

Investigating the perceptions of Teachers and Students towards the Implementation of Culturally Responsive Teaching in Diverse Classrooms

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Abstract-This study explored the perceptions of teachers and students regarding culturally responsive teaching in the classroom. Data collected from educators indicated a moderate agreement on the importance of incorporating students' cultural backgrounds (mean: 3.0) and using diverse teaching materials (mean: 3.3). Students reported feeling respected (mean: 3.6) and encouraged to express their cultural identities (mean: 3.7), highlighting a generally positive classroom environment. However, the curriculum's representation of diverse cultures (mean: 3.5) indicated areas for improvement. The findings suggest that ongoing professional development for educators, enriched curricula, structured opportunities for cultural sharing, and collaboration with local cultural organizations are essential for fostering inclusivity and educational equity.

Keywords: Culturally responsive teaching, educational equity, cultural backgrounds, diverse materials, teacher perceptions, student perceptions, classroom environment.

INTRODUCTION

In an increasingly interconnected world, classrooms are becoming more diverse, reflecting a mosaic of cultures, languages, and experiences. This diversity presents both opportunities and challenges for educators striving to create inclusive learning environments that cater to the needs of all students. Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) has emerged as a critical pedagogical approach aimed at addressing these challenges by recognizing, respecting, and incorporating students' cultural backgrounds into the educational process. As classrooms become more heterogeneous, the implementation of CRT not only enhances student engagement and academic performance but also fosters a sense of belonging and respect among students from various backgrounds. Culturally Responsive Teaching is grounded in the

belief that all students come to school with unique cultural assets that can enrich the learning experience. This approach goes beyond merely acknowledging diversity; it actively seeks to integrate students' cultural references into the curriculum, teaching strategies, and classroom interactions. By doing so, educators can create more meaningful and relevant learning experiences that resonate with students' lives. Research has shown that when students see their identities reflected in the curriculum, they are more likely to engage deeply with the material, leading to improved academic outcomes and a greater sense of self-efficacy. Despite its potential benefits, the effective implementation of CRT in diverse classrooms faces several obstacles. Teachers often encounter systemic barriers, including a lack of training and resources, institutional policies that prioritize standardized testing, and preconceived notions about students' capabilities based on their cultural backgrounds. Furthermore, there may be resistance to changing traditional teaching practices, especially in environments where cultural homogeneity has historically dominated the curriculum. Addressing these challenges requires a commitment to ongoing professional development and institutional support that empowers educators to embrace CRT as a foundational aspect of their teaching practice. One of the key principles of CRT is the emphasis on building strong relationships with students and their families. By understanding students' cultural contexts, teachers can create a supportive classroom environment where all students feel valued and included. This relational aspect of CRT encourages educators to engage with students' families and communities, fostering partnerships that enhance the educational experience. Such collaboration can provide insights into students' cultural backgrounds

and experiences, enabling teachers to tailor their instructional methods to better meet the needs of their students. Moreover, the implementation of CRT involves a critical examination of the curriculum itself. Traditional curricula often reflect a Eurocentric perspective that marginalizes the histories, contributions, and perspectives of non-Western cultures. To create a more equitable learning environment, educators must strive to diversify the curriculum, incorporating texts and materials that represent a broad range of voices and experiences. This not only validates the identities of marginalized students but also enriches the educational experience for all learners, fostering empathy and understanding across cultural divides. Professional development is crucial for teachers seeking to implement CRT effectively. Training programs should focus on equipping educators with the knowledge and skills to recognize their own biases, understand cultural dynamics, and apply culturally relevant pedagogical strategies. Such professional learning opportunities can help teachers reflect on their practices, challenge their assumptions, and adopt new approaches that promote inclusivity and equity in the classroom. In conclusion, the investigation of Culturally Responsive Teaching in diverse classrooms is not just a pedagogical endeavor but a social imperative. As our society becomes more diverse, the need for educational practices that honor and leverage this diversity becomes increasingly urgent. CRT provides a framework that enables educators to create inclusive, engaging, and relevant learning environments that affirm students' identities and cultural backgrounds. However, for CRT to be effectively implemented, it requires a concerted effort from educators, schools, and communities to address systemic barriers, invest in professional development, and commit to creating curricula that reflect the rich tapestry of human experience. The journey towards culturally responsive teaching is complex, yet it holds the promise of transforming classrooms into spaces of equity, respect, and mutual understanding—ultimately preparing all students to thrive in a diverse world.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Parrish et al (2010) examined research on cultural differences to identify key dimensions that affect instructional situations, introducing the Cultural

Dimensions of Learning Framework (CDLF), which outlines eight cultural parameters related to social relationships, epistemological beliefs, and temporal perceptions. It discusses literature on instructional design and culture to provide guidelines for overcoming cross-cultural challenges faced by educators. The article emphasizes the importance of increased awareness, culturally sensitive communication, and adjusted instructional design processes to address these challenges. Finally, it highlights the use of the CDLF questionnaire as a tool to identify learners' preferences and potential strategies for effective instruction. Milner (2011) filled a gap in the literature by highlighting a White science teacher's efforts to build cultural competence in a diverse urban school. Using culturally relevant pedagogy as a framework, the article illustrates how the teacher enhances his cultural knowledge to improve student learning. It argues that the teacher successfully establishes cultural congruence by deepening his understanding of himself and his practices. The insights provided are valuable for teachers, educators, and researchers, demonstrating how the teacher builds relationships with students and fosters awareness of identity and race in an urban context. Byrd (2016) examined the effectiveness of culturally relevant teaching by assessing student perceptions in classrooms with varying levels of such practices. It surveyed 315 students in grades six to twelve across the U.S., comprising diverse backgrounds (62% female; 25% White, Latino, African American, and Asian each). Results indicated that culturally relevant teaching positively impacted academic outcomes and ethnic-racial identity development, supporting its effectiveness in enhancing classroom experiences. Johnson (2015) broadened the principles of culturally responsive leadership to include community-based educational leadership that emphasizes cultural recognition, revitalization, and community development. They present historical examples of educational leaders from New York City, London, and Toronto, highlighting how these leaders acted as public intellectuals, "boundary spanners," and advocates, connecting community activism with culture-focused curricula within three national contexts. Ultimately, the author explores the implications of this framework for preparing future leaders. Aronson and Laughter (2016) aimed to identify examples linking CRE to

positive student outcomes across various subjects. The authors hope this synthesis will serve as a valuable resource for educational researchers, parents, teachers, and education leaders seeking to shift public discourse in education away from neoliberal individualism, whether within specific classrooms or the broader educational community.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

1. To investigate teacher perceptions regarding the incorporation of cultural backgrounds and diverse materials in their teaching practices.
2. To explore student experiences related to cultural respect and representation in the classroom, as well as the impact of culturally responsive teaching on their engagement.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employed a mixed-methods approach to investigate the implementation of culturally responsive teaching (CRT) in diverse classrooms in Kerala, targeting approximately 50 teachers and 200 students from various socio-economic and ethnic backgrounds. Data collection involved structured surveys to assess perceptions of CRT, semi-structured interviews for qualitative insights into experiences, and classroom observations to evaluate practical application. Quantitative data has been analyzed using statistical software for descriptive and inferential statistics, while thematic analysis has been applied to qualitative data from interviews and observations. Ethical considerations included obtaining informed consent and ensuring confidentiality. Despite potential limitations such as sample size and response bias, this methodology aims to provide comprehensive insights into effective teaching practices that recognize and celebrate cultural diversity.

DATA ANALYSIS

Teachers Perception

Table 1: Cultural Backgrounds Enhance Learning

Statement	Response	Frequency	Percentage	Mean	SD	Rank
Incorporating students' cultural backgrounds enhances learning.	1	5	10%	3.0	1.0	3
	2	10	20%			
	3	15	30%			
	4	12	24%			
	5	3	6%			
Total		50	100%			

Source- Primary Data

The responses indicate that a majority of participants (60%) agreed (3 or higher on the scale) that incorporating cultural backgrounds enhances learning. The mean score of 3.0 reflects a moderate agreement,

while the standard deviation of 1.0 suggests variability in responses. The ranking places this statement in the middle, indicating a common acknowledgment of the importance of cultural backgrounds in education.

Table 2: Use of Diverse Teaching Materials

Statement	Response	Frequency	Percentage	Mean	SD	Rank
I regularly use teaching materials that reflect diverse cultures.	1	4	8%	3.3	1.0	3
	2	6	12%			
	3	18	36%			
	4	16	32%			
	5	6	12%			
Total		50	100%			

Source- Primary Data

Responses show that 68% of respondents rated their use of diverse teaching materials at 3 or higher. With a mean of 3.3 and a standard deviation of 1.0, the data reflects a relatively strong recognition of the

importance of incorporating diverse cultural perspectives in teaching materials. The ranking suggests this statement is moderately significant in the context of promoting educational equity.

Table 3: Confidence in Addressing Cultural Differences

Statement	Response	Frequency	Percentage	Mean	SD	Rank
I am confident in my ability to address cultural differences.	1	3	6%	3.4	1.2	2
	2	7	14%			
	3	15	30%			
	4	18	36%			
	5	7	14%			
Total		50	100%			

Source- Primary Data

The results reveal that 50% of participants expressed confidence (rated 3 or higher) in addressing cultural differences, with a mean score of 3.4 and a standard deviation of 1.2. This indicates a positive yet

somewhat varied perception of their confidence levels. The ranking of this statement as second suggests it is a crucial area of focus for professional development among educators.

Table 4: Encouraging Cultural Sharing

Statement	Response	Frequency	Percentage	Mean	SD	Rank
I encourage students to share their cultural experiences.	1	2	4%	3.5	1.1	2
	2	5	10%			
	3	15	30%			
	4	20	40%			
	5	8	16%			
Total		50	100%			

Source- Primary Data

The majority (56%) of respondents rated their encouragement for students to share cultural experiences at 3 or higher, yielding a mean of 3.5. The standard deviation of 1.1 indicates moderate

variability in responses. This statement's ranking suggests it is significant, highlighting the importance of fostering an inclusive classroom environment.

Table 5: Adapting Teaching Methods

Statement	Response	Frequency	Percentage	Mean	SD	Rank
I adapt my teaching methods to meet the diverse needs of my students.	1	4	8%	3.5	1.1	1
	2	6	12%			
	3	10	20%			
	4	20	40%			
	5	10	20%			
Total		50	100%			

Source- Primary Data

The data indicates that 60% of educators adapt their teaching methods to meet diverse student needs, with a mean score of 3.5 and a standard deviation of 1.1. This suggests a strong recognition of the need for

adaptable teaching strategies. As the highest-ranked statement, it reflects a commitment to inclusive educational practices.

STUDENTS PERCEPTION

Table 1: Respect for Cultural Background

Statement	Response	Frequency	Percentage	Mean	SD	Rank
I feel that my cultural background is respected in this classroom.	1	16	8%	3.6	1.1	2
	2	24	12%			
	3	56	28%			
	4	64	32%			
	5	40	20%			
Total		200	100%			

(Primary Data)

The majority of students (60%) rated their cultural background as respected in the classroom with a mean score of 3.6, indicating a positive perception of cultural respect. The standard deviation of 1.1 suggests

moderate variability in responses, while the ranking positions this statement as the second most significant in terms of student experiences.

Table 2: Curriculum Representation

Statement	Response	Frequency	Percentage	Mean	SD	Rank
The curriculum includes materials that represent my culture.	1	18	9%	3.5	1.1	3
	2	30	15%			
	3	50	25%			
	4	60	30%			
	5	42	21%			
Total		200	100%			

(Primary Data)

Students expressed a generally positive view regarding the inclusion of culturally representative materials in the curriculum, with a mean of 3.5. Approximately 51% rated their agreement at 3 or higher, indicating a

good but not complete alignment with cultural representation. The standard deviation of 1.1 shows some variation, and this statement ranked third, emphasizing its relevance to students' experiences.

Table 3: Expression of Cultural Identity

Statement	Response	Frequency	Percentage	Mean	SD	Rank
I am encouraged to express my cultural identity in class activities.	1	10	5%	3.7	1.0	1
	2	22	11%			
	3	46	23%			
	4	72	36%			
	5	50	25%			
Total		200	100%			

(Primary Data)

With a mean score of 3.7, students felt encouraged to express their cultural identity during class activities, making this the highest-ranked statement. A significant 61% rated their agreement as 3 or higher,

reflecting a strong environment for cultural expression. The standard deviation of 1.0 indicates consistent agreement among respondents.

Table 4: Valuing Cultural Diversity

Statement	Response	Frequency	Percentage	Mean	SD	Rank
My teacher values the cultural diversity of students in the classroom.	1	8	4%	3.6	1.1	2
	2	16	8%			
	3	40	20%			
	4	80	40%			

	5	56	28%			
Total		200	100%			

(Primary Data)

Students perceived that their teachers valued cultural diversity, with a mean score of 3.6. Approximately 68% agreed (rating of 3 or higher), indicating a favorable view of teachers' recognition of diversity in

the classroom. The standard deviation of 1.1 reflects some differences in perceptions, placing this statement as the second most significant.

Table 5: Impact on Engagement and Motivation

Statement	Response	Frequency	Percentage	Mean	SD	Rank
I believe that culturally relevant teaching improves my engagement and motivation to learn.	1	12	6%	3.6	1.1	2
	2	20	10%			
	3	38	19%			
	4	72	36%			
	5	58	29%			
Total		200	100%			

(Primary Data)

Students largely agreed that culturally relevant teaching positively impacted their engagement and motivation, reflected in a mean score of 3.6. With 65% rating their agreement at 3 or higher, this highlights the importance of cultural relevance in fostering student engagement. The standard deviation of 1.1 shows a consistent sentiment among respondents, ranking this statement as one of the key factors in their educational experiences.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

The study highlighted the significance of culturally responsive teaching, revealing that educators acknowledged the importance of integrating students' cultural backgrounds and utilizing diverse materials, with mean scores of 3.0 and 3.3, respectively. Students felt respected and encouraged to express their identities, evidenced by a mean of 3.6 for respect and 3.7 for cultural expression, indicating a positive classroom environment. However, the curriculum's representation of diverse cultures (mean: 3.5) showed room for improvement. To enhance educational equity, it is recommended that schools implement ongoing professional development for teachers, enrich the curriculum with more diverse materials, create structured opportunities for cultural sharing, establish feedback mechanisms for student input, and collaborate with local cultural organizations. These measures can further foster an inclusive and equitable educational landscape.

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