


Chapter 1

Understanding Culturally Responsive Teaching From an Interdisciplinary Perspective


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ABSTRACT

The student population in the United States is becoming increasingly racially and culturally diverse. However, many teachers and educators are not properly equipped to teach diverse students. The importance of teacher professional development in the area of culturally responsive pedagogy and the subsequent effects on student learning cannot be overemphasized. While several research studies have examined culturally responsive pedagogy as a theoretical concept, more work is needed in its practical application and implementation in the classroom. This chapter discusses best practices for infusing culturally responsive strategies and interventions into classroom teaching.

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INTRODUCTION

Culturally Responsive Teaching

Culturally responsive teaching is not a new phenomenon. Several researchers have been conducted on culturally responsive teaching (Buzzetto-Hollywood, 2023; Gay, 2010; Gay, 2013; Gay, 2002; Harris et al., 2021; Harris et al., 2018; Howard, 2020; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Stenbridge (2019). According to Matias (2013), culturally responsive teaching is not just responding to teaching better or an intellectual revolution; it is connected to the civil rights movement and focuses on racial justice for everyone. Gay (2010) has conducted several works on culturally responsive teachings and defines it as “using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant to and effective for them” (Gay, 2010, p. 31; Gay, 2013, pp. 50-51; Muniz, 2019).

Vavrus (2008) argued that the student population in the United States has become increasingly racially and culturally diverse, while teachers remain almost 90% white. Warikoo et al. (2016) noted that a growing percentage of students of color in public schools today make up the majority of students and most of the teachers that teach them tend to be white. Chang and Halpin (2016) explained that the students of ethnic and racial backgrounds are the majority in US public schools, while the ethnic and racial minorities of the teachers represent less than 20% of the schools. White et al. (2015) noted “the demographic changes that will occur with the majority of American families being ethnic families of color by the year 2050” (p. 248). In another study, Martorell et al. (2014) mentioned that by 2050 ethnic minorities are expected to be the majority in the United States. Martorell et al. (2014) also expressed that more than half of the children population will consist of minority children by 2023. Dickson et al. (2016) posit that culturally responsive teaching “can improve the educational experiences of students from diverse cultural, linguistic, and ethnic groups and lessen educational disparities” (p.151). Abacioglu et al. (2020) point out that student achievement and engagement increase when culturally responsive teaching is used. At the same time, Harmon (2012) noted that culturally responsive teaching is one of the most effective methods for meeting culturally different students’ learning needs. According to Gay (2010), culturally responsive teaching is comprehensive, multidimensional, validating/affirming, transforming, emancipatory, and empowering. According to Bassey (2016), when culturally responsive teaching is implemented, students are empowered. When working with diverse students, it is imperative that the instructor teaches from an inclusive approach to increase student engagement and belonging. Bassey (2016) suggests that teachers are successful when they use the student’s culture as the driving force for

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