

Culturally Responsive Teaching

| Content | Theoretical Knowledge | Skills | Competencies |
|---|--|--|---|
| <p><i>Understanding Culturally Responsive Teaching</i></p> <p><i>Main Principles of Culturally Responsive Teaching</i></p> <p><i>Essentials Practices in Culturally Responsive Teaching</i></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>What is Culturally Responsive Teaching?</i> - <i>What are the benefits of it?</i> - <i>What are the principles of Culturally Responsive Teaching?</i> - <i>Essential strategies for the implementation of Culturally Responsive Teaching</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Enabled to use CRT in classroom</i> - <i>Cultural Knowledge Reflection</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Openness to new learning approaches</i> - <i>Openness to environment of other age and social groups</i> - <i>Mental flexibility</i> - <i>Perspective Taking</i> |

Introduction

Culture is a complex phenomenon that includes the changing worldviews, knowledge, values, traditions, beliefs, capabilities, and social and political relationships of a group of people that give meaning to and influence their life and actions. This means that culture goes beyond visible and tangible aspects, such as food or dress, to include more implicit behaviours, communication and beliefs.

Culture is shared between and learnt in groups of people bound together by a common history, location, language, religion or social class. Yet, it is multifaceted and dynamic, so there are variations between individuals within cultural groups.

The following module explains culturally responsive teaching its importance and relevance. In addition, important key points for implementation in practice are presented.

Topic 1 | Understanding Culturally Responsive Teaching

“First, an important reminder that the cultural differences among students are an asset, not a deficit.”

-June E. Downing

What is Culturally responsive teaching?

Culturally Responsive Teaching is a pedagogy that recognizes the importance of including students' cultural differences in all aspects of learning.

This strategy uses the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning more inclusive and effective.



Image source: ArgoPrep.

<https://argoprep.com/blog/k8/5-ways-to-celebrate-cultural-diversity-in-your-classroom> (accessed 30 Sept 2021)

Teachers who utilise culturally responsive teaching strategies value students' cultural and linguistic resources and view this knowledge as a foundation to build upon rather than a learning barrier. These teachers use this capital as the basis for instructional connections to facilitate student learning and development. Some important components include bringing native language into the classroom, understanding history and culture, family involvement, and community culture into the classroom.

Why is it important?

In the classroom, problems may occur when teachers are unaware of the diverse knowledge and experiences of the different students. For this reason, it is important not to pretend that differences don't exist, or to treat all students the same way regardless of culture. Teachers need to move beyond cultural blindness to cultural responsiveness.

Deficit beliefs and discourses about students from various cultural and ethnic backgrounds can lead to teachers feeling helpless, frustrated or angry. This way of thinking locates the responsibility for change within students and their families and therefore outside of a teacher's control. It prevents teachers from being powerful agents of change in their own classrooms.

Culturally responsive teaching techniques can reduce the gap between the highest and lowest achievers while at the same time increasing the overall levels of achievement. Culturally responsive teaching strategies can have significant benefits such as:

Strengthening students' sense of identity: enhances mutual respect for different cultures and ethnicities among students. An inclusive teaching strategy helps teachers and students understand different perspectives, appreciate others' strengths, and build empathy.

Engaging students in the course material: allows students to proudly acknowledge their heritage, culture, religion, and traditions; and provides opportunities for students and teachers to interact and share stories, thoughts, beliefs, and ideas from different cultures

Enhance development: Supporting critical thinking and teamwork; and improves student-student and student-teacher interaction and collaboration.

Social connection: Promoting equity and inclusivity in the classroom, by eliminating racial and cultural discrimination and emphasizing on diversity, helps students feel more valued and empowered.

When students see themselves socially included, they feel like they belong. They're more likely to develop the trust it takes to build a relationship with a teacher.

It helps schools meet students' needs by understanding that culturally diverse students may face implicit bias because of their race, culture, or language. By using culturally responsive techniques, schools are more likely to better identify and serve all students.

Topic 2 | Main Principles of Culturally Responsive Teaching



Reflection on one's cultural knowledge.

Teachers' beliefs and attitudes are crucial to their ability to make a difference to diverse learners.

Teaching practices are determined by teachers' beliefs and assumptions about different cultures and cultural appurtenance.

Teachers who are culturally responsive share a passion for social justice and helping all students achieve their goals.

They have the courage to challenge pedagogy as well as their own beliefs and assumptions about students, families, and communities. Teachers should:

- reflect upon their assumptions, attitudes and biases,
- reflect on how their classroom management techniques meet the needs of diverse learners and whether particular practises might be promoting learning for some students, while obstructing education for others,
- reevaluate their expectation of each student and mind the opinion of the single student.

Learn about their students. Diverse students have different and unique knowledge, cultural values and experiences, which should be considered.

- Learn about their students' cultures, languages and traditions.
- Avoid stereotypes, which do not see students as individuals and interfere with their ability to understand each student's capabilities.

Use students' cultural knowledge, perspectives and skills as a resource for teaching. Diversity in the classroom is a strength from which all students can benefit.

- Gather and use students' background knowledge and prior experience when organising curricular content, selecting teaching strategies, and designing the classroom environment.

- Familiarise themselves with the culture, traditions and languages of their students.
- Share the new diverse culture with the rest of their class by including significant and more comprehensive information about different cultures and
- their contributions to the curriculum

Create a safe and supportive learning environment, which is favourable for learning and culturally responsive teaching.



- Teachers should demonstrate that they care and value their students' diversity, culture and academic success.
- They should demonstrate a genuine interest in students' cultures.
- Attend extracurricular activities in which students are involved.
- Give feedback carefully to diverse students, as there is the possibility of mistrust about the motivation for the feedback.

Enable students' self-determination. It involves patterns of interaction in which all students are included and can participate successfully.

- Teachers should adopt an interactive teaching style, focusing on discussion.
- Give students' autonomy in their learning.
- Promote problem-solving and cooperative learning.

Connect with families.

The link between school and home is a pivotal factor for enhancing students' achievement.

Culturally diverse students and families often feel detached from schools due to a lack of personalised relationships with the teachers or the school.

- Teachers should give parents access to information and opportunities and enhance their inclusion.



- Develop positive interactions with families through regularly calling or emailing each student's family with information about their child's progress.
- Improve parent-teacher interviews by conducting more face-to-face dialogues with culturally diverse parents.

Connect with communities. Culturally responsive teachers extend their classroom to the broader community. Listening to students, families and the community enables them to adapt their teaching techniques to diverse students.

Topic 3 | Essentials Practices in Culturally Responsive Teaching

Being culturally responsive is a critical and necessary feature of our interactions with one another. It is also vitally important in the context of education. The following practices provide five essential strategies for how educators can make their learning environments more culturally responsive.

1. Know your students

Learning about your students is critical in how you design your curriculum and deliver it. As instructors, you must understand your students' behaviours, backgrounds, and challenges to address them.

An effective way to learn about students is to break the ice in the first few class meetings. This can be accomplished by brief survey questions, student inventories, interviews, or questions that can be tailored to be increasingly sophisticated depending on student level. Questions might include information about students' likes and dislikes, personal interests, responsibilities outside of school, and especially their opinions about courses and/or teachers they perceived as effective or ineffective.

Very often, students will share personal experiences that have deeply affected them. Getting this kind of information can assist educators in better meeting their students' needs. Engaging in regular check-ins with your classes helps keep your knowledge about your students up to date.

Sometimes during a semester or school year, situations may change. Students may end up homeless, deal with a parent remarrying or divorcing, or cope with their own life-changing circumstances. The more we know about them, the better we can empathise with their situation and assist them.

2. Be aware of your own biases

Bias can exist in many forms and often stems from inherent world views taught in us during childhood. Our beliefs and preferences are shaped by our education, family, friends and peers. They may take many forms such as religious, gender, cultural, academic, or something less consequential as food or size.

In an educational setting, teacher bias is often a genuine issue.

It happens pretty often that a student perceives the teacher as being unfair or that grading practices are not consistent from one student to another. This perception may or may not be accurate, and being unaware of your biases may influence pedagogical decisions. For example, teachers may lower expectations based on a student's culture and/or colour in a predominantly white, middle-class community.

Unconscious biases can also contribute to flawed thinking. For example, implicit bias may result in a teacher thinking women can't excel at maths or that introverted, quiet students don't understand the lesson because of their limited participation. Recognising the fact that we all have biases will not change them. Still, it may help us make more informed decisions and value differences from various perspectives so we are not perpetuating inequality.

3. Transform your pedagogy and curriculum

Teachers are now more mindfully revisiting how to facilitate culturally responsive lessons due to the critical need in these changing times. While some begin to work toward meaningful changes, there are specific steps teachers can take to transform both course curriculum and pedagogical practices.

Several different strategies can be implemented in the curriculum in three areas: course content, methodology, and assessment.

3.1 Cultural course content

First, when it comes to content, materials and readings used in the classroom should reflect the diversity of the students in class and the diversity of the contributors in the field of study or discipline.

Teachers should also recognise how their choices of readings, examples, analogies, videos and other content may be biased or reinforce stereotypes.

The curriculum should also be reviewed to ensure there are no hidden forms of oppression. And activities used in class should be created to be mindful of their impact on students.

3.2 Meaningful methodology

Second, pedagogy should be inclusive, which means that course work should be meaningful for students, designed to encourage them, effectively meet their needs, and invite collaboration.

Teachers should ensure that varied and frequent active learning techniques are being used. This can include discussions, group work, experiential learning, debates, presentations, and team projects, to name a few.

Activities and lessons should be presented in multiple ways to address students' varied learning styles. Allowing students to reflect on what they have learned can provide insight into their progress and areas that may need more attention, but it can also reinforce learning and help them make connections to their own life experiences.

3.3 Assess assessments

Finally, in the assessment area, we can use multiple measures to assess student learning and acquisition of knowledge.

Students should be invited to share knowledge in various ways, including traditional tests and quick writes, homework, responses to class questions, group discussions, and authentic assessments such as life history interviews or personal stories to demonstrate and personalised learning.

Students should be allowed to accumulate grade points in several ways, not just through midterms and a final. Finally, teachers should communicate the purpose of assignments and activities and the knowledge and skills gained by doing these.

4. Respect and reinforce student culture

Each student comes to our classroom with a set of behaviours, beliefs, and characteristics that make that student unique. Coupled with this are the value systems, languages, religious beliefs, and ways of life that also contribute to their self-identity. By valuing each student's culture, we contribute to their self-concept, which in turn influences their academic success. There are many ways that teachers can embrace culture in the classroom.

Students should be encouraged to listen effectively, and this is something a teacher can model with good listening skills. Students should be given opportunities to share their feelings, beliefs, values, and perspectives. They should be taught to receive and embrace this information while still honouring the differences of their classmates. Activities and learning opportunities that allow students to celebrate their own culture and those of others should be incorporated into lessons.

Teaching methods and instructional practices are another way to support and appreciate a student's culture and language. Include readings, videos, poems, songs, and other materials where students will see and hear people who look like them. Inviting guest speakers to class or joining an online event is another way to embrace your student's culture. Spend time understanding your students so you can teach different cultural backgrounds and interests.

5. Involve family and community

Making a classroom more culturally responsive means engaging families and communities in the academic lives of students. Research has shown when parents and communities are involved, students are more likely to attend school regularly, complete homework and earn better grades, to name a few findings. Involvement can occur in several ways, including parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision making, and collaborating with the community.

Educators should communicate with families, not just when there is a discipline issue but also when something positive occurs. Open and honest communication with families can lead to greater trust and develop a nurturing relationship that allows teachers to ask questions and learn more about their students.

Reaching out before the school term begins and providing ways parents can communicate with you can be very helpful. Teachers might even invite parents to complete an interest survey to understand their students better. Many schools also ensure translators are available for families and provide transportation vouchers to enable them to attend school meetings and events. Finally, making time for spontaneous conversations and organic check-ins would allow families to feel more included and comfortable.



Image source: ArgoPrep. <https://argoprep.com/blog/k8/5-ways-to-celebrate-cultural-diversity-in-your-classroom> (accessed 30 Sept 2021)

Test and Evaluation

1. Students' cultural and linguistic resources are valuable and fundamental for integrating a culturally responsive classroom.
 - True
 - False
2. Deficit beliefs and discourses about students from various cultural and ethnic backgrounds can lead to teachers feeling helpless, frustrated or angry.
 - True
 - False
3. Students should be encouraged to listen effectively, and this is something a teacher can model with good listening skills.
 - True
 - False
4. When it comes to content, materials and readings used in the classroom should reflect the diversity of the students in class and the diversity of the contributors in the field of study or discipline.
 - True
 - False
5. Bias can exist in many forms and often stems from inherent world views taught in us during childhood.
 - True
 - False
6. Culturally responsive teaching is about motivating students of colour.
 - True
 - False

7. Being culturally responsive requires a teacher to master the details of every culture represented in his classroom.
- True
 - False
8. Only teachers that lived abroad for a long time have the skills to be truly culturally responsive.
- True
 - False
9. Culturally responsive teaching is about implementing hip hop and Fortnite to the classroom.
- True
 - False
10. There is no difference between teaching children, adults or older people.
- True
 - False

SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONNAIRE

1. What are approaches similar to CRT that you have previously followed?
2. Which one of the described principles of CRT appeals to you the most?
3. After getting familiar with the theory and the accompanying activities which activity appeals to you the most?
4. What are some Culturally Responsive Teaching techniques you can see yourself adopting and using?
5. After studying the theory of CRT and learning about possible activities, how do you think CRT could enrich your lessons?

Correct answers to the quiz:

- 1) T
- 2) T
- 3) T
- 4) T
- 5) T
- 6) F
- 7) F
- 8) F
- 9) F
- 10) F

Sources & Additional Materials

Singhal, M/Gulati, S 2020, Five Essential Strategies to Embrace Culturally Responsive Teaching, Faculty Focus, accessed 16th December 2021, <<https://www.facultyfocus.com/articles/equality-inclusion-and-diversity/five-essential-strategies-to-embrace-culturally-responsive-teaching/>>

Willimas Rucker, N 2019, Getting Started With Culturally Responsive Teaching, Edutopia, accessed 16th December 2021, <<https://www.edutopia.org/article/getting-started-culturally-responsive-teaching>>

Burnham, K 2020, 5 Culturally Responsive Teaching Strategies, Northeastern University, accessed 16th December 2021, <<https://www.northeastern.edu/graduate/blog/culturally-responsive-teaching-strategies/>>

Muñiz, J 2019, Culturally Responsive Teaching, New America, accessed as pdf 16th December 2021, <<https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED594599.pdf>>

Wlodowski, R J/Ginsberg M B 1995, A Framework for Culturally Responsive Teaching, Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, accessed 16th December 2021, <<https://www.ascd.org/el/articles/a-framework-for-culturally-responsive-teaching>>

Center for Strengthening the Teaching Profession (2014), accessed on the 16th December 2021 as pdf, <<https://cstp-wa.org/cstp2013/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/activities.pdf>>

15 culturally-responsive teaching strategies and examples
<https://www.prodigygame.com/in-en/blog/culturally-responsive-teaching/>

Short video about creating a culturally responsive classroom
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VixB5WBiLqE>

List of resources regarding culturally responsive teaching
<https://www.colorincolorado.org/culturally-responsive-resources>