

Teaching through Concrete Representational Abstract Model: Lived Experiences of Elementary Teachers in Implementing Early Numeracy Instruction

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Abstract

This study explored the lived experiences of elementary teachers in implementing the Concrete Representational Abstract (CRA) Model in early numeracy instruction and addressed four research questions: (1) How do participants describe their significant experiences in implementing the CRA Model in early numeracy instruction? (2) What meanings do participants attach to their experiences in implementing the CRA Model? (3) What themes emerge from the participants' formulated meanings regarding their implementation of the CRA Model? and (4) Based on the findings, what instructional support program or intervention may be proposed to enhance the implementation of the CRA Model in early numeracy instruction? Using a qualitative research design and Colaizzi's phenomenological method, data were gathered through interviews with elementary teachers who had experience implementing the CRA Model. The findings revealed that the implementation of the CRA Model at Tayac Elementary School in Maryland, USA, was perceived as a transformative and effective instructional approach that promotes conceptual understanding, active student engagement, differentiated instruction, and equitable learning opportunities in early numeracy education. Teachers described the CRA Model as a meaningful instructional framework that enables students to construct mathematical understanding gradually and purposefully by progressing from concrete manipulatives to visual representations and, ultimately, abstract mathematical concepts rather than relying primarily on rote memorization of procedures. The participants' experiences further highlighted the value of hands-on learning, meaningful representations, teacher guidance, and opportunities for students to explain their mathematical thinking. Although teachers recognized challenges such as limited instructional time, preparation of materials, student readiness, and the need to ensure that manipulatives are used appropriately as learning tools, they viewed these challenges as manageable through collaboration, professional development, careful planning, and appropriate instructional support. Based on the emerging themes, an instructional support program is proposed to strengthen teachers' knowledge, confidence, and fidelity in implementing the CRA Model and to promote consistent, meaningful, and equitable early numeracy instruction.

Keywords: teaching, Lived Experiences, qualitative research, instructional support

