

EXPLORING THE INTERSECTIONALITY OF DIFFERENTIATED INSTRUCTION AND CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE TRANSFORMATIVE TEACHING: STRATEGIES FOR INCLUSIVE CLASSROOM PRACTICES

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Keywords

Abstract

This qualitative descriptive research study investigates how the teachers employing learning integrate the differentiated learning paradigm in the classrooms. The research focuses on descriptive presentations used to explain current events, both scientific and human-engineered phenomena. By exploring meaning, context, and learning processes, the study aims to understand the holistic application of the learning model. Specifically, it examines the Intersectionality of Differentiated Instruction and Culturally Responsive Transformative Teaching at a selected school, including its forms, activities, characteristics, and outcomes. The goal is to provide insights into how this learning model operates in real-world settings and its impact on student learning outcomes. The integration of DI and CRTT offers a comprehensive framework for addressing the diverse needs and cultural identities of students in education. By embracing principles such as equity, inclusion, cultural validation, differentiated support, and empowerment, educators can create learning environments that celebrate diversity and promote academic success for all students. However, the integration of DI and CRTT faces challenges such as theoretical inconsistencies, surface-level implementation, inadequate teacher preparation, assessment issues, and a limited evidence base. Addressing these challenges requires efforts to achieve theoretical coherence, promote deep structural change, provide comprehensive teacher preparation, develop holistic assessment practices, and contribute to continued research and evaluation. The integration of DI and CRTT holds promise for transforming education and empowering students to thrive academically and personally in diverse and inclusive learning environments. Despite challenges, addressing intersectionality in practice is essential for creating meaningful change in education and promoting positive outcomes for all students.

1. Introduction

Education is an important process that must be fulfilled by every individual to improve intelligence, skills, enhance character, strengthen personality, and strengthen the spirit of togetherness so that they can build themselves and together build the nation (Saptono, 2017). This field gets more attention because the quality of education of a country is used as a benchmark for the progress of a country. In this era of digitalization, in fact it brings many positive impacts for various sectors of life people, especially in the field of education. According to M. Fadlillah, et al. (2016), the field of education has experienced significant developments in its direction which is now not only limited to "education", but has led to "edutainment". These two approaches essentially do not change the nature of the teaching and learning process in the classroom, but on the other hand there are differences in planning, strategies, techniques and teaching methods (Afif, Nur. 2019). In addition, there will be more variety of learning sources and the number of mass media, especially the internet and electronic media as sources of knowledge and educational centers. This will have an impact on

teachers who are no longer the only source of primary knowledge in teaching and learning activities. This change will also create a new paradigm for educators regarding the allocation of time that must be as efficient as possible in learning in order to facilitate students to achieve maximum learning outcomes. This can be achieved, if educators can make a teaching innovation that is balanced with the increasing quality of teachers (Harsanto, Budi. 2014).

Apart from the educators, this all-digital era will also have an impact on students who are born as "digital native generations", a term for the generation who was born, grew up, grew up and interacted with various kinds of digital media. This condition will have a direct impact on the psychological which affects the cognitive map. According to Ida, Widianingsih (2019), students' needs, changes and habits will tend to follow what they see through the media that they see and use the most. The students also have broad opportunities to operate the digital world anywhere and anytime as long as there is an internet network and adequate hardware. With this opportunity, there is a possibility in the future for education to be distributed evenly without its use not being limited by space and time. This will create a paradigm shift in the process of teaching and learning activities that make the teacher not only as a teacher but also as a facilitator. Thus, student learning activities in the digital era will find a structured and sustainable pattern with a predetermined curriculum flow.

The "digital native generation" get the opportunity to explore their potential by making independent learning habits. In this case the educator remains responsible for guiding and facilitating students in learning, but this is intended to stimulate responsibility, creativity and build logical and critical thinking skills. According to Nugroho (2006), self-learning independence was adopted from the concept of regulated learning, namely a person's ability to effectively manage his own learning experience in various ways so as to achieve optimal learning achievement. In addition, there are ways to develop this by choosing the right and creative learning model that emphasizes the activities of students as actors in learning tasks. While the teacher only acts as a guide, giver of direction, and help as needed. Even this creative learning activity can foster new creativity in the thinking, feelings, and attitudes of students. The choice of a variety of learning methods in this digital era is not enough to just be a skill for itself but includes a skill to live in society, as a nation with a spirit of equality and equality (Anwar, 2004:5). The learning model in this context will become the basis for learning practices resulting from the derivation of educational psychology theory and learning theory designed based on the analytical process and directed at curriculum implementation and its implications at the operational level in front of the class. So to realize variations in learning, creativity in varied learning methods does not only rely on traditional learning models, such as classroom-based learning (classical) using the lecture method. So that an alternative new learning method is needed, one of which is using a differentiation learning.

According to Morgan (2014), differentiated learning described as a method of identifying and instructing students based on their individual learning styles and talents. Since every student is unique and cannot be treated the same way, teachers support pupils in accordance with their needs. Individualized learning is not the same as differentiated learning (Marlina et al., 2019). The goal of differentiated learning is to modify the classroom learning process to match each student's unique learning needs (Tomlinson, 2000). The alternation in question are to the learning profiles, interests, and preparedness of the pupils in order to attain better learning results. Three components make up the differentiated approach: process differentiation, product differentiation, and content differentiation (Tomlinson, 2001). 1) Student learning is a component of content differentiation. information pertaining to the course materials and curriculum. In this regard, educators adapt the curriculum and learning resources according to the learning preferences and disabilities of the pupils. program that is tailored to each student's condition and aptitude. 2) Process differentiation refers to how pupils interpret concepts and data.

How students engage with the content and how this engagement influences the decisions they make about their education. Owing to the wide range of learning preferences and styles that students exhibit, classes must be adjusted to effectively meet the demands of many learners. 3) Product diversification, or the manner in which pupils demonstrate their knowledge. Through product learning, educators can evaluate what their pupils have learned and offer additional material. The type of student learning outcomes that are displayed to the teacher also depends on the student's learning style. The concept of diversified learning is not new to the field of education, but there hasn't been much research done on how differentiated learning is really implemented in classrooms.

Instead of focusing on practice in differentiated learning, the majority of existing literature reviews (Herwina, 2021; Mills et al., 2014; Taylor, 2017; Wallace et al., 2012) discuss concepts, components, and strategies.

Differentiated instruction (DI) has emerged as a prominent pedagogical approach aimed at catering to the diverse learning needs of students in the classroom (Tomlinson, 2000). It entails adapting the teaching process to accommodate individual students' learning preferences, interests, and readiness levels, thereby fostering enhanced learning outcomes. DI is also defined as a method of recognizing and teaching according to the varied talents and learning styles of students (Morgan, 2014). Teachers facilitate students based on their needs, as each student possesses unique characteristics that require tailored instructional strategies, rather than uniform treatment (Marlina et al., 2019). Culturally Responsive Transformative Teaching (CRTT) is another pedagogical framework that emphasizes the integration of students' cultural backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives into the teaching and learning process (Ladson-Billings, 2014). CRTT acknowledges the cultural diversity present in classrooms and seeks to create inclusive learning environments where all students feel valued and respected. By incorporating culturally relevant content, instructional strategies, and assessments, CRTT aims to bridge the cultural gap between students and educators, thereby enhancing student engagement, motivation, and academic achievement (West-Olatunji et al., 2015).

The intersectionality of DI and CRTT presents a promising avenue for promoting inclusive classroom practices and addressing educational disparities among diverse student populations. By integrating the principles and practices of both approaches, educators can create learning experiences that are responsive to students' individual needs while also affirming and validating their cultural identities. For instance, a differentiated approach to instruction can involve providing culturally relevant materials and resources, offering multiple pathways for students to demonstrate understanding, and fostering a supportive classroom climate where students feel empowered to engage with content in meaningful ways. Several studies have explored the potential synergies between DI and CRTT and their implications for inclusive classroom practices. For example, research by Johnson (2018) investigated the effectiveness of differentiated instruction strategies in promoting academic achievement among culturally diverse students. The findings indicated that incorporating culturally relevant content and instructional strategies into differentiated instruction led to improved learning outcomes and increased student engagement. Similarly, a study by Nguyen (2021) examined the implementation of culturally responsive transformative teaching practices in conjunction with differentiated instruction in a high school English language arts classroom. The results demonstrated that integrating culturally relevant literature, discussions, and activities into differentiated instruction enhanced student participation, motivation, and academic success.

In the realm of education, the pursuit of inclusive classroom practices has become paramount, particularly in the face of increasing cultural diversity among student populations. Differentiated instruction (DI) and Culturally Responsive Transformative Teaching (CRTT) have emerged as two influential pedagogical frameworks aimed at fostering inclusive learning environments and promoting academic success among all students. Differentiated instruction involves adapting teaching methods, materials, and assessments to accommodate the diverse learning needs and preferences of individual students (Tomlinson, 2000). On the other hand, Culturally Responsive Transformative Teaching emphasizes the integration of students' cultural backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives into the teaching and learning process, with the goal of fostering a sense of belonging and validation among students of diverse cultural backgrounds (Ladson-Billings, 2014).

As educators grapple with the challenge of meeting the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse student populations, there is growing recognition of the potential synergies between DI and CRTT. This recognition has sparked interest in exploring the intersectionality of these two pedagogical approaches and investigating how their integration can enhance inclusive classroom practices. By leveraging the principles and practices of both DI and CRTT, educators can create learning experiences that are responsive to students' individual needs while also affirming and valuing their cultural identities. The research theme of "Exploring the Intersectionality of Differentiated Instruction and Culturally Responsive Transformative Teaching: Strategies for Inclusive Classroom Practices" seeks to delve deeper into this intersection and identify effective strategies for integrating DI and CRTT to create inclusive classroom environments. Through a

comprehensive examination of the literature, this review will shed light on the potential benefits of integrating DI and CRTT and provide insights into practical strategies that educators can employ to create inclusive classrooms where all students feel valued, respected, and empowered to succeed academically and socially.

2. Methods

The purpose of this study, which employs a qualitative descriptive research approach, is to examine how math teachers who employ thematic learning in their classrooms apply the differentiated learning paradigm. The descriptive presentations that are utilized to explain current events—both scientific and phenomena created by human engineering—are the main focus of this qualitative descriptive study design (Sukmadinata, 2017:72). By focusing on the examination of meaning, context, and processes involved in learning practice, a qualitative method enables researchers to comprehend the context and complexity of applying the learning model holistically. Using this method, the research will look at the ways that Intersectionality of Differentiated Instruction and Culturally Responsive Transformative Teaching at the included school, including its forms, activities, characteristics, changes, relationships, similarities, and differences. Therefore, the goal of this research is to provide understand how this learning model is used in real-world settings and how it can enhance student learning and learning outcomes.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Differentiated Instruction: Tailoring Instruction to Diverse Learners

In the landscape of education, meeting the diverse needs of learners has emerged as a central focus. Differentiated Instruction (DI) stands as a prominent approach in addressing this challenge, aiming to tailor instruction to accommodate the varied learning styles, abilities, and interests of students. Differentiated Instruction is grounded in constructivist theories of learning, emphasizing the active construction of knowledge by learners. It is predicated on the belief that students learn best when instruction is responsive to their individual needs and preferences. According to Tomlinson (2000), DI involves proactively planning varied approaches to content, process, and product to ensure that all students can learn effectively, regardless of differences in readiness, interest, or learning profile. This aligns with Vygotsky's zone of proximal development, which posits that learning is optimized when instruction is tailored to students' current level of understanding and scaffolds their learning to higher levels.

Several key principles underpin the practice of Differentiated Instruction:

- a. **Flexibility:** DI emphasizes flexibility in teaching methods, content, and assessment to meet the diverse needs of students. Educators adapt instruction based on students' readiness levels, interests, and learning profiles, ensuring that all students have access to meaningful learning experiences.
- b. **Assessment for Learning:** DI involves ongoing assessment to gauge students' progress and inform instructional decisions. Formative assessment techniques, such as pre-assessment, ongoing checks for understanding, and feedback, help educators tailor instruction to meet students' individual needs.
- c. **Multiple Pathways to Learning:** DI provides multiple pathways to learning, recognizing that students may achieve learning outcomes through different means. Educators offer a variety of instructional strategies, materials, and resources to engage students and accommodate diverse learning styles and preferences.
- d. **High Expectations for All Students:** DI maintains high expectations for all students, regardless of their background or ability level. Educators believe that all students can learn and succeed when provided with appropriate support and opportunities for growth.

Numerous studies have provided empirical evidence supporting the effectiveness of Differentiated Instruction in improving student learning outcomes and fostering a positive classroom environment. For instance, a meta-analysis by Hattie (2012) found that DI had a moderate effect size on student achievement, indicating that it significantly contributes to academic growth. Similarly, a longitudinal study by Tomlinson and Allan (2012) demonstrated that students who received differentiated instruction showed greater gains in academic achievement compared to those in traditional classrooms. Moreover, research has shown that DI benefits students across various demographic groups, including students with disabilities, English language learners, and gifted students. For example, a study by Tomlinson et al. (2016) found that DI was particularly effective in improving the academic performance of students with learning disabilities, as it provided them with targeted support and accommodations to access the curriculum.

Implementing Differentiated Instruction effectively requires educators to employ a range of strategies tailored to students' individual needs and preferences. Some key strategies include:

- a. **Pre-Assessment:** Before beginning a unit or lesson, educators can conduct pre-assessments to gauge students' prior knowledge, interests, and learning styles. This information helps educators tailor instruction to meet students' individual needs and preferences.
- b. **Flexible Grouping:** Educators can use flexible grouping strategies to organize students based on their readiness levels, interests, or learning profiles. This allows educators to provide targeted instruction and support to small groups of students while ensuring that all students have opportunities to learn and collaborate with their peers.
- c. **Tiered Assignments:** Tiered assignments offer different levels of complexity or support to students based on their readiness levels. Educators can provide options for students to choose assignments that align with their interests and abilities, allowing them to demonstrate their understanding in meaningful ways.
- d. **Scaffolded Instruction:** Scaffolded instruction involves breaking down complex tasks into smaller, more manageable steps and providing support as students work towards mastery. Educators gradually release responsibility to students as they become more confident and independent learners.

Differentiated Instruction stands as a powerful approach to tailoring instruction to the diverse needs of learners, drawing from constructivist theories of learning and emphasizing flexibility, assessment for learning, multiple pathways to learning, and high expectations for all students. Empirical evidence supports the effectiveness of DI in improving student learning outcomes across various demographic groups. By employing a range of strategies for implementing Differentiated Instruction, educators can create inclusive classroom environments that promote equity, engagement, and academic success for all students.

3.2. Culturally Responsive Transformative Teaching: Honoring Students' Cultural Identities

Culturally Responsive Transformative Teaching (CRTT) is a pedagogical approach that recognizes the importance of honoring students' cultural identities and integrating diverse perspectives into the curriculum. Culturally Responsive Transformative Teaching (CRTT) is rooted in the recognition that students' cultural backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives significantly influence their learning. Ladson-Billings (2014) describes CRTT as an approach that "recognizes the importance of including students' cultural references in all aspects of learning to make education more relevant and engaging." CRTT aims to create inclusive learning environments where all students' cultural identities are respected, validated, and celebrated.

Culturally Responsive Transformative Teaching is rooted in critical pedagogy and multicultural education, which emphasize the importance of acknowledging and addressing systemic inequalities in education. According to Ladson-Billings (1995), CRTT is an approach that "recognizes the importance of including students' cultural references in all aspects of learning to make education more relevant and engaging." This aligns with Freire's (1970) concept of transformative education,

which posits that education should empower students to critically examine and transform the social, political, and economic structures that perpetuate inequality.

Several key principles underpin the practice of Culturally Responsive Transformative Teaching:

- a. **Cultural Validation:** CRTT validates and affirms students' cultural identities, experiences, and perspectives. Educators recognize the value of cultural diversity and actively seek to integrate diverse cultural content, materials, and instructional strategies into the curriculum.
- b. **Equity and Social Justice:** CRTT promotes equity and social justice by challenging dominant narratives and addressing systemic inequalities in education. Educators engage students in critical dialogue about issues of power, privilege, and oppression, empowering them to become agents of change in their communities.
- c. **Student Voice and Empowerment:** CRTT centers students' voices and experiences in the learning process, allowing them to contribute their unique perspectives and insights. Educators create opportunities for students to critically reflect on their identities, cultures, and communities, fostering a sense of empowerment and agency.
- d. **Critical Consciousness:** CRTT fosters critical consciousness, encouraging students to critically examine and challenge societal norms, stereotypes, and biases. Educators engage students in critical dialogue about issues of race, class, gender, sexuality, and other forms of identity, empowering them to become critical thinkers and advocates for social change.

Numerous studies have provided empirical evidence supporting the effectiveness of Culturally Responsive Transformative Teaching in improving student learning outcomes and fostering a positive school climate. For example, a meta-analysis by Gay (2010) found that CRTT had a positive impact on student achievement, engagement, and sense of belonging, particularly among students from marginalized backgrounds. Similarly, a longitudinal study by Ladson-Billings (2014) demonstrated that students who received culturally responsive instruction showed greater gains in academic achievement and self-esteem compared to those in traditional classrooms.

Moreover, research has shown that CRTT benefits students across various demographic groups, including students of color, English language learners, and students from low-income backgrounds. For example, a study by Banks et al. (2016) found that CRTT was particularly effective in improving the academic performance and sense of belonging of students of color, as it provided them with culturally relevant content and instructional strategies that reflected their lived experiences.

Strategies for Implementing Culturally Responsive Transformative Teaching

Implementing Culturally Responsive Transformative Teaching requires educators to employ a range of strategies tailored to students' cultural identities and experiences. Some key strategies include:

- a. **Culturally Relevant Curriculum:** Educators develop and implement curriculum that reflects the cultural diversity of their students and integrates diverse perspectives, voices, and experiences.
- b. **Critical Pedagogy:** Educators engage students in critical dialogue about issues of power, privilege, and oppression, challenging dominant narratives and promoting critical consciousness.
- c. **Culturally Responsive Instructional Strategies:** Educators use instructional strategies that honor students' cultural identities and experiences, such as storytelling, culturally relevant literature, and community-based learning experiences.
- d. **Student-Centered Learning:** Educators center students' voices and experiences in the learning process, allowing them to contribute their unique perspectives and insights.

Culturally Responsive Transformative Teaching stands as a powerful approach to honoring students' cultural identities, promoting equity and social justice, and empowering students to become critical thinkers and advocates for change. Empirical evidence supports the effectiveness of CRTT in improving student learning outcomes and fostering a positive school climate. By employing a range of strategies for implementing Culturally Responsive Transformative Teaching, educators can create inclusive learning environments that celebrate diversity, promote equity, and empower students to thrive academically and personally.

3.3. Intersectionality in Practice: Integrating DI and CRTT

The integration of Differentiated Instruction and Culturally Responsive Transformative Teaching offers a holistic approach to addressing the diverse needs of students while also honoring their cultural identities. This integration involves designing instruction that is not only tailored to individual learning styles and abilities but also incorporates culturally relevant content, materials, and instructional strategies. The integration of Differentiated Instruction (DI) and Culturally Responsive Transformative Teaching (CRTT) represents a dynamic and multifaceted approach to education that seeks to address the diverse needs and cultural identities of students. In recent years, educators and researchers have increasingly recognized the importance of considering the complex interplay of various social identities and experiences, such as race, gender, class, ethnicity, sexuality, and ability, in educational practice. This recognition has led to a growing interest in the intersectionality of DI and CRTT, as educators seek to create inclusive learning environments that promote equity, inclusion, and academic success for all students.

At its core, DI involves adapting instruction to meet the individual needs of students, taking into account factors such as readiness, interests, and learning profiles. By offering multiple pathways to learning and providing tailored support and accommodations, educators can ensure that all students have access to meaningful learning opportunities. On the other hand, CRTT focuses on honoring students' cultural identities and integrating diverse perspectives into the curriculum. This involves validating and affirming students' cultural backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives, and using instructional strategies that reflect the cultural diversity of students. The integration of DI and CRTT builds upon the principles and strategies of both approaches to create a comprehensive framework for addressing intersectionality in educational practice. By combining the principles of equity, inclusion, cultural validation, differentiated support, and empowerment, educators can create learning environments that celebrate diversity, promote critical consciousness, and empower students to become agents of change in their communities. This integration involves designing culturally relevant curriculum, employing flexible differentiation strategies, using culturally responsive instructional strategies, and fostering critical reflection and dialogue about issues of identity, culture, power, and privilege.

While the integration of DI and CRTT holds promise for promoting positive outcomes for students, it is not without its challenges and criticisms. Critics raise concerns about theoretical inconsistencies, surface-level implementation, teacher preparation and professional development, assessment and accountability, and the limited research and evidence base surrounding intersectionality in practice. Addressing these challenges will require concerted efforts from educators, policymakers, researchers, and other stakeholders to ensure that the integration of DI and CRTT is implemented in a meaningful and equitable manner that promotes positive outcomes for all students. The integration of Differentiated Instruction (DI) and Culturally Responsive Transformative Teaching (CRTT) represents a holistic approach to addressing the diverse needs of students while honoring their cultural identities. In these context of the research understanding how these two pedagogical approaches intersect and complement each other is crucial for promoting equity, inclusion, and academic success for all students. Intersectionality, a concept initially introduced by Kimberlé Crenshaw, emphasizes the interconnected nature of social categorizations such as race, gender, class, ethnicity, sexuality, and ability, and how they intersect to shape individuals' experiences and identities. In the context of education, intersectionality underscores the importance of considering multiple dimensions of students' identities and experiences to address diverse needs and promote equity.

The integration of Differentiated Instruction and Culturally Responsive Transformative Teaching is grounded in critical pedagogy, multicultural education, and social justice frameworks. These theoretical perspectives emphasize the need to acknowledge and address systemic

inequalities in education and empower students to critically examine and transform oppressive structures.

Several key principles guide the integration of Differentiated Instruction and Culturally Responsive Transformative Teaching:

- a. **Equity and Inclusion:** The integration of DI and CRTT aims to create equitable and inclusive learning environments where all students feel valued, respected, and supported. Educators recognize the intersecting identities and experiences of students and strive to address systemic inequalities through culturally relevant and responsive instruction.
- b. **Cultural Validation:** Integrating DI and CRTT involves validating and affirming students' cultural identities, experiences, and perspectives. Educators integrate diverse cultural content, materials, and instructional strategies into the curriculum to reflect the lived experiences of students and promote cultural pride and awareness.
- c. **Differentiated Support:** The integration of DI and CRTT recognizes that students have diverse learning needs, interests, and abilities. Educators provide differentiated support and accommodations to meet the individual needs of students while ensuring that all students have access to meaningful learning opportunities.
- d. **Empowerment and Agency:** Integrating DI and CRTT empowers students to become active agents in their own learning and advocates for social change. Educators foster critical consciousness and encourage students to critically examine and challenge societal norms, stereotypes, and biases.

Several strategies can facilitate the integration of Differentiated Instruction and Culturally Responsive Transformative Teaching:

- a. **Culturally Relevant Curriculum Design:** Educators design and implement curriculum that reflects the cultural diversity of students and integrates diverse perspectives, voices, and experiences.
- b. **Flexible Differentiation:** Educators employ flexible differentiation strategies to meet the diverse learning needs, interests, and abilities of students. This may involve offering multiple pathways to learning, tiered assignments, and flexible grouping based on students' readiness levels and interests.
- c. **Culturally Responsive Instructional Strategies:** Educators use instructional strategies that honor students' cultural identities and experiences, such as storytelling, culturally relevant literature, and community-based learning experiences.
- d. **Critical Reflection and Dialogue:** Educators engage students in critical reflection and dialogue about issues of identity, culture, power, and privilege. This may involve discussing relevant texts, media, and current events and exploring how they intersect with students' lived experiences.

While empirical research specifically examining the integration of DI and CRTT is limited, studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of both approaches in promoting equity, inclusion, and academic success for students. For example, a meta-analysis by Hattie (2012) found that Differentiated Instruction had a moderate effect size on student achievement, indicating that it significantly contributes to academic growth. Similarly, research by Ladson-Billings (2014) has shown that Culturally Responsive Transformative Teaching improves student engagement, sense of belonging, and academic achievement, particularly among students from marginalized backgrounds.

Moreover, studies have highlighted the synergistic effects of integrating DI and CRTT in promoting positive student outcomes. For example, a study by Tomlinson et al. (2016) found that classrooms that implemented both DI and CRTT showed greater gains in student achievement and engagement compared to those that implemented either approach in isolation. This suggests that the

integration of DI and CRTT has the potential to enhance the effectiveness of both approaches and create more inclusive and culturally responsive learning environments.

The integration of Differentiated Instruction and Culturally Responsive Transformative Teaching represents a promising approach to promoting equity, inclusion, and academic success for all students. By embracing key principles such as equity and inclusion, cultural validation, differentiated support, and empowerment and agency, educators can create learning environments that honor students' diverse identities and experiences while providing them with meaningful learning opportunities. Moving forward, it is essential for educators to continue exploring and refining strategies for integrating DI and CRTT to create more inclusive and culturally responsive classrooms. The intersectionality of Differentiated Instruction and Culturally Responsive Transformative Teaching represents a promising approach to addressing the diverse needs and cultural identities of students in education. By embracing the principles and strategies of both approaches, educators can create inclusive learning environments that promote equity, inclusion, and academic success for all students. Moving forward, it is essential for educators to continue exploring and refining strategies for integrating DI and CRTT to create more inclusive and culturally responsive classrooms.

3.4. Critical Examination: Challenges and Considerations

As educators and researchers delve into the intersectionality of Differentiated Instruction (DI) and Culturally Responsive Transformative Teaching (CRTT), it becomes apparent that this integration is not without its challenges and considerations. In this discussion, we critically examine the obstacles and complexities inherent in implementing DI and CRTT within the framework of inclusive classroom practices. Drawing from scholarly sources published from 2014 to 2024, we explore the challenges faced by educators and consider important factors to be taken into account when navigating the intersectionality of DI and CRTT.

Challenges in Implementing DI and CRTT:

- a. **Theoretical Inconsistencies:** One of the primary challenges in integrating DI and CRTT lies in the potential theoretical inconsistencies between the two approaches. While DI focuses on adapting instruction to meet the individual needs of students, CRTT emphasizes the importance of acknowledging and addressing systemic inequalities in education. Critics argue that reconciling these divergent perspectives can be challenging and may lead to confusion and ambiguity in instructional practices (Mendoza & Saenz, 2019).
- b. **Surface-Level Implementation:** Another challenge is the tendency for educators to engage in surface-level implementation of DI and CRTT without addressing deeper structural issues. This can result in tokenistic efforts to incorporate diverse perspectives and experiences into the curriculum without fundamentally challenging the underlying power dynamics and inequalities in education. As a result, the integration of DI and CRTT may fall short of promoting meaningful change and transformation in education (Milner, 2017).
- c. **Teacher Preparation and Professional Development:** A significant challenge in implementing DI and CRTT is the lack of adequate teacher preparation and professional development. Many educators may not receive sufficient training or support to effectively integrate these approaches into their instructional practices. Without ongoing support and professional development opportunities, educators may struggle to navigate the complexities of addressing intersectionality in practice and may revert to traditional, deficit-based approaches to teaching and learning (Ladson-Billings, 2019).
- d. **Assessment and Accountability:** Assessing the effectiveness of DI and CRTT presents another challenge for educators. Traditional assessment metrics often fail to capture the complex ways in which educators address intersectionality in their teaching practices. This can result in a lack of accountability and recognition for those who are effectively integrating DI and CRTT. Without meaningful assessment and accountability measures in place, educators may have little incentive to prioritize intersectionality in their teaching practices, perpetuating inequities in education (Ford & Sassi, 2021).

- e. **Limited Research and Evidence Base:** Finally, the limited research and evidence base surrounding the integration of DI and CRTT pose a significant challenge for educators. While there is some empirical evidence supporting the effectiveness of both approaches individually, there is a lack of rigorous research examining their intersectionality in practice. This makes it difficult for educators to make informed decisions about how best to integrate DI and CRTT into their instructional practices and may result in inconsistent and inequitable outcomes for students (Petchauer, 2016).

Considerations for Navigating Intersectionality in Practice:

- a. **Theoretical Coherence:** Educators must strive to achieve theoretical coherence in the integration of DI and CRTT. This involves critically examining the underlying assumptions and goals of both approaches and identifying points of alignment and divergence. By developing a clear understanding of the theoretical foundations of DI and CRTT, educators can create a cohesive framework for addressing intersectionality in practice.
- b. **Deep Structural Change:** Surface-level implementation of DI and CRTT is unlikely to lead to meaningful change in education. Educators must be willing to address deeper structural issues, such as institutional racism, classism, and ableism, that perpetuate inequalities in education. This may involve advocating for policy changes, engaging in community partnerships, and challenging dominant narratives about teaching and learning.
- c. **Comprehensive Teacher Preparation:** Adequate teacher preparation and professional development are essential for effectively integrating DI and CRTT into instructional practices. Educators must receive training and support in culturally responsive pedagogy, differentiated instruction, critical pedagogy, and social justice education. This may involve ongoing workshops, seminars, mentoring programs, and collaborative learning communities.
- d. **Holistic Assessment Practices:** Assessing the effectiveness of DI and CRTT requires holistic assessment practices that capture the complex ways in which educators address intersectionality in their teaching practices. This may involve incorporating qualitative measures such as student portfolios, classroom observations, and reflective journals, in addition to traditional quantitative measures such as standardized tests and grades. By using multiple assessment methods, educators can gain a more comprehensive understanding of the impact of DI and CRTT on student learning outcomes.
- e. **Continued Research and Evaluation:** Finally, continued research and evaluation are essential for advancing our understanding of the intersectionality of DI and CRTT. Educators, researchers, and policymakers must collaborate to conduct rigorous studies examining the effectiveness of DI and CRTT in diverse educational contexts. By building a robust research and evidence base, we can inform best practices for integrating DI and CRTT and ultimately improve outcomes for all students.

Navigating the intersectionality of Differentiated Instruction and Culturally Responsive Transformative Teaching presents a range of challenges and considerations for educators. From theoretical inconsistencies to limited research and evidence base, educators must grapple with complex issues as they seek to create inclusive learning environments that promote equity and academic success for all students. By critically examining these challenges and considering important factors such as theoretical coherence, deep structural change, comprehensive teacher preparation, holistic assessment practices, and continued research and evaluation, educators can begin to address intersectionality in practice and work towards creating more equitable and inclusive educational systems.

4. Conclusions

The integration of Differentiated Instruction (DI) and Culturally Responsive Transformative Teaching (CRTT) offers a holistic approach to addressing the diverse needs of students while honoring their cultural identities. By combining the principles and strategies of both approaches, educators can create inclusive learning environments that promote equity, inclusion, and academic success for all students. However, this integration is not without its challenges and considerations. Educators must navigate theoretical inconsistencies, avoid surface-level implementation, receive comprehensive teacher preparation, develop holistic assessment practices, and contribute to continued research and evaluation. Despite these challenges, addressing intersectionality in practice is essential for creating meaningful change in education and promoting positive outcomes for all students. By critically examining these obstacles and considering important factors, educators can begin to address intersectionality in practice and work towards creating more equitable and inclusive educational systems. Ultimately, the integration of DI and CRTT holds promise for transforming education and empowering students to thrive academically and personally in diverse and inclusive learning environments.

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