

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy and Literacy Education in Marginalized Classrooms

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Recommended Citation: Dunbar, E. Elijah (2020). Culturally Relevant Pedagogy and Literacy Education in Marginalized Classrooms. *Journal of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies, Fall 2020 Special Issues on Educational Leadership Policy Briefs: Perspectives of Doctoral Students*

Abstract

This brief shows that culturally relevant instruction can be used efficiently in the classroom to teach literacy education to all students, especially marginalized students; some of whom have academic and behavioral challenges. This paper highlights some of the elements of culturally relevant pedagogy and shows how they align with the teaching platform of literacy education. It also examines and analyzes the views of other scholars and research regarding the effectiveness of culturally relevant pedagogy in marginalized classrooms and its impact on the teaching-learning process of literacy education. The paper includes findings that support culturally relevant pedagogy as an effective and efficient instructional method that can be used to teach literacy education and other subjects in both marginalized and non-marginalized settings

Keywords: Culturally Relevant Pedagogy, Culturally Responsive Pedagogy, marginalized, literacy

Executive Summary

About 26% of school districts in Connecticut are performing poorly on a consistent basis and those ones that perform moderately or better are not consistent in their performance (The CT Nirror, 2020; EdSight/ Connecticut Report Cards, 2018-19). Data also reveal that most of or all the school districts that continue to perform poorly are low-income communities with higher poverty rates (Data USA, 2017; New Canaan Advertisers, 2017; City Data, 2010). A 2012 report of the America Community Survey, a subsidiary of the U. S. Census Bureau reveals that 20% of residents in Connecticut lack

the literacy skills to succeed in the 21st-Century work force and 65 to 75% of the residents in Hartford are illiterate (American Community Survey as cited in Campaign for a Working Connecticut)

Today many students from low-income and underserved communities are not getting the academic help and support they need to succeed (Milner & Lomotey, 2014; Moore & Lewis, 2012). Some stakeholders believe that it is a waste of time to teach them because they have no interest in learning, are not motivated to learn, lack the basic skills to do the class work, and are likely to drop out of school. Instead of giving them a chance they are blamed for their socioeconomic conditions (Simone, 2012). With such recurrence in performance, it is important that policymakers and educational leaders get together to see what can be done to improve the performance of students in those districts that are performing poorly and those ones that produce mediocre and inconsistent results.

Context Analysis - Background

“Literacy is the essential education; the learning through which all other learning takes place” (International Literacy Association, 2016). Literacy education should not be mistaken for English Language Learning. Literacy education has to do with teaching students how to read, write, listen, speak, and apply the knowledge learned for every subject, not English or grammar alone (College of Education of Northern University of Iowa, 2020). One may be literate in one subject but illiterate in another. The same is true for job-related skills, national stability and human development, and postsecondary life (Sang, 2017; Barton, 1999; & Burriss, 2017). The National Assessment of Adult Literacy defines literacy as being able to use printed and written information to function in society and achieve one’s goals and to have the word-level skills (to recognize words) and high level skills (to know how to draw inferences) from continuous texts (National Assessment of Adult Literacy, National Center for Education Statistics, 2005). Instead of using marginalization as an excuse or a loophole to blame the failure of a school system or poor performance of a school district on a small population of underserved students (Simone, 2012 & Journal of Education and Practice, 2015), it is important that educators and other proponents of education come up with strategies that can make learning effective and students productive irrespective of their academic challenges. Research shows a low literacy rate for adults in many states and counties across the United States. A 2003 report shows that 9% of adults lacked basic prose literacy skills in Connecticut. In Fairfield County 10%, Hartford

County 9%, Litchfield County 6%, Middlesex County 5%, New Haven County 9%, New London County 7%, Tolland County 5%, and Windham County 9% (National Center for Education Statistics, 2003). Today the illiteracy rate for residents in Connecticut has increased to 20% (American Community Survey as cited in Campaign for a Working Connecticut).

Researchers argue that culturally relevant pedagogy can be that remedy to the challenges and challenging learning environments in education today (Milner & Lewis, 2011).

Researchers argue that culturally relevant instruction engages students, makes them competent, allows the utilization of broad range of literacy materials that gear towards the interest and needs of students, introduces students to global networking, and prepares students to be informed technologically and be able to collaborate effectively in the global society (International Literacy Association, 2016, p. 18). State officials and other stakeholders in Connecticut may want to find out why 26% of district schools are performing poorly and why other districts do not maintain their high levels of performance. Could it be policy issues, demographical changes, inadequate staffing, curriculum- or classroom-related concerns? The poverty rates are higher in those school districts that perform poorly and very low in school districts that perform better (New Canaan Advertiser, 2017; Data USA, 2017). In fact, data show that there are more certified staffers in school districts that perform well than in school districts that perform poorly. Also, the per pupil-spending amount in districts that perform poorly is less than other districts (EdSight/ Connecticut Report Cards, 2019-20).

Context Analysis – Arguments for Policy and Agenda Setting

To have certain school districts in Connecticut consistently perform poorly every year is alarming. It raises concerns and should be given attention immediately. Also, to have other school districts that cannot maintain their high performance levels is as equally a concern as the former. Perhaps, high-performing district leaders could share their success story with low-performing district leaders. Importantly, school superintendents have to investigate to find out why schools continue to fail. They should find out whether the failure relates to funding, curriculum, or staffing. If it is funding, then more funds might have to be appropriated to those areas that need them, If it has something to do with the curriculum, then State education officials, policymakers, and curriculum developers might have to collaborate to find a solution. Perhaps, introducing additional or alternative

instructional methodologies for certain population of students might be the answer. If staffing is the reason, that means teachers are having a problem being effective in those failing school districts. Teacher attrition is common in low-performing districts. However, having teachers properly trained to know how to teach students in those environments can make a difference. Also, it may require alternative approaches with the curriculum to help those students succeed. Culturally Relevant Pedagogy is an instructional method or strategy comprising essential elements relating to the social context surrounding the population of students being taught, the curriculum by which students are measured, the individuality of each student in terms of their character and demeanor, the type of instruction used in the classroom, the achievement level of the students, cultural competency of each student, and their sociopolitical consciousness (Landsman & Lewis, 2011, pp 33-45).

In relation to the social context of culturally relevant teaching, Landsman & Lewis, 2011 argue that teaching transcends the classroom. According to them, teachers should have a holistic approach to the teaching-learning process, such as knowing their students well, in other words, knowing where their students live, the parents or guardians of their students, community organizations their students associate with, and meaningful people in the lives of their students. According to Landsman & Lewis, educating the whole child goes beyond the classroom. Perhaps, the teacher may be experiencing some difficulties in the classroom with certain students but by reaching out for help out of the immediate school environment might be the solution to the problem. It might be the parent or the pastor of the student's church, or a relative of that student who may be able to make the student listen or do the right thing. Therefore, teachers in the classroom must be able to look and think outside of the classroom.

Landsman & Lewis, 2011 argue that culturally relevant teachers do not look at or define all their students through the same lenses, rather, look at the individuality of each student. Landsman & Lewis argue that every student is different though they may all be categorized as being marginalized. Landsman & Lewis argue that decision making and observation of students should be done on a case-by case basis because it may cause problems for teachers who may make subjective decisions and judgments about students. Landsman & Lewis argue that teachers who are proponents of culturally relevant pedagogy are the ones who envision their students as having potential and are capable of succeeding in and out of the classroom. Therefore, with that mindset, according to Landsman & Lewis, teachers will

be able to look at the academic symptoms of each of their students and be able to diagnose each student's case and prescribe the best remedy to each student's situation. In relation to curriculum; the standard by which students are measured for success, Landsman & Lewis argue that with a culturally relevant approach, it may call for reconstructing, constructing, and deconstructing a curriculum to make students successful in the classroom. Landsman & Lewis argue that states and policy makers should have a uniform standard but one that is relevant to make all students succeed, even if it would require making some adjustments to the standards or curriculum because every student learns differently. They argue that students are capable of learning the same content but it may require a different approach to get some students to respond to the lesson. According to Landsman & Lewis, for some students, information may have to be broken down into smaller chunks before they can grasp it. Therefore, considerations should be given by State officials or teachers to reconstructing the curriculum to meet the needs of some students. Also, on a case-by-case basis, some situations may be extreme than others and may require for curriculum developers to allow certain schools to adopt models that fit their respective academic environments. Likewise, in few extreme situations it may be proper to dismantle the entire curriculum and replace it with one that fits the learning environment and students, argued Landsman & Lewis.

Relating to Instruction, Landsman & Lewis, 2011 argue that instruction contains content material that is to be taught for students to grasp and show mastery of the subject and students are assessed to prove mastery to be allowed to move on to the next level which could be another grade level, college, or the workforce. However, no matter what level it is, culturally relevant teachers according to Landsman & Lewis, must be able to use teaching strategies that engage all students, including those with learning challenges, even if it requires using multiple strategies with the lesson to enable each student to feel important and know that he or she matters in the teaching-learning process. With regards to Academic Achievement, Landsman & Lewis argue that teachers should not stress out by worrying about whether or not their students will pass the state exam or be a factor in closing the achievement gap, rather, teachers should focus on finding ways to make the lesson interesting to their students, and making sure they are meeting the requirements of the curriculum. Sometimes, according to Landsman & Lewis it may require supplementing the instruction or curriculum with something else to make the students willing to learn. According to Landsman & Lewis, culturally relevant teachers prepare their students not only to master the content or curriculum, rather, to be ready for

the future; a long-term goal. In terms of Cultural Competence, Landsman & Lewis argue that culturally relevant teachers enable their students to understand their cultural values and ask themselves what they could offer to their culture and the greater culture that surrounds them.

Landsman & Lewis, 2011 also argue that culturally relevant teachers expose their students to all elements of society that can equip them and make them ready to offer their skills and knowledge. It is this exposure according to Landsman & Lewis that makes students value themselves and realize that they too have something to contribute to society. They argue that it is the self-esteem that makes students believe in themselves and those with whom they interact. Landsman & Lewis suggest that teachers should also enhance the sociopolitical consciousness of their students. They argue that students are supposed to be aware of some of the stigmas society has on them, such as being referred to as “marginalized” students, students with “learning disabilities,” or “at-risk” students. Students have to know about those criticisms and know how to live beyond them, argue Landsman & Lewis. They also argue that it is the duty of culturally relevant teachers to inform their students about those social and political issues that their students will always have to deal with in life and show them ways they could mitigate them. Landsman & Lewis further argue that culturally relevant teachers also have a responsibility to advocate for their students. They want teachers to be proponents of social justice as well as educational democracy. They want teachers to be gatekeepers not to only contain students for academic achievement purposes, rather, to protect them from academic harm as well. Landsman & Lewis argue that culturally relevant teachers prepare students to be good and wise citizens; attributes of democratic education.

In his book, *Why School?*, Rose, 2014 refers to some of the elements that Landsman & Lewis, 2011 mention as being components of culturally relevant education. Rose argues that the purpose of public education is to benefit the citizenry for the common good of society. He mentions that education should be a democratic experience without any attachments or political influence, not one that allows policies to create stumbling blocks for some and a clear path for others. Rose also argues concerning the necessity of curricular adjustments due to unintended consequences. He argues that policy makers or curriculum developers must step back and thoughtfully plan on the curriculum building process before acting upon it, and argues that considerations should be given to situations that may warrant modification because a school environment or population of students might not respond that well as other schools to that curriculum.

With regards to high-stakes testing, Rose argues that there are other ways in which the aptitude and skills of students can be measured other than standardized testing. He argues that formative and summative testing initiatives should be able to measure the knowledge and skills of students. Rose also argues that character education which in some way is of importance to culturally relevant education should be considered as a factor in the education of some students. Character education is aligned with the arguments of Landsman & Lewis regarding social context, sociopolitical consciousness, and the individuality of the student. Through the medium of character education, the mind and behavior of students can be nurtured to properly fulfill those needs categorically recommended by Landsman & Lewis which relate to educating the entire child holistically. Although Rose did not address the topic of culturally relevant education, he wrote about most of the elements of culturally relevant education. Even some of his approaches to learning meet some of the requirements Landsman & Lewis allude to as being approaches that culturally relevant teachers should use to be effective in marginalized classrooms.

The identical approach that proponents of culturally relevant education wish to achieve, are the ones pursued by proponents of literacy education. Members of the International Literacy Association seek to find reforms that address the needs of every student, especially marginalized students or students who are challenged academically. Members of the association advocate for research-validated approaches free of politics that can foster effective literacy teaching. The Association drafted four frameworks representative of the kind of reform that can impact literacy teaching and teachers, school and schooling, student support system, including families and the community. The first framework which focuses on literacy teaching and teachers reflects the importance of providing literacy teachers with the knowledge, skills, twenty-first century tools, teaching and teacher equitability, a caring environment to empower the teaching of literacy education and teacher; and a call on the preparation and training of pre-service and in-service teachers to teach literacy education. The second framework which focuses on schools and schooling reflects the aligning of literacy curriculum and instructional materials with the needs of students and schools based on research evidence, and to enable standard-based reform that aligns curriculum and assessment together. The third framework which focuses on student support reflects poverty as an alarming concern in today's literacy learning environments. This framework by and large promotes culturally relevant instruction or approach as being proper for students of low-socioeconomic backgrounds. Also, this framework aids in

the provision of discipline-specific literacy instruction, standard-based literacy instruction, and high-quality literacy education which can help close the achievement gap. The fourth framework which focuses on the family and community reflects the importance of including the home and community in the literacy education process (International Literacy Association, 2016).

One of the elements of culturally relevant pedagogy is social context. It provides a holistic approach to the student's learning process. It allows the teacher to be able to interact or know about the surroundings of each student and use the resources available to reach out to know about everything or every person each student interacts with, such initiative informs the teacher about the child. The classroom is not the only place students can get their education. The student's surroundings also play a part in the student's learning. Therefore, the teacher should find a way to include the student's surroundings, such as the home and community in the student's education (Landsman & Lewis, 2011).

Baumann, Hoffman, Duffy-Hester, and Moon Ro, 2000, share that in their research on elementary reading instruction practices in the 1960s and subsequent years, they noticed that findings showed that significant value was placed on the support the home and community can give to aid in the instruction of struggling students; findings which align with elements of culturally relevant pedagogy. In light of social context as highlighted by Landsman & Lewis to be a significant part of culturally relevant pedagogy, it shows that historical learning fits within that category of social context, which means relevance is placed on the past, present, and future of the students and their surroundings, and that a culturally relevant teacher should know their students' history academically and naturally because that could play a role in the education process; an approach found to bring a balance to the teaching-learning process (Landsman & Lewis, 2011; Berry, 2008).

Although culturally relevant instruction and culturally responsive instruction may appear homologous in certain cases, they differ and carry out unique functions (Milner & Lomotey, 2014, pp. 353-368; Landsman & Lewis, 2011, pp. 33-45). Nevertheless, culturally responsive pedagogy is a design that strongly incorporates and attaches the natural elements of the respective cultures of the students as opposed to culturally relevant pedagogy (Milner & Lomotey, 2014, pp. 353-368; Landsman & Lewis, 2011, pp. 33-45) Culturally relevant pedagogy is an instructional design that is curriculum-based but strictly targets the academic needs of students and

aligns with the culture of the school and simultaneously fulfills curriculum requirements and makes students as competitive as their peers (Landsman & Lewis, 2011, pp. 33-45). Every school has a culture, and that culture makes it unique compared to other schools. A school's culture is reflective of its mission statement or vision. Culturally relevant pedagogy is curriculum-based and allows teachers to be able to construct, deconstruct, and reconstruct pedagogy to enhance the learning of students (Landsman & Lewis, 2011, 36).

Culturally relevant pedagogy is not mainly about constructing, reconstructing, or deconstructing curriculum as some may argue, rather, it is aligning the curriculum and using a unique approach to motivate students to learn and at the same time fostering change in the child's learning. Culturally relevant pedagogy is not a utopian proposition, a tinkering gesture or faddish reasoning that makes one to wonder whether or not change is taking place in education, or whether education is progressing or retrogressing (Tyack & Cuban, 1995). Also, culturally relevant pedagogy is all about change in the interest of the child. Therefore, educational stakeholders should advocate for the benefit and academic welfare of all students. Stakeholders are not to allow politics or politicians interfere with the education of the child in a way that makes education unequal and compromising. Jennings (2015) lengthily writes about *The Politics of Education Reform*, and in his text he reveals some of the charades of politicians when it comes to matters relating to public education or education in general.

According to Jennings, a proponent of culturally relevant pedagogy or education in general should not compromise the education of students by allowing politicians to control research findings and how they should be handled. Pearson (2005) attests to how politicians are out to shape literacy instruction and research methodologies and epistemologies which he argues could negatively impact education. "Culturally relevant pedagogy is used as an analytical tool to explain and uncover the ways in which the teacher develops cultural knowledge to maximize student learning opportunities" (Milner, 2010). Other researchers find culturally relevant pedagogy to be a demographical imperative due to migration and immigration to urban areas, and as a social justice advocacy initiative for teachers and students, demonstrates high expectations for student achievement, involves teaching rigor, modeling and scaffolding, using the strengths of students as instructional starting points, investing and taking personal responsibility for students' success, creating and nurturing cooperative investment to allow

students to feel motivated and work harder, high behavioral expectations, building on students' funds knowledge or cultural expectations which is connected to their family and community values, both tangible and intangible, critical literacy, making explicit the power dynamics of mainstream society, and sharing power in the classroom (Morrison, Robbis, & Rose, 2008).

Current Policy

The No Child Left Behind Act enacted in 2002 to provide educational equity and accountability was able to discover the achievement gap that exists between underserved students and their counterparts (U. S. Department of Education). The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), enacted in 2015 was to address the needs of underserved students to help close the achievement gap as revealed by the No Child Left Behind Act. The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) provides educational equity by addressing the needs of disadvantaged and high-needs students, the teaching of high academic standards, to prepare students for college and postsecondary life, create statewide assessments to measure students' progress, the embracing of academic innovations that are evidence-based and placed-based, encouraging expectations that positively impact low-performing schools (U. S. Department of Education, 2015). Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965, as amended by the No Child Left Behind Act funds programs to assist disadvantaged children such as low-performing students in high poverty schools, English learners, children of migrant workers with disability, Native American children, neglected or delinquent children, and young children and their parents who need literacy services. These funds are used especially for extended-day, after-school, and summer programs that extend and reinforce the school curriculum and other services to extend accelerated academic progress. These Title I Funds are distributed as Title I Grants to Local Education Agencies (LEA) around the country that want to improve the education of low-income and disadvantaged elementary and secondary students (National Center for Education Statistics, 2016).

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy can be infused with the State of Connecticut Boards of Education Acts on 21st Century skills which aligns with the 21st Century Community Learning Center Programs. In fact, few of the programs being carried out at the 21st Century Community Learning Center are elements of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy. The after-school tutoring initiative as being supported by No Child Left Behind, Every Student

Succeeds Act, and / or Title I is an element of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy. Other existing policies of Connecticut General Assembly and Boards of Education that are to be reexamined are Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) Titles I, II, III, and IV, Public Chapter 170 Boards of Education Sections 10-220a, 221, 221a, 221e, 221h, 221m, 221r, 223a, 233b, 233c, 233f, 233o, 239a, and Public Act 18-182. Table 1 shows some of the federal grants sent to Local Education Agencies in Connecticut for the 2019-2020 Academic Year. These grants are allocated by the federal government to help the State meet the needs of low-income and underserved students.

Table 1. Federal Grants to Connecticut for 2019 – 2020 Fiscal Years

Category	Amount
Grants to Local Educational Agencies	\$ 131,134,581
State Agency Program for the Neglect and Delinquent	\$ 1,008,852
Supporting Effective Instruction State Grants	\$ 17,929,976
21 st -Century Community Learning Centers	\$ 9,176,994
Student Support and Academic Enrichment State Grants	\$ 8,841,703
Homeless Children and Youth Education	\$ 763,843
Adult Basic and Literacy Education State Grants	\$ 5,061,873
English Literacy and Civic Education State Grants	\$ 851,263
English Language Acquisition	\$ 6,194,803
Native American Education – Grants to local Education Agencies	\$ 36,666

Note. Some of other State-formula grants sent to Connecticut for 2019 – 2020 Fiscal Years by the U. S. Department of Education for educational purposes, especially to assist students from low-income and underserved communities (U. S. Department of Education, 2020).

Policy Formulation

The seven major elements of culturally relevant pedagogy reflect on the following: **1.** The social context of the learning environment, **2.** The student, **3.** The curriculum, **4.** The instruction, **5.** The academic achievement of the child, **6.** The cultural competence of the child, and **7.** The sociopolitical

consciousness of the child (Ladson-Billings as cited in Landsman & Lewis, 2012, pp. 34-41).

1. Social context reflects on the unlimited spaces in which learning can take place, not only in the classroom. It expands to the home, community, statewide, nationwide, and globally. In these spaces, stakeholders and non-stakeholders being aware of the social disparity of the child, without the promotion of deficit thinking or talking, with patience, care, love, instilling of hope in an empathic manner, and help the child develop the necessary skills that will enable him or her to be competitive not only for the present, rather, the future (Simone, 2012; Landsman & Lewis, 2012).

2. Student; teachers, stakeholders, and non-stakeholders always creates a positive environment around the child. The child should be envisioned as being filled with possibilities and able to succeed. The child should be motivated, respected, taught about real life situations, and be given moral lessons and support when needed. The child's parents should be contacted as frequently as possible to not only discuss issues, rather, just to share some positive things about the child. If possible, a visit or two can have a great impact, awareness of the church and other community groups the child associates with can be supporting opportunities for stakeholders and non-stakeholders (Landsman & Lewis, 2012).

3. Curriculum; the standard by which students are measured for success, Landsman & Lewis argue that with a culturally relevant approach, it may call for reconstructing, constructing, and deconstructing a curriculum to make students successful in the classroom. Landsman & Lewis argue that states and policy makers should have a uniform standard but one that is relevant to make all students succeed, even if it would require making some adjustments to the standards or curriculum because every student learns differently. They argue that students are capable of learning the same content but it may require a different approach to get some students to respond to the lesson. According to Landsman & Lewis, for some students, information may have to be broken down into smaller chunks before they can grasp it. Therefore, considerations should be given by State officials or teachers to reconstructing the curriculum to meet the needs of some students. Also, on a case-by-case basis, some situations may be extreme than others and may require for curriculum developers to allow certain schools to adopt models that fit their respective academic environments. Likewise, in few extreme situations it may be proper to dismantle the entire

curriculum and replace it with one that fits the learning environment and students, argued Landsman & Lewis.

4. The Instruction; Relating to Instruction, Landsman & Lewis, 2011 argue that instruction contains content material that is to be taught for students to grasp and show mastery of the subject and students are assessed to prove mastery to be allowed to move on to the next level which could be another grade level, college, or the workforce. However, no matter what level it is, culturally relevant teachers according to Landsman & Lewis, must be able to use teaching strategies that engage all students, including those with learning challenges, even if it requires using multiple strategies with the lesson to enable each student to feel important and know that he or she matters in the teaching-learning process.

5. Academic Achievement; With regards to Academic Achievement, Landsman & Lewis argue that teachers should not stress out by worrying about whether or not their students will pass the state exam or be a factor in closing the achievement gap, rather, teachers should focus on finding ways to make the lesson interesting to their students, and making sure they are meeting the requirements of the curriculum. Sometimes, according to Landsman & Lewis it may require supplementing the instruction or curriculum with something else to make the students willing to learn. According to Landsman & Lewis, culturally relevant teachers prepare their students not only to master the content or curriculum, rather, to be ready for the future; a long-term goal.

6. Cultural Competence; Landsman & Lewis argue that culturally relevant teachers enable their students to understand their cultural values and ask themselves what they could offer to their culture and the greater culture that surrounds them. Landsman & Lewis, 2011 also argue that culturally relevant teachers expose their students to all elements of society that can equip them and make them ready to offer their skills and knowledge. It is this exposure according to Landsman & Lewis that makes students value themselves and realize that they too have something to contribute to society. They argue that it is the self-esteem that makes students believe in themselves and those with whom they interact.

7. Sociopolitical consciousness; the sociopolitical consciousness of their students. They argue that students are supposed to be aware of some of the stigmas society has on them, such as being referred to as “marginalized” students, students with “learning disabilities,” or “at-risk” students.

Students have to know about those criticisms and know how to live beyond them, argue Landsman & Lewis. They also argue that it is the duty of culturally relevant teachers to inform their students about those social and political issues that their students will always have to deal with in life and show them ways they could mitigate them. Landsman & Lewis further argue that culturally relevant teachers also have a responsibility to advocate for their students. They want teachers to be proponents of social justice as well as educational democracy. They want teachers to be gatekeepers not to only contain students for academic achievement purposes, rather, to protect them from academic harm as well. Landsman & Lewis argue that culturally relevant teachers prepare students to be good and wise citizens; attributes of democratic education.

Policy Statement

Researchers argue that culturally relevant instruction engages students, makes them competent, allows the utilization of broad range literacy materials that gear towards the interest and needs of students, introduces students to global networking, and prepares students to be informed technologically and be able to collaborate effectively in the global society (International Literacy Association, 2016, p. 18).

The proposed instructional model is not to augment or replace existing models or policies, rather, to be used in addition to existing Connecticut General Assembly and Boards of Education Statutes on education, such as ESSA Titles I, II, III, and IV, Public Chapter 170 Boards of Education Sections 10-220a, 221, 221a, 221e, 221h, 221m, 221r, 223a, 233b, 233c, 233f, 233o, 239a, and Public Act 18-182.

Policy Implementation and Legitimation

Implementation would be an addendum, not a replacement to current statutes or policies. Policymakers or members of the General Assembly of Connecticut, Boards of Education members, officials of the Department of Education of Connecticut, and concerned stakeholders would have to make some policy adjustments. Following the addendum process, there would be a dissemination of information to regional superintendents, school district leaders, school administrators, teachers, and department heads of institutions of higher learning that prepare students to teach (see Table 2). The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) or Title I of Connecticut which caters to improving the academic achievement of the disadvantaged,

describes in Part A the need to improve basic programs provide by the local education agency. Title II of the ESSA calls for the preparing, training, and recruiting of high-quality teachers, principals, and other school leaders and Part A requests support for effective instruction. Title III A relates to the Academic Achievement Act and Title IV B refers to 21st-Century Community Learning Centers (CGA.CT.GOV, 2016). Implementation would require the inclusion of the culturally relevant strategies with the existing programs provided by ESSA/ Title I Part A, Title II Part A, Title III A, and Title IV B, enhancing the promotion and participation of students and parents in literacy education and 21st-century skills (computers, numeracy, and career-development), and ensuring that students have access both at school and home to electronic platforms and other programs that can enhance their learning.

Social-emotional learning should also be an inclusive part of the teaching-learning process which students and parents can benefit from. Other areas of public statutes that some principles of culturally relevant pedagogy can be applied are Connecticut Public Chapter 170 Sections 10-220a: *In-service Training and Professional Development*; pre-service and in-service teachers can be trained to know how to incorporate culturally relevant strategies to teach low-income and underserved students. 221: *Prescribing rules, policy, and procedures*; culturally relevant strategies can be legitimized, 221a: *Student Support*; formative evaluation should have a huge weight in determining the overall performance of students, 221e: *Intra-district student assignment program*; all students should have access to technology at school and home to participate in other electronic programs to enhance their performance and skills, 221h and 221i: *Reading Competency*; all students should have access to electronic platforms that can enable them to develop the skills needed to succeed and have accessibility to extended-day, after-school, and Saturday tutoring, 221m: *Development and Implementation of In-Service Instruction Training Program*; this requirement should not only be for elementary educators, it should be for educators at middle and secondary levels as well with the inclusion of culturally relevant training, 221r: *Advance Placement Course Program*; there should be an oversight to assure that equity is in the student selection process in terms of race and academic ability, 223a: *Promotion and Graduation Policies, Basic Skills and Assessment Process*; formative assessment should play a reasonable role, also inviting input from community leaders of organizations students affiliate with, 232b: *Removal of pupil from the class*; educators should deescalate the situation, send student out for a breather, speak with a member of the behavior management team, dean of students, or sit in

another classroom for few minutes and be allowed to return for instruction, 233c: *Suspension of pupils*; suspensions should be minimized and educators should be trained to know how to deal with male students, especially African American. Restorative Justice, social-emotional learning, and school wide positive behavioral supports have been proven techniques to work and schools with major behavioral challenges (Kupchik & Hirschfield as cited in Educational Researcher, 2018), 233f: *In-School Suspension*; should be done with learning taking place, 233o: *Standards Re-alternative Educational Opportunities*; Culturally relevant instructional strategies should be used, 239a: *Demonstration Scholarship Program*; it should be inclusive, diverse, and supportive, and Public Act No. 18-182: *Program to Provide Grants to Youth Services*; promotion of programs that enable students to develop the skills needed to succeed in school and life, such as participation in debates, spelling bee, oratorical competitions, college visits, conferences, workshops, webinars, and other activities.

Table 2. Goals and Expectations of Policy Implementation and Legitimation

Objectives: To utilize the elements of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy to enhance the performance of students from low-income and underserved communities.			
Implementation Processes: Below actions to be taken.			
Action to be taken	Key Actors	Time Frame	Place
Current statutes or policies to be amended: Connecticut ESSA, Titles I, II, III, & IV, PC 170 Sec. 220a, 221(a, e, h, m, &r) 223 (a, b, c, f & o), 339a & PA 18-182	Connecticut Legislators, Connecticut Boards of Education members, Connecticut Department of Education officials	TBD	Connecticut
Preparation and legitimization of policy/ model by aligning it with current statutes and policies of Connecticut, and to distribute to key policymakers and stakeholders and ask for feedback.	Connecticut Legislators, educators, school administrators, and university education Leaders.	TBD	Connecticut
Dissemination of policy amendments and implementation plans to	University leaders, professors, students in the field of	TBD	Connecticut

universities and other stakeholders	education, principals, and teachers.		
Communicate policy/model standards for implementation	University presidents, deans, and education department chairs and professors.	TBD	School districts and universities
Preparation of programs of universities to meet policy/model standards.	Connecticut university education department heads, Connecticut Department of Education officials, Connecticut Education District leaders	TBD	School districts and universities
Evaluation of policy/model, its implementation, and effectiveness	Connecticut University department chairs, professors, superintendents, principals, and teachers	TBD	School districts and universities

Note. This table shows the planning, implementation, legitimation, and evaluation phases of the policy or model recommended to serve as an addendum to current statutes and policies of the General Assembly and Boards of Education of Connecticut.

Policy Evaluation

In order to assess the effectiveness of the instructional model or policy after being implemented, teachers will be observed as they use the model in their classrooms. Following the observation, they will be interviewed to get their feedback about how students are responding to the model. Students will also complete a survey to get their reflections on the model. Teachers who may be struggling with implementing the program effectively would be given free professional development trainings. School administrators would also be interviewed to get their feedback on the model. Students would be given weekly formative and summative assessments to find out how they have been impacted. Their results would be reviewed and analyzed to determine whether growth took place or not. Deans and department chairpersons of the education departments or colleges of education would be interviewed to get their feedback on the program. College students in the field of education

would also complete a survey to get their feedback on the model. After data are gathered regarding the effectiveness of the model or policy, they would be disseminated to the appropriate institutions and stakeholders.

Conclusion

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy is an antidote to teaching literacy education and other subjects because it has been proven and tested. Researchers have found that the school culture of a poorly-funded or low-performing school that promotes high expectations for students, collaborative learning, diversity, and equity can improve students' performance (ASCD, 2005). Another evidence-based study shows that a struggling school that maintains a data-based instructional strategy and encourages frequent and intensive tutoring can enhance the performance of students (Center for American Progress, 2016). Educators widely support culturally relevant learning and argue that it makes a difference in education (The National Council of Teachers of English, 2016; Landsman & Lewis, 2011). Based on the findings of previous studies, it has been proven that a culturally relevant pedagogy is the right approach to enhancing the academic performance of marginalized students (Ladson-Billings, 1995; Collins & Tamarkin, 1990; Foster, 1997; Matthews, 1988). Adding and implementing the culturally relevant pedagogical model can positively impact the academic outcomes of the students of those school districts in Connecticut who are continuously performing poorly.

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