Culturally Responsive Teaching Practices of Elementary Teachers and their Contribution to Pupils' Engagement and Academic Performance

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Abstract *– This study was conducted to ascertain the culturally responsive teaching practices of teachers and their relationship to the engagement and academic performance of pupils in all elementary schools of the Department of Education-Dumingag I and II Districts, Dumingag, Zamboanga del Sur, Philippines during the School Year 2018-2019. It utilized the descriptive correlational method of research with the questionnaire-checklist as main data gathering instrument. Both the descriptive and inferential statistics were employed as data analysis tools. The findings of the study disclosed that "Comprehensive" and "Empowering" culturally responsive teaching practices were always applied by the teachers while "Emancipatory", "Multidimensional", "Transformative", and "Validating" were only often employed. The pupils' levels of affective, behavioral, and cognitive engagement were high while majority of them had an average academic performance. There was no significant correlation between the teachers' culturally responsive teaching practices and the pupils' engagement and academic performance. Furthermore, statistically not significant correlation value existed between the pupils' engagement and their academic performance.*

Keywords *–* Culturally Responsive Teaching Practices, Pupils' Engagement, Academic Performance

INTRODUCTION

One of the challenges that confronts school districts and educators today is on how to improve the test scores of culturally diverse students so that there would be no achievement gap. "The schools' ability to attain this worthy goal depends to a great degree on how teachers become prepared to build varied learning environments in addressing the varied needs, interests, and experiences of all culturally diverse students" [1]. Differentiated instruction is employed in various classrooms to accommodate the diverse needs of the students, basing on the understanding that every person learns differently. Being said, many educators have universally acknowledged that every culture learns differently and that the integration of culture in classroom instruction could be beneficial to all students, especially those who are at high-risk.

Instructional practices which address cultural and linguistic issues bear the greatest promise in assisting students having learning and behavioral problems in order to become successful students [2, 3]. The teachers' challenge nowadays is on

how to integrate those curricular elements that will help optimize student learning as well as self-esteem [4].

Culturally responsive teaching (CRT) is a research-based pedagogy that has been seen effective in accommodating the needs of students with diversity and achievement. Culturally responsive teaching also refers to the degree to which educators utilize students' cultural contributions in changing their personal lives as well as of their families and communities through making education meaningful and relevant. Shealey and Callins [3] note that support for the utilization of culturally responsive teaching in both special and general education is required.

Being an educational practice, culturally responsive teaching reflects a promise for dealing effectively with gap in achievement. Tatum [5] observes that culturally responsive education includes students' culture as a key in their education and notes that effective learning occurs when culture's importance is acknowledged and shapes classroom activities. This education goes beyond teaching traditional history lessons during history month. Culturally responsive

teaching "broadens what students are exposed to, and challenges teachers to perform whatever is within their power to assist students to embrace high expectations for themselves, and to assist them to achieve those expectations in spite of what others outside the classroom may expect of them."

When trying to intrinsically motivate diverse students, educators must consider more than the classroom and school culture, like the outside issues that are connected to the students. "To effectively resolve self-crisis, curriculum and instruction must be culturally relevant, responsive, appropriate, as well as sensitive to the learner" [6].

Pupils' engagement, popularly known as student engagement, is regarded as a dynamic construct that becomes the centerpiece of student motivation [7]. Student engagement refers to the outward manifestation of home context, school context, and the student's self-perceptions on emotional regulation and behavioral involvement in class learning [7, 8]. Similarly, a poor perception of one's academic competence could make a student to be emotionally and behaviorally disengaged in class learning [9].

Student engagement involves several research areas such as motivation, sense of belongingness, and academic involvement into a single comprehensive model [8, 10]. This construct is multidimensional as it comprises of internal and observable indicators of student learning [11]. Observable indicators refer to behaviors that are typically regarded as indicators of classroom learning like active listening, participation, as well as academic effort. Internal indicators pertain to emotional states that are also typically regarded as indicators of classroom learning which involve enjoyment, learning interests, and excitement [7].

Academic performance is both considered a measure of successful progress through elementary and secondary school as well as a foundation for success as an adult. LeFrancois [12] and Santrock [13] note that educational deficiencies will render vital impact on the economic and social well-being throughout the lifespan. Zunker [14] characterizes these competencies to be acquired at the elementary level for career development. These competencies include (a) knowledge in self-

concept, (b) interactional skills with others, (c) awareness on the importance of change and growth, (d) benefits of education, (e) relationship between learning and work, (f) significance of personal responsibility and good work habits, (g) awareness of relationship between learning and work, (h) functions of the society; and (i) understanding how to make sound decisions.

The urgency to address the problems commonly met by elementary teachers in culturally diverse classrooms had motivated the researchers to conduct an investigation which endeavors to determine the cultural responsiveness of the teaching practices that are employed by teachers as well as their contribution in improving student engagement and academic performance. Valuable insights that would be obtained from this study would serve as practical guide to the school administrators, teachers, students, and other school stakeholders in planning and implementing programs aimed at strengthening the teachers' use of culturally responsive teaching practices not only to enhance student engagement and academic performance but also to make schools more conducive for learning.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This quantitative study was conducted to determine the culturally responsive teaching practices of teachers and their relationship to the engagement and academic performance of pupils in all elementary schools of the Department of Education-Dumingag I and II Districts, Dumingag, Zamboanga del Sur during the School Year 2018-2019. Specifically, it endeavored to determine the culturally responsive teaching practices of the teachers in terms of (a) Validating, (b) Comprehensive, (c) Multidimensional, (d) Empowering, (e) Transformative, and (f) Emancipatory; the pupils' engagement as to (a) Affective, (b) Behavioral, and (c) Cognitive; and pupils' academic performance based on their first and second grading Mean Percentage Scores in all learning areas. Furthermore, it aimed to ascertain the significant correlation between the teachers' culturally responsive teaching practices and pupils' engagement; the significant correlation between the teachers' culturally responsive teaching practices and pupils' academic performance; and the significant correlation

between the pupils' engagement and their academic performance.

METHODOLOGY

This study utilized the descriptive correlational research design as it primarily aimed to ascertain the relationship between the teachers' culturally responsive teaching practices and the pupils' engagement and academic performance. Creswell [15] states that descriptive correlational research design tries to ascertain the degree of the relationship between two or more quantifiable variables using statistical tools. It also recognizes patterns and trends in data but it does not go so far in analysing the causes for these observable patterns.

A total of 1178 individuals, composing of 59 Grade VI teachers and 1119 pupils, were selected as respondents of the study. These pupils were purposely selected as they were under the advisory of the teachers involved. The respondents accomplished first informed consent to guarantee strict compliance with existing ethical standards in undertaking research. Moreover, they were given assurance that their answers on the given questionnaire-checklists would be dealt with utmost confidentiality and were assigned with particular codes in order to establish their anonymity.

The researcher employed standardized questionnaires as principal instruments in gathering the needed data. The first standardized questionnaire was adapted and used by the researcher in determining the culturally responsive teaching practices of the teachers. This questionnaire was the Culturally Responsive Teaching Inventory (CRTI) which was formulated by Hohensee [16] based on Gay's [4] six dimensions of culturally responsive teaching that is used in multicultural curriculum development and implementation. These dimensions included (a) Validating, (b) Comprehensive, (c) Multidimensional, (d) Empowering, (e) Transformative, and (f) Emancipatory. It consisted of 30 items and used a 5-point Likert-type scale. This questionnaire was answered by the teachers.

To ascertain the frequency of application of the culturally responsive teaching practices of the teachers, the following 5-point adjectival scale was used:

Scale	Weight Continuum	Adjectival Equivalent	Interpretation
5	4.21–5.00	Strongly Agree	Always Applied
4	3.41–4.20	Agree	Often Applied
3	2.61–3.40	Slightly Agree	Sometimes Applied
2	1.81–2.60	Disagree	Rarely Applied
1	1.00–1.80	Strongly Disagree	Never Applied

The second standardized questionnaire was adapted and utilized by the researcher in determining the level of engagement of the pupils. This questionnaire was the Student Engagement in School Questionnaire (SESQ) which was collaboratively developed by international scholars from 19 countries [17]. It was composed of three main indicators which were Affective, Behavioral, and Cognitive. Affective engagement had two sub-indicators which were Liking for Learning and Liking for School while Behavioral engagement also had two sub-indicators which included Effort and Persistence and Extracurricular Activities. It comprised 33 items using a 5-point Likert-type scale. This questionnaire was answered by the pupils.

To determine the level of engagement of the pupils, the following 5-point adjectival scale was employed:

Scale	Weight Continuum	Adjectival Equivalent	Interpretation
5	4.21-5.00	Always	Very High
4	3.41-4.20	Often	High
3	2.61-3.40	Sometimes	Neither High nor Low
2	1.81-2.60	Rarely	Low
1	1.00-1.80	Never	Very Low

To obtain accurate analysis and interpretation of the data gathered from the respondents of the study, both the descriptive statistics such as the Weighted Average Mean and the inferential statistics like the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient were the statistical tools utilized by the researchers.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Culturally Responsive Teaching Practices of Teachers

Table 1 presents the data which reflect the culturally responsive teaching practices of the teachers and their frequency of application. The teachers' culturally responsive teaching practices are assessed in terms of the following dimensions: Validating, Comprehensive, Multidimensional, Empowering, Transformative, and Emancipatory.

Based on the table presented, the results reveal that the teachers "Strongly Agree" that they make use of "Comprehensive" culturally responsive teaching practices as supported by the

Table 1. Culturally Responsive Teaching Practices of Teachers

Statements	WAM	AE	I
A. Validating			
1. I have included literature from different cultural groups to reduce prejudice against those groups.	4.07	A	H
2. I have provided a cultural context for learning.	3.90	A	H
3. I have provided a multicultural classroom climate.	3.90	A	H
Overall Mean	3.95	A	H
B. Comprehensive			
1. I have recognized and encouraged different study habits.	4.32	SA	VH
2. I have encouraged pupils in my classroom to collaborate as part of an extended family by supporting and encouraging each other.	4.53	SA	VH
3. I have encouraged teacher-pupil relationships.	4.61	SA	VH
4. I have referred to different pupils' cultures as it relates to the curriculum we are studying.	4.37	SA	VH
5. I have respected the cultures and experiences of various groups.	4.56	SA	VH
6. I have acknowledged the legitimacy of the cultural heritages of different minority groups as part of the curriculum I use with the pupils.	4.39	SA	VH
7. I have encouraged pupils to honor human dignity.	4.54	SA	VH
8. I have encouraged understanding of interconnections among individuals.	4.34	SA	VH
Overall Mean	4.46	SA	VH
C. Multidimensional			
1. I have used a wide variety of instructional strategies that are connected to different learning styles.	3.97	A	H
2. I have responded to pupils' need for a sense of belonging.	3.95	A	H
3. I have provided multidimensional curriculum content.	3.83	A	H
4. I have allowed my pupils to actively participate in their own performance.	4.27	SA	VH
Overall Mean	4.00	A	H
D. Empowering			
1. I have promoted pupils' individual self-concepts.	4.27	SA	VH
2. I have shown my appreciation for pupils' strengths and accomplishments.	4.56	SA	VH
3. I have supported pupils' efforts toward academic performance.	4.63	SA	VH
4. I have celebrated individual and collective accomplishments.	4.25	SA	VH
Overall Mean	4.43	SA	VH
E. Transformative			
1. I have provided resources and personal assistance in the classroom.	4.02	A	H
2. I have demonstrated ambitious and appropriate expectations.	3.88	A	H
3. I have acknowledged informal social interactions.	4.02	A	H
4. I have identified meaningful bridges between home and school curriculum experiences of my pupils.	4.07	A	H
Overall Mean	4.00	A	H
F. Emancipatory			
1. I have guided pupils in understanding that no single version of "truth" is total and permanent.	4.07	A	H
2. I have collaborated with teachers of other disciplines in teaching a single cultural concept.	4.17	A	H
3. I have encouraged understanding of interconnections among local communities.	4.10	A	H

4. I have encouraged understanding of interconnections among national, minority, and global identities.	4.02	A	H
5. I have empowered marginalized groups.	3.90	A	H
6. I have made available authentic knowledge about different minority groups accessible to the pupils.	4.12	A	H
Overall Mean	4.06	A	H
Grand Mean	4.15	A	H

overall mean of 4.46; "Empowering" follows next with the overall mean of 4.43, having the same corresponding verbal interpretation of "Always Applied". Meanwhile, they "Agree" that they

utilize "Emancipatory" culturally responsive teaching practices as reflected by the overall mean of 4.06; "Multidimensional" and "Transformative" having the same overall mean of 4.00; and "Validating" with the overall mean of 3.95, having been interpreted as "Often Applied".

Analysis of the foregoing findings indicates that the culturally responsive teaching practices are "Often Applied" by the teachers as strongly supported by the grand mean of 4.15 with the descriptive equivalent of "Agree". The result strongly supports one of the major findings of the quantitative ex post facto study conducted by Hohensee [16] on elementary teachers' perceived use of culturally responsive teaching practices that all culturally responsive teaching dimensions were being often used. Furthermore, the given result supports another key finding of Hohensee's [16] study that "Comprehensive" culturally responsive teaching practices were always used along with "Empowering" CRT practices while the other culturally responsive teaching practices such as "Validating", "Emancipatory" "Multidimensional", and "Transformative" were often applied.

Engagement of Pupils

Table 2 shows the data which reveal the pupils' engagement as to the following dimensions: Affective, Behavioral, and Cognitive.

As reflected, the results reveal that the pupils "often" demonstrate their "Liking for School" as shown by the highest overall mean of 4.16; "Extracurricular Activities" follows next with the overall mean of 4.00; "Cognitive Engagement", 3.93; "Effort and Persistence", 3.85; and "Liking for Learning" which has the lowest overall mean

of 3.54, having the same corresponding verbal interpretation of "High".

Analysis of the preceding findings implies that the pupils' level of engagement is "High" as evidently supported by the grand mean of 3.90 with the descriptive equivalent of "Often". The given result further indicates that the pupils have positive feelings toward their school, learning, teachers, as well as peers [18]. They also demonstrate positive conduct in school, persistent effort in learning, as well as active participation in extracurricular activities [10]. Furthermore, they possess positive perceptions and beliefs about their school as well as learning [19].

Academic Performance of Pupils

Table 3 shows the data which reflect the academic performance of the pupils based on the first and second grading Mean Percentage Scores in all learning areas.

Based on the table presented, the data reveal that 30 or 50.85% of the classes have obtained Mean Percentage Scores of 35-65% which have the corresponding description of "Average" while 29 or 49.15% of the said classes have earned Mean Percentage Scores of 66-85% which are described as "Moving Towards Mastery".

Analysis of the foregoing findings suggests that majority of the pupils perform fairly in all their academic subjects. Furthermore, the given result does not strongly confirm one of the claims of Richards, Brown, and Forde [20] that students' academic performance is promoted in a culturally responsive classroom where effective teaching and learning take place in a culturally supported and learner-centered context in which the strengths that students bring to their school are identified, nurtured, as well as utilized.

Table 3. Academic Performance of Pupils

Mastery/Achievement Levels		F	%
Closely Approximating Mastery	(86-95%)	0	0.00
Moving Towards Mastery	(66-85%)	29	49.15
Average	(35-65%)	30	50.85
Low	(15-34%)	0	0.00
Very Low	(5-14%)	0	0.00
Absolutely No Mastery	(0-4%)	0	0.00

Significance of the Correlation Between Teachers' Culturally Responsive Teaching Practices and Pupils' Engagement

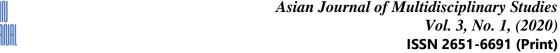Table 4 presents the analysis on the significance of the correlation between the teachers' culturally responsive teaching practices and the pupils' engagement.

The result reveals that the computed *t*-value of 0.6217 is less than the critical *t*-value of 2.011 with a correlation coefficient of 0.21 at the 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, there is an enough evidence to accept the null hypothesis.

Analysis of the foregoing findings indicates that there is no close association between the teachers' culturally responsive teaching practices and the pupils' engagement. The result also indicates that the culturally responsive teaching practices applied by the teachers do not significantly affect the engagement of the pupils. The given result does not confirm one of the major findings made by Gay [21] that students become more engaged in learning when teachers make use of culturally responsive teaching

Table 2. Engagement of Pupils

Statements	WAM	AE	I
A. Affective Engagement			
A.1 Liking for Learning			
1. I am very interested in learning.	4.17	O	H
2. I think what we are learning in school is interesting.	4.09	O	H
3. I like what I am learning in school.	3.34	O	H
4. I enjoy learning new things in class.	4.12	O	H
5. I think learning is boring.	1.95	R	L
Overall Mean	3.54	O	H
A.2 Liking for School			
1. I like my school.	4.22	A	VH
2. I am proud to be at this school.	4.09	O	H
3. Most mornings, I look forward to going to school.	4.22	A	VH
4. I am happy to be at this school.	4.10	O	H
Overall Mean	4.16	O	H
B. Behavioral Engagement			
B.1 Effort and Persistence			
1. I try hard to do well in school.	4.08	O	H
2. In class, I work as hard as I can.	4.06	O	H
3. When I'm in class, I participate in class activities.	3.74	O	H
4. I pay attention in class.	3.72	O	H
5. When I'm in class, I just act like I'm working.	3.48	O	H
6. In school, I do just enough to get by.	3.81	O	H
7. When I'm in class, my mind wanders.	3.76	O	H
8. If I have trouble understanding a problem, I go over it again until I understand it.	3.93	O	H
9. When I run into a difficult homework, I keep working at it until I think I've solved it.	4.04	O	H
Overall Mean	3.85	O	H
B.2 Extracurricular Activities			
1. I am an active participant of school activities such as sport day and school picnic.	4.01	O	H
2. I volunteer to help with school activities such as sport day and parent day.	4.00	O	H
3. I take an active role in extracurricular activities in my school.	4.00	O	H
Overall Mean	4.00	O	H
C. Cognitive Engagement			
1. When I study, I try to understand the material better by relating it to things I already know.	3.90	O	H

2. When I study, I figure out how the information might be useful in the real world.	3.90	O	H
3. When learning new information, I try to put the ideas in my own words.	3.92	O	H
4. When I study, I try to connect what I am learning with my own experiences.	3.86	O	H
5. I make up my own examples to help me understand the important concepts I learn from school.	3.81	O	H
6. When learning things for school, I try to see how they fit together with other things I already know.	3.88	O	H
7. When learning things for school, I often try to associate them with what I learnt in other classes about the same or similar things.	3.85	O	H
8. I try to see the similarities and differences between things I am learning for school and things I know already.	3.83	O	H
9. I try to understand how the things I learn in school fit together with each other.	3.93	O	H
10. I try to match what I already know with things I am trying to learn for school.	4.04	O	H
11. I try to think through topics and decide what I'm supposed to learn from them, rather than studying topics by just reading them over.	4.14	O	H
12. When studying, I try to combine different pieces of information from course material in new ways.	4.08	O	H
Overall Mean	3.93	O	H
Grand Mean	3.90	O	H

practices as they are presented within the context of their experiences and cultural frames of references. Furthermore, the result does not support one of the claims of Wlodkowski and Ginsberg [22] in their study that teaching that is culturally responsive stimulates student involvement in learning.

Table 4. Significance of the Correlation between Teachers' Culturally Responsive Teaching Practices and Pupils' Engagement

Variables	*rp*	Level of Significance	*t*-value	
			Computed	Critical
Teachers' CRT Practices	0.21	0.05	1.6217	2.011
Pupils' Engagement				

Significance of the Correlation Between Teachers' Culturally Responsive Teaching Practices and Pupils' Academic Performance

Table 5 shows the analysis on the significance of the correlation between the teachers' culturally responsive teaching practices and the pupils' academic performance.

The result discloses that the computed *t*-value of 1.4611 is less than the critical *t*-value of 2.011 with the correlation coefficient of 0.19 at the 0.05 level of significance. Thus, there is a sufficient evidence to accept the null hypothesis.

Analysis of the preceding findings elucidates that there is no association between the teachers' culturally responsive teaching practices and the

pupils' academic performance. The result also implies that the culturally responsive teaching practices employed by the teachers do not have substantial impact on pupils' academic performance. Moreover, the result does not confirm one of the claims of Gay [21] that students learn more effectively when their teachers employ culturally responsive teaching strategies in which knowledge and skills to be taught are presented within a context of their experiences and cultural frames of references.

Table 5. Significance of the Correlation between Teachers' Culturally Responsive Teaching Practices and Pupils' Academic Performance

Variables	*Rp*	Level of Significance	*t*-value	
			Computed	Critical
Teachers' CRT Practices	0.19	0.05	1.4611	2.011
Pupils' Academic Performance				

Significance of the Correlation Between Pupils' Engagement and Their Academic Performance

Table 6 displays the analysis on the significance of the correlation between the pupils' engagement and their academic performance.

The result shows that the computed *t*-value of 0.6828 is less than the critical *t*-value of 2.011 with the correlation coefficient of 0.09 at the 0.05

level of significance. Hence, there is an enough evidence to accept the null hypothesis and establish no significant correlation since the computed t-value does not reach or exceeds the critical t-value.

Analysis of the foregoing findings indicates that there is no close association between the pupils' engagement and their academic performance. The result further indicates that the level of engagement of the pupils do not significantly affect their academic performance. Moreover, the given result does not strongly support one of the findings of the previous studies of Appleton, Christenson, and Furlong [8] as well as Shernoff and Schmidt [23] that pupils' engagement is linked with improved academic performance and it has been repeatedly shown to be a strong predictor of performance and behavior in schools.

Table 6. Significance of the Correlation between Pupils' Engagement and their Academic Performance

Variables	rp	Level of Significance	t-value	
			Computed	Critical
Pupils' Engagement	0.09	0.05	0.6828	2.011
Pupils' Academic Performance				

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings of the study explicate that "Comprehensive" and "Empowering" culturally responsive teaching practices are always applied by teachers while "Emancipatory", "Multidimensional", "Transformative", and "Validating" are only often employed. The pupils' level of engagement in terms of "affective", "behavioral", and "cognitive" dimensions is "High". Majority of the pupils have an academic performance of 35-65% that is described as "Average". There is no significant correlation between teachers' culturally responsive teaching practices and pupils' engagement and academic performance. Furthermore, there is no significant correlation between pupils' engagement and their academic performance.

This study recommends that the school administrators send their teachers to seminars and trainings to help teachers be more updated with the utilization of culturally responsive teaching practices and in enhancing pupils' engagement as well as pursue graduate studies for professional growth and development; that the pupils exert more effort in studying their lessons as well as be more actively engaged in the classroom learning activities to improve their academic performance; and that another study be conducted in other school districts and to include the identification of factors affecting the teachers' use of culturally responsive teaching practices.

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