Impact of Culturally Inclusive Practices on Academic Achievement in Secondary Education

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Abstract: *Today's kids are more aware of other cultures because to social media, which has changed the demand for cultural responsiveness in the classroom. Effective instructors are essential to the education of twenty-first-century pupils. They must build meaningful connections with their students, adjust to different cultural contexts, and use cutting-edge techniques to enhance their teaching. Secondary education has the most need for culturally responsive teaching (CRT). Research indicates that teachers may advance students' best interests by developing more equitable teaching methods that boost student motivation, engagement, and effectiveness. Teachers and school administrators need to use culturally sensitive pedagogical techniques if they are to bring about meaningful educational transformation and bridge performance disparities made worse by the epidemic. By putting these tactics into practice, educators will support decisions made with the best interests of their students in mind. The purpose of this study of the research is to investigate and determine how CRT affects secondary school students' academic performance.*

Keywords: Educational Outcomes, Multicultural Education, Curriculum Development

I. INTRODUCTION

America is demographically evolving. Blacks, Asians, Hispanics, and other racial minorities will dominate the population by 2050, according to the U.S. Census Bureau (Parker et al., 2019, p.1). The US educational system must adapt to population shifts. Recognizing a paradigm change may be the start. COVID-19 worsened concerns and, most notably, expanded the school success disparity. While schools try to return to normal, many still notice a teaching-learning gap. If educators want to educate children for global competition, this gap is expensive and must be fixed. Thus, many have turned to administrators and educational stakeholders for answers. Leaders must now make effective choices based entirely on student needs. To close the performance gap and promote real learning, leadership must make choices that benefit children intellectually, cognitively, and emotionally.

Public school student demographics are becoming increasingly varied, yet classroom experiences differ from kids' outside lives. Research shows that a cultural mismatch between home and school causes academic problems, disengagement, and dropout rates in teenagers (Mackay & Strickland, 2018). Emdin (2016) claims that urban adolescents must leave their daily lives and emotions at the door and adapt into school culture (p. 25). Cultural differences have serious consequences for teaching and learning.

Learning seems to be linked to narratives. CRT experts Dyson and Genishi think all people want tales (1994). Stories may provide context for our lives and fresh knowledge. Denman (1991) describes narratives as a way people interpret their lives. Therefore, tales and narratives must be considered.

The following extract from Vavrus (2008) emphasizes school demographics and the academic success gap: "The academic achievement gap is generally seen between (1) White economically advantaged students and (2) students of color, immigrant children, and lower socioeconomic families. Researchers say "for the first time in our history, students of color make up the majority of students enrolled in U.S. public schools" (Muniz, 2019, p.6; Hussar & Bailey, 2013). Although this is a major adjustment to our educational system, America's secondary schools still have a gap. Considering this, Muniz (2019) states, "yet 65 years after Brown tried to pave a fair path for these students, the promise of educational equity remains elusive" (p. 6).

The public school student body has altered. Consequently, the curriculum must adapt. Once successful teaching approaches have "often been ineffective for students of color, immigrant children, and students from lower socioeconomic families" (Vavrus, 2008, p.51). To address the present student demography, educators must tie academic information to prior experiences. Therefore, culturally relevant education is essential.

Vavrus (2008) describes CRT as an educational reform that aims to engage and motivate traditionally underperforming and socially excluded pupils of color in public schools. CRT uses tales or narratives to assist students from different backgrounds relate to the subject matter.

II. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

A technique to address race and culture in the classroom is via school racial socialization. School racial socialization focuses on classroom messaging and practices and depends on parental racial socialization (Hughes et al., 2011; Hughes as al., 2006) and multicultural education (Bennett, 2001). Recent frameworks highlight multiple elements (Aldana & Byrd, 2015; Byrd, 2016), and this research focuses on four: cultural socialization, cultural competency promotion, positive interaction support, and critical awareness socialization.

CRT aims to engage and motivate kids of color who have been academically and socially excluded from public schools. School racial socialization fosters good attitudes and an awareness of race and culture in society (Hughes et al., 2006).

CRT uses students' cultural knowledge and backgrounds in the classroom (Gay, 2010). African American students may socialize during Black History Month and via Afrocentric education (Byrd, 2016). This is CRT for all classroom pupils, regardless of ethnicity. Teaching about diverse cultures in the classroom provides many learning possibilities. Through CRT, one may learn about their and other ethnicities' histories. This method of teaching fosters a supportive classroom environment via relevant storytelling, which enhances student involvement and engagement. CRT may teach kids about various cultures. This kind of strategic education may assist one grasp another culture's history or traditions. This is crucial, and schools without it have caused many horrible but avoidable events. A person who doesn't comprehend another culture may misread a reaction. Students must comprehend diverse cultures to empathize with others. This will improve interethnic relations. The sample above shows CRT dimensions. The next part defines each dimension and discusses its importance to this instructional technique.

Research showed cultural socialization was the first dimension. Cultural socialization helps kids create a good cultural identity by learning about cultural values, beliefs, and behaviors, according to Vietze et al. (2019). Cultural identity—feelings of belonging, deals, and attitudes toward one's cultural group or groups—is also linked to better psychological adjustment, including well-being, and school adjustment, including school-related perspectives, for cultural minority youth (Vietze et al., 2019).

According to research, increased cognitive stimulation within and outside the home improves cognitive outcomes for children (Caughey & Owen, 2016). Cultural socialization may increase cognitive stimulation. Caughey and Owen found cultural socialization to be the most prevalent ethnic-racial socialization strategy and most consistently connected with excellent ethnic minority child outcomes. Hughes et al. (2016) thought cultural socialization boosted children's self-esteem. He believed this confidence boost improved academic achievement and reduced disciplinary difficulties.

To begin her book, Moule (2011) gives a cross-curricular misunderstanding. She portrays an educator who cares about her pupils and helps them succeed. She writes encouraging remarks on their papers with a red ink pen and writes the pupils' names before each message. Writing a name in red ink is considered evil in certain cultures. Thus, parents and children of certain ethnicities have reacted negatively to this simple move. This example shows why CRT includes cultural competency. Cultural competency may improve classroom and student life. Cultural competency is the capacity to educate pupils from other cultures, according to Moule (2011). She believes "teachers often discriminate against their students by lacking sensitivity, knowledge, and skills necessary to teach them properly" (Moule, 2011, p. 5). Because instructors are not culturally competent, they may insult pupils and make them uncomfortable in class. Disconnected kids will be unwilling to participate. It might cause discipline, poor self-esteem, and other challenges. All kids should feel welcomed and appreciated in the classroom, regardless of culture. Cultural competence is the only way educators can generate this dynamic.

CRT also requires excellent student-teacher relationships. Barr (2016) reports that rapport—an interpersonal relationship built on harmony, connection, and mutual trust—improves instructor-student and student-student

connections and creates a healthy classroom atmosphere. Analysis showed that favorable student-teacher interactions boosted student involvement and academic performance, allowing educators to develop relationships with their pupils and create a safe, ready-to-learn atmosphere.

The fourth CRT factor is critical awareness socialization. According to Schwartzenthal et al. (2022), "a classroom climate which fosters the active discussion of social inequity (i.e., critical consciousness climate) can contribute to adolescents' critical consciousness, while a classroom climate in which group differences are downplayed (i.e., color-evasion climate) may not" (p. 13). Freire thought that critical social awareness should be routinely discussed in the classroom to assist students understand injustices and how to break the cycle (Schwartzenthal et al., 2022). Critical social awareness curriculum should educate teenagers about inequalities, institutional racism, and group-based discrimination, according to Byrd (2017). This part of CRT educates students to be leaders with empathy and respect for all cultures.

III. PEDAGOGY AND CURRICULUM

Culture affects how kids learn and understand the world beyond the classroom. The school-home gap may be overcome by changing thinking, curriculum, and pedagogy. If material is effective and relevant, curriculum and teaching must represent the school demography. Culturally responsive curriculum and pedagogy enable cross-cultural inquiry. When students fail to apply learning to their life and communities, the breakdown happens.

Gay (2010) defines culturally responsive pedagogy as "using the cultural knowledge, past experiences, and student performance styles of various ethnic groups to make learning more relevant to and effective for students" (p. 31). Culturally relevant pedagogy requires instructors to combine student cultural abilities with theory to improve student learning. Gay (2010) identifies six culturally sensitive pedagogical practices:

1. Expecting excellent standards from all pupils.
2. Utilizing students' cultural knowledge, experiences, behaviors, and views
3. Bridging home-school practices gaps
4. Educating the complete kid
5. Utilizing student talents to improve education
6. Questioning conventional education procedures, content, and evaluations. (p. 186)

According to Ladson-Billings (1995), culturally relevant pedagogy relies on three criteria: academic success, cultural competence, and critical consciousness to challenge the status quo (p. 160). CRT and its practitioners promote student autonomy, creativity, and student-centered learning in learning settings that support CRT. Many intricacies build on CRT. However, pupils must be permitted to study more actively.

Culturally responsive education is student-centered and values students' cultural origins, according to Wah and Nasi (2019). Effective culturally responsive teaching addresses, respects, and uses students' reality, history, and viewpoints as instructional practice (Bartolome, 1994).

Impact of CRT

Byrd (2016) claims that culturally appropriate instructors boost student success, engagement, and achievement gap reduction. Culturally relevant teaching involves high expectations, cultural competence, critical consciousness, and understanding students' communities and homes (Dickson et al., 2015; Ladson-Billings, 1995a; 1995b; Morrison et al., 2008).

CRT sets high standards, capitalizes on students' skills, and takes responsibility for their performance (Byrd, 2016). Constructivist education encourages students to be themselves and connect with the instructor and classmates for a more meaningful experience (Byrd, 2016). The courteous and inclusive atmosphere in high-expectation classrooms helps students appreciate and understand their classmates' cultures via cooperative and experiential learning (Byrd, 2016). Cultural competency helps instructors to incorporate students' communities, homes, and other outside influences into the classroom, building connections. School may benefit from students' global experiences (Byrd, 2016). Finally, school social justice and racial inequality may promote critical awareness. Helping students discover and solve issues empowers them to make decisions (Byrd, 2016).

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Scholars believe genuine, culturally relevant instruction may narrow performance disparities and foster positive ethnic-racial identity for pupils of color (Dickson et al., 2015; Sleeter, 2012). Numerous studies (Christianakis, 2011; Ensign, 2003; Rodriguez, Jones, et al., 2004; Tate, 1995) show that culturally appropriate education boosts academic performance and participation. Epstein et al. (2011), Martell (2013), Morrell & Duncan-Andrade (2002), and Stovall (2006) show that culturally appropriate instruction promotes critical awareness. One research examined river contamination and suggested strategies for students to become involved in politics (Dimick, 2012).

Student Achievement and Engagement

The COVID-19 epidemic destroyed teaching and learning because school officials saw a drop in student engagement and accomplishment. Some school authorities say pupils are "more passive, have a lesser sense of belonging, and feel disengaged from their learning" (Toth, 2021). The Education Week Research Center (2021) found that pupils' enthusiasm and morale were much lower after the COVID-19 epidemic. Student involvement and accomplishment are linked, so one supports the other.

Student involvement and accomplishment are crucial to teaching and learning. To improve student accomplishment, instructors must develop innovative and realistic engagement strategies. Sousa (2016) defines student engagement as "the amount of attention, interest, curiosity, and positive emotional connections that students have when learning whether in the classroom or on their own" (p.17). Engaged students are motivated to engage in class, grasp difficult subjects, and most importantly, comprehend their world. CRT relies on this idea (Sousa, 2016).

Culturally sensitive pedagogy may help different learners and boost student engagement. According to Byrd (2016) and Tanase (2020), culturally responsive strategies may affirm diversity and improve academic performance and student engagement (Cuffee, 2020; Okoye-Johnson, 2011). CRT guarantees that students get an egalitarian education, not only based on their cultural background and life experiences (Cuffee, 2020; Gay, 2010).

Culturally sensitive approaches in each classroom increase student engagement and academic performance, according to Dyer (2015) and Toth (2021). Teachers show the worth of culture and the importance of respecting it by building rapport and meaningful interactions with pupils. Students feel connected to their learning environment (Cuffee, 2020; Wanless & Crawford, 2016). Lack of cultural awareness in the classroom reduces student involvement, motivation, and success (Cuffee, 2020). Engaged learning develops student success skills, practices, and habits. Teachers cannot eliminate barriers to high accomplishment unless they understand what is affecting students' performance, according to Gay (2018). Blaming kids, their socioeconomic background, lack of interest and enthusiasm in studying, and insufficient parental involvement in school is unhelpful.

Teachers must be willing to pivot and adopt paradigm adjustments to reverse the impacts of remote learning on pupils during the COVID-19 epidemic and address the "ever-present" achievement gap. Teachers must move away from a "cultural deficit perspective," which holds that some cultural groups are inferior and cannot succeed (Silverman, 2011; Cheong, 2021; Gay, 2010). It also demands abandoning "subtractive views," which remove students' culture and language from classrooms (Cheong, 2021; Gay, 2010). Teachers who reject the aforementioned ideas and pedagogical techniques realize that culture is important in education and reject old and outmoded social standards in teaching and learning. Asserting worth to this object boosts student engagement and accomplishment.

Benefits of CRT

Learning material and teaching methods is essential for effective teaching. Teachers must know their material and different student demographics. However, many instructors lack the skills to educate diverse kids (Howard, 1999). Professional development and training should help teachers use CRT in their classrooms.

Implementation is key to student success. Literacy affects culture both ways, according to Flippo et al. (1997). An individual's cultural identity will be shaped by literacy education and cultural variety.

CRT-based curriculum and practices may transform the classroom. It may shrink the academic gap, boost student confidence, and reduce classroom behavior. Vavrus (2008) and Byrd (2016) found that low-status students are less likely to benefit from instructional methods that help them learn meaningful and engaging content to meet state learning standards, graduate from high school, and become active democratic citizens.

This remark emphasizes CRT's value to students. This curriculum affects students' learning and their potential to become productive adults. Without acknowledging students' culture and uniqueness, instructors fail to see them as unique persons with unique life experiences that enhance the learning environment.

IV. CONCLUSION

Culture permeates students' homes, communities, and cultural knowledge. To deepen students' learning, leaders who care about them must examine their histories, customs, and narratives. Some say culturally relevant teaching is "good teaching" because it values students' interests and knowledge and promotes academic performance (Ladson-Billings, 1995a; Sleeter, 2012). These effective teaching practices are rare for kids of color, therefore success discrepancies remain.

Vavrus (2008) adds that "CRT is a democratic, student-centered pedagogy that incorporates and honors the cultural background of historically marginalized students and attempts to make meaningful links to academic knowledge for student success" (p. 57). CRT is essential to school reform and reduces achievement gaps (Vavrus, 2008). CRT utilization is a sign of an educational leader who cares about students' academic and personal growth. CRT may assist instructors narrow the COVID-19-exacerbated achievement gap by improving student learning.

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