



Praxes for Culturally Responsive Teaching in Basic and Higher Education

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ABSTRACT

Purpose of the study: Learners' diversity and individuality demand contextualized and inclusive education anchored on their diversified approach, catering to their academic, social, and cultural contexts. Responding to that reality, the present study explored the praxes for culturally-responsive teaching (CRT) in basic and higher education in the Philippines as an input for the proposal of an inclusive learning plan for novice educators.

Methodology: Using the descriptive qualitative approach of research, twelve novice educators were purposively selected to participate in the semi-structured interviews, wherein the results were analyzed using thematic analysis.

Main Findings: The study highlighted CRT as an essential practice that fosters inclusive practice, enhances learning by valuing cultural knowledge and respecting different student histories. The research emphasized the necessity of embedding culturally-responsive approaches like improving community engagement and personalizing learning to fire up relevance and access to learning.

Novelty/Originality of this study: The study introduces an output (inclusive learning plan) that can guide novice educators toward their inclusive learning practices and advocacies. As part of strengthening the role in induction programs for novice educators, embed an inclusive learning plan in these programs to develop the skills novice educators need to create supportive and culturally sensitive learning environments.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) is an educational approach promoting equity and inclusivity through acknowledging and valuing learner cultural diversity and experiences, highlighting the importance of forming cultural identities in learning [1]-[3] in culturally diversified learner population with diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds [4], experiences, and perspectives [5] and relating them to classroom learning. It is an approach that promotes inclusion and celebrates learners' diversity by being responsive to their social and cultural backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives, respectful of their diversity, and providing fair academic opportunities. Seen as an effective modality for contextualized and inclusive education, CRT paved the way for more personalized and tailored curriculum, instruction, and educational practices, celebrating learners' uniqueness and heritage.

Educators effectively do this considering the learner needs, cross-cultural communicating, and creating supportive environments celebrating cultural diversity and addressing injustices, gaining experiences and active interactions, which shape their confidence and competence in culturally responsive teaching being interculturally

sensitive providing practical applications of CRT and creating inclusive curriculum [6]-[8]. To effectively facilitate CRT, educators need to have a high level of cultural competence to foster a learning environment that resonates with and connects learners' diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds to classroom learning [9], [10]. This reality underscores the high level of competence required for teachers to deliver culturally responsive, appropriate, and sensitive education that meets the diverse needs of 21st-century learners.

It is the teachers' intercultural sensitivity and confidence in building relationship that has a significant impact on their CRT practices [11]-[13]. The CRT has been widely recognized as well for enhancing learners' academic achievement, outcomes, capacity, well-being social skills, soft skills, life skills sense of belonging and identity, growth mindset, taking academic risks, learning motivations, participation, and equitable educational experience [14]-[17].

Despite of significant changes in the field, CRT still faces substantial challenges, particularly in subjects where teachers struggle with issues beyond instruction, including time constraints, lack of resources, inadequate training in diverse settings [18], unprepared new teachers to meet the diverse cultural and linguistic needs of learners nondifferentiated responses, missed opportunities to address cultural differences, insufficient collaboration [19], [20], implicit bias, and structural barriers further complicate creating supportive learning environments, struggles with specific culturally sensitive practices and issues in online since CRT has been widely documented to be effectively used during face-to-face classes [21]-[23].

Preparing educators, both in-service and preservice, is a key to the effective streamlining of CRT practices in the academe, as implementing CRT alone is seen as insufficient, as it needs support for sustainability. Preservice programs can integrate technologies, such as mixed-reality simulations, performance feedback, online tools, and environments and be provided with practical applications of CRT in their future classrooms [24]-[26]. There should also be reflective spaces for educators to examine biases, provide ongoing professional development, advocate for equity and inclusion policies, promote collaborations among educators, researchers, policymakers, and community stakeholders promote critical consciousness to students, conduct further research needed to explore practical strategies, and administrative backing [27].

In a study that integrated CRT in technology-supported environments, it was found that while cultural values and technology were effectively combined, technology was mainly used as an instructional tool rather than a student learning tool, highlighting the need for a K-12 curriculum that supports culturally responsive teaching [28], [29]. The CRT framework enhanced teacher skills through interventions, including the Identity Project [30]. The Philippines has begun using Indigenous Peoples' (IP) education, paying attention to the sociocultural spaces and relevant exposure for CRT competency [31]. Culturally responsive teaching enhances student engagement and achievement by making learning culturally relevant and improving teacher-student relationships, despite existing disparities in inclusive practices [32].

In the Philippines, culture-based or culture-sensitive teaching has been part and parcel of educational policies. From national and agency-based policies, culture is seen as an integral aspect for national identity and unity. The 1987 Philippine Constitution gives highest priority to education, arts, and culture to foster nationalism, patriotism, and human development by conserving, promoting, and popularizing cultural heritage, communities, and resources. In the K to 12 education program, schools and educators are mandated to implement curriculum that are culture-sensitive and contextualized (localized and indigenized), as well as develop locally-produced teaching materials [33]. Also, public school teachers are mandated to provide learning environments responsive to the community contexts and diverse learners' backgrounds by using personalized and culturally-appropriate teaching strategies [34]. Teachers are also mandated to contextualize instruction through localization and indigenization as part of their professional development, implementation of the curricular programs teacher competency standards, classroom assessment, and learning resources development for learning continuity [35]. Such educational initiatives also contribute to fulfilling the mandates prescribed in promoting cultural education in the academe, thus, contributing as well for the attainment of Sustainable Goal No. 4 (Quality Education).

There had been studies in the Philippines that explored the effective use of CRT in the primary level, elementary level, secondary level, district and division level, and higher education [36]. As can be seen from the reviewed pieces of literature, there is a lack of studies holistically analyzing the use of CRT from basic to higher education in the Philippine contexts. It is for those contexts that the present study is conceptualized to explore the praxes for CRT in basic and higher education in the Philippines as an input for the proposal of an inclusive learning plan for novice educators.

This study stood out by addressing a critical gap: while previous research in the Philippines had explored Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) at various educational levels primary, elementary, secondary, and higher education no study had holistically analyzed its application across the entire spectrum from basic to higher education. Its novelty lay in not only mapping these praxes but also in proposing an inclusive learning plan for novice educators, designed to be integrated into induction programs to foster culturally sensitive and supportive learning environments from the outset of their careers.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

The study employed a descriptive qualitative (exploratory) design. This design explored a relatively underexplored area by focusing on research questions and utilizing semi-structured interviews to gain insights [37]. In the study, a descriptive qualitative design was employed to describe the praxes for culturally responsive teaching in basic and higher education in the Philippines, providing input for the proposal of an inclusive learning plan for novice educators. Semi-structured interviews served as the data-gathering tools.

Twelve (12) educators from elementary, secondary, and tertiary schools, who were all at the novice or beginning career stage (with less than 3 years of teaching experience), served as participants or key informants in the study, and were purposively selected from the Philippines. As noted [38], purposive sampling is a method in which researchers deliberately choose participants who possess specific characteristics that align with the study's objectives. Since the purpose of the study was to describe the praxes for culturally responsive teaching in basic and higher education in the Philippines as input for proposing an inclusive learning plan for novice educators, the use of purposive sampling is justified. Table 1 below presents the profile of the educator-participants.

Table 1. Participants of the study

Participant	Sex	Educational Level Taught	Years of Teaching
1	Male	Elementary	1 yr.
2	Female	Elementary	2 yrs.
3	Female	Secondary	3 yrs.
4	Female	Secondary	1 yr.
5	Male	Tertiary	1 yr.
6	Female	Tertiary	3 yrs.
7	Male	Elementary	3 yrs.
8	Male	Secondary	1 yr.
9	Female	Elementary	2 yrs.
10	Female	Tertiary	2 yrs.
11	Female	Elementary	1 yr.
12	Female	Secondary	2 yrs.

As shown in table 1, out of the 12 participants or key informants, 4 (33%) were males and 8 (67%) were females. Moreover, 5 or 42% were from elementary schools, 4 or 33% were from secondary schools, and 3 or 25% were from tertiary schools in public educational institutions in the Philippines. All the participants are considered novice or beginning teachers since they have less than three years of teaching experience. More so, the saturation principle was the primary basis applied in determining the final number of sampled transcripts to be included in the data analysis. Hence, out of the fifteen transcripts, only twelve were included in the data presentation because of data saturation.

The study employed semi structured interviews as its primary method for data collection. These interviews included open-ended, pre-set questions with follow-up questions to allow for flexibility [56]. Participants were asked a series of structured questions, and follow-up questions were used to deepen or expand on their answers. Additionally, three expert evaluators in the field of education reviewed and validated the interview questions.

Consent forms were collected from participants before the commencement of data collection. The researcher ensured the anonymity of participants' identities and the confidentiality of their data. The study's objectives were clearly explained, including details about their involvement in the research.

The study utilized the thematic analysis method proposed by Braun and Clarke [39], which includes six stages. Initially, the researcher transcribed and analyzed the collected data. Key points in the transcripts were then identified and coded for each participant, with specific concepts assigned to each key response. Themes were identified based on how participants integrate AI into their professional careers and teaching, focusing on its positive use, associated challenges, and strategic approaches. This process involved grouping concepts into categories and then into broader themes. The initial themes were reviewed by repeatedly examining the transcripts. Subsequently, the themes were finalized and described to accurately reflect the participants' thoughts and ideas. Finally, the results were written up and presented in both tabular and narrative formats. Additionally, member checking was conducted, where participants validated the accuracy of the themes and the overall discussion of the data.



Figure 1. Six stages of thematic analysis [40]

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. What is culturally-responsive teaching?

Analysis revealed a complex approach to teaching that prioritizes cultural understanding, awareness, sensitivity, and practical pedagogies in terms of students, parents, colleagues, communities, and teachers' cultural knowledge. Participants referenced the critical need to understand and honor the cultural differences that are associated with students. All of these are essential to practicing culturally responsive teaching.

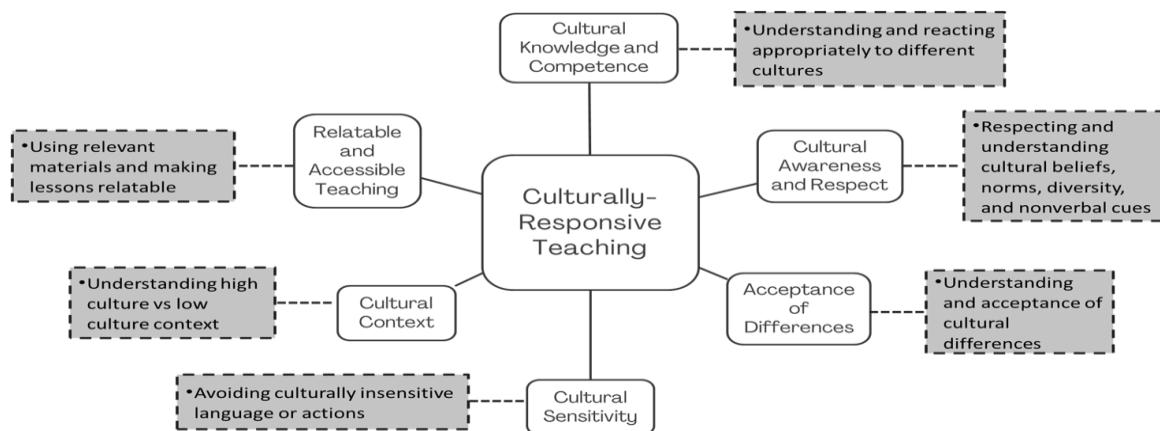


Figure 2. Themes on the Participants' Conception of a Culturally-Responsive Teaching

The theme of cultural knowledge and competence underscores the necessity for educators to be well-informed about various cultures and capable of responding appropriately to cultural nuances. Participant 1, for example, said that it was an important skill to know people and their cultures, and Participant 2 noted that understanding and responding effectively to student cultures was a quality skill in reasoning. Having a wide range of knowledge and subsequent competence is essential for educators to use when working with diverse students.

Cultural awareness and respect emerged as a prominent theme. Participants made clear that there are several things they value when it comes to respecting and understanding cultural beliefs, norms, and diversity. Participant 3 placed particular emphasis on respecting those cultural beliefs and standards, while Participant 5 referred to celebrating diversity within humankind. More generally, Participant 6 highlighted how people recognize and respect cultures as distinct differences in cultural traditions and practices, and Participant 9 made a valuable addition regarding nonverbal messages and signals. These types of responses indicated that cultural awareness also involves respecting cultural differences and understanding different forms of communication.

The theme discusses acceptance of differences, as is represented by Participant 4, the understanding and acceptance of cultural differences. This acceptance is easily understood as one of the critical aspects of being culturally responsive, as it allows students to feel accepted and understood, regardless of their cultural background and personal characteristics.

Cultural Sensitivity, spoken about by participant 7, was described as avoiding language or actions that may be considered culturally insensitive. Cultural sensitivity is essential as we do not want to marginalize or exclude students due to our educational practices.

Understanding cultural context, regarding high and low culture contexts as described by participant 8, adds complexity to CRT. Understanding the high and low culture context added complexity. The rich culture, symbolism, or cultural context can impact how educational content is intended and received, and how students engage with cultural nuances in their contributions.

Lastly, the relatable and accessible teaching theme identifies the pragmatic nature of utilizing education so it is relevant and accessible to all learners. Participant 10 mentioned using appropriate materials and experiences to connect with learners, Participant 11 mentioned making the lessons relatable, and Participant 12

mentioned trying to meet the needs and distinct cultural experiences of learners. These responses speak to the perspective of customizing educational content to be inclusive and present it in a way that all students can relate to and have access to the information provided.

In summary, the expanse of the discussion surrounding these themes shows that CRT is a holistic approach that values cultural diversity in an attempt to elevate the learning experience for all learners by making it inclusive and accessible. This means that CRT not only acknowledges cultural differences but also recognizes and contextualizes references to cultural experiences that can add value to the educational experience for all students.

The relevant literature published about CRT solidifies the research findings on CRT, which incorporates understanding, knowledge, and sensitivity to culture in educational practice. It is essential to recognize and appreciate cultural diversity to create cultural identities in learning [40]. Studies have discovered also that acknowledging cultural diversity is possible in varied cultures and languages [41]. In addition, the literature has highlighted some of the highlights of CRT, which also include cultural competence and well-meaning in CRT [42]. The literature also shows the positive influence of CRT concerning academic achievement, well-being, and social skills, which also supports some of the research findings that CRT adds value to all students' learning experiences.

3.2. What is the most effective way of using culturally-responsive teaching?

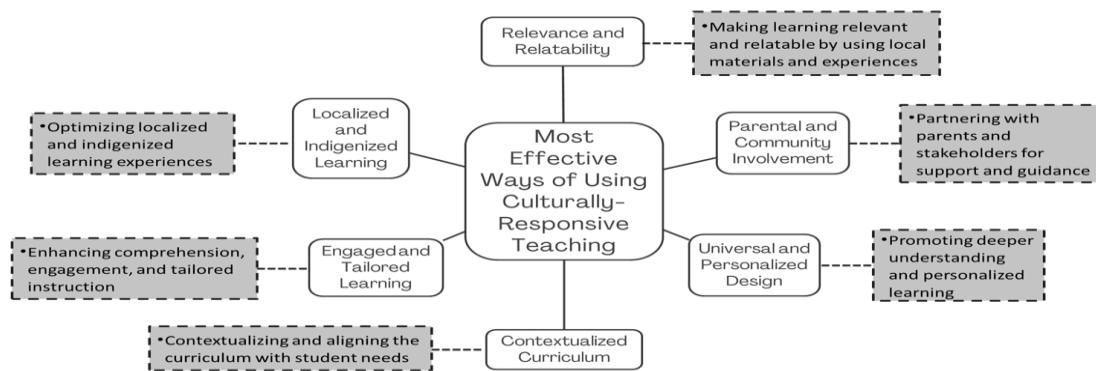


Figure 3. Themes on the participants' conception of the most effective ways of using culturally-responsive teaching

The thematic analysis of responses regarding the most effective ways of using CRT reveals a comprehensive approach to education that emphasizes relevance, community involvement, personalized learning, and contextualized curriculum. These strategies are critical to building inclusive and accountable learning environments that value and incorporate the diversity of students' backgrounds.

One of the dominant themes is relevance and relatability. This theme illustrates learners' opportunities to obtain meaningful learning experiences through connections to students' life experiences and backgrounds. Participant 1 completed an interview saying, "In reality, it is important for learners to find relevance in the situations or the problems presented in their lessons." This strategy represents an opportunity for learners to connect the lessons in practice with the use of education. This level of relevance garners student investment in the learning process, provides insights, expands comprehension, demonstrates the desire to engage in and promotes learner relevance and opportunities to obtain meaningful learning experiences through connections to life experiences and backgrounds. Participant 2 also explained opportunities to apply local materials and experiences from their areas, as long as they relate to their cultural and linguistic experiences as learners. Learning experiences made applicable based on prior knowledge of familiar contexts lead to more accessible and engaging experiences for diverse learners. As an example, one of the common barriers for educators in bridging the gaps sometimes found between the educational contexts and their students' lived experience also demonstrates learners' opportunity in possessing meaningful learning.

Another key theme is parental and community involvement, which emphasizes the importance of involving parents and community members in the education process. Participant 3 mentions the importance of being in partnership with parents to provide support and direction at home. In ways, the parents and caregivers of students will reinforce their learning outside of school, thereby enhancing the overall learning success of students. Participant 5 also discussed providing relevant materials through a partnership with stakeholders. Thus, connecting the resources to what students need and enhancing the learning experience, elevates the education of students as a matter of community.

The theme of universal and personalized design emphasizes the support of the use of frameworks or personalized plans that engage individual needs while deepening understanding. Participant 4 mentioned both

the universal design model, likely universal design for learning (UDL), to optimize teaching and learning for all students using multiple means of engagement, representation, and expression.

Contextualized curriculum is key to making education relevant and effective by adapting the curriculum to the cultural and contextual needs of the students. Participant 6 has indicated the need to amend the standard curriculum and assessment better to reflect the diverse backgrounds and experiences of students. By modifying curriculum and assessment in this way, learners' engagement expands as their learning becomes relevant and accessible. Participant 10 is indicating that the curriculum for diverse learners must be tailored to meet the students' learning needs, so that the educational content relates and is relevant to the students' experiential context and background.

Engaged and tailored learning reminds us that our instruction can empower learning and understanding for our learners because we better meet their needs. Participant 7 discusses helping learners better understand lessons by making meaningful connections and engaging in discussions, fostering a deeper understanding and retention of material. Participant 8 points out the importance of addressing learners' specific needs, where a focus on the strengths and challenges of an individual supports their educational experience. Participant 11 also advocates for starting instruction at a learner's current capacity and modifying instruction to fit the learner's needs, underscoring that teaching should address the various abilities and backgrounds of the students.

Additionally, there is another theme entitled localized and indigenized learning, which discusses finding the best way for learning experiences to be localized and relevant for the cultural contexts of students. Participant 9 discussed the relevance and respect for a learner's cultural background and noted that the relevance and respect for the students' culturally situated experience provides meaning for an educational experience. Education would be adequate by incorporating the learners' cultural contexts.

In general, an examination of the most effective ways of implementing CRT demonstrates a holistic lens of viewing cultural diversity as a potential to enhance learning experiences through a more-inclusive, relevant, and accessible education experience. These strategies also highlight the significant role of understanding and respecting cultural differences (including learner diversity), community involvement, personalized instruction, and providing a curriculum that localizes experiences for a diversity of learners.

The results of this research highlight the importance of CRT, which helps affirm the relevance and accessibility of lessons to students, providing an inclusive learning environment that aims to improve all student experiences. CRT is tailored within lessons according to students' culture, involvement of parents and the community, and is conducted through individualized framework approaches, which literature supports the inclusion of technologies and reflective practices for teacher training [42]. Studies also reinforce that to sustain culturally-responsive practices, there must be ongoing professional development for educators, and collaborations with stakeholders cited as well will apply research related to improving student engagement and student achievements in learning that is culturally relevant [43].

3.3. Inclusive learning plan for novice educators

Including the inclusive learning plan as part of the induction program for beginning teachers is central to supporting cultural competence an essential requirement for teaching diverse learners. This includes committed professional learning for beginning teachers by providing them with the tools to create culturally responsive lessons, classroom management strategies, and strategies for their community. It enables teacher practices that encourage student engagement with relevant and inclusive lesson plans and creates an atmosphere of inclusivity where mutual respect and understanding can foster. In summary, embedding the inclusive learning plan as part of the beginning teacher induction program will support novice teachers in preparing to meet the needs of all students and increase their chances of success in the teaching profession, particularly in terms of the establishment of inclusive and supportive learning environments. Table 2 comprehensively presents the content of the proposed inclusive learning plan for novice educators.

Table 2. Inclusive learning plan for novice educators

Objectives	Activities	Strategies	Resources Needed	Success Indicators	Expected Output / Outcome
Increase cultural awareness and sensitivity among educators	Cultural Competence and Workshops	Interactive workshops focusing on cultural norms, values, and communication styles	Cultural experts, workshop on cultural norms, materials, and multimedia resources	Number of workshops conducted, participant feedback scores	of Educators demonstrate increased awareness and sensitivity to cultural differences
Develop culturally responsive	Curriculum Development Sessions	Collaborative sessions to adapt and create sample	Curriculum specialists, and create sample lesson	Number of revised lesson plans, lesson inclusion	Curriculum that is inclusive and relevant to all

curriculum	curriculum content plans, that reflects diverse resources cultural backgrounds	cultural diverse content	cultural students' cultural backgrounds
Engage parents and community in the educational process	Community Engagement in the Meetings	Regular meetings and events that involve parents and community members in school activities and decision-making	Meeting spaces, communication tools, community leaders
Implement personalized learning frameworks	Training on Universal Design for Learning (UDL)	Professional development sessions on UDL principles and their application in the classroom	Attendance records, feedback from parents and community members
Localize educational experiences	Localization Projects	Projects that incorporate local resources, cultural contexts and resources into the learning materials	Meeting spaces, communication tools, community leaders
Foster an inclusive classroom environment	Inclusive Teaching Practices	Techniques and practices that promote inclusivity, such as differentiated instruction culturally responsive pedagogy	Attendance records, feedback from parents and community members
Enhance educator understanding of cultural contexts	Cultural Immersion Experiences	Opportunities for educators to immerse themselves in different cultural contexts, such as event tickets field trips or cultural events	Attendance records, feedback from parents and community members
Promote acceptance and respect for cultural differences		Activities and discussions that highlight the importance of diversity and respect for cultural differences	Attendance records, feedback from parents and community members

The inclusive learning plan for novice educators is designed to CRT through a structured and comprehensive approach. The objectives of the plan focus on raising cultural awareness and cultural sensitivity for the educators, developing a culturally responsive curriculum, engaging parents and the community, establishing personalized learning frameworks, creating localized learning experiences, promoting classroom inclusiveness, enhancing understanding of cultural contexts, and promoting acceptance and respect of cultural differences. To support these objectives, the plan proposes key activities including cultural competence workshops, curriculum development workshops, community engagement meetings, UDL training, localization efforts, inclusive teaching, culturally based activities, and classroom activities based on diversity. Each of these activities is explicitly designed to advance one of the plan's objectives.

Strategies for implementing the activities include workshops on culture and communication styles, sessions on working collaboratively to change the curriculum to reflect the diverse population, and professional learning sessions on the principles of UDL. Whatever the method for implementation, we are mindful of ensuring that activities are reflective of practice and not just a theoretical framework. The plan also identifies the

resources needed to implement the activities, including cultural experts, workshop materials, curriculum specialists, community leaders, UDL experts, local cultural resources, teaching guides, and multimedia resources. These resources are crucial for the successful execution of the activities.

Success indicators such as the number of workshops conducted, participant feedback scores, attendance records, the number of revised lesson plans, implementation of UDL principles, student engagement levels, and observations of classroom practices are used to evaluate the effectiveness of the activities and strategies.

The anticipated outcomes of the plan are as follows: educators exhibit increased cultural awareness; developing a curriculum that is inclusive and relatable; stronger relationships between the school and the community; classrooms that recognize different learning needs; education experiences that embrace the students' culture; culturally inclusive classrooms; educators have authentic cultural contexts of understanding; and students exhibit respect and appreciation for different cultures. The anticipated outcomes represent the ultimate goal of the plan, which is to develop an inclusive and culturally responsive educational learning experience for all students.

This plan connects theory to practice by using CRT to guide novice educators in creating inclusive classrooms. It provides workshops, UDL training, and community engagement to build cultural awareness and adapt teaching to local contexts. Success is measured through feedback, classroom observations, and student engagement, ensuring that educators can effectively apply CRT principles improving both teaching quality and student outcomes in diverse settings.

In forming an inclusive learning plan for novice teachers and their professional development needs related to cultural competence, it incorporated a literature base that discusses contextualized learning and game-based learning. The novice teachers were provided training and workshops about culturally-responsive pedagogy and engagement with the community. The focus of these professional development sessions was on enhancing their cultural competency and adding to an inclusive curriculum. The novice teacher's success will be measured through feedback they provide once returning to their classrooms and through classroom observations that assess the extent to which they create culturally inclusive environments. These objectives of inclusive environments are related to what the pieces of literature have reiterated, which encouraged the use of more teaching methods relevant to local culture and resources, which could assist in improving academic performance and student engagement [44], [45]. Such inclusive plan may also align teachers' practices in addressing various learning needs and difficulties through proper intervention, support, or remediation to innovate instruction and empower teachers in addressing such and to align the development of instructional support and learning tools based on the needed competencies, promoting further interactive, independent, and diversified learning experiences [46].

4. CONCLUSION

The research indicates that CRT is an inclusive educational practice that values cultural understanding, awareness, and sensitivity, and it expects educators to acknowledge and celebrate the diverse cultural aspects of students and communities. Essential components of CRT include cultural competence, awareness, respect, acceptance of differences, and sensitivity to avoid marginalization.

Recognizing cultural context and ensuring that lessons are relevant and accessible means that the teaching is approachable and inclusive, enriching and enhancing the learning for all students. As well, effective CRT involves making lessons relevant to the students' backgrounds, engaging parents and the community, and incorporating personalized learning frameworks. Adapting the curriculum to fit cultural context and meet students' individual needs leads to effective learning. Localizing an educational experience also ensures that lessons are relevant and respectful of a student's cultural context.

Also, the inclusive learning plan for novice educators is an essential factor to consider to support CRT practices. Since it is involved in their induction program, the inclusive learning plan is designed to help new teachers develop their pedagogical practices, including planning inclusive lessons, classroom management, and involving the community. Activities such as workshop participation and UDL training support developing cultural awareness and provide teachers with practical and impactful ways to adapt their teaching practices. The inclusive learning plan signifies inclusive classrooms where every student finds value in their educational experiences, and supports teachers to address diversity and develop supportive learning spaces.

Based on the results, the study recommends that the inclusive learning plan for novice educators be officially integrated into the induction programs of schools. This plan should focus on training new teachers to apply CRT by creating culturally relevant lessons, involving parents and communities, and using adaptive strategies like UDL. By including workshops and practical training, the plan will help teachers build classrooms where every student feels valued and supported, ensuring a more inclusive and effective learning experience for all. Lastly, since the study focuses only in gathering qualitative data to small number of sampled participants, it is recommended that quantitative or mixed methods approach may be explored for future research undertakings.

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