# Cultural Responsiveness in Finnish Education Export: Exploring Curriculum Localization in a Primary School in Asia

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# ABSTRACT

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Exporting a Finnish curriculum to a new country context is a complex process, and little is known of how exported curricula are localised to meet local needs. This research intends to explore how exported education, specifically curriculum and pedagogy, can be planned and localised in a culturally responsive manner by fostering and respecting local cultural characteristics. A primary school in Asia is brought to the centre of this study, where a localised version of the Finnish National Core Curriculum for Basic Education has been implemented.

This qualitative research draws from Geneva Gay's culturally responsive teaching (CRT) approach, and the CRIOP observation framework was also applied to identify which educational practices are indicative of cultural responsiveness (approx. 40 hours of observations). A teachers' qualitative questionnaire (N=11) was conducted to further explore how the local context, and particularly its cultural dimensions, are considered in the curriculum planning and localisation.

Culturally responsive practices were identified in three thematic areas and practical examples of effective CRT practices were found. While three new local subjects had been added to the localized curriculum, the curriculum localisation was identified as a classroom level practice as the inclusion of local cultural features took mainly place on classroom level. Discussion explores some of the challenges regarding the inclusion of local cultural characteristics to the curriculum. The case school is also utilized to discuss the phenomenon of Finnish education export from critical perspectives to highlight some of the issues regarding the spread of "Finnishness" through export initiatives.

Keywords: Culturally responsive teaching, Finnish education export, Curriculum localisation

# TIIVISTELMÄ

Suomalaisen opetussuunnitelman vieminen uuteen maahan on monimutkainen prosessi ja sen lokalisoinnista paikallisia tarpeita vastaaviksi tiedetään vielä vähän. Tässä tutkimuksessa tarkasteltiin kuinka koulutusvientiä, erityisesti opetussuunnitelman ja pedagogiikan osalta, voidaan suunnitella ja lokalisoida kulttuurisesti responsiivisella tavalla kunnioittaen paikallisen kulttuurin erityispiirteitä. Tutkimus toteutettiin Aasiassa sijaitsevalla ala-asteella, jossa käytetään suomalaisen perusopetuksen opetussuunnitelman perusteiden lokalisoitua versiota.

Tämä laadullinen tutkimus hyödynsi Geneva Gayn kulttuurisesti responsiivisen opetuksen lähestymistapaa. Luokkahuonehavainnot kerättiin CRIOP-observointityökalun avulla ja pyrkimyksenä oli tunnistaa mitkä opetuskäytännöt ovat yhteydessä kulttuuriseen responsiivisuuteen (noin 40 tuntia luokkahuonekäytäntöjen havainnointia). Lisäksi tutkimuksessa tarkasteltiin kuinka paikallinen konteksti ja erityisesti sen kulttuuriset ulottuvuudet huomioidaan opetussuunnitelman suunnittelussa ja lokalisoinnissa. Aineistona käytetään myös opettajille (N=11) laaditun kyselyn vastauksia.

Kulttuurisesti responsiivisia opetuskäytäntöjä havaittiin kolmella temaattisella alueella ja aineistosta nostettiin esiin käytännön esimerkkejä responsiivisista luokkahuonekäytänteistä. Lokalisoituun opetussuunnitelmaan oli lisätty kolme uutta ainetta, mutta pääpiirteittään opetussuunnitelman lokalisointi tunnistettiin luokkahuonetason toiminnaksi sillä paikallisten kulttuuristen piirteiden sisällyttäminen opetussuunnitelmaan tapahtui pääasiassa luokkahuonetasolla. Johtopäätöksissä tarkastellaan paikallistamiseen liittyviä haasteita erityisesti kulttuuristen piirteiden osalta. Suomalaisen koulutusviennin ilmiötä tarkastellaan myös kriittisestä näkökulmasta tutkimuskohteen kautta, ja esiin nostetaan joitain ongelmia liittyen suomalaisuuden levittämiseen koulutusviennin kautta.

Avainsanat: Kulttuurisesti responsiivinen opetus, suomalainen koulutusvienti, opetussuunnitelman lokalisointi

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## ABBREVATIONS

CR - Culturally Responsive

CRI - Culturally Responsive Instruction

CRIOP – Culturally Responsive Instruction Observation Protocol

CRT - Culturally Responsive Teaching

EVS – Environmental Sciences

NCCBE - National Core Curriculum for Basic Education (Finland)

SEN – Special Educational Needs

# 1. INTRODUCTION

Given the growing activity of exporting Finnish primary education abroad, deeper evaluation should be given to the process of implementing education to meet local needs (Schatz, 2016). The case of exporting primary education calls for deeper evaluation of intentions, implications and ethics (Stein & Andreotti, 2015; Himanka and Lindén, 2018; Keto-Tokoi, 2016; SYL, 2014), especially taken the young age of students attending the schools. Knight (2012) argues for serious consideration of both long and short term implications as well as sustainability in export initiatives. She describes that while at times the movement of people, knowledge and ideas across borders can promote the fusion of cultures, it can also cause erosion of national cultural identities and cultural homogenisation.

Education has been framed as a key instrument in promoting individuals' cultural identities, cultural plurality and linguistic diversity, while respecting the mother tongue (UNESCO, 2001). The universal, indivisible and interdependent right for culture was recognized as a human right in 1948 in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UNESCO, 1948; Article 27), which gives us "a rationale and an approach to integrate cultures in education and professional practice" (Janhonen-Abruquah, Topp & Posti-Ahokas, 2018, p.9). In addition to the cultural rights approach, learning has been perceived most effective when learners cultural frames of references, lived experiences, community settings and cultural heritages are recognized and utilized in the learning processess (Gay, 2018). For these reasons, local cultural characteristics should be in the centre of education export initiatives, where foreign curricula and pedagogy are implemented in new country contexts.

Teachers are in a key role in operationalising practices that foster cultural diversity (see e.g. Gay 2013; 2018) but equally the exported curricula, learning material and instructional practices needs to be explored to determine to what extent local realities, local cultural characteristics and diverse cultural identities are considered in these processess. Through culturally responsive teaching (CRT) (Gay, 2000; 2013; 2015; 2018) as well as context-specific planning and dialogue

(e.g. Gu & Canagarajah, 2018; Leask, 2004; Pyvis, 2011; Reinikka, Niemi & Tulivuori, 2018; Zhang, 2015), the needs of the local communities can be met. Furthermore, these methods may assist in evaluating the implications and dynamics linked to transnational education initiatives such as "Westernizing " non-Western countries (Bunnel, 2016) that has the danger of (re)producing educational, cultural and linguistic imperialism (Phillipson, 2012).

The aim of this study is to explore how exported education, specifically curriculum and pedagogy, can be planned and localised in a culturally responsive manner by fostering and respecting local social realities and cultures. By examining an international primary school in Asia, that resulted from a Finnish education export initiative and follows a localised version of the Finnish National Core Curriculum for Basic Education (NCCBE), this research intends to provide useful and culturally informed perspectives for future export projects.

## 1.1.    Finnish education export

Education export is a contested term and while some may perceive it as a self-explanatory concept (Schatz 2016, p. 46), the term is used in describing various activities connected to internationationality and education. Schatz (2016, p. 16-21) defines education export as "an intentional business transaction concerning degrees, educational practices, services, and materials from one country to another", and she has divided Finnish education export to three categories: 1) Selling educational equipment to other countries; 2) Selling educational knowledge to other countries;  and 3) Selling Finnish education know-how/programs/degrees to other countries (to non-Finns both outside and inside of Finland). However, no single term can grasp the complex nature of these activities, and international literature is more likely to refer to transnational education and cross-border education (Knight, 2016; Juusola & Räihä, 2018, p. 343) when describing movement of educational services and products. Table 1 provides an overview on Finnish export activities, which have been categorised in activities taking place abroad (outgoing) or in Finland (incoming).

| Outgoing activities | Incoming activities |
|---|---|
| • Executed independently by Finnish operators/ or in collaboration with host country partners<br>• Curricula and education policy counseling and and education systems development<br>• Degree and joint programs<br>• Certifications<br>• Franchise-models<br>• Training packages e.g. pedagogical professional development<br>• Teacher exchanges and expat teachers<br>• Educational technology<br>• Learning material<br>• Learning space design | • Educational travel and school visitors<br>• Policymaker delegations<br>• Expert knowledge of Finnish professional gained during export activities<br>• Foreign degree students, exchange students and groups |

TABLE 1: An overview of Finnish education export activities (Alam, Alam, Chowdhury & Steiner, 2013; Schatz, 2016, p. 16; Visit Finland, 2018; Reinikka et al., 2018; Juusola & Nokkala, 2019)

What differentiates Finland from the other exporting countries is that instead of exporting mainly higher education, Finland's competitive edge lies in the success story of primary education (Schatz 2016, p. 17). What brought Finland to the forefront of educational competitiveness was the continuous success in the OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) surveys starting from the early 2000s. The reputation of a top-ranking education system has since influenced the growth of exporting educational services and products on all educational levels from early childhood education and care to higher education. Moreover, the Finnish government's strategic inputs from 2010 onwards increased the overall export activity (Juusola & Nokkala, 2019) making export also a strongly government-driven initiative (Schatz 2016, p. 17). What can be drawn from government policy papers and strategies (e.g. MFA, 2017 & MEC, 2010) is a strong business-oriented motive to increase Finland's market share in the international competition, and overall, the measures proposed focus mainly on developing business strategies, the brand of Finnish education, commodification and productisation. While the importance of collaboration with

host country partners and stakeholders is addressed, export activities are mainly seen from the perspective of the sending country, and guidelines regarding curriculum localisation, responsiveness of practices or ethical consideration in education export are difficult to find. In a recent report on Finland's role as a global actor in education (Reinikka et al. 2018, p. 20) it states, that "the local context must always come first and be the determining factor" when engaging in development cooperation through education export. However, if export takes place outside official development cooperation initiatives, the interpretation of such recommendations, as well as the operationalisation and accountability, is left to export actors including educational institutions and the private sector.

When looking deeper into the outgoing activities (see Table 1), a former Finnish internationalisation advisory organization Finpro (today known as Team Finland) identified two export strategies in the global field of education export: 1) selling pre-established models or 2) building tailored service or product to suit local needs. The biggest and most traditional exporters UK, USA and New Zealand are known to follow the first strategy, whereas Germany, The Netherlands and Norway employ the latter (MEC, 2016). The first strategy can be perceived both cost-effective and easily commercializable because these models already exist (Polso, 2015 p. 412), but Sahlgren (2015) criticises exporting "best practices" as it tells us nothing about causality (as cited in Schatz 2019, p.53). Altogether, exporting or borrowing elements of education systems should be done with caution, as this may disrupt the overall cohesion of local education systems, especially if elements of local education systems work in isolation (Reinikka et al, 2018).

The second export strategy will be explored more carefully in this research, where specific attention is given to localization of a Finnish curriculum and pedagogy. In this research, curriculum refers to the localised curriculum that is based on the Finnish NCCBE where general values and approaches to learning are defined, along with learning objectives and subject syllabi (EDUFI, 2020). This definition does not include educational practices, contents, material or for instance specific lesson plans, that are developed and chosen on school level

(UNESCO-IBE, 2009; 2019). In this context, curriculum localization refers to the process in which parts or components of the curriculum are developed and adapted according to the needs of the local communities, cultural features, languages, environment and economic life (UNESCO-IBE, 2009; 2019). While little is known of such processes in the context of exported primary education, research on higher education provides some reference. According to Healey (2015) localization of the curriculum to local needs can increase its relevance, but in turn, decrease its "academic equivalence", if intended to resemble and maintain the academic quality and culture of the home university. While this perspective stems from research on transnational university branch campuses, it calls for discussion about whether the aim to deliver an "academically equivalent" Finnish curriculum abroad limits the possibilities of increasing local relevance. Furthermore, the metaphor of localization as a "tradeoff" (Healey, 2015) between local relevance and "academic equivalence" implies that increased local relevance is found to endanger the delivery of education according to the exporting country standards and their country brand. As notions of oppression have been found to rise if host countries are expected to use exporting country standards in evaluating educational quality (Pyvis, 2011), the perspectives of the host country communities should be emphasized in the localization processes, and long term implications of a detailed delivery of Finnish curriculum should be carefully evaluated.

Clear guidelines on ethical and sustainable education export are hard to find (see e.g. Ylitalo, 2019), but a discourse on responsibility has been identified (Juusola, 2016) especially in strategic documents concerning the quality and ethicality of Finnish education export. Himanka and Lindén (2018) stress that exporting education should not simply be a financial decision but also an ethical one, and important lessons can be learned from research on international education where the growth of international 'British-ethos' schools abroad have been regarded as "Westernization" rather than internationalization (Bunnel, 2016). Corporate social responsibility (CSR) has been proposed as a possible tool to evaluate the social impact and implications of Finnish education export (MEC

2016, p. 25). However, it remains to be seen whether tools, intended for business, are effective in evaluating the complexity of socialization through education, and long term educational impact.

A growing body of scholars have explored the phenomenon of Finnish education export, and a systematic review (Juusola & Nokkala, 2019) of the past decade (2010-2019) illustrates that a great proportion of research investigates the export of tertiary education, whereas research on the primary level is scarce. A striking lack of research on classroom level practices can be drawn from the review, as only 3 out of 111 papers focused on learning and pedagogy in education export (Mattila, 2018; Nketsia, Juma, Malle, Yehualawork, Pirttimaa & Lehtomäki, 2017; Roininen, 2019). This indicates that little is known of the results of implementation and impact of educational initiatives, whereas thematics related to marketing, market research, commercialization, productization, education policy, leadership and administration, quality, tuition fees and student/client/teacher experiences, have received more attention.

## 1.2.    Towards culturally responsive export

This article draws from Geneva Gay's (2013; 2018) work on culturally responsive teaching (CRT). It can be defined as a pedagogical approach that recognizes the importance of students' cultural experiences and knowledge in learning. CRT is essentially a learner-centered approach, and it is rooted in constructivist and sociocultural theories of learning, in which learning is perceived to be most effective when cultural frames of references, lived experiences, community settings and cultural heritages are recognized and utilized in the learning processess (Gay, 2018)

Stemming from the discipline of multicultural education (see eg. Banks, 1995) CRT was initially developed as a tool to improve the academic achievement of ethnic and racial minorities in the United States. Each scholar has coined a slightly different version of the term CRT (word relevant replaced with sensitive, sustaining, congruent or reflective; and the word teaching replaced with

education pedagogy, instruction or learning), yet all of these approaches share more or less the same agenda. CRT provides both methodological and epistemological perspectives to teaching, meaning that it is concerned with "what to teach, why to teach, how to teach, and to whom to teach with respect to ethnic, racial, cultural, and social diversity" (Gay 2015, p.125). It is also an ideological and ethical approach that is strongly connected to the promotion of ethnic, racial, cultural, social and linguistic pluralism, and it seeks to enhance educational equality, justice, representation and social transformation (Gay 2015).

The key to culturally responsive teaching lies in its contextual specifity and localism (Gay 2013, p. 63). This poses a challenge to utilizing CRT in classrooms, as it's principles can offer educators only some general guidelines on how to educate in a culturally responsive manner. Gay (2015) stresses that each school and classroom requires locally contextualized practices, that are shaped by the sociocultural characteristics and population to whom the education is designated for, but similarly, she also promotes the development of universally applicable CRT practices. While a great share of CRT literature derives from the US, the past decade has shown a positive trend of CRT research being done also in Africa, Asia and Europe across all education levels (see. E.g. Civitillo, Juang, Badra & Schachner, 2019; Lehtomäki, Janhonen-Abruquah & Kahangwa, 2017; Posti-Ahokas, Janhonen-Abruquah & Adu-Yeboah, 2020; Riitaoja, Posti-Ahokas & Janhonen-Abruquah, 2019), which encourages great novel and experimental applications of CRT to other sociocultural contexts.

This research utilizes the principles of CRT to explore means to localise Finnish curriculum and pedagogy to the host country context in Asia. According to current knowledge, there is no literature on applying CRT to the context of education export, which makes this an exploratory project. CRT invites us to examine cultures within education export, and to discover whose voices, realities and perspectives are in the medium of these ventures, and for instance of exported curricula. Furthermore, it provides means to explore the educational and cultural perspectives of a relatively business-oriented field where less

attention has been given to questions regarding rights and realities of the host country communities.

Before describing some of the empirical research on CRT, the term culture needs to be defined. Culture can be framed as a "distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features of society or a social group [...] that encompass, in addition to art and literature, lifestyles, ways of living together, value systems, traditions and beliefs." (UNESCO, 2001). Defining the complex, fluid and dynamic concept of culture requires a use of precise and explicit utterances (for example, instead of talking about the local culture, one can use specific terms such as local language, arts, heritage, crafts and traditions) (Gay, 2013; Dervin, 2016). Studying culture is challenging, and the use of the concept has been criticised "because it tends to give the impression that culture is endorsed coherently by those who are supposed to be represented by it" (Bayart 2005, p. 74, as cited in Dervin 2016). In order to avoid stereotypical assumptions of cultural identities defined by nationalities or country borders, this research seeks to apply CRT in a manner that fosters cultural diversity, without forgetting the importance of localizing exported education to match with local cultural characteristics.

## 1.3. Practical operationalization of CRT

Culturally responsive teaching can be anchored into four pillars of practice: teachers' attitudes and expectations, culturally diverse content in the curriculum, cultural communication in the classrooms, and culturally congruent instructional strategies Gay (2000, p. 44). Research regarding the first pillar illustrates that teachers awareness of their own beliefs, norms and attitude regarding cultural diversity is a prerequisite for implementing CRT (Gay, 2018, 2015; Gay & Kirkland, 2003; Morrison, Robbins & Rose, 2008; Young, 2010), and these have been found to affect teachers pedagogical practices and their willingness to incorporate multicultural contents to daily practices (Civitillo et al, 2019; Gay 2010). In order for teacher to be able to affirms diverse cultural identities (Gay,

2018), their critical reflection skills and intercultural competencies should be in the centre of their pedagogical development (Acquah & Commins, 2015; Powell et al, 2017; Civitillo et al, 2019). Diverse texts, imagery and perspectives also have a central role in affirming diverse identities and the lack of diverse material can also hinder the implementation of CR practices (Freire & Valdez, 2017). Above all, reshaping prescribed curricula to more culturally diverse formats is central to CRT (Morrison et al, 2008).

Culturally diverse curricula and learning material will not alone make education culturally responsive. What is also required, is instructional strategies that "emphasize inquiry, critique, and analysis" instead of traditional strategies focusing on sheer memorization and "regurgitation of factual information" (Gay, 2018, p.35) Morrison et al. (2008, p. 436) synthesis illustrates some of the commonly used instructional CRT practices. These included a) Using different scaffolding and modelling techniques that helps the learner to understand challenging curricula, b) Utilizing students strengths as instructional starting points, c) Building education on students' funds of knowledge and enforcing communication between school and communities, d) Sharing power in the classroom and e) Including critical literacy, social justice and analysis of power dynamics in society to the instruction. Morrison et al. also recognized that teachers' personal investment in students' success, as well as a nurturing, safe and cooperative learning environment was central for students to meet high academic expectations.

Several scholars (Morrison et al, 2008; Powell, Cantrell, Correll & Malo-Juvera, 2017, Young, 2010) have criticised CRT and other similar approaches for being too complex to operationalize in classrooms, especially in relation to standardised curricula. However, evidence of CRT's effectiveness encourages us to learn from different practitioners and contexts in order to develop locally applicable practices. For instance, Aronson & Laughter's (2016) empirical literature review illustrated that CR practices can be implemented across curricula in various subjects. Additionally, positive benefits of CR practices included increase in the following areas: students academic performance,

motivation, interest in content, ability to engage in content area discourses, perception of themselves as capable students and confidence when taking standardized tests.

One of the more recent inputs has sought to collate effective CRT practices under one tool to be utilized in teacher professional development and research (Powell et al, 2017). This comprehensive framework, namely Culturally Responsive Instruction Observation Protocol (CRIOP), comprises six areas of practise that equips teachers with practical tools to implement CRT. Previous research carried out with CRIOP (Powell et al, 2017) illustrates improved academic achievement through the utilization of culturally responsive instruction (CRI). Students, whose teachers were high implementers of CRI, had significantly higher achievement scores in reading and mathematics than students of low implementers. The CRIOP framework will be applied to this study both as a data collection scheme and as an analysis framework. More description of the observation framework can be found in Table 2 (see section 2.2. Research Methods).

## 1.4.    Research task

As previous research has pointed out, careful ethical consideration should be used in education export, so that the needs and rights of the local context and its communities are met. For this reason, this study attempts to explore how exported education, specifically curriculum and pedagogy, can be planned and localised in a culturally responsive manner by fostering and respecting local social realities and cultures. With the intention to understand how culturally responsive education export can be executed, this research can provide useful and culturally informed perspectives for future export projects.

This research seeks to find answers to the following questions:
1. What kind of educational practice is indicative of cultural responsiveness in the case school in Asia?
2. How is the local context, particularly its cultural dimensions, considered in the curriculum planning and localization?

# 2. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STUDY

## 2.1. Research context and participants

This research was based on classroom observation data (approx. 40h of lessons) and teachers' qualitative questionnaire (N=11) that were collected in an international elementary school in Asia during a 3 week fieldwork period. The school followed a locally adapted Finnish NCCBE and pedagogy, and it was established as part of a Finnish education export initiative in collaboration with a local private school operator. The country context will remain anonymized from the data, and only some general description of the context will be given to provide the information necessary to evaluate the trustworthiness of findings.

Teachers' questionnaire sample consisted of 7 local teachers and 4 Finnish teachers and data was collected anonymously on a voluntary basis. Altogether, the case school's educational staff consisted of 10 local class teachers, 5 Finnish class teachers, 2 local subject teachers, 1 Finnish SEN teacher, 3 local relief/assistant teachers, a Finnish principal and a Finnish vice principal. All teachers had given the permission to observe their classes, and observations were carried out in each grade level (1-6) for the duration of two days resulting in approximately 40 hours of observed activity. There were altogether 250 students in the school of which 14 were non-local students who represented other nationalities. The school operated in grade levels from 1 to 6, of which the latter two grades operated as a multigrade class. Each grade level consisted of 50 students who were taught in teams of two local teachers and one Finnish teacher.

## 2.2. Research methods

This qualitative research was carried out by using a qualitative questionnaire and classroom observations as the main data collection methods. O'leary (2014, p. 48) suggests that context specific understanding of the school where observations take place is "integral to the observer's accurate interpretation of events". For this

reason an ethnographic approach also informed this research and a three-week long immersion to the context allowed the researcher to gain a deeper understanding of the schools daily operations. Additional data such as a researcher's field diary, pictures of classroom posters and learning material, and interviews with the school principal and vice principal were utilized in the analysis process.

The teachers' questionnaire was conducted to gain insight to teachers' perceptions of teaching and learning in a culturally diverse setting, and to understand what kind of strategies they had used in making education relevant in the host country context. The questionnaire was conducted anonymously online, and it consisted of 16 questions of which 4 were multiple-choice questions and the rest were open-ended questions. Questions were divided into 5 thematic sections (see Attachment 3).

Classroom observations were conducted with the intention to gain a deeper understanding of the context specific educational practices. A Culturally Responsive Instruction Observation Protocol (CRIOP, 4th ed.) (Powell et al., 2017) was utilized in this study both as an observation scheme, and later as an analytical framework. A semi-structured adaptation of CRIOP was developed (see Attachment 1) and the original measurement scale (4-point Likert scale) was adapted into a semi-structured scheme (O'leary, 2014) that focuses on identification of practices that were indicative of CRT. This adaptation allowed the researcher to examine the multifaceted aspects of the phenomenon, and freed the researcher from an evaluative "inspector" approach that could have made teachers less willing to participate.

Observations focused on four elements of CRIOP: (1) Classroom discourses (2) Classroom relationships (3) Instructional practices and (4) Critical consciousness. These elements and their 16 individual indicators (see Table 2) informed the documentation of lessons. On the first day of the observations, lessons were documented on a 10-page A4 size observation scheme (similar to Attachment 1) where observed instances had to be systematically assigned under the right theme and indicators while observing the lesson. However, this method

was found slow and laborious, which is why the method was changed to a free writing format where lessons were documented on a notebook by writing descriptive and interpretive field notes of the general outline of each lesson, as well as of instances that were identified as indicative of cultural responsiveness. The observation scheme was central in this process, and it was repeatedly reread to make sure that each theme and indicator was taken into account. Lastly, two elements of the original CRIOP (Family collaboration and Assessment practices) were omitted from the scope of this research, as these would have required additional data collection instruments and preferably a longitudinal approach.

| CRIOP themes | Indicators (called sub-categories in the analysis) |
|---|---|
| **Theme 1: Classroom Discourses** | 1. The teacher promotes active student engagement through discourse practices<br>2. The teacher promotes equitable and culturally sustaining discourse practices<br>3. The teacher provides structures that promote academic conversation<br>4. The teacher provides opportunities for students to develop linguistic competence |
| **Theme 2: Classroom Relationships** | 5. The teacher demonstrates an ethic of care (e.g., equitable relationships, bonding)<br>6. The teacher communicates high expectations for all students<br>7. The teacher creates a learning atmosphere that engenders respect for one another and toward diverse populations<br>8. Students work together productively |
| **Theme 3: Instructional practices** | 9. Instruction is contextualized in students' lives, experiences, and individual abilities<br>10. Students engage in active, hands-on, meaningful learning tasks, including inquiry-based learning<br>11. The teacher focuses on developing students' academic language<br>12. The teacher uses instructional techniques that scaffold student learning<br>13. Students have choices based upon their experiences, interests and strengths |
| **Theme 4: Critical consciousness** | 14. The curriculum and planned learning experiences provide opportunities for the inclusion of issues important to the classroom, school and community<br>15. The curriculum and planned learning experiences incorporate opportunities to confront negative stereotypes and biases<br>16. The curriculum and planned learning experiences integrate and provide opportunities for the expression of diverse perspectives |

TABLE 2: CRIOP themes and indicators used in data collections and analysis (adapted from Powell et al, 2017)

## 2.3.    Data analysis

A qualitative content analysis (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008) was carried out for both the observation data and teachers' survey responses. Both datasets were first analysed separately (See Figure 2) after which findings of these two data sets were brought together. Teacher survey data was analysed in an inductive manner (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008) to form a representative and comprehensive summary of teachers' perceptions and experiences. The analysis process is illustrated in Figure 2.
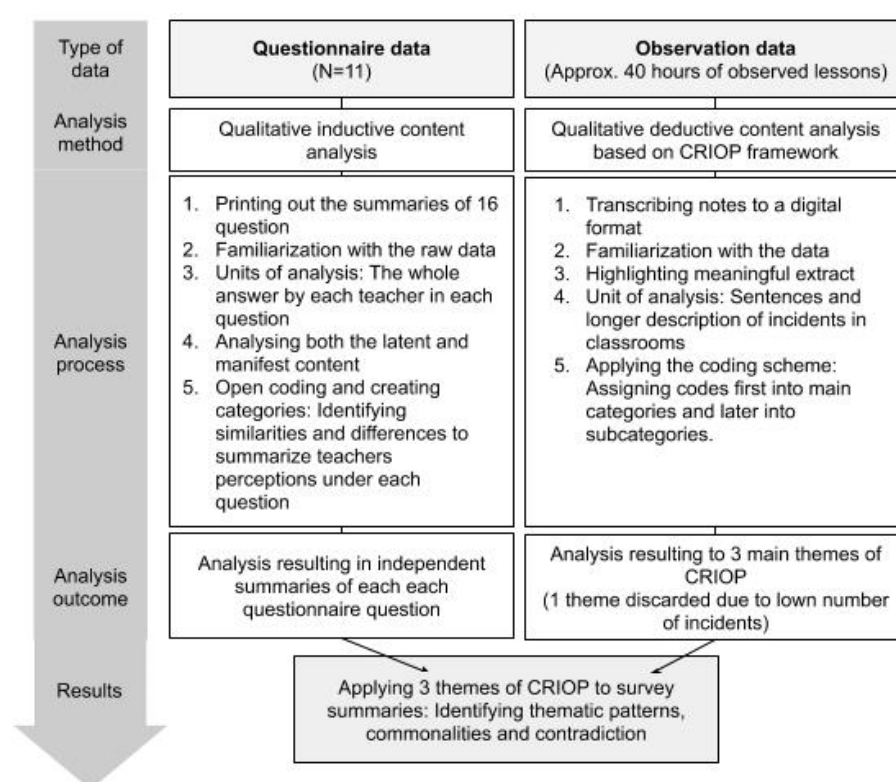
| Type of data | Questionnaire data (N=11) | Observation data (Approx. 40 hours of observed lessons) |
|---|---|---|
| Analysis method | Qualitative inductive content analysis | Qualitative deductive content analysis based on CRIOP framework |
| Analysis process | 1. Printing out the summaries of 16 question 2. Familiarization with the raw data 3. Units of analysis: The whole answer by each teacher in each question 4. Analysing both the latent and manifest content 5. Open coding and creating categories: Identifying similarities and differences to summarize teachers perceptions under each question | 1. Transcribing notes to a digital format 2. Familiarization with the data 3. Highlighting meaningful extract 4. Unit of analysis: Sentences and longer description of incidents in classrooms 5. Applying the coding scheme: Assigning codes first into main categories and later into subcategories. |
| Analysis outcome | Analysis resulting in independent summaries of each each questionnaire question | Analysis resulting to 3 main themes of CRIOP (1 theme discarded due to lown number of incidents) |
| Results | Applying 3 themes of CRIOP to survey summaries: Identifying thematic patterns, commonalities and contradiction | |

FIQURE 2: Data analysis process

The observation data was analysed deductively on theory-driven basis (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008) by utilising the existing main themes and subcategories (indicators) of CRIOP framework (Powell et al, 2017). CRIOP also provided a functionable coding manual as it included examples and non-examples of effective practices under each indicator (see examples in Attachment 1). The analysis proceeded according to the steps illustrated in Figure 2. Observations were coded according

to the 4 themes (DISC= Discourses, CLASSREL= Classroom relationship, INST= Instructional practices, CRIT= Critical consciousness), after which these were assigned to subcategories that were formulated according to the 16 indicators presented in Table 2. In the last phase of analysis, the survey summaries were then coded according to the three main themes of CRIOP after which the survey summaries were compared with the observation sub-categories to identify thematic patterns, connections, commonalities and contradictions. Due to a low number of identified events under the theme (4) Critical Consciousness, it was discarded from the final analysis. Additionally, other specific discursive practices (Theme 1, indicators 3 and 4), involving students' linguistic competencies and academic conversation skills, were omitted from the scope of this research.

While the CRIOP scheme was found functionable both for data collection and analysis, some insufficiency in terms of internal homogeneity and external heterogeneity (Lincoln & Guba, 1985 as cited in Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009, p.4) regarding two themes of CRIOP were identified in the analysis process. For this reason, minor adjustments were made to the original scheme: Observations regarding culturally diverse instructional material and other classroom resources were collated under one theme, instead of two, which allowed a more coherent analysis.

## 2.4.    Ethical solutions

Participation in this study was based on informed consent. Participants were informed of their rights and the research procedures in an information letter, and they had the right to cancel their participation at any point during the study. Participants' privacy was protected through anonymization of data and the country context, and only the researcher and the thesis supervisor had access to the research data. Responsible conduct of research (JYU, 2020) was followed throughout the research process.

# 3. FINDINGS

The following sections discusses how culturally responsive teaching was manifested in the case school. Following the structure of the CRIOP scheme, findings are presented in three thematic sections; Classroom discourses, Classroom relations and Instructional practices. All practical examples from the classroom observations are collated in Attachment 2.

Findings based on the analysis of two main data sets are complemented with few additional excerpts from interviews with the school leadership. A summary of findings is presented at the end of this chapter (see Table 3) Teachers direct quotes were given pseudonyms (LT=Local teacher, FT=Finnish teacher) and were numbered in order of appearance. Also the name of the local language has been omitted from teachers' direct quotes, and replaced with the word "[local language]".

## 3.1.    Classroom discourses

Observation revealed that teachers employed equitable and culturally sustaining discourse practices that promoted active student engagement and dialogue (See Attachment 2 for practical examples). More traditional teacher-centered discourse practises were also identified during classes where teachers "delivered" factual knowledge with less emphasis on engaging students into the classroom discourse.

Bilingualism, on the other hand, was identified as a key discursive area to which the local teachers contributed to a great extent. Bilingual teaching appeared mainly in three subjects, the local language, Islam and Quran, (see Attachment 2 for practical examples), and a third language, Arabic, was also included in the Quran lessons as students learned to read and recite verses in Arabic:

> "Since majority of students are fluent in English we try to give explanations in both in [local language] and in English during [local language lessons], Quran and Islam period which has shown that students actually find the subject interesting when we explain it in a language they understand better." (LT1)

The excerpt above illustrated that bilingual instruction had been found effective and engaging, as English had been incorporated into subjects that had been traditionally taught in the local language. Observations and teachers' responses revealed that local students communicated most naturally in English with their peers, teachers and even at home. It was also identified that the school implemented bilingualism in a manner that did not discourage students from using the language that they felt most comfortable with. Effective practices had been found, but challenges also emerged:

> "In Islam students get the opportunity to choose the language in which they feel easy to answer the questions. It is more important for them to get the concept. [The local language] is very challenging because many of our students are more familiar with the second language instead of their mother language." (LT2)

As this excerpt reveals, the dominance of English language posed a challenge to the delivery of bilingual teaching and instruction, as the majority of students were more fluent in their second language. Teachers added that challenges appeared when new concepts were introduced in English but students did not have an adequate knowledge of the same concept in the local language. While the whole educational staff showed concerns regarding local students' low levels of local language acquisition, it also appeared that students' good English skills was seen as a positive thing because it was a common language for all students and teachers.

## 3.2. Classroom relationships

Observations revealed that **teachers demonstrated an ethic of care** by bonding with students throughout the day using various individualized routines (See Attachment 2 for practical examples). Teachers' supporting and warm presence was also enforced with non-verbal communication of care. Attempts to connect with students' lives outside school were also identified. Working in teams of three teachers was recognised as an asset in assuring that each student in a classroom of 50 students received equal attention. However, observations indicated that the more introverted or well behaving students did not always

receive as much attention in relation to extroverts or students who required more support. Longer observations of individual students' daily interaction paths in a class or 50 students and 3 teachers should be carried out, before further conclusions can be made about teacher-student relations.

The observations related to **communicating high expectations for all students revealed** a clear emphasis on learning and expecting higher level thinking from all students (See Attachment 2 for practical examples). Practices related to support of students thinking skills development were identified to play an important role in students' transition from their previous school, where education was more result-oriented and focused on learning-by-heart. This had naturally affected students' dispositions to learning, meaning that students perceived the process of learning in a way that no longer applied in their new school. Finally, students were identified to receive individualized and equitable feedback and support according to their individual needs (see more in section 3.3.2 Instruction is contextualized in students' lives, experiences, and individual abilities)

Teachers' responses and observations revealed a **commitment to creating an atmosphere that engenders respect for one another and towards diversity**. When teachers were asked how cultural diversity was manifested in their classrooms, they described that it was about allowing students to be whom they are, but also about teaching students to respect, accept and learn about diversity. Similar practices were identified in observations (see Attachment 2 for practical example) but teaching collaboration skills were found integral to this (see 3.2.4. Student collaboration). Diversity was perceived as an interdisciplinary and overarching theme that was implemented across the curriculum and in various subjects:

"Respecting and accepting diversity is one main objective in the curriculum." (LT2)

"The curriculum focuses on the cultural diversity and ways we can tackle the challenges we would have to face" (LT3)

Cultural diversity was perceived to have a positive effect in the learning community. The comment below illustrates that it brought additional value to the classroom by enriching the subject matter:

> "When working and learning with people from a variety of backgrounds and cultures present in the classroom, students gain a more comprehensive understanding of the subject matter." (LT4)

While respondents focused mainly on diversity in students, one teacher brought up the value of a culturally diverse teacher community in developing contextually relevant practices:

> "It is valuable to bring together different viewpoints and ways of doing things when developing locally functional ways of working". (FT1) (orig. quote in Finnish)

When teachers were encouraged to evaluate how their cultural background affects their teaching, two divergent views emerged. Majority reported that their cultural background, and especially their values, attitudes and beliefs, affected their teaching work. Some stressed that these elements influenced their teaching to a great extent, even if they did not want it to, which had further motivated them to constantly reflect on their actions and reactions. Some perceived the influence of their own cultural background to be positive, and interestingly, few teachers reported that their cultural background had no influence on their teaching. Only little details were given about the specifics of personal values, attitudes and beliefs, but aspects such as local traditions, religion, own family and belief in science and equality were mentioned.

Observation revealed clear efforts **to support students' collaboration skills** in each classroom (See Attachment 2 for practical examples). Students were found willing to engage in collaboration even without teachers' explicit recommendations, and the open learning environment design allowed opportunities to arrange seating that further enabled collaboration. Most importantly, flexibility given to decide where and with whom to study with was found to foster student collaboration.

## 3.3. Instructional practices

Probably one of the most important features of CRT is to contextualize learning instructions in students' lives, experiences, and individual abilities. CRIOP's sub-category regarding contextualised learning instruction (3.3.2) was complemented with two new sub-categories developed specifically for this research. Themes regarding cultural heritages in learning (3.3.3) and contextualized learning material (3.3.4) were added to provide a deeper analysis of elements focal to culturally responsive instruction.

### 3.3.1. Enhanced ownership through hands-on and meaningful learning tasks

Observations revealed that teachers utilized hands-on learning strategies that incorporated meaningful content knowledge with creative and practical delivery (see Attachment 2 for practical examples). Students were able to illustrate their personal strengths, interests and unique thinking strategies in different learning tasks, which allowed students with some choice and ownership in the process of learning. This was also found to increase the relevance of academic learning and content (see section 3.2.3. Communicating high expectations for all students for more discussion on thinking skills).

### 3.3.2. Individually contextualized instruction

When looking into the instructional practices that engendered respect for a culturally diverse student body, teachers described employing strategies such as being sensitive, teaching as neutrally as possible, or being overly respectful. Teacher responses revealed that sensitive pedagogies were applied especially when it came to discussing religious matters with students, and some teachers reported that they hesitated to engage in discussion about religious matters with students.

Teacher proposed a variety of strategies for utilizing students' lived experiences in learning. These included strategies such as encouraging children to share their own reality, taking examples from their reality and experiences,

listening to other students and generating ideas with them. Variety of similar effective approaches were identified in classroom observations (see Attachment 2 for practical examples). Incorporating learning with student experiences was found important especially by one teacher who commented,

"If we don't utilize children's experiences in learning, teaching loses its purpose". (FT2)

Students' individual abilities were also put in the centre of learning and instruction, and systematic SEN support was identified to enhance equity in the classroom (See Attachment 2 for practical examples). The school did not have facilities for students who required full-time support, and on a general basis, all enrolled students were expected to cope and follow instruction in classes of 50 students. Large class sizes were identified to cause struggles to concentrate due to high volume levels, and while small group teaching strategies were also adopted, similar challenges emerged there too. A deeper look into the equity aspect of instructional practices revealed an interesting contradiction in one excerpt, where a local teachers described how cultural diversity was manifested in their classrooms:

"We are always focusing on treating everyone the same in our class and respecting each and everyone's needs and opinion" (LT3)

While respect for each student's diverse needs and opinions are being framed as key practices in this excerpt, the wording "treating everyone the same" implies that the teacher seeks to enforce equality in classrooms, instead of applying equitable practices. This is interesting from the perspectives of inclusion and context specific cultural diversity of learners, as treating everyone the same does not provide adequate tools for true inclusion. While this comment is not, by any means, generalizable to the whole school, it illustrates some of the pitfalls of achieving educational equity.

### 3.3.3. Connection to cultural heritages in learning

The questionnaire revealed both an emphasis on deepening local students' connection to the local cultures, and an intention to become familiar with non-

local students' cultural heritages. Some reported strategies that the teachers took, or are planning on taking, included discovering students' own languages and cultures, cherishing the local language, being involved in local traditional celebrations and visiting local museums and surroundings. In practice, cultural heritages were fostered by teaching the local language and religion as independent subjects, and by including other local cultural characteristics to learning (See Attachment 2 for practical examples).

Projects such as "The Human Body" and "My Language and Culture" were mentioned to deepen students' awareness of themselves and diversity across the classroom, but teachers also proposed activities that focused more directly on increasing awareness of other cultures, such as bringing in guests to talk about different cultures, and showcasing different cultures in presentations, exhibitions and in extra curricular club activities. The latter, namely Culture Club, had recently been established with the intention to increase students' awareness of other countries and cultures, and to enhance their intercultural competencies by identifying similarities and differences between countries and their environments and lifestyles (See Attachment 2 for practical examples). While one teacher emphasized that the clubs seek to avoid othering and telling singular stories of cultures, the club concept and the pedagogical approach they sought to utilize was described to be relatively new. For this reason, the school was building capacity to deliver this in a full form, especially as it was an extracurricular element. However, the country approach was identified to have a risk of seeing cultures defined by national borders or nationalities, which can limit learners' perceptions of the fluidity of their own identity, as well as their perception of others' diversity. The next excerpt illustrates how intentions to learn about other cultures can turn into a so-called cultural mosaic approach to multiculturalism, which will be discussed in more detail in the discussion.

> "I believe cultural diversity reflects in our curriculum through lessons such as how in some cultures they have a different way of greeting, different ways of clothing and celebrations, food etc." (LT1)

Teacher responses and the school leadership interviews illustrated that the localized curriculum was perceived to foster the uniqueness of each student, respect for diversity and promote development of intercultural competencies and global citizenship. However, teachers seemed to have opposing views about how local cultural features were incorporated into the curriculum itself. While some teachers considered that the local history, customs, traditions, languages, arts and environmental elements were featured in the curriculum, others noted that the local cultural features were not directly visible in the curriculum but made visible in the daily work of each teacher.

> "Our curriculum is a Finnish curriculum which has been localised for our country. I think that says a lot about our curriculum being featured for our culture." (LT4)

> "In my opinion, these [local cultural features] can not be directly seen in the curriculum, but more in the ways teachers teach and implement the curriculum" (FT3)

This implies that the concept 'curriculum' had at least two interpretations, one referring to the lesson plans or the actualized curriculum ("what was taught"), and the other referring to the localized core curriculum document of the school. The next comment goes along the lines with the first interpretation and it implies that cultural features are implemented in all planned learning activities at every possible occasion, which might indicate that the 'true' inclusion of local cultural features to the Finnish curriculum takes place on the classroom level.

> "The cultural features are taken into account in every situation possible, e.g.: when teaching language, during literature classes and other occasions" (LT5)

Different interpretations of 'curriculum' could be explained by language and country specific definitions and similarly, various definitions for this term can be found in curriculum research and in practice. What could also explain teachers' opposing views is the framework that was recently developed alongside the localized CC. This offered teachers practical tools for planning and teaching Environmental Sciences (EVS) in ways that tied local realities into the curriculum through perspectives and themes that were relevant in the country context. In fact, this framework provided the school with an alternative to the original

localized core curriculum and learning material for EVS, which both were perceived to reflect Eurocentric and Finland-centered perspectives.

While the new framework and teachers' personal efforts indicated that local cultural features were being featured in the processes of planning and teaching, an important point was made by a Finnish teacher who suggested that local minorities should be incorporated more to the curriculum.

> "I think we could incorporate more the minority cultures represented here…[The local culture] and the Finnish culture are well represented." (FT4)

This exemplifies that while teachers may incorporate instruction that is contextualized to the lives of a diverse body of students, both in social minority and majority, the localized curriculum may not reflect the sociocultural realities of the host country context. This may result in practices that are dependent on individual teachers' critical consciousness, but lack implementation across all grade levels. What may hinder the inclusion of diverse perspectives to the curriculum is that approximately 70% of teachers reported that they had not participated in the curriculum development. This finding is surprising, regardless of how teachers interpreted the term curriculum, because it illustrates that teachers do not perceive themselves as active agents in the curriculum development process.

The vice principal (VP) agreed that the local cultural features were hardly visible in the localized curriculum, and on a hypothetical basis, the functionality of including local cultural features to the localized curriculum was questioned. The VP continued that developing a culturally detailed curriculum could be beneficial for an expat teacher, who was new to the local culture and local life, but the lack of first hand experience and knowledge of these cultural features could hinder the application of these cultural elements to teaching. This idea exemplifies, that implementing a culturally detailed curriculum is more challenging especially for staff arriving from another country. Additionally, the VP described that while local cultural features were obvious for local teachers, it would require a long immersion to the society, for any foreigner teaching or developing a localized curriculum, to be able to grasp all the details. This

illustrates the focality of involving local teachers as well as other local stakeholders to the curriculum development and localization processes.

### 3.3.4. Contextualized learning material

The observations revealed that teachers utilized a vast range of textbooks, self developed worksheets, presentations, games and other digital resources, of which some offered opportunities to build meaningful connections regarding cultural relevance (See Attachment 2 for example) However, the workload of seeking and preparing new material was reported heavy, and teachers described a lack of suitable material in English that was based on the Finnish curriculum. This may have increased the workload of creating new material and seeking suitable material from online resources, but it also may have enforced the use of material packed with Finnish cultural reference.

During the initial stages of establishing the Finnish school under scrutiny, certain Finnish and British textbook series and other learning material had been selected and ordered by the experts of the Finnish education export company. After the first semester some series' had been replaced with more suitable and functional options, as it became evident that not all material was suitable for the student body, nor did they reflect the realities of the local context. The local subjects Islam, Quran and the local language were assigned with more locally contextualized text books.

The connection between local cultures, cultural diversity and learning material received little attention in teachers' responses, while several other criteria for choosing material were mentioned. One teacher commented that learning material should include culturally suitable content, and another pondered upon the use of Finnish imagery or songs. The pedagogical purposefulness of cultural characteristics in learning material was stressed, and the importance of being aware of the possible mismatch between local realities and of what teachers perceive as 'normal' was emphasised:

> "Things that are commonplace for us, such as fields, trains and trucks, are not commonplace for these children." (FT3)

When asked about the benefits of incorporating and recognizing cultural diversity and local cultures in the learning material, three perspectives emerged from the teachers' responses. Firstly, learning was perceived to be more effective if students were able to build a personal connection to the learning material. One teacher stated that

> "The students would miss some parts of the learning, if they were not able to build connection to the learning material". (FT3)

Secondly, culturally diverse learning material was seen as an opportunity for the teacher to develop a more individualized set of instructional strategies. One teacher commented that culturally diverse learning material allows the teacher new opportunities to learn more techniques and tools that could facilitate the students in their learning. Lastly, incorporation of local cultures and cultural diversity into learning material was believed to affirm diverse identities, enhance students intercultural skills, foster dialogue and sense of security among students, and to enhance students ability to interpret and evaluate imagery and media in learning material critically.

Classrooms' libraries were stocked with great amounts of nonfiction literature and natural science encyclopaedias to be utilized as learning material especially in EVS classes. The shortage of literature in the local language seemed to be a more common issue, and the principal mentioned that it was challenging to encourage children to read in the local language because the supply of such literature was simply very low.

## 3.4.    A summary of findings

Table 3 illustrates the key findings of this research. Findings for RQ1 describe what kind of educational practice was indicative of cultural responsiveness (practical level), and findings for RQ2 describe how the local context, particularly its cultural dimensions, was considered in the curriculum planning and localization (curriculum level).

| Research questions | Summary of findings |
|---|---|
| **PRACTICAL LEVEL**<br><br>**RQ1**: What kind of educational practice was indicative of culturally responsive teaching in the case school? | **Classroom discourses**<br>• Bi- and multilingual instruction implemented<br>• Equitable discourse practices identified<br>**Classroom relationship**<br>• Caring classroom relations and equitable bonding practices identified<br>• High expectation for all student communicated<br>• Respect for diversity engendered<br>• Student collaboration encouraged<br>**Instructional practices**<br>• Instruction contextualized in students' lives, experiences, and individual abilities<br>• SEN support given<br>• Opportunities for student ownership in learning identified<br>• Hands-on activities used<br>• Culturally diverse learning material and imagery identified |
| **CURRICULUM LEVEL**<br><br>**RQ 2:** How is the local context, particularly its cultural dimensions considered in the curriculum planning and localisation? | • Localised curriculum (LC) adapted to local linguistic features and religion; More practical and contextually relevant framework developed alongside LC<br>• Curriculum localisation identified as classroom level practice as inclusion of the local cultural features took place on classroom level<br>• Respect and acceptance of diversity as a core value of curriculum provided opportunities for the realization of CRT<br>• Two interpretations of curriculum identified; Teachers holding opposing views about cultural characteristic being featured in the curriculum<br>• Relevance and usefulness of including specific cultural characteristic in the LC is questioned |

TABLE 3: Summary of findings: Culturally responsive teaching in the practice and in the curricula of the studied school

# 4. DISCUSSION

This study aimed at discovering how cultural responsiveness is manifested in the context of Finnish education export, and it was carried out in an international elementary school in Asia that followed an adapted version of the Finnish CCBE. The data consisted of teachers' qualitative questionnaire (N=11) and classroom observations (approx. 40h of lessons) and additional data such as two interviews, a researchers field diary and picture were utilized in the analysis (see section 2.3 for data analysis). Findings were presented thematically, but Table 3 (in section 3. Findings) provides an overview of findings according to the research questions.

**RQ1 sought to identify 'What kind of educational practice was indicative of culturally responsive teaching in the case school?'.**

Practices that indicated cultural responsiveness were found in three of the observed areas, Classroom Discourses, Classroom relations and Instructional practices (See Table 3). CRT shows potential in increasing recognition of cultural frames of references in learning, and this research concludes that it could be utilized in future export initiatives also as teachers' pedagogical development tool.

The first theme, **Classroom discourses,** illustrated that the school had implemented bi- and multilingual instruction, among other equitable discourse practices. These are essential not only for culturally responsive teaching but for the realization of students' cultural and linguistic rights (UNESCO, 1948; 2001). While the use of bilingual strategies had shown positive outcomes, the dominance of English posed a challenge to the acquisition of the local language, whereas the lack of knowledge of different concepts in the local language were found to hinder student ability to learn about them in English. While this research only scratched the surface of languages in learning, the dominance of English and its influence to learning other languages and concepts raises further questions. Local linguistic complexities should be further explored, and equally the effectiveness of learning in the local language (see e.g. Smits, Huisman &

Kruijff, 2008) should be acknowledged in future export initiatives. What exemplifies the need to extend CRT beyond classroom practices to curriculum and policy levels (Gay, 2018) is that English-only policies have shown to limit the implementation of multilingual and culturally responsive practices (Michener, Sengupta-Irving & Proctor, 2015; Zhang, 2015).

The second theme, **Classroom relations**, provided an overview to how teachers created a caring and equitable classroom atmosphere. Observations revealed that teaching in teams of three class teachers was considered as a asset, whereas large class sizes were perceived as possible hindering factors for equitable bonding. Investment in supporting students' thinking skills development and higher order thinking was found important not only for setting high academic expectations for all students, but because students' previous schools had been more result-oriented and focused on different pedagogies such as "learning-by-heart"-strategies. Investment in these learning oriented pedagogies are central for applying CRT in full form (Gay, 2018) As only a fraction of students started their primary education guided by the localized Finnish curriculum, and majority shifted from other primary schools, future research could examine how learners' different dispositions influence their capacity to shift from one type of school to another.

Teachers' questionnaire revealed two divergent views on how teachers perceived their cultural background to affect their teaching work. Awareness of personal frames of reference had resulted in reflection of actions and reactions, whereas some teachers reported that their cultural background had no effect on their work as a teacher. As teachers awareness, consiousness and clarity of their own norms, attitudes and belief is considered as prerequisite for delivering of CRT (Gay, 2018, 2015; Gay & Kirkland, 2003; Young, 2010), more attention should be given to teachers' professional development regarding critical reflection and intercultural competencies (Powell et al, 2016; Civitillo et al, 2019). However, promising findings of previous research (Savva, 2017) shows that even a long duration cross-cultural teaching experience can change teachers' dispositions and

have direct implications to teachers' professional practice in delivering CR teaching well. Additionally, the schools' co-teaching approach and allocated co-planning time was found to provide opportunities for an intercultural dialogue, and opportunities to increase the relevance of the Finnish core curriculum in a new context. This is in accordance with previous research (Gu & Canagarajah, 2018) where collaboration between immigrant teachers and local teachers contributed to the development of more locally relevant practices.

In the third theme, **Instructional practices,** efforts to contextualize instruction in students' lives, experiences and individual abilities were identified, and teachers were also found to use strategies that provided opportunities for meaningful and engaging student-centered learning. Findings regarding the feasibility of inquiry-based learning as a CRT practice, especially in the subject of EVS, are supported by previous research (van Ingen, Davis & Arndt, 2018; Brown, 2017). Teachers proposed and operationalized a variety of strategies for utilizing students' lived experiences in learning, which has been  identified as a central element of CRT in other classroom based studies too (Morrison, et al 2008). Furthermore, observations revealed that educational equity was systematically enhanced through SEN support, as well as through diversified learning material and instruction. Religious matters, especially, were found to make teachers employ sensitivity, and it encourages us to think could application of similar pedagogies be beneficial regarding other cultural matters?

Teachers proposed various strategies that could be employed to strengthen the connection between cultural heritages and learning, as well as awareness about other countries and cultures. The school had staff knowledgeable of education for global citizenship, but some critical aspects should be addressed in the school's on-going capacity building around these themes. The idea of raising students' awareness about other cultures has been found inadequate when reaching long-term changes in attitudes (Walton, Priest & Paradies, 2013), which is why more critical perspectives to discussing cultures and societal issues are required. While practices connected to increasing knowledge about other

cultures through exhibitions and separate cultural week celebrations may bring new understanding and dialogue within a culturally diverse school community (Dewilde, Kjørven, Skaret & Skrefsrud, 2018), it also has a danger of a so-called cultural mosaic approach to multiculturalism, where cultural features like "saris, samosas and steel bands" are presented through "food, fairs and festivals" (Kromidas, 2011). This may result in a stereotypical presentation of a "shared culture" (Gay, 2018) defined by nationalities or country borders. Consequently, celebratory approaches to culture, like to cultural mosaic approach, can easily turn into cultural essentialism, where all members of a given country or group are assumed to share defining cultural characteristics coherently (see e.g. Bayart 2005 & Holliday, 2010 in Dervin, 2016 p.4-74), and yet, they are a popular way of acknowledging cultural diversity in schools (see e.g. Kromidas, 2011; Phoon, Abdullah & Abdullah, 2012). Interestingly, even projects that aim to build a responsive and dialogical approach to cultural dialogue can turn out to take the essentializing and exoticizing approach in the end, and result in "opposite effects of exaggerating cultural differences, reinforcing ethnocentric stereotypes about racial and cultural 'others'"(Alvaré, 2017, p.45). In the context of this study, it would also be important to critically analyse how Finland and 'Finnish culture' are represented in the context of education export.

Teachers' responses revealed that incorporation of local cultures and cultural diversity into learning material was believed to enhance learning and teaching. Few references to being cautious about the use of Finnish content and cultural references were found, which indicated that teachers used critical consciousness to assess the suitability of content stemming from the Finnish context (see also e.g. Savva, 2017). However, while teachers were found to utilize a vast range of learning material, some material and classroom posters were also found to lack diverse perspectives. This may hinder the implementation of culturally relevant pedagogy (Freire & Valdez, 2017) and altogether suppress the affirmation of diverse identities that is the core attribute of CRT (Gay, 2018). The usage of material deriving from Finnish and Eurocentric frame of reference should receive more attention in future transnational processes, as using

translated textbooks and other material from Finnish to English, and English to the local language may lack cultural authenticity (see e.g. Fox & Short, 2004) but also provide students with irrelevant content that does not correspond with realities of another country context. Future initiatives could utilize the case schools co-teaching model, as it could provide a possible platform for exchange and development of functional and diverse material.

Finally, the fourth theme of observations, **Critical consciousness,** was omitted from the final analysis due to low number of identified classroom practices. Interestingly, Powell et al (2016) also reported low numbers of observations regarding the same theme (titled socio-political consciousness in the older version of CRIOP) when observing elementary teachers. This could indicate that inclusion of learning material, content and practices that confront biases, negative stereotypes and traditionally dominant point of views is challenging for teachers, but a longer immersion to the context could have given a more comprehensive evaluation of this interpretation. However, this finding may help us determine key areas of teachers' professional development, especially in terms of their intercultural competencies.

**RQ2 sought to understand 'How the local context, particularly its cultural dimensions, were considered in the curriculum planning and localization**

The core principles of the Finnish NCCBE were found to provide fertile grounds for utilization of CRE. Diversity was regarded as an interdisciplinary and overarching theme that was implemented across the curriculum and in various subjects, and the objectives connected to enhancement of intercultural competencies allowed the inclusion of diverse cultural perspectives. These findings are in line with the discourse analysis of the Finnish NCCBE (Zilliacus, Paulsrud & Holm 2017), which recognized that the Finnish NCCBE endorses non-essentialized multicultural identities. The findings of this research illustrate that inclusion of the local cultural features took place on the classroom level, where the input and knowledge of teachers

was central. This indicates that consideration of local cultural features was, for the most part, a classroom level initiative. However, some local cultural dimensions such as the local language, subjects related to religion (Islam and Quran), and a more recent school level innovation concerned with a framework that made the teaching of EVS more contextualized to local realities, had been included to the localised curriculum.

Interestingly, teachers held opposing views about how and to what extent the local cultural characteristics were being featured in the curriculum, and concerns regarding the lack of representation of local minorities were expressed. Opposing views stemmed from differing interpretations of the concept 'curriculum' which implied that cultural features were not, according to all, included in the localized core curriculum document, but included in the lesson plans and daily educational practices. Future export initiatives should explore the differing interpretations of the term curriculum in order to clarify what is meant by curriculum localization by different stakeholders, but most importantly, what actions and evaluations curriculum localization should include? Future research could also investigate to what extent the implementation of local cultural characteristics to the curriculum depends on individual teacher's efforts?

Findings regarding the exclusion of teachers from curriculum development indicated that they did not perceive themselves as active agents in the curriculum development process. This could hinder the inclusion of diverse and local perspectives, but also uneven power relations can emerge (Leask, 2004), especially if a curriculum is planned and developed in the exporting country (or by stakeholders representing it) without inclusion of local perspectives and representatives. Therefore, local teachers', parents', administrators' and researchers' perspectives and experiences should be put to the centre of future research and development.

The relevance and usefulness of including specific cultural characteristics into the curriculum was questioned, as the lack of first hand experience of the cultural features would still make it rather challenging for an expat teacher to

truly understand or teach through these cultural characteristics. Despite this challenge, the case school's co-teaching model provided spaces for reciprocal learning and cultural dialogue, and it was found to be a promising model to increase the overall relevance of the Finnish curriculum in another context. This research concludes that a culturally detailed curriculum should be developed with great critical consciousness in order to avoid stereotypical presentations of the local culture, but similarly, acknowledgement of local cultural features in the localized curriculum are seen essential in increasing relevance of exported education. Learning about the hidden societal features that affect students' behaviour, values and attitudes (taught through a hidden-curriculum), can be perceived as an essential element of CRT, but how such hidden features could be considered in curriculum planning and localization requires further exploration.

**Spreading "Finnishness" through export initiatives - discussing implications**

Despite the promising empirical findings of this study that suggest that the use of culturally responsive educational practices can make an exported curriculum and pedagogy more relevant in terms of local cultural characteristics, this research concludes that in the end, responsive classroom practices can only do so much to decrease social disparities caused by structural inequalities (Riita-Oja, Posti-Ahokas & Janhonen-Abruquah, 2020; Gay; 2018). In order to provide quality education in international and local contexts, the dominance and the exclusive power of one ethnic group (or a country) needs to be addressed (Gay, 2015). Unravelling the power imbalance is especially challenging in the context of education export, where host countries become dependent on Finnish educational expertise (see e.g. Knight, 2012). The following closing section seeks to bring critical perspectives to the current discussion around Finnish education export along with research ideas for future research.

Selling pre-established educational models (MEC, 2016) has received criticism because taking a functional model to another context does not mean that it will function similarly elsewhere (see e.g. Salhgren, 2015 in Schatz 2016, p. 53), and they also may disrupt the overall cohesion of national education systems

(Reinikka et al, 2018). Country models are problematic also due their cultural, historical and political nature, and the Finnish NCCBE makes no exceptions in terms of being less situated to a certain historical, political, social and cultural continuum. Even though the case school of this research illustrated remarkable efforts to adapt the Finnish NCCBE to better suit local needs, the use of the Finnish curriculum should receive as much critical evaluation as any other transnational educational process would. As Finland has been identified to transmit a discourse of "Finnish excellence" (Itkonen, Dervin & Talib, 2017) through popular commercial educational products, which is accompanied with a successful country 'hyper-branding' (Dervin, 2015), exporters should act with ethical consideration as little is still known of the long term implications of Finnish education abroad. Utilizing Finnish know-how can be perceived as Finland's ethical imperative for global common good (UNESCO, 2015), but simultaneously the spread of "Finnishness" or "Finnish-style" education needs to be questioned, so that notions of educational and cultural imperialism will not arise.

How could education export work against the challenges of 'Westernization' (Bunnel, 2016) and educational/cultural/linguistic imperialism (see eg. Phillipson, 2012) Could some things in education export be done differently, in collaboration and dialogue with local perspectives, so that English as an instructional language, as well as the hegemony of Western educational content and imagery does not dominate the development of locally relevant practices? To discuss this matter further, Stein & Andreotti (2015, p.5) encourages institutions to consider how they can engage in 'global development' with critical consideration about uneven power relations and reproduction of social inequalities that can emerge in global initiatives. Private schooling could be mentioned as one inhibitor of educational equity if not monitored and regulated carefully (UNESCO, 2015). Another element that can maintain uneven power relations is the global comparison and the strive for 'sameness' when assessing quality according to exporting country standards (Pyvis, 2011). This perspective is highly important with regards to accreditation processes, which are used to

verify the quality of education according to sending countries' standards. As the case school had recently gone through a similar process, it calls for examination about whether such standards limit the localization of the Finnish curriculum, if the verification of 'sameness' has higher value, especially in a commercial sense, than localizing the curriculum and teaching to match better with local realities? Undoubtedly, the accreditation process can be seen as an essential part of the brand enforcement of the Finnish school, which to some extent defines the future demand for such private school services in the host country. Further research should examine how quality assurance protocols impact the localization of transnational education.

Scholars critical towards the imperial claim argue that students, especially on tertiary level, are engaged in transnational education because they seek alternatives to locally produced education (McBurnie & Ziguras, 2006) making them active agents. Phan (2017) annotates that rather than seeing host countries as being exploited, the host countries' and their private school operators are nowadays playing an active role in importing foreign educational models. This illustrates that host countries contribute to "creating and sustaining a desire for 'Western education' and 'Western knowledge'"(as cited in Smith, 2020). However, both of these examples can be interpreted as symptoms of structural issues caused by global competition and capitalism, which is why more historical and political perspectives should be applied to discuss existing power structures, hierarchies, dependencies and inequities (re)produced by transnational endeavours in education.

Further research could explore what key policy priorities are needed for the long-term sustainability of education export from the perspective of the host countries. In the meanwhile, the on-going Finnish export initiatives could examine how locality is manifested in their current educational practices. Culturally responsive teaching and especially its aspect regarding decolonization can offer effective tools to curriculum development processes, where local needs and perspectives are made a priority.

## 5. TRUSTWORTHINESS AND LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The classroom observations were carried out in 3-weeks time and without a doubt, a prolonged engagement in the context (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) would have increased the credibility of the findings. However, the use of multiple data collection methods increased the richness of the data, and allowed the researcher multiple perspectives to form interpretations. While the data collection design was structured so that the classroom observations were followed up by the teacher survey, the schedule created boundaries to do this in full form. For this reason, few teachers were given the opportunity to answer the survey prior to the classroom observations, which may have influenced these teachers' behaviour and choice of methods.

One of the questions that was pondered throughout this research was 'How a foreign country context, education and its cultural characteristics can be studied in a way, that does not en up (re)producing culturally essentialist analysis and views about the host country context, but rather celebrates the fluidity of cultural identities in a non-essentialist manner?' While the initial observations focused on the identification of successful educational strategies that were culturally responsive for the host country context, it soon became evident that a culturally diverse student body required more than "locally relevant" pedagogies. Constant critical reflection took place in order to avoid simplistic and stereotypical assumptions of a shared "local culture" defined by national borders.

## 6. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This research provides alternative perspectives to the Finnish education export discussion especially regarding locality and cultural characteristics. Education and learner-centered perspectives are given to a relatively business-oriented field, and examples of practices that can enhance the relevance of instruction, content and learning are given, which could benefit future export initiatives.

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# Attachment 1: CRIOP coding manual (adapted from Powell et al, 2017) (4th ed)

## 1. DISCOURSES

**Which discursive classroom practices are indicative of cultural responsiveness?**

*(written, spoken communication & representing, thinking, interpreting, expressing, reflecting, agreeing and disagreeing, and even debating and arguing))*

| CRIOP Indicator | For example, in a responsive classroom: | For example, in a non-responsive classroom: |
|---|---|---|
| 1. The teacher promotes active student engagement through discourse practices | • Teacher employs a variety of discourse protocols to promote student participation and engagement (e.g., call and response, talking circles, read-around, musical shares, etc.)<br>• All students have the opportunity to participate in classroom discourse<br>• Teacher uses various strategies throughout the lesson to promote student engagement through talk (e.g., partner share, small group conversation, interactive journals, etc.) | • The main form of classroom discourse is Initiate-Respond-Evaluate (IRE) where the teacher poses a question and individual students respond<br>• The teacher controls classroom discourse by assigning speaking rights to students<br>• Not all students have the opportunity to participate in classroom discussions<br>• Some students are allowed to dominate discussions |
| 2. The teacher promotes equitable and culturally sustaining discourse practices | Generally Effective Practices:<br>• Students use collaborative, overlapping conversation and participate actively, supporting the speaker during the creation of story talk or discussion and commenting upon the ideas of others<br>• Teacher uses techniques to support equitable participation, such as wait time, feedback, turn-taking, and scaffolding of ideas<br>Practices that are Culturally Responsive:<br>• Students speak in their home language/dialect when it is situationally appropriate to do so<br>• There is an emphasis on developing proficiency in students' native language as well as in Standard English; bilingualism/ multilingualism is encouraged (e.g., students learn vocabulary in their native languages; students read/write in their native languages; students learn songs and rhymes in other languages, etc.) | • Discourse practices of various cultural groups are not used during instruction<br>• Students are discouraged from using their home language or dialect and communicating in culturally specific ways, even when it is situationally appropriate to do so<br>• Emerging bilingual students are discouraged from using their native language, both inside and outside of school<br>• Students are discouraged from communicating in a language other than English<br>• There is no evidence of attempts to promote bilingualism/multilingualism |
| 3. The teacher provides structures that promote academic conversation | Generally Effective Practices:<br>• Students engage in genuine discussions and have extended conversations<br>• Teacher explicitly teaches and evaluates skills required for conducting effective academic conversations<br>Practices that are Culturally Responsive:<br>• Teacher provides prompts that elicit extended conversations and dialogue (e.g. questions on current issues; | • Students are discouraged from talking together, or conversations are limited to short responses<br>• Teacher rarely asks questions or provides prompts that would elicit extended dialogue<br>• Teacher does not teach skills required for academic conversations |

Adapted from Powell, R., Cantrell, S. C., Correll, P. K., & Malo-Juvera,
V.(2017). Culturally Responsive Instruction Observation Protocol (4t h ed.). Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky College of Education.
Originally Developed by: R. Powell, S. Cantrell, Y. Gallardo Carter, A. Cox, S. Powers, E. C. Rightmyer, K. Seitz, and T. WheelerRevised 2012 by:
R. Powell (Georgetown College), S. Cantrell (University of Kentucky), P. Correll (University of Kentucky), V. Malo-Juvera (UNC-Wilmington), D. Ross (University of Florida) and R. Bosch (James Madison University)

| | questions that would elicit differing points of view) | |
|---|---|---|
| 4. The teacher provides opportunities for students to develop linguistic competence | Generally Effective Practices:<br>• Teacher provides many opportunities for students to use academic language in meaningful contexts<br>• Students are engaged in frequent and authentic uses of language and content (drama, role play, discussion, purposeful writing and communication using ideas/concepts/vocabulary and syntactic structures from the field of study)<br>Practices that are Culturally Responsive:<br>• Students are taught appropriate registers of language use for a variety of social contexts and are given opportunities to practice those registers in authentic ways | • Students' use of language is limited and they do not use language in authentic ways<br>• Students are not taught about the registers of language use; they are expected to use Standard English in all social contexts |

## 2. CLASSROOM RELATIONSHIPS
**Which communication / interactional practices are indicative of cultural responsiveness?**

| CRIOP Indicator | For example, in a responsive classroom: | For example, in a non-responsive classroom: |
|---|---|---|
| 5. The teacher demonstrates an ethic of care (e.g., equitable relationships, bonding) | Generally Effective Practices:<br>• Teacher refers to students by name, uses personalized language with students<br>• Teacher conveys interest in students' lives and experiences<br>Practices that are Culturally Responsive:<br>• There is a "family-like" environment in the classroom; there is a sense of belonging; students express care for one another in a variety of ways<br>• Teacher promotes an environment that is safe and anxiety-free for all students, including culturally and linguistically diverse students; students seem comfortable participating in the classroom<br>• Teacher differentiates patterns of interaction and management techniques to be culturally congruent with the students and families s/he serves (e.g., using a more direct interactive style with students who require it) | • Teacher permits and/or promotes negativity in the classroom, e.g., criticisms, negative comments, sarcasm, etc.<br>• Teacher does not address negative comments of one student towards another<br>• Teacher stays behind desk or across table from students; s/he does not get "on their level"<br>• Teacher does not take interest in students' lives and experiences; is primarily concerned with conveying content<br>• Teacher does not seem aware that some students are marginalized and are not participating fully in classroom activities<br>• Some students do not seem comfortable contributing to class discussions and participating in learning activities<br>• Teacher uses the same management techniques and interactive style with all students when it is clear that they |

| | | | do not work for some |
|---|---|---|---|
| 6. | The teacher communicates high expectations for all students | **Generally Effective Practices:**<br>• There is an emphasis on learning and higher-level thinking; challenging work is the norm<br>• Students do not hesitate to ask questions that further their learning; there is a "culture of learning" in the classroom<br>• Teacher expects every student to participate actively; students are not allowed to be unengaged or off-task<br>• Teacher gives feedback on established high standards and provides students with specific information on how they can meet those standards<br>**Practices that are Culturally Responsive:**<br>• There are group goals for success as well as individual goals (e.g., goals and charts posted on walls); every student is expected to achieve<br>• Students are invested in their own and others' learning ; they continuously assist one another<br>• Teacher takes steps to assure that emerging bilinguals understand directions and have access to the same content and learning as native speakers | • Teacher has low expectations , consistently giving work that is not challenging or frustrating students by giving them tasks that are unreasonably difficult<br>• Teacher does not call on all students consistently<br>• Teacher allows some students to remain unengaged, e.g., never asks them to respond to questions, allows them to sleep, places them in the "corners" of the room and does not bring them into the instructional conversation, etc.<br>• Teacher does not establish high standards; evaluation criteria require lower-level thinking and will not challenge students<br>• Teacher feedback is subjective and is not tied to targeted learning outcomes and standards<br>• Teacher expresses a deficit model, suggesting through words or actions that some students are not as capable as others<br>• Teacher does not explicitly assist emerging bilinguals to assure they understand directions and content |
| 7. | The teacher creates a learning atmosphere that engenders respect for one another and toward diverse populations | **Generally Effective Practices:**<br>• Teacher sets a tone for respectful classroom interaction and teaches respectful ways for having dialogue and being in community with one another<br>• Teacher implements practices that teach collaboration and respect, e.g., class meetings, modeling and reinforcing effective interaction, etc.<br>• Students interact in respectful ways and know how to work together effectively<br>• Teacher and students work to understand each other's perspectives<br>**Practices that are Culturally Responsive:**<br>• Positive and affirming messages and images about students' racial and ethnic identities are present throughout the classroom<br>• Teacher affirms students' language and cultural knowledge by integrating it into classroom conversations<br>• Teacher encourages students to share | • Teacher shows impatience and intolerance for certain student behaviors<br>• Lack of respectful interaction amongst students may be an issue<br>• Teacher establishes a competitive environment whereby students try to out-perform one another<br>• Teacher does not encourage student questions or ridicules students when they ask for clarification<br>• Posters and displays do not show an acknowledgement and affirmation of students' cultural and racial/ethnic/linguistic identities<br>• Classroom library and other available materials promote ethnocentric positions and/or ignore human diversity<br>• Classroom resources do not include any bilingual texts<br>• Teacher never affirms students' native |

Adapted from Powell, R., Cantrell, S. C., Correll, P. K., & Malo-Juvera,
V.(2017). Culturally Responsive Instruction Observation Protocol (4t h ed.). Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky College of Education.
Originally Developed by: R. Powell, S. Cantrell, Y. Gallardo Carter, A. Cox, S. Powers, E. C. Rightmyer, K. Seitz, and T. WheelerRevised 2012 by:
R. Powell (Georgetown College), S. Cantrell (University of Kentucky), P. Correll (University of Kentucky), V. Malo-Juvera (UNC-Wilmington), D.
Ross (University of Florida) and R. Bosch (James Madison University)

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| | their stories with one another and to have pride in their history and linguistic and cultural identities<br>• Classroom library and other available materials contain multicultural content that reflect the perspectives of and show appreciation for diverse groups<br>Classroom library (including online resources) includes bilingual texts that incorporate students' native languages | languages and cultures |
| 8. Students work together productively | Generally Effective Practices:<br>• Students are continuously viewed as resources for one another and assist one another in learning new concepts<br>• Students are encouraged to have discussions with peers and to work collaboratively | • Students are discouraged from assisting their peers<br>• Students primarily work individually and are not expected to work collaboratively; and/or students have a difficult time collaborating<br>• Teacher dominates the decision-making and does not allow for student voice<br>• The emphasis is on individual achievement<br>• Classroom is arranged for quiet, solitary work, with the teacher being "center stage" |

## 3. INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES
**Which instructional practices are indicative of cultural responsiveness?**

| CRIOP Indicator | For example, in a responsive classroom: | For example, in a non-responsive classroom: |
|---|---|---|
| 9. Instruction is contextualized in students' lives, experiences, and individual abilities | Generally Effective Practices:<br>• Learning activities are meaningful to students and promote a high level of student engagement<br>• Materials and real-world examples are used that help students make connections to their lives<br>• Learning experiences build on prior student learning and invite students to make connections<br>Practices that are Culturally Responsive:<br>• Teacher uses instructional methods/activities that provide windows into students' worlds outside of school (e.g., "All About Me" books, student-created alphabet walls, camera projects, etc.)<br>• Teacher views students' life experiences as assets and builds on students' cultural knowledge, linguistic knowledge, and "cultural data sets," making connections during instruction in the various content areas | • Learning tasks and texts reflect the values and experiences of dominant ethnic and cultural groups<br>• No attempt is made to link students' realities to what is being studied; learning experiences are disconnected from students' knowledge and experiences<br>• Skills and content are presented in isolation (never in application to authentic contexts)<br>• Teacher follows the script of the adopted curriculum even when it conflicts with her own or the students' lived experiences<br>• Learning experiences are derived almost exclusively from published textbooks and other materials that do not relate to the classroom community or the larger community being served |

# Attachment 1: CRIOP coding manual (adapted from Powell et al, 2017) (4th ed)

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| | • Materials and examples are used that reflect diverse experiences and views<br>• Families' "funds of knowledge" are integrated in learning experiences when possible; parents are invited into the classroom to share their knowledge | • Families "funds of knowledge" are never incorporated in the curriculum; parents are never invited to share their knowledge |
| 10. Students engage in active, hands-on, meaningful learning tasks, including inquiry-based learning | • Learning tasks allow students to practice and apply concepts using hands-on activities and manipulatives<br>• Learning activities promote a high level of student engagement<br>• Exploratory learning is encouraged<br>• Teacher engages students in the inquiry process and learns from students' investigations (e.g., inquiry-based and project-based learning)<br>• Students are encouraged to pose questions and find answers to their questions using a variety of resources<br>• Student-generated questions form the basis for further study and investigation | • Students work passively at their seats on teacher-directed tasks<br>• Passive student learning is the norm (e.g., listening to direct instruction and taking notes, reading the textbook, seatwork, worksheets, etc.)<br>• Exploratory learning is discouraged<br>• Teacher is the authority<br>• Students are not encouraged to challenge or question ideas or to engage in further inquiry<br>• Students are not encouraged to pose their own questions<br>• All knowledge/ideas are generated by those in authority (e.g., textbook writers, teachers) |
| 11. The teacher focuses on developing students' academic language | Generally Effective Practices:<br>• There is an emphasis on learning academic vocabulary in the particular content area<br>• Students are taught independent strategies for learning new vocabulary<br>• Key academic vocabulary and language structures are identified prior to a study or investigation<br>Practices that are Culturally Responsive:<br>• Teacher develops language objectives in addition to content objectives, having specific goals in mind for students' linguistic performance<br>• Teacher articulates expectations for language use (e.g "I want you to use these vocabulary words in your discussion; I expect you to reply in a complete sentence" etc.)<br>• Teacher scaffolds students' language development as needed (sentence frames, sentence starters, etc.)<br>• Academic language is taught explicitly (identifying it in written passages, dissecting complex sentences, using mentor texts, creating "learning/language walls," etc.) | • Little attention is paid to learning academic vocabulary in the content area<br>• New words are taught outside of meaningful contexts<br>• Students are not taught independent word learning strategies<br>• Teacher does not articulate expectations for language use<br>• The teacher does not establish language objectives for students; only content objectives are evident<br>• Teacher does not scaffold students' language development<br>• No attention is given to the language used in particular disciplines; academic language is not addressed<br>• Students are evaluated on their use of academic discourse but it is never taught explicitly |

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| 12. The teacher uses instructional techniques that scaffold student learning | • Teacher uses a variety of teaching strategies to assist students in learning content (e.g., demonstrations, visuals, graphic organizers, reducing linguistic density, etc.)<br>• Teacher models, explains and demonstrates skills and concepts and provides appropriate scaffolding<br>• Teacher uses "comprehensible input" (e.g., gestures, familiar words and phrases, slower speech, etc.) to facilitate understanding when needed<br>• Teacher builds on students' knowledge of their home languages to teach English (e.g., cognates, letter-sound relationships, syntactic patterns) | • Teacher primarily uses traditional methods for teaching content (e.g., lecture, reading from a textbook) with few scaffolding strategies<br>• Teacher does not always model, explain and demonstrate new skills and concepts prior to asking students to apply them<br>• Teacher does not use visuals, comprehensible input etc. to facilitate understanding<br>• Teacher does not build upon students' home languages to teach terms, skills and concepts in English |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 13. Students have choices based upon their experiences, interests and strengths | • Students have multiple opportunities to choose texts, writing topics, and modes of expression based on preferences and personal relevance<br>• Students have some choice in assignments<br>• Students have some choice and ownership in what they are learning | • Teacher selects texts, writing topics, and modes of expression for students<br>• All assignments are teacher-initiated<br>• Students have no choice or ownership in topic of study or questions that will be addressed |

## 4. CRITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS
**Which classroom practices promote critical consciousness (and are therefore indicative of cultural responsiveness?)**

| CRI Indicator | For example, in a responsive classroom: | For example, in a non-responsive classroom: |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 14. The curriculum and planned learning experiences provide opportunities for the inclusion of issues important to the classroom, school and community | Generally Effective Practices:<br>• Students are engaged in experiences that develop awareness and provide opportunities to contribute, inform, persuade and have a voice in the classroom, school and beyond<br>• Community-based issues and projects are included in the planned program and new skills and concepts are linked to real-world problems and events<br>Practices that are Culturally Responsive:<br>• Students explore important contemporary issues (poverty, racism, global warming, human trafficking, animal cruelty, etc.)<br>• Teacher encourages students to investigate real-world issues related to a topic being studied and to become | • The focus of literacy and content instruction is to teach the skills and information required to "pass the test"; learning occurs only as it relates to the standard curriculum<br>• Teacher does not encourage critical thought or questioning of contemporary issues<br>• Teacher does not encourage application to real-world issues; accepts or endorses the status quo by ignoring or dismissing real life problems related to the topic being studied |

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| | | actively involved in solving problems at the local, state, national, and global levels | |
| 15. | The curriculum and planned learning experiences incorporate opportunities to confront negative stereotypes and biases | Practices that are Culturally Responsive:<br>• Teacher facilitates students' understanding of stereotypes and biases<br>• Teacher encourages students to examine biases in popular culture that students encounter in their daily lives (TV shows, advertising, popular songs, etc.)<br>• Teacher makes intentional use of multicultural literature to facilitate conversations about human differences<br>• As appropriate to the grade level being taught, teacher helps students to think about biases in texts (e.g., "Who has the power in this book? Whose perspectives are represented, and whose are missing? Who benefits from the beliefs and practices represented in this text?" etc.)<br>• As appropriate to the grade level being taught, teacher challenges students to deconstruct their own cultural assumptions and biases both in the formal and informal curriculum | • Teacher does not encourage students to examine biases in instructional materials or popular texts; texts are considered to be "neutral"<br>• Teacher never addresses issues related to human differences<br>• Teacher makes prejudicial statements to students (e.g., girls are emotional; immigrants don't belong here; etc.), and/or fails to challenge prejudicial statements of students |
| 16. | The curriculum and planned learning experiences integrate and provide opportunities for the expression of diverse perspectives | Generally Effective Practices:<br>• Students are encouraged to challenge the ideas in a text and to think at high levels<br>Practices that are Culturally Responsive:<br>• Texts include protagonists from diverse backgrounds and present ideas from multiple perspectives<br>• Students are encouraged to explore alternative viewpoints<br>• Opportunities are plentiful for students to present diverse perspectives through class discussions and other activities<br>• Students are encouraged to respectfully disagree with one another and to provide evidence to support their views | • The conventional, dominant point of view is presented and remains unchallenged<br>• Few texts are available to represent diverse protagonists or multiple perspectives<br>• Biased units of study are presented that show only the conventional point of view (e.g., Columbus discovered America) or that ignore other perspectives (e.g., a weather unit that does not include a discussion of global warming)<br>• No or very few texts are available with protagonists from diverse |

# Attachment 1: CRIOP coding manual (adapted from Powell et al, 2017) (4th ed)

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| | | cultural, linguistic, and/or socioeconomic backgrounds<br>• No opportunities are provided for students to learn about or to present diverse views |

| Theme | Sub-category | Examples from classroom observations |
|---|---|---|
| **Theme 1: Discourses** | Bi- and multilingual instruction implemented | • Bilingual strategies used in the mother tongue classes varied depending on the grade level; Some used both English and the mother tongue consistently and equally throughout the lesson, whereas others used mainly English or the mother tongue as instructional language, and then accompanied it with occasional bilingual support.<br>• Bilingualism also used when greeting, chatting or calming down student<br>• Bilingual scaffolding included gestural and visual aids, and also reduction of linguistic density.<br>• Assessments, tests and worksheet were also prepared in two languages, English and local. Students given the opportunity to choose which language they wanted to use.<br>• Individual language levels considered in designing differentiated worksheets and homework.<br>• Non-local students provided with enrichment classes in English and Math if they didn't participate in the 'local subject' classes. |
| | Equitable discourse practices identified | • Building a dialogue with the whole group, facilitating pair or group work, or applying inquiry based strategies.<br>• Employing strategies that promoted equal participation in the classroom discourse by deploying a collaborative story writing strategie where every student participated in generating new ideas and discussing next possible storylines, or by utilizing more traditional methods by assigning each student an equal opportunity to ask questions, provide an explanation, practice pronunciation, solve a math problem or write on the whiteboard. |
| **Theme 2: Classroom relations** | Caring classroom relations and equitable bonding practices identified | • Making efforts to bond with each student, especially upon student arrival to school.<br>• Using strategies such as referring to students by their names or nicknames, greeting each student personally every morning in the school yard, using individualized greeting routines upon the entry to the classroom,<br>• Communicating care non-verbally by using affirmative physical manners such as giving a touch on the shoulder or being open for a hug.<br>• Connecting with students' lives outside the classrooms by giving them opportunities to showcase their favorite toy, game or freetime activity, or by reading their own books for the whole classroom. |
| | High expectation for all student communicated | • Supporting students' thinking skills development by encouraging students to verbalise their thinking processes,<br>• Applying instruction that sought to develop students' ability to define, classify, compare and analyse information. (e.g. utilising a method called See-Think-Wonder, that enhanced students' thinking skills development)<br>• Fostering a "culture of learning" that encouraged students to actively participate, help one another, generate ideas and even give corrections.<br>• Giving encouraging feedback on learning skills, performance, individual efforts and behaviour throughout lessons |
| | Respect for diversity engendered | • Respect for and acceptance of diversity manifested in classrooms by discovering biological and cultural human differences and diversity through a theme 'human' across subjects. |

| | | |
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| | | ● Respectful teacher-student dialogue practices<br>● Classroom posters and discussion in students conflict situations encouraged to 'respect diversity' |
| | Student collaboration encouraged | ● Skills to interact, negotiate, make decisions in collaboration and engage in respectful dialogues were taught.<br>● Collaboration used as a learning method among the many.<br>● Students identified to engage in collaborate with each other without any external encouragement (e.g. when students were given individualized worksheets, theys sought to collaborate with someone who had similar assignments)<br>● Open and adaptable learning environment design strengthen students' active take on seeking to collaborate (possibilities to rearrange the seating)<br>● Flexibility and autonomy given to decide where, and with whom to study with |
| **Theme 3: Instructional practices** | Hands-on activities used & opportunities for student ownership in learning identified | ● Introducing inquiry-based projects<br>● Incorporating elements of arts and crafts to e.g. environmental sciences lessons<br>● Allowing opportunities for students to illustrate personal strengths and interests (e.g. in collaborative tasks, projects, or in individual writing assignments.<br>● Encouraging students to visualize and utilize their own unique thinking strategies (e.g. when solving and maths problems) |
| | Instruction contextualized in students' lives, experiences, and individual abilities | ● Applying sensitive pedagogies especially when it came to discussing religious matters.<br>● Utilizing students' lived experiences in learning by promoting high levels of student participation, (e.g. arranging sessions designated for students' questions) encouraged student inquiry (e.g. using student interest as starting points for projects) and by drawing from student lived experiences to form a comprehensive picture of the studied matter and a meaningful connection to the studied theme (e.g. by enforcing a dialogue and collaboration in defining and learning about new concepts through students' lived experiences and knowledge of the local life)<br>● Equity enhanced in classrooms through SEN support (individualised support given by SEN teacher on a weekly basis in each classroom and in small group sessions)<br>● Diversified learning material and instruction designed based on students' different competency levels |
| | Cultural heritages connected in learning | ● Connections made to foster student identities (e.g. using student lived experiences and 'All about me' -style posters), local language and religion (independent subjects) traditions and celebrations (included in schedules in monthly basis), nature, local livelihood and history (included in subject content and enforced in subject level frameworks), music and arts (incorporated in subjects)<br>● Intercultural competencies enhanced in Culture Club activities. Activities included creating a small fact sheet of a new country (United Arab Emirates), creating artwork illustrating country characteristics (Japan), discovering effects of human action and climate change (Australia) and playfully testing student knowledge about another country in Asia. |

| | Culturally diverse learning material and imagery identified | <ul><li>Utilizing a vast range of textbooks, self developed worksheets, presentations, games and other digital resources, of which some offered opportunities to build meaningful connections to the material in regards to cultural relevance.</li><li>Some posters and textbooks included imagery of diverse ethnicities (e.g. affirmative images of students of colour)</li><li>Photographs of the local country, its people, traditions and livelihood utilised in students learning assignments and art work.</li><li>Students' art work offered personalized look into students' identities and lives outside of school (e.g. full body self portraits, drawings and short stories of holiday experiences)</li><li>Locally relevant themes connected to the learning material (e.g. examining traditional local tools in an arts exercise; following a story of visiting a local fruit market in a math class; learning a local song in a music lesson; utilizing imagery of local nature and livelihood in mother tongue class.</li><li>Bilingualism visible in some of the classroom schedules and in the class library (the majority of the books and posters were in English)</li></ul> |
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# Thesis survey 2020
## Culturally responsive ja sustainable education export

Welcome to my master's thesis survey! I'm interested in hearing your thoughts around the theme of culture in education. This survey consists of open-ended questions, and it allows you more room for longer reflection.

You will be asked 17 questions around the following themes:
1. Work Experience and Educational Background
2. Cultural Diversity in the Classroom
3. Curriculum Localization
4. Learning Material
5. Learning Content and Instruction

This survey is conducted anonymously, and no personal data will be collected.

### Part One: Work Experience and Educational Background

1. How long have you worked as a teacher? *

2. And how long have you worked outside your primary home country? *

3. Has your education included studies on diversity or interculturality? If yes, please describe it in more detail. * Options: *Yes/No/Not sure*

4. Have you developed your competencies and knowledge around the themes of diversity and interculturality in some other ways? * Options: *Yes/No/Not sure*

5. Please describe what kind of professional development was this? (e.g. training arranged by the employer / self-financed training / independent professional development through literature) *

## Part Two: Cultural Diversity in the Classroom

Cultural diversity refers to the variety of unique features of and between individuals and communities. These can include ethnicity, cultural background, languages, gender, sexual orientation, religion, socio-economic background, traditions, habits and values. Diversity perspective reinforces individuals rights to self-definition and it seeks to avoid stereotypical views of communities.

*Definition: Holm & Zilliacus, 2010, p.23. In Talib, M. (2009). Dialogs on diversity and global education. Frankfurt am Main. New York: Peter Lang;  Hiltunen. Sanasto monikulttuurisuudesta. [Finnish glossary on multicultural terminology] Sanasto. Retrieved from:* https://taskuhanke.files.wordpress.com/2015/12/cultureforallsanasto.pdf*)*

6.  How is cultural diversity manifested in your classroom? *

7.  What kind of a role does cultural diversity plays in teaching and learning? *

8.  In which ways your cultural background influences your teaching (e.g. norms, values, attitudes) *

## Part Three: Curriculum Localization

In this section you will be asked questions about the process of curriculum localization. Curriculum localization is defined as a process in which parts or components of the curriculum are developed and adapted according to the needs of the local communities, cultural features, languages, environment and economic life.
*Definition: UNESCO International Bureau of Education.*

9.  Have you been involved in the design or development of your school's curriculum? If yes, please describe how. * Options: *Yes/No/Not sure*

10. How do you think cultural diversity is reflected in the curriculum? *

11. How are the cultural features of the local communities taken into account in the curriculum? (such as languages, knowledges, literature, history, customs, religions, traditions, festivities, arts, crafts) *

## Part Four: Learning Material

12. Could you describe the process of selecting learning material. Please also describe what you find important to consider when selecting learning material? *

13. What are the benefits of taking cultural diversity and local cultures into account in learning material? *

## Part Five: Learning Content and Instruction

14. In what ways students' lived experiences and cultural heritages can be utilized in the learning content? *

15. Could you describe the home-school collaboration. Describe also what advantages home-school collaboration can bring to teaching and learning? *

16. What kind of themes involving cultural awareness and intercultural communication have you incorporated in your teaching? *

17. How have students' linguistic backgrounds and bi-/multilingualism been considered in the teaching and assessment? *

## Thank you for you time and effort!

18. Was there something you wanted to add or perhaps discuss in more detail?

*You will be given a summary of your responses on the next page.*
*If you don't want to edit your answers, please click 'Finish'.*