades for all schools are publicized. The governing principle of the grading scheme has been that the "stigma" of failure will mobilize public pressure for change, which in turn pressures teachers to increase their efforts (Figlio & Rouse, 2004). School grades pressure teachers as student achievement is mingled with teacher evaluation and remuneration. Such accountability legislation to improve student achievement is growing in popularity.

Apple (1999, 2006, 2007), Ballet and Kelchtermans (2008, 2009), and Wills and Sandholtz (2009) stated that accountability policies affect teachers' instructional performance in the classroom. Unfortunately, unintended consequences such as job dissatisfaction, reduced commitment, burnout, loss of self-esteem, and early departure from the profession accompany education policy implementation (Valli & Buese, 2007). Numerous qualitative studies support the view of intensification, which strengthens through policies that diminish teacher autonomy. Apple (1986, 2004), Ballet, Kelchtermans and Loughran (2006), Gallagher (2003), and Wills and Sandholtz (2009) reported that teachers' autonomy on course content delivery has diminished because of accountability policies. At the same time, their obligations escalate with mandates to increase student achievement. According to Apple (2021), the teaching profession is inappropriately controlled by accountability policies, which impair their ability to perform the most critical role as educators—teaching.

"Heavier workloads and ever-escalating demands for accountability, a never-ending schedule of meetings, and in many cases a growing scarcity of resources both emotional and physical" lessened teachers' professional autonomy (Gillborn & Youdell, 2009; Whitty et al., 1998, pp. 67-68). Compounding matters, legislation is often accompanied by high-stakes testing. Since 2001, high-stakes standardized test scores have been used to determine the success or failure of America's public schools (Au, 2007). High-stakes testing of canned and prearranged

curricula reduces teachers' ability to make autonomous curricular decisions and diminishes effective instructional practices. Apple (1986, 2004); Ballet, Kelchtermans, and Loughran (2006); Hargreaves (1992, 1996); and Wills and Sandholtz (2009) reported that teachers' lack of control over curriculum content and instructional goals produces intensification. In their studies, the effects of intensification diminished teachers' daily pedagogical practice to extend careful planning and consideration for creative, individualized educational exercises and instructional choices necessary for students' success. Furthermore, these researchers asserted that intensification effects from educational accountability policies become apparent when teachers must use preplanned and predetermined curricula and instructional interventions. Apple (1992) and Van den Berg (2002) reported that intensification compromises the work ethics of teachers by forcing them to rely on experts to tell them what to do; as a result, they begin to mistrust their professional expertise. Moreover, Apple (1986), Apple and Jungck (1990), Ballet and Kelchtermans (2008, 2009), Densmore (1987), Gallagher (2003), Hargreaves (1992, 1996) and Wallace (2012) concluded that intensification is reflected in teaching symptoms such as (a) increased dependence on external curricular materials because of excessive work overload, (b) lessened time to socialize with peers minimizing the opportunity to create a communal environment, (c) decreased time to improve pedagogical skills, and (e) pressured responsibilities with lack of relaxation during the workday.

Apple (1986, 1992, 2004); Ballet, Kelchtermans, and Loughran (2006); Gallagher (2003) and Hargreaves (1992, 1996) indicated that teachers often substitute autonomous instructional activities for pre-scripted plans that deskill and de-professionalize their teaching practice. These scholars found that the mediated curriculum leaves less time in teachers' daily practice for careful planning and reflection to create individualized instructional interventions and to make curricular choices necessary for individual students' success. Moreover, they claimed that teachers rely more on preplanned curricula and predetermined instructional interventions to accomplish legislative mandates resulting from externalized pressures to achieve the numerous demands placed upon the teaching practice.

According to Apple (2021), the teaching profession is inappropriately controlled by accountability policies, which interferes with the critical role of an educator—teaching. Although research has been conducted since 1986 to address intensification's impact on teaching, there is minimal research on intensification teachers' perspectives of state standards and its impact on them. Do teachers perceive intensification in their professional practice as a decrease in curricular autonomy, instructional autonomy, professional expertise, and time to concentrate on classroom outcomes because of legislation and state standards? Responding to these questions will provide insight into the impact of legislation, intensification, and its effect on teachers.

Method

Analysis

This research had a three-fold purpose, which was to determine (a) teachers' perspectives about Florida's educational standards regarding curricular autonomy, instructional autonomy, and professional expertise; (b) the extent to which teachers' experiences meet the criteria of intensification concerning curricular autonomy, instructional autonomy, professional expertise, and (c) the degree to which teachers experience pressure from

increased accountability to years teaching English Language Arts, Mathematics, Reading, Science, Social Studies, and Technology.

Four research questions guided the inquiry.

1. How do the Florida State Standards influence teachers' perspectives regarding their practice relative to instructional and curricula autonomy and professional expertise?
2. To what extent do teachers' perspectives of current work experience meet the criteria of intensification theory relative to instructional and curricular autonomy and professional expertise?
3. To what extent do teachers' perspectives regarding intensification differ according to years of teaching experience and subject taught?
4. To what extent do teachers' perspectives differ regarding classroom experience relating to the Florida State Standards accountability policies?

Florida's educational standards were developed to guide students' critical thinking and problem-solving skills to graduate high school ready for college, career, and life success. This study did not explore college and or employment readiness. Additionally, this study did not consider unresolved explanations of students' lack of preparedness for college or careers regarding their background, opportunities, or access to sufficient educational resources. Since teachers' perspectives regarding their practices were the focus of this study, student experiences were not considered part of the research.

The modified Teaching in the Age of Accountability and Professional Development-My Experiences Survey was employed to collect data on teacher perspectives relative to Florida's educational legislation and its impact on teachers' instructional and curricular autonomy and professional expertise. The survey has four dimensions: instructional autonomy, curricular autonomy, professionalization, and state accountability policies. Survey response options are: (a) strongly agree, (b) agree, (c) neither agree or disagree, (d) disagree, and (e) strongly disagree. Teachers also responded to demographic items, such as school location, grade taught, gender, ethnicity, years of teaching experience, subject area, and origin of certification. Cronbach's alpha for the overall survey reliability was .96.

The population for this research consisted of 19,209 high school teachers in 14 counties that comprise the West Central Region of Florida. According to Krejcie and Morgan (1970), 377 is a representative sample size for this population. However, only one of the 14 school districts in the West Central Region authorized permission to conduct the research. There were 5,328 high school teachers in the Excel School District. A larger population was used for the sample size to pilot-test the instrument. This decision maintained the sample at 377. The sample size was doubled to seven hundred fifty-four to obtain a respectable return rate.

A database was created that includes the names of all high school teachers in the Excel School District. The Florida public high school teachers' contact information was exported into columns in a spreadsheet. The 7th and 8th-grade male and female teachers were omitted. Data for 9th through 12th-grade teachers were exported into a Microsoft Excel workbook. Columns were created and titled (a) teacher name, (b) subjects taught, (c) gender, and

(d) employment email address. Only full-time male and female ninth through twelfth-grade teachers who instructed English/Language Arts, Mathematics, Reading, Science, Social Studies, and Technology were included. Another column titled random number identification was inserted for the sample selection process. Seven hundred fifty-four teachers were randomly selected. Sixty teachers were randomly selected for the pilot test and excluded from the research sample. An email was sent to teachers inviting them to participate in the research. The email included information about the research purpose, voluntary participation with the right to withdraw without penalty, confidentiality, issues specific to electronic correspondence, and informed consent. Surveys were emailed to the remaining six hundred and ninety-four full-time ninth through twelfth-grade teachers in the Excel School District who taught English/Language Arts, Mathematics, Reading, Science, Social Studies, and Technology. Three hundred fifty-six teachers (242 females and 114 males) responded, yielding a 51.30% response rate.

Results

Pearson's chi-square test was used to analyze the relation of intensification as the criterion variable and years of experience as the predictor variable. Additionally, Pearson's chi-square test of independence was used to determine differences in responses and to disaggregate items relating to intensification as the criterion variable and subject taught as the predictor variable. Pearson's chi-square (χ^2) test of independence and multinomial logistic regression were used for logging the probability of variable outcomes. Survey Items 1 through 9 gathered data on teachers' perspectives regarding instructional autonomy and freedom in daily instructional decisions. Items 10 through 18 collected data on teachers' perspectives regarding curriculum autonomy and the amount of freedom to choose the type of curriculum used in the class. Items 19 through 27 gathered information about teachers' ability to use their expertise. Items 28 through 32 were used to collect data on teachers' perspectives on state accountability policies and their impact on classroom experiences.

A chi-square test of independence was performed to address Research Question 1: to what extent do teachers perceive that state accountability policies impact instructional autonomy, curriculum autonomy, and professional expertise? A total score was computed regarding the correlation of teachers' perspectives concerning state accountability policies and their practice relative to instructional autonomy. There was a significant relation between state accountability policies and instructional autonomy, $X^2(690, N = 5043.257) = 0.14, p < .0001$. Table 1 shows the calculation of Pearson Chi-square 5043.257, degrees of freedom as 690, minimum expected count equals 0.14, and the p-value is 0.0001.

Table 1. Chi-Square Tests for State Accountability Policies and Instructional Autonomy

	<i>Chi-Square Tests</i>		
	<i>Value</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)</i>
Pearson Chi-Square	5043.257 ^a	690	.0001

^a749 cells (99.6%) have an expected count of less than 5. The minimum expected count is 0.14.

A statistically significant relationship exists between instructional autonomy as the criterion variable and state

accountability policies as the predictor variable. High school teachers selected the agree option, indicating experiencing intensification regarding their freedom in daily instructional decision-making more often than strongly agree, neither agree or disagree, disagree, or strongly disagree.

The chi-square test of independence was performed to examine the relationship between state accountability policies and curricular autonomy. The relation between these variables was significant $X^2 (405, N = 3582.327) = 0.14, p < .0001$. Table 2 shows the calculations of Pearson Chi-square 3582.327, degrees of freedom as 405, minimum expected count equals 0.14, and the p-value is 0.0001. A statistically significant relationship exists between curricular autonomy as the criterion variable and state accountability policies as the predictor variable. Concerning curriculum autonomy, high school teachers selected the neither agree or disagree option to experience intensification regarding their perception of the amount of freedom they have when choosing the type of curriculum used in class and to what depth they can cover the curriculum more often than strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree.

Table 2. Chi-Square Tests for State Accountability Policies and Curriculum Autonomy

<i>Chi-Square Tests</i>			
	<i>Value</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)</i>
Pearson Chi-Square	3582.327 ^a	405	.0001

^a438 cells (97.8%) have an expected count of less than 5. The minimum expected count is 0.14.

A chi-square test of independence was performed to examine the relationship between state accountability policies and professional expertise. The relation between these variables was significant $X^2 (450, N = 3927.768) = 0.02, p < .0001$. Table 3 shows the calculation for Pearson Chi-square 3927.768, degrees of freedom as 450, minimum expected count equals 0.02, and the p-value is 0.0001. A statistically significant relationship exists between professional expertise as the criterion variable and state accountability policies as the predictor variable. Concerning professional expertise, high school teachers selected the neither agree or disagree option to experience intensification regarding using their expertise more often than strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree.

Table 3. Chi-Square Tests for State Accountability Policies and Professional Expertise

<i>Chi-Square Tests</i>			
	<i>Value</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)</i>
Pearson Chi-Square	3927.768 ^a	450	.0001

^a486 cells (98.0%) have an expected count of less than 5. The minimum expected count is 0.02.

A Chi-square test of independence was performed to respond to Research Question 2: to what extent do teachers' perspectives of current work experience meet the definition of intensification relative to instructional and curricular autonomy and professional expertise? The relation between the variable intensification and recent work experience was significant, $X^2 (102, N = 138.129) = 0.00, p < .010$. Table 4 shows the calculation for Pearson Chi-square 138.129, degrees of freedom as 102, minimum expected count equals 0.00, and the p-value is 0.010. There is a statistically significant relationship between intensification as the criterion variable and the current

work experience as the predictor variable. If teachers were allowed to select another career because the current work experience results in intensification, 44% of teachers would make a change.

Table 4. Chi-Square Tests for State Accountability Policies and Current Work Experiences

<i>Chi-Square Tests</i>			
	<i>Value</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)</i>
Pearson Chi-Square	138.129 ^a	102	.010

^a152 cells (97.4%) have an expected count of less than 5. The minimum expected count is 0.00.

To address Research Question 3, do teachers' perspectives regarding intensification differ when considering years of teaching experience? A chi-square test of independence was performed to compare the relationship between intensification as the criterion variable and teachers' years of experience as the predictor variable. The relation between the variables was significant, $X^2(51, N = 95148.714) = 48.52, p < .0001$. Table 5 shows the calculations for the Pearson Chi-square 95148.714, degrees of freedom as 51, minimum expected count equals 48.52, and the p-value is 0.0001.

Table 5. Chi-Square Tests for Intensifications and Years of Experience

<i>Chi-Square Tests</i>			
	<i>Value</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)</i>
Pearson Chi-Square	316.664 ^a	51	.0001

^a55 cells (52.9%) have an expected count of less than 5. The minimum expected count is 0.16.

There is a significant relationship between intensification as the criterion variable and teachers' years of experience as the predictor variable. Teachers with less experience selected the agree option, indicating experiencing intensification. Data analysis regarding research question 3 revealed that teachers' perspectives about intensification and teachers' years of experience are related.

A chi-square test of independence was performed to answer the question: do teachers' perspectives regarding intensification differ when considering the subject taught? The relationship between intensification and subject taught was significant $X^2(306, N = 1259.522) = 0.12, p < .0001$. Table 6 shows the calculations for the Pearson Chi-square 1259.522, degrees of freedom as 306, minimum expected count equals 0.12, and p-value of .0001.

Table 6. Chi-Square Tests for Intensification and Subject Taught

<i>Chi-Square Tests</i>			
	<i>Value</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)</i>
Pearson Chi-Square	1259.522 ^a	306	.0001

^a364 cells (100.0%) have an expected count of less than 5. The minimum expected count is 0.12.

Teachers who taught Mathematics, 21.91% indicated experiencing intensification by selecting agree more often than teachers who instructed English/Language Arts, 20.22%; Science, 17.13%; Social Science, 14.04%;

Technology, 12.92%; Reading, 11.8%; and Other 1.98%.

A Chi-square test of independence was performed to address Research Question 4: to what extent do teachers experience an intensification of state accountability policies? The relation between the variables intensification and state accountability policies was significant, $X^2(765, N = 5136.042) = 0.02, p < 0.0001$. Table 7 shows the calculation for Pearson Chi-square 5136.042, degrees of freedom as 765, minimum expected count equals 0.02, and the p-value is 0.0001.

Table 7. Chi-Square Tests for Intensification and State Accountability

<i>Chi-Square Tests</i>			
	<i>Value</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)</i>
Pearson Chi-Square	5136.042 ^a	765	.0001

^a831 cells (99.9%) have an expected count of less than 5. The minimum expected count is 0.02.

A statistically significant relationship exists between intensification as the criterion variable and state accountability policies as the predictor variable. Teachers selected the agree option, indicating experiencing intensification to state accountability policies more often than strongly agree, neither agree or disagree, disagree, or strongly disagree.

Table 8 shows the correlations between intensification as the dependent variable and gender, years of experience, and subject taught as independent variables.

Table 8. Correlations of Gender, Years of Experience, Subject Taught, and Intensification

Measure	Intensification	Years of Experience	Subject Taught
Gender	0.0001	0.290	0.067
Intensification		0.290	0.066

Note. * $p < .01$, ** $p < .001$

Correlations between intensification and gender ($p = 0.315$), intensification and years of experience ($p = .0001$), and intensification and subject taught ($p = .067$). The correlation between intensification as the criterion variable and gender, years of experience, and subject taught as predictor variables. The criterion variable intensification has four levels: instructional autonomy, curriculum autonomy, professional expertise, and state accountability policies. Years of experience and subjects taught are marginally significant, and gender is revealed as a non-significant trend in the predicted direction.

A multinomial logistic regression analysis was used to test whether perspectives significantly predicted teachers' experience regarding intensification. As seen in Table 9, years of teaching experience better predict whether intensification affects teachers rather than the subject they instruct, $R^2 = 0.066, F(1, 459.073) = 30.294, p < 0.01$. Gender is less of a predictor than the subject taught.

Table 9. Summary of Logistic Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting Intensification by Years of Teaching Experience, Subject Taught, and Gender for Teachers

Predictor	Intensification		
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	<i>e^B</i>
Years of Teaching Experience	32.221	0.331	0.309
Subject Taught	-0.999	0.064	-0.05
Gender	-0.531	0.252	-0.006
Constant	257.243	0.554	
<i>X</i> ²		295.686	
<i>df</i>		140	
% Leave career		55.6	

Note: Years of teaching experience coded as 1 for no and 2 for yes.

Perspectives scored as 1 for strongly disagree to 5 for strongly agree.

Subject Taught coded as 1, English Language Arts, 2, Mathematics, 3, Science, 4, Social Science, 5, Reading, 6, Business/Technology, 7, Other

**p*<.05.

Discussion

The United States federal and state educational accountability standards such as the Elementary and Secondary Educational Act (ESEA, 1965) and No Child Left Behind (NCLB, 2002) were initiated for pre-kindergarten through 12th grade to ensure all students become college- or career-ready. Darling-Hammond (2009) asserted that teachers are significant to students' educational attainment. Federal mandates require teachers to be "qualified" professionals. In America's public schools, a considerable problem is the intense pressure placed on teachers and other educators. Educational policies require teachers to be accountable for student achievement outcomes. Reauthorized changes to NCLB mandated teachers to be qualified while educating students as they become career and or college-ready, but unintended consequences occurred within the teaching practice, such as narrowing of curriculum, loss of teachers' control over curricular focus, limiting teacher autonomy in the classroom, and de-professionalization of teaching practices. In 2015, the Florida State Standards were approved to ensure all publicly educated students were college- or career-ready upon graduation. Therefore, this research aimed to determine teachers' perspectives regarding the influence of accountability policies on intensification in public high schools in the West Central area of Florida. Participants were from a random sampling of full-time 9th through 12th-grade public high school teachers instructing English/Language Arts, Mathematics, Reading, Science, Social Studies, and Technology subjects in a regional area of Florida.

The enforcement of federally mandated laws changed the teaching profession, causing intensification. Intensification is defined as "an increased separation within the understanding and performing regulatory policies that include a reduction in accountability planning with expansions in curricula and teaching from externally pre-specified lists of behaviorally defined competencies and objectives, which often lessen teachers' meaningful involvement in curriculum development" (Apple, 1986, 2021; Ballet & Kelchtermans, 2006). Regulatory

accountability legislation implemented to improve student achievement is growing in popularity and intensifying further.

The first question asked how the Florida State Standards influence teachers' perspectives regarding their practice relative to instructional and curricular autonomy and professional expertise. Research Question 1: to what extent do teachers perceive that state accountability policies impact instructional autonomy, curriculum autonomy, and professional expertise? In the literature, intensification is stated as affecting teachers' instructional autonomy, curricular autonomy, and professional expertise regarding their concerns about state accountability policies, educational assessments, and issued materials (Apple, 2004; Ballet & Kelchtermans, 2008, 2009; Valli & Buese, 2007; Wills & Sandholtz, 2009).

Apple (2004), Ballet and Kelchtermans (2008, 2009), Darling-Hammond (2015), and Wills and Sandholtz (2009) informed that an additional unintended consequence is that state accountability policies de-professionalize the teaching practice. Darling-Hammond (2009) asserted that teachers are significant to the educational attainment of students, and results from this research indicate a correlation between instructional autonomy and professional expertise, revealing that teachers responded as having the freedom to make decisions while employing subject-delivery to address child-learning problems. Results of this research are that full-time public-school teachers selected the "agree" option for experiencing intensification regarding their perception of the amount of freedom they have in daily instructional decision-making more often than strongly agree, neither agree or disagree, disagree, or strongly disagree regarding instructional autonomy. A significant correlation is computed and shown in Table 1, Chi-Square Tests for State Accountability Policies and Instructional Autonomy. Data analysis regarding the first research question reveals that teachers perceive instructional autonomy, curricular autonomy, professional expertise, and current state accountability policy as related, resulting in an experience of intensification.

The second question stated; to what extent do teachers' perspectives of current work experience meet the criteria of intensification theory relative to instructional and curricular autonomy and professional expertise? The total score indicated that teachers' perspectives of recent work experience met the requirements of intensification theory relative to instructional and curricular autonomy and professional expertise. The results of this research support previous conclusions presented by Apple (2004) stating that the federal and state public education accountability requirements narrow curriculum and reduce teachers' instructional autonomy; however, the results do not agree that a mass exit of educators is produced. The analysis of survey items 1 through 32 for the total score of intensification revealed that teachers' perspectives of their current work experience meet the criteria of the intensification theory. Survey item 40 stated that they would choose another profession if given the opportunity, and 55.6% of those surveyed would not choose another occupation. The statistical outcome for the survey item total scores per research question two computes as significant, shown in Table 4, Chi-Square Tests for State Accountability Policies and Current Work Conditions. Fortunately, teachers' loyalty to the teaching practice cannot be coerced through sanctions, but devotion can be motivated through positive leadership and internal supports that buttress competence and care (Darling-Hammond, 2004). The results from the data analysis regarding research question two are from teachers' perspectives. Their current work experiences meet the theory

of intensification relative to instructional and curricular autonomy and professional expertise, which are related.

The third question stated to what extent teachers' perspectives regarding intensification differ according to years of teaching experience and subject taught. Given years of teaching experience, teachers indicated pressure resulting in intensification rather than the subject teachers instruct. Valli and Buese (2007) stated that teachers are pressured to emphasize portions of the curriculum more. This research shows that full-time teachers with less than twenty years of experience were more likely to experience intensification than full-time public school teachers with more than twenty years of experience, which supports prior literature. As Boyd et al. (2008) and Feng and Sass (2017) state, the less experienced colleagues leave their first teaching assignment for new placements in New York and Florida. This research indicates that teachers with less experience agree when addressing items 1 through 32 and 36 about experiencing pressure regarding intensification, which is computed as significant in Table 5, Chi-Square Tests for Intensifications and Years of Experience. Data analysis regarding research question three reveals that teachers' perspectives about intensification and teachers' years of experience are related.

Wallace (2012) stated that teachers teaching non-core academic subjects are not influenced by intensification resulting from accountability policies; however, core academic teachers indicate apprehension and stress. Concerning teachers' perspectives about the classroom environment relating to the Florida State Standards accountability policies, results from this research support core academic Mathematic teachers' experience intensification regarding the subjects taught. The Mathematical teachers selected agreed more often than teachers who instructed English/Language Arts, Reading, Science, Social Studies, and Technology. More often, teachers chose the agree option, indicating the impact of intensification in expressing their perspective regarding classroom experience relating to the Florida State Standards accountability policies. This result shows a significant relationship between Table 6, Chi-Square Tests for Intensification and Subject Taught. Data analysis regarding research question three reveals that teachers' perspectives about intensification and the subject taught are related.

Research question four stated, to what extent do teachers' perspectives differ regarding classroom experience relating to the Florida State Standards accountability policies? Apple (1999, 2006, 2007), Ballet and Kelchtermans (2008, 2009), and Wills and Sandholtz (2009) stated that accountability policies affect teachers' instructional performance in the classroom. Unfortunately, within the teaching profession, unintended consequences have developed from the implementation of NCLB, such as job dissatisfaction, reduced commitment, burnout, loss of self-esteem, and early exit from the profession (Valli & Buese, 2007). Teachers selected the agree option indicating the impact of intensification more often than strongly agree, neither agree or disagree, disagree, or strongly disagree to express their perspective regarding classroom experience relating to the Florida State Standards accountability policies, which is computed as significant in Table 7, Chi-Square Tests for Intensifications and State Accountability. Data analysis regarding research question four reveals that teachers' perspectives about classroom experience and Florida State Standards policies are related.

For college, career, and life achievements, Florida's educational standards were developed with the intent of students graduating high school guided by critical thinking and problem-solving skills. This study has limitations when analyzing teachers' perspectives about Florida's educational standards, state accountability policies,

intensification, teaching practices, classroom environment, current work experiences, subject taught, and instructional and curriculum autonomy. College and employment readiness should have been explored. This study did not consider unresolved explanations of students' lack of preparedness for college and career readiness regarding their background, opportunities, or access to sufficient educational resources. Given that the focus of teachers' practices was the main point of this study, students' experiences were not considered.

Conclusion

Today, teachers face numerous demands that impact their work lives in the teaching and learning environment. A long-standing national concern has been effective teaching, but in recent years, the focus on the effectiveness of programs in producing high-quality teachers has sharpened (Todd-Smith & Campana, 2022). Federal and state legislation with accompanying accountability requirements to improve student academic achievement and stigmatize unsatisfactory performance has reconfigured the work context. Legislation has had the unanticipated consequence of shifting curriculum development away from teachers to prearranged instructional materials developed by companies. Requirements for teachers to exercise fidelity to commercially designed programs, practices, and resources undermine teachers' ability to differentiate instruction in ways they deem necessary to meet the needs of their students (Costello & Costello, 2017). Teaching to standards is the classroom norm, and teacher creativity and judgment have been supplanted. In this context, teacher autonomy and decision-making are limited, contributing to deskilling and decreased professionalism (Costello & Costello, 2017).

Educational policies have lessened teachers' ability to be optimally effective while exercising their professional expertise (Darling-Hammond, 2004). Education legislation's accountability mandates produce intensification, affecting teachers' instructional autonomy, curricular autonomy, and professional expertise. This research confirms the existence of intensification and its impact on teachers. The Florida State Standards affect teachers' practice because of associated pressures on teachers' ability to exercise curricular autonomy, instructional autonomy, and professionalism. Teachers' perceptions in this research indicate experiencing intensification concerning state accountability policies. This research also revealed a relationship between years of teaching experience and intensification. Teachers with less than twenty years of experience were more likely to experience intensification than those with more than twenty years of experience. Boyd et al. (2008) and Feng and Sass (2017) stated that less experienced colleagues leave their first teaching assignment for new placements.

Stressors primarily come from people outside the educational setting, and the minimal inclusion of educational professionals—teachers to provide pedagogical knowledge has negatively influenced the learning process. Todd-Smith and Campana (2022) concluded now is the time for stakeholders in education to review the policies that govern teacher preparation programs and help teachers become more effective in every classroom. The Primary Sources: 2012- scholastic report, *America's Teachers on the Teaching Profession*, noted that teachers desired greater decision-making in school policies and practices to make teaching more of a profession, as observed by the surveyed participants in 2011.

The main conclusion of this study is, as stated above, that American students' educational gains are dependent on

qualified teachers. It's a fundamental premise that each student is unique and may need different teaching strategies. Teachers are required to implement educational policies for student achievement outcomes. Unintended consequences occurred within the teaching profession. Florida implemented academic standards. Even now, a new progress monitoring system, Florida's Assessment of Student Thinking (FAST), is approved and in place.

Recommendations

More research is needed to determine whether progress monitoring standards produce intensification, lessen pedagogical practices, and deskill the teaching profession. Conduct research to examine the relationship between different Florida regional areas and analyze whether intensification exists regarding state and national educational accountability policies that affect instructional autonomy, curricular autonomy, and professional expertise. Conduct research to explore the relationship between local educational policies to assess whether intensification regarding state and national educational accountability policies affects instructional autonomy, curricular autonomy, and professional expertise.

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