

Chapter 25

Interculturally Relevant Pedagogy: Developing Contemporary Approach

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ABSTRACT

Although culturally responsive pedagogy has been geared towards students' cultures, interests, and needs, it does not meaningfully consider intercultural communication dynamics that are always existing in almost all classrooms, especially highly multicultural ones. This assumption is problematized by the current academic discussion on individuals' tendency to oscillate between different identities/cultures and the significance of intersubjectivity in the epistemological complexity of interculturality. This chapter makes a case for interculturally relevant pedagogy as an educational approach that recognizes the importance of considering students' cultures while emphasizing intercultural communication in K-12 classrooms procedures with the aim of simultaneously attaining social justice and scholastic achievement. It argues for the plausible need of integrating popular culture in order to present sociopolitical realities and accordingly enable students, along with teachers' guidance, to critically question the current power imbalances and the cultural hegemony of dominant group.

INTRODUCTION

Most scholars interested in the intersections of culture and education have corroborated the assumption that culture is central to learning as it contributes not only to the processes of communicating, receiving and interpreting 'culturally coded' information but also to the shaping of the thinking process of groups and individuals. Increasing student identification with the course content across all levels would necessarily entail encouraging a pedagogy that acknowledges, responds to, and celebrates fundamental cultures and offers full, equitable access to education for students from all cultures (Gloria Ladson-

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Interculturally Relevant Pedagogy

Billings, 1994). Culturally relevant pedagogy helps to realize a meaningful relationship between students as cultural beings and the objective of scholastic retention and learning. It is constructed to establish active engagement, enrichment, and academic achievement of all students by promoting an appreciation of diversity, recognizing and valuing students' cultural strengths, and meaningfully considering students' lived experiences and their place in the world (Villegas & Lucas, 2007). Implementing culturally responsive/relevant teaching/pedagogy across content areas and grade levels involves "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 [students]" (Gay, 2010, p. 31). This type of content delivery contributes to the development of students' involvement through "knowing their opinions will be valued, and expressing themselves in multiple ways" (Edwards & Edwick, 2013, p. 10).

Culturally relevant pedagogy's (CRP) pedagogical realization/ applicability is anchored in empowering "students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically [because it uses] cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes" (Ladson-Billings, 2009, p. 20). Moreover, culturally responsive teaching primarily focuses on the consideration of the students' native culture (as a counterpart to intercultural-oriented education) and embracing it as a standard for the selection and design of instructional activities and contents. It is, therefore, made distinctive by teachers who aim at developing the cultural competence, determining high expectations, and rendering their task as both facilitators and learners.

Irrespective of epistemological orientations underpinning any educational framework, culture is often presented as an indispensable aspect in the delivery of appropriate learning experience. Particularly, popular culture with its defining feature of enjoying currency and contemporary topics enables constructing teaching elements that reflect students' interests and concerns as they tend to imitate/re-live what they have been exposed to in movies, music, etc... Popular culture is succinctly described as the cultural texts, practices and artifacts that are attractive to large numbers of youth (Marsh, 2005). Many researchers have confirmed the usefulness of embracing culturally responsive instruction, materials and curriculum in K-12 schools (Aronson & Laughter, 2016; Ladson-Billings, 2014; Milner, 2011; Paris, 2012;; Warren, 2018). Scholars interested in literacy have reported that integrating popular culture can propel students' critical thinking and writing abilities about "the media they produce and consume both in and outside of school "(Schmier, 2014, p. 39).

Promoting youth engagement in critical media pedagogy using popular culture can concurrently empower youth as media consumers and develop their academic literacy skills (Morrell and Duncan-Andrade, 2006). By using popular culture, literacy educators are provided with opportunities to develop culturally sustaining pedagogies (Paris, 2012) that will assist in creating pedagogical third spaces (Gutiérrez, 2008). This, in turn, situates literacy curricula in the lives of "students and repurpose traditional literacy curricula to be more useful and pertinent for the complex literate lives of today's K-12 students" (Petroni, 2013, p. 5). It seems, therefore, clear that implementing culturally responsive pedagogy while using popular culture is rather more promising especially in the case of youth who are constantly exposed to media with all its means. Bringing different forms of popular culture serves the need for contextualizing learning and catering to students' needs/interests by meaningfully taking their daily lives/routines into account while designing courses. Yet, it is important to emphasize that these objectives are only met when teachers are keen on using popular culture which is unfiltered and wisely selected under the rubrics of supporting the objective of learning. In other words, through these media avenues including whether in TV, media, music, articles, or books, people are learning. The daily pedagogical onslaught of information that people are experiencing through popular media can either "create conflict within [themselves] or elicit great insights for change and acceptance "(CohenMillar, 2019, p. 1).

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