

Culturally Responsive Teaching: Enhancing Reading Proficiency in Indigenous Kindergarten Learners

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Abstract: *In modern education discussions, there's a growing concern over equitable learning outcomes, highlighted by the enduring achievement gap, especially in early literacy proficiency, between Indigenous and non-indigenous students, which mirrors broader disparities rooted in historical, cultural, and socio-economic factors. This study utilized a narrative literature review to explore the theme of "Culturally Responsive Teaching: Enhancing Reading Proficiency in Indigenous Kindergarten Learners." The focus was investigating teachers' experiences within the Division of Bukidnon's elementary education institutions. This inquiry aligns with the expanding body of literature on culturally responsive teaching and its potential impact on teaching methods and student learning outcomes within Indigenous community education. Before delving into a comprehensive review, a preliminary scoping review was conducted to assess the availability of relevant literature, specifically in the context of the Division of Bukidnon. The initial exploration revealed a scarcity of research on this topic, indicating a need for further investigation. Findings revealed five (5) emerging perceptions and responses to, such as (1) Importance of culturally Relevant Pedagogy and (2) Challenges and Solutions in Culturally Responsive Teaching. (3) Parental Involvement and Support, Four (4) Policy Implications and Recommendations, Fifth (5) Professional Development and Training. Prioritizing professional development programs focused on cultural sensitivity is recommended to empower educators with the knowledge and skills to create inclusive learning environments, ultimately improving reading achievement for Indigenous kindergarten students. This ongoing investment equips teachers to leverage the strengths students bring from their communities and nurture a love of learning that respects their cultural heritage. Culturally relevant pedagogy bridges the gap between indigenous students' cultural backgrounds and the school environment, fostering a more engaging and practical learning experience.*

Keywords: responsive teaching, culture, Indigenous kindergarten learners

Introduction

In contemporary educational discourse, the issue of equitable learning outcomes among diverse student populations has garnered increasing attention. (Lopez, A. (2013). One prominent challenge within this realm is the persistent achievement gap between Indigenous and non-indigenous learners, particularly in early literacy proficiency. (Arteaga, I., & Glewwe, P. (2017) This phenomenon reflects broader educational access and quality disparities rooted in historical, cultural, and socio-economic factors. (Pokropek, A., Boronovi, F., & Jakubowski, M. (2015).

Internationally, the struggle for educational equity resonates across various contexts. Indigenous communities worldwide often face similar challenges in accessing quality education and achieving academic success. (Devlin, M. (2009). Debates on culturally responsive teaching and the importance of culturally relevant curricula have gained traction as educators and policymakers recognize the need to acknowledge and incorporate indigenous perspectives, languages, and cultural practices into educational frameworks. (Gay, G. (2002)

In the specific context of early literacy development, indigenous kindergarten learners encounter unique obstacles that impact their reading proficiency. (PhD), S. (2023). These barriers may include limited access to culturally relevant materials, linguistic differences between home and school environments, and a lack of pedagogical approaches that honor indigenous ways of learning (Costa, M., Pereira, Í., & Macedo, S. (2020). As a result, Indigenous students often lag behind their non-indigenous peers in reading achievement, perpetuating cycles of educational equality (Yeung, A., Craven, R., & Ali, J. (2013).

While research on culturally responsive teaching and literacy development has grown in recent years, there remains a noticeable gap in literature addressing the specific needs of Indigenous kindergarten learners (Keehne, C., Sarsona, W., Kawakami, A., & Au, K. (2018 Existing studies often focus on general principles of culturally responsive pedagogy or explore literacy interventions in broader contexts, overlooking the nuances of early literacy instruction within Indigenous communities (Gillispie, M. (2021). This gap underscores the importance of targeted research aimed at understanding and addressing the unique challenges indigenous kindergarten learners face (Hickling-Hudson, A., & Ahlquist, R. (2003).

The study seeks to fill this gap by investigating effective strategies for promoting reading proficiency among Indigenous kindergarten students. By employing a culturally responsive approach that integrates Indigenous languages, cultural traditions, and community knowledge into early literacy instruction, the study aims to improve educational outcomes and empower Indigenous learners (Gillispie, M. (2021). Through collaboration with educators, community members, and Indigenous stakeholders, the research endeavors to develop culturally relevant teaching practices that honor the unique identities and experiences of Indigenous

kindergarten learners, ultimately contributing to more equitable educational opportunities for all students (Bishop, M., & Vass, G. (2020). Talking about culturally responsive approaches to education: teacher professional learning, Indigenous learners and the politics of schooling (Bishop, M., & Vass, G. (2020).

Objectives

This review aimed to fill the void in the literature by providing a comprehensive analysis of the experiences of mathematics teachers who have undergone ipsative assessment during their practice of the profession of teaching. Specifically, this sought to answer the following questions:

1. How do IP education teachers perceive and respond to "Culturally Responsive Teaching: Enhancing Reading Proficiency in Indigenous Kindergarten Learners"?
2. What challenges arise when implementing "Culturally Responsive Teaching: Enhancing Reading Proficiency in Indigenous Kindergarten Learners" in IP education?
3. To what extent does it contribute to improving teaching practices and student learning outcomes?

Methods

This study utilized a narrative literature review to explore the theme of "Culturally Responsive Teaching: Enhancing Reading Proficiency in Indigenous Kindergarten Learners." The focus was investigating teachers' experiences within the Division of Bukidnon's elementary education institutions. This inquiry aligns with the expanding body of literature on culturally responsive teaching and its potential impact on teaching methods and student learning outcomes within Indigenous community education. Before delving into a comprehensive review, a preliminary scoping review was conducted to assess the availability of relevant literature, specifically in the context of the Division of Bukidnon. The initial exploration revealed a scarcity of research on this topic, indicating a need for further investigation.

Using various academic resources such as databases and journals, the researcher conducted a systematic search for literature published between 2019 and 2024, employing search terms like "Culturally Responsive Teaching: Enhancing Reading Proficiency in Indigenous Kindergarten Learners," "culturally responsive," "reading proficiency," "indigenous kindergarten learners," and "responsive teachers." The identified literature was then categorized into three primary themes: defining and characterizing culturally responsive teaching, its application in enhancing reading proficiency among Indigenous learners, and the challenges and benefits associated with its implementation.

This study found that while culturally responsive teaching has the potential to improve teaching practices and student outcomes in indigenous education, there is limited research specifically within the Division of Bukidnon. Most existing literature focuses on elementary-level education, leaving secondary and tertiary indigenous education largely unexplored. Despite the scarcity of research in this specific context, the existing literature provided valuable insights that could inform this study. Notably, many studies emphasized the benefits of culturally responsive teaching but often overlooked the challenges encountered during implementation.

The narrative literature review began by introducing the topic and justifying the significance of examining the experiences of culturally responsive teachers within the Division of Bukidnon. It then discussed the reviewed literature, highlighting key findings, trends, and research gaps. Finally, the study outlined implications for future research and practical considerations for Indigenous community education in the Division of Bukidnon.

Results and Discussion

Importance of culturally Relevant Pedagogy

The significance of culturally relevant pedagogy must be considered, particularly concerning advancing reading skills in Indigenous kindergarten students. Recognizing the distinct learning approaches of Indigenous learners and integrating their cultural heritage into educational frameworks can markedly influence their academic success (Vargas, 2020; Tortola, 2024). Educators must evaluate their teaching plans, ensuring they are centered around the needs of children and sensitive to diverse cultural backgrounds, fostering an atmosphere of respect and comprehension (Gay, G. (2002). By adopting culturally relevant pedagogy, teachers can narrow the divide between students' cultural roots and the educational setting, resulting in a more immersive and efficient learning journey (Yu, 2018 & Tortola, 2021).

Challenges and Solutions in Culturally Responsive Teaching

A key hurdle in culturally responsive education is the disparity between the cultural settings of Indigenous students' homes and schools (Plevitz, L. (2007). This mismatch poses obstacles to academic achievement and learning. To tackle this challenge, teachers need training to grasp the cultural intricacies of their students and adjust their teaching approaches accordingly (Plevitz, L. (2007 & Tortola, 2021). By acknowledging and valuing students' identities and cultural backgrounds, educators can establish ideal learning settings that empower students and improve their reading skills (Shaban, E., & Abir, R. (2013). Culturally responsive classroom management extends beyond behavior regulation; it involves nurturing positive connections, fostering trust, and recognizing how culture shapes academic and social growth (Gay, G. (2002).

Parental Involvement and Support

Active parental engagement is crucial in culturally responsive education for Indigenous kindergarten students (Brayboy, B., & Castagno, A. (2009). Parents appreciate educators who demonstrate understanding and reverence for Aboriginal history, as this fosters trust and cultivates a favorable learning atmosphere for their children (Hatcher, A. (2012). Acknowledging the intricate dynamics between Aboriginal communities and the educational framework is imperative for teachers to assist Indigenous students adequately. Through meaningful interaction with parents and insight into their viewpoints, educators can establish a cooperative alliance that elevates student achievements and advocates for cultural awareness in the classroom (Martin, A. (2006).

Policy Implications and Recommendations

Policy and practice implications are essential in advancing culturally responsive teaching within Indigenous kindergarten education (Bishop, M., & Vass, G. (2020). Suggestions encompass crafting varied curriculum resources that reflect students' experiences, confronting issues of colonization, racism, and power imbalances within educational contexts, and ensuring that federal and state policies respect tribal sovereignty and self-governance (Krueger, J. (2021). Funding allocations should prioritize aiding communities, schools, and educators in nurturing students' diverse literacies, while educational standards and assessments developed at the local level should embody cultural inclusivity and diversity (Markey, D., Brien, D., Kouta, D., Okantey, C., & Donnell, D. (2021).

Professional Development and Training

Professional development and training are fundamental to integrating culturally responsive teaching methods for Indigenous kindergarten students (Bishop, M., & Vass, G. (2020). Teachers require comprehensive and sustained training to grasp culture's influence on learning and acquire techniques for establishing culturally inclusive learning environments (Caingcoy, M. (2023). Through continuous investment in professional development programs centered on cultural sensitivity, educators can refine their instructional approaches, enhance student involvement, and elevate reading skills among Indigenous kindergarten learners (Dzamesi, F., & Heerden, J. (2020).

Conclusion and Recommendation

Culturally relevant pedagogy bridges the gap between indigenous students' cultural backgrounds and the school environment, fostering a more engaging and practical learning experience (Mccarty, T., & Brayboy, B. (2021). Prioritizing professional development programs focused on cultural sensitivity empowers educators with the knowledge and skills to create inclusive learning environments, ultimately improving reading achievement for Indigenous kindergarten students (Cantrell, S., Sampson, S., Perry, K., & Robershaw, K. (2022). This ongoing investment equips teachers to leverage the strengths students bring from their communities and nurture a love of learning that respects their cultural heritage (Bergantz, L. (2021).

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