

## Analysis of the Implementation of Cultural Responsive Teaching (CRT) in Designing Learning Based on the Needs of Students at SMAS Sultan Agung and SMA Negeri 3 Pematangsiantar

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**Abstract:** This study aims to analyze the implementation of Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) in designing learning that is based on the needs of Simalungun students at SMA Negeri 3 Pematangsiantar and SMA Sultan Agung Pematangsiantar. The research method used is descriptive qualitative, with data collected through observation, in-depth interviews, and document analysis. The findings indicate that the implementation of CRT in History learning is still not optimal, as Simalungun cultural content is more frequently featured in art performances and the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project (P5) rather than in formal classroom instruction. The application of CRT has a positive impact on increasing student motivation and active participation, as well as fostering a sense of pride in local cultural identity. However, limited teacher understanding of CRT remains a major challenge that needs to be addressed through continuous training and mentoring. The study reveals a need for more systematic integration of Simalungun cultural elements into the formal curriculum, particularly in History lessons. To address this, schools could develop comprehensive lesson plans that incorporate local cultural narratives, artifacts, and historical perspectives alongside national content. Additionally, creating a supportive environment for teachers to collaborate and share best practices in implementing CRT could help overcome the challenges of limited understanding and promote more effective culturally responsive pedagogy.

**Keywords:** Culturally Responsive Teaching, Simalungun Culture, History Learning, Learning Motivation, Cultural Identity.

## INTRODUCTION

Student-centered education is one of the main principles in the development of the national curriculum, including in the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum. This approach aims to make students the center of the learning process, paying attention to their needs, potential, and socio-cultural backgrounds. Amidst Indonesia's cultural diversity, it is important for education to not only transfer knowledge, but also integrate local cultural values that shape students' identities.

Simalungun, one of the Batak tribes in North Sumatra, has a rich cultural heritage, including the value of Habonaron do Bona (truth is the basis of everything). This value plays an important role in shaping the character of the younger generation of Simalungun. However, the reality in several educational units, such as SMA Negeri 3 Pematang Siantar and SMA Sultan Agung Siantar, shows that the integration of Simalungun culture in the learning process is still not optimal. Learning tends to be general and does not link material to the local cultural context, so that students' cultural identities are not optimally developed.

Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) is an approach that emphasizes the importance of connecting learning materials to students' cultures. Through CRT, teachers can use cultural

background as a source of strength in learning, increase the relevance of the material, strengthen student involvement, and build a strong self-identity. This approach is relevant to be applied in the context of multicultural Indonesian education, especially in the Simalungun community, so that students feel recognized, appreciated, and able to actualize their cultural values in everyday life.

Based on the description, this study aims to analyze the application of Cultural Responsive Teaching in designing learning based on the needs of Simalungun students at SMA Negeri 3 Pematang Siantar and SMA Sultan Agung Siantar. This study also aims to identify Simalungun culture-based learning strategies and measure the impact of CRT implementation on student motivation and learning outcomes. Based on the identification of the problems above, the formulation of the problem is as follows:

1. How is CRT implemented in designing learning for Simalungun students?
2. What strategies do teachers use to integrate Simalungun culture into learning?
3. What is the impact of CRT implementation on Simalungun students' motivation and learning outcomes?

Based on the objectives of the research conducted which will be included in this research as follows:

1. Analyzing the application of CRT in learning design
2. Identifying learning strategies based on Simalungun culture
3. Measuring the impact of the application of CRT on students/

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Cultural Responsive Teaching (CRT)

Culturally Responsive Teaching is a pedagogical approach that recognizes that cultural approaches are very important in the learning process. Gay (2000) defines CRT as the use of students' cultural characteristics, experiences, and perspectives as an effective channel in teaching them. Villegas and Lucas (2002) stated that CRT functions as a bridge between students' knowledge and school subject matter, thereby increasing the relevance of learning. According to Banks and Banks (2019), CRT aims to help students understand and appreciate their own cultural backgrounds and the cultures of others.

There are several basic principles of CRT, namely:

- a) Recognition of cultural diversity: Teachers must be aware of and appreciate the cultural diversity of students.
- b) Integration of culture in the curriculum: Learning materials must be relevant to students' cultural backgrounds.
- c) Using responsive teaching strategies: Teachers must adjust learning strategies to suit the cultural needs of students.
- d) Building strong relationships: Positive relationships between teachers and students are an important foundation for effective learning (Gay, 2000; Greer, *et al.*, 2009).

In the context of multicultural Indonesia, the application of CRT is very relevant to build appreciation for cultural diversity. CRT can help students develop a strong cultural identity, tolerance, and social awareness, in line with the objectives of the Merdeka Curriculum which emphasizes contextual learning that is relevant to the student's environment (Ainia, 2020; Salma & Yuli, 2023).

## 2. Simalungun Culture

### A. Core Values in Simalungun Culture.

Simalungun culture is full of noble values that have been passed down from generation to generation. One of the main concepts is Habonaron do Bona, which means "truth is the

basis of everything." (Silalahi, *et al.*, 2023). Simalungun customs include various rituals, social norms, and artistic traditions such as the use of the Simalungun language in daily communication and the traditional Manduda dance which is full of meaning of togetherness and gratitude (Sari, 2016).

### B. The Influence of Culture on the Character of Simalungun Students.

Simalungun culture shapes the character of students by instilling values of honesty, respect for parents, a spirit of mutual cooperation, and gratitude. In the context of education, students who are raised in this culture tend to have an attitude of respect for teachers, values of hard work, and appreciation for local cultural heritage. This can be proven based on previous research, namely the Use of the Simalungun Language in schools, such as at SD Negeri 091287, Panei District, showing how local culture strengthens students' identities (Editor Patiar Manurung, 2024).

### 3. Integration of CRT in Learning Design.

Differentiated learning adapts the learning process to the needs, interests, and learning styles of each student. When combined with CRT principles, differentiated learning enriches the learning experience by incorporating elements of the learner's culture into the learning activity (Tomlinson, 2014; Gay, 2000). This approach helps learners understand abstract concepts through real-life experiences that are close to their own culture, while also increasing their sense of ownership of the learning process.

## RESEARCH METHODS

The type of research used in this study is descriptive qualitative research. The qualitative approach aims to understand the phenomenon in depth through descriptions of words, not numerical data (Kusumastuti & Khoiron, 2019). This study focuses on the analysis of the application of Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) in designing learning based on the needs of Simalungun students. The research method is based on descriptive data processing (Djam'an Satori, 2011: 23). Descriptive qualitative research is conducted to explain existing research without providing data manipulation of the variables studied by conducting direct interviews (Bahri, 2017: 73).

The subjects of the study were teachers who teach at the high school level, namely at SMA Negeri 3 Pematang Siantar and SMA Sultan Agung Siantar.

The selection of subjects was carried out purposively, with the criteria of teachers who have experience in implementing or designing learning that considers the local cultural background of Simalungun.

Data collection was carried out through three main techniques, namely:

1. Direct observation of the implementation of the learning process in the classroom to gain an understanding of the dynamics of teacher and student interactions.
2. In-depth interviews with teachers and students to explore experiences, views, and challenges in implementing the CRT approach.
3. Documentation study of the Learning Implementation Plan (RPP), student work, and other relevant supporting documents.

The data obtained were analyzed using the Miles and Huberman data analysis model, which includes three stages:

1. Data reduction, namely the process of selecting, simplifying, and focusing data to sharpen relevant information.
2. Data presentation, namely organizing data into narrative or table form to facilitate interpretation.
3. Drawing conclusions, by identifying patterns, themes, or relationships between data to gain a deep and valid understanding.

To increase the validity of the data, triangulation was carried out by comparing the results of observations, interviews, and documentation. Through this method, the research is expected to be able to provide a comprehensive picture of how the Culturally Responsive Teaching approach is implemented in the learning of Simalungun students, as well as its impact on their motivation and learning outcomes.

## RESULTS

Based on the results of interviews with teachers at two schools, namely SMA Negeri 3 Pematang Siantar (school A) and SMA Sultan Agung Siantar (school B), an overview of the initial conditions of learning related to local culture in the History subject was obtained.

At school A, it was found that students showed interest in the culture of their region of origin, especially Simalungun culture. This interest was seen from the active participation of students in art performances and the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project (P5), where they performed various traditional dances, sang regional songs and made and exhibited traditional foods. Although

these cultural activities were actively carried out in school events, the results of data collection showed that in the context of History learning in the classroom, the association of material with Simalungun culture was still less than optimal. Learning tended to use a general and national approach without exploring local history as part of learning Indonesian history.

At school B, the results of interviews showed that teachers did not fully understand the concept of learning based on local culture. The approach used was still conventional, centered on national textbooks, so that it paid less attention to the potential of local culture as a source of learning history. As a result, the level of students' appreciation of their own regional history and culture, including Simalungun culture, has not developed optimally.

Following up on these findings, researchers designed History learning activities by applying the principles of Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT). The stages carried out include:

### 1. Developing learning plans

At this stage, researchers begin to design learning activities with the CRT approach. The planning process includes the preparation of various learning tools, such as teaching modules, learning media, learning resources, and assessments. This planning is prepared by considering the learning flow in accordance with the CRT approach, which refers to the five principles or guidelines for culturally responsive education put forward by Greer, et al., (2009), namely: (1) the importance of culture, (2) knowledge as part of social construction, (3) cultural inclusiveness, (4) academic achievement that does not only depend on the intellectual dimension, and (5) balance between unity and diversity.

### 2. Implementing Learning Activities with the CRT Approach.

After the learning plan is prepared, the next step is to implement learning activities with the CRT approach in class A and class B, each of which has 30 students as research subjects. Learning activities are focused on learning History

### 3. Conducting Evaluation

After the learning activities are completed, researchers conduct an evaluation through an assessment carried out at the end of the activity. The results of the assessment are used to evaluate the effectiveness of the learning that has been

implemented. Based on observations in class A, it can be seen that students showed high enthusiasm during the learning process with the CRT approach. They actively asked questions and provided answers to questions posed by the teacher. In addition, the success of the CRT approach can be seen from the ability of students to develop a sense of mutual respect for cultural diversity, both their own and others. Students are also able to see cultural diversity as part of an identity that needs to be appreciated and preserved. In class B, the results of observations showed that students felt enthusiastic and showed a high interest in learning when studying the diversity of self-identity at school. They were asked to mention the identities of their deskmates, such as ethnicity, religion, hobbies, eye shape, and so on, with the aim of getting to know each other better. Each student seemed enthusiastic to learn more about the cultural background of their deskmate, which then enriched their insight into the cultural diversity around them.

## DISCUSSION

Education in the 21st century implemented through the Independent Curriculum provides more space for students to develop creativity and innovation. According to Ainia (2020), Independent Learning emphasizes freedom of thought and innovation. This curriculum also integrates cultural values, thus providing opportunities for teachers to innovate and create in learning activities (Salma & Yuli, 2023; Assyauqi & Thohir, 2024; Soiuiddin & Saputra, 2024). In this case, Ki Hajar Dewantara's idea that emphasizes the importance of the relationship between learning and culture can be realized through the Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) approach. Through the Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) approach, teachers act as facilitators who encourage students to be involved in the learning process that contains cultural elements. This approach aims to stimulate students' imagination, increase their participation in learning, and broaden their understanding of the surrounding culture. The results of Lasminawati's (2023) research revealed that the implementation of CRT can have positive impacts, including: (1) Increasing active participation of students in the learning process, (2) Creating an understanding of material that is relevant to real life, (3) Sharpening social skills through collaboration, and (4) Increasing students' ability to connect lessons with their life experiences and cultural contexts. The implementation of the Culturally Responsive

Teaching (CRT) approach in a number of schools in Simalungun is a strategic step to adapt education to the needs of students. Schools that are inhabited by students from diverse cultural backgrounds are the right place to foster an understanding of cultural differences. Through CRT, students are equipped with a foundation to understand global cultural diversity, which also contributes to the formation of their character. In its implementation, teachers need to have the ability to recognize and appreciate diversity in the classroom. This can be done through a personal approach, such as understanding the background of students, communicating with parents, and creating open dialogue spaces in the classroom. Overall, CRT opens up opportunities for the creation of an inclusive and meaningful learning atmosphere, and encourages students to grow as tolerant and globally aware individuals.

Implementing CRT in learning materials that reflect the cultural diversity of students is very important. A deeper discussion of diversity provides broader insight into global diversity, while also giving students a sense of being valued in the learning process.

Research conducted in a number of schools in the Simalungun area, especially in the city of Pematangsiantar, shows that the implementation of the Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) approach has a positive impact on increasing student participation and interest in learning, especially when the subject matter is linked to their cultural diversity. However, there are still a number of obstacles in its implementation, especially concerning the level of understanding and readiness of teachers in implementing this approach. Teachers still need further training and assistance in order to be able to integrate CRT principles into the learning process effectively. In addition, the active role of schools and policy makers is needed to create an environment that is conducive to the optimal implementation of CRT.

## CONCLUSION

This study aims to analyze the implementation of Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) in designing learning based on the needs of Simalungun students, and to identify the strategies used by teachers and their impact on student motivation and learning outcomes.

Based on the results of the study at SMA Negeri 3 Pematang Siantar and SMA Sultan Agung Siantar, it can be concluded that:



- 1) The implementation of CRT in History learning has begun to be integrated through efforts to link materials with local culture, such as introducing Simalungun cultural values and local history. However, in general, the linking of Simalungun culture in learning is still not optimal and requires further strengthening.
- 2) The strategies used by teachers in integrating Simalungun culture include planning learning based on local culture, implementing learning with a contextual approach, and assessments based on cultural projects. Activities such as art performances and the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project (P5) are moments that support student involvement in their culture, although they have not been fully integrated into History learning in the classroom.
- 3) The impact of the implementation of CRT shows positive results, namely increased enthusiasm, active participation, and students' pride in their cultural identity. Learners become more able to connect historical concepts with local cultural experiences. However, the main challenge remains the lack of understanding of teachers regarding the principles of CRT, so that training and institutional support are needed for more effective implementation.

Overall, this study emphasizes the importance of implementing a culturally responsive learning approach in the context of multicultural education, especially to strengthen local identity, increase learning motivation, and develop critical thinking skills in learners. Therefore, ongoing efforts are needed from teachers, schools, and policy makers in encouraging the integration of local culture in the curriculum and daily learning.

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