International Journal of Social Science and Human Research

ISSN (print): 2644-0679, ISSN (online): 2644-0695

Volume 09 Issue 04 April 2026

DOI: 10.47191/ijsshr/v9-i4-93, Impact factor- 8.361

Page No: 3320-3326

Building Culturally Responsive Literacy Through Contextualized Instruction

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ABSTRACT: Literacy in culturally diverse classrooms is essential in enhancing students' comprehension, critical thinking, and engagement in Social Science education. This study examined the relationship between teachers' cultural awareness, culturally responsive teaching practices, and teacher self-efficacy in delivering literacy instruction. A quantitative descriptive-correlational research design was utilized involving forty-eight (48) Social Science teachers. Data were gathered using standardized survey questionnaires and analyzed through descriptive statistics and Pearson correlation.Results revealed that teachers demonstrated a high level of cultural awareness and frequently practiced culturally responsive teaching strategies. Findings further showed a significant positive relationship between cultural awareness and teacher self-efficacy, as well as between culturally responsive teaching practices and instructional effectiveness. These results indicate that teachers who possess higher cultural awareness and consistently apply culturally responsive strategies tend to exhibit greater confidence in delivering effective literacy instruction.The study concludes that strengthening teachers' cultural competence contributes to improved literacy instruction in culturally diverse classrooms. It recommends sustained professional development programs focused on culturally responsive pedagogy to further enhance teacher effectiveness and student engagement in Social Science learning contexts.

KEYWORDS: Culturally Responsive Literacy, Contextualized Instruction, Teacher Self-Efficacy, Social Sciences Education, Inclusive Teaching

I. INTRODUCTION

In culturally diverse classrooms, literacy plays a significant role in enhancing learners' comprehension, critical thinking, and engagement in Social Science education. It is no longer confined to basic reading and writing skills but is increasingly associated with learners' ability to interpret information, construct meaning, and relate academic content to real-life contexts. However, when literacy instruction is delivered through standardized and decontextualized materials, learners often struggle to connect lessons with their lived experiences. This disconnect contributes to low engagement, passive participation, and shallow understanding of Social Science concepts. Accordingly, this study examined the relationship between teachers' cultural awareness, culturally responsive teaching practices, and instructional effectiveness in literacy instruction within Social Science classrooms.

Related studies emphasize that culturally responsive teaching significantly influences classroom engagement and learning outcomes. Research indicates that integrating learners' cultural identities and experiences into instruction enhances motivation and comprehension (Baker-Bell, 2020; Paris & Alim, 2020). Hammond (2021) found that culturally responsive pedagogy improves cognitive engagement by making learning more relevant and accessible. Ladson-Billings (2021) further noted that culturally relevant teaching supports academic success while affirming learners' identities. Additionally, contextualized instructional practices have been shown to improve reading comprehension and critical thinking by linking academic content to real-world experiences (Dukes et al., 2023; He, 2021). These findings suggest that teachers' cultural competence is a key factor in effective literacy instruction.

In the Philippine context, challenges remain in implementing culturally responsive instruction in Social Science classrooms. Teaching practices are still largely textbook-based and often lack integration of local cultural contexts (Renaida, 2023). Teachers also face constraints such as limited training, insufficient instructional resources, and time limitations, which affect their ability to apply culturally responsive strategies. As a result, learners may exhibit low engagement and limited comprehension when lessons are not contextually relevant. Despite existing policies promoting contextualized education, gaps persist between policy and classroom practice, highlighting the need to examine how teachers' cultural awareness and instructional practices relate to teaching effectiveness.

In response, this study investigated the relationship between teachers' cultural awareness, culturally responsive teaching practices, and their instructional effectiveness in delivering literacy instruction in Social Science education.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Teachers' Awareness and Sensitivity to Cultural Diversity

Park et al. (2024) validated a scale designed to measure teachers' awareness and beliefs regarding content and language-integrated education for multilingual learners. Their findings emphasized the importance of accurately assessing teacher awareness of multilingual learners as a critical component of culturally responsive instruction. This awareness serves as a foundational factor in integrating students' linguistic and cultural backgrounds into effective literacy practices, which is essential in promoting inclusive and equitable learning environments.Similarly, Kardel et al. (2025) examined pre-service and in-service teachers' critical cultural and multilingual awareness using video-based assessment in Germany. The study identified varying levels of responsiveness, ranging from rejection to critical acceptance, and demonstrated that teachers' beliefs about multilingualism significantly influenced their awareness and instructional responsiveness. These findings suggest that teachers' cultural beliefs and awareness are strongly associated with their ability to implement culturally responsive teaching strategies, which is crucial in diverse classroom settings.

B. Implementation of Culturally Responsive Teaching Practices Among Teachers

Alamsyah et al. (2025), through a synthesis of existing research studies, found that culturally responsive teaching (CRT) enhances student engagement, academic achievement, and critical thinking by connecting classroom instruction to learners' cultural contexts. The review emphasized that CRT bridges cultural gaps between students and curriculum content, promotes inclusive learning environments, and supports the development of collaboration and problem-solving skills in diverse classrooms. Furthermore, the study concluded that culturally responsive teaching is not only an effective pedagogical approach but also a key factor in strengthening learner motivation and identity development. These findings highlight the importance of culturally responsive practices in improving instructional effectiveness and learner outcomes in culturally diverse educational settings.

C. Teachers' Self-Efficacy in Implementing Culturally Responsive Teaching

Laluna, Civitillo, Schachner, et al. (2024) examined the role of teachers' culturally responsive teaching (CRT) self-efficacy and culturally diverse classroom climate (CDC) in relation to students' academic and psychological adjustment. Their findings indicated that both CRT self-efficacy and CDC positively contribute to student outcomes, although they function in independent ways. The study further revealed that these effects were consistent regardless of students' immigrant generation, suggesting that culturally responsive teaching practices benefit learners across diverse backgrounds. Overall, the results highlight that teachers' self-efficacy in implementing culturally responsive instruction plays a significant role in fostering supportive learning environments that promote both academic success and psychological well-being among students.

III. RESEARCH METHODS

A. Research Design

This study employed a quantitative descriptive-correlational research design to examine the relationship between teachers' cultural awareness, culturally responsive teaching practices, and instructional effectiveness in Social Science education. This design is appropriate for determining the extent of relationships among variables without manipulating any conditions. Quantitative data were collected and statistically analyzed to identify patterns, relationships, and levels of significance among the study variables.

B. Research Locale

The study was conducted in three public secondary schools in Nasipit District, Agusan del Norte, namely: Nasipit National Vocational School, Calixto D. Montinola National High School, and Nasipit National High School. These schools were purposively selected to represent different school classifications in terms of size, resources, and program offerings. Nasipit National Vocational School is a large school offering Academic and Technical-Vocational-Livelihood (TVL) strands with relatively well-equipped facilities. Calixto D. Montinola National High School is a medium-sized school offering STEM, HUMSS, and ICT-related programs with moderate instructional resources. Nasipit National High School is a smaller institution with limited academic strands and resources, relying on contextual and teacher-initiated instructional strategies. The inclusion of these schools provides a diverse context for analyzing culturally responsive teaching practices in Social Science education.

C. Participants of the Study

The participants of the study were forty-eight (48) Social Science teachers and teachers handling related subjects from the selected public secondary schools. Purposive sampling was used to select participants based on their relevance to the study and their direct involvement in teaching Social Science-related subjects. The inclusion criteria required that participants must be currently employed, actively teaching Social Sciences or related subjects such as Araling Panlipunan, Contemporary Issues, or similar disciplines, and willing to participate in the study. Teachers who were not handling relevant subjects, on leave during data collection, or who declined participation were excluded from the study.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

TABLE I. FREQUENCY AND PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF THE DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF THE RESPONDENTS

Profile	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age		
20-29 years old	4	8
30-39 years old	21	44
40-49 years old	10	21
50-59 years old	9	19
60 and above	4	8
Total	48	100
Sex		
Male	25	52
Female	23	48
Total	48	48
Civil Status		
Single	26	54
Married	21	44
Separated	1	2
Total	48	100
Educational Attainment		
Bachelor's Degree	25	52
Master's Degree	10	21
Doctoral Degree	3	6
Others	10	21
Total	48	100
Field of Specialization (Major)		
Social Studies/Araling Panlipunan	15	31
History	3	6
Others	30	63
Total	48	100
Ethnic Affiliation		
Higaonon	3	6
Manobo	1	2
Other	24	50
Prefer not to say	20	42
Total	48	100
Years of Teaching Experience		
Less than 1	1	2
1-3	5	10
4-6	9	19
7-10	13	27
11 above	20	42
Total	48	100
Current Position/Designation		
Teacher I	12	25
Teacher II	18	38
Teacher III	15	31
Master Teacher I-IV	3	6
Total	48	100
Trainings and Seminars Attended Related to Cultural Awareness and Diversity		
None	23	48
1-2	20	42
3-4	3	6
5 or more	2	4
Total	48	100
Who provided the trainings and seminars?		

School	2	4
DepEd	19	40
LGU	3	6
NGOs	2	4
Others	22	46
Total	48	100

Table I presents the demographic characteristics of the forty-eight (48) Social Science teachers who participated in the study. In terms of age, most respondents belonged to the 30–39 age group (44%), followed by those aged 40–49 (21%) and 50–59 (19%), indicating that the majority were in their active and experienced years of teaching. The distribution by sex was relatively balanced, with males comprising 52% and females 48% of the respondents.

Regarding civil status, more than half of the respondents were single (54%), while 44% were married. In terms of educational attainment, the majority held a bachelor's degree (52%), while 21% had earned a master's degree and 6% had completed doctoral studies. The remaining respondents (21%) reported other forms of educational attainment. As to field of specialization, most respondents (63%) were non-Social Science majors, while 31% specialized in Social Studies or Araling Panlipunan.In terms of ethnic affiliation, half of the respondents (50%) identified with other ethnic groups, while 42% preferred not to disclose their ethnicity. A small proportion identified as Higaonon (6%) and Manobo (2%). Regarding teaching experience, a considerable number had 11 years or more of experience (42%), followed by those with 7–10 years (27%), indicating that most respondents were experienced educators. In terms of position, most held the rank of Teacher II (38%) and Teacher III (31%).Finally, nearly half of the respondents (48%) reported not having attended any training or seminar related to cultural awareness and diversity, while 42% had attended one to two trainings. Among those who had attended, the Department of Education (40%) was the most common provider, suggesting that professional development opportunities related to cultural responsiveness remain limited.

TABLE II. EXTENT OF TEACHERS' AWARENESS AND SENSITIVITY TOWARD CULTURAL DIVERSITY OF STUDENTS

Indicators	**Mean**	**Verbal Description**
Influence of Cultural Identity on Teaching & Interaction	3.67	*Highly Aware*
Recognition of Varied Cultural Backgrounds	3.78	*Highly Aware*
Inclusive Classroom Environment	3.65	*Highly Aware*
Adaptation of Communication Styles	3.58	*Highly Aware*
Overall	3.67	*Highly Aware*

Table II, indicates that teachers exhibited a high level of awareness and sensitivity toward cultural diversity, with an overall mean of 3.67 and a low standard deviation of 0.48, suggesting consistent responses among the respondents. The highest mean was observed in the recognition of varied cultural backgrounds (Mean = 3.78,), while adaptation of communication styles obtained the lowest mean (Mean = 3.58), though still interpreted as *Highly Aware*. The relatively low standard deviations across all indicators indicate minimal variability and a generally shared perception among teachers regarding cultural awareness and sensitivity.

TABLE III. CULTURE-RESPONSIVE TEACHING PRACTICES CURRENTLY EMPLOYED BY SOCIAL SCIENCE TEACHERS

Indicators	**Mean**	**Verbal Description**
Cultural Knowledge Integration	3.46	*Always Practice*
Cultural Relevance of Materials	3.43	*Always Practice*
Classroom Inclusivity	3.63	*Always Practice*
Teacher Cultural Competence	3.49	*Always Practice*
Overall	3.50	*Always Practice*

Table III, presents the extent of culturally responsive teaching practices employed by the respondents. The overall mean of 3.50 with a standard deviation of 0.62 indicates that teachers *always practice* culturally responsive teaching strategies, with relatively consistent responses across indicators. Among the dimensions, classroom inclusivity obtained the highest mean (Mean = 3.63), while cultural relevance of materials recorded the lowest mean (Mean = 3.43), though still interpreted as *Always Practice*. The moderate and closely clustered standard deviations suggest limited variability in teachers' reported implementation of culturally responsive practices.

TABLE IV. LEVEL OF TEACHERS' SELF-EFFICACY IN IMPLEMENTING CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE TEACHING PRACTICES IN LITERACY INSTRUCTION

Indicators	Mean	Verbal Description
Cultural Awareness & Sensitivity	3.54	*Highly Confident*
Culturally Responsive Instructional Strategies	3.54	*Highly Confident*
Classroom Environment & Inclusivity	3.57	*Highly Confident*
Communication & Interaction	3.53	*Highly Confident*
Assessment & Feedback	3.50	*Highly Confident*
Overall	3.54	*Highly Confident*

Table IV shows that teachers demonstrated a high level of self-efficacy in culturally responsive teaching, as reflected by an overall mean of 3.54 and a standard deviation of 0.53, interpreted as *Highly Confident*. Among the indicators, classroom environment and inclusivity obtained the highest mean (Mean = 3.57), while assessment and feedback recorded the lowest mean (Mean = 3.50,), although all indicators remained within the *Highly Confident* range. The relatively low and closely clustered standard deviations indicate consistent self-efficacy perceptions among the respondents across all dimensions.

TABLE V. OVERALL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TEACHERS' AWARENESS AND SENSITIVITY AND CULTURE-RESPONSIVE TEACHING PRACTICES

Variable 1	Variable 2	Spearman rho (ρ)	p-value	Interpretation
Teacher's Awareness and Sensitivity	**Culture-Responsive Teaching Practices**	0.7483	<0.001	*Significant*

Table V shows a strong and statistically significant positive relationship between teachers' awareness and sensitivity and their culture-responsive teaching practices, as indicated by a Spearman rho of 0.7483 ($p < 0.001$). This result implies that teachers who demonstrate higher levels of awareness and sensitivity toward cultural diversity are more likely to consistently implement cultureresponsive teaching strategies in their classrooms. The strength of the correlation suggests a substantial association between the two constructs, confirming that awareness and sensitivity play an important role in shaping teachers' culture-responsive instructional practices.

TABLE VI. OVERALL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CULTURE-RESPONSIVE TEACHING PRACTICES AND TEACHERS' SELF-EFFICACY

Variable 1	Variable 2	Spearman rho (ρ)	p-value	Interpretation
Culture-Responsive Teaching Strategies	**Teachers' self-efficacy in implementing culturally responsive teaching practices**	0.8225	<0.001	*Significant*

Table VI shows a very strong and statistically significant positive relationship between culture-responsive teaching practices and teachers' self-efficacy in implementing culturally responsive teaching, as indicated by a Spearman rho of 0.8225 ($p < 0.001$). This result suggests that teachers who more consistently employ culture-responsive teaching strategies tend to exhibit higher levels of confidence in their ability to implement culturally responsive instruction. The strength of the correlation indicates a substantial association between instructional practice and teacher self-efficacy, highlighting the role of culture-responsive pedagogy in enhancing teachers' instructional confidence and effectiveness.

V. CONCLUSION

Based on the findings, it can be concluded that culturally responsive teaching practices among Social Science teachers are generally well-established and are supported by a high level of cultural awareness and teaching self-efficacy. This indicates that teachers are capable of fostering inclusive and culturally sensitive learning environments, which may contribute to improved learner engagement and participation in Social Science instruction.The absence of significant differences in culturally responsive teaching practices across demographic variables suggests that such practices are not influenced by personal or professional characteristics such as age, sex, civil status, educational attainment, or years of teaching experience. This implies that culturally responsive teaching is more likely shaped by external factors such as institutional support, access to professional development, and availability of instructional resources rather than individual teacher profiles. Hence, system-level interventions are more appropriate than demographic-targeted strategies. Furthermore, the significant positive relationship between culturally responsive teaching practices and teacher self-efficacy implies that increasing teachers' confidence through continuous training, practice, and support mechanisms can enhance

the effective implementation of culturally responsive instruction. Conversely, challenges such as limited training opportunities, language barriers, and inadequate instructional resources may hinder the full realization of culturally responsive pedagogy if not properly addressed. Overall, the study implies that strengthening culturally responsive literacy instruction requires sustained institutional support and the integration of contextualized instructional materials, such as Self-Learning Modules, to promote consistency, sustainability, and improved educational outcomes in Social Science education.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The researcher sincerely thanks Almighty God for guidance and strength throughout this study. Gratitude is extended to the school heads of Nasipit National Vocational School, Calixto D. Montinola National High School, and Nasipit National High School for their support and permission to conduct the study.Sincere appreciation is given to the forty-eight (48) Social Science teachers who participated as respondents. Special thanks are also extended to the research adviser, panel members, family, and friends for their guidance, support, and encouragement.

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