

Addressing Coordination and Conflict in Multicultural Elementary Classrooms through Culturally Responsive Teaching and Universal Design for Learning

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Abstract:

Multicultural classrooms in elementary education have been gaining academic recognition, but research remains insufficiently systematized in incorporating both cultural and structural approaches of inclusion. This paper analyzes the characteristics of coordination and conflict in multicultural classrooms and assesses them by the frameworks of Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) and Universal Design for Learning (UDL). The analysis shows that CRT focuses on cultural relevance, reflective teaching, and relational equity, and UDL emphasizes accessibility and flexible design. Their integration provides a complementary framework that improves coordination and reduces conflicts, but the current practice is still fragmented, and there is a lack of empirical research and teacher preparation. The study suggests combining CRT and UDL in teacher training, curriculum design, and institutional policies based on such findings, and encourages further research in cross-national and technology-supported contexts to strengthen inclusive education in the future. These findings have significant implications for both researchers and practitioners in the field of multicultural education.

Keywords: Multicultural Elementary Education, Culturally Responsive Teaching, Universal Design of Learning, Inclusion

1. Introduction

Due to today's global migration, some countries have undergone significant structural changes. Today's elementary school classrooms are more multicultural

than they once were. This shift brings both opportunities and challenges. In diverse classrooms, students are encouraged to grow intercultural competence. They may also aid in global citizenship and multilingual development. At the same time, they may create

tensions. Teachers, parents, and schools may have different viewpoints depending on learning goals, teaching methods, and school rules [1].

Two approaches to these issues have been put forward by experts. One is Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT), and the other is Universal Design for Learning (UDL). CRT focuses on integrating students' cultural backgrounds into all aspects of education. It promotes academic accomplishments, cultural competence, and critical thinking [2]. Teachers use the CRT approach to modify classes to reflect the students' cultural backgrounds. They design effective communication strategies and assessments based on students' experiences. According to recent research, using CRT in elementary schools increases student engagement and reduces misunderstandings between schools and families [3].

A comparable approach is UDL. It provides a framework for creating supportive learning environments for teachers [4]. It provides multilingual materials for multicultural classrooms and promotes different representations, engagement, and expression. Additionally, it recommends more ways for students to take part in learning activities and demonstrate their abilities. According to research, the UDL-based practices reduce the structural obstacles and increase equity in diverse classrooms [5].

While UDL emphasizes making structures inclusive, the focus of CRT is cultural relevance. In multicultural classrooms, they assist in promoting coordination and reducing conflicts. There is not much research that successfully combines these two approaches in the elementary studies. This paper then uses the frameworks of CRT and UDL to evaluate the characteristics of coordination and conflict in multicultural classrooms. This paper's goals are to provide strategies for creating learning environments that are inclusive and culturally responsive.

2. Conceptual Definitions and Theoretical Foundations

2.1 Characteristics of Elementary Education Classrooms

There are some significant differences between multicultural elementary classrooms and traditional classrooms. Engaging a diversified group of students reflects their diverse cultural backgrounds, ethnicity, and socioeconomic conditions. The students' daily interactions and learning experiences reflect the diversity that leads to cultural integration in the classroom. Additionally, these classrooms typically exhibit language diversity. Some students, for example, may practice their mother tongue at home while

using English at school. This diversity offers challenges for teaching and opportunities for cross-cultural communication. In this situation, teaching must balance the needs of both native speakers and language learners.

Family-school relationships become more complicated as a result of multicultural influences. By bringing their cultural traditions, values, and educational goals into the school community, families extend students' educational environment beyond the class [1]. Since these factors may be different from the school's existing education system and cultural atmosphere, communication and cooperation between families and schools may become more difficult. Flexibility and inclusion are typically the main themes in multicultural curricula. That includes cooperative learning strategies to improve peer interaction [6]. Materials are carefully selected to reflect different cultural perspectives [6]. The classroom environment also expands the teacher's role. Teachers serve as cultural mediators in addition to being teachers [3]. In daily teaching, they guide students to deal with challenges from cultural diversity [3]. In summary, multicultural elementary classrooms have diverse student groups, language diversity, complex family-school relationships, expanded teacher roles, and inclusive curricula. Based on these features, the following sections of this paper will analyze how coordination and conflict arise in multicultural elementary classrooms, and use UDL and CRT to address them.

2.2 Coordination and Conflict in Multicultural Classroom Practice

In multicultural classrooms, coordination and conflict often coexist. Coordination is demonstrated when students from various cultural backgrounds interact effectively with one another. Group activities and peer interaction often provide opportunities for cultural exchange, as well as enabling diversity to enhance the learning environment [6]. Schools also contribute by offering bilingual resources and inclusive arrangements to empower students' complete engagement [3].

Conflict may occur at the same time in these classrooms. Although stereotypes and unequal expectations do place minority students at a disadvantage as a result of language obstacles, they may prevent students from engaging in learning [7]. Immigrant children are particularly vulnerable to social tensions such as bullying or cyberbullying in settings where there is no cultural awareness [8]. These issues identify the risks of exclusion and tension brought on by unmanaged diversity [8]. Multicultural classrooms are impacted by the presence of disruptive tensions and cooperative potential. Depending on its practical application, they can either enrich or challenge classrooms.

3. Theoretical Responses: Concept and Adaptive Logic

3.1 Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) and the Logic of its Adaptation

A theoretical framework for understanding how multicultural classrooms operate is provided by Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT). It focuses on incorporating students' cultural identities, experiences, and views into the pedagogy. That breaks away from traditional "one-culture-fits-all" culture styles. The diversity of cultures in a classroom is seen by CRT as a valuable teaching resource instead of a barrier [2,7]. For example, students from different cultures bring unique ways of thinking and real-life stories that can enrich class discussions and help others see things from different angles. In addition to acknowledging that diverse cultural practices have an impact on learning, CRT also emphasizes the value of social awareness and educational material in classrooms.

CRT's ideas are built on three main parts, each giving clear guidance for multicultural classrooms. It highlights curricular relevance, requiring the classroom materials to reflect the students' educational backgrounds and experiences to promote engagement. For example, students could do a project about their own community's traditions in social studies. CRT emphasizes the importance of teacher reflection and competence, and refers to teachers as cultural interpreters. This means teachers need to think about their own views on cultural diversity. They also need skills to teach in a culturally responsive way. It's necessary for them to know about different cultures and how to design lessons that fit those cultures. CRT emphasizes relational equity because it thinks teacher-student and peer relationships are essential for educational success [2,3,7].

In multicultural classrooms, CRT's adaptive responses to fostering coordination dynamics and resolving cultural conflict are evident. When students have different cultural views, CRT guides teachers to turn these differences into meaningful learning experiences. It also provides a framework for assessing students' cultural perspectives, when diversity runs the risk of marginalization. By incorporating the cultural aspect into teaching, CRT can work with classroom practices to meet the needs of different students.

3.2 Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and the Logic of its Adaptation

A conceptual framework for understanding inclusion in multicultural classrooms is provided by Universal Design

for Learning (UDL). It adheres to the principles of accessibility and flexibility. It is based on the idea that learning environments may be designed to support a wider variety of learners rather than be retrofitted later on [4,9]. There are three basic UDL techniques of offering multiple means of representation, engagement, and expression. Together, these techniques aim to remove the barriers that prevent students from fully engaging in the learning process. In essence, UDL promotes structural inclusion. It aims to make learning processes accessible to students regardless of their level of knowledge, language proficiency, or cognition. It is understood that classrooms can anticipate and deal with learner variability because they have flexibility in their curricula and assessment [5,10,11]. UDL addresses the structure for balancing diversity in multicultural classrooms concerning the coordination and conflict. In a situation where coordination requires equitable participation, it emphasizes accessibility as the foundation of collaboration. When conflict arises due to exclusion, based on universal teaching or assessment methods, UDL prevents the emergence of such inequities through flexible structures. By assuring that inclusion is both culturally significant and accessible, UDL strengthens CRT.

3.3 Complementarity Between CRT and UDL

The "Culturally Responsive Teaching" (CRT) and "Universal Design for Learning (UDL) can function mutually. They ought to be viewed as building on one another. CRT supports diversity recognition and value, and UDL encourages participation accessibility. In multicultural classrooms, cultural recognition without accessibility can be exclusionary, and accessibility without cultural recognition can be superficial. Together, these two approaches make education both important and equitable and offer a complete foundation for inclusion.

4. Developmental Limitations and Recommendations

4.1 Current Limitations in Research and Practice

While CRT and UDL complement each other, there are still limitations in both research and practice. The biggest issue is that they operate separately. The most recent study focuses on one approach alone instead of looking at how they work together. The existing literature is mostly theoretical or context-specific, and there is little evidence showing how these two approaches interact in actual elementary school classrooms.

Another limitation lies in teacher preparation. Teachers

are not adequately trained to integrate CRT with UDL in some multicultural competence programs. This leads to poor implementation of accessibility principles [1,2,9]. Without this training, the strengths of the two approaches are weakened, and this even risks making education more inequitable. Even though CRT and UDL have strong theoretical value, people still know very little about how to use them together in real teaching.

4.2 Policy and Practice Recommendations

Integrated action is needed at several levels to overcome these limitations. Professional development should incorporate culturally responsive practices and universal design principles at the teacher level. Teachers can manage multicultural classrooms more effectively by combining reflective pedagogy with universal design approaches. At the curriculum level, the contents should integrate diverse cultural perspectives to provide multiple ways for students' engagement and assessment. This kind of integration makes education more accessible and equitable.

Schools can provide resources, leadership, and policies needed for inclusive practice at an institutional and policy level. This can involve strengthening family-school relationships by setting regular communication channels, like home visits or online parent workshops. School also promotes multilingual resources by adding multilingual notes to teaching materials or developing language support tools. Allocating enough time for teacher collaboration allows teachers to share practical experiences of supporting diverse students and solve classroom challenges together. Policies that promote peer mentoring and intercultural collaboration between students are essential in reducing tensions, since they provide structured opportunities for students from diverse backgrounds to interact, share ideas, and build mutual understanding. Student empowerment should also be a key component of systemic inclusion. Through student involvement as peer mediators and cultural bridges, schools may develop cooperation, reduce conflicts, and turn diversity into a useful tool.

4.3 Future Research Directions

These findings provide some research directions for the future. More experimental classroom-based research is required to review the efficient integration of CRT and UDL in multicultural elementary education. The case studies may provide evidence about their impact on academic achievement and social relations. Because multicultural relationships vary based on immigration histories, culture, and educational policies, the cross-national comparison should also be made. These comparative studies may be useful in recognizing universal and specific strategies.

Moreover, more research needs to be done on the impact of technology. Even though current digital tools and platforms have the potential to provide culturally relevant information and increase accessibility, there is not much research done on their application. Technology serves as a bridge between CRT and UDL to make learning inclusive and adaptive. Future research should concentrate on generating practical evidence, expanding comparative studies, and mastering technological innovations that may help the integration of CRT and UDL.

5. Conclusion

This paper analyzes the characteristics of coordination and conflict in multicultural classrooms. The two approaches that are studied are CRT and UDL. It often assesses how both approaches offer theoretical solutions to the opportunities and tensions found in diverse classrooms. CRT focuses on the cultural aspect of inclusion, while UDL focuses on the structural aspect of inclusion. Collectively, they complement the framework that can turn diversity into an exceptional educational practice. For the inclusion to reach, cultural recognition and structural accessibility are needed, according to the findings. The integration of CRT and UDL may improve the coordination among students, teachers, and families, and minimize the possibility of conflict where diversity is not properly considered or managed. However, there are some limitations to the research. Most research is disjointed and theoretical, and only limited empirical research is conducted in the classrooms. Furthermore, teacher preparation does not often systematically incorporate both approaches.

In the future, the research should focus on generating evidence in the classroom environment, more cross-national comparisons, and how technology bridges between cultural responsiveness and universal accessibility. These suggestions may help promote the process of integrating CRT and UDL to ensure that inclusive education in a multicultural context is sustainable and theoretically sound. Schools can change the multicultural diversity as a source of tension into an opportunity for collective growth and learning when these gaps are filled.

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