

# A Culturally Responsive Pedagogy as a Case for Curriculum Relevance

Bulelwa Makena<sup>1</sup>  & Dineo Mamaile<sup>1</sup> 

<sup>1</sup> Continuing Professional Teacher Development, Walter Sisulu University, Komani, South Africa.



## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to investigate how Culturally Responsive Pedagogy (CRP) can enhance curriculum relevance in higher education, particularly within culturally and linguistically diverse contexts. CRP is recognised for its emphasis on valuing learners' cultural identities and lived experiences, and this study examined its potential to foster inclusivity and engagement. A qualitative case study design was employed. Data were collected through semi-structured focus group interviews with five purposively selected lecturers teaching across various enrolment levels and programmes at a rural university in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa. The open-ended format of the interviews enabled the capture of pedagogical adaptations and reflections on the integration of learners' cultural and linguistic backgrounds into classroom practice. Findings revealed two dominant themes: (i) lecturers' ability to reflect and incorporate learners' cultural realities into their teaching, and (ii) the fostering of supportive, inclusive learning communities that promote belonging and participation. These results affirm the transformative potential of CRP in bridging the gap between curriculum content and students' cultural contexts. The discussion highlights the importance of professional development and institutional support for embedding CRP, while recommendations include curriculum reforms that prioritise cultural inclusivity and further research into scaling CRP across disciplines and institutions. The study contributes to scholarship by advancing CRP as a viable pedagogical framework for curriculum transformation in South Africa. It underscores the need for culturally inclusive teaching practices to enhance curriculum relevance, support equity, and strengthen higher education's role in social transformation.

## Correspondence

Bulelwa Makena

Email:

[bmakena@wsu.ac.za](mailto:bmakena@wsu.ac.za)

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## INTRODUCTION

The educational landscape, looking at how the educational landscape has become inclined in a contemporary fashion, it becomes necessary to shift towards a more inclusive and culturally inclined teaching pedagogy.<sup>1</sup> Thus, it becomes crucial to clearly define the fundamental variables entailed by the title of this paper, a culturally responsive pedagogy (CRP), and curriculum relevance. Civitillo et al opine that CRP is an educational approach developed to integrate learner diversity, cultural backgrounds, and

<sup>1</sup> Miriam Schwarzenthal et al., "Equal but Different: Effects of Equality/Inclusion and Cultural Pluralism on Intergroup Outcomes in Multiethnic Classrooms.," *Cultural Diversity & Ethnic Minority Psychology* 24, no. 2 (April 2018): 260–71, <https://doi.org/10.1037/cdp0000173>.

variations in linguistic constituencies.<sup>2</sup> As all these factors are considered core to the learning process and the entire schooling environment, the aim is the production of a more inclusive learning environment that values and respects learners as worthwhile human beings.<sup>3</sup> Such a stance is already believed to be empowering and success-oriented when academic metrics are measured.

Curriculum Relevance, as defined by Dee and Penner, has Key Aspects for consideration. Curriculum is solely considered relevant when it solidifies the individual learning styles, as well as their socio-economic backgrounds.<sup>4</sup> This is referred to as taking close consideration of unique learner needs. In accordance, for a curriculum to be considered viable, it should encompass current global issues, thus allowing for the integration of emerging technologies into the teaching and learning processes. This practice is already believed to be leveraging practicality and relevancy into learning. With cumulative global diversity, recipients of teaching and learning are faced with a huge challenge, that of being expected to adapt their pedagogical approaches to reflect learners' varied cultural backgrounds. As institutions of learning are faced with this emergent transition, CRP serves as a central principle, with its characteristic to promote an educational experience meant to validate and foster meaningful learning experiences and learner identities.<sup>5</sup> The aim of this paper is to investigate how CRP can enhance curriculum relevance for recognising practical approaches for its execution.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

With the identified prerequisite for teachers to integrate learners' cultural references into their teaching practices, research advocates for education that not only respects but also draws from learners' diverse backgrounds. An all-inclusive understanding of CRP is for an equitable and relevant curriculum to be considered, with the essence of crafting a holistic learner well-being. Of a different opinion, Arvanitis claims that although CRP is rooted in the recognition that education cannot be uniform, it is crucial that it must be adaptable to cater for learner diversity as learners are a diverse group in one particular schooling environment emanating from assorted cultures.<sup>6</sup>

It is for the reasons highlighted above that CRP prioritizes the assimilation of a multicultural stance into the curriculum. This is anticipated to improve efficiency and effectiveness in the education process. Considering these crucial factors at a very close range not only acknowledges a nurtured pedagogy but also sustains learners' cultural identities as part of their educational practice.<sup>7</sup> Therefore, CRP is a worthwhile approach that emphasises meaningful learning profoundly interconnected with learner socio-cultural contexts, thus imposing a holistic understanding of learner uniqueness. Studies conducted by Matthews and Lopez discuss an augmented language curriculum that addresses diversity and inclusion, as these have been noted to be increasingly essential.<sup>8</sup> In line with these claims, Paris and Alim concur that for the administered practices to be considered inclusive, this is anticipated to enhance learning outcomes, thereby fostering belonging among learners from varied backgrounds.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Sauro Civitillo, Linda P Juang, and Maja K Schachner, "Challenging Beliefs about Cultural Diversity in Education: A Synthesis and Critical Review of Trainings with Pre-Service Teachers," *Educational Research Review* 24 (2018): 67–83.

<sup>3</sup> Ángel Díaz de Rada and Livia Jiménez Sedano, "Variations on Diversity and the Risks of Bureaucratic Complicity," *A Companion to the Anthropology of Education*, 2011, 408–24.

<sup>4</sup> Thomas S. Dee and Emily K. Penner, "The Causal Effects of Cultural Relevance," *American Educational Research Journal* 54, no. 1 (February 24, 2017): 127–66, <https://doi.org/10.3102/0002831216677002>.

<sup>5</sup> Na'ilah Suad Nasir and Tryphenia B Peele-Eady, "Identity and Learning," in *Encyclopedia of the Sciences of Learning* (Springer, 2012), 1482–84.

<sup>6</sup> E. Arvanitis, "Culturally Responsive Pedagogy: Modeling Teachers' Professional Learning to Advance Plurilingualism," in *Handbook of Research and Practice in Heritage Language Education*, ed. P. Trifonas and T. Aravossitas (Cham: Springer, 2018), 254–62.

<sup>7</sup> Melissa K Driver and Sarah R Powell, "Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Schema Intervention: Improving Word Problem Solving for English Language Learners with Mathematics Difficulty," *Learning Disability Quarterly* 40, no. 1 (2017): 41–53.

<sup>8</sup> J. Sharif Matthews and Francesca López, "Speaking Their Language: The Role of Cultural Content Integration and Heritage Language for Academic Achievement among Latino Children," *Contemporary Educational Psychology* 57 (April 2019): 72–86, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cedpsych.2018.01.005>.

<sup>9</sup> Django Paris and H Samy Alim, *Culturally Sustaining Pedagogies: Teaching and Learning for Justice in a Changing World* (Teachers College Press, 2017).



Figure 1: Social inequality<sup>10</sup>

The concept of social inequality, as alluded to by Collins, proposes that for learners gathered in an individual learning environment, it becomes essential to note that such inhabitants have differences among themselves.<sup>11</sup> This results from diversity in linguistic abilities, learning styles, and socio-economic status. If these critical factors are not handled with caution, they can significantly influence educational experiences and consequences.<sup>12</sup> This becomes a wake-up call that addressing learner diversity is crucial for creating inclusive learning environments, thus catering to learners' unique perspectives is meant to enrich classroom deliberations. Furthermore, research indicates that schools that embrace learner diversity tend to foster social cohesion and enhanced academic achievement.<sup>13</sup>

Henceforth, it becomes imperative for all the education stakeholders to explore frameworks that incorporate cultural perspectives into language education. Identification and implementation of such networks can facilitate a profound understanding of learning needs, and this is equated to an enhanced curriculum relevance.<sup>14</sup> Teaching and learning, as a universal process, is consistently reported in global studies to reflect a movement toward a more inclusive curriculum that incorporates learners' cultural backgrounds. This movement has been proven to be gaining significant traction across various educational contexts. It goes without saying that implementing curricula that integrate learners' cultural identities is equivalent to functional institutions of learning, and these are drivers for academic success.<sup>15</sup> Meaning, more needs to be explored by curriculum designers on how they can better reflect linguistic and cultural diversity into the pedagogies to be amplified.

<sup>10</sup> Patricia Hill Collins, "Social Inequality, Power, and Politics: Intersectionality and American Pragmatism in Dialogue," *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy* 26, no. 2 (2012): 442–57.

<sup>11</sup> Hill Collins, "Social Inequality, Power, and Politics: Intersectionality and American Pragmatism in Dialogue."

<sup>12</sup> Parlo Singh, "Performativity and Pedagogising Knowledge: Globalising Educational Policy Formation, Dissemination and Enactment," *Journal of Education Policy* 30, no. 3 (May 4, 2015): 363–84, <https://doi.org/10.1080/02680939.2014.961968>.

<sup>13</sup> Emmanuel O. Acquah and Nancy L. Commins, "Critical Reflection as a Key Component in Promoting Pre-Service Teachers' Awareness of Cultural Diversity," *Reflective Practice* 16, no. 6 (November 2, 2015): 790–805, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14623943.2015.1095729>.

<sup>14</sup> Brittany Aronson and Judson Laughter, "The Theory and Practice of Culturally Relevant Education," *Review of Educational Research* 86, no. 1 (March 1, 2016): 163–206, <https://doi.org/10.3102/0034654315582066>.

<sup>15</sup> Ben Kirshner et al., "Rethinking 'the Community' in University–Community Partnerships: Case Studies from CU Engage," in *Connecting Research and Practice for Educational Improvement* (Routledge, 2017), 85–99.

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This paper is underpinned by the Normative re-educative model.<sup>16</sup> For educational innovations, this approach proposes that people can be re-educated to change from the norm to the new ways. Meaning, human behaviour is influenced by a variety of factors like socio-cultural norms; hence, direct interventions by change agents are believed to lead to change in attitudes, values, and skills. This approach implies that, as the education system caters for inclusive education, there is a need to recognize and value diversity among learners. Radical reforms within educational systems, especially those aligned to curriculum design, have to ensure that varying learner needs are at the centre, as proclaimed by Hammond.<sup>17</sup>

Noting how this model affects the education processes, this implies a need to depart from traditional pedagogical models that tend to marginalize the voices of diverse learners; instead, teachers are urged to foster a collaborative learning environment.<sup>18</sup> This could be proven functional if personalized instruction could be prioritized to enhance learner-teacher engagement. In addition to that, curriculum designers should consider local contexts, enabling a curriculum that resonates with learners' socio-cultural backgrounds. If learners are permitted chances to express their own perspectives, such an approach is regarded as crucial as it fosters learner-centeredness, thereby encouraging opportunities for all.<sup>19</sup> Therefore, incorporating culturally sustaining pedagogies not only enriches classroom learning but also empowers one to utilize one's own cultural wealth as a foundation for academic success.

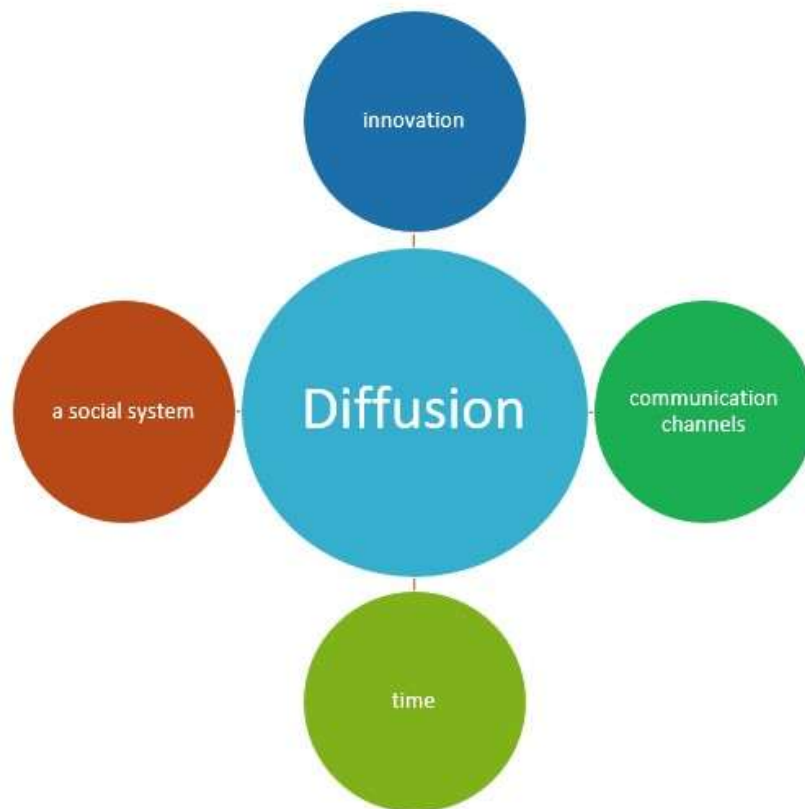


Figure 2: Diffusion of innovations Theory (Rogers, 2003)

In accordance with the Normative re-educative model by Chin and Benne,<sup>20</sup> the Diffusion of Innovation Theory<sup>21</sup> stipulates that it is crucial to prioritize a related social system for innovation and

<sup>16</sup> Warren G Bennis, Kenneth Benne, and Robert Chin, *The Planning of Change*, vol. 69 (LWW, 1969).

<sup>17</sup> Z. Hammond, *Culturally Responsive Teaching and the Brain: Promoting Authentic Engagement and Rigor among Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Learners* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin, 2015).

<sup>18</sup> Aronson and Laughter, "The Theory and Practice of Culturally Relevant Education."

<sup>19</sup> Django Paris, "Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy," *Educational Researcher* 41, no. 3 (April 1, 2012): 93–97, <https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X12441244>.

<sup>20</sup> Bennis, Benne, and Chin, *The Planning of Change*.

<sup>21</sup> E. M. Rogers, *Diffusion of Innovations*, 5th ed. (Tampa, FL: Free Press, 2003).

communication channels to be efficiently administered. When interconnecting the elements of the social system, communication channels, time, and innovation, people, diverse as they are, tend to adopt an idea or product quickly and effectively. As innovation refers to an emergent idea that is introduced to a community, such a network of individuals or groups is liable to be a deterrent or facilitator of the innovation if they feel considered as worthwhile human beings within an ecosystem. Therefore, it is the structure of the social system that determines the rate of effectiveness in whatever emergent information needs to be dispatched among users.

## METHODOLOGY

### Research Design

This study employed a qualitative case study design, which is ideally suited for examining the intricate and contextually embedded experiences of educators who engage in CRP. The case study approach enabled an in-depth exploration of how lecturers adapt their teaching strategies to address the cultural, linguistic, and socio-economic diversity present within their learner cohorts in a specific rural higher education setting. By focusing on a bounded system, namely, a particular institution and its lecturers, the design facilitated the collection of rich, descriptive data that illuminates the subjective interpretations and practices of educators. According to Yin, case studies are particularly useful when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident, which aligns with the complexity of implementing CRP in diverse educational environments.<sup>22</sup> Furthermore, the design supports the exploration of "how" and "why" questions, making it an appropriate choice for capturing the nuanced application of CRP in rural contexts.<sup>23</sup>

### Sampling and Participants

A purposive sampling strategy was employed to select participants who are actively involved in both instruction and curriculum development. Purposive sampling, also known as judgmental or selective sampling, is a non-probability technique where participants are intentionally selected based on their ability to provide rich, relevant, and diverse information aligned with the study objectives.<sup>24</sup> In this context, five lecturers from a university located in the rural Eastern Cape Province of South Africa were selected. These individuals were chosen due to their extensive experience with diverse learner populations across various enrolment levels and academic programmes. Their professional engagement within a linguistically and culturally complex environment makes them well-suited as informants for this research.

### Data Collection Method

Data was gathered through semi-structured focus group interviews, utilizing an open-ended interview schedule. The questions were centred around key themes, including lecturers' understanding and application of CRP, adaptations made to accommodate cultural and linguistic diversity, challenges encountered in implementing CRP in a rural higher education context, and the perceived impact of CRP on learner engagement and success. This method provided flexibility to delve deeper into participants' perspectives, encouraging them to elaborate on teaching strategies and pedagogical adjustments concerning diverse learners' needs. Follow-up questions and probes were employed throughout the interviews to clarify responses, elicit further detail, and explore emerging insights.<sup>25</sup> The group setting promoted interactive discussions and collaborative reflections among participants, thereby enhancing the richness and depth of the data collected. With the consent of all participants, the interviews were audio-recorded and subsequently transcribed verbatim for thematic analysis.

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<sup>22</sup> Robert K. Yin, *Case Study Research and Applications: Design and Methods* ( Sage Publications, 2018).

<sup>23</sup> Pamela Baxter and Susan Jack, "Qualitative Case Study Methodology: Study Design and Implementation for Novice Researchers," *The Qualitative Report*, January 14, 2015, <https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2008.1573>; John W Creswell and Cheryl N Poth, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing among Five Approaches* (Sage publications, 2016).

<sup>24</sup> S. Ramsookbhai, "A Qualitative Study on Factors Contributing to High Learner Performance in a South African Public School," AERA Online Paper Repository, 2023, <https://www.aera.net/publications/online-paper-repository>.

<sup>25</sup> M.M. Sefotho and R. Mampane, "Qualitative Interviewing in Education Research: Reflexive Engagement and Methodological Integrity," *South African Journal of Higher Education* 37, no. 2 (2023): 223–38.

## Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was utilized to interpret qualitative data. Thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data and offers a flexible yet rigorous approach to analysing qualitative data.<sup>26</sup> Transcripts were reviewed several times to identify recurring patterns, categories, and themes. Coding was conducted manually, employing a deductive-inductive approach: certain themes were derived from existing literature on CRP, while others emerged organically from the participants' narratives. Trustworthiness was established through peer debriefing and member checking to validate the accuracy of both transcriptions and interpretations.

## Ethical Considerations

The research was conducted in accordance with established ethical standards for scientific inquiry. Ethical clearance was obtained from the relevant institutional review board to ensure compliance with protocols for conducting research involving human participants. Participants were comprehensively informed about the study's objectives, procedures, potential risks, and benefits. They were also advised of their rights, including the right to voluntary participation, the freedom to withdraw from the study at any stage without consequence, and the assurance of anonymity and confidentiality.<sup>27</sup>

In line with the principle of respect for persons, as outlined by the National Health Research Ethics Council, participants were treated as autonomous individuals, capable of making informed decisions regarding their involvement.<sup>28</sup> Informed written consent was obtained before data collection commenced, and care was taken to ensure that the consent process was conducted in a language and manner that participants could fully understand.

Additionally, the principle of beneficence was upheld by ensuring that no harm would come to participants as a result of their involvement in the study. Efforts were made to minimise potential discomfort and to maximise the benefits of participation through reflection, empowerment, and contribution to educational improvement. The principle of justice was also observed, ensuring equitable selection of participants and fair distribution of the burdens and benefits of the research. Finally, participant data were stored securely, used solely for academic purposes, and treated with strict confidentiality, further upholding the ethical requirement to protect privacy and dignity.<sup>29</sup>

## PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

The findings of the study reveal two dominant themes: (1) Reflection of Cultural Realities by Learners, and (2) Fostering a Supportive Learning Community. These themes emerged through thematic analysis of the semi-structured focus group interviews with five lecturers teaching at a rural university in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa. The participants are referred to using pseudonyms (e.g., Participant A, B, etc.) to protect their identities and maintain the credibility of the study.

### Theme 1: Reflection of Cultural Realities by Learners

Lecturers consistently reported adapting their teaching to better reflect the cultural backgrounds of their learners. They acknowledged the need to localize content and create relatable examples.

*"When I introduce financial accounting principles, I use examples drawn from the local village economy. It gets their attention and they begin to participate more,"* noted Participant A.

Participant B supported this by stating, *"Our learners come from isiXhosa-speaking communities, so I sometimes allow them to discuss complex topics in their home language before presenting in English. This boosts their confidence."*

Participant C added, *"When you respect their background and allow them to bring their cultural stories into classroom debates, they become more engaged."*

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<sup>26</sup> L. Ramrathan, "Using Thematic Analysis in South African Education Research: A Flexible Strategy for Qualitative Inquiry," *South African Journal of Education* 43, no. 1 (2023): 1–10.

<sup>27</sup> D. Wessels and L. Daniels, "Ethical Considerations in Qualitative Research with Learners and Educators in South African Schools," *South African Journal of Education* 44, no. 1 (2024): 1–10.

<sup>28</sup> NHREC (National Health Research Ethics Council), *Ethics in Health Research: Principles, Processes and Structures*, 3rd ed. (Pretoria: Department of Health, 2023).

<sup>29</sup> NHREC (National Health Research Ethics Council), *Ethics in Health Research: Principles, Processes and Structures*.

These narratives illustrate the proactive incorporation of linguistic and cultural realities into the teaching process, affirming CRP as a viable tool for enhancing curriculum relevance.

## Theme 2: Fostering a Supportive Learning Community

Participants described intentionally building learning environments that embrace learners' identities and create a sense of belonging.

*"I try to create group work activities where learners from different backgrounds must collaborate. It forces them to understand and respect each other's views,"* stated Participant D.

This was echoed by Participant B: *"By acknowledging their cultural holidays and traditions, learners feel seen and respected. This has improved their classroom attendance and participation."*

Participant E added, *"Learners know that their voices matter here. We create classroom rules together and reflect on them regularly, which has fostered a strong community spirit."*

These responses demonstrate how CRP fosters an inclusive and affirming learning space, encouraging engagement and mutual respect.

## DISCUSSION

The findings align with previous literature affirming the role of culturally responsive pedagogy in addressing learner diversity and enhancing curriculum relevance.<sup>30</sup> The reflection of cultural realities by learners, as facilitated by their lecturers, resonates with the theoretical underpinnings of the Normative Re-Educative Model, which posits that individuals can be reoriented toward inclusive practices through values-based interventions.<sup>31</sup>

Moreover, the emphasis on fostering a supportive learning community correlates with Rogers' Diffusion of Innovations Theory, in which social systems are identified as critical in facilitating change.<sup>32</sup> By fostering an inclusive educational environment, the lecturers acted as change agents within their institution, promoting the adoption of CRP as an innovation. These findings also expand on the argument by Driver and Powell that culturally sustaining pedagogies nurture learners' identities and offer more meaningful engagement.<sup>33</sup> The study supports the view that CRP is not just a theoretical framework but a practical necessity in culturally diverse and rural educational settings in South Africa.

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These findings also expand on the argument by Driver and Powell that culturally sustaining pedagogies nurture learners' identities and offer more meaningful engagement.<sup>37</sup> The consistency of the participants' experiences affirms that CRP is not merely theoretical but a practical necessity in culturally diverse and rural educational settings in South Africa.

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<sup>30</sup> Paris and Alim, *Culturally Sustaining Pedagogies: Teaching and Learning for Justice in a Changing World*; Sharif Matthews and López, "Speaking Their Language: The Role of Cultural Content Integration and Heritage Language for Academic Achievement among Latino Children."

<sup>31</sup> Bennis, Benne, and Chin, *The Planning of Change*.

<sup>32</sup> Rogers, *Diffusion of Innovations*.

<sup>33</sup> Driver and Powell, "Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Schema Intervention: Improving Word Problem Solving for English Language Learners with Mathematics Difficulty."

<sup>34</sup> Paris and Alim, *Culturally Sustaining Pedagogies: Teaching and Learning for Justice in a Changing World*; Sharif Matthews and López, "Speaking Their Language: The Role of Cultural Content Integration and Heritage Language for Academic Achievement among Latino Children."

<sup>35</sup> Bennis, Benne, and Chin, *The Planning of Change*.

<sup>36</sup> Rogers, *Diffusion of Innovations*.

<sup>37</sup> Driver and Powell, "Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Schema Intervention: Improving Word Problem Solving for English Language Learners with Mathematics Difficulty."

## RECOMMENDATIONS

As emanating from the study findings, this paper recommends that institutions of learning, for the integration of CRP to be considered operative, there is a need to prioritize professional development programs specifically focusing on culturally relevant teaching practices. Further than that, prescribing curricula that highly consider the inclusion of diverse cultural perspectives would therefore enrich the learning experiences. For this stance to be effective, it becomes necessary for teachers, learners, and the wider community to collaborate for the establishment of sustained culturally responsive educational environments, as these are noted to thrive on multiplicity. Lastly, another crucial factor to consider is policy advocacy. Policymakers need to be encouraged to adopt frameworks and standards that promote culturally responsive teaching practices across all levels, as this is anticipated by this paper to contribute to the broader discourse on education equity as prioritized by Chapter 2 of the Bill of Rights in the South African Constitution.

## CONCLUSION

The study concludes that the implementation of CRP enhances curriculum relevance by aligning teaching practices with learners' cultural and linguistic backgrounds. CRP facilitates learners' engagement, fosters inclusivity, and cultivates mutual respect within the learning environment. In doing so, CRP emerges as a transformative tool for addressing equity and diversity in rural South African universities.

### Future Studies

Future research could:

- Explore CRP implementation across other disciplines and educational phases, including basic education.
- Investigate the long-term impact of CRP on learner performance and identity formation.
- Examine institutional policy readiness for embedding CRP within curriculum design.
- Consider quantitative and mixed methods approaches to complement qualitative insights and offer broader generalisability.

Deeper research into collaborative partnerships between universities and rural communities may also offer valuable perspectives on sustaining CRP in higher education.

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## ABOUT AUTHORS

Bulelwa Makena is an Associate Professor of Language Education and has served as a member of the Faculty of Education Higher Degrees and Ethics Committee at Walter Sisulu University, South Africa. As a self-motivated, achievement-oriented, lateral thinker and a doer, I am an author who has managed to publish scientific papers, all on DHET-accredited platforms. I serve as a reviewer for manuscripts

published by DHET-accredited journals. As a session chair in both national and international conferences, supervising post-graduate students to the finality of their research projects/graduation, and a mentor for mentees who successfully publish articles, I have gradually sharpened my research and paper writing skills. As charity begins at home, it is worth mentioning that mentoring colleagues within my department has also benefited the departmental and faculty throughput.

Dineo Mamaile, as an emerging scholar and a Lecturer at Walter Sisulu University, South Africa, has engaged with a wide range of scholars through the conferences attended. Publishing in research-accredited platforms has instilled in me that sense of eagerness to collaborate and co-author with scholars from diverse disciplines. This has helped to reshape my scholarly mindset, and with the information I have already gathered, I apply such expertise to the BEd Hons students whom I supervise. Engaging in the processes of supervising their research projects also enhances my research skills. Being institutionally recognised through receiving an award as an outstanding scholar for the identified category is motivation enough to consistently engage in research-related activities.