

## **Pre-Service Teachers' Readiness to Implement Culturally Responsive Teaching**

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### **Abstract**

This study examined Indonesian pre-service English teachers' experiences with and developing understandings of Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT). Equipping teachers to teach responsively is not only an educational duty but also a social and ethical one in a nation with such cultural, linguistic, and ethnic variety. This study examined how CRT is seen, applied, and contested in coursework and field practice using a qualitative methodology that included semi-structured interviews and open-ended questionnaires with sixteen preservice teachers who enrolled in teacher professional education (PPG). According to the findings, pre-service teachers often face institutional gaps that hinder their preparedness and confidence, such as a lack of exposure to CRT principles, inconsistent mentorship, and the prevalence of standardized instructional models, even though they demonstrate a sincere commitment to inclusive and culturally affirming pedagogy. Despite having few resources, many teachers use reflective practices, adapt course material to students' cultural backgrounds, and put up a lot of effort to establish deep connections. This study highlights CRT as an emotionally complex, relational, and identity-forming activity that requires more than just academic understanding. Strong institutional backing, context-sensitive implementation, and extended reflection are required. In order to better prepare future teachers to respond to the dynamic and diverse realities of their classrooms, the study's conclusion is that Indonesian teacher preparation programs integrate CRT as a fundamental element into their curricula, practical experiences, and institutional culture.

**Keywords:** Culturally Responsive Teaching; English Education; Preservice Teacher

## **A. Introduction**

The purpose of this study is to find out how prepared Indonesian pre-service English teachers are to employ CRT, or culturally responsive teaching. According to the CRT teaching methodology, children learn best when their worldviews, cultural origins, and individual identities are acknowledged and meaningfully incorporated in the classroom. With over 700 languages and more than 1,300 ethnic groupings, this type of instruction is not only beneficial but also required in Indonesia. In this context, teachers are expected to do more than just provide courses. It is expected of them to relate to the everyday experiences of the students, comprehend the culture they bring with them, and observe how all of this influences the way that kids learn. Teacher training programs, particularly the Pendidikan Profesi Guru (PPG) Prajabatan, serve as the foundation for this study. These programs help teachers develop as conscientious educators who are prepared to support all students in inclusive ways, in addition to helping them become professionals.

This research is significant from an academic and practical standpoint. It contributes to the expanding body of scholarly work on CRT in Southeast Asia. There is still a lack of representation from this region in international discussions about education. The study demonstrates how CRT is implemented and introduced during the early phases of teacher development by concentrating on pre-service teachers. The study directly addresses Indonesia's continuous attempts to enhance teacher education from a practical standpoint. It makes the case that CRT is not a minor, elective subject. Rather, it ought to be a key component of teacher preparation. Accordingly, it ought to be included in the course materials, fieldwork assignments, and the overall plan for teacher development. To guarantee that every student is seen, heard, and supported in Indonesian classrooms, instructors require practical resources and unambiguous direction.

Prior research demonstrates the potential benefits of CRT for students. According to research by Ladson-Billings (1995), Gay (2002) and (2018), and Villegas and Lucas (2002), students are more engaged and perform better when their cultural knowledge and experiences are incorporated into the lesson. According to Santosa and Mulyani (2024), the method that CRT is taught in Indonesia varies greatly depending on the professor. Additionally, in 2023, Wulandari and colleagues noted that teacher education programs frequently lack robust mechanisms to regularly support CRT. According to a 2024 study conducted in Turkey by

Aydoğan and İzmir, pre-service teachers who receive clear and systematic CRT training grow more confidence in their ability to teach and more conscious of cultural differences.

Even though all of this research is beneficial, some gaps still need to be addressed. The majority of recent research focuses on working teachers. Others focus solely on attitudes toward diversity in general. The implementation of CRT by Indonesian pre-service teachers has been the subject of very few studies. CRT is taught as a theory in many programs, with minimal chance for classroom experience. Many teacher hopefuls are therefore uncertain about how to use it. The goal of this study is to bridge that gap. It chronicles pre-service teachers' experiences implementing CRT in actual classrooms. Their experiences give us insight into the emotional work and instructional decisions that go into this process.

The gap between understanding CRT and actually utilizing it in the classroom is the main emphasis of this study. There is only one primary objective. to investigate how prepared pre-service teachers are to use CRT. Sixteen pre-service teachers from the PPG Prajabatan program are included in the study. They bring a range of backgrounds and are from various locations of Indonesia. Every individual is a student and aspiring educator who is forming their identity as a culturally sensitive teacher.

This article's remaining content is broken up into multiple sections. It begins with a review of previous studies and theories on CRT, covering both international and Indonesian viewpoints. The study's methodology, participant demographics, and data collection and analysis are then covered. The results and their implications are then presented. The article concludes with recommendations for how Indonesian teacher education programs might better equip aspiring educators to employ CRT in significant and long-lasting ways.

This study is aimed at investigating the Pre-Service Teachers' Readiness to Implement Culturally Responsive Teaching. This study tries to answer the following research question: To what extent are pre-service teachers prepared to implement culturally responsive teaching practices in diverse classroom settings?

## **B. Research Methodology**

A descriptive qualitative research design was employed in this study. Examining how prepared Indonesian pre-service English teachers were to use Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) was the goal of the study. They choose this approach because it made it possible for them to gather comprehensive, in-depth, and significant data. They were interested in learning how the teachers used and interpreted CRT in their classroom instruction and

academic preparation. Gay (2018) and Sleeter (2023), who highlighted the value of examining real-life experiences in education, backed the choice to employ a qualitative method.

### **Sampling**

Pre-service English teachers took part in this study. They were enrolled in a public university in Indonesia's PPG Prajabatan program. Purposive sampling was used by the researchers to choose sixteen participants. This indicates that they selected participants who possessed the particular traits and experiences that were pertinent to the research. Every participant completed coursework and a teaching practicum.

Purposive sampling was employed by the researchers in order to obtain a thorough grasp of the implementation of CRT. They weren't attempting to draw wide conclusions. Rather, they sought to investigate significant perspectives from those directly engaged in teacher education. This strategy is supported by Patton (2002), particularly when researchers are seeking in-depth comprehension from knowledgeable participants.

Practical considerations and the requirement for a comprehensive analysis of the data informed the number of participants. This choice was made in accordance with Creswell's (2013) recommendations about sample size in qualitative research. Every participant completed an open-ended survey. They participated in a follow-up interview as well. Every one of the sixteen participants finished both study sections. They were from various parts of Indonesia. Their diverse cultural upbringings contributed to a broader understanding of the conception and application of CRT. According to Santosa and Mulyani (2024), this kind of diversity enhances qualitative research.

### **Data Collection**

Two primary techniques were employed by the researchers to gather data. They started by distributing an open-ended questionnaire to the participants. Participants were able to clarify how they understood CRT as a result. They also talked about how comfortable they felt using CRT. They also discussed difficulties they encountered and any assistance they received.

The researchers performed semi-structured interviews after collecting the surveys. The researchers were able to delve deeper into the questionnaire results thanks to these interviews. Participants discussed their teaching practices and curricula. They also talked

about the advice they got from lecturers and mentors. The interviews were laid-back and cordial. The duration of each session ranged from thirty to forty-five minutes. All interviews were videotaped, but only with consent from the subjects. The researchers allowed individuals to think deeply and express themselves clearly by using both written and oral responses. This kind of multi-method approach in qualitative research is supported by Aydoğan and İzmir (2024).

### **Data Analysis**

To make sense of the data, the researchers employed theme analysis. They took the six actions that Braun and Clarke (2006) recommended. They started by reading the questionnaire answers and transcripts multiple times. This aided in their familiarization with the subject matter. They then identified key concepts and points to construct preliminary codes.

They then searched for trends in the codes. They were able to create more expansive themes because to these patterns. To ensure that the themes aligned with the participants' comments, they went over and modified them. The researchers were adaptable and reverted to earlier stages if needed. This allowed them to guarantee reliable analysis while remaining faithful to the voices of the participants.

This study was a strong fit for thematic analysis. It aided the researchers in comprehending both personal narratives and collective experiences. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), this approach is helpful when researching intricate human experiences.

A number of important motifs were found by the researchers. These covered the participants' definitions of CRT, their level of comfort using it, and how they modified their instruction to accommodate the cultural norms of their pupils. Other themes talked about the guidance they had and how their practicum experiences shaped who they are now. The research questions were addressed by each theme. The researchers thought their techniques were reliable and suitable. Wulandari et al. (2024), who highlighted the importance of context-based qualitative research in teacher education, also backed up their findings.

## **C. Results and Discussion**

### **1. Results**

The main conclusions drawn from the questionnaire and interview data involving 16 pre-service English teachers enrolled in Indonesia's PPG Prajabatan program are succinctly summarized in this section. The conversation focuses on surprising discoveries and differences from earlier research. It incorporates tables and statistics that graphically depict ideas while maintaining the narrative's interpretability on its own.

#### **1. Emerging Definitions of CRT Rooted in Practice**

The majority of participants understood and used Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) in their own experiences, even though they lacked a formal academic description. Usually, teachers used real-world examples to illustrate CRT, including incorporating regional cuisine, batik, or traditional stories into their lessons.

**Table 1. Common Themes in Defining CRT**

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Example Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
Integrating local culture	(Linking Paoman batik to exposition text)	10
Contextualizing materials	Writing procedural texts using regional specialties	9
Building student identity	Students enjoy discussing their local traditions	6

#### **2. Readiness Varies—Driven by Exposure, Not Just Belief**

In addition to their individual dedication to inclusive education, participants' perceptions of their preparedness to apply CRT were greatly influenced by their hands-on experience in field teaching and coursework.

**Table 2. Readiness vs. Exposure to CRT**

<b>Readiness Level</b>	<b>No. of Participants</b>	<b>Common Influences</b>
Very Confident	4	Regular feedback, CRT-themed coursework
Confident	6	Self-initiated practices, peer discussion
Somewhat Unprepared	4	Lack of modeling, inconsistent lecturer guidance
Unprepared	2	No direct instruction or examples of CRT

#### **3. Partial Implementation Through Contextualized Content**

Pre-service teachers did not have a clear framework for integrating CRT, but they did describe small-scale adjustments, such as using local cuisine for procedural texts or holidays for narrative writing.

**Table 3. Instructional Adaptations Made by Participants**

Instructional Focus	CRT Example	Teachers Reporting
Procedure Text	"How to make nasi lengko"	7
Descriptive/Narrative	Describing a local place	6
Recount/Exposition	Lebaran Tradition as a Recount Topic	4

#### 4. Key Challenges: Time, Materials, and Conceptual Clarity

Reported Challenges in Implementing CRT

**Table 4. Primary Obstacles Reported by Participants**

Challenge	Number of Participants	Example Statement
Limited time in curriculum	13	Too focused on the exam so CRT is sometimes neglected
Lack of local CRT materials	12	It's hard to find valid local culture articles
Conflicting definitions by mentors	11	Lecturers and supervising teachers have different understandings

#### 5. Institutional Support Seen as Fragmented or Inconsistent

Out of 16 participants, only 5 said they received regular CRT help. Many said that the incorporation of CRT into the curriculum felt flimsy and unrelated to practicum experiences.

**Table 5. Support Structures and Gaps**

Support Type	Number of Participants	Comment Example
Mentoring on CRT	5	There is rarely any CRT feedback from the supervising teacher
Consistent CRT discussion	4	Depends on the lecturer, sometimes CRT is not discussed
Example modules available	3	CRT module lacks variety and applicability

## 2. Discussion

### Purpose and Summary of Findings

The purpose of this study was to determine how prepared Indonesian pre-service English teachers are to use Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) in their classroom instruction. In Indonesia, a nation renowned for its vast cultural and linguistic variety, this

research is particularly significant. This study adds to a subject that frequently ignores Southeast Asian views and provides useful insights by examining the real-world experiences of sixteen participants in the PPG Prajabatan program.

The findings demonstrated that many aspiring educators sincerely think CRT is important. However, a number of obstacles prevent them from using it efficiently. Many of them were able to illustrate CRT using instances from everyday life, such as incorporating regional cuisine, customs, or student identities into their classes. However, they were not guided by official definitions or organized training. The assistance they received during their education had an impact on their preparedness to use CRT. This provided access to working CRT models, specialized courses, and mentorship. Few teachers had the resources or assistance to completely develop these techniques, even if many made an attempt to include CRT in tiny ways, such as by using regional content in assignments. Their struggles were exacerbated by institutional obstacles like time constraints, a dearth of resources that were culturally appropriate, and contradictory mentor advice. These results demonstrate the disconnect between knowing CRT and being able to confidently use it. This demonstrates the obvious need for more integrated and encouraging approaches in teacher education programs.

### **Connection to the Literature**

The study's conclusions are in line with a large portion of the body of knowledge regarding CRT, both domestically and abroad. According to academics like Gay (2018) and Ladson-Billings (1995), a strong theoretical background and real-world experience are both necessary for effective CRT. This study backs up that theory by demonstrating how important practical teaching experience is for fostering confidence. In this study, participants gained more knowledge from practical experiences than from theoretical concepts. This bolsters Sleeter's (2023) claim that genuine student interaction and reflection are the foundations of profound CRT learning.

The results of this study corroborate those of Santosa and Mulyani (2024), who noted that Indonesian educational programs lack a standardized framework for teaching CRT. Additionally, according to Wulandari et al. (2023), pre-service teachers are frequently left to develop CRT practices on their own in the absence of explicit institutional commitment. Participants in this study often talked about how they included aspects of their students' cultures into their courses, including mentioning regional cuisine or holidays. This is in

line with Paris and Alim's (2017) culturally sustaining pedagogy, which emphasizes students' cultural identities as strengths in the classroom.

This study does, however, also go counter to some of the more upbeat findings in the literature. For instance, systematic CRT training boosts teacher confidence, according to Gay (2002). Even though research participants thought CRT was important, confidence did not always follow from this perception. Teachers found it difficult to implement their views in the absence of helpful advice and assistance. This bolsters the opinions of Howard (2003) and Siwatu (2007), who warn that effective CRT requires more than just well-meaning intentions.

### **Interpretation, Explanation, and Comparison**

Examining both structural and emotional elements helps to explain the study's conclusions. Many participants viewed CRT as an emotional way to demonstrate their concern for their kids. They desired for their pupils to feel valued and acknowledged. These educators made a conscious effort to address their pupils' cultural origins, even in the absence of official training or institutional assistance. This illustrates the emotional complexity of CRT, as defined by Buehler et al. (2009). In order to respond to the needs of their students and navigate institutional expectations, instructors must manage their own identities.

From a structural standpoint, the participants' uneven application of CRT suggests that teacher education programs lack well-defined tactics. In contrast, Aydoğan and İzmir (2024) discovered that structured CRT training increased the confidence of Turkish pre-service teachers. The requirement that Indonesian participants learn CRT independently demonstrates how heavily national policy and institutional advice are relied upon.

Even though many participants tried to include the cultures of their pupils into their lessons—for instance, by using regional cuisine or customary tales—they didn't always deal with more profound problems. Social justice, identity, and power were frequently absent. This could be as a result of the curriculum emphasizing technical skills over contemplation and critical thinking. According to Morrison et al. (2008) and Lucas et al. (2008), critical viewpoints should be included in CRT in addition to cultural material. Participants' experiences mainly lacked this more comprehensive understanding of CRT.

The conflict between individual dedication and the lack of institutional support was another recurring subject in the research. Similar to the findings of Sleeter (2001) and

Castro (2010), this study demonstrates that teachers who are driven by personal ideals frequently encounter difficulties when attempting to implement CRT in the real world. This implies that CRT involves more than just personal willpower. Having supportive structures in place is also essential.

A very significant component of this learning process was the teaching practicum. Participants had the opportunity to use CRT in actual classroom settings. But it also increased awareness of the disconnect between theory and practice. In their analysis of Indonesia's Kurikulum Merdeka, Hendrayani et al. (2024) noted something similar. They discovered that inconsistent application of policy reforms results in varying degrees of teacher preparedness.

#### **D. Conclusion and Suggestion**

This study explored the level of readiness among Indonesian pre-service English teachers to implement Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) within the context of their coursework and field practicum experiences. CRT has increasingly become a critical framework for inclusive education, particularly in multicultural societies like Indonesia. The research findings revealed that although most participants believed in the importance of CRT and tried to apply it using culturally relevant content, many lacked the formal definitions, pedagogical frameworks, and structured institutional support needed to translate that belief into effective practice. Their readiness was not uniform. It varied depending on factors such as exposure to CRT principles during training, access to mentoring, availability of teaching models, and encouragement from faculty and supervisors. These findings reaffirm that valuing CRT is only a first step. The ability to practice it confidently and effectively requires guided opportunities and systemic support. Therefore, CRT cannot be treated as an occasional topic but must be established as a sustained and foundational element within teacher education.

Culturally Responsive Teaching is more than a collection of teaching techniques or lesson plans. It is a philosophy of education that asks teachers to deeply reflect on their own identities, values, and assumptions. At the same time, it challenges them to understand and honor the diverse cultural backgrounds of their students. This kind of teaching is built on meaningful relationships, mutual respect, and a commitment to equity. The emotional labor

and critical awareness required for CRT need to be cultivated in safe and supportive learning environments. These spaces must encourage continuous growth, critical inquiry, self-examination, and open dialogue. For future teachers, these learning opportunities should begin early and be reinforced throughout the duration of their preparation programs.

The study's findings also highlighted that many participants incorporated CRT through surface-level practices, such as using local foods, regional traditions, or familiar examples in classroom activities. While these are useful starting points, they do not necessarily address the deeper goals of CRT. Issues such as cultural identity, power, student voice, and social justice were rarely addressed in classroom instruction. This points to a broader issue in teacher education programs, which often emphasize technical teaching skills and national curriculum standards over deeper cultural engagement and critical pedagogy. It is essential that teacher education in Indonesia moves toward more comprehensive models of CRT that address both content and context. Teachers must learn not only how to incorporate students' cultures into their lessons but also how to challenge stereotypes, promote equity, and foster critical thinking in their classrooms.

This research also comes with some important limitations. The number of participants was relatively small, and they were all enrolled in the same public university. As a result, the findings may not fully represent the diversity of teacher education experiences across the country. The study focused exclusively on pre-service teachers and did not include perspectives from mentor teachers, university lecturers, students, or education administrators. Future research would benefit from a more inclusive and comparative approach, where insights from various stakeholders within the teacher education system are taken into account. This would offer a broader and more balanced understanding of the supports and challenges associated with implementing CRT in Indonesian schools.

There is also a strong case for conducting longitudinal research in this area. Tracking participants after they graduate would help determine whether and how their CRT practices develop over time. Researchers could examine what kinds of school environments foster CRT and which types of professional development best support it. They could also study how new teachers respond to institutional barriers, peer expectations, and their own evolving beliefs. Such long-term studies could provide vital feedback to teacher education programs and help bridge the gap between theory and practice.

Cross-cultural research can also offer valuable lessons. Studies from other countries such as Turkey, the United States, or Canada have shown that when CRT is built into coursework, practicum experiences, and faculty mentoring, teachers feel more confident and competent. Comparative research between countries could help identify best practices that can be adapted to Indonesia's unique social, linguistic, and cultural context. It could also help build international collaboration between educators committed to equity and inclusion.

Looking to the future, it is essential to treat CRT not as a checklist of activities, but as an evolving professional journey. Teaching responsively requires teachers to continue learning long after graduation. They must engage in lifelong reflection and dialogue, adapting their approaches to meet the changing needs of students, communities, and educational systems. Building inclusive classrooms is a complex process. It involves not just the actions of individual teachers but also the policies, resources, and values upheld by the education system as a whole. Educational leaders, policy makers, community organizations, and universities must all work together to create environments that actively support CRT.

This study adds to a growing body of knowledge that argues for a deeper and more intentional integration of CRT into teacher preparation. It shows that Indonesian pre-service teachers are motivated and willing to implement CRT, but they need more than passion. They need knowledge, mentorship, time, and institutional encouragement. With stronger support structures in place, these future educators will be better equipped to create classrooms where all students feel valued, respected, and included. Culturally responsive teaching should not be viewed as an optional enhancement. It is an essential practice for building a more just and inclusive education system—one that reflects the diversity and dignity of all learners.

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