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Implementation of Culturally Relevant Teaching in Namibian Classrooms: Understanding Impediments and Identifying Assets

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**Implementation of Culturally Relevant Teaching in Namibian Classrooms: Understanding
Impediments and Identifying Assets**

By

Fransisko Constantino

A culminating thesis, submitted to the faculty of Dominican University of California in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science in Education.

Dominican University of California

San Rafael, CA

May 2021

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Abstract

Culturally responsive pedagogy (CRP) is a teaching approach that can be utilized to improve academic outcomes among diverse student populations. Currently, however, there is a lack of research examining why some teachers struggle to implement CRP, particularly in educational contexts beyond the U.S. This study examined why there is a lack of implementation of CRP within combined schools in the Kavango East region of Namibia. More specifically, this study assessed the role of CRP within Namibian English Second Language (ESL) classrooms and examined how the experiences of ESL teachers affected their ability to implement CRP. In addition, this study explored the ways in which Namibian ESL teachers might ultimately leverage existing assets in their schools and communities to assist in the implementation of CRP.

This study implemented a mix methods approach to data collection which included: questionnaires, interviews and focus groups discussions. Purposeful selection of ESL teachers were chosen to participate in this study to highlight awareness, implementation and challenges in using a CRT model of teaching. The findings of this study call attention to the lack of knowledge and implementation surrounding CRP, as well as the many challenges that either shape or restrict teachers' approaches to teaching. Common challenges included the low/varied academic level(s) of their learners, lack of resources, and overcrowding in classrooms. However, findings from the study also suggest that many of the challenges faced by Namibian teachers could be mitigated by the leveraging of previously unidentified and under-utilized assets. In a similar way, these assets could also be leveraged to support the development of CRP in Namibia.

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my late mother, Elvira Francisco Mendonca. It is because of her infinite amount of love and support that I seized the opportunity to come study in the US. A teacher herself, my mother always encouraged my siblings and I to pursue our education no matter what difficulties we may face. This work is a testimony to her love. I know she is looking down on me and smiling

Elvira Francisco Mendonca

1963 - 2021

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Namibia is an incredibly diverse country - geographically, racially, culturally, and linguistically. Through the use of culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP), this diversity can be utilized as an asset in educational settings and can serve as a way in which a truly multicultural education can be achieved in the diverse context of the Namibian school system (Zorba, 2020). CRP is a method of “using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant to and effective for them” (Gay, 2018, p. 31).

Recent studies conducted in Namibia suggest that the country is one of the most unequal and polarized societies in the world, and established that educational achievement gaps of up to 40% exist between urban and rural areas (Republic of Namibia, 2008; Van Wyk & Van der Berg, 2015). Given these challenges facing Namibia, CRP offers a framework through which educational equity can be advanced in Namibian schools.

Statement of Purpose

There has been a considerable amount of research in the field of culturally relevant pedagogy ever since Ladson-Billings coined the term in 1995. However, the majority of this research has been conducted within the U.S. context and has focused on the benefits that arise from successful CRP implementation. This research has shown that CRP has the potential to improve academic outcomes, as well as improve and strengthen students' sense of identity, particularly within diverse settings (Byrd, 2016; Hawkins-Jones & Reeves, 2020; Myers, 2019; Stewart et al., 2015; Yuan & Jiang, 2019). This is achieved by utilizing the cultural knowledge and prior experiences of students to make classroom learning more relevant and effective, and requires that teachers maintain high expectations of students, promote cultural competence, and develop critical consciousness of their students (Byrd, 2016; Dickson, Chun, & Fernandez, 2015; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Morrison, Robbins, & Rose, 2008). Although the existing research has demonstrated the ways in which CRP can be utilized to improve academic outcomes

among diverse student populations, there is a lack of research that examines why some teachers struggle to implement CRP, particularly in educational contexts beyond the U.S.

Thus, the focus of this particular study is the lack of CRP in the Namibian school system. More specifically, the study aims to explore and examine the experiences of English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers in relation to CRP, with the purpose of discovering untapped educational resources within Namibian teachers and communities that can assist in the implementation of CRP.

Overview of the Research Design

Research for this study was grounded in both pragmatic and transformative worldviews, and was conducted in the Kavango East region of northern Namibia. Participants in the study included four grade 4-7 ESL teachers employed at government-operated schools in areas within and surrounding the town of Rundu, a bustling town along the Namibia-Angola border whose rapidly expanding population has led the formation of multiple informal settlements. Participants were recruited based on their previously established professional relationships with the researcher (also a former teacher within the same geographic area). Participants were purposefully selected in order to highlight awareness, implementation, and challenges in using a CRP model of teaching. The study implemented a mixed methods approach to data collection (which included questionnaires, interviews, and focus groups discussions), and was guided by three central research questions:

- How do Namibian ESL teachers perceive the role of CRP within their own classrooms?
- How do teachers' experiences affect the implementation of CRP within their own classrooms?
- How can teachers leverage existing assets to assist in the implementation of CRP within their classrooms?

Significance of the Study

The findings of the study highlight the lack of knowledge and implementation surrounding CRP, as well as the many challenges that either shape or restrict teachers' approaches to teaching. Common challenges included the low/varied academic level(s) of their learners, lack of resources, and overcrowding in classrooms. These findings were not surprising given the existing literature. However, findings from the study also suggest that many of the challenges faced by Namibian teachers can be mitigated by the leveraging of previously unidentified and under-utilized assets. In a similar way, these assets can also be leveraged to support the development of CRP in Namibia.

Based on the findings of this study, there is a need for Namibian ESL teachers to reinvent their approach to teaching and learning through the implementation of CRP. More specifically, Namibian ESL teachers should be encouraged to first and foremost utilize code-switching as a teaching strategy. Through the sustained use of code-switching, teachers can break down language barriers within their ESL classrooms and improve the academic outcomes of their learners. Second, teachers must take responsibility for developing their own teaching practices. Teachers cannot rely on the government to mandate development or implement top-down strategies if meaningful development and evolution is to occur. Third, teachers should be encouraged to diversify and expand their current strategies. No one strategy will address the numerous challenges being faced by Namibian ESL teachers, thus teachers must begin to rely on a multitude of teaching and learning strategies. Next, teachers are encouraged to create professional learning communities. These learning communities could employ methods such as the Lesson Study Approach to aid in the professional development and learning of teachers. Additionally, teachers are encouraged to utilize existing school and community assets to supplement and support their teaching practices. For example, if a school lacks books, teachers can alternatively rely on school WiFi to obtain short stories, show films, etc. And lastly, teachers

should engage more with the families or their learners in order to gain support outside of school, and should engage more with community members in order to enhance their learners' social awareness and increase their motivation and engagement.

In addition to changes that should be made by individual teachers, strategies and policies must also be implemented in order to support both learners and teachers, especially in schools and circuits that have historically low academic outcomes among populations of learners. More specifically, schools and circuits should ensure that learners are held to higher standards and provided additional means of support. This would require the review of policies such as passing grades of 40% and the automatic promotion of learners to the next grade after failing a grade twice. Additional means of support could take the form of well-implemented CRP, acquisition of resources that aid learning, remedial and/or individual learning opportunities, etc. Secondly, teachers need to be provided with more opportunities to increase their professional readiness to implement new approaches and strategies. These opportunities could be provided by the Ministry of Education, or by outside sources, and could be presented as lectures, focus groups, workshops, or self-paced modules. Next, overcrowding in schools needs to be reduced and prevented. School and circuits should set and adhere to classroom enrollment caps. In addition, schools should prioritize school development funds to be used for the construction of additional classrooms to further reduce overcrowding. Lastly, schools should also prioritize resource acquisition. Resource acquisition may take different forms depending on the schools' needs, but could include obtaining and maintaining classroom sets of books that can be used year after year, investing in expanding the school library, or buying projectors for classrooms on campus.

By undertaking these suggestions, teachers and schools can improve academic outcomes among diverse populations of learners and work towards reducing the urban-rural educational achievement gap. Not only that, but through the increased use of CRP within

Namibian classrooms, learners will be provided with a wide range of social and cognitive benefits including: increased motivation and engagement of learners; improved critical thinking skills; strengthened racial, ethnic, and cultural identities; as well as an increased sense of belonging.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

In the U.S., there has been a considerable amount of research regarding culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP) ever since Ladson-Billings coined the term in 1995. CRP is touted as a means through which a truly multicultural education can be actualized — with research demonstrating that CRP has significant positive impacts, particularly within classrooms of diverse student bodies (Aronson and Laughter, 2015). In addition, the existing literature regarding CRP suggests that well-designed approaches can have positive effects on both learning outcomes as well as on student identity development (Byrd, 2016).

In Namibia, however, there remains a general lack of CRP within the education system. Namibia is a wonderfully diverse country; but this diversity functions as a hindrance in classroom settings when teachers are not properly prepared to support diverse populations of students (Biraimah, 2016). Take for example the fact that educational achievement gaps of up to 40% exist between urban and rural areas (Van Wyk & Van der Berg, 2015). Previous interventions and initiatives have taken place to mediate these gaps. As one example, a recent initiative set forth by the Millenium Challenge Corporation sought to “[enhance] the equity and effectiveness of basic education” in Namibia, and involved school infrastructure improvements and improved access to learning resources (Millenium Challenge Corporation, 2020, p. 1). However, these changes did not yield consistent improvements in educational outcomes (Millenium Challenge Corporation, 2020). Given the enormous educational challenges facing Namibia, culturally relevant pedagogy offers a framework to advance educational equity in Namibian schools.

In the following review of the academic literature, I first provide a general overview of multicultural education and the history of culturally relevant pedagogy. In order to explain the specific context of this study, I also explain the historical challenges of implementing culturally relevant teaching in Namibia in this section. Prior research conducted in Namibia concluded that the urban-rural and cultural divides within the country make it a particularly challenging

educational environment, and the implementation of CRP within classroom settings was recommended to help Namibia “[move] beyond a destructive past to a decolonised and inclusive future” (Biraimah, 2016, p.1). However, as noted by Biraimah, implementation of CRP in Namibian classrooms is also a challenge in itself.

In the second section of this literature review, I discuss common challenges for CRP implementation. These challenges include classroom overcrowding, test-based learning environments, lack of student-teacher connections, the lived experiences of teachers that affect their pedagogy, and lack of professional development opportunities — all of which are prevalent and affect the Namibian education system.

In the final section of the literature review, I consider strategies for the implementation of culturally relevant pedagogy. If Namibia is to effectively implement CRP within its classrooms, best practices for CRP implementation include a fluid approach, examination of biases on the part of the teacher, meaningful student-teacher interactions, culturally responsive disciplinary practices, culturally diverse and relevant content, and longer class periods. In implementing any new teaching approach, research supports a bottom-up approach such as on the job training or lesson study - which aids in teachers’ growth while also acknowledging and building upon their existing knowledge and skills. Through the use of culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP), diversity can be utilized as an asset in educational settings and can serve as a way in which a truly multicultural education can be achieved in the diverse context of the Namibian school system (Zorba, 2020).

The Historical Context of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy in Namibia

Multicultural education refers to any form of education or teaching that aims to provide “an equal opportunity to learn in school” for all students “regardless of their gender, social class, and ethnic, racial, or cultural characteristics” (Banks & Banks, 2010, p.3). Although relatively simple by definition, achieving a truly multicultural education has proven to be difficult for many

in the education sector. Banks (2016) developed a five-dimension structural framework of multicultural education that focused on the following standards:

1. Content Integration - when teachers integrate multiple perspectives and/or voices into their lessons
2. Knowledge Construction- when “teachers help students to understand, investigate, and determine the implicit cultural assumptions and frames of reference and perspectives of the discipline they’re teaching” (Banks, 1998)
3. Equity Pedagogy - when teachers adapt and diversify their methods and approaches to teaching, in order to help students from diverse backgrounds succeed
4. Prejudice Reduction - when teachers work to reduce prejudice in the classroom and help students to develop more positive racial attitudes
5. Empowering School Culture and Social Structure - when teachers and school staff strive to make classroom and school culture more equitable

As noted by Richards (2001), changes to content, curriculum, and the likes would not achieve these ideas and standards alone, because it is the teachers themselves that actualize this information.

In contrast to multicultural education, culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP) is an approach through which teachers learn what to do and how to do it in order to actualize the requirements of truly multicultural education - or put more simply, multicultural education is the plan on paper and CRP is the plan in action (Zorba, 2020). As defined by Gay (2018), CRP is a method of “using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant to and effective for them” (p. 31).

Ladson-Billings (1995) first introduced the term *culturally relevant pedagogy* (CRP) to describe a teaching approach that engages students whose experiences and cultures have

been traditionally excluded from educational settings. The goals of this teaching approach were to yield academic success; aid students in developing positive racial, ethnic, and cultural identities; and aid students in becoming aware of, knowledgeable of, and critical of social inequalities within society. There are three primary approaches that teachers use in CRP: maintaining high expectations of students, promoting cultural competence, and developing critical consciousness (Byrd, 2016; Dickson, Chun, & Fernandez, 2015; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Morrison, Robbins, & Rose, 2008).

In contrast to the framework first introduced to Ladson-Billings in 1995, Gay (2010) developed a framework for culturally responsive teaching (CRT) which was more focused on teachers' strategies and practices than the original framework. Gay encourages teachers to focus on the instructional techniques and materials that are used in the classroom, student-teacher relationships, overall classroom climate, and teachers' own self-awareness. Building on Gay's work, Brown-Jeffy and Cooper (2011) developed a framework of CRT that identified five essential principles: "Identity and achievement, equity and excellence, developmental appropriateness, teaching the whole child, and student-teacher relationships" (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011, p. 71)

A third term that can be found in the academic literature is culturally sustaining pedagogy. Paris (2014) introduced the concept of *culturally sustaining pedagogy* (CSP) to encourage educators to not only draw upon students' cultures, but also to help students sustain these cultural practices by further developing positive identities.

For the purposes of this study, the term CRP will be used as an inclusive term that stems from Ladson-Billings' 1995 work while also acknowledging the theoretical contributions offered in the CRT and CSP frameworks. CRP has been a widely adopted approach in the education sector because of its ability to significantly improve academic outcomes for diverse groups of students. A study conducted by Zaretta Hammond showed that students process new information best if and when it is somehow linked to prior knowledge and/or experience

(Hammond, 2015). CRP identifies student knowledge and/or experiences as assets that can be leveraged to produce an improved academic performance as well as improved senses of identity. A study conducted by Byrd (2016) concluded that CRP is “significantly associated with academic outcomes and ethnic-racial identity development”, and more specifically that “diverse teaching practices are associated with better outcomes” and that “a direct focus on race and culture in the classroom is beneficial” (Byrd, 2016, pp. 1,6).

Multiple studies have shown that CRP — when implemented in the correct way — can also assist teachers in overcoming common classroom challenges such as language barriers and mandated curriculum. An in-depth, qualitative case study conducted by Yuan & Jiang (2019) explored the implementation of CRP techniques to improve an ESL student’s outcomes within the classroom setting. The student’s linguistic resources in another language and cultural knowledge were used to bridge her family and school lives, and thus improve her academic outcomes. In another in-depth case study conducted by Myers (2019), a struggling English teacher utilized CRP techniques to greatly assist in her approach to teaching mandated literature that was seemingly-irrelevant to her students.

Despite the documented positive outcomes resulting from CRP, there remains an overall lack of CRP in the Namibian educational context. A paper by Biraimah (2016) further explored the lack of CRP in Namibia and found that “[the] same factors that provide Namibia with a rich and diverse cultural tapestry also pose great difficulties for educators determined to provide an equitable education for all” (Biraimah, 2016). The factors Biraimah looked at specifically were the urban-rural divide and the divide between the four main ethnic/cultural groups.

Namibia is a country with a great divide between urban and rural communities. The Gini index is a measure used by economists to quantify the level of income or wealth inequality within a nation or group of people- and Namibia has the second-highest Gini coefficient in the world (Degenhard, 2020). A report on poverty and inequality conducted by the government of the Republic of Namibia in 2008 found that “Namibia ranks among the most unequal and

polarised of societies in the world” (Republic of Namibia, 2008, p. 39). More specifically, the poorest 10% of the population possessed only 2.4% of the country’s wealth, while the richest 10% possessed 42.0% of the country’s wealth (Levine and Roberts 2013; Sherbourne 2013; UN News Centre 2012). This inequality of wealth is sharply defined by the borders of urban and rural areas and is likewise reflected in educational achievement gaps between these areas. Regional and National Exam pass rates for learners in rural vs. urban areas remain significant. For example, in 2009 Grade 5 learners in non-remote areas passed English at a rate of 52%, whereas learners in rural areas passed at a rate of only 14%. Mathematics in the same population of students saw a pass rate of 42% in non-remote areas, and a pass rate of only 20% in rural areas (Van Wyk and Van der Berg, 2015). As of 2012, the gap continued to persist in relation to English and Mathematics scores.

Biraimah noted that there are also divides between the four main ethnic/cultural groups of Namibia — “the White Afrikaans speakers, the Black African majority, the Coloured population, and the Basters” (Biraimah, 2016, p. 46). Both Coloured and Baster individuals are considered mixed race and speak Afrikaans as their home language. However, Baster people are descendants of white European men and Black African women from the Dutch Cap Colony, and Coloured people are descendants of white Europeans and Malay or Indonesian slaves brought to South Africa. In addition, whereas Namibia’s Baster population has historically been concentrated in the area of Rehoboth, Coloured people have never inhabited a specific area of the country. While it is true that there are divides between these four groups, it is important to note that even within the Black African majority, a variety of tribal/linguistic divides exist. Namibia is home to a wide variety of tribal and linguistic groups, including, but not limited to, the Caprivian, Damara, Herero, Kavango, Nama, Ovahimba, Ovambo, San Bushmen, and Tswana. Biraimah notes that despite the vast array of ethnic, cultural, tribal, and linguistic groups within Namibia’s borders, the “Namibian Ministry of Education continues to assign teachers to schools

nationwide, often without regard to language alignment” leading to communication problems between teachers and learners (Biraimah, 2016)

Another of Biraimah’s findings was that although many required textbooks have an emphasis on Namibian and African culture, history, traditions, and heritage, they were lacking in other realms (Biraimah, 2016). For example, an analysis of the required Grade 5 English textbook identified multiple examples of unequal representation, including far fewer female characters than male characters, the affirmation of typical gender role stereotypes, no portrayals of disabled characters, and lack of portrayal of characters from backgrounds of low socioeconomic status. It is also notable that most of the perspectives were that of a middle-upper class Namibian society.

In order to increase culturally relevant practices in Namibian classrooms, Biraimah (2016) encouraged the incorporation of “ubuntu-style” pedagogy. “Ubuntu” is a Bantu term that loosely translates to “humanity”, and that is often translated as “I am because we are.” In discussing ways to incorporate an “ubuntu-style” approach, Biraimah includes six culturally relevant and inclusive suggestions:

1. Establish a caring classroom in which patience is exhibited with all students, student persistence is recognized and rewarded, and each learner’s worth is made to feel valued and worthy
2. Provide quality Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) for all children
3. Include mother-tongue instruction in order to enhance parental support, positively impact cognitive abilities, ensure smoother transitions into higher levels of education, and help bridge the gap between school and home/society
4. Provide culturally diverse curriculum content and resources that include relevant “to the lives of students coming from homes without electricity or other urban creature comforts” and that do not promote stereotypes” (p. 57)
5. Offer inclusive education for learners with disabilities

6. Utilize effective educational approaches for students living in extreme poverty which emphasize resilience rather than deficits.

Common Challenges for Implementation of CRP

Despite the widely documented positive outcomes of CRP, and despite Biraimah's (2016) ground-breaking paper which outlined six concrete steps that should be taken to increase the prevalence of culturally relevant practices in Namibian classrooms, few schools in Namibia have focused on the development of CRP. In considering what has prevented the widespread use of CRP in Namibian classrooms, existing research suggests that factors such as overcrowded classrooms, lack of student-teacher connections, test-based learning environments, the lived experiences of teachers, and a lack of professional development opportunities can act as barriers to CRP implementation.

One of the most significant obstacles to CRP is overcrowded classrooms. Classroom overcrowding is a problem faced by schools all over the globe, but it is amplified in developing countries due to rapidly expanding populations coupled with a limited number of schools and classroom spaces. Various studies have found that smaller class sizes - in comparison to larger class sizes - have significantly higher test scores, lower dropout rates, and provide a more even playing field for disadvantaged students from minority groups or low SES backgrounds (Boyd-Zaharias, 1999; Glass & Smith, 1979). The phrase "overcrowded classroom" evokes different images depending on where in the world you are. For the researcher, his homeroom class of 72 sixth-graders was crowded — but not as crowded as other classrooms at the same school or in other areas of the country. One reason overcrowded classrooms constitute a primary barrier for CRP implementation is because they have significant negative effects on learning and academic outcomes. A study conducted by Fehrler et al. (2009) using data from various African countries found that class sizes near or above 60 students produced significant negative effects. An additional study conducted by Jones (2016) found that mixed-age classrooms in Ugandan

primary schools do not have any significant effect on learning outcomes, but that class size has significant negative effects on learning.

Negative effects on classroom management and discipline are also directly related to increased class sizes (Mustafa et al., 2014). A South African study involving 112 student-teacher participants supported this finding and confirmed that discipline management was negatively impacted by overcrowding (Marais, 2016).

A third major consequence of overcrowded classrooms, is that instructors are typically forced to resort to teacher-centered methods of teaching that rely on heavy use of the chalkboard — as there is not enough physical space to move around the classroom or to do group work or individualized teaching (Opoku-Asare et al., 2014). Classroom size also affects the ability of a teacher to maintain relationships with their students. For example, multiple studies have noted that teachers are unable to pay attention to individual students when classrooms are overcrowded, and thus are unable to ensure full class participation or neglect passive students (Imtiaz, 2014; Kiggundu & Nayimuli, 2009; Sosibo & Nomlomo, 2014). Mustafa et al. (2014) further noted that students who need the most support are all too often left behind. The aforementioned study conducted by Marais in 2016, involving 112 student-teacher participants, also found that in overcrowded classrooms there was generally little to no individual learner support, no variety in the applicability of teaching strategies, and a general lack of student motivation.

Another significant obstacle to the implementation of CRP in Namibia is the focus on test-based learning. Test-based learning environments place an emphasis on academic achievement at a standardized level. However, CRP is difficult to utilize in settings where there is an emphasis placed on testing and curriculum coverage (Misco, 2018). For context, in Namibia, regionally-based tests typically occur once or twice per year starting in Grade 4 and are administered in the form of end of term tests. As a result, many teachers resort to quickly covering topics to ensure their learners are prepared to vaguely answer questions pertaining to

any topic that may appear on these tests. In addition to regional tests, National Examinations occur at Grades 9 and 11. In order to be promoted to the next grade level, a learner must pass these national exams. Because the testing is high stakes, many teachers place a large emphasis on curriculum coverage rather than developing students' understanding of content material or fostering critical thinking. This emphasis on testing and curriculum coverage creates an environment in which it is difficult to utilize CRP — because a central tenet of CRP is the development of deeper understandings and connections.

Given the overcrowded classroom conditions in Namibia and the focus on mandated testing, it is unsurprising that most teachers struggle to develop connections with their students. Yet, if teachers do not know their students, they are unable to relate to them and shape their teaching approaches accordingly to make them more culturally relevant. “Knowing” a student extends beyond the basics of knowing a student's name or general performance in the classroom and encompasses the student's home life, cultural background, experiences, interests, and skills. In a study conducted by Misco (2018) in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, it was found that teachers expressed an interest in implementing CRP within their classrooms, but that a major barrier in realizing CRP was that teachers lacked connections to their students and their parents. These teacher-student connections are difficult to navigate in many Namibian communities because within many Namibian cultural contexts, there is a distinct separation between elders and those of the younger generation. In many cultures, such as various Kavango cultures, it is unacceptable for an elder (i.e. teacher) to socialize with younger members of the community (i.e. students) — even within the classroom. Relationships between teacher and student are expected to be strictly professional, and topics other than schoolwork are considered inappropriate or taboo.

In addition to the challenges to CRP created by the educational context of Namibia, the lived experiences of teachers also act as a barrier to implementing CRP within their own classrooms. For example, many teachers may be reluctant to attempt strategies associated with

CRT due to their enormous workload or their lack of background knowledge on the topic. In a study by Mullick et al., (2013) that focused on inclusive education (IE) within a Bangladeshi context, the researchers found that a major barrier to implementation of IE was teacher reluctance. This reluctance was associated with a lack of knowledge regarding IE and an already large workload due to high student to teacher ratios. Likewise, a study conducted by Klauswitz (2005) concluded that the lived experiences of teachers, including the methods that were used when they were students, were heavily embedded into their perspectives, and as a result, acted as filters through which decisions were made.

Yet even when teachers are personally ready to implement CRP, they are often not professionally prepared. In studies conducted by Karatas and Oral (2015) and Paksoy (2019), teachers found themselves to be inadequate and unprepared in terms of actualizing CRP within their classroom settings. A study conducted by Zorba (2020) of in-service teachers in Turkey further built upon the findings of Karatas and Oral (2015) and Paksoy (2019). Zorba's study found that English teachers who participated in the study were personally ready to implement CRP, but were not certain about being professionally ready. This was attributed to the fact that:

- (1) University teacher prep programs failed to prepare teachers to confront culturally diverse environments
- (2) Teachers had a lack of experience and lack of professional development opportunities in relation to CRP.
- (3) Many teachers also mentioned the difficulty of implementing CRP in linguistically diverse classrooms.

In a similar way, a study by Mullick et al. (2013) that focused on inclusive education within a Bangladeshi context found that a major barrier to implementation of IE was a lack of professional development opportunities. Teachers were interested in learning more about IE but were not provided with adequate opportunities to develop their approaches.

Strategies for Implementation of CRP

Despite the common challenges faced by teachers attempting to implement CRP within their own classrooms, there are multiple practices and strategies that can aid in the implementation of CRP. Yet CRP is not a one-size-fits-all or step by step process. Research has shown that CRP is optimal as a fluid process through which an instructor adapts their methods according to the needs and circumstances of their students. An in-depth case study conducted by Myers (2019) found that the subject (a teacher) was best able to teach the mandated curriculum by allowing her teaching approaches to be more dynamic and varied. Misco (2018) further supported this line of reasoning and concurred that curriculum and approaches should be fluid and dynamic

Nevertheless, there are specific strategies that can be developed among teachers to facilitate CRP. A first key step in the implementation of CRP is to have teachers examine their own biases, positionality, and experiences. In examining their own biases, teachers can act to minimize their influence on their teaching approaches. For example, in a case study conducted by Yuan & Jiang (2019), a student was misdiagnosed as having a speech and language disorder. Rather than being considered an “emergent bilingual,” the biases of the parties involved led to a wrongful diagnosis. A study conducted by Oleson & Hora (2013) concluded that teachers (faculty members) model their teaching after previous instructors, but also after a wide variety of experiences and knowledge. Through examining this positionality and these experiences, teachers are able to learn and further develop their pedagogical skills. Klauswitz (2005) noted that teachers should examine their lived experiences in order to remove barriers to development and learning.

A second central strategy to the development of CRP is to focus on meaningful student-teacher connections, while maintaining an awareness of appropriate cultural norms and values. The first of Biraimah’s (2016) suggestions for the inclusion of culturally relevant pedagogy in Namibian classrooms involved establishing a classroom environment in which each learner is

made to feel valued and worthy. This, of course, cannot be achieved without meaningful teacher-student connections. Research has shown that meaningful teacher-student connections are an essential part of CRP and that such connections have significant positive effects on student learning outcomes. For example, a study conducted by Myers (2019) looked specifically at teachers who are vulnerable in front of and who establish meaningful connections with their students. Myers observed positive effects in terms of the classroom environment, student morale, and academic outcomes.

Meaningful teacher-student relationships, however, can only be developed when culturally responsive disciplinary practices are used. As noted by Bornman & Rose (2017), the ability of a teacher to accommodate diversity relies on creating supportive classroom environments that act as cultures in themselves; and a “culturally responsive learning environment requires disciplinary practices that respect the unique culture of each learner” (Prins et al., 2019, p. 1). In a study conducted by Prins and others, interviews with teachers highlighted the importance of disciplinary practices “focusing not only on positive reinforcement, but on encouragement, modelling positive behaviour, maintaining engagement, acknowledging the individual, and promoting ownership as ways to maintain a disciplined and conducive learning environment” (Prins et al., 2019, p. 4)

A third essential component to CRP is culturally diverse and relevant content. Research has shown that culturally diverse and relevant curriculum content/resources are essential for supporting CRP in the classroom setting (Biraimah, 2016). Students who are able to connect personally with themes in literature and who are able to make connections to previously read texts show positive improvements (Myers, 2019). In determining whether content is relevant, teachers should consider relevancy in relation to age, language level, and culture (Stewart et. al, 2015). Kibler & Chapman (2018) offered the following tips in relation to literature specifically: select culturally relevant texts carefully, offer transformative activities during the process of reading the text, and extend teaching beyond the text.

Finally, longer class periods can be used to increase opportunities for CRP. Although there is little research exploring the relationship between CRP and length of class periods, the benefits of a longer class period seem to coincide with the type of environment that needs to be established in order for CRP to be effective. In a US study conducted by Marshak in 1998, a newly implemented block scheduling system was examined. Teachers who participated in the study noted that longer block periods:

- Allowed for teaching and learning that could constantly change and develop, and that “a variety of learning activities also responds to the learning style diversity among any group of students” (Marshak, 1998, p.1)
- Students played a more active role in their learning process.
- Group work was more effective in block periods because of the longer periods of time.
- Students were able to receive more personalized education and were better known by their teachers (i.e. more meaningful teacher-student connections)
- Focus shifted from curriculum coverage to the breadth and depth of student learning
- Teachers and students were able to draw more connections to the learning that was taking place. These connections were made to other subjects and disciplines, as well as to the students’ lives outside of the classroom.

When implementing any new teaching approach, it is important to consider how best to introduce it. Typically, educational reforms are best implemented in a bottom-up approach that is “supportive of teacher’s growth as professional educators while also respecting their existing knowledge and skills” (Oleson & Hora, 2013, p. 30; see also Darling-Hammond and McLaughlin 1995; Fishman 2005). This differs from top-down approaches that are created and driven by centralized leadership such as district offices, or state or federal agencies. Bottom-up approaches can take many forms, but for the purpose of this study I will consider on-the-job

training and experience, as well as collaborative problem-solving approaches such as the lesson study approach, as examples of bottom-up approaches.

According to Oleson & Hora (2013) “one of the most important factors shaping teacher knowledge and growth is on-the-job training and experience” (Oleson & Hora, 2013, p. 31). As previously detailed, a lack of professional development opportunities poses a major challenge for the implementation of new pedagogical approaches in Namibia. To be clear — these are not simply random approaches invented by individual teachers. These are evidence based practices that have been shown to improve academic outcomes when implemented in the proper way. Thus, it is essential that teachers receive on-the-job training and experience to be able to do so.

The Lesson Study (LS) approach is one way to provide quality on-the-job professional development. The LS approach, developed in Japan, is a cyclical and reflective approach to professional development. The approach centers around collaboration among small groups of teachers to develop and implement different approaches to teaching, with the purpose of improving student learning and developing teaching knowledge (Takahashi & Yoshida, 2004). More specifically, the LS approach involves collaborative lesson planning, lesson observations, and examinations of students learning. Although lesson study approaches are widely considered “alternative” approaches, they have been proven to be effective. For example, findings from a study conducted by Norwich et al. (2018) demonstrated the following: LS procedures were well-implemented by school staff, working memory knowledge translated well to other contexts, the teams collaborated in an effective and positive way, and a majority of teachers described positive outcomes arising from LS (improved understanding of students, heightened confidence to implement new approaches, increased understanding of the learning process).

Conclusion

Over the past 25 years, CRP has evolved to help achieve the goals of truly multicultural education. The wide amount and depth of information regarding theoretical frameworks clearly outlines the origins and evolution of CRP over time. In addition, there is an extensive depth of knowledge regarding CRP implementation in specific contexts (i.e. specific populations of students within various US contexts). This academic literature demonstrates that CRP has significant positive impacts within classrooms of diverse student bodies — specifically the improvement of academic performance and sense of identity of learners. However, because CRP is an approach that is fluid and adapted to individual populations of students, it is difficult to know whether CRP implemented in a specific context will translate to other contexts (in different regions of the world and with different student populations).

Biraimah's Namibian study identifies various barriers to CRP implementation and offers suggestions for implementation of CRP. Yet although it was extremely helpful to frame CRP within a Namibian context, the study failed to address the perspectives of teachers — which is critical in that teachers are the ones who are primarily responsible for the implementation of CRP. Also, many of the recommendations made could only be implemented from a top-down approach. This is problematic in that top-down approaches are rarely, if ever, as effective as bottom-up approaches. Top down approaches place the responsibility in the hands of higher-ups — when in reality many teachers themselves are in a position to be able to leverage their existing assets to greatly change their approach to teaching and thus their students' learning outcomes.

Overall, there remains a general lack of research that addresses why some teachers struggle to implement / properly utilize CRP, especially in a Namibian context. Thus, the purpose of this research is threefold. First, this research seeks to understand how Namibian ESL teachers perceive the role of CRP within their own classrooms. Second, this research intends to explore and examine the experiences of teachers who are trying to implement CRP in

Namibian classrooms. Lastly, this research looks to identify assets that exist within the schools that teachers can leverage to assist in the implementation of CRP.

Chapter 3: Methodology

The purpose of this study was to examine the experiences of Namibian teachers in relation to CRP and discover what assets teachers can leverage in their classroom environments to better support its implementation. In the United States, there has been a considerable amount of research which has shown that CRP has significant positive impacts, particularly within classrooms of diverse student bodies. The existing literature regarding CRP is encouraging in that it suggests that well-designed approaches can have positive effects on both learning outcomes as well as on student identity development (Byrd, 2016). Although there is ample research that shows how CRP can be utilized to improve academic outcomes among diverse student populations, there is a lack of research that examines why some teachers struggle to implement CRP, particularly in educational contexts beyond the U.S. Thus, there is a need for more data that explores and examines the experiences of Namibian teachers who are trying to implement CRP in their classrooms, and that identifies assets that exist within their schools which can be utilized to assist in the implementation of CRP. Three central research questions guided the study:

- How do Namibian ESL teachers perceive the role of CRP within their own classrooms?
- How do teachers' experiences affect the implementation of CRP within their own classrooms?
- How can teachers leverage existing assets to assist in the implementation of CRP within their classrooms?

Description and Rationale for Research Approach

Research for the purpose of this study is grounded in both pragmatic and transformative worldviews. A pragmatic worldview focuses on the research problem as opposed to the research methods and uses all available approaches to better understand the research problem (Creswell, 2018). Pragmatists view research in relation to social, historical, political, and other

contexts, and oftentimes through a social justice lens. This study is grounded in a pragmatic worldview, as the researcher has utilized all available and sensible approaches to better understand the lack of CRP in Namibian classrooms, and has taken into account the various contexts which affect their findings. The study aims to increase social justice by encouraging teacher participants to identify and leverage existing assets to aid in the implementation of CRP — which has the ability to drastically improve the learning outcomes for marginalized groups of learners.

The pragmatic worldview is further extended to the study's mixed-methods design. The mixed-methods design draws extensively from both quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection and analysis and utilizes both open- and closed-ended questions. A mixed-methods approach is suitable for this particular study in order to better understand the complexities surrounding the lack of CRP in Namibian classrooms. Quantitative methods (i.e. questionnaires) are useful for the purpose of collecting data related to the research environment (i.e. participants' classrooms and schools) and for the initial gauging of knowledge and experiences of the research participants. Qualitative methods (i.e. interviews and focus groups) are useful for the purpose of collecting data that builds off of the baseline information gained from the questionnaire, in order to provide more context, depth, and explanation. Qualitative methods also provide the opportunity for participants to learn from one another during the course of the study.

As stated previously, pragmatists often view research through a social justice lens — as is the case in this particular study. Thus, the study is also grounded in a transformative worldview that holds that research needs to inform an action agenda in order to combat social oppression (Mertens, 2010; Creswell, 2018). Research conducted with a transformative worldview often centers around important social issues such as empowerment and inequality. In addition, this type of research embodies a collaborative approach in which participants play an

active role in shaping and/or benefiting from the study. This study is grounded in a transformative worldview in that the research is being conducted with the purpose of catalyzing reform in the Namibian classroom setting. This study has been structured so that not only does the researcher learn from the participants, but the participants also learn through participation in the study. The hope is that participants will walk away from the study with a greater understanding of CRP, and how best to implement CRP given their circumstances.

Taking into consideration the study's transformative worldview, a humanized approach to research was utilized (Paris & Winn, 2014). A humanized approach emphasizes the importance of researcher-participant relationships that are built upon both dignity and care. These researcher-participant relationships are critical to ensure effective collaboration as outlined by the transformative worldview. A humanized approach has been utilized in order to gain the trust of participants and to aid in the establishment of a context where participants feel comfortable admitting shortcomings and disclosing information of a personal nature. In light of the research problem, the researcher felt a humanized approach was not only necessary from an ethical standpoint, but also from a validity standpoint in order to ensure the soundness of the research findings. This approach to research connects back to the concept of “ubuntu” — I am because we are.

Research Design

Research Sites and Entry into the Field

Research was conducted in the Kavango East region in northern Namibia. The Kavango East region is roughly equivalent in size to the U.S. state of Maryland, and at the time of the study during the Namibian 2021 academic year had roughly 170 schools that were registered with the Namibian Ministry of Education — most of which were government-operated, and some of which were private. Participants in the study were employed as permanent teachers at government-operated schools in both urban areas within, as well as rural areas surrounding, the

town of Rundu — the regional capital of Kavango East and second most populous area in Namibia.

Schools within and around Rundu were purposefully selected because the researcher had established relationships with teachers and school management in the general geographic area. As a former teacher within the town of Rundu, the researcher had built relationships of a professional nature that center around a mutual understanding of a shared profession and felt that this established trust would aid in the process of having frank conversations regarding difficult topics.

Table 1 Schools included in the study

School Pseudonym	Grade levels	Total learners	Location	Languages taught at school	Home Languages of learners	Number of participants
Southampton Combined School	1-9	2496	Town (Informal settlement)	English, Rukwangali	Rukwangali, Rumanyo, Nyemba	2
Nottingham Combined School	4-9	2540	Town (Informal settlement)	English, Rumanyo	Rukwangali, Rumanyo, Nyemba	1
Newcastle Combined School	0-11	926	Rural (Village)	English, Rukwangali	Rukwangali, Nyemba	1

Participants and Sampling Procedures

Participants in the study were four Grade 4-7 ESL teachers who teach in or around the town of Rundu in the Kavango East region of Namibia. All teachers were employed at government-operated schools, and are considered permanent employees by the Ministry of Education. All four teacher participants were Black Namibian, English second-language speakers who utilized English as their primary language of communication in the workplace. In addition, all participants identified culturally as being Kavango (i.e. they were living and working in their cultural homeland). With regards to the educational level of participants, all participants completed Bachelors of Education degrees at the same, public university in Namibia.

The researcher made initial contact with potential participants via WhatsApp. Potential participants were identified as Grade 4-7 ESL teachers in the Rundu area, with whom the researcher had previously established professional relationships and/or professional connections.

Table 2 Participants in the study

Participant Pseudonym	Age	Gender	Ethnic / Cultural group	Vernacular languages spoken	Level of Education	Years as teacher	Grade levels of ESL	Prior CRP experience
Mr. Derby	31	Male	Black Namibian - Kavango	Rukwangali Umbundu Nyemba Portuguese	Bachelor Degree	4	6th 7th	None
Mr. Leeds	29	Male	Black Namibian - Kavango	Nyemba Rukwangali	Bachelor Degree	5	5th 7th	None
Mr. Hull	26	Male	Black Namibian - Kavango	Rukwangali Nyemba Rumanyo	Bachelor Degree	4	5th 7th	None
Ms. Aston	29	Female	Black Namibian - Kavango	Nyemba Rukwangali	Bachelor Degree	4	4th	None

Methods for Data Collection

Prior to data collection, the research participants read a brief description of the study and its purpose, and then provided the researcher with both verbal and written consent. Data for the study was collected through the use of questionnaires, individual interviews, and a focus group. Retention of participants for the entirety of the study proved to be a challenge, due to the time constraints of participants and the 10 hour time difference between California (USA) and Namibia. Four participants completed the questionnaire, three participated in individual follow-up interviews, and two participated in the focus group discussion.

The questionnaire explored the participants' experiences as teachers, their basic

understanding of culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP), and their general experience in implementing CRP. Questionnaires were formatted as a Google Form, making it easy for the researcher to distribute and for participants to access via WhatsApp and/or email (see Appendix A). The questionnaire consisted of both multiple-choice and open-ended questions, with 9 questions pertaining to personal background, 8 pertaining to professional background, 8 pertaining to classroom experience, 4 pertaining to teaching experience, and 5 pertaining to experience in CRP implementation. Each multiple-choice question had an “other” answer option or request to “please elaborate below” in order to ensure that the participants’ responses were as close to the truth as possible. The use of Google Forms for the questionnaire allowed for quantitative data to be automatically collected in a Google Sheets spreadsheet. Quantitative data collected regarding topics such as years of teaching experience, number of professional development opportunities, class sizes, period length, and teaching methods and resources utilized helped establish a baseline of understanding as to what challenges Namibian teachers are facing in their classrooms which impact their ability to implement and utilize CRP.

Upon completion and submission of the questionnaire, each participant participated in an individual follow up interview (Appendix B). Fourteen open-ended interview questions were constructed for the individual interviews of participants. Individual interviews provided the opportunity for the researcher to further explore the participant’s understanding of CRP, utilization of CRP, and the use of students’ prior knowledge and experience in their own classroom settings. The interview also gave participants the chance to further elaborate upon their responses given during the questionnaire. The interview was a one-time meeting during which the researcher asked each participant the standard interview questions (Appendix B) and asked additional questions as needed for follow-up and/or clarification purposes. Some questions asked participants to elaborate regarding their responses on the initial questionnaire:

- *Have you made active attempts to use CRP in your classroom?*
- *Do you feel personally ready to implement CRP in your classroom?*

- *Do you feel professionally ready to implement CRP in your classroom?*

Other questions sought to identify additional methods and approaches that teachers utilize which may not have initially been thought of as CRP, but which fit the bill. For example:

- *What connections are made between home and ESL classes?*
- *In what ways have you involved learner's prior knowledge and experience in the classroom?*

These interview questions were developed to establish how widely known and utilized the practice of CRP is within the Namibian education system, and provided an insight into how Namibian ESL teachers perceive the role of CRP within their own classroom.

Pending completion of all individual interviews, a focus group discussion was arranged that included all participants. Prior to the focus group discussion, all participants received materials relevant to their discussion which focused on the implementation of CRP in diverse classroom settings. The focus group was moderated by the researcher and was guided by open-ended debrief questions (Appendix C) pertaining to three videos and an article regarding CRP — with the goal of participants gaining a deeper understanding of what CRP looks like in practice and gathering CRP implementation techniques.

The first of the three videos was a 3:25 minute long video that focused on representation of students in both literature and learning resources within the classroom environment. The second video was 4:32 minutes long and focused on the ways in which CRP specialists help teachers adapt to the ways in which students learn. The last video, which was 5:10 minutes long, focused on the various forms of knowledge possessed by English language learners. The article entitled "Culturally Responsive Teaching: What You Need to Know" gave practical suggestions for teachers seeking to implement CRT, and encouraged teachers to do four things specifically: identify student assets, create a supportive classroom environment, examine the curriculum, and continue their own learning (Breiseth et al., 2020).

Prior to conducting the focus group discussion, it was unclear what assets existed within

the participants' classrooms and how exactly they could be leveraged to assist in the implementation of CRP. Through the focus group, the teachers and researcher were able to collaborate to determine how teachers could leverage their existing assets to assist in the implementation of CRP within their classrooms.

Both the interviews and the focus group discussion were conducted via Zoom and WhatsApp and were audio-recorded with the participants' consent on the researcher's iPhone, which is password protected. Recordings of interviews and the focus group were listened to and transcribed via Otter.ai transcription software and stored on the researcher's password-protected account. Transcribed transcripts were read and verified for accuracy, and corrections were made in order to ensure accuracy. Interview transcripts were sent via email and/or WhatsApp to the participants, and they were given the opportunity to amend and/or clarify their responses from the interview in order to have the data collected accurately represent their views and experiences.

Data Analysis

Data was collected through the use of questionnaires, individual interviews, and a focus group. The use of Google Forms for the questionnaire allowed for quantitative data to be automatically compiled into a Google Sheets spreadsheet, from which bar charts and pie charts could be generated for close-ended (i.e. multiple choice) questions.

Qualitative data analysis occurred via the use of analytic memos, categorizing strategies (i.e. coding and concept mapping), and connecting strategies such as narrative analysis (Maxwell, 2013). Recordings of interviews and the focus group were listened to and transcribed via Otter.ai transcription software and stored on the researcher's password-protected account. Transcribed transcripts were read and verified for accuracy, and corrections were made in order to ensure accuracy. Interview transcripts were sent via email and/or WhatsApp to the participants in order to provide the opportunity to amend and/or clarify their responses in order to have the data collected accurately represent their views and experiences. Analytic memos

were taken by the researcher during the interviews and focus group, and a narrative analysis was written immediately after the conclusion of the interviews and focus group. Analytic memos captured the researcher's analytic thinking about the data, further facilitated such thinking, and provided a means by which the researcher could reflect on "goals, methods, theory, or...prior experiences and...relationships with participants" (Maxwell, 2013, p.105). Post-session narrative analysis documented the overall tone of the session, the environment in which the session took place, and the body language of the participant — all factors which were not captured by audio recordings. In addition, narrative analysis was utilized in an attempt to understand the data in context. This was achieved by identifying relationships among various elements that "[connected] statements and events within a context into a coherent whole" (Maxwell, 2013, p. 113).

The questionnaires and complete transcripts from the interviews and focus group were first open-coded to determine overarching themes and common ideas referred to as *codes*. Data collected from the initial questionnaire aided the researcher in identifying codes of likely importance. Expected codes were: lack of professional development opportunities, lack of prior exposure to CRP, lack of student-teacher connections, classroom overcrowding, and language barriers. Unexpected codes that were discovered included lack of student engagement, language barriers, lack of foundation of learners, and severe lack of resources.

After open-coding, a process of focused coding was driven by these initial ideas, during which transcripts were re-read in order to identify supporting details for further detailed coding. These codes were then further analyzed and connected to the ideas mentioned in the literature review.

Significant codes were identified and verified by peers outside of the study through a process of peer coding. Then, the process of peer concept mapping was utilized to create a concept map that established and visualized relationships between codes, and from which major themes were identified. These themes were then mapped to both the individual interview

responses as well as the focus group responses. The major themes were again discussed with peers outside of the study -further refining the overarching themes of the study.

Validity

The two main threats to validity for qualitative or mixed methods studies are researcher bias and reactivity (Maxwell, 2013, p. 124). As noted by Maxwell, it is impossible to eliminate subjectivity of the researcher. Rather, it is important to understand “how a *particular* researcher’s values and expectations may have influenced the conduct and conclusions of the study” by examining the researcher’s positionality and explaining possible biases (Maxwell, 2013, p. 124). The researcher who conducted this particular study is a Namibian native who was born, raised, and educated in the Kavango region of northern Namibia. Growing up in an informal settlement with no access to electricity, the schools he attended were often located multiple kilometers away. The schools themselves were overcrowded — his homeroom classes with an average of 50 learners, and oftentimes four learners to a single textbook. Teachers relied heavily on teacher-centered methodologies, and practices aligned with CRP were rarely, if at all, utilized. Despite these obstacles, the researcher managed to be the first in his family to complete beyond a Grade 10 education. After further pursuing his education at the university level and receiving a Bachelor of Education degree from the University of Namibia - at the Rundu Campus, the researcher was hired at a combined, government-operated school in the Rundu circuit. The researcher taught English as a Second Language to a culturally and linguistically diverse group of learners in Grades 4-6. The researcher faced many of the same challenges he faced as a learner — but just from the other side. After three years teaching, the researcher seized an opportunity to move to the United States in order to further pursue his studies. It was at this point that the researcher was introduced to the practice of culturally relevant pedagogy for the first time in his career. The researcher’s initial interest in the topic was spurred due to its relative novelty. Further investigation into the topic revealed the potential of

CRP to significantly improve learning outcomes for diverse groups of students in Namibia — which is what solidified the researcher's research topic.

The researcher was able to leverage his position within the Namibian education system in order to recruit teachers to participate in the study. Thus, all participants had established professional relationships and/or connections with the researcher prior to the study. These relationships — albeit professional — may have caused reactivity during the data collection process in that participant bias may have increased the prevalence of socially desirable responses that did not accurately reflect the participants' true opinions. In order to minimize the validity threats posed by the researcher-participant relationships, triangulation was employed (i.e. multiple forms of data were collected via questionnaire, interview, focus group) in order to ensure the validity of the information being collected (Maxwell, 2013, p. 128). Each multiple-choice question on the questionnaire had an “other” answer option or request to “please elaborate below” in order to ensure that the participants' responses were as close to the truth as possible. In addition, the use of open-ended questions in all forms of data collection encouraged participants to further elaborate regarding their knowledge and experiences - thus minimizing the ease at which participants could self-report inaccurate information. The use of open-ended questions was also utilized to minimize the indication of researcher bias. It is important to note that despite these validity threats, positive researcher-participant relationships allow for a deeper understanding of participants' experiences and foster an increased amount of trust being placed in the researcher — this, in turn, can lead to more accurate and valid findings (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

A questionnaire was utilized as an initial data collection method due to its ability to be completed while in the absence of the researcher and other participants — thus minimizing the effects of participant bias and reactivity. The strength of the questionnaire as self-paced also poses a problem in terms of ensuring participants complete it in a thoughtful and thorough manner in order to provide data that accurately reflects their knowledge and experience. To

combat this, the researcher programmed the Google Form questionnaire to timestamp the start and completion time. If the participant completed the questionnaire in under 30 minutes, the researcher asked the participant to take a second look in order to verify their responses and elaborate further if need be. Another risk posed by the questionnaire relates to the use of multiple-choice questions. Multiple choice questions are versatile, yield clean data that is easy to analyze, and make it simple for participants to participate. However, data is limited to the choices provided by the researcher — so if answer options are not comprehensive, then there is a great risk of bias to influence the results. In order to counteract this, an “other” answer option or request to “please elaborate below” was included on every multiple-choice question in order to ensure that the participants’ responses were as close to the truth as possible.

The focus group evoked other possible validity threats, such as non-participation — caused when one or a few participants dominate the conversation — and lack of variability — caused by participants being swayed to agree with the majority. In order to minimize these validity threats, the researcher served as the sole moderator in order to maintain consistency in question delivery, timing, emphasis, and reactivity potential. The researcher did not respond emotionally to participant responses during the course of the focus group in order to minimize the prevalence of participant bias and reactivity. In order to combat non-participation and lack of variability in the focus group, the researcher directed questions to specific participants in a round table format.

Quantitative data was collected through the use of a questionnaire at the beginning of the study and was analyzed and visualized through the use of charts. Qualitative data was collected through audio-recorded and transcribed interviews, and focus groups with teacher participants. During the data analysis process, both supportive and discrepant data was examined rigorously to “assess whether it [was] more plausible to retain or modify the conclusion, being aware of all the pressures to ignore data that [did] not fit [the researcher’s] conclusions” (Maxwell, 2013, p.127). Respondent validation was used to minimize the chance

of misinterpretation of collected data and to verify reached conclusions (Maxwell, 2013).

Triangulation through the use of a variety of methods “[reduced] the risk of chance associations and of systematic biases” because the researcher was able to identify emergent themes over the span of several sources (Maxwell, 2013, p.128). Through the use of such processes, the threats posed to validity by researcher bias and reactivity were adequately recognized, addressed, and minimized.

Chapter 4: Research Findings

CRP is an approach to teaching and learning that has been around since the 1990's. Research has repeatedly shown that CRP is an especially beneficial approach in diverse educational settings, such as ones found in Namibian classrooms. Despite this, not a single Namibian ESL teacher who participated in this study had heard of CRP prior to their involvement. This was an especially shocking discovery, considering the implications that this approach could have in the diverse context of Namibian education. Given this lack of knowledge and exposure, it came as a bit of a surprise that the Namibian English Second Language syllabus for the Senior Primary phase (Grades 4-7) contains language directly related to some of the founding principles of CRP, as seen through this excerpt:

The aim is to develop learning with understanding, and the knowledge, skills and attitudes to contribute to the development of society. The starting point for teaching and learning is the fact that the learner brings to the school a wealth of knowledge and social experience gained continually from the family, the community, and through interaction with the environment. Learning in school must involve, build on, extend and challenge the learner's prior knowledge and experience (NIED, 2015, p. 4)

In the findings presented below, I explore why government teachers, whose entire teaching experience centers around the syllabus distributed by the Namibian Ministry of Education, a syllabus that makes specific reference to principles of CRP, are completely unaware of CRP as a pedagogical approach.

In what follows below, I describe the three main themes that emerged through data analysis. First, I discuss teachers' minimal knowledge of CRP, and suggest this lack of awareness stems from two sources — a lack of exposure to CRP during both teaching preparation programs and professional development opportunities, as well as from a lack of initiative on the part of teachers to independently seek out information that might supplement or improve their methodologies. This lack of prior exposure to and experience with CRP is one of

the major impediments to the implementation of CRP within Namibian classrooms. In the second theme explored below, I discuss challenges that either shape or restrict teachers' approaches to teaching, such as the academic level(s) of their learners, the motivation and engagement exhibited by their learners, lack of resources, overcrowding in classrooms, and other external factors such as the at-home situations of learners. Finally, I discuss the central finding that many of these challenges faced by teachers could be mitigated by the leveraging of assets possessed by learners, teachers, and the community at large. In a similar way, these assets could also be leveraged to support the development of CRP in Namibia.

Teachers' Perception of CRP

Although Namibian ESL teachers participating in the study had utilized some strategies associated with CRP, teachers' understanding of the role of CRP as a pedagogical approach to teaching and learning was virtually non-existent. Research participants exhibited a lack of understanding and/or misunderstanding of CRP because they have never been exposed to it in theory or in practice. In spite of this, participants were motivated to learn more about CRP due to the potential positive outcomes that can arise through successful implementation.

Lack of Exposure to CRP: "I have no idea what it's all about"

One reason why participants had a lack of understanding surrounding CRP is because their university-level teaching programs failed to address and/or emphasize it as a viable teaching approach. Not a single participant could recall learning about CRP during their teacher preparation programs:

Did you learn about culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP) during your teacher education or teacher preparation program?

4 responses

Figure 1 A pie chart depicting the lack of CRP training during university-level teacher preparation programs

It is important to note that all participants obtained Bachelors of Education degrees within the last 6 years from the same well-established, Namibian university. This is important because of the fact that CRP has been a widely accepted and practiced approach since the 1990s. This begs the question as to why teacher preparation programs are failing to emphasize such approaches that could be of tremendous benefit to teachers and learners alike.

Another factor that contributes to teachers' lack of knowledge surrounding CRP is the apparent lack of individual initiative to further develop their teaching approaches. Half of participants in the study had not participated in even a single professional development opportunity within the last five years. Though it is sometimes the case that school management selects which teachers attend workshops and professional development opportunities offered at the circuit or regional level, this lack of participation at professional development opportunities could also suggest a lack of individual initiative to develop approaches and strategies. This was reflected in the way that some participants seemed to share a belief that initiatives such as CRP implementation needed to be mandated or taught by the government. As put by Mr. Hull, "I think the reason for me not using [CRP] was the lack of knowledge and skills to implement it in

my classroom due to the fact that it's not something that is common in our government schools here.”

However, even for those participants who did attend professional development sessions, CRP had never been a topic of discussion. Both participants who attended one or more professional development opportunities had never learned about CRP. As it so happens, some participants explained that participation in this study was, in a way, a type of professional development opportunity for them. For example, Mr. Hull further reflected that participants were “only being made aware of CRP now that we are growing under this study”.

Misunderstandings of CRP: “I’m a little bit confused right now”

Despite never being exposed to CRP prior to participation in the study, it became apparent after the completion of the questionnaire that participants did a bit of digging on the subject. For example, every participant confessed during the questionnaire that they had never heard of CRP, but Mr. Leeds was able to provide a technical definition for CRP and Mr. Derby made multiple references to learners as not being “empty vessels” in the follow-up interview (a frequently discussed concept in articles and videos regarding CRP). Throughout the course of follow-up interviews, it became clear that there were some misunderstandings of what exactly CRP entails. Interviewees were asked to share their understanding of what CRP was, and many responses overemphasized the utilization and incorporation of learners’ cultures (e.g. tribal traditions, cultural wear, etc). For instance, when asked to give an example of a strategy a teacher could use when implementing CRP, Mr. Leeds responded:

For example, you might be covering speaking for the day, and then you can ask them, like, “Let’s talk about our cultures.... What do we wear? What do we eat?” So through the teaching, you are helping them and are able to point out things like, “In our culture we wear beads, and shorts, or skirts”

While it is true that CRP should take into account and incorporate the culture of learners, it does not mean that the focus should merely be on the material aspects of culture such as clothing

and food. Interviewees did not seem to understand how they might build off of the cultural norms, structures, and tendencies of learners to help aid their approach to teaching and learning.

Another misunderstanding that became apparent was the association of prior knowledge as purely academic. Some interviewees seemed to think that engaging a student's prior knowledge meant reminding them of what they had been taught about the topic already. When asked about the ways in which they have built upon or challenged learners' prior knowledge and experiences, Mr. Hull described how he "[asks] a lot of questions... regarding what they know before I tell them what they need to know or what I have prepared for them..... [because] I know that this was supposed to be taught in a previous grade or the previous grades."

A last misunderstanding among participants surrounded the pedagogical aspect of CRP. Through the various interviews conducted with participants, it became clear that CRP was being thought of as the occasional use of a certain lesson type or specific content, as opposed to an overarching approach used to guide the practice of teaching. For example, when asked if he had made active attempts to implement CRP in his classroom, Mr. Leeds responded by saying:

Yes - I might have. But I might not have known that it was culturally relevant, because this is all new to me. So I might have used it indirectly without me knowing that this is what I'm doing. I will say I have used it.

The claim that he has used CRP, while admittedly not knowing "that this is what [he was] doing" suggests that the pedagogical aspect of CRP is misunderstood.

Motivation to Learn and Implement CRP: "These are things that we do not know of, that we need"

Despite participants' prior lack of exposure to CRP, they were motivated to learn more about the approach and about best practices in implementation. This was especially true when the benefits of successful CRP implementation were considered. In relation to CRP, Mr. Leeds

professed that “These are things that we do not know of, that we need, and things that will help us to make the right decisions in planning.”

More Engaged Learners. Throughout the course of the interviews, many participants described instances of learners being disengaged and unmotivated in the classroom setting. For example, Mr. Hull described giving learners “the platform to ask questions or to get involved, [but] these are the same people that are just quiet. I don't know if it's because they don't want to get involved or just something else.” Disengagement of learners was attributed to a variety of factors including —but not limited to —language barriers, ineffective teaching strategies, and external factors such as learners’ living circumstances.

Better Academic Outcomes. Participants described being frustrated with the low pass rates of their learners. What was particularly discouraging for teachers is that these low pass rates continued to occur even after teachers gave it their best. As Mr. Hull put it — “...sometimes you are teaching a certain topic, communicating with them effectively. And then you feel like ‘Oh, today, I really did my best,’ but then the outcome that you're going to get is not as you expected after giving it your best.” Testimonials such as this suggest that current teaching approaches and strategies being utilized by participants are ineffective. Thus, teacher participants were motivated to learn more about CRP because —when implemented in the proper way— CRP can greatly improve academic outcomes among learners. CRP was described as having the potential to “help all of us — not only the teachers but also the learners ... it's something that will help them to improve and it will help them to love learning.”

Challenges that Impact Approaches to Teaching and Learning

Participants in the study revealed that the challenges they face in their day to day work greatly impact and/or restrict their approaches to teaching and learning. Some challenges faced by Namibian ESL teachers that have the potential to impede the implementation of CRP within classrooms included teachers’ prior exposure to and experience with CRP, the academic

level(s) of their learners, the motivation and engagement exhibited by their learners, lack of resources, overcrowding in classrooms, and other external factors.

Novelty of CRP: “It was my first time coming across it”

As revealed by Mr. Leeds, “In terms of culturally relevant pedagogy, it was my first time coming across it.....” This was a common revelation of participants that can be partly attributed to teacher preparation programs and professional development opportunities that fail to address and emphasize CRP. After watching a variety of videos regarding CRP in preparation for the focus group, Mr. Leeds observed:

Access to professional development and strategy development opportunities is really important. Teachers in [the] video were trained in how to handle learners from different backgrounds, from different cultures, and traditions. They were able to incorporate these strategies into their lessons and their approach to teaching.

This lack of knowledge regarding CRP is one of the most substantial challenges to the implementation of CRP within Namibian classrooms.

Lack of Academic Foundation: “English is not up to standard as it should be”

A chief complaint among participants in the study was that the foundation of learners in their classrooms was lacking. Ms. Aston disclosed that “The foundation of the learners is not satisfactory, so I have to start from square one” — this includes “teaching these learners how to write their names properly, sentence constructions and the basics which they were supposed to know in the previous grades”. Mr. Hull shared similar sentiments and stated that learners’ “English is not up to standard as it should be in the grade that they are.”

Some participants expressed feelings of helplessness — as they oftentimes find themselves backtracking and then attempting to cover two or more years of content within a single year in order to get their learners up to speed:

The problem is your lesson outcome will be based on the foundation of learners before they reach your grade. It makes your lesson difficult because it forces you to come and

teach the very basics before they begin to understand the lesson you are trying to teach them.

This idea of shared accountability when it comes to preparing learners for future grades was one that came up many times throughout the course of the study. According to participants, “shared accountability” in this specific context meant being able to rely upon teachers in earlier grades to establish a good foundation for learning. Teachers seemed to equate this with learners being able to meet the basic competencies as outlined by syllabi in previous grades.

Catering to Different Learning Levels: “You find both fast and slow learners”

In addition to proper foundations not being laid, participants described the difficulties of having to cater to learners across a wide range of learning levels. In the words of Mr. Derby, “The understanding and the level of the learners [within a classroom] is very different. So you find both fast and slow learners. And you find those that are just far, far below”. Mr. Hull described the difficulties he has faced in engaging “slow” learners that are “most affected” because “the most active people are the ones that are fast in learning and catching onto things. While the slow learners are mostly just quiet.”

Problems Motivating and Engaging Learners: “I don’t know if it’s because they don’t want to get involved, or just something else”

During interviews, participants frequently referred to times in their teaching when learners were not engaged or participating in lessons. For example, they described times when they as teachers “are trying to teach something, [but] then everyone is looking at you” or times when “learners would want to skip the topic.” Participants cited various reasons as to why this may be the case, such as language barriers and a lack of effective teaching strategies.

Language as a Barrier. Multiple participants cited the lack of English language skills among their learners as a major challenge for them. Participants generally viewed the use of home languages by learners as a barrier to learning in their ESL classrooms, and tended to try

and avoid code-switching at all costs. For example, Mr. Hull described his greatest challenge in teaching as:

...having to teach English with learners who put less effort into learning the language to be fluent and use the language effectively. Most learners have the "English is difficult" mentality and thus they don't use English for long or they code-switch to their home languages a lot even during English lessons. There has never been a day where I had an English class and everyone spoke English for the whole period. Most if not all will switch to their home languages.

Mr. Hull further described the lengths he has gone to in order to try to get his "learners to speak English at all times" and to discourage them from speaking their home languages during ESL classes: "We tried to say okay if you speak any other language in my subject, you are going to pay \$1 or if you are going to speak a different language in my class, you are going to sit down or kneel down." While a few participants described occasionally utilizing code-switching when they introduced a topic, no participant regularly employed code-switching as a strategy that could allow them to break down the language barriers in their classrooms by explaining difficult concepts in the learners' native languages..

Ineffective Teaching Strategies. An especially revealing question from the initial questionnaire completed by participants was "What teaching and learning strategies do you commonly utilize?" Participants were provided with a list of 38 different strategies that they could select from, plus were given the option to write in answers as well. The most utilized strategies included: having learners copy notes from the board, close-ended questioning, open-ended questioning, and teacher reading aloud. Most striking, however, was the number of strategies that were not utilized by participants at all. This includes learners discovering or exploring information for themselves, tiered assignments, pause procedures, presentations, project-based learning, games, songs, and field trips. Most of the strategies that were seldom-used by participants are commonly used by teachers utilizing a CRP approach in their classroom.

Table 3 Teaching and learning strategies most commonly utilized by participants in the study

Commonly Utilized Teaching and Learning Strategies by....				
75% of Participants	50% of Participants	25% of Participants	No Participants	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy notes from board • Close-ended questioning • Open-ended questioning • Teacher reads aloud 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual activities • Give learners notes • Summative assessments • Individual punishments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group activities • Whole class activities • Re-telling • Enrichment teaching • Formative assessment • Reciprocal questioning • Choral reading • Use of visual media 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pair activities • Silent activities • Lecture • Information discovery • Memorization • Tiered assignments • Peer teaching/learning • Pause procedure • Individual presentations • Group presentations • Popcorn reading 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fixed seating • Flexible seating • Project-based learning • Learning stations • Personalized learning • Use of games • Service learning • Field trips • Use of written media • Use of song • Whole class punishment

Mr. Leeds alluded to the ineffectiveness of some of his utilized teaching strategies, stating that...

One day, you may have a strategy that you use and as a teacher you might think, 'This strategy is the one that will work for me.' But then, the challenge is that learners may not understand what you are teaching them and through assessment, you will see that the failure rate is rising and you do not know where you went wrong. So, that affects your teaching strategies because you feel you are never able to make improvements.

Mr. Leeds' comments allude to a perpetual, back and forth cycle of demotivation between teachers and learners. Teachers use ineffective teaching strategies that fail to motivate and engage students. Students, in turn, do not achieve academically in the ways that they could be. Teachers become disheartened and unmotivated, and then are less likely to devote time to improving their strategies, as they feel it is a hopeless endeavor. And then the cycle continues. Plainly put, teachers "need new strategies that will help [them] to work well with [their] learners" and break this cycle.

External Factors. In addition to language barriers and ineffective teaching strategies impacting the engagement of learners, additional external factors are at play. Mr. Hull described the challenge of sustaining engagement and academic outcomes of his learners, and hypothesized that learners “might have some problems at home because these are not the same people all the time. You will find out thatOkay, today the person did very well. But come tomorrow, that person doesn't seem to be in the mood and the person seems to be down and all these things.”

Lack of Resources: “There are no resources for the both of us”

A major challenge faced by participants was a lack of resources to support their teaching. As put by Mr. Leeds, “there are no resources for the both of us, teacher and learners, to use.” This was exemplified by the fact that not a single participant in the study taught a class in which every learner had a book. This lack of resources is undoubtedly tied to the types of teaching and learning strategies that teachers commonly utilize. For example, copying from the board becomes a necessity when learners are unable to look up and synthesize information from other resources such as textbooks.

Lack of resources also directly impacts the ability of teachers to expand their strategies and approaches. It was further noted by Mr. Leeds that “for us to implement CRP as a school, we might also have to search for more resources. We also need training for how we are going to implement CRP, taking into consideration the resources that we have.”

Extreme Overcrowding in Classrooms: “Teacher to learners ratio is not a good one”

When asked to identify the greatest challenges they face as a teacher, half of participants mentioned classroom overcrowding. Among participants in the study, the average number of learners reported in an average ESL classroom was 48 —with some participants reporting that they have more than 70 learners in a single classroom.

Restricted Movement. Overcrowding in classrooms poses many challenges for teachers, one of which is restricted movement by both the teacher and the learners. Mr. Leeds,

who has 80 learners in a single ESL classroom, revealed that learners are forced to share tables and chairs. Mr. Leeds further explained that “The classroom is too small to move around in, as it was built to accommodate a maximum of 40 learners. I am unable to move around because there are too many people in the class.” Mr. Hull shared similar experiences regarding his classrooms of 60 ESL learners. The implications of restricted movement in classrooms are far reaching — teachers are restricted to the area in front of the chalkboard and are unable to move around the classroom to monitor the work of their learners, whereas learners are unable to move freely to participate in activities, group work, and other such activities.

Workload Management. In addition to restricted movement in the physical realm of the classroom, managing the workload associated with overcrowded classes puts an incredible amount of pressure and stress on teachers. For Mr. Leeds who described a classroom environment with a learner to teacher ratio that is 80 to 1, he described how “This slows down my work...For example, marking essays takes two weeks” leaving the teacher “not enough time to prepare for the following day.”

Inability to Connect with Learners. Another consequence of overcrowded classrooms is the difficulty teachers face in getting to know their learners. A point that came up in the focus group discussion was how Namibian teachers frequently refer to their learners in classes by calling out “Hey, you!” or “Ove, you!” While participants agreed that “it’s always more valuable to call a learner by his or her name” because “It makes them feel more accepted and involved because the teacher knows them,” the reality of classrooms in Namibia may pose challenges in teachers doing so. As previously mentioned, overcrowded classrooms restrict the movement of teachers and learners — making it more difficult to make connections during the class period. A less intimate learning setting would then reasonably lead to less intimate relationships between the teacher and learners. This challenge was articulated by Ms. Aston, who described the challenge of “having a lot of learners in one class which makes it difficult for me to give attention to individual learners.”

Assets to Assist in CRP Implementation

Despite the many challenges identified by the teachers, through the collective effort of a focus group discussion, participants were able to identify existing assets that could be leveraged to assist in the implementation of CRP within their classrooms. Participants in the study identified that they all have a strong teaching background and possess the ability to communicate with their learners in their vernacular languages. Other external assets that were identified included resources at the school grounds, family members of learners, and the existing infrastructure and members of their local communities.

Teaching Backgrounds: “Knowledge on how to teach”

All participants in the study attended the same four-year university that has a well-established Bachelor of Education program. Mr. Leeds identified that “As an educator, I have pedagogical knowledge — knowledge on how to teach.” So although participants may not have learned about CRP during the course of their teacher preparation program, they do possess knowledge of different pedagogical approaches. In addition to being taught theory during the course of their studies, all participants gained practical experience through observation, mentorship, and student-teaching that was mandatory during each year of their four-year program. This well-established teaching background that is both theoretical and practical in nature can be used to further support the adoption and implementation of new approaches such as CRP.

Non-English Language Skills: “You can break down language barriers”

As previously mentioned, participants expressed in the initial stages of the study that they strongly discouraged learners from using their vernacular languages during ESL class, and generally viewed the use of vernacular languages as a barrier to learning English. But during the culminating focus group discussion, it was clear that participants had begun to shift their thinking regarding the use of vernacular languages in ESL classrooms. When asked to identify assets possessed by learners, Mr. Leeds explained that “many English learners are coming

from different backgrounds, they speak different languages....So they have speaking skills in another language.... And knowledge of vocabulary.” In response, the researcher gave an example of how code-switching could be utilized as a technique through which language barriers can be broken down:

I like that you brought up that ELLs have language skills. If we as teachers can act on that, it would really give [learners] an advantage. For example, if you see a learner is struggling with an assignment, you could first ask them to respond and write in their home language, and then assist them in translating it to English. Through adding this extra step and encouraging the learner to code-switch, you can break down language barriers.

This shift in thinking is especially substantial for this group of participants because they themselves possess so many skills in this area. All participants spoke languages commonly found in the surrounding areas in which they teach (e.g. Rukwangali, Nyemba...), and all participants were either trilingual or quadrilingual.

School Assets: “Resources can be books, teachers”

Throughout the course of the focus group discussion, participants regarded school resources as assets — for example, “resources can be books, teachers.” The researcher helped in further developing this idea by focusing on ways in which these resources can be utilized by teachers:

So the library has some books, so learners and teachers have access to that. And we also have computers for learners to be able to research different topics, cultures, and all that. And most of all, our schools have WiFi — which is very helpful for teachers to research new strategies.”

Participants agreed that these aspects of their schools were assets that sometimes went under-utilized or not utilized whatsoever.

Family Members: “Family members of students can definitely be assets”

Mr. Leeds suggested that parents and family members could be used as assets through continued engagement by teachers: “so like when you give students homework, family members can help to guide them and get them started.” And of course, support from family members can take many different forms depending on the circumstances. For example, some parents might be most involved in respect to supervising the completion of their child’s work, whereas other parents might be most involved through the provision/donation of materials, participation at class or school events, or through providing moral support to the teacher.

Engaging Community Infrastructure and Members: “They learn more through interacting and through trips”

Another point that came up in focus group discussions was the idea of engaging with and taking advantage of existing resources in the surrounding community. As put by Mr. Leeds:

[By] having learners go out into the community, you are involving learners in their own learning and they are also getting first hand information. So it's a good asset to consider.

They learn more through interacting and through trips. It will also increase their curiosity about their cultures [and] their heritage...

For example, teachers could utilize the existing infrastructure (e.g. established institutions such as clinics, police stations, and local offices) or engage with community members (e.g. nurses, headwomen/men, etc) for further learning and engagement opportunities. The close proximity of many schools to nature and open spaces also was also discussed, in that teachers can leave the confines of crowded classrooms and engage with their students more in the outdoors.

Conclusion

In consideration of the initial research questions that shaped the study, the findings strongly support several main conclusions. First, in answer to the research question, “How do Namibian ESL teachers perceive the role of CRP within their own classrooms? “, the findings indicate that Namibian ESL teachers do not perceive CRP as having an established role within

their own classrooms, due in part to a lack of exposure and a lack of initiative on the part of teachers. Although some strategies associated with CRP have been utilized before, CRP has not been adopted as a pedagogical approach to teaching and learning.

In response to the second research question, “How do teachers’ experiences affect the implementation of CRP within their own classrooms?”, the research indicates that participants face a multitude of challenges that either influenced or restricted their teaching approaches. For example, poor academic outcomes in the classroom are demotivating for teachers who try to adapt and develop their approaches. These poor outcomes are driven by learners’ lack of foundation and language barriers, as well as their lack of engagement and motivation in the classroom. In addition, environmental factors such as classroom overcrowding and lack of resources restrict teachers in the type of approaches they can realistically utilize.

In regards to the final research question, “How can teachers leverage existing assets to assist in the implementation of CRP within their classrooms?”, the findings indicate that when given the opportunity for reflection, teachers were able to identify assets within themselves, their schools, and their communities that they could leverage to begin to implement CRP. Moreover, teachers were genuinely interested in learning about CRP and motivated to continue to explore CRP within a community of learners. Participants identified that they could leverage their teaching backgrounds to help support their adoption of different teaching approaches, and their multilingualism to help breakdown language barriers within their ESL classrooms. In addition, participants suggested that increased engagement with stakeholders such as the school, the learners’ family members, and community members in the surrounding community could assist in the implementation of CRP.

Whereas many of the findings of the study were supported by previously conducted research mentioned in the literature review, there were a few findings that were not anticipated. These findings will be further elaborated upon in the next chapter, where new insights will be discussed and the implications for educational policies and practices will be explored.

Chapter 5: Discussion

This study showed consistencies with several major themes covered in the literature review, such as the impacts of classroom overcrowding on teaching and the lack of professional readiness of teachers in regards to implementing CRP (Fehrler et al., 2009; Imtiaz, 2014; Jones, 2016; Kiggundu & Naymuli, 2009; Marais, 2016; Mustafa et al., 2014; Opoku-Asare et al., 2014; Sosibo & Nomlomo, 2014; Karatas & Oral, 2015; Paksoy, 2019; Zorba, 2020) . It should be noted that both of these points focus on deficits in people (whether they are teachers, children, administrators or policymakers), the schools, or the community. However, new insights gained from the study suggest that previously unidentified and under-utilized assets can be leveraged in order to mitigate these challenges and support the development of CRP.

One of the consistencies between the research and the literature review is the impact that classroom overcrowding has on the implementation of CRP. The research supported the notion that classroom overcrowding negatively impacts teaching and learning in a multitude of ways. For example, the research confirmed the findings of Opoku-Asare et al. (2014) in that classroom overcrowding restricts teachers to teacher-centered methods because of a dire lack of space. More specifically, this study affirmed that teachers in extremely crowded classrooms are restricted to the space in front of the chalkboard and are unable to move around the classroom to employ other methods of teaching and learning. Likewise, students are unable to get up and move around for activities or to participate in group work. The findings of multiple other studies were affirmed in that the inability of teachers to move around their classroom “makes it difficult for [teachers] to give attention to individual learners” and leads to a lack of meaningful connections between teachers and learners (Imtiaz, 2014; Kiggundu & Nayimuli, 2009; Sosibo & Nomlomo, 2014).

In addition to the challenges related to the physical restrictions of overcrowded classrooms, other themes related to classroom overcrowding included teacher reluctance and lack of resources. The findings of the research reaffirmed the findings of Mullick et al. (2013) in

that overwhelming teacher workload leads to the reluctance of teachers to employ new strategies. The workload associated with overcrowded classrooms leaves little time for teachers to self-reflect and focus on improving their strategies. A Namibian study conducted by Biraimah (2016) suggested providing culturally diverse curriculum content and resources that are relevant “to the lives of students coming from homes without electricity or other urban creature comforts” and that do not promote stereotypes” (Biraimah, 2016, p. 57). While representation may be an issue, the findings of this study suggested that a general lack of resources was also a huge challenge. Classroom overcrowding has led to learners being forced to share books and other resources. This in turn restricts the approaches that teachers can utilize both in and outside of the classroom since resources are not accessible to each and every student.

Another theme consistent with the literature review was that lack of professional readiness of teachers is a barrier to the implementation of CRP. Similar to the findings of Zorba (2020), the findings of this study suggested that university teacher preparation programs in Namibia failed to expose teachers to CRP or prepare them to implement CRP. Although teacher preparation programs may have exposed students to concepts such as inclusive and/or multicultural education, there was little exposure to the strategies and approaches needed to realize these theoretical approaches in a classroom setting. For example, not a single teacher in the study utilized project-based learning, personalized learning, information discovery, tiered assignments, games, service learning or field trips in order to help support their students. In addition, the findings of Mullick et al. (2013) and Zorba (2020) corresponded with the experiences of Namibian teachers in that teachers were not provided with adequate opportunities to develop practical strategies necessary for CRP.

Implications for the Literature

In addition to the anticipated challenges for CRP implementation that were reaffirmed by the study, the research findings provide new insights about how the challenges faced by

Namibian ESL teachers could be mitigated through the use of existing individual and community assets. For example, the study revealed that ESL teachers were not utilizing — and instead were actively avoiding — their multilingual skills. Similarly, schools and communities possess a vast wealth of resources that were not being engaged with or utilized. Instead of placing a focus on deficits such as the lack of classroom space, resources, or professional development opportunities, teachers and policymakers must also begin to consider how to best leverage existing assets. A 2006 paper by Weiner describes how when working from a deficit perspective, the emergent practices and assumptions tend to downplay the abilities of students and teachers (Weiner, 2006). As put by Weiner, “We can make powerful changes when we break through the pervasive influence of the deficit paradigm and recognize the untapped strengths of students and teachers” (2006, p.70).

Implications for Practice

Based on research from the literature review as well as the findings of this project, there is a need for Namibian ESL teachers to reinvent their approaches to teaching and learning through the implementation of CRP. More specifically, Namibian ESL teachers should be encouraged to:

1. Utilize code-switching within their classroom
2. Take responsibility for developing their own teaching practices
3. Diversify and expand their current strategies
4. Create professional learning communities
5. Utilize existing school and community assets, and
6. Engage more with families of learners as well as community members.

First and foremost, Namibian ESL teachers should be encouraged to employ code-switching in their classrooms, as it is a tool that utilizes learner’s prior knowledge to enhance their understanding of the English language. In addition, code-switching is extremely powerful for establishing rapport and building relationships with ESL learners. All participants in this

particular study were, at minimum, trilingual, but rarely utilized languages other than English in the classroom setting. Many participants described actively avoiding and discouraging the use of vernacular languages in their classrooms. However, multiple studies have proven that code-switching can improve learners' academic outcomes in bilingual/multilingual settings. For example, a Namibian study regarding code-switching found that Grade 10 teachers in the Caprivi area of Namibia relied heavily on code-switching to improve the learning outcomes and overall understanding of their learners (Simasiku et al., 2015). Thus, teachers should begin to change the way they think about the usage of other languages in ESL classroom settings.

In addition, Namibian ESL teachers should be encouraged to actively seek out professional development opportunities in order to be able to diversify and strengthen their approaches to teaching. It became evident during the course of the study that teachers believed it was the responsibility of the Ministry of Education to offer opportunities for professional development. As put by Mr. Hull, "I think the reason for me not using [CRP] was the lack of knowledge and skills to implement it in my classroom due to the fact that it's not something that is common in our government schools here." This type of blame-shifting fails to recognize that teachers need to take responsibility for what is taking place in their classrooms and that the implementation of CRP could have been a self-choice. Teachers need to take responsibility for developing their own teaching practices by seeking out professional development opportunities themselves — whether it be workshops offered by the Ministry of Education, creating professional learning communities, watching YouTube videos, attending lectures, or pursuing other opportunities for continued learning.

It is important to add that despite the constraints posed by classroom overcrowding, there are a multitude of teaching and learning strategies that could be used more often by Namibian ESL teachers. A majority of the participants described their most commonly utilized strategies as having learners copy notes from the chalkboard, questioning learners (close and open-ended), and reading aloud to their learners. However, strategies such as group activities,

use of visual media, project-based learning, personalized learning, information discovery, tiered assignments, games, service learning, or field trips were rarely (if ever) utilized. Namibian ESL teachers should look to build upon their existing teaching background and knowledge of pedagogical approaches in order to diversify and expand their use of strategies in their classrooms. In doing so, they will be able to better support their learners and aid in the implementation of CRP.

In order to support the expansion of current strategies and in consideration of the lack of CRP training during professional development opportunities attended by participants, Namibian teachers might consider creating professional learning communities. These professional learning communities could be formed at a school or circuit level and would consist of teachers who are trying to implement CRP. Members of these learning communities would be able to share best practices, pool collective knowledge, and assist each other in overcoming challenges faced within their teaching professions.

In addition to involvement in supportive learning environments, access to proper resources is essential for the diversification and expansion of currently utilized teaching strategies. Although the lack of class sets of textbooks and chapter books was a concern for ESL teachers in the study, participants in the focus group conceded that some school resources were underutilized for the practice of teaching. For example, all participants had access to WiFi at their school campuses — an asset that can be utilized within ESL classrooms to support learners, as well as by teachers to aid in developing their teaching approaches. In addition, most campuses have some sort of small library or school book supply. So, although teachers may not have class sets of books, books could be utilized for the purpose of silent reading or book report assignments. Additionally, teachers and school management are encouraged to rely more extensively upon non-text resources (e.g. projectors, printers for the purpose of printing short stories). In this way, teachers will be able to provide learning aids while ensuring accessibility to all learners.

Namibian ESL teachers are encouraged to engage more with the parents of their learners. Research has shown that positive parental involvement has numerous benefits, such as increased academic achievement of children (including classmates at school), better classroom behavior, and improved teacher morale (National Coalition for Parent Involvement in Education, 2006; PTA, 2000; Henderson & Berla, 1995; El Nokali et al., 2010; Henderson & Mapp, 2002). Despite this, parents of learners are rarely engaged with schools outside of disciplinary and school board meetings. Thus, it is recommended that at the beginning of the year, the teacher invites parents for a class meeting during which discussions surrounding parent involvement can occur. The teacher can ask parents how they would like to be involved - whether it be through supervision during after-school study, provision of needed materials (e.g. class sets of poster paper, pens, pencils), supervision during class field trips, etc. A simple way for increasing engagement of parents is to create parent WhatsApp groups through which teachers can inform parents about homework assignments, upcoming deadlines for work, and provide additional materials and information that parents can use to support their children's learning. A more extensive way in which schools can increase parental engagement would be through the hosting of parent training workshops. Topics for workshops may vary depending on the specific needs of learners, but would aim to teach families about child development and provide ways in which they can support their child's academic learning. Potential topics might include how to provide support for math and reading at home, or ways in which parents can help their children study (e.g. flash cards, summaries, memory games).

Funds of knowledge within Namibian communities should be utilized by Namibian teachers to help support learning and CRP implementation. For example, the schools of participants were all located in close proximity to establishments such as police stations, clinics, and various governmental offices. These institutions, and their employees, should be considered assets through which learning can take place. For example, an English teacher might decide to take a class field trip to a particular establishment in the local community.

Learners could brainstorm interview questions prior to the field trip, and then would be provided with the opportunity to utilize their communication skills as well as gather knowledge regarding local resources. They could then synthesize this information to write a short report about their findings. Another idea might be to invite community members from different professions or careers to speak in the class. Engagement with community members and resources can take many different forms, but the first step is the recognition of them as assets in the first place.

And lastly but perhaps most importantly, the interest in CRP, motivation for self-improvement, and love of learning shown by participants in the study is a significant asset. Probably more than any other factor, individual desire will be the driving force that motivates teachers to make these proposed changes. Teachers, no matter how different, share a belief that education is of utmost importance. This belief is what I believe has opened participants' hearts and minds to the prospect of participating in the study and becoming more educated themselves.

Implications for Policy

In addition to changes in practice, systematic policies to support both learners and teachers must be implemented, especially in schools and circuits that have historically low academic outcomes among populations of learners. More specifically, schools and circuits should see to it that:

1. Learners are held to higher standards and provided additional means of support
2. Teachers are provided opportunities to increase their professional readiness to implement new approaches and strategies
3. Overcrowding in schools is reduced and prevented, and
4. Resource acquisition is prioritized

According to Namibian ESL teachers in the study, one of the greatest challenges faced in teaching is the lack of foundational knowledge of learners in their classrooms. It can be theorized that the foundational levels of learners in Namibian ESL classrooms are directly tied to

the passing and promotional policies enacted at the institutional level by the Ministry of Education, in combination with the current structures of support offered to them. For example, "passing" a subject in Namibia means achieving a grade of 40% (Republic of Namibia, 2015), and if a learner fails a grade twice, they are automatically promoted to the next grade (NIED, 2015; New Era Live, 2018). It should be noted that, oftentimes, there is no intervention or additional structured support given to learners who fail a grade the first time — thus it is not surprising when they fail a second time and are automatically promoted. These policies make it especially difficult for teachers because learners become less motivated to strive for excellence and may develop “learned helplessness.” One of the pillars of CRP is holding learners to high standards. Thus, I encourage individual schools as well as the Ministry of Education to reconsider their current passing and promotional policies, in addition to providing learners with the additional support to be able to achieve such standards. Additional support may come in the form of well-thought-out and implemented individual education plans (IEPs), required study sessions for students who have not met academic standards, or additional training for teachers in approaches such as CRP that can improve academic outcomes among learners of diverse backgrounds.

As outlined in the previous section “Implications for Practice,” teachers need to adopt more effective strategies in order to better support their learners, yet schools, circuits, regional offices, and the Ministry of Education must help ensure they are able to do so. Schools should create a culture where professional development is encouraged. They can do so by, for example, developing professional learning communities among teachers. Circuits and regional offices should offer more opportunities for teachers from different schools to come together to share best practices and learn from one another. Also, circuits and regional offices should seek to offer non-subject based workshops that focus on overall approaches to teaching and learning. Teacher Resource Centers should be a place where teachers can go to improve their approach and seek out new strategies. TRCs should make it a point to maintain useful and up-

to-date resources for teachers. The Ministry of Education could create a culture of professional development by requiring teachers to participate in at least one professional development opportunity every year. For example, the MOE might require all teachers to participate in some sort of professional development opportunity (e.g. online module, lecture, workshop) in order to receive the annual salary increase obtained by teachers.

Another significant barrier to teaching as revealed by participants in the study is classroom overcrowding. School and classroom overcrowding is not a problem that is isolated to the Kavango, thus I urge the Ministry of Education to prioritize the building of more schools as this problem will only get worse the longer it fails to be addressed. In the meantime, schools should prioritize the expansion and/or addition of classrooms through the use of School Development Funds. In addition, schools should impose and enforce strict enrollment caps to ensure overcrowding does not occur. A model that some overcrowded schools have adopted is structuring their school week such that they have split days. For example, students in group A attend classes from 08:00 to 13:00, and students in group B attend classes from 14:00 to 19:00. In this way, class sizes are half of what they would be were they to rely on a traditional daily schedule. Lastly, teachers should also consider how they might utilize outdoor or alternative spaces for the purpose of teaching.

Finally, in addition to utilizing existing school assets, school management should prioritize resource acquisition in order to maintain class sets of books, as well as other valuable resources such as projectors. By maintaining class sets of textbooks and chapter books, teachers will be able to ensure that every learner has access to important learning aids. By implementing these strategies, schools can improve academic outcomes among diverse populations of learners and reduce the urban-rural divide.

Limitations of the Study

Several limitations to this study exist. Firstly, as with all research, the results of this particular study may not translate to other regions or populations. For example, the research

conducted involved teachers from government-operated schools only. Thus, the results of the study may not apply to private institutions within or outside of the same geographic area. In addition, these findings may be specific to the Rundu area of Kavango and may not apply to other areas in or outside of Namibia.

A second limitation is that participant perspectives may have been limited. For example, all participants in this particular study were Black Namibians who identified with the dominant, local cultural group in the areas in which they teach. This positionality may have led to reduced feelings of cultural and/or linguistic barriers between teachers and their learners — a point cited in Biraimah's 2016 study. In addition, the perspectives of participants were male-dominated due to the fact that the only female teacher was unable to participate beyond the initial questionnaire due to time restraints. Interestingly enough, all participants graduated from the same teaching program, so the experiences of these teachers surrounding their lack of knowledge of CRP may be limited to teachers who graduated from this specific program and may not apply to other Namibian ESL teachers.

A third limitation is the lack of retention of participants. There were four participants for the questionnaire, three for interviews, and two in the focus group. This lack of retention of participants could very well have altered the results of the study in ways the researcher cannot anticipate.

A final limitation is that the researcher has previously established professional relationships with all participants. This comfort level and rapport may have yielded different results than if the researcher was not affiliated with the participants in the study.

Further research exploring the lack of academic foundation among Namibian ESL learners would be useful to better understand how to implement CRP in the Namibian context. Teachers in the study described this as one of their greatest challenges, so it is important to understand the source of this lack of foundation (e.g. from policy, lack of accountability). Another area for future research would be to conduct a study into the benefits of code-switching

that involves both teachers and learners. Teachers and learners could be interviewed before and after the implementation of code-switching within the classroom in order to assess whether there are beneficial effects in relation to academic outcomes and/or learner motivation. Finally, further research is necessary to explore what happens when a group of engaged teachers collectively attempt to leverage personal and community assets to implement CRP in a Namibian school.

Conclusion

A couple of years ago, I could never have imagined that I would be in the United States pursuing my Masters Degree in Education. Looking back upon the past few years, it was not the move across the globe that changed my life's trajectory so much as learning about CRP. It was not until studying at Dominican University of California that I learned about CRP and realized the implications this approach could have on education in Namibia. In undertaking my research project, I hoped to share the benefits of CRP with other Namibian teachers such as myself. Fast forward to today, and I am culminating a year-long research project, the aim of which was to increase my understanding of complex problems going on at home in Namibia, and to uncover potential solutions.

The thing I learned through my research that struck me the most is the extent of the commitment of Namibian ESL teachers to their profession. Although they might not currently be attaining the types of results with their learners that they desire, their willingness to participate in my research and to learn from one another brings me hope that someday they will be able to attain those goals. I strongly believe that the implementation of CRP will be an essential part of attaining better results for all learners, as well as better equipping learners to be part of a diverse world.

Part of being an educator means a commitment to lifelong learning, adaptation, and evolution. Based on this understanding, I challenge Namibian educators to re-commit

themselves to their profession by learning more about and implementing CRP in their own classrooms. I know that for myself; I have already accepted the challenge.

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Appendix A: Questionnaire

PERSONAL BACKGROUND (9 Questions)

1. Full name
2. Country of birth
 - a. If in Namibia - which region?
3. Ethnic origin and/or racial identity (check all that apply):
 - a. Note: Choices are given as follows: "Afrikaaner", "Baster", "Black Namibian", "Black non-Namibian (other African)", "Coloured", "Other: _____"
4. Tribal and/or cultural identity (check all that apply)
 - a. Note: Choices are given as follows: "Caprivian", "Damara", "Herero", "Kavango", "Nama", "Ovahimba", "Ovambo", "San Bushmen", "Tswana", "White Namibian", "Other(s): _____")
5. Please list all other ethnic origin(s) and/or racial identities
6. Years (total) you have lived in Kavango Region
7. Age
8. Gender
 - a. Note: Choices are given as follows: "Female", "Male", "Other: _____"
9. Languages spoken
 - a. Note: Choices are given as follows: "First language: _____," "Second language: _____," "Third Language: _____," "Additional languages: _____")

PROFESSIONAL BACKGROUND (8 Questions)

1. Years of teaching experience
 - a. Note: Choices given are <1, 1,2.....30
2. Years of English Second Language teaching experience
 - a. Note: Choices given are <1, 1,2.....30
3. In what grade levels do you currently teach English as a Second Language? (check all that apply)
 - a. Note: Choices are given as follows: "4th," "5th," "6th," "7th"
4. What qualification(s) do you have? (select highest level earned)
 - a. Note: Choices are given as follows: "Masters Degree", "Bachelor Degree", "Diploma from a tertiary institution (e.g. UNAM, IUM..)", "NSSC Certificate", "Grade 12"
5. Did you learn about culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP) during your teacher education or teacher preparation program?
 - a. Note: Choices include: "No", "Yes", "Not sure"
6. How many professional development opportunities have you attended in the last five years? This includes workshops, training sessions, etc.
 - a. Note: Choices are given as follows: "None", "1", "2", "3", "4", "5", "6", "7", "8", "9", "10". "10+"
7. How many professional development opportunities have you had that address teaching approaches specifically?
 - a. Note: Choices are given as follows: "None", "1", "2", "3", "4", "5", "6", "7", "8", "9", "10". "10+"

8. Have you learned about culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP) during any professional development opportunities?
 - a. Note: Choices are given as follows: “No”, “Yes”, “Not sure”

CLASSROOM EXPERIENCE (8 Questions)

1. When I teach, I:
 - Note: Choices are given as follows: “have my own classroom”, “rotate classrooms”, “Other: _____”
2. How many learners are in an average English Second Language class that you teach?
 - Note: Choices given are “20-30”, “30-40”, “40-50”, “50-60”, “60-70”, “70-80”, “80+”, “Other: _____”
3. Do all students have their own chair and desk?
 - Note: Choices are given as follows: “Yes”, “No”
 - If no, please elaborate: _____
4. Is there space for you to be able to walk around the entire classroom with ease?
 - Note: Choices are given as follows: “Yes”, “No”
 - If no, please elaborate: _____
5. Do you teach a majority of single or double periods?
 - Note: Choices are given as follows: “Single”, “Double”, “Both”, “Other: _____”
6. What visual teaching/learning aids are present within the classroom(s)?
 - Note: Choices are given as follows: “Subject related posters”, “Charts”, “Educational infographics”, “Research Reports”, “Checklists”, “Diagrams”, “Dioramas”, “Class or school calendar”, “Photos”, “Other: _____”
7. Do your learners use a textbook?
 - Note: Choices are given as follows: “Yes”, “No”
 - If “Yes”, does every learner have their own individual copy? Please elaborate.
8. Does the classroom environment reflect the learners and their work? For example, are there pictures of students, their projects, etc up on display?
 - Note: Choices are given as follows: “Yes”, “No”, “Not sure”
 - Please elaborate: _____

TEACHING EXPERIENCE (4 Questions)

1. What teaching/learning aids do you commonly utilize during lessons?
 - Note: Choices are given as follows: “Whiteboard”, “Chalkboard”, “Projectors”, “Flipcharts”, “Smartboards”, “Powerpoint presentations”, “Computer/Laptops”, “Stereo systems”, “Books/Stories”, “Textbooks”, “Worksheets”, “Pictures”, “Posters”, “Diagrams”, “Other: _____”
2. What teaching /learning strategies do you commonly utilize? Check any/all that apply:
 - Note: Choices include: “individual activities”, “pair activities”, “group activities”, “whole-class activities”, “silent activities”, “individual presentations”, “group presentations”, “lecture”, “copying notes from the board”, “giving students notes to paste in exercise book”, “memorization”, “teacher reads aloud”, “popcorn reading (learners each read a single portion of a larger text out loud)”, “choral reading (a student, or a group of students reads a passage out loud together,

with or without a teacher)" "learners discover or explore information themselves", "enrichment and/or remedial teaching", "re-telling", "close ended questions (questions that have a single correct answer)", "open-ended questions" (questions that could have multiple correct responses), "fixed seating arrangements", "flexible seating arrangements", "summative assessments that occur at the end of a topic or unit", "formative assessments that occur throughout the chapter or unit", "reciprocal questioning (when students come up with questions regarding a topic)", "pause procedure" (students take a break from learning every 10-15 minutes to discuss, ask questions, and solve problems), "learning stations", "personalized learning", "use of games in the classroom", "project based learning", "peer teaching/learning (learners help teach each other)", "tiered assignments (assignments that have different levels or types of questions based on the learners' level)", "service learning", "field trips", "use of visual media (such as computers, internet, videos)", "use of written media (such as newspapers, documents, magazines, texts)", "use of song", "whole class punishments", "individual punishments", "Others: _____"

3. Consider the following statement:

"The overall aim of teaching English as a second language is the development of the learners' communicative skills for meaningful interaction in a multi-lingual and multi-cultural society....The syllabus promotes the following general aims: to support creativity and intellectual development, to help learners develop self-confidence and a better understanding of the world in which they live, to develop positive attitudes, values and an understanding of local, social and cultural issues, to develop greater awareness of health and population issues, democracy and human rights, information and technology, HIV and AIDS, the environment and individual responsibilities regarding these and to enable learners to talk, read and write about them" (English Second Language Syllabus, Ministry of Education, Arts, & Culture 2016)

To what extent do you feel these aims are realized in your classroom? Please explain.

4. What are the greatest challenges you face as a teacher? Please elaborate.

EXPERIENCE WITH CRP (5 Questions)

1. Had you heard of CRP prior to participating in this research?
 - Note: Choices are given as follows: "Yes", "No", "Unsure"
 - If so, where did you learn about CRP?
2. What is your understanding of what CRP is?
3. Have you made active attempts to use CRP in your classroom(s)?
 - Note: Choices are given as follows: "Yes", "No"
 - Please elaborate: _____
4. Do you feel personally ready to implement CRP in your classroom? In other words, do

you have the desire and will to implement this approach?

- Note: Choices are given as follows: “Yes”, “No”, “Unsure”
- Please elaborate: _____

5. Do you feel that you are professionally ready to implement CRP in your classroom? In other words, do you feel you have the knowledge and skills to implement this approach?

- Note: Choices are given as follows: “Yes”, “No”, “Unsure”
- Please elaborate: _____

NEXT STEPS: SETTING UP INTERVIEW

- Do you agree to participate in a one-hour long follow up interview with the researcher?
 - Note: Choices are given as follows: “Yes”, “No”

Appendix B: Individual Interview Questions

1. What are your overall thoughts regarding the questionnaire?
2. How did you decide to become a teacher?
3. Can you walk me through a typical day of teaching?
4. What does it mean to you to be a good teacher?
5. What does CRP look like to you? (i.e. Could you provide a few examples of activities or things you could do as a teacher if you are using CRP?)

Note: Questions 6-9 gather further insights regarding questions from the questionnaire

6. Have you made active attempts to use CRP in your classroom(s)?
7. A. If you have not attempted to use CRP in your classroom before - why not?
B. If you have attempted to use CRP in your classroom before - what have you done? Do you feel that it was effective?
8. Do you feel personally ready to implement CRP in your classroom? In other words, do you have the desire and will to implement this approach? Elaborate.
9. Do you feel that you are professionally ready to implement CRP in your classroom? In other words, do you feel you have the knowledge and skills to implement this approach? Elaborate.
10. Do the challenges you face as a teacher (as outlined in the questionnaire) affect the teaching strategies that you utilize? If so - how?
11. What connections are made between home and ESL classes?
12. Is the learning relevant for students?
13. In what ways have you involved learner's prior knowledge and experience in the classroom?
14. In what ways have you built upon, extended, and/or challenged the learner's prior knowledge and experience?

Appendix C: Focus Group Discussion

VIDEO 1: REPRESENTATION IN LITERATURE AND LEARNING RESOURCES

Watch a video that shows an example of CRT in action:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VbKnaHR1FO4&feature=youtu.be>

Encourage participants to think about these questions as they watch, then discuss afterwards:

1. What does the teacher mean by the “windows and mirrors” metaphor?
 - Mirrors: students seeing themselves in texts and other classroom resources (posters, pictures, etc)
 - Windows: students learning about others through texts and other resources
 2. What are some takeaways you could apply to your own teaching?
 - Reading of more storybooks / short stories
 - Using imagination to create characters that represent themselves
 - Learners contribute to the decor of the classroom (posters, etc)
 - Different seating arrangements for different activities
 - Other ideas?
-

VIDEO 2: LISTENING TO LEARNERS AND THEIR NEEDS

Watch another video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mnK1m30hi6U>

Encourage participants to think about these questions as they watch, then discuss afterwards:

1. What strategies from the video do you think you would be able to use in your own classroom?
 - Rethinking the structure / set up of your classroom
 - Involving learners in the process of arranging and decorating their classroom
 - Incorporating the use of toys and games into the classroom for learning
 - Get rid of desks and set up big tables instead
 - Other ideas?
 2. What challenges do you think you would face in trying to implement these types of strategies?
-

VIDEO 3: ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS HAVE A WEALTH OF KNOWLEDGE

Watch another video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5HU80AxpP-U>

Encourage participants to think about these questions as they watch, then discuss afterwards:

- What forms of knowledge do English Language Learners possess?
 - Cultural, experience, language, traditions, etc
- What are the takeaways (main points) from the video?
 - English Language Learners possess a lot of knowledge. The key is utilizing their wealth of knowledge to help break down language barriers
 - Other ideas?

ARTICLE: CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE TEACHING: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

Source: Breiseth, L., Garcia, S., & Butler, S. (2020, February 14). Culturally Responsive Teaching: What You Need to Know. Retrieved November 5, 2020, from <https://www.understood.org/en/school-learning/for-educators/universal-design-for-learning/what-is-culturally-responsive-teaching>

1. What are the four main ideas the article discussed?
 - Identify student assets
 - Create a supportive classroom environment
 - Examine the curriculum
 - Continue your own learning
 2. What are a few techniques that you think you could personally use in your classroom?
 - Bring a diverse range of poetry, music, or other forms of expression into the classroom on a regular basis.
 - Give frequent opportunities for learners to share their interests, culture, traditions, etc
 - Use group work more often to utilize collectivist culture of students
 - Learn every learner's name and use it often
 - Design research projects that allow students to focus on issues in their own community.
 - Consider finding a partner or mentor for shared discussion / lesson planning
 - Other ideas?
-

ASSET IDENTIFICATION

Ensure all participants understand what an asset is. Asset- “a useful or valuable thing, person, or quality.”

Given what you know about Culturally Relevant Pedagogy and based on the article you have read and videos you have watched ...

1. What are assets that you possess as an **educator**?
 - In what ways can these assets be leveraged to implement CRP?
 2. What are assets that your **students** possess?
 - In what ways can these assets be leveraged to implement CRP?
 3. What are assets that your **school and/or community** possess?
 - In what ways can these assets be leveraged to implement CRP?
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