


Chapter 3


Culturally Responsive Pedagogies and Multilingual Classrooms in Zimbabwean Schools

Onias Matumbu

 <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-0257-3510>

Morgan Zintec College, Zimbabwe & University of Zimbabwe, Zimbabwe

Tonderai James Zendah

 <http://orcid.org/0009-0006-2903-4070>

Morgan Zintec College, Zimbabwe

Maud Masuka

Manyoni High School, Zimbabwe & Catholic University in Zimbabwe, Zimbabwe

ABSTRACT

In a world increasingly defined by linguistic diversity, the need for educational systems that honor and reflect this complexity has never been more critical. Zimbabwe, with its rich complexity of sixteen officially recognized languages and myriad ethnic communities, stands at a crossroads where educational policy intersects with the realities of multilingual classrooms. In this landscape, the implementation of culturally responsive pedagogies emerges as a beacon of hope and innovation. Despite progressive language-in-education policies aimed at fostering inclusivity and equity, significant gaps persist between these ideals and the lived experiences of educators and learners. This disjunction not only hampers academic achievement but also threatens the cultural identities of these communities, highlighting an urgent need

DOI: 10.4018/979-8-3373-7842-8.ch003

for pedagogical reform. This chapter examines the implementation and effectiveness of culturally responsive pedagogies in multilingual Zimbabwean classrooms, where linguistic diversity intersects with post-colonial educational challenges.

INTRODUCTION

Culturally responsive pedagogy represents a transformative educational approach that recognises and builds upon the cultural and linguistic assets students bring to classrooms (Gay, 2018; Ladson-Billings, 2021). In Zimbabwe, where linguistic diversity is constitutionally enshrined yet often marginalised in educational practice, implementing culturally responsive pedagogies presents unique challenges and opportunities (Ndamba, 2023; Viriri & Viriri, 2022). The nation's educational system, inherited from colonial structures and reinforced through decades of English-medium instruction, continues to privilege English over the sixteen officially recognised indigenous languages (Kadenge & Nkomo, 2021). Recent data from the Zimbabwe School Examinations Council (2023) suggests that while national pass rates have fluctuated, the achievement gap remains most pronounced in districts where students have the least exposure to English outside the school gate. This linguistic hierarchy creates pedagogical tensions that affect student engagement, academic achievement, and cultural identity formation across Zimbabwe's diverse student population.

The significance of this chapter lies in its examination of how Zimbabwean educators navigate the intersection of language policy, cultural identity, and pedagogical practice in multilingual classrooms. Research consistently demonstrates that students learn most effectively when instruction builds upon their linguistic and cultural foundations (Cummins, 2021; García & Kleyn, 2022). However, as Ndlovu et al. (2023) notes in a recent study of rural Matabeleland schools, teachers often feel a “pedagogical guilt” when using mother tongue, fearing they are depriving students of English proficiency. Zimbabwe's multilingual reality encompasses complex linguistic dynamics including languages such as Tonga, Kalanga, Nambya, Venda, and others (Mumpande, 2023). Community leaders in these regions have increasingly called for “linguistic sovereignty,” arguing that the current model risks “cultural erasure” for the youngest generation (Tonga Language and Culture Association, 2024). Students from these minority language communities face double marginalisation, navigating instruction in languages that are neither their mother tongue nor the colonial lingua franca (Mpofu & Chimhenga, 2022). This linguistic complexity, combined with rural-urban disparities in resources and English exposure, creates educational inequities that demand culturally responsive pedagogical interventions. Understanding how teachers can effectively honour students' multilingual identities

30 more pages are available in the full version of this document, which may be purchased using the "Add to Cart" button on the publisher's webpage: www.igi-global.com/chapter/culturally-responsive-pedagogies-and-multilingual-classrooms-in-zimbabwean-schools/413381

Related Content

Civic Engagement of Students: Perspectives of Bangladesh

SSM Sadrul Huda, Tanveer Kabirand Tanvir Alam Siddiq (2019). *International Journal of Political Activism and Engagement* (pp. 1-9).

www.irma-international.org/article/civic-engagement-of-students/236661

Inclusive Pedagogical Practices in Online Courses

Christina M. Nash (2021). *Research Anthology on Instilling Social Justice in the Classroom* (pp. 308-324).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/inclusive-pedagogical-practices-in-online-courses/270097

Jokowi's Political Communication Especially Self-Image in 2014 Presidential Election: Political Communication Especially Self-Image

Belli Nasution (2019). *International Journal of Political Activism and Engagement* (pp. 49-59).

www.irma-international.org/article/jokowis-political-communication-especially-self-image-in-2014-presidential-election/236664

Designing an Education Curriculum Through Collaboration With Institutions of Higher Learning, Libraries, Archives, and Museums: Case of Kruger National Park

Nkholezeni Sidney Netshakhuma (2022). *Handbook of Research on the Role of Libraries, Archives, and Museums in Achieving Civic Engagement and Social Justice in Smart Cities* (pp. 236-251).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/designing-an-education-curriculum-through-collaboration-with-institutions-of-higher-learning-libraries-archives-and-museums/291400

Being "Badass": Identity of a Teacher Activist Organization

Brianne N. Kramer (2022). *International Journal of Political Activism and Engagement* (pp. 1-12).

www.irma-international.org/article/being-badass/315602