

Introduction

- Standardized observation measures of classroom practices are often used to assess quality and identify areas for improvement in early childhood classrooms (e.g., Connors, 2016; Tout et al., 2010).
- Observational assessments are important, yet they may not reflect all that is occurring within teaching interactions such as teachers' thinking and instructional intentions.
- Thus, it is important to determine whether there are differences in the ways that varying stakeholders perceive observations of instruction.

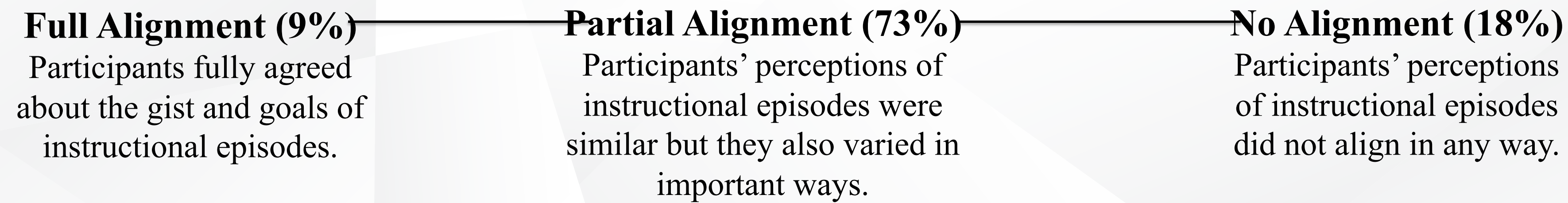
Research question: How do early childhood teachers' reported intentions during literacy instruction align with other early childhood teachers' and researchers' observations of that instruction?

Method

- 12 early childhood *study teachers* were video-taped twice while they enacted literacy instruction. Then they commented on their in-the-moment thinking as they watched video clips of their instruction (Schachter & Freeman, 2015).
- Two *observing researchers* and two *observing teachers* watched the same instructional episodes and shared their perceptions of the teachers' practice and intentions.
- Interview data were analyzed with a general thematic qualitative approach (Braun & Clarke, 2006) to find instances of alignment in what participants' perceived about the instructional episodes.

RESULTS

Participants' perceptions of literacy instruction aligned along a continuum



When there was partial or incomplete alignment this seemed to be around differences in participants' perceptions related to classroom context and instructional goals.

Themes Regarding Classroom Context (*study teachers* only)

Curriculum (n=15)

"I wanted to know if...they are grasping some of the concepts that we've been talking about"

Knowledge of an individual child (n=13)

"knowing Jen, knowing her family...I can say that to her as if she was a kindergarten student"

Knowledge of groups of children (n=12)

"we have mixed age...some of our kids re ready for things that some of our other kids aren't"

Classroom environment (n=7)

"I have- the bigger type of books. All those- we got donated and all those- have rhyming words"

Classroom routines (n=6)

"then when we come in, they eat, relax on their cots, and take a nap"

Themes Regarding Instructional Goals (*observers* and *study teachers*)

Social or emotional goal (n=17)

"the more words they have, the more they can express [their feelings]"

Assessment of learning goal (n=14)

"in our literacy standards, they have to be able to distinguish individual sounds and words"

Kindergarten readiness goal (n=9)

"everything that they don't learn here they will learn in kindergarten...our goal is to get them ready"

STEM goal (n=6)

"numbers and letters"

Check child learning goal (n=6)

"I kind of just wanted to see where they were at"

Classroom management goal (n=3)

"I just kind of try and fill the quiet space. That way, um, I'm still actively engaged with them"

Discussion

- In general there seemed to be at least partial agreement across participants regarding the purpose of instruction.
- Despite differences among varying stakeholders, it seems that observations can capture some of what teachers intend and identify additional practices
- Yet there was limited full alignment, indicating that observations may omit important parts of instruction such as teachers' context-related knowledge.

Implications:

- Observation can at least in part capture teachers' intentions regarding literacy instruction.
- However, holistic assessments of classroom quality that include unobservable aspects of teaching such as teacher thinking might provide better insight into classroom processes and areas for professional development than observational measures alone.

References

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For more information contact rschachter2@unl.edu