

Reading summary

Morrison, A., Rigney, L.-I., Hattam, R., & Diplock, A. (2019). *Toward an Australian culturally responsive pedagogy: A narrative review of the literature*: University of South Australia Adelaide, Australia. (We suggest pp 13-34)

Toward an Australian Culturally Responsive Pedagogy presents a comprehensive narrative review of the literature surrounding culturally responsive pedagogy (CRP) in the Australian educational context. The review synthesises existing research, highlighting the need for educational practices that are not only inclusive but also affirming of Aboriginal and diverse identities and experiences.

The first section examines the complex and troubling history of Aboriginal education in Australia, tracing its roots from early colonial efforts to "civilise" Aboriginal children through to contemporary policies and practices. The authors highlight how the Australian education system has consistently failed Aboriginal peoples, being founded on Eurocentric models and racist ideologies that have perpetuated harmful stereotypes and deficit views. The authors examine how historical policies of forced removal and assimilation have given way to more subtle, yet still damaging, forms of marginalisation in modern educational settings. They argue that despite numerous policy initiatives aimed at improving outcomes for Aboriginal students, significant disparities persist.

The second section reviews the literature about culturally responsive pedagogy (CRP), exploring key characteristics of CRP and emphasising its focus on inclusivity and the validation of students' cultural identities. They discuss the importance of integrating Indigenous epistemologies and critical race theory into CRP, highlighting how these concepts can inform teaching practices that are more equitable and relevant to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. The section also examines student and teacher perspectives on CRP, revealing that both groups recognise its potential to improve educational outcomes. However, challenges such as conceptual confusion, essentialism, and tokenism are identified as barriers to effective implementation. The authors stress the need for a broader understanding of CRP that goes beyond superficial approaches, advocating for systemic changes in educational policies and practices. Crucial to being culturally responsive, is a relational pedagogy that fosters trust and engagement between educators and students. Successful initiatives in culturally responsive pedagogy require collaboration among educators, local communities, and policymakers to create a supportive and inclusive educational environment.

Section three addresses the challenges associated with implementing culturally responsive pedagogy (CRP). It identifies several barriers, exploring in more detail some of the conceptual confusions surrounding CRP, which can lead to ineffective practices. The section explores issues of super-diversity in classrooms and the importance of validating diverse knowledges. It also discusses the risks of essentialism and stereotyping, where students' cultural identities can be reduced to simplistic categories, undermining the complexities and singularities of their experiences. Tokenistic approaches to CRP are also critiqued, as they often fail to engage meaningfully with students' cultures. To this end, the authors argue for a shift from cultural competence to cultural humility, emphasising the importance of ongoing learning and reflection by educators. Ongoing training and resources for educators are crucial to enable culturally responsive practices. Overall, this section calls for a deeper understanding of CRP that transcends superficial engagement, advocating for genuine inclusion and respect for the diverse cultural identities present in Australian classrooms.

Take Home Messages:

Positive Impact on Student Outcomes: Implementing culturally responsive pedagogy has been shown to enhance student engagement, academic performance, and overall well-being.

Cultural Relevance is Key: To create an inclusive learning environment, pedagogy must prioritise the cultural backgrounds of students, and in Australia Indigenous perspectives are especially important.

Shift from Cultural Competence to Relational Pedagogy: There are dangers of essentialising students' cultures, so the focus should shift towards educators having a cultural humility and building strong relationships.

Collaborative Efforts are Crucial: Successful CRP initiatives involve collaboration among educators, local communities, and policymakers.

Continuous Reflection and Adaptation: Educators should engage in continuous reflection and adaptation of their teaching practices to meet the evolving needs of their diverse student populations.

Professional Development is Essential: Educators require ongoing training and resources to effectively implement culturally responsive practices in their classrooms.

Discussion questions:

This paper suggests a shift from 'cultural competence' to 'cultural humility.' How do you understand the difference and what implications might it have for our practice?

How might we distinguish between meaningful engagement and tokenistic practices in our own educational contexts?