

# Effective Communication and Culturally Responsive Leadership

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**Abstract:-** Lately, literature and research in the United States have reported that culturally responsive leadership has become predominant because the increasing diversity in public schools has brought us to a critical juncture. A cultural gap exists between students from diverse backgrounds and their white middle-class teachers, leading to a mismatch in the delivered curricula, leaving many students feeling disconnected, disengaged, and uninterested in the educational process. These emotions can have profound and long-lasting effects particularly due to language and verbal participation structures. Thus, a factor of communication that enhances culturally responsive leadership has been found to enable students' achievement in schools in the US because culturally responsive leadership involves integrating leadership philosophies, practices, and policies to create an inclusive educational environment for students and parents from diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds. This entails understanding that communication is a complex process that encompasses words, intentions, contexts, histories, and attitudes. As school leaders navigate the complex landscape of modern education, their communication skills become not just desirable but truly critical for any leader to enhance culturally responsive among students and teachers. Thus, this paper recommends School leaders must find ways to bridge language gaps to ensure teaching and learning difficulties in communicating effectively across languages between teachers and students. It is paramount for principals to demonstrate excellent communication skills for listening to and interacting within the teaching and learning process to enhance student achievement effective communication and culturally responsive leadership.

**Keywords:-** *Culturally Responsive, Communication, Leadership, Schools and Student's Achievement.*

## I. INTRODUCTION

As education continues to hold great importance in the socio-economic development of nations, several factors are a determinant for acquiring the aims and objectives of schools, globally. Lately, among such factors is the flow of communication which enhances culturally responsive leadership to enable students' achievement in schools, especially in developed countries. According to literature and research in the United States, culturally responsive leadership has become predominant (Davy, 2016). This teaching

strategy was inspired by earlier anthropological research that found a cultural mismatch in language and verbal engagement patterns between students from culturally diverse backgrounds and their white middle-class teachers (Johnson, 2014). A 2019 online research from American University's School of Education states that there has been a turning point in the rise in diversity in public schools. Racial and ethnic minorities made up the majority of students in the US public school system for the first time in history. Since then, there has been a steady rise in the variety of classrooms across the country. Nevertheless, the curricula taught in those classrooms diverge, which causes a number of students to feel disengaged, detached, and uninterested in the learning process—emotions that can have serious, lifelong consequences (School of Education, American University, 2019).

Culturally sensitive teaching is an effective tool for bridging the diverse backgrounds of students and the teaching content taught in the classroom. School administrators and teachers can collaborate to develop and implement a culturally responsive curriculum that will effectively engage all learners and promote the success of every student. A few examples of the various kinds of CRI are culturally and historically responsive frameworks, culturally responsive education, and culturally relevant pedagogy. Improving the educational experiences and results of all students especially those who have historically been marginalized in the educational system is the goal of culturally responsive leadership, which is frequently linked to social justice programs. Culturally responsive leadership, according to Johnson & Fuller (2015), requires leadership philosophies, practices, and policies that support inclusive learning environments for parents and kids from a variety of backgrounds.

In addition, culturally responsive pedagogy forms the cornerstone of culturally responsive leadership. It emphasizes the establishment of high-performance standards for students by integrating the history, values, and cultural knowledge of their home communities into the curriculum. This approach cultivates a critical awareness among both students and faculty, prompting them to challenge societal injustices. At the school and district levels, it establishes organizational structures that empower parents and students from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds (Johnson & Fuller, 2015). In essence, culturally sensitive school administrators prioritize high academic standards for students, demonstrate a caring

ethos, promote inclusive teaching methods, and establish institutional frameworks that actively involve parents and the broader community in the school's life.

Selecting and supporting the leadership team is a crucial part of the school board's planning process. The leadership team plays a key role in shaping the district's future in line with the community's best interests (Gratto & Little, 2002). Experts in education consider the appointment of the superintendent as the most critical function of a school board, as it connects the board's educational vision with the practical means to achieve those goals (Glass, 2001). Recent research shows that the entire leadership team in a district significantly influences its direction and performance (Gabbadon, 2024; Phillips & Phillips, 2007). It's vital for the board to be involved in selecting principals, supervisors, and the superintendent to position the district for success in the future.

Early research has highlighted the importance of culturally responsive principals, who are known for prioritizing high expectations for student academic achievement, demonstrating an ethic of care or "empowerment through care," and maintaining strong connections to the broader community (Reitzig & Patterson, 1998; Scheurich, 1998; Johnson, 2006; 2007).

Furthermore, it is essential to recognize that educational inequity is deeply intertwined with economic challenges and societal issues that often surpass the control of schools (Davy, 2016). According to Gorski (2013), while schools may not be able to eradicate such inequity entirely, by identifying key needs of the most economically disadvantaged and culturally diverse students, school leaders, in collaboration with community organizations and the education community, can work to address some of these students' needs. This approach can significantly increase the likelihood of these vulnerable students reaching their full potential (Gorski, 2013). The timelier the intervention occurs, the greater its potential for creating a lasting impact on a child's future.

According to various academic sources, a considerable body of evidence suggests that a significant number of marginalized students consistently underperform compared to their peers from mainstream backgrounds, despite there being no discernible difference in mental aptitude or intellectual ability among children from diverse racial, cultural, or socioeconomic backgrounds prior to their formal schooling (Horsford, Grosland & Gunn, 2011). This persistent "achievement gap" is frequently defined by disparities in academic performance, as reflected in standardized test scores, grades, and graduation rates between students of color and middle-class, White children (El Ganzoury, 2012; Kugler & West-Burns, 2010; Smith, 2005). Notably, some researchers, such as Gilborn (2008), argue compellingly that this gap does not stem from a lack of ability among marginalized students, but rather results from unfair assessment strategies and systemic inequities deeply embedded within the educational system. Regrettably, due to the pressure placed on principals to elevate standardized test

scores, they often find themselves with limited motivation and resources to effectively address the specific and unique needs of marginalized students (Johnson, 2007; Young, 2010). This complex issue merits a comprehensive and targeted approach to bridge the gap in the educational outcomes of marginalized students.

## **II. THE CLASSICAL THEORY OF COMMUNICATION- HAROLD LASSWELL (1948)**

The Classical Theory of Communication, introduced by Harold Lasswell in 1948, provides a comprehensive framework for understanding communication as a process involving a source, a message, a channel, a receiver, and feedback. This theory, with its emphasis on key questions such as "Who says what? In which channel? To whom? With what effects?" has been widely embraced for its straightforwardness and its alignment with hierarchical organizational structures. According to the Classical theory of communication, the process can be broken down into a series of distinct components, including a source, a message, a channel, a receiver, and feedback (Pepper, 1994). However, it is essential to acknowledge the limitations of this theory in accurately capturing the complex nature of communication, particularly in conveying and preserving organizational culture. Meaning and communication are not solely contained within words but are intricately woven into intentions, contexts, histories, and attitudes (Pepper, 1994). Understanding these nuances is crucial for effective and meaningful communication within organizations.

## **III. EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION AND ENHANCING CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE LEADERSHIP IN SCHOOLS**

For quite some time, multiculturalists have been advocating for an educational approach because it is essential to adopt an approach that is culturally diverse and equitable in education. This involves integrating culturally responsive curriculum and instructional methods, ensuring fair assessment practices, and establishing organizational structures that promote interaction across racial and ethnic boundaries while ensuring academic success for all students (Nieto & Bode, 2011). Multicultural education advocates for equal learning opportunities for every student, regardless of gender, social class, ethnicity, race, or cultural background (Banks & Banks, 2009). Enhancing cultural responsiveness in the classroom involves establishing effective communication between teachers, students, and parents. This fosters trust, promotes collaboration, improves communication, and creates a supportive, respectful environment conducive to student success. Culturally responsive teachers understand the impact of culture on communication, encompassing verbal aspects such as tone, rhythm, and vocabulary, as well as nonverbal cues like eye contact, body language, and gestures. By grasping these cultural nuances, educators can better connect with students and tailor their approaches. Building strong relationships with students not only boosts motivation and classroom discussions, but also leads to greater satisfaction, improved

communication, and trust. Instructors who invest time in getting to know their students contribute to a more dynamic and engaging classroom experience (Weimer, 2010).

Thus, communication is a vital tool at the core of effective leadership in any context, and its importance is especially pronounced in the field of education. As educational leaders navigate the intricate landscape of modern education, their communication skills become not just desirable but truly critical in fostering cultural responsiveness among students and teachers. Research on effective schools consistently emphasizes the crucial role principals play in shaping the success of educational institutions (Fears, 2004; Fullan, 2004). Leadership ranks second only to teaching in its influence on student outcomes (Flessa, 2007; Leithwood, Seashore Louis, Anderson & Wahlstrom, 2004).

#### **IV. CHALLENGES ASSOCIATED WITH ENHANCING COMMUNICATION AND CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE LEADERSHIP IN SCHOOLS**

While many scholars and practitioners recognize the vital role of school leaders in enhancing students' achievement and fostering thriving school environments, there has been limited success in educating marginalized students within the educational system. Various challenges have been linked to the limited accomplishment of culturally responsive leadership by principals in U.S. schools. Some of these challenges include:

- Culturally responsive teaching aims to equally promote the success of all students, which is often not achieved by traditional education methods. When students' cultural backgrounds are not carefully considered, classrooms can face challenges such as language barriers, systemic discrimination, and a lack of representation.
- Language Barriers: Nearly 10 percent of public school students in 2016 were English language learners, according to the National Center for Education Statistics (2017). In an English-speaking school, non-fluent students may face challenges in fully grasping class material and expressing their ideas due to limited English proficiency. This can hinder their academic progress and participation in classroom discussions like asking of questions, sharing of ideas.
- Systemic Discrimination: Students who are in the minority group frequently face discrimination in educational institutions, healthcare facilities, libraries, and other public settings. Authoritarian standards and disciplinary actions in school settings can intensify these experiences, leading students to perceive school as an unsafe or unwelcoming environment.
- Lack of Representation: Educational materials frequently unintentionally demonstrate bias. Books typically center on white protagonists, movies predominantly depict white classrooms, and even standardized test questions are often unconsciously framed to favor the experiences of racial and ethnic majorities. These instances communicate to students of color that schools and classrooms are not created with them in mind.

#### **V. CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, this paper reveals that culturally responsive leadership has become predominant because there has been an increased diversity in public schools which has reached a tipping point. However, a significant number of marginalized students consistently underperform compared to their peers from mainstream backgrounds, despite there being no discernible difference in mental aptitude or intellectual ability among children from diverse racial, cultural, or socioeconomic traits. Thus, the factor of communication that enhances culturally responsive leadership has been found to enable students' achievement in schools in the US because communication is a product of a "complex communicative process that includes words, intentions, contexts, histories, and attitudes. As school leaders navigate the complex landscape of modern education, their communication skills become not just desirable but truly critical for any leader to enhance culturally responsive among students and teachers in order to enhance students' achievement effective communication and culturally responsive leadership.

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

As a way of enhancing effective communication towards the achievement of culturally responsive leadership in schools, the following recommendations are proffered:

- As a result of the language barrier encountered in multicultural teams, there is a need for the inclusion of language training which should be given to those who have more chances of coming into contact with foreigners. The difficulty of communicating effectively across languages between teachers and students is obvious. School leaders must find ways to bridge language gaps to ensure teaching and learning are achieved.
- Cultural norms and values: Different cultures have varying norms, values, and beliefs and descriptive norms are common behaviors of individuals that help to know cultural practices. Thus, school leaders and educational stakeholders are responsible for navigating these differences to create culturally sensitive initiatives.
- Language Barriers: Language training is essential, especially for those who will likely contact with foreigners, as multilingual teams frequently face language hurdles. There are several obstacles to overcome when trying to communicate successfully across languages, particularly between teachers and pupils. To guarantee efficient teaching and learning, school administrators must come up with plans to close language gaps.
- Advocates ought to actively challenge the preconceptions and stereotypes that obstruct cross-cultural communication and collaboration. It's critical to understand prejudice as a process within a group of interactions as opposed to a fixed state or trait of specific people.

- It's crucial to build strong relationships between district leaders and staff to facilitate discussions on important issues like school climate, culturally responsive teaching, family and community engagement, and equal opportunities. Culturally responsive leaders must actively work to break down systems that perpetuate inequalities and serve as influential cultural ambassadors by effectively engaging individuals from diverse cultures.
- This demands the unwavering communication of a culturally responsive vision and goals, despite the inherent challenges. They must unapologetically drive change while managing conflicting perspectives. Above all, they must assertively create a secure environment for impactful conversations about cultural responsiveness and ensure strict accountability.
- In order to create a positive and inclusive school environment, it is essential to cultivate strong leadership within the school and district which can promote changes in the cultural and instructional changes. Culturally responsive leaders must have a deep understanding of critical theories related to learning and the impact of factors such as race, power, cultural capital, poverty, disability, ethnicity, gender, age, and language on the learning process. Additionally, it is crucial for these leaders to identify and address discrimination, inequalities, and injustices affecting different groups. Lastly, school leaders must be able to articulate their educational philosophy and reflect on whether it perpetuates the status quo or encourages active participation for transformation.

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