

Exploring Agency and Adaptability in Schooling

Prof. Margaret Vaughn,

Professor of Language, Literacy & Technology,
Washington State University, USA

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Abstract

Student agency is often described as important goal for students. Educational initiatives across the globe support the claim that student agency is an important dimension of effective literacy learning. However, obstacles have impeded a common understanding and implementation of student agency in schools. For example, in the United States, recent educational reforms emphasizing test-based school accountability have created pressure on educators to provide highly prescriptive and “one-size fits all” instruction, offering few opportunities for student voice, decision-making, and agency in what and how they learn. In this lecture, student agency and understandings of adaptive teaching are discussed to explore possibilities for research, theory, and practice. First, an overview of recent educational reform efforts in the United States are discussed. Then, observational data and theories of adaptability are presented with a focus on how adaptability supports equitable and effective literacy learning and instruction. Finally, discussion centers on theoretical understandings of student agency and its relationship to adaptability with implications for research, practice, and policy. Participants attending this lecture will explore the intersections of theories of adaptability and agency during literacy instruction as well as directions for future research on adaptive and agentic literacy practices.