



Culturally Responsive Teaching Practices and Historical Empathy Among Junior High School Students in Congressional District I, Division of Batangas

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Abstract

This study assessed the culturally responsive teaching (CRT) practices of Social Studies teachers and the degree of manifestation of historical empathy among junior high school students in the First Congressional District, Division of Batangas during the academic year 2025-2026. Utilizing a descriptive-correlational research design, data were gathered from a stratified random sample of 133 Social Studies teachers via a researcher-developed questionnaire and complemented by a focus group discussion (FGD) with a subset of 10 purposively selected participants to provide qualitative depth. The data were analyzed using ranking, weighted mean and the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient.

Findings revealed that while teachers highly utilized CRT practices in terms of classroom climate, their utilization of awareness and knowledge and instructional strategies remained at a moderate level. Correspondingly, students exhibited a moderate manifestation of historical empathy, showing proficiency in chronological sequencing but struggling with the cognitive demands of perspective-taking and reconstruction of historical moral frameworks. Correlational analysis established a significant moderate positive relationship between the Social Studies teachers' utilization of culturally responsive teaching (CRT) practices and students' degree of manifestation of historical empathy. However, systemic barriers, particularly a lack of specialized professional training, emerged as the primary challenge.

The study concluded that historical empathy required culturally situated analysis to strengthen civic identity. To achieve this, Project BARAKO (*Bridging Awareness, Responsiveness, and Knowledge for Outstanding Historical Empathy*) introduced a localized framework that transformed empathy into active heritage stewardship. The intervention established Sentro ng Karunungan Residencies for teacher-artisan collaboration, utilized the Coastal-Heritage Perspective Series for student perspective-taking, and institutionalized the Dambana ng Ala Eh Framework to integrate culturally responsive indicators into teacher IPCRFs. Backed by a Barako-Break Policy for protected Culture Lab time, this model offered a scalable approach to localized historical instruction across diverse regions.

Keywords: *Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) Practices, Historical Empathy, Project Barako, Social Studies Education*



Introduction

In the 21st century, education is increasingly regarded not merely as a mechanism for transmitting knowledge but as a powerful vehicle for cultivating cultural awareness, empathy, and social responsibility among learners. In response to the growing cultural diversity in classrooms worldwide, the concept of Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) has emerged as a transformative pedagogical approach that deliberately integrates learners' cultural backgrounds, lived experiences, and social realities into the teaching–learning process.

According to Gay (2021), culturally responsive teaching recognizes students' cultural knowledge, prior experiences, and learning styles as central resources for effective instruction, thereby promoting equity, inclusion, and meaningful academic engagement. This pedagogical approach is particularly significant in Social Studies, a discipline inherently concerned with identity, heritage, history, and civic responsibility, where learners are expected not only to acquire content knowledge but also to develop deeper socio-cultural understanding. International and local legal frameworks, such as UNESCO (2021) and the Philippine Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013 (RA 10533), explicitly mandate that learning processes and content must respect cultural diversity, community contexts, and teacher standards for diversity.

Despite these clear educational mandates, a visible decline in the historical consciousness of Filipino youth, as evidenced by widely publicized knowledge gaps like the viral "Gomburza-Majoha" incident, exposes a critical lack of historical empathy among learners. When Social Studies and technical sub-disciplines like Grade 9 Economics are taught without cultural relevance, students fail to build emotional or intellectual connections with the past, viewing history as a dry series of facts to memorize rather than a legacy to value. Educators on the ground face systemic obstacles, including rigid curriculum pacing, large class sizes, and a severe lack of localized resources, making it exceptionally difficult to integrate regional heritage or assess genuine socio-economic empathy without the integration feeling forced or superficial.

These implementation challenges highlight a critical research gap regarding how a teacher's application of culturally responsive pedagogy actively influences a student's cognitive and emotional engagement with history. This gap underscores the urgent need to examine the explicit relationship between the utilization of culturally responsive teaching practices and the manifestation of historical empathy among learners. This study aims to determine the extent of utilization of culturally responsive teaching practices among teachers, assess the degree of historical empathy manifested by students, identify the instructional challenges encountered, and examine the relationship between these core variables to provide a foundation for localized instructional interventions like PROJECT BARAKO.

Specifically, it seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What is the extent of utilization of culturally responsive teaching practices by the teachers as assessed by themselves relative to:
 - 1.1 awareness and knowledge;



- 1.2 instructional strategies; and
- 1.2 classroom climate?
2. What is the degree of manifestation of historical empathy of the students as assessed by the teacher-respondents in terms of:
 - 2.1 contextual understanding;
 - 2.2 perspective-taking; and
 - 2.3 emotional engagement?
3. Is there any significant relationship between the assessments on the extent of utilization of culturally responsive teaching practices and on the degree of manifestation of students' historical empathy?
4. What challenges do Social Studies teachers encounter in utilizing culturally responsive teaching practices?
5. Based on the results of the study, what localized instructional intervention may be proposed?

Objectives:

The study aimed to:

1. Determine teachers' extent of utilization of culturally responsive teaching practices relative to awareness and knowledge, instructional strategies, and classroom climate.
2. Assess the students' degree of manifestation of historical empathy in terms of contextual understanding, perspective-taking and emotional engagement.
3. Analyze if there is a significant relationship between teachers' culturally responsive teaching practices and students' historical empathy.
4. Identify the challenges encountered by the teachers in utilizing culturally responsive teaching practices.
5. Propose localized instructional intervention activities to strengthen the utilization of culturally responsive teaching practices.

Hypothesis

There is no significant relationship between the assessments on the extent of utilization of culturally responsive teaching practices and the degree of manifestation of students' historical empathy

Methodology

This study utilized a descriptive-correlational research design with an embedded qualitative component to determine the extent of utilization of culturally responsive teaching practices and the degree of manifestation of student historical empathy, as well as to examine the relationship between these variables. The descriptive method was used to systematically describe the culturally responsive teaching practices in terms of awareness and knowledge, instructional strategies, and classroom climate, alongside student historical empathy relative to contextual understanding, perspective-taking, and emotional engagement. Meanwhile, the correlational



approach was utilized to determine whether a significant relationship exists between culturally responsive teaching practices and students' historical empathy. This design is appropriate as it allows the researcher to analyze patterns, trends, and relationships without manipulating variables.

Participants

The respondents for the quantitative phase of this study comprised 133 Social Studies junior high school teachers currently employed in public secondary schools within Congressional District I of the Schools Division of Batangas for the School Year 2025–2026. This sample size was derived from a total population of 200 teachers using Slovin's formula with a 5% margin of error, and distribution was achieved via stratified random sampling with proportionate allocation across seven school sub-offices. For the qualitative phase, 10 Social Studies teachers were selected through purposive sampling to participate in Focus Group Discussion (FGD). To maintain data integrity, eliminate response contamination, and ensure independent data sources, these FGD participants were strictly excluded from the quantitative survey pool.

Research Instruments

To obtain reliable data, this study utilized a researcher-synthesized Likert-type survey questionnaire as the primary quantitative instrument and a structured Focus Group Discussion (FGD) guide for qualitative validation. Both instruments underwent validation by experts in education to ensure content validity, clarity, and reliability before administration. Both instruments were strategically aligned to ensure conceptual clarity, cultural relevance, and direct structural mapping to the objectives of the study.

Data Collection Procedure

Prior to data collection, proper authorization was secured from the Schools Division Superintendent of Batangas, after which the researcher coordinated with district supervisors and principals to distribute the validated questionnaires via QR codes and Google Form links. Concurrently, audio-recorded Focus Group Discussions (FGD) were conducted with a separate group of consenting teachers to ensure independent data sources. All collected data were systematically compiled and prepared for final statistical treatment and qualitative enrichment.

Strict ethical standards were maintained to ensure participant confidentiality and data integrity. Informed consent was integrated into the digital survey, explicitly detailing the voluntary nature of the study and the participants' right to withdraw at any time without penalty. To preserve absolute anonymity, no personal or institutional identifiers were collected, and alphanumeric codes were used to mask identities in the FGD transcripts. All gathered information was securely stored in password-protected digital files accessible only to the researcher, ensuring absolute objectivity and complete compliance with data privacy policies.

Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using appropriate statistical tools. The weighted mean and ranking determined the precise levels and prominent dimensions of the primary research variables. Pearson r was used to test the relationship between culturally responsive teaching practices and students' historical empathy. All results were interpreted using corresponding verbal descriptions and standard statistical significance levels.

Results

The descriptive and inferential results of the study were presented in the tables below.

Table 1
Extent of Utilization of Culturally Responsive Teaching Practices by the Teachers

Indicators	Composite Mean	Std. Deviation	Verbal Interpretation
Awareness and Knowledge	3.34	0.184	Moderately Utilized
Classroom Climate	3.72	0.225	Highly Utilized
Instructional Strategies	3.42	0.171	Moderately Utilized

Legend: 3.50-4.00 – Highly Utilized (HU), 2.50-3.49 – Moderately Utilized (MU), 1.50-2.49 – Slightly Utilized (SU), 1.00-1.49 – Least Utilized (LU)

Table 2
Degree of Manifestation of Students' Historical Empathy

Indicators	Composite Mean	Std. Deviation	Verbal Interpretation
Contextual Understanding	3.35	0.226	Moderately Manifested
Emotional Engagement	3.47	0.178	Moderately Manifested
Perspective-Taking	3.29	0.208	Moderately Manifested

Legend: 3.50-4.00 – Highly Manifested (HM), 2.50-3.49 – Moderately Manifested (MM), 1.50-2.49 – Slightly Manifested (SM), 1.00-1.49 – Least Manifested (LM)

Table 3
Correlation Between the Overall Utilization of Culturally Responsive Teaching Practices and Students' Historical Empathy

Variables	r-value	p-value	Decision	Interpretation
Culturally Responsive Teaching Practices Students' Historical Empathy	0.521	0.000	Reject Ho	Significant

r = Pearson correlation coefficient; *p* = significance level; Ho= Null Hypothesis; Significant = statistically significant ($p < .05$)

Table 4
Correlation Between the Dimensions of Culturally Responsive Teaching Practices and Students' Historical Empathy

Culturally Responsive Teaching Practices Dimension	Historical Empathy Dimension	r-value	p-value	Interpretation
Awareness and Knowledge	Contextual Understanding	0.423	0.000	Significant
	Perspective-Taking	0.395	0.000	Significant
	Emotional Engagement	0.209	0.016	Significant
Instructional Strategies	Contextual Understanding	0.404	0.000	Significant
	Perspective-Taking	0.377	0.000	Significant
	Emotional Engagement	0.148	0.090	Not Significant
Classroom Climate	Contextual Understanding	0.475	0.000	Significant
	Perspective-Taking	0.393	0.000	Significant
	Emotional Engagement	0.073	0.407	Not Significant

r = Pearson correlation coefficient; *p* = significance level; Ho= Null Hypothesis; Significant = statistically significant ($p < .05$)

Awareness and Knowledge

- Contextual understanding: significant, moderate positive relationship
- Perspective-taking: significant, low positive relationship
- Emotional engagement: significant, low positive relationship
- **Interpretation:** Higher teacher awareness and knowledge were significantly and positively correlated with higher levels of student historical empathy.

Instructional Strategies

- Contextual understanding: significant, moderate positive relationship

- Perspective-taking: significant, low positive relationship
- Emotional engagement: not significant, very low positive relationship
- **Interpretation:** Effective instructional strategies were significantly and positively correlated with higher levels of students' contextual understanding and perspective-taking but demonstrated no significant relationship with their emotional engagement.

Classroom Climate

- Contextual understanding: significant, moderate positive relationship
- Perspective-taking: significant, low positive relationship
- Emotional engagement: no significant relationship
- **Interpretation:** A supportive classroom climate was significantly correlated with higher levels of students' contextual understanding and perspective-taking but did not significantly correlate with students' emotional engagement.

Table 5

Key Challenges Encountered in Utilizing Culturally Responsive Teaching Practices

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation
Limited professional training	3.75	Strongly Agree
Rigid time constraints	3.71	Strongly Agree
Standardized testing requirements	3.68	Strongly Agree

Discussion

The findings indicated that Social Studies teachers moderately utilized culturally responsive teaching (CRT) practices regarding awareness, knowledge, and instructional strategies, whereas they highly utilized the dimension of classroom climate. Furthermore, junior high school students moderately manifested historical empathy across all three dimensions; contextual understanding, perspective-taking, and emotional engagement. Correlational analysis also established a significant relationship between the two main variables, indicating that the extent of CRT utilization directly correlated with students' historical empathy. These results strongly aligned with Gay (2021), who posited that while teachers frequently excelled at cultivating a supportive and highly inclusive classroom climate, translating that environment into deep instructional strategies and cultural knowledge required more specialized pedagogical scaffolding. Crucially, her framework affirmed that when teachers effectively maximized these culturally responsive practices, it directly drove and elevated students' capacity for deep, contextualized empathy.

Building upon these correlational dynamics, systemic barriers were identified by the teachers attempting to utilize these culturally responsive teaching practices, including limited



professional training, strict time constraints, and standardized testing requirements. These institutional challenges aligned with the observations of Pedroso et al. (2023), who explained that many educators lacked deeper, specialized strategies for culturally grounded instruction due to a baseline deficit in formal preparation.

Consequently, improving historical empathy required structured, localized, and culturally responsive teaching practices rather than conventional, fact-based instruction alone. To directly address these localized gaps and systemic constraints, PROJECT BARAKO (Bridging Awareness, Responsiveness, and Knowledge for Outstanding Historical Empathy) was proposed. This intervention project aimed to bridge the gap between teacher awareness and instructional practice, improve Junior High School students' engagement in contextualized and heritage-based historical activities, and overcome existing barriers such as moderate perspective-taking and limited cultural integration. Ultimately, the initiative sought to build confidence and skills in localized historical inquiry while promoting a deeper, more socially responsible civic consciousness.

The study was limited to junior high school Social Studies teachers in Congressional District I, Division of Batangas, limiting the generalizability of the findings to other grade levels, regions, or school environments. Methodologically, reliance on self-reported survey questionnaires and teacher-rated evaluations introduced recall and social desirability biases, which did not fully capture students' internal cognitive and affective developments. Temporally, data collection was confined to a single academic period, with the qualitative phase further constrained by virtual focus group challenges such as connectivity issues and limited participant representation. Finally, external factors like teacher motivation, institutional support, leadership practices, and students' socioeconomic backgrounds were not examined, meaning the results had to be generalized with caution.

Conclusion

Teachers moderately utilized culturally responsive teaching practices, while students moderately manifested historical empathy across all three dimensions. A significant relationship was found between culturally responsive teaching practices and students' historical empathy, indicating that the extent to which teachers utilize CRT practices directly correlates with students' historical empathy. Teachers strongly agreed that limited professional training, rigid time constraints, and standardized testing requirements emerged as the key systemic barriers. Consequently, a localized instructional intervention in the form of Project BARAKO (*Bridging Awareness, Responsiveness, and Knowledge for Outstanding Historical Empathy*) was proposed to bridge the identified gaps in teacher awareness and to institutionalize the use of Batangas' local heritage as a primary pedagogical resource.

Based on the findings and the conclusions drawn, the study offers several strategic recommendations. To begin with, school administrators and curriculum planners may integrate the proposed Project BARAKO into the social studies program, ensuring the intervention is first reviewed and refined based on stakeholder feedback to guarantee its effectiveness in utilizing



local heritage. To address the gap between the highly utilized classroom climate and moderately utilized awareness and knowledge and instructional strategies, the District Sub Offices may establish Sentro ng Karunungan Residencies (Center of Knowledge). Simultaneously, schools may adopt the Coastal-Heritage Perspective Series to elevate the degree of students' manifestation of historical empathy from moderately manifested to highly manifested across all dimensions. Furthermore, given the significant relationship between culturally responsive teaching practices and students' historical empathy, the District Sub Offices may institutionalize the Dambana ng Ala Eh Framework. To address the key challenges of time constraints, standardized testing, and lack of professional training, school administrators may implement the Barako-Break Policy (Time to Breathe). Finally, future researchers may further examine the development of students' historical empathy by conducting longitudinal or mixed-method studies that explore how sustained exposure to culturally responsive teaching practices influences learners' historical thinking, civic identity, and cultural awareness.

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