

Implementing Culturally Responsive Teaching Strategies for Inclusive English Classrooms in Diverse Urban Districts

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Abstract: The paper examines Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) practices that can be applied in English classrooms in urban areas and how the practices affect student engagement, student achievement, and classroom interactions. CRT has emerged as a crucial resource in a increasingly heterogeneous school context to meet the cultural and socio-economic demands of students and allow inclusiveness and a sense of belonging. The study utilized both quantitative and qualitative research designs and incorporated the use of surveys, classroom observations, and teacher and student interviews to determine the efficacy of CRT strategies. The results revealed that culturally relevant content, differentiation, and the establishment of the culturally responsive relationship between the teacher and the students led to a substantial increase in student engagement and student achievement. The teachers said that there was an increased level of student engagement and the classroom atmosphere was more collaborative, with the students saying that they were more engaged in the learning material. The barriers to successful implementation were also found, but a lack of teacher training, curriculum limitations, and institutional opposition were also mentioned. The paper refers to professional development and institutional backing to address such problems and implement CRT in urban classrooms completely. These findings indicate that CRT could be used in a transformative manner to achieve an inclusive learning experience that leads to academic and social-emotional growth. The future study should be carried out on the long-term effects of CRT, how it can be used in other subjects, and its future in other institutions of learning.

Key Words: culturally responsive teaching, student engagement, academic performance, urban classrooms, teacher training, inclusivity, educational barriers

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Introduction

The increasing variety of the urban classes presents challenges and possibilities to teachers (Louderback, 2016; Shevalier & McKenzie, 2012). As student groups become increasingly diverse, with varying cultural and linguistic backgrounds and socio-economic status, traditional methods of teaching may not be effective in addressing the needs of each student. In order to overcome such problems, culturally responsive teaching (CRT) has emerged as a necessary pedagogical practice that aims to foster inclusivity and growing student engagement.

Culturally responsive teaching acknowledges and values the cultural experiences of the students and integrates the knowledge into the curriculum, teaching and learning process, and the classroom relationships (Guberina, 2023; Ashrafova, 2024). It is not merely cultural sensitivity but a process of establishing an inclusive environment in which all students, irrespective of their background, will feel respected and understood. In English language teaching, it is the desire to make the subject more accessible

and relevant that is facilitated by the different perspectives, literature, and learning styles that are applied in the CRT (Yuliantari & Huda, 2023).

However, despite the growing level of popularity, there are significant impediments to the implementation of CRT strategies in urban school districts (Griner & Stewart, 2013). The teachers may also lack the necessary training and resources, and the standardized curriculum taught traditionally may not be capable of considering the richness of the cultural identities of students (Idrus & Sohid, 2023). In addition, institutional problems such as large classes, insufficient finances, and resistance to change can hamper the successful practice of CRT.

This paper aims to explore ways in which the idea of culturally responsive instructional practice can be utilized to create inclusive English classrooms in different urban districts. The paper will provide workable thoughts about the application of these strategies in successful teaching to teachers who may be interested in trying to use CRT. The beneficial results of the CRT, as stated in the paper, including higher rates of student engagement, academic achievement, and social-emotional growth, are also planned to be utilized as a guide to the further implementation of CRT in urban schools.

The paper is structured as follows: Section I presents the need for Culturally Responsible Teaching (CRT) in urban schools, explaining the need to create an inclusive environment in the classroom and the need to meet the needs of the various learners. The literature on CRT and its effectiveness, and the obstacles to its implementation in urban schools, will be discussed in Section II. Section III describes the mixed method approach that was adopted in the study, data collection techniques, and data analysis techniques. The results of the study and discussion of the positive results of CRT on student engagement and academic performance, and difficulties in the implementation process, should be given in section IV. Lastly, in Section V, future studies are proposed, and recommendations are provided about how one can train teachers and institutionally support them to effectively incorporate CRT.

Background and Literature Review

Culturally Responsible Teaching (CRT) is a teaching method that recognizes and respects the various cultural backgrounds of learners. It incorporates the cultural background of students in the curriculum, teaching practices, and classroom dynamics to establish a diverse and exciting learning process. Fundamentally, CRT stresses that the cultural identities of students must not just be embraced but also hailed so that they can feel that it is reflected in their learning. This would help teachers to customize their practices to the cultural experiences of their students and provide a more individualized and relevant learning experience (Farinde-Wu et al., 2017).

Studies have established that CRT can be of great help in enhancing learning in different classrooms (Bonner et al., 2018) (McCain & Farnsworth, 2018). When their cultural backgrounds are understood and incorporated into the learning process, students will be more inclined to engage in the learning process. CRT has been associated with higher student motivation, student participation, and academic success, especially among students of historically marginalized groups. CRT can contribute to the social and academic growth of students by making them feel more connected to the learning process by incorporating a variety of viewpoints and resources in the curriculum. The teachers also attest that there is a better classroom atmosphere when they use CRT strategies, as students feel respected and valued, resulting in better classroom dynamics and student achievement (Bottiani et al., 2018).

Although CRT has been successful in most settings, it may not be easy to apply in urban schools. Among the key impediments is a shortage of teacher preparation and professional development in CRT. The majority of teachers may not feel prepared enough to utilize culturally relevant text in their teaching, or they may be unaware of how to teach culturally diverse students. In addition, the pressure to adopt similar curricula and achieve the standards set by state-mandated testing is more likely to create a burden on the teachers to employ non-rigid instructional methods. Even the urban schools can be stricken with institutional resistance to change, in which some administrators and policymakers have not been keen on adopting CRT practices because they have not understood how to do them, or simply because they believe it to be difficult. The challenges have the potential to produce a barrier to the full potential of CRT in the urban classrooms (Milner IV, 2011).

The effectiveness of culturally responsive instruction is unique in addressing student engagement, academic achievement, and inclusion in heterogeneous classrooms. Its difficulties, however, in the form of insufficient training of the teachers, standard curricula, and institutional opposition, should be overcome so that the CRT strategies can be successfully brought to the city schools. The paper will also elaborate on these challenges and give possible solutions on how to overcome them, and provide a framework that can easily change CRT into urban English language classrooms.

Methodology

Research Approach

The research is a mixed-methods study that implies the usage of both quantitative and qualitative research methods to investigate the effectiveness of culturally responsive teaching (CRT) interventions in English classes in urban settings. The research design will focus on developing a profound insight into how CRT can promote inclusiveness, student engagement, and academic success. Combining both of these data types, the study aims to have a comprehensive picture of the effectiveness of CRT strategies in meeting the needs of the various students in the urban districts.

Participants and Setting

The research was carried out in several city school districts, all of which were high in cultural diversity. A total of 50 English teachers and 300 students with different cultural and socio-economic backgrounds took part. The teachers were chosen according to their desire to use CRT strategies in their classrooms, and both experienced and relatively new to the profession were selected. The student participants were representative of various ethnicities, which included African American, Latino, Asian, and immigrant students, as well as showing cultural diversity that is often present in urban districts.

Data Collection

A combination of surveys, classroom observations, and interviews was used to collect data to measure the effect of CRT. The questionnaires were based on the teachers' attitudes towards CRT and their own reported use of CRT strategies in the classroom. Observations in classrooms were done to evaluate the ways in which teachers applied the CRT strategies, such as the incorporation of culturally relevant materials, differentiated instructions, and interaction with the cultural backgrounds of the students. Both teachers and students were interviewed and provided with qualitative information regarding their experience with CRT in the classroom. Teachers were questioned on what was difficult and what was good

about CRT use, and students were questioned on how they viewed their learning experiences and whether they felt that their cultural identities were being represented in the classroom.

Table 1: Data Collection Methods

Data Collection Method	Description	Purpose
Surveys	Teacher self-reports on CRT usage	To gauge teachers' attitudes toward CRT and the frequency of implementation
Classroom Observations	Observing teaching practices in real-time	To assess the integration of culturally relevant materials and engagement strategies
Interviews	Structured interviews with teachers and students	To capture qualitative insights into experiences with CRT in the classroom

Table 1 is an overview of the various techniques of gathering information to evaluate the effectiveness of Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) in the English classrooms in an urban setting. It entailed Surveys, which entailed self-reported data collected by teachers about their usage of CRT strategies; Classroom Observations, which incorporated real-time observations of teachers concerning their use of CRT strategies in the classroom; and Interviews, which involved qualitative data about the experiences of teachers and students in relation to their CRT practices in the classroom. Both approaches were important in obtaining quantitative and qualitative data to present a detailed view of the effectiveness of CRT.

Data Analysis

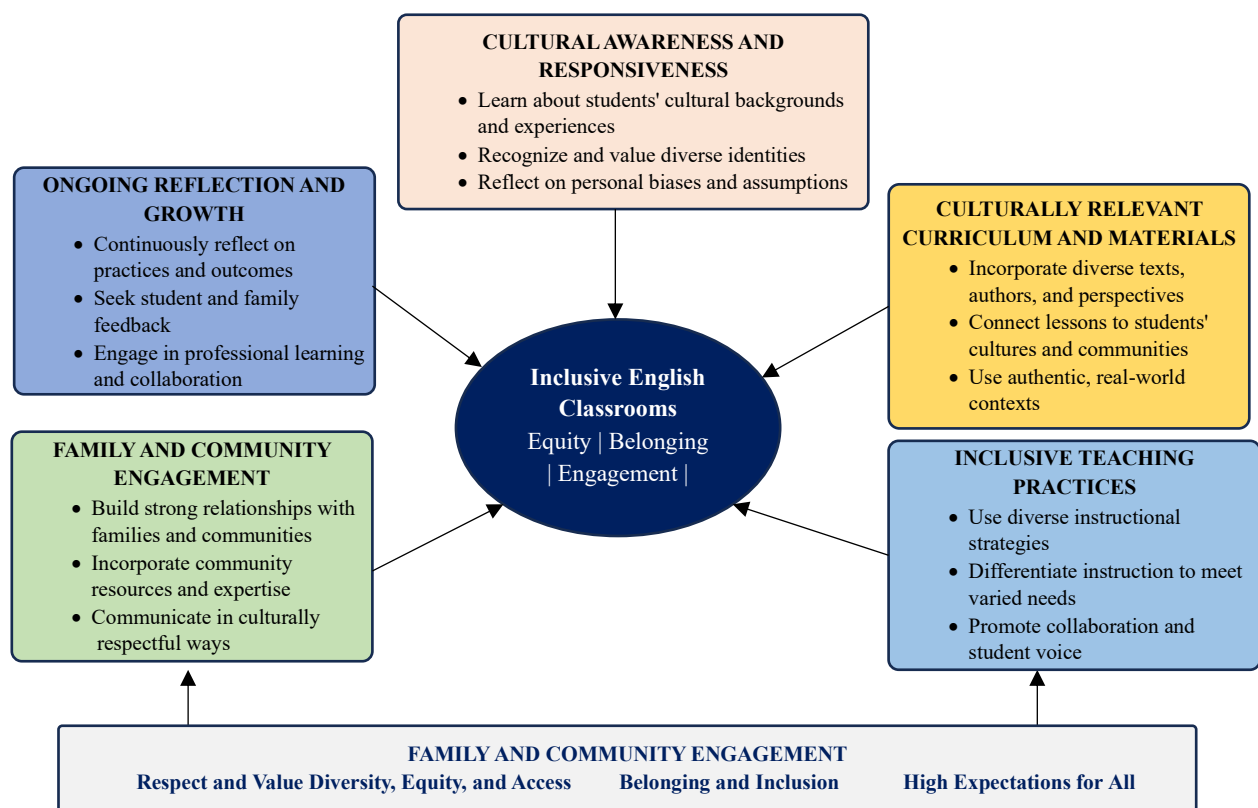


Figure 1: Framework for Implementing Culturally Responsive Teaching Strategies in Inclusive English Classrooms

The results of the surveys (quantitative data) were processed with the help of descriptive statistics to recognize the trends in the utilization of CRT strategies by teachers and evaluate their efficiency in terms of increased student engagement. The pre- and post-survey responses were compared with the help of a paired t-test that would help to determine whether there are any changes in teacher attitudes and practices during the time. Qualitative data on classroom observations and interviews were analyzed using thematic analysis to determine the primary themes related to the implementation and impacts of CRT. It involved coding the data to determine the patterns of teaching practices by teachers and how the students felt about inclusiveness and their role in the learning process.

To implement the Culturally Responsive Teaching strategies in urban English classes, Figure 1 shows a detailed plan to be applied. It prioritizes the following key aspects, such as cultural awareness, relevant curriculum, inclusive teaching, community engagement, and teacher reflection, as ongoing to foster equity, belonging, and student achievement.

Ethical Considerations

The study was in line with the ethics of conducting research involving human subjects. All the participants were informed, and their privacy in the course of the study was guaranteed. Students and teachers were assured that they would be involved in the study on a voluntary basis and could withdraw themselves in the study at their own convenience. Another aspect that was considered in the study was to ensure that all data were anonymized to protect the identity of the participants.

Results and Discussion

Findings

These data analysis results have revealed several significant lessons about the way Culturally Responsible Teaching (CRT) is practiced in urban English classrooms.

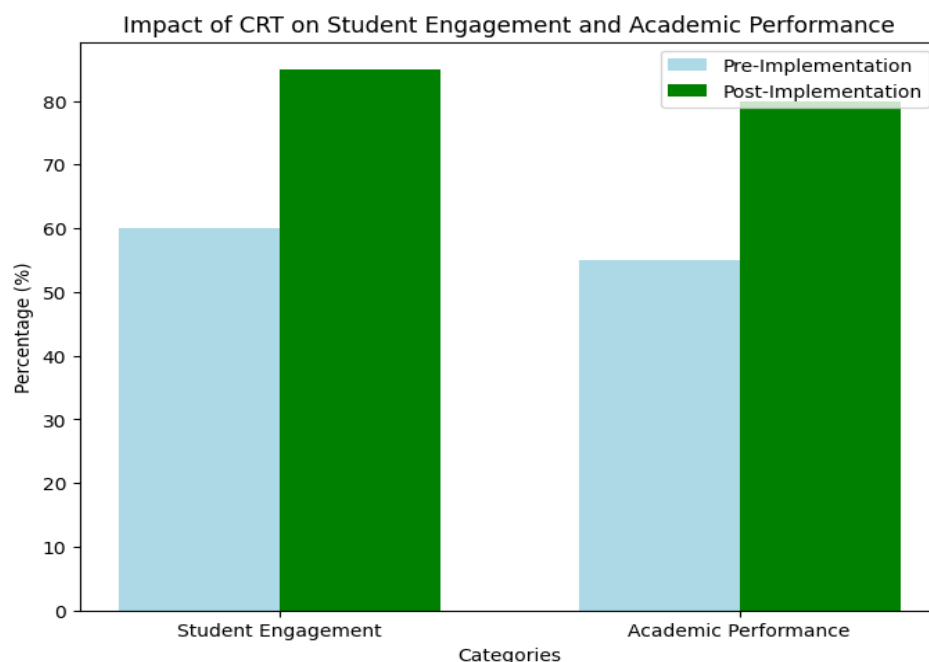


Figure 2: Impact of CRT on Student Engagement and Academic Performance

CRT teachers reported that student engagement and achievement have greatly improved especially among the culturally diverse students. Use of culturally relevant material was very influential and students claimed to be more associated with the content when it was culturally relevant to them. It was observed in the classroom observations that teachers who altered their teaching methods and accommodated cultural differences offered a more accommodating and enabling learning environment. Also, the students interviewed expressed that they felt more of a sense of belonging and wanted to attend classes when they perceived that their cultural perspectives were valued.

Figure 2 demonstrates the way CRT strategies have enhanced student participation and achievement. The statistics show that the two areas have significantly improved with the students of different background registering the highest improvement.

Comparison with prior studies

Such findings can be attributed to the existing literature, which highlights the positive effects of CRT on student engagement and success. Previous research has shown that when students see their cultural backgrounds reflected in the curriculum, they are more likely to actively engage in the learning process. Nonetheless, this paper contributes to the literature by showing that CRT may also enhance classroom interactions and a more inclusive environment, particularly in urban districts with a large proportion of marginalised students. The success that was realised in this study supports the role of CRT as an intervention to overcome educational differences in heterogeneous classrooms.

Table 2: Teachers' Self-Reported Use of CRT Strategies

Strategy Implemented	Pre-Implementation (%)	Post-Implementation (%)
Incorporating Cultural Materials	45%	80%
Differentiating Instruction	55%	75%
Building Culturally Relevant Relationships	50%	78%

Table 2 shows the difference in the self-reported use of different CRT strategies by teachers before and after the implementation. There are noticeable positive changes in the use of cultural materials and differentiated instruction.

Interpretation

The findings indicate that in urban classrooms culturally responsive teaching can greatly improve the learning process among students. By incorporating the cultural background of students in the learning process, the teacher is able to establish an environment, which is not only conducive to academic performance but also social-emotional development. CRT has shown itself to be important to make learning more relevant and approachable as the greater student engagement was seen in this study. Also, the beneficial effect on classroom dynamics implies that the CRT strategies may be used to create a more respectful and cooperative environment, in which every student feels important.

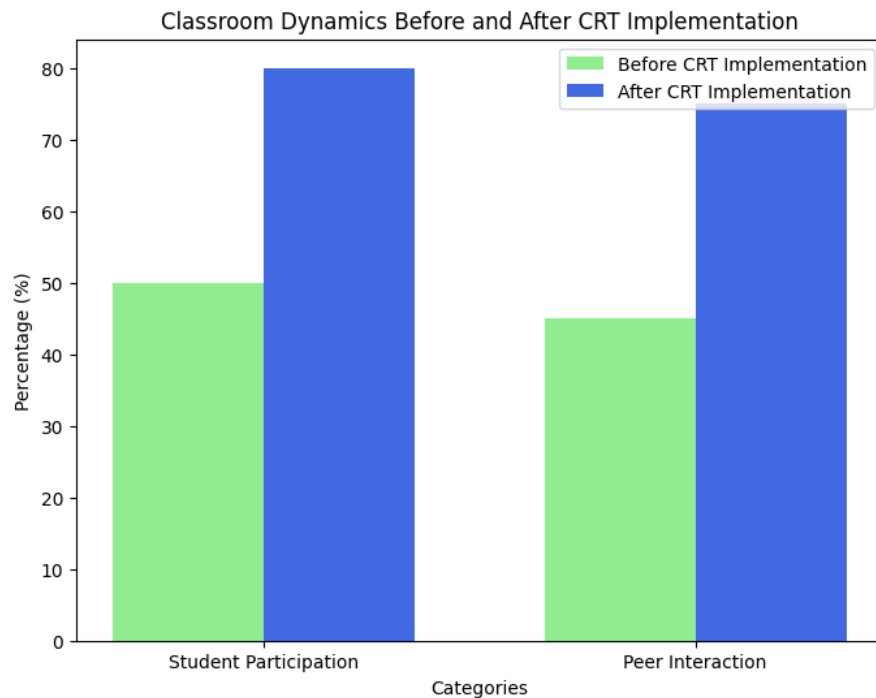


Figure 3: Classroom Dynamics Before and After CRT Implementation

Figure 3 plots the changes in classroom dynamics prior to and following implementation of CRT strategies. Among the essential changes, there are more student engagement and peer interaction.

Challenges Encountered

Although the positive results were observed, a number of challenges were found when implementing CRT strategies. Inadequate professional development and training of teachers in culturally responsive practices was one of the main challenges. The teachers noted that they required additional resources and assistance in order to successfully integrate CRT in their classes. Also some schools adopted CRT, but others had institutional opposition, where their schools expressed concerns over the limitations of their curriculum and the requirements of standardized testing restricted the capacity of teachers to implement full CRT strategies. These issues underscore the need to make systemic changes within urban school districts to support the mainstream adoption of CRT.

Table 3: Barriers to CRT Implementation in Urban Classrooms

Barrier	Frequency (%)
Lack of Teacher Training	60%
Curriculum Constraints	50%
Institutional Resistance	45%

Table 3 indicates the barriers that most teachers have encountered the most in implementing CRT strategies with most of the problems being lack of training and curriculum restrictions.

As this paper has shown, culturally responsive instruction can make a difference in urban English classrooms to make the learning process more inclusive and interactive. These findings indicate that when CRT strategies are well implemented, students become more engaged, academically better, and socially-emotionally. Yet, such issue of teacher preparation, curricular restriction and institutionalization needs to be handled as well to guarantee the successful implementation of CRT in urban schools. The study is a

valuable source of guidelines of the advantages and issues of CRT and ideas about how future studies and practice in the field can be conducted.

Conclusion

The strategies of Culturally Responsible Teaching (CRT) have demonstrated enormous potential in enabling student interaction, learning outcomes, and classroom interactions within English classrooms in urban contexts. As shown in this paper, when the cultural backgrounds of the students are factored into their teaching strategies, the motivation and the involvement of the students also improve greatly especially among the students who have various cultural and socio-economic backgrounds. With the help of culturally relevant materials, distinguishing instructions, and promoting the inclusive classroom activities, the teachers will manage to establish the classroom environment where all the students will feel valued and respected. Such strategies not only sustain high academic performance, but also contribute to the student developing socially-emotionally resulting in an improved and more collaborative classroom. There is however no issue with the implementation of CRT. Some of the major challenges that have been identified include inadequate training of the teachers in the cultural responsiveness department, curriculum limitations and institutional resistance. All these obstacles do not enable the complete implementation of CRT strategies in most urban districts where diversity is most prevalent. The school districts to deal with the challenges would need to invest their resources in the development of teachers and provide the resources necessary to support the CRT practices. The schools should also strive to remove institutional obstacles and devise policies that can promote the use of CRT. There is need to conduct further research on the long-term impacts of CRT on academic performance as well as social integration and to investigate its relevance in other subjects and grades. Finally, the research establishes that through implementing CRT, teachers can create a more inclusive, equal, and engaging learning experience in which students of other cultures may engage.

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