Conceptualizing Teacher Agency for Culturally Responsive Teaching in International Programs at Higher Education Levels

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ABSTRACT: *In light of the internationalization of higher education, teachers play a crucial role in promoting culturally responsive teaching (CRT) for all students from diverse backgrounds. A growing interest in teacher agency and its enactment in culturally diverse environments has recently emerged among educators and policy makers. However, a systematic conceptualization of teacher agency in CRT remains under-explored. This article presents a theoretical framework that synthesizes existing theories of teacher agency and analyses conditions for its enactment in CRT in international programs. Teacher agency in CRT has been addressed in five major aspects including CRT teacher identity, professional competence, professional philosophy, autonomy and reflexivity. Institutional conditions have been described for curriculum adaptation and development, culturally responsive pedagogy and enabling environment building. This paper discusses the implications for teacher education, professional development and institutional provisions in order to facilitate the transformation of CRT practices in international programs at higher education levels.*

KEYWORDS: Teacher agency, culturally responsive teaching, internationalization, international programs, higher education.

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1. Introduction

In a growing trend of internationalization in higher education worldwide, more attention to CRT has been paid. Internationalization is defined as "*the process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of post-secondary education*" (Knight, 2003, p. 2). In Vietnam, the term *internationalization at home* has primarily been adopted because the internationalization in Vietnamese higher education institutions focuses on integrating its intercultural and international aspects into the teaching learning process, the extracurricular activities, and the relationships with local, cultural and ethnic community groups (Wachter, 2003).

In the higher education internationalization, teachers are considered to be the most powerful agents of change in determining learning conditions for students (Li & Ruppar, 2021; Min et al., 2021; Luong et al., 2023). Culturally responsive teaching (CRT) has been used to make significant contributions to promoting equity for all learners in increasingly diverse learning environments. Among the significant influential factors, 'teacher agency' is a key variable in the design and delivery of CRT (Priestly et al., 2015; Min et al., 2021). Teacher agency for CRT shapes how they support students to learn through their own cultural lenses instead of the ones constructed by dominant ideologies. It is vital that work be done to develop teachers' CRT professional competence in order that they may contribute to CRT innovations and policy reform (Toom et al., 2015). In this process, teacher agency in CRT addresses and improves the institutional and systemic inequality issues that exist in culturally diverse education settings (Min et al., 2021). As such, teacher agency plays an important role in improving students' learning, school development, and education innovation and reform (Pantić & Florian, 2015; Toom et al., 2015).

Despite a growing emergence of internationalization of higher education, there is a lack of knowledge on how to achieve

sustained commitments to CRT with teachers' transformative learning and agentic roles as its core (Priestly et al., 2012). The discrepancy between the high expectation of institutional conditions for CRT and the low levels of its provision poses great challenges on teachers of international programs in higher education because of an irrelevant curriculum, students' poor acquisition of instructions, and high-stakes testing-based accountability. Given this context, this article focuses on conceptualizing teacher agency in CRT so as to help policy makers, educators and researchers develop a support system for in-service and pre-service education for teachers at higher education institutions. This article was produced from the scoping review. An inductive approach was used to analyze the selected data. As the themes of teacher CRT agency emerged, they were clustered, enumerated and presented below.

2. Literature on culturally responsive teaching and teacher agency for CRT

Culturally responsive teaching is defined as a pedagogy that makes learning more relevant to and effective for ethnically diverse students; it is a method that teaches to and through strengths of these students (Gay, 2002, 2018). From a holistic perspective, Gay (2018, p.36) elaborated eight attributes of CRT that require teachers to be accountable for students' learning capability and wellbeing. First, CRT *validates* students' "cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles". Second, CRT is *comprehensive*, meaning that teachers help students maintain their ethnic identities, develop community, and encourage their success, and it is *inclusive*. Third, CRT is *multidimensional*, spanning dimensions of teaching (e.g., curriculum, assessment, subject areas) and including "a wide range of cultural knowledge". Fourth, CRT is *empowering*, such that students' self- beliefs, including academic beliefs, are nurtured. In this regard, teachers' responsibilities are not only to help students gain academic achievements, but also to help them recognize, appreciate and maintain their cultural heritages. Next, CRT is *humanistic*,

encouraging students to acquire knowledge of self and others and to be culturally responsive in their own lives. Notably, CRT is also described as *emancipatory*, supporting students to become activists in their own right. CRT is also envisioned as *transformative*, in that academic success is supported alongside development of cultural identity. The final tenet of CRT asserts that it is an *ethical* teaching practice and a *norm* for education.

From a socio-cultural, ecological perspective, teachers who teach in a CRT manner, recognize students' cultural experiences and backgrounds in classroom while attaching importance to creating an environment in which students feel empowered and welcomed (Taylor & Sobel, 2011). Apart from acknowledging different cultures in the classroom, teachers show their willingness to learn about them, create a culturally-aware environment that allows students from different cultures to feel validated, thereby creating a greater sense of belonging and inclusion (Thomas & Berry, 2019).

From an agentic-role perspective, CRT has three patterns: (a) it engages with teacher education knowledge from culturally-plural perspectives; (b) it hones strategies for creating culturally inclusive learning experiences; and (c) it develops asset-based views toward cultural diversity. These patterns constitute a conceptualization of the process of learning that is needed in order to develop culturally responsive teachers, and they suggest practical implications for preparing culturally responsive teachers (Liao et al., 2021).

Worldwide, research on teacher agency for CRT is growing. Accordingly, teacher agency has been examined in terms of: (i) curriculum reform (Priestley et al., 2013; Min, 2019); (ii) personal attributes that shape teacher agency (Biesta et al., 2015); (iii) socio-cultural, ecological factors including institutional dimensions such as administration and values and policies that regulate and form teacher agency (Richards et al, 2007; Anderson, 2010; Priestley et al., 2015; Wilcox & Lawson, 2018); (iv) educational innovations and reform policies (Toom et al., 2015; Wilcox & Lawson, 2018; Min, 2019);

and (v) inclusion and social justice for students (Pantić & Florian, 2015; Min et al., 2021). The findings have shown how teacher agency has been shaped in diverse contexts; how it determines educational reforms and initiatives; and how it influences student academic achievement and empowerment. Although the multidimensional aspects of teacher agency have been explored, there exists a paucity of empirical research that probes the relationships between teacher agency and CRT (Min et al., 2021).

3. Theoretical framework of teacher agency for CRT in higher education

In this article, teacher agency for CRT is developed on the basis of three major theories including agency theory, transformative learning theory and ecological systems theory (Figure 1). The agency theory examines teachers' agentic roles and capacity for transforming their teaching practice in delivering international training programs in response to student learning needs in an intercultural environment. The transformative learning theory explains teachers' learning and changes that they experience in becoming agents in CRT. Finally, the ecological system theory addresses the institutional conditions for teacher agency development of CRT and its enactment that engages many different stakeholders in the delivery of international training programs.

3.1. The agency theory and CRT

Human agency can be viewed as a property or capacity residing in individuals (Priestley et al., 2016). It is not only something that people have – as a property, capacity or competence – but is also something that people do. So human agency is conceptualized as capacity in exercising agentic actions. In this sense, teacher agency is defined as "*their capacity to effect real change through reforming and transforming educational practice for the benefit of learners...*" (Orland-Barak, 2018, p.247). In simple terms, agency can be described as the capacity of teachers to "*critically shape their own responsiveness to problematic situations*" (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998, p.971) or the "*capacity for autonomous action... [independent] of the determining*

constraints of social structure" (Cahoun, 2002 cited in Biesta & Tedder, 2006, p.5).

As such, a conception of agency encompasses the dynamic interplay between three dimensions including (i) routine (acquired patterns of action), (ii) purpose (motivating 'forces'), and (iii) judgement (the engagement with the situation in the here-and-now). It takes into consideration 'how this interplay varies within different structural contexts of action' (Biesta et al., 2015).

It is often not clear whether the 'teacher agency' term refers to an individual capacity of teachers to act agentically or to an emergent 'ecological' phenomenon dependent upon the quality of individuals' engagement with their environments (Biesta & Tedder, 2007). Priestly et al. (2015) set out an ecological model for understanding teacher agency, drawing explicitly on the temporal/relational conception of agency outlined by Emirbayer and Mische (1998), who view teacher agency under particular ecological conditions and circumstances in which the importance of both *agentic capacity* and *agentic spaces* is emphasized in shaping agency. The development of teacher agency is viewed as a temporal process which is built in three dimensions. Firstly, the iterational dimension distinguishes between the influence of the more general life histories of teachers and their more specific professional histories (including their own education as a teacher and the accumulated experience of being a teacher). As such, teacher professional and personal experience is highlighted in the achievement of agency. Secondly, the projective dimension distinguishes between short term and long-term orientations of action. In this regard, teacher agency concerns their work aspirations that enable them to direct their appropriate courses of action. Thirdly, the practical-evaluative dimension makes a distinction between cultural, structural and material resources available to actors for agency-enactment in a concrete situation.

Teacher agency for CRT

In culturally diverse environments, teacher agency of CRT is critically important in supporting students to learn through their own cultural lenses instead of those constructed by the

dominant ideologies (Toom et al., 2015). In the international training programs, Tran and Nguyen (2014) defined agentic teachers as those who are "*active in the process of making changes to their teaching or undertaking new roles associated with the presence of international students in their class*" (p.6). In this sense, teacher agency in CRT is theorized as teachers' capacity or power to actively make everyday choices about situation-appropriate and context-specific CRT pedagogies, to intentionally take actions, and to

strategically initiate changes through reforming and transforming their educational practices in international program(s) for the benefit of learners (Anderson, 2010; Toom et al., 2015; Orland-Barak, 2018).

Teacher agency for CRT is manifested in five main aspects: teacher identity, professional competence, professional philosophy, autonomy and reflexivity (Pantić & Florian, 2015; Li&Ruppar, 2021).
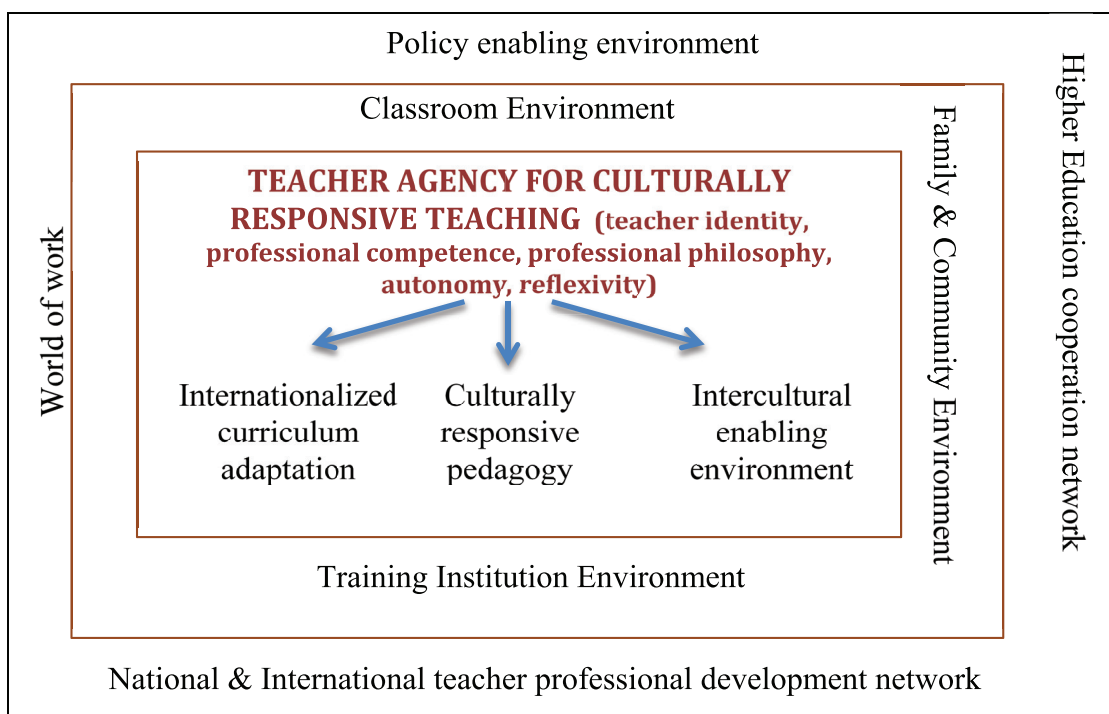
The agentic actions are seen in three following

Figure 1. Theoretical Framework of Teacher Agency for CRT in Higher Education

Table 1. Aspects of Teacher Agency and Agentic Actions of CRT Practice

Aspects of Teacher Agency	Agentic actions of CRT practice
CRT teacher Identity (professional role, moral roles, motivation)	Promoting equal status in collaborative teaching partnerships; Acting as school system developers and decision makers; Actively engaging in creating cultures in which teachers see themselves as being in control of their own work environments; Visioning their professional work around CRT education; Owning a strong ethnics and accepting accountability for enabling their students to access international or culturally responsive job fields and living.
CRT professional competence (knowledge and practice of CRT)	Actively developing knowledge about CRT; Having insatiable desire for CRT capacity-building; Seeking CRT professional development opportunities through national and international teacher professional development networks; Adapting their prerequisite curriculum, pedagogy and assessment for CRT practices;

Aspects of Teacher Agency	Agentic actions of CRT practice
	Intersectional understanding of ability/difference within CRT; Modelling a disposition to quality education in diverse environments; Creating extracurricular space for CRT relationship-building with students; Creating mutually supporting space among students to foster a sense of belonging in a culturally diverse environment; Tailoring CRT curricula but still ensuring students' competence in taking high-stakes exams; Developing tests in accordance with CRT practice.
CRT professional philosophy (attitudes and perceptions toward CRT teaching, learning, and ability)	Having a positive attitude toward CRT education; Understanding student achievement as always contingent upon socio-cultural contexts and home situations; Possessing strong convictions about the significance of social-emotional growth for academic learning; Addressing barriers embedded in the school's institutional organization or broader social structures instead of simply expecting the students to adapt to the existing schooling structures; Regarding instruction as a reciprocal process; Challenging deficit views of superior ability of dominant groups in a culturally diverse environment.
Autonomy (individual and collective efficacy, decision-making power, and active collaboration with other actors)	Constructing a supportive ecology within higher education institutions (HEIs); Collaborating with other HEIs, employers (world of work) and communities; Co-planning and deciding curricula; Committing to building trustworthy relationships with students and with colleagues (both Vietnamese and foreign ones); Willing to engage in critical discussions with others about CRT issues; Having high levels of confidence, control, and resilience; Challenging problematic HEIs/classroom/international program cultures and international program leadership; i.e.: challenging culturally irrelevant assessment or teaching practices; Challenging problematic broader education policy and sociocultural contexts.
Reflexivity (constant reflection, monitoring, and regulation of one's own actions and social contexts)	Reflecting on their own CRT practices and enabling environments in seeking to accommodate all learners from different cultural backgrounds; Constantly monitoring their own CRT actions with respect to their commitments; Simultaneously seeking ways to manage cultural differences; Articulating practical CRT professional knowledge and justifying actions; Making sense of the structures and cultures in their HEIs as sites for students' intercultural adaptability and social transformation.

(Source: Adapted from the work of Pantić & Florian, 2015)

major domains of CRT practice:

• exercising internationalized curriculum adaptation and culturally relevant instructional strategies (i.e.: design and implement activities, tasks and assessments) to facilitate student learning (Priestley et al., 2012);

• building an intercultural enabling environment by providing support (i.e.: deal with culturally emerging difficulties, culturally relevant structure-calibrated support, respect learner autonomy and integrity) in order to keep learners engaged and motivated (Maclellan, 2018);

• adopting the CRT pedagogy (i.e.: experience and make critical reflection in groups; pedagogical choices, decision making and instructional innovations to promote students learning and collegial development in

intercultural context) (Toom et al., 2015; Gay, 2018).

The achievement of agency in CRT is always informed by past experience, including personal and professional biographies, and it is orientated towards the future but enacted in the here-and-now, where such enactment is influenced by what we refer to as cultural, material and structural resources (Biesta et al., 2015).

3.2. The transformative learning theory and teacher agency for CRT

According to Merizow's transformative learning theory, effecting changes occurs in a frame of reference that encompasses mind-set, habits of mind and meaning perspectives (Mezirow, 2003, 2018). In the intercultural environment, sojourners gradually transform their worldview – a perspective of the world that is often contradicted by personal values and beliefs (Taylor, 1994). As a result, transformed worldview gradually contributes to the transformation of teacher identity, professional philosophy and professional competence. In this process, becoming critically reflective of one's own and others' assumptions is the key to transforming one's set frame of reference (Mezirow, 2003). Three fundamental constructs for transformative learning, including experience, reflection, and dialogue (Mezirow, 2018) shape three main properties of human agency namely, forethought, self-reflectiveness and self-reactiveness (Bandura, 2018).

Teacher identity in intercultural environments has been transformed through its five-stage transformative learning trajectory namely (i) a disorienting dilemma; (ii) critical reflection on prior assumptions in relation to the new context; (iii) reflective discourse; (iv) trialling and further validating the new-meaning perspective; (v) living the new perspective—integrating it into work. It is proved that CRT teaching experiences that result in a disorienting dilemma drive teachers to practice critical reflection. This should be reflected in identity-oriented teacher education programs. As a result of the disorientation, new critical insights are enacted and validated in teaching work and professional development

networks via their continuous critical reflection (Yang & Han, 2022).

In CRT environments, teachers constantly promote transformative professional learning that is characterized by two major features. First, there is the centrality of agency as the basis for transformative learning, which in turn, fosters agency in terms of 'emancipating' or 'empowering' teachers. Second, there is the significance of collaborative and inquiry forms of professional learning in which collaboration – happening at multiple levels – supports teacher autonomy, agentic actions and innovation (Boylan et al., 2022). The transformative professional learning of teachers can be enabled in different ways: collaborative inquiry and practitioner research; training, or workshops led by experts and teacher peer groups, and various forms of material and systemic arrangements (ibid.).

In the process of becoming culturally responsive, teachers move from a stage of being to a stage of "becoming" in which transformed actions are applied. Transformation has taken place owing to their learnt behaviours and changes in thinking. Specifically, "*the individual has moved on from a particular way of thinking to a new way of thinking in relation to a subject matter, that is, a shift from a state of becoming to the next state of being*" (Natanasabapathy & Maathuis-Smith, 2018, P.8). Such an evolving process reframes teacher identity and philosophy in two ways: (i) by sustaining reflexive practices (self-directed learning and ongoing reflexivity); and (ii) through collaborative professional learning (either in a community setting or online network) (Arvanitis, 2018).

All in all, transformative learning becomes a professional action imperative for teacher agency development in CRT. With teachers' experiences, critical reflection and collaboration at different levels, it possibly transforms teacher agency for CRT in expected ways upon its given context-for-actions.

3.3. The ecological systems theory and the development of teacher agency for CRT

Biesta and Tedder (2007) have developed a useful ecological view of agency, positing the

notion that agency is achieved under particular ecological conditions. This notion suggests that, even if teachers have some capacity for CRT, achieving it depends on the interaction of their capacity and the extant socio-cultural ecological conditions. From this perspective, "*rather than seeing agency as residing in individuals as a property or capacity, the ecological view of agency sees agency as an emergent phenomenon of the ecological conditions through which it is enacted*" (Priestley et al., 2015, p.22).

That is, agency does not exist in a vacuum and it cannot be achieved in isolation. Immediate and existing ecological conditions can facilitate or limit the achievement of CRT agency in teachers. With such an socio-cultural ecological approach, teacher agency is developed through specific teacher acts of critically shaping 'their responses to problematic situations' (Biesta & Tedder, 2007, p.143) in order to achieve CRT in the international training programs. Therefore, rather than seeing agency residing in individuals, teacher agency of CRT is understood as an emergent phenomenon of actor-situation transaction.

In this approach, the agency development model of teachers' CRT and the provision of institutional conditions for its development will be examined through the following lenses (Priestley et al., 2012).

1. Agency of CRT is strongly connected to the contextual conditions within which it is achieved; it is not merely a capacity or possession of the individual in particular (transactional) situations.

2. Agency of CRT can be understood temporally as well as spatially. Thus, analysis of agency should include insights into the past experiences and the projective aspirations and views of agents, as well as the possibilities of the present. Further, according to Bronfenbrenner (1995), different layers of each setting can be disentangled for the purpose of analysis of their effects on teachers' CRT agency development. The specific layers are:

• Microsystem: to investigate the causative influence of teacher agency in CRT (i.e. experience, motivations/aspirations, knowledge, skills and attitudes);

• Mesosystem: to investigate the influence of contextual or ecological factors that directly develop teacher agency of CRT in the international training programs (including teacher-student relationship, student-student relationship, institutional policies on professional development, inter-universities cooperation, mobility academic exchange programs, digital learning and sharing network or forums, facilities for extra-curricular or intercultural exchange programs/events, etc.);

• Macrosystem: to investigate the influence of contextual or ecological factors that indirectly develop teachers agency in CRT in the international training programs (i.e. Covid-19 context, Government policies such as Decree No. 86/2018/NĐ-CP dated 06/6/2018 on cooperation with foreign partners in the edcational sector; Circular No.38/2020/TT-BGDDT dated 6 October 2020 on training cooperation with foreign institutions in online or blended graduate and postgraduate training programs; teacher professional development networks/forums, teacher development cooperation programs among universities, etc.).

4. Conditions for the enactment of teacher agency for CRT

Institutional conditions, one of the three dimensions that influence agency (personal and instructional are the other two) are critically important for CRT enactment (Richards et al., 2007). According to these scholars, appropriate physical, social and political structures in schools are prerequisite conditions for the effective implementation of CRT. More specifically, the organization of schools, school policies and procedures, and community involvement are three institutional factors that significantly affect CRT enactment. In line with these scholars, cultural, structural, and material aspects, as stated by Priestley et al. (2015), have a pivotal role in forming a major influence on teacher agency. In this sense, institutional conditions can be understood as social, human, and material aspects. These conditions can be facilitators or inhibitors for teacher agency – they shape teachers' decisions and actions with regard to implementing CRT (Mayfield & Garrison-Wade,

2015; Min et al., 2021).

Teacher agency may be shaped and enhanced by policies that specify goals and processes that enhance the capability of teachers to manoeuvre and move between teaching repertoires, make decisions, and frame future actions (Priestly et al., 2015). In principle, the existing education policies of higher education institutions require teachers to exercise agency in their teaching. In practice, however, the enabling or disabling of teacher agency depends on the provision or subversion of cultural and structural conditions (ibid.).

Institutional conditions for teacher agency in developing and adapting international curriculum

To implement international programs, the development and delivery of international curriculum in an effective manner have become critically important roles of teachers. Leask (2015) defines internationalization of the curriculum as 'the incorporation of international, intercultural and/or global dimensions into the content of the curriculum as well as the learning outcomes, assessment tasks, teaching methods and support services of a program of study' (p.209). As such, teachers need some institutional policies and support to exercise their agency in the international curriculum adaptation and/or development.

Teachers are responsible for transferring what is included in the curriculum to students. To enact a culturally responsive curriculum that is tailored to the needs of students from diverse cultural backgrounds, teachers are required to understand their students' home lives and cultural experiences. As such, culturally responsive curricular are delivered effectively only when teachers actively make due efforts in adapting them. In the case of borrowing curriculum, which is foreign curriculum provided in conjunction with a Vietnamese collaboration partner, teachers should be flexible and able to adapt curriculum before transferring this prescribed curriculum to their students from diverse cultural backgrounds (Dreyfus, 2019; Richard, et al., 2007).

As noted, teachers enact agency in CRT in a socio-cultural ecological environment. This creates professional development opportunities for them to learn, understand, and connect with students' cultural experiences and to participate in the culturally responsive curriculum management process (i.e. designing, implementing, monitoring, and evaluating) so as to achieve its desired learning outcomes. In this regard, an example is provided by a project conducted in Scotland within a University/Local Authority partnership (Drew & Priestley, 2016). Accordingly, teachers worked with university researchers over the course during a school year to develop curriculum, drawing upon various resources. The curriculum development was based on the goals of Curriculum for Excellence laid down in the policy framework, as well as a clearly defined process for school-based curriculum development through collaborative professional enquiry facilitated by university-based researchers (Priestley & Minty, 2012). This model proves how curricular specification might play a powerful role in enabling teachers to enact their agency in making curriculum relevant to curricular goals and local needs.

Institutional conditions for teacher agency in adopting culturally responsive pedagogy

It has been resonated that teachers need supports in their ecological institutions in order to deliver effective instructions for students from culturally diverse backgrounds. Most importantly, school leadership or school administration that determines constructed teacher agency has been underlined in several studies in the field of CRT (Dreyfus, 2019; Min et al., 2021). Culturally responsive leadership embodies three levels: personal, environmental, and curricula. It regulates CRT practice by building relationships, modeling, and fostering cultural responsiveness among teachers. Administrators' support and valuing of teachers' voice in communicating, sharing beliefs, and understanding the needs of students can foster teachers to make changes in their CRT practice. In addition, CRT professional development, including training CRT knowledge & skills and building CRT-promoting communities, also supports CRT practice (Mette et al., 2016). Providing CRT learning and sharing opportunities can help teachers achieve teaching

experience in CRT (Priestley et al., 2015). Furthermore, it is echoed that school leadership structures, strategies and resource allocation are positively related to teachers' experiences in policy innovation implementation (Wilcox & Lawson, 2018).

International teaching experiences have also been recognized to significantly contribute to developing teacher agency of CRT. Major et al. (2020) pointed out in their study that maintaining the sustainability of long-term international teaching exchange program and professional development network or community ensures on-going support and encouragement for teachers to critically reflect on their experiences, and enhance their CRT in international programs. Moreover, continuous collaboration among teachers is considered as supporting factor to put CRT into practice (Min et al., 2021).

Institutional conditions for teacher agency in developing a CRT enabling environment

It has been affirmed that teachers and students are inspired when they find themselves represented and reflected in their school environments. In adequately recognized environments, all people from diverse backgrounds are treated with respect and dignity that, in turn, reinforces their sense of belonging (Luong et al., 2021). In order to build such enabling environments, teachers are granted with autonomy of creating policy statements about their commitment to culturally responsive education and conducting periodic review of school policies (i.e. dress code, discipline code and conduct code) on the basis of research-based practices (NYSED, 2022). Furthermore, teachers should be provided with space to process and determine how to engage employers and community in schools. On this account, higher education institutions should set up advisory groups of various stakeholders (teachers, students, employers, families and community members) to work collaboratively in delivering CRT.

Notably, teachers are encouraged to create a visibly multilingual and multicultural environment in HEIs through posters, banners and other visual signs that celebrate the identities of students from all ethnic groups. Additionally, they are provided with sufficient resources for initiating "listening conferences" or "peace making circles", and cultural clubs through which cultural and social values and conflicts can be discussed by all concerned stakeholders. Particularly, multiple means of on-going employers' engagement (i.e. apps and online systems of communication, possibly providing transportation, outreach at company meetings, etc.) can be provided so that continuous partnership with this stakeholder can be sustained (NYSED, 2022).

5. Conclusion

Many international studies have investigated teacher agency in order to improve teaching and teacher education (Priestley et al., 2012; Li & Ruppar, 2021); and students' learning, school development, and education innovation and reform (Pantić & Florian, 2015; Toom et al., 2015). It is important to note that teacher agency plays a critical role in the effective design and delivery of culturally responsive teaching (Priestly et al., 2015; Min et al., 2021) that has been recognized as a key influence on shaping students' intercultural adaptability (Luong et al., 2023). Importantly, teacher agency for CRT addresses and improves the institutional and systemic inequality issues that exist in international education settings (Min et al., 2021).

However, teacher agency for CRT remains under-theorized in the face of an ever-growing trend towards the internationalization in higher education. This article provides insights into conceptualizing teacher agency for CRT with three major theories, namely agency, transformative learning and ecological systems. Teacher agency for CRT is examined with agentic actions in five main aspects, including teacher identity, professional competence, professional philosophy, autonomy and reflexivity. In order to promote CRT in international programs, institutional conditions for enacting teaching agency in curriculum adaptation and development, CRT pedagogy and enabling-environment-building have been described. It is also emphasized that a collaborative culture

between higher education institutions and employers and communities is a significant factor in encouraging and supporting teachers to become change agents toward CRT. With all of these elements in mind, higher education institutions can design professional development for teachers and provide sufficient conditions for teacher agency enactment. From the policy-making perspective, the conceptualization of teacher agency for CRT as explored in this article contributes specific and systematic indicators for designing pre-service teacher training programs as well as elaborating effective policies and regulations for CRT promotion and management in international programs in Vietnam's higher education institutions.

Acknowledgements

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