

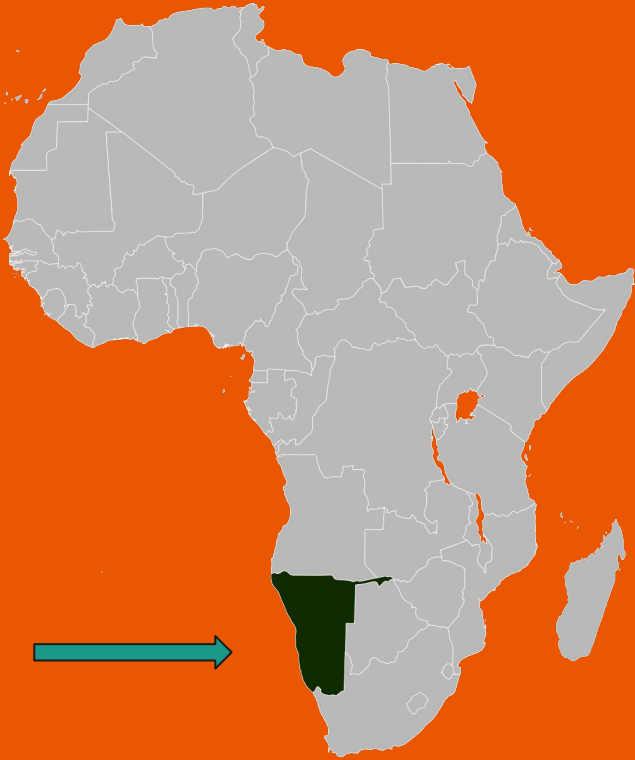


**Implementation of Culturally Relevant Teaching
in Namibian Classrooms:
Understanding Impediments and Identifying Assets**

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**Where in
the world is
Namibia?**



About Namibia...



Himba Tribe



San Bushmen Tribe



Herero Tribe

- Population of roughly 2.5 million people
- Formerly colonized by Germany and South Africa, gained independence in 1990
- Official language is English, with at least 9 other vernacular languages taught in schools
- Diverse array of tribal / ethnic / cultural groups
- 2nd highest Gini coefficient in the world (measure of income inequality)

The Problem

Lack of implementation of
Culturally Relevant Pedagogy
(CRP) within ESL classrooms in
the Rundu area of Namibia

“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.”

-Mr. Hull, Southhampton Combined School Teacher

Based on the Literature....



Challenges Specific to Namibian Education

Urban-rural educational
achievement gaps of 40%

Failed initiatives that
focused on improved
infrastructure / resource
access

Cultural divides

*(Van Wyk & Van der Berg, 2015; Millenium
Challenge Corporation, 2020; Biraimah,
2016)*

Potential Positive Impacts of CRP

Improved academic
outcomes of students

Student identity
development

Particularly in diverse
classroom settings

(Aronson & Laughter, 2015 ; Byrd, 2016)

Common Challenges for Implementation

Classroom overcrowding

Test-based learning
environments

Lack of professional
development
opportunities for
teachers

*(Fehrler et al, 2009; Mustafa et al, 2014;
Opoku-Asare et al, 2014; Misco, 2018;
Zorba, 2020; Mullick et al, 2013)*

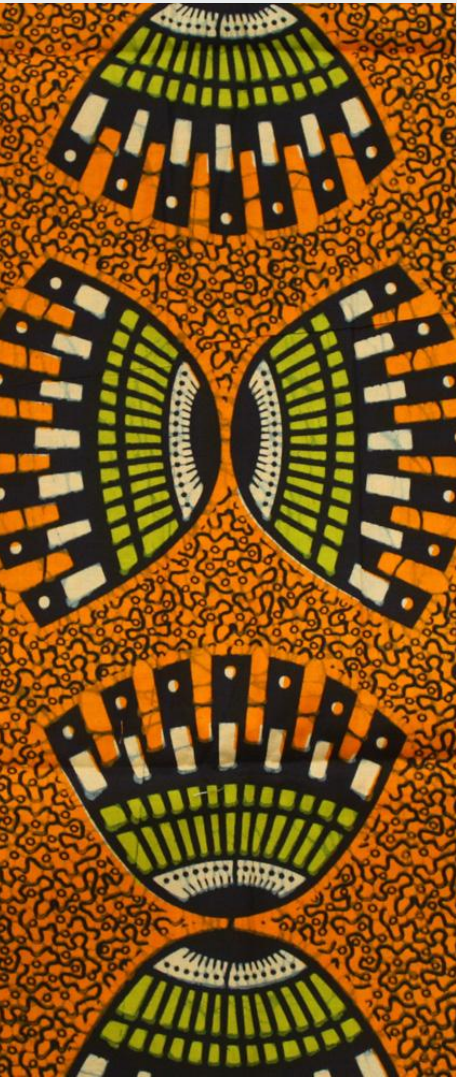
Best Practices for Implementation

Fluid, bottom-up
approach

Culturally diverse,
relevant content

Meaningful interactions
between teachers and
students

*(Myers, 2019; Misco, 2018; Biraimah, 2016;
Bornman & Rose, 2017)*



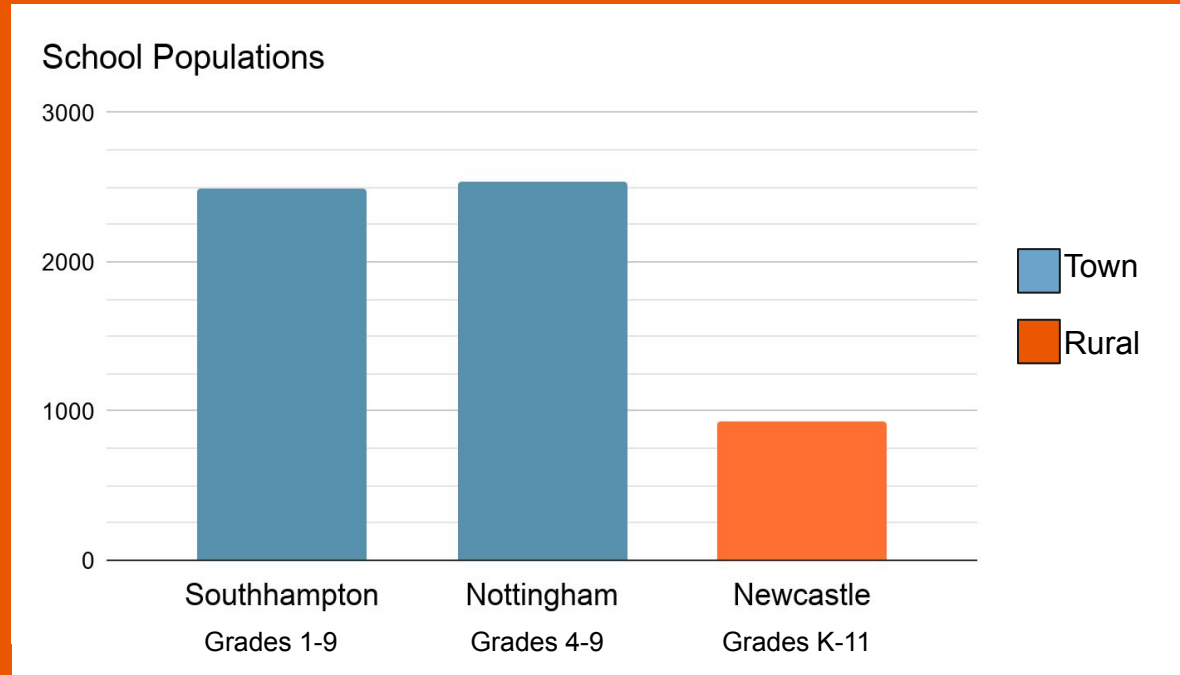
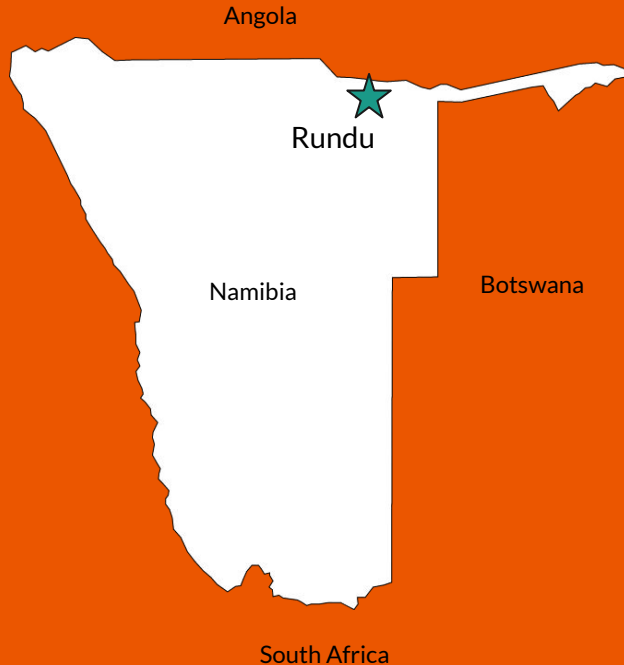
The majority of research regarding CRP has been conducted within the US context and has focused on the benefits that arise from it's successful implementation...

Research Questions

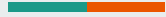
- How do Namibian ESL teachers **perceive the role of CRP** within their own classrooms?
- How do the experiences of teachers **affect their implementation** of CRP within their classrooms?
- How can teachers **leverage existing assets** to assist in the implementation of CRP within their classrooms?

Research Sites

Three government-operated schools located in/around the town of Rundu (2nd most populous city)



Participants



Four grade 4-7 ESL teachers

- Bachelors of Education
- <5 years of teaching experience
- Black Namibians who identify as Kavango (local culture)
- Multilingual (3+)
- 3 Male, 1 Female



Data Collection

Mixed Methods Approach

- Questionnaire (4 teachers)
- Follow-up interviews (3 teachers)
- Focus group discussion (2 teachers)





Findings: Minimal Knowledge of CRP

No participant had ever even heard the term 'CRP' prior to participation in the study

Lack of exposure to CRP during teacher preparation programs and professional development opportunities

Lack of initiative shown from teachers to independently supplement or improve their methodologies



Findings: Challenges that Shape and Restrict Approaches to Teaching and Learning

Academic levels of learners (lack of academic foundation, mixed-level classes) make it difficult for teachers to effectively teach. Tied to promotional policies enacted (?)

Problems motivating and engaging with learners due to ineffective teaching strategies and language barriers (Note: teachers generally avoided code-switching)

Lack of resources restricts the types of teaching and learning strategies, and impacts ability of teachers to expand their approach

Overcrowding in classrooms leads to restricted movement of teachers and learners, deters meaningful connections with learners, and leaves teachers with unimaginable workloads

What **overcrowding** in Namibia looks like...



A picture from one of the schools in the study, where up to 114 learners can be found in a single classroom



A picture from my former school in Rundu, where I had 72 learners in my homeroom class



Findings: Existing Assets to Assist in the Implementation of CRP

Teaching backgrounds and knowledge of pedagogical approaches to support adoption and implementation of new approaches

Non-English language skills of teachers to break down language barriers through code-switching

Resources at school such as WiFi to further supplement learning (print worksheets and short stories, show films, etc)

Family members of learners to further support learning

Community infrastructure and members (e.g. field trips, guest speakers, research projects) to increase the engagement and motivation of learners, while also increasing their social awareness

Implications



By shifting the focus to an asset-based model, teachers can improve the academic outcomes among diverse populations of learners, in turn reducing the urban-rural achievement gap.

Practice (Teachers)

1. Utilize **code-switching** within their classrooms
2. Take **responsibility** for developing their own teaching practices
3. Diversify and expand their current **strategies**
4. Create professional **learning communities** (e.g. Lesson Study approach)
5. Utilize existing school and community **assets**
6. Engage more with **families** of learners as well as community members

Implications



Policy (Schools, Circuits)

1. Learners are held to **higher standards** through the revision of promotional policies, and are provided with additional means of **support**
2. Teachers are provided **opportunities** to increase their professional readiness to implement new approaches and strategies
3. Schools look to reduce and **prevent overcrowding**
4. **Resource acquisition** is prioritized

What's Next...



Benefits of Code-Switching- Video

Enhanced Understanding of CRP - Videos

Sustained Implementation of CRP

1. Self-paced learning with CRP texts
2. Collaborative WhatsApp group
3. Ongoing focus group meetings

THANK YOU

Questions?

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