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## ANNOTATION

Taylor, Teresa Maria. “From Aware to Action: A Case Study of Teachers Implementing Culturally Responsive Teaching.” EdD dissertation, Bethel University, 2017. 186 pp.

Dr. Taylor’s dissertation arises from the awareness that while schools in the USA are becoming more racially, ethnically and linguistically diverse, “the teaching force, mostly White, is not” (3). This fact, as the study states, has led to a higher incidence of academic failure among people belonging to minority groups.

This dissertation, developed under the qualitative paradigm and following a phenomenological case study design, aims to gain deeper knowledge of the experience of teachers implementing Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) in order to produce research grounded orientations and recommendations for PK-12 and higher education teachers and institutions as well as for teaching colleges and teacher training program designers. The teachers participating in the study are five PK-12 teachers who have completed graduate level Culturally Responsive Teaching programs (at Saint Mary’s University of Minnesota) and implement them in their classes; focusing on finding out how Culturally Responsive Teaching training has transformed their pedagogies and their theoretical awareness of their students’ diversity into actionable steps and practical changes in their classrooms.

The author lays out the current situation and historical change in American demographics (15-19, 22-28) of teachers and students and particularly those in the Minneapolis area. The contrast in the change rates seems stark and evident. Next, she draws from this situation the need for reflection and action in the field of teacher’s professional development, integrating to it, in particular, the notion of Culturally Responsive Teaching, which is described as “aiming at school success for students of diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds” (20); and she continues to reference multiple scholarly papers that recognize and support the importance of addressing racial and cultural issues in the classroom (20-22).

The dissertation addresses three questions: how teachers who have completed CRT programs define CRT and what their perspectives are after completing the program and the practices they’ve implemented as a result of such training (29-30).

The theoretical framework for this study encompasses theories such as Antiracism Theory, Critical Pedagogy, Critical Race Theory, Diversity Pedagogy Theory, Multicultural Education Theory and Culturally Responsive Teaching itself (34-47) and further enlists the characteristics of CRT as being: validating, comprehensive, multidimensional, empowering, transformative and emancipatory (49); characteristics that are anchored in teachers’ attitudes and expectations, cultural communication, a culturally diverse curriculum and culturally congruent instructional strategies (50-59).

Four techniques for data collection were used in this study (64-65): formal interviews, documents, reflections and reflective essays through which the participants shared their personal journeys and experiences in diverse classrooms, represented them with artifacts, photographs, pieces of art and other documents and provided personal reflections and interpretations (78-98).

Considering the 5 participants as individual cases in the study, a few themes emerged by comparing and contrasting their responses and elaborations. All five participants declared that CRT training and practice has made them more self-reflective; four among them believed their racial consciousness has been raised, making them “continuously examine their own cultural biases on concepts of power and White privilege” (103). All of them reported experiencing CRT as a personal journey, and that they’ve “adopted a culturally responsive mindset into their professional vocation. Specifically examining issues of race and culture related to personal and professional practices.”

Another convergence point among the five cases was the experience of becoming more relationship oriented as teachers, valuing the relationship with the students. Four of them specifically mentioned needing to “improve their commitment to students’ families.” All participants also talked about them becoming equity leaders and change agents, four of them even declared feeling called toward advocacy on behalf of their students (105).

The author defines as one of the key findings of her study that Culturally Responsive Teaching transformed the pedagogical practices of the participants from awareness into action when referring to diversity issues.

Teachers who have completed CRT programs all attest that they have changed their definitions of CRT. Two of them admit they didn’t even have one before going into the program (134). Their current definitions are reported in the dissertation as being more personally involving and still evolving but encompassing concepts like “Best practices for all students . . . emphasis on all,” “Culture and color matter!” “teaching scholars who do not look like her and honoring their stories” and not an “add-on” to teaching but “best practices for my students.”

After completing CRT programs, teachers’ perspectives changed in the way they think of CRT and its importance as well as their attention to the role of relationships in teaching, the value of cohorts and the challenges that may arise from colleagues who have not received this kind of training (135-141).

Regarding their practices, they reported reflecting on and implementing techniques to help students have a voice and be “successful as the leaders in the classroom” and developing new ideas inspired by questions such as “whose voices are missing, whose perspectives are not here, what research do I need to do to make sure the story is whole?” which led them to reexamination of curriculum and materials to “provide students with opportunities to learn about equitable (antiracist) education reform” as well as for “learning how to examine institutional policies and that impact one’s educational community (. . .) and the ability to affect change” (142-148).

The dissertation finalizes with recommendations for higher education institutions as well as PK-12 schools to develop collaborative relationships that allow for the development, strengthening, expansion and improvement of CRT programs and the awareness of their importance.

Future researchers might find interesting replicating the study analyzing and comparing the effects of different CRT programs, a larger sample or a sample that purposely selects culturally diverse teachers or pre-service teachers. It would also be interesting to do research on the students' perspective and experience of the changes in their teachers' attitudes and teaching after receiving CRT training.