

Sequential exploration of strategies and challenges in implementing culturally responsive pedagogy

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ABSTRACT

The implementation of culturally responsive pedagogy (CRP) in higher education is essential for fostering inclusive and equitable learning environments. However, faculty members often face challenges such as addressing biases and ensuring inclusivity. This study examines the strategies and challenges of CRP implementation at a state university in the Philippines using an exploratory sequential mixed methods approach. The qualitative phase involves in-depth interviews with 10 faculty members to identify key CRP strategies and challenges. The quantitative phase surveys 116 faculty members to assess the effectiveness of these strategies and measure the difficulty of encountered challenges. Thematic analysis and descriptive statistics provide a comprehensive understanding of CRP implementation. Findings reveal that CRP enhances student engagement and learning outcomes but is hindered by challenges related to bias, institutional support, and creating inclusive environments. The study calls for professional development programs and policy reforms to help faculty adopt culturally responsive teaching (CRT) and gain stronger institutional support. It also highlights the need for collaboration among educators, administrators, and policymakers to ensure CRP is effectively and sustainably implemented.

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1. INTRODUCTION

As classrooms become more diverse, the need for culturally responsive pedagogy (CRP) has never been more urgent. Schools and universities worldwide strive to create inclusive learning environments by integrating diverse cultural perspectives into their teaching practices. CRP is a broad framework that promotes equity by addressing cultural diversity in curriculum design, institutional policies, and teaching strategies. According to Alim *et al.* [1], CRP is a student-centered teaching approach that recognizes and values students' cultural backgrounds. This aims to enhance academic achievement and foster a strong sense of identity and belonging in a diverse society. Further, CRP is an approach that fosters inclusivity and equity by incorporating cultural diversity into instruction.

A key component of this pedagogy is culturally responsive teaching (CRT), which focuses specifically on instructional methods that incorporate students' cultural backgrounds into daily classroom interactions [2]. While CRP provides the overarching theoretical foundation for inclusive education, CRT represents its practical application by guiding teachers in implementing culturally relevant strategies. This study adopts CRP over CRT as it encompasses not only classroom instruction but also institutional policies, curriculum development, and faculty practices. Unlike CRT, which centers on teacher-student interactions,

CRP better suits this study's focus on the systemic implementation of culturally responsive strategies in higher education. In the Philippines, universities welcome students from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds, such as indigenous groups, linguistic minorities, and socio-economic backgrounds. However, as Mckoy *et al.* [3] points out, some institutions still rely on standardized teaching methods that fail to reflect or support this diversity. Another challenge is the language barrier, which can make it harder for students to fully understand lessons when instruction is not delivered in a way that aligns with their linguistic background [4]. Moreover, unconscious biases among educators may influence how they interact with students. As a result of these challenges, students may struggle with comprehension, feel disconnected from the learning process, and experience lower academic performance.

To overcome these challenges, teachers need to use inclusive teaching methods that respect and reflect students' diverse backgrounds. This is where CRP becomes important. Walker [5] explains that CRP helps make education more engaging and meaningful by connecting lessons to students' real-life experiences. This approach also promotes greater student participation and fosters a sense of belonging within the classroom [6]. In line with this, the Philippine Government supports CRP through initiatives like the Indigenous Peoples Education (IPEd) Program, established by the Department of Education (DepEd) under Department Order No. 62, s. 2011 [7]. This program aims to provide education that respects indigenous identities and promotes their cultural heritage. Additionally, the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) has implemented policies to encourage flexible learning and teaching approaches that accommodate diverse cultural contexts [8]. These efforts align with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) [9] framework for cultural diversity, advocating for equal access, fair processes, and equitable learning outcomes. However, despite these policies, effectively implementing CRP in higher education remains a challenge. While CHED and UNESCO promote cultural inclusivity, the extent to which educational institutions translate these principles into practice varies. Some universities struggle to fully integrate CRP due to gaps in faculty training, limited institutional support, and a lack of CRT materials [10].

According to Ladson-Billings [11], for CRP to work, universities must create an environment where academic success, cultural identity, and social awareness go hand in hand. This means universities need to do more than just set policies—they must take long-term steps like continuous faculty training, a more inclusive curriculum, and a stronger commitment to diversity and equity. But even with these ideas, CRP is not always used well in higher education. As cited by Siwatu [12], some schools struggle to implement these policies due to various challenges. This is further supported by Brown *et al.* [13], who argue that a gap exists between policy intentions and actual classroom practices. This discrepancy highlights the need to examine how CRP is implemented and what challenges educators face in its application.

Hence, this study seeks to bridge the gap between policy and practice in CRP implementation within Philippine higher education. It aims to sequentially explore the strategies and challenges for implementing CRP among faculty members in one state university in the Philippines. Employing a two-phase approach, the study: i) identified strategies for implementing CRP; ii) determined the challenges faculty members encounter; iii) assessed the level of effectiveness of these strategies; iv) examined the extent of difficulty of the encountered challenges; and v) proposed a policy brief to strengthen CRP in Philippine higher education.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

CRP has become increasingly significant in diverse educational settings, aiming to bridge cultural gaps and enhance learning outcomes. Recent studies have explored various strategies and challenges associated with implementing CRP, particularly within the Philippine context. One effective strategy involves integrating students' cultural backgrounds into the curriculum. Mercado [14] highlights that teachers at Pagsangjan primary school design learning activities anchored in students' ancestral domains and cultural practices. Similarly, Edilo *et al.* [15] emphasize the use of native languages and contextualized examples in mathematics instruction. This not only enhances comprehension but also affirms students' cultural identities. These approaches promote relevance and engagement in the learning process.

However, implementing CRP is not without challenges. Mercado [14] explains that many teachers only have a basic understanding of their students' cultural traditions, so they often rely on tribal elders for deeper knowledge. This shows the need for better training programs to help teachers learn more about different cultures. Another challenge is the lack of teaching materials in indigenous languages, making it harder to include cultural perspectives in lessons. Without enough written resources, it becomes difficult to preserve and pass on indigenous knowledge in schools. Despite these challenges, the positive impact of CRP on student outcomes is evident. Hoque [16] found out that CRP improved students' English writing skills, breaking language and cultural barriers while helping them feel more included.

On the other hand, Mangila and Paculaba [17] investigated the CRT practices of elementary school teachers in Dumingag, Zamboanga del Sur. The study revealed a strong correlation between CRP strategies

and increased student engagement and academic performance. Their findings suggest that when teachers integrate culturally relevant materials, employ inclusive pedagogical approaches, and foster a sense of belonging in the classroom, students become more motivated and active participants in their learning. These results align with global research advocating for CRP as a means to bridge educational gaps and promote equity in diverse learning settings.

3. METHOD

3.1. Research design

This study employed an exploratory sequential mixed-methods design, integrating qualitative and quantitative approaches to examine the strategies and challenges of implementing CRP. Following Creswell [18], the study began with qualitative research to explore faculty experiences in depth. The findings from this phase informed the development of a quantitative survey, which assessed the effectiveness of CRP strategies and the difficulty of encountered challenges. The results were then integrated to provide a more comprehensive understanding.

3.2. Participants

This study involved two groups of participants. In the qualitative phase, in-depth interviews were conducted with 10 faculty members from five colleges in one state university in Batangas, Philippines. Participants were selected to represent a diverse range of disciplines, teaching experiences, and cultural perspectives. For the quantitative phase, 116 faculty members from the same university participated in a survey designed to evaluate the effectiveness of identified CRP strategies and measure the level of difficulty associated with implementation challenges. These faculty members, experienced in teaching diverse student populations, provided insights grounded in practical experience, further enriching the study's findings.

3.3. Data collection and procedure

Data collection followed a sequential mixed-methods approach. Before conducting the study, the researcher obtained permission from the relevant authorities through a formal written request. In-depth interviews were conducted using a semi-structured framework to explore CRP-related strategies and challenges. Participants were briefed on the study's purpose, and interviews were scheduled at their convenience. Questions focused on faculty experiences integrating cultural responsiveness into teaching, challenges encountered, and effective strategies employed. Sample questions included:

- Can you describe a specific instance where you integrated elements of students' cultural backgrounds into your teaching approach?
- What strategies are you using to implement CRP?
- What challenges have you encountered while implementing CRP in your classroom?

The researcher transcribed and analyzed responses to identify key themes and patterns. Based on the interviews, CRP strategies and challenges were identified, serving as the basis for developing the questionnaire. The self-made questionnaire was composed of two parts. The first part consisted of 10 items aimed at assessing the effectiveness of the identified CRP strategies. Meanwhile, the second part consisted of 8 items designed to reveal the extent of difficulty encountered by teachers when implementing these strategies. To ensure validity, selected faculty experts from the university conducted content validation. Reliability testing using Cronbach's alpha yielded a coefficient of 0.85, indicating a high level of internal consistency. On the other hand, for scoring purposes, numerical values were assigned to different scale ranges, facilitating interpretation of effectiveness and difficulty levels, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Scale for interpreting the effectiveness and difficulty of CRP strategies

Numerical value	Scale range	Verbal Interpretation
4	3.50–4.00	Highly effective/highly difficult
3	2.50–3.49	Effective/difficult
2	1.50–2.49	Slightly effective/slightly difficult
1	1.00–1.49	Not effective/not difficult

3.4. Data analysis and treatment

For the qualitative phase, thematic analysis was conducted to identify recurring themes and patterns in faculty interviews. Following Schreier [19], the researcher employed an inductive coding approach, where initial open coding was used to identify key concepts emerging from the data. Codes were then grouped into broader categories, forming themes that encapsulated faculty experiences with CRP implementation. These

themes guided the development of the quantitative survey. For the quantitative phase, data collected from the questionnaire were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including mean and standard deviation, through Minitab statistical software. This analysis provided insights into the perceived effectiveness of CRP strategies and the level of difficulty encountered in their implementation.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Results for the qualitative phase

4.1.1. Identified strategies for implementing culturally responsive pedagogy

This study identified key strategies for implementing CRP. Table 2 shows the three main themes such as culturally relevant materials, a culturally inclusive classroom environment, and student voice and choice. These identified strategies reveal how integrating students' cultural backgrounds into teaching fosters deeper engagement and learning.

One important strategy is using culturally relevant materials, such as literature, media, and art. Faculty members observed that when students see their cultures reflected in learning resources, they connect more with the content. As one participant (P10) shared, "*culturally relevant materials sparked more meaningful discussions in class.*" Another (P3) noted that integrating music and art helped students grasp complex ideas, "*music and art in lessons have helped students relate to the material and understand concepts better.*" These findings suggest that diverse materials make learning more relatable and encourage student participation.

Another key strategy is creating a culturally inclusive classroom environment. Group activities and projects were found to promote collaboration and a sense of belonging among students from different backgrounds. A faculty member (P8) explained, "*group activities and projects encourage collaboration among students from different backgrounds.*" Discussions about current events through a cultural lens also deepened students' awareness of diverse perspectives. One participant (P2) stated, "*exploring current events through a cultural lens has sparked meaningful discussions.*" These approaches illustrate the importance of fostering inclusivity in learning spaces.

Moreover, faculty members noted that giving students opportunities to lead activities made them more engaged and motivated. As one participant (P5) put it, "*student-led activities make students more engaged and motivated to learn.*" Allowing students to choose how they demonstrate their learning—whether through presentations, essays, or creative projects—also proved beneficial. A faculty member (P9) explained, "*offering students choices in their learning assessments has empowered them to personalize their learning experiences.*" These findings reinforce the idea that flexibility in learning supports student confidence and active participation. Therefore, allowing student voice and choice emerged as a powerful strategy.

Table 2. Identified strategies for implementing CRP

Themes	Subthemes	Exemplary texts
Culturally relevant materials	Diverse literature and media	"Literature and historical texts mirror students' backgrounds and significantly increased engagement." (P1) "...culturally relevant materials sparked more meaningful discussions in class." (P10) "...music and art in lessons has helped students relate to the material and understand concepts better." (P3)
Culturally inclusive classroom environment	Inclusive activities and projects	"Group activities and projects foster a sense of belonging and encourages collaboration among students from different backgrounds." (P8) "... these tasks celebrate cultural diversity." (P1)
	Cultural lens on current events	"Exploring current events and societal issues through a cultural lens has sparked meaningful discussions among students." (P2) "...broadened students' awareness of diverse perspectives." (P3)
Student voice and choice	Student-led activities and inquiry-based learning	"Giving students opportunities to voice their opinions and make choices in their learning is empowering." (P1) "...more engaged and motivated to learn." (P5) "...has increased their sense of ownership." (P10)
	Flexible learning pathways and assessments	"Offering students choices in their learning assessments, including presentations, essays, or creative projects, has empowered them to exhibit their strengths and interests." (P9) "... allowed students to personalize their learning experiences." (P2)

4.1.2. Encountered challenges in implementing culturally responsive pedagogy

Table 3 presents the challenges educators face when applying CRP. These challenges fall into three main categories such as addressing biases, integrating CRP into the curriculum, and creating inclusive

classrooms. Each category highlights key difficulties that make it harder for educators to implement CRP effectively.

Some educators recognized that confronting their own biases is essential to creating an inclusive classroom. As one participant (P6) noted, *“confronting personal biases is essential for inclusivity.”* This suggests that self-awareness and reflection are important for CRT. However, biases also exist at the institutional level. One faculty member (P5) explained, *“addressing systemic barriers is critical for equity.”* This calls for the need for strong advocacy and policy changes to align institutional practices with CRP principles. This reveals that addressing personal and institutional biases is a challenge.

Another key challenge is integrating CRP into the curriculum while meeting academic standards. Educators often struggle to balance cultural inclusivity with existing curriculum guidelines. One participant (P5) shared, *“aligning with standards while being culturally responsive is challenging.”* This suggests that teachers need more flexibility and support in adapting lesson plans to include culturally relevant teaching while still meeting institutional expectations.

The study also reveals that creating inclusive learning environments can also be difficult. This is evident in fostering a sense of belonging and managing discussions on sensitive cultural topics. One faculty member (P3) emphasized, *“fostering belonging is crucial for inclusivity and requires intentional efforts and collaboration.”* This finding means that there is a need for proactive strategies to ensure all students feel valued in the classroom. Additionally, discussing cultural issues requires careful handling to promote respectful conversations. A participant (P10) explained, *“creating safe spaces for sensitive topics requires setting clear ground rules and respectful dialogue.”* This underscores the importance of establishing a supportive classroom culture where students feel comfortable expressing their views without fear of judgment.

Table 3. Encountered challenges in implementing CRP

Themes	Subthemes	Exemplary texts
Understanding and addressing bias	Personal biases	“Confronting personal biases is essential for inclusivity.” (P6) “...requires continuous self-reflection.” (P7)
	Institutional biases	“Addressing systemic barriers is critical for equity.” (P5) “... involves advocacy and collaboration.” (P9)
Integrating culturally responsive practices with curriculum	Educational standards	“Aligning with standards while being culturally responsive is challenging.” (P5) “... there is need for careful planning, selecting and organizing learning plans.” (P1)
Creating inclusive learning environments	Belonging for all students	“Fostering belonging is crucial for inclusivity and it requires intentional efforts and collaboration.” (P3)
	Safe cultural discussions	“Creating safe spaces for sensitive topics is challenging.” (P10) “... as an educator, it needs ground rules and respectful dialogue.” (P4)

4.2. Results for the quantitative phase

4.2.1. Assessed effectiveness level of the identified strategies in implementing CRP

Table 4 presents the level of effectiveness of the identified strategies in implementing CRP. The results show that all strategies were rated as highly effective in fostering student engagement, inclusivity, and cultural awareness. This provides insight into how well these approaches support culturally responsive learning. Among the strategies, the use of culturally relevant materials received the highest mean score (3.77). This shows that using literature, media, and cultural artifacts helps students understand different perspectives. This finding confirms that when students see their own culture in learning materials, they feel more connected, participate more, and engage in deeper discussions. This suggests that culturally relevant materials are not just helpful but necessary for creating meaningful learning experiences. When students relate their own experiences to what they are learning, they become more motivated and confident in their studies.

On the other hand, aligning assessments with culturally relevant learning outcomes received the lowest mean score (3.51), though it was still considered highly effective. This means that while flexible assessments help students, teachers may need more training and support to use them properly. The lower rating suggests that current assessment methods may not fully reflect the diverse ways students learn and express their knowledge. Schools and universities should consider new ways to assess students that allow them to showcase their strengths in ways that respect their cultural backgrounds.

In general, the composite mean of 3.69 confirms that CRP strategies help create a more engaging and inclusive learning environment. These results highlight the need to continue using CRT approaches to support students from different backgrounds. Universities should invest in teacher training, expand access to culturally relevant materials, and establish policies that support CRP. Rather than relying solely on individual educators, CRP should be embedded within the education system to ensure sustainability.

Table 4. Assessed effectiveness level of the identified strategies in implementing CRP

Item statements	Mean	Standard deviation	Verbal interpretation
1. Using of culturally relevant materials (e.g., texts, resources) enhances students' understanding of diverse cultural perspectives	3.77	0.43	Highly effective
2. Incorporating diverse literature and media enriches students' awareness and appreciation of cultural diversity	3.74	0.45	Highly effective
3. Fostering a safe classroom environment that promotes respect and inclusivity towards cultural differences and backgrounds	3.72	0.51	Highly effective
4. Giving activities and projects that encourage collaboration and understanding among students from different cultural backgrounds	3.72	0.49	Highly effective
5. Analyzing current events through a cultural lens helps students connect global issues with their own cultural contexts	3.67	0.53	Highly effective
6. Providing opportunities for students to express their cultural identities and preferences enhances their engagement in learning activities	3.75	0.49	Highly effective
7. Encouraging student-led activities and inquiry-based learning fosters deeper cultural understanding and empathy among students	3.72	0.53	Highly effective
8. Adapting learning pathways to accommodate diverse cultural backgrounds and learning styles	3.59	0.56	Highly effective
9. Aligning assessments with culturally relevant learning outcomes	3.51	0.56	Highly effective
10. Collaborating with community members and engaging them in teaching practices	3.75	0.49	Highly effective
Composite mean	3.69	0.50	Highly effective

4.3. Extent of difficulty of the encountered challenges

Table 5 presents the level of difficulty educators face in implementing CRP. The results indicate that all challenges were rated as highly difficult, with an overall composite mean of 3.72. This suggests that while educators recognize the value of CRP, substantial barriers hinder its full implementation.

Among the identified challenges, promoting open and respectful dialogue about cultural differences was rated the most difficult. This was manifested by the highest mean score (3.77). This reflects the complexity of handling sensitive discussions while ensuring that all perspectives are acknowledged and respected. Educators may lack the training or confidence to facilitate conversations on cultural identities, social inequalities, and historical biases. This underscores the need for professional development programs focused on culturally responsive communication and conflict resolution.

Another significant challenge was identifying and mitigating systemic biases within education (3.75). Institutional policies, traditional curriculum frameworks, and conventional assessment methods often reinforce implicit biases. These biases limit the integration of diverse cultural perspectives. Addressing these structural barriers requires targeted policy reforms, faculty development initiatives, and institutional commitment to equity-driven education.

On the other hand, the challenge with the lowest difficulty rating, but still classified as highly difficult, was collaborating with community stakeholders (3.61). While community partnerships can enrich curriculum content and enhance students' cultural awareness, logistical constraints—such as time limitations, resource gaps, and misalignment of priorities—often hinder sustained collaboration. To address this, institutions should consider formalizing partnerships through structured programs, resource-sharing initiatives, and long-term engagement strategies. In sum, these findings reveal the urgent need for institutional support in the form of faculty training, curriculum adjustments, and policy enhancements. Without these measures, educators may struggle to implement CRP effectively.

Table 5. Extent of difficulty of the encountered challenges

Item statements	Mean	Standard deviation	Verbal interpretation
1. Recognizing and addressing their personal biases to foster equitable interactions with students	3.76	0.42	Highly difficult
2. Identifying and mitigating systemic biases within educational practices	3.75	0.46	Highly difficult
3. Supporting the integration of culturally responsive practices across diverse courses	3.72	0.53	Highly difficult
4. Creating inclusive classroom environments	3.70	0.47	Highly difficult
5. Facilitating safe and productive discussions on cultural topics	3.68	0.54	Highly difficult
6. Promoting open and respectful dialogue about cultural differences and similarities among students	3.77	0.51	Highly difficult
7. Developing strategies to ensure fair assessment practices that align with culturally diverse student needs	3.74	0.56	Highly difficult
8. Collaborating with community stakeholders to enrich cultural perspectives within the curriculum	3.61	0.58	Highly difficult
Composite mean	3.72	0.51	Highly difficult

4.4. Discussion

The findings of this study provide a comprehensive understanding of the implementation of CRP in higher education. Both qualitative and quantitative data reveal that CRP strategies are generally effective in enhancing student engagement, fostering inclusivity, and promoting cultural awareness [20]-[22]. However, faculty members face significant challenges in implementation, including addressing personal and institutional biases, aligning CRP with curriculum standards, and facilitating safe discussions on cultural topics [22]. In the qualitative phase, the researcher identified three key themes for CRP strategies such as culturally relevant materials, culturally inclusive classroom environments, and student voice and choice. Faculty members emphasized the importance of using diverse literature and media, engaging students in inclusive activities and projects, and incorporating a cultural lens in discussions about current events [23], [24]. These findings suggest that integrating students' cultural backgrounds into instruction fosters deeper engagement, strengthens identity development, and enhances learning outcomes. Faculty members who incorporated diverse literature, music, and art noted that students demonstrated increased enthusiasm and understanding of complex concepts [25].

Moreover, the study also outlined key challenges encountered in CRP implementation, categorized into understanding and addressing bias, integrating CRP into the curriculum, and creating inclusive learning environments. Since personal and institutional biases emerged as a significant challenge, this requires continuous self-reflection and systemic advocacy [26], [27]. Faculty members reported difficulties in aligning CRP with existing educational standards. According to Sleeter and Carmona [28], flexibility in curriculum design ensures inclusive, adaptable, and culturally responsive learning. Additionally, fostering a sense of belonging for all students and facilitating discussions on cultural topics were noted as complex yet essential components of an inclusive learning environment [29]. The challenge of creating safe spaces emphasizes the importance of clear guidelines, respectful dialogue, and faculty training in handling sensitive discussions [30].

On the other hand, the quantitative analysis indicates that all identified CRP strategies were rated as highly effective. The highest-rated strategy was the use of culturally relevant materials. This suggests that when students see their cultural backgrounds reflected in learning materials, they are more likely to connect with the content and participate actively in discussions. As cited by Yoon [31], culturally relevant materials include diverse literature, media, historical texts, visual arts, multilingual resources, and real-world case studies that reflect students' backgrounds. Additionally, strategies promoting student voice and choice, such as student-led activities and flexible learning pathways, were also rated highly. This indicates their effectiveness in encouraging self-expression and deeper learning. Also, this fosters autonomy, confidence, and engagement, because learning is more personalized. As reported by Gorski [32] when students take an active role in their education, they develop critical thinking skills and a deeper connection to the content. However, the lowest-rated strategy was the alignment of assessments with culturally relevant learning outcomes. This proposes that faculty members may struggle to implement flexible and inclusive assessment methods. This highlights the need for professional development to help educators design assessments that accommodate diverse cultural perspectives. Without culturally responsive assessments, students may face difficulties in demonstrating their knowledge in ways that reflect their backgrounds and learning styles [33], [34].

Despite these positive findings, the study highlights substantial challenges educators face in implementing CRP. The most challenging aspect was promoting open and respectful dialogue about cultural differences. This stresses the complexities involved in facilitating sensitive discussions within diverse classrooms. Additionally, the challenge of systemic biases within educational institutions points to the need for institutional reforms and targeted faculty training to support culturally inclusive practices. Faculty members also indicated difficulty in fostering a sense of belonging among all students. This suggests that institutional policies and pedagogical approaches should be examined to ensure they actively promote inclusivity and representation. Inclusive environments boost student engagement, well-being, and academic success [35].

The implications of these findings suggest several key considerations for the future of CRP implementation. First, institutions must invest in professional development programs that equip educators with the skills and knowledge required to navigate cultural discussions effectively. Providing training on bias awareness, inclusive communication strategies, and culturally responsive assessment methods will be essential in overcoming the difficulties identified in this study [33]. Second, curriculum reform is necessary to integrate CRP principles more seamlessly with academic standards [22]. Flexibility in course design, diversified learning materials, and culturally inclusive assessment frameworks will help ensure that CRP becomes a sustainable component of higher education.

Additionally, the findings highlight the importance of strengthening partnerships with community stakeholders. According to Bañez [36], cultural leaders, parents, and organizations must work collaboratively to enhance the authenticity of CRP practices. On the other hand, Evans [37] mentioned that establishing long-term partnerships with local communities enables educators to incorporate real-world cultural perspectives into their teaching. Studies have shown that teachers who adopted culturally responsive pedagogies provided more meaningful teaching-learning experiences [38]-[40]. In summary, while CRP strategies effectively

foster inclusive and engaging learning environments, their implementation remains challenging due to institutional constraints and the complexities of addressing cultural differences in the classroom. The findings of this study underscore the need for continued institutional support, curriculum innovation, and faculty training to integrate CRP into higher education [41], [42]. If achieved, this can create more equitable and culturally responsive educational experiences for all students [43]-[45].

4.5. Proposed policy brief: advancing culturally responsive pedagogy in Philippines higher education

4.5.1. Justification for the brief and policy objectives

CRP enhances student engagement, learning outcomes, and inclusivity across diverse educational settings. In the context of Philippine higher education, CRP implementation is challenged by persistent biases, rigid curricula, and limited institutional resources. This policy brief seeks to present evidence-based strategies to effectively integrate CRP and address the disconnect between national policy and classroom practice. The primary objectives are to promote faculty training, advocate for curriculum reform, ensure adequate resource allocation, foster community partnerships, and develop coherent policy support mechanisms.

4.5.2. Key messages/policy recommendations

To support the institutionalization of CRP, several recommendations are proposed. First, faculty training programs should be developed and institutionalized to empower educators with the knowledge and tools to implement CRP effectively. These programs would enhance teaching strategies and improve classroom inclusivity. Second, the existing curricula must be revised to integrate diverse cultural perspectives and adopt inclusive teaching practices, ensuring that course content reflects the multicultural realities of Philippine society. Third, there is a need for increased allocation of financial and material resources to support the creation and dissemination of CRP-specific teaching materials and the establishment of dedicated research centers. Fourth, universities should strengthen partnerships with local communities and cultural organizations, allowing real-life cultural narratives and experiences to enrich academic content. Lastly, national guidelines should be formulated to standardize CRP implementation and ensure long-term sustainability and accountability across higher education institutions.

4.5.3. Description of policy options

Table 6 summarizes the key policy options for advancing CRP in Philippine higher education. These policy options offer distinct pathways for advancing CRP in higher education. Faculty training is foundational, equipping educators with the skills to deliver inclusive instruction, though it requires sustained institutional investment. Curriculum reform complements this by embedding diverse cultural content, but may encounter resistance from traditional academic structures and slow adoption rates. The development of CRP-focused resources and research centers supports both faculty development and curriculum enrichment, although financial constraints may limit scalability. Community partnerships offer valuable opportunities for contextual learning and cultural exchange, yet they demand careful coordination and consistent engagement. Finally, national policy support can provide the necessary framework for systemic and standardized implementation, but bureaucratic hurdles may hinder timely execution. Taken together, these strategies present a comprehensive and balanced approach to embedding CRP within the Philippine higher education system.

Table 6. Description of policy options

Policy options	Description	Advantages	Disadvantages
Faculty training	Regular workshops and professional development for educators on CRP principles and practices.	Increased teacher effectiveness and student engagement.	Requires long-term institutional commitment and funding.
Curriculum reform	Integration of culturally diverse content into existing curricula.	Promotes inclusive and relevant learning experiences for students.	Potential resistance from traditional faculty; slow adoption.
Resource allocation	Development of CRP-focused learning materials and research centers.	Better access to teaching tools and research support.	Requires significant financial investment.
Community partnerships	Collaboration with cultural organizations for learning enrichment.	Strengthens cultural context and community engagement.	Logistical challenges in establishing and maintaining partnerships.
Policy support	Development of national guidelines for CRP in higher education.	Enables standardized, sustainable implementation.	Bureaucratic delays in policy development and enforcement.

These policy options offer distinct pathways for advancing CRP in higher education. Faculty training is foundational, equipping educators with the skills to deliver inclusive instruction, though it requires sustained institutional investment. Curriculum reform complements this by embedding diverse cultural content, but may encounter resistance from traditional academic structures and slow adoption rates. The development of CRP-focused resources and research centers supports both faculty development and

curriculum enrichment, although financial constraints may limit scalability. Community partnerships offer valuable opportunities for contextual learning and cultural exchange, yet they demand careful coordination and consistent engagement. Finally, national policy support can provide the necessary framework for systemic and standardized implementation, but bureaucratic hurdles may hinder timely execution. Taken together, these strategies present a comprehensive and balanced approach to embedding CRP within the Philippine higher education system.

4.6. Further considerations

To ensure successful and sustainable CRP integration, it is essential to establish monitoring indicators that can assess the effectiveness of implementation efforts. Regular reviews and updates of CRP policies should be conducted based on feedback from both educators and students. Moreover, continued support for research and development is vital to enhance CRP practices and adapt them to evolving educational contexts.

5. CONCLUSION

This study underscores the critical role of CRP in fostering inclusive, engaging, and equitable learning environments in higher education. Using both qualitative and quantitative analyses, the findings demonstrate that CRP strategies such as the use of culturally relevant materials, inclusive classroom practices, and opportunities for student voice significantly enhance student participation, identity development, and overall academic experience. However, the study also highlights persistent challenges, including addressing institutional and personal biases, aligning CRP with rigid curriculum structures, and facilitating constructive discussions on cultural diversity.

A key contribution of this study is its examination of CRP within the context of Philippine higher education, an area that remains underexplored in existing literature. Unlike previous research, which often focuses on theoretical discussions of CRP, this study bridges the gap between pedagogy and policy by proposing concrete, evidence-based strategies for its implementation. The inclusion of a policy brief that offers practical recommendations for faculty training, curriculum development, institutional reforms, and community partnerships further strengthens its novelty. In sum, this research provides a comprehensive blueprint for integrating CRP into higher education in a sustainable and meaningful manner.

Beyond its immediate implications for educators, this study advances the broader discourse on educational equity. It reinforces the need for institutional commitment, ongoing faculty development, and policy interventions that support CRT practices. Future research should explore the longitudinal effects of CRP on student achievement and retention. A sustained focus on culturally responsive education will be instrumental in shaping more inclusive and socially just learning environments for diverse student populations.

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C : Conceptualization

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P : Project administration

Fu : Funding acquisition

CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

The authors declare no conflicts of interest in the development of this policy brief.

INFORMED CONSENT

Informed consent was obtained from all individuals included in this study.

ETHICAL APPROVAL

This study adhered to all relevant national regulations and institutional policies.

DATA AVAILABILITY

The data supporting the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author, [GP-L], upon reasonable request.





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