

Repositioning the Teacher as a Cultural Mediator: Advancing Cultural Literacy through Autonomy and Innovation

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Abstract

Teachers increasingly work in classrooms marked by cultural plurality, contested identities and digitally mediated meaning-making. This paper advances an empirical and design-oriented account of teacher cultural mediation: the teacher's capacity to create "pluricultural space," interpret divergent cultural standpoints and facilitate dialogue that turns difference into shared learning rather than social fracture. Building on contemporary reconceptualisations of cultural literacy as a dialogic social practice and on self-determination theory's evidence base for autonomy-supportive teaching, the paper argues that cultural literacy grows when students experience agency (autonomy), relational safety (belonging) and interpretive tools (dialogue and multimodal production). A structured synthesis of recent empirical studies is combined with a feasible mixed-methods empirical design. Because the target context and participant demographics are unspecified, the paper reports hypothetical (simulated) data aligned with published effect sizes to illustrate expected outcome patterns from a 10–12 week classroom programme integrating (a) teacher autonomy-support training, (b) dialogic cultural literacy routines and (c) innovative cultural artefact production (digital storytelling/photo voice/virtual exchange). Findings suggest that repositioning the teacher as cultural mediator can plausibly yield moderate gains in cultural literacy dispositions (tolerance, empathy, inclusion), dialogic participation and intercultural communication confidence, especially when teacher autonomy and school-level support for innovation are present. The paper concludes with actionable implications for teacher education, curriculum, assessment and school leadership.

Keywords: *cultural mediation; cultural literacy; autonomy-supportive teaching; dialogic pedagogy; intercultural competence; digital storytelling; teacher innovativeness.*

Cultural diversity has become a defining condition of contemporary schooling, not simply through migration or demographic change but through the everyday coexistence of multiple linguistic repertoires, digital subcultures, value systems and historical narratives within a single classroom. In such contexts, "culture" is not a static background variable; it is a lived resource and a contested interpretive field. This makes cultural literacy and cultural mediation core pedagogical concerns rather than specialised topics for "multicultural weeks" or discrete curriculum units.

Cultural literacy beyond canon: from knowledge lists to dialogic practice- Foundationally, cultural literacy has been

framed as acquisition of shared cultural knowledge—cultural references, texts and "what every citizen should know" (Hirsch, 1988). That framing has had enduring influence on curriculum debates, often aligned with national identity projects and standardisation. Yet a growing body of research critiques purely canonical models as insufficient for pluralistic societies because they position culture as a one-way transmission of "correct" knowledge, risk marginalising minoritised cultural repertoires and under-specify the relational and democratic work of living together with difference (Maine, Cook and Lahdesmaki, 2019). Recent European research associated with the DIALLS programme explicitly reconceptualises cultural literacy as a dialogic

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social practice. In this view, being culturally literate means being able to encounter cultural differences, elaborate one's own identity in respectful interaction and enact dispositions such as tolerance, empathy and inclusion through talk and collaborative meaning-making (DIALLS, 2021; Maine, Cook and Lahdesmaki, 2019). Empirically, DIALLS materials—wordless picture books and short films—are used to stimulate interpretive dialogue precisely because ambiguity invites multiple perspectives and makes negotiation observable (Cook, 2022).

Teacher as cultural mediator: mediation as “bridge-building” and as pedagogy -The move from cultural literacy as “what students know” to cultural literacy as “how students engage” requires a parallel shift in teacher role. The teacher becomes less a transmitter of settled cultural interpretations and more an intercultural mediator who designs conditions for interpretation, dialogue and co-creation. Officially, the Council of Europe's CEFR Companion Volume expands “mediation” beyond translation to include social and cultural mediation relevant to diverse classrooms. It defines mediation as a mode of communication in which the learner/actor “creates bridges and helps to construct or convey meaning,” and it explicitly describes the role of a “cultural mediator” who creates a trusted shared space to enhance communication among people with contrasting cultural viewpoints (Council of Europe, 2020). This policy-technical definition matters for education because it operationalises mediation into describable and assessable practices: facilitating collaborative meaning-making, managing ambiguity, anticipating misunderstandings and supporting perspective-taking. Empirically, cultural mediation is visible not only in classroom talk but also in family-school relations. For example, a qualitative study of bilingual Latina teachers

portrays educators “as bridges” who translate linguistically and culturally, challenge deficit narratives about families and undertake relational labour to create recognition and belonging in school partnerships (Chen, 2025). This expands cultural mediation from “instructional technique” into an ethical and institutional role: mediating between community cultural wealth and school norms.

Autonomy as a mechanism: why cultural mediation needs agency

Cultural mediation is profoundly constrained when classrooms operate under rigid compliance models. If students experience culture talk as surveillance (e.g., “say the correct tolerance statement”) rather than as agency (e.g., interpret, question, connect), cultural literacy can become performative. Here, self-determination theory (SDT) contributes an empirically validated mechanism: autonomy-supportive teaching. A large intervention literature synthesised by Reeve and Cheon (2021) reports that autonomy-supportive teaching is malleable (teachers can learn it) and beneficial (it yields motivational, engagement and wellbeing gains), based on 51 interventions including 38 randomised controlled trials. More recently, a cluster RCT in Korean middle schools (n ≈1,566 students; 28 teachers) tests a longitudinal model in which a teacher workshop increases teacher perspective-taking and subsequent need-support, which then predicts student need satisfaction and lower need frustration across the school year (Reeve and Cheon, 2024). The conceptual bridge to cultural mediation is straightforward: mediation requires perspective-taking, respectful listening and the ability to hold multiple interpretations without collapsing them into a single sanctioned meaning—precisely the interpersonal conditions autonomy-supportive pedagogy is designed to cultivate.

Innovation as infrastructure: why cultural mediation needs new forms of expression

Cultural mediation also requires innovative pedagogical infrastructures that make cultural meaning visible and discussable. Empirical work shows that innovative approaches—dialogic programmes, digital storytelling, photo voice and virtual exchange—create new affordances for cultural literacy:

- Dialogic cultural literacy programmes (e.g., DIALLS) are structured around cultural themes and designed to move classroom talk towards dialog city, reasoning and stance exploration, with evidence of increased dialog city and culturally relevant dispositions in student participation.
- Digital storytelling studies in upper secondary contexts show that culturally grounded digital narratives can strengthen multimodal literacy, cultural identity meaning-making, student motivation and collaborative engagement through staged processes of planning, production and reflective viewing (Handayani, Sumiyadi and Yulianeta, 2026).
- Photovoice workshops with middle-school learners show that creative, discussion-based visual production can foster shared language about culture and support reflection and cultural literacy skill development (Straub, Cox, and Slatinska, 2025).
- Virtual exchange studies, though often small and context-specific, repeatedly find gains in self-reported intercultural competence and willingness to engage across difference when learners collaborate through sustained online interaction (Higgins, 2024).

Innovation is also not only “teacher creativity” but a system-level variable. Large cross-national TALIS analyses show that teacher

autonomy and collaborative school culture are positively related to collective teacher innovativeness and that integrated professional learning mediates these relationships (Nguyen, Pietsch and Gumus, 2021). A newer OECD TALIS 2024 results chapter similarly treats teacher autonomy and leadership opportunities as measurable dimensions linked to professional outcomes, while noting declining teacher involvement in some decision domains across many systems (OECD, 2025). These findings position autonomy and innovation as policy-relevant conditions for cultural mediation, not merely classroom preferences.

Research development milestones timeline
title Research development milestones for cultural mediation and cultural literacy

1980s : Cultural literacy debates (canon vs. equity) : Cultural capital as stratification lens

1990s : Intercultural competence and dialogic traditions become central to education discourse

2000s : Self-determination theory expands evidence on autonomy-supportive teaching

2010s : Digital/multimodal literacies reshape how culture is represented and assessed

2018-2021 : Cultural literacy programmes integrate dialogue + multimodal texts in schools

2020 : Policy frameworks operationalise mediation as bridge-building in diverse classrooms

2024-2026 : Large-scale datasets and intervention studies link intercultural practice to wellbeing and learning

Significance of the Study

This study is significant because it consolidates fragmented empirical literatures intercultural education, cultural literacy programmes, autonomy-supportive pedagogy and teacher innovation research into a coherent explanatory model of teacher cultural mediation, specifying mechanisms (autonomy support, dialogic mediation, innovative cultural artefact

production) and measurable outcomes (cultural literacy dispositions, belonging, dialogicity, intercultural communication confidence) that can guide teacher education, curriculum reform and school leadership in culturally plural classrooms.

Objectives

- To synthesise recent empirical evidence on cultural literacy and intercultural education to clarify how “teacher as cultural mediator” can be operationalised and assessed.
- To examine autonomy-supportive teaching and teacher autonomy as enabling mechanisms for cultural mediation and innovation, drawing on intervention research and international teacher survey evidence.
- To propose and illustrate an empirical mixed-methods design (with hypothetical data aligned to published effect sizes) that estimates the likely impact of a cultural mediation programme integrating autonomy and innovative cultural artefact work.

Methodology

This paper adopts a two-layer empirical approach: (a) a structured synthesis of contemporary empirical studies and official frameworks and (b) a feasible mixed-methods intervention design with hypothetical (simulated) outcome data to illustrate expected effect patterns under realistic implementation conditions. The proposed empirical design is a 10–12 week quasi-experimental mixed-methods study with matched intervention and comparison classrooms; participating teachers receive professional development in autonomy-supportive routines (perspective-taking, invitational language, rationale-giving) aligned with SDT interventions and in cultural mediation routines aligned with mediation-as-bridge-building (facilitating pluricultural

space, managing ambiguity, dialogic ground rules). Student participants (demographics unspecified beyond grade/age bands due to constraints) complete (i) a cultural literacy dispositions measure adapted from DIALLS progression tools (tolerance, empathy, inclusion; dialogic participation indicators), (ii) perceived teacher autonomy support via the Learning Climate Questionnaire (LCQ) and (iii) intercultural communication confidence items aligned with virtual exchange/self-assessment traditions. Data analysis uses multilevel models for pre–post change (students nested in classes), with qualitative thematic analysis of classroom talk samples and student artefacts (digital stories/photovoice products) to trace mediation moves and meaning-making trajectories. Instrument choices and analytic structure are grounded in established measures and programme tools (Council of Europe mediation descriptors; DIALLS progression tools; LCQ; intercultural competence models).

Results

Across robust empirical literatures, three types of evidence support the repositioning of teachers as cultural mediators.

First, evidence at scale indicates that intercultural education practices relate to student wellbeing and belonging. Basarkod, Dicke, Allen, Parker, Ryan, Marsh, Carrick and Guo (2024), analysing PISA 2018 data ($N \approx 451,846$ students; 58 countries) using multilevel regression, report that student-reported intercultural education practices predict multiple psychosocial outcomes (eudaimonia, life satisfaction, positive affect, school belonging) and that student-reported teacher intercultural attitudes predict higher belonging and lower victimisation, while principal/teacher-reported intercultural variables show negligible effects. This pattern highlights a practical implication: what matters

is not policy rhetoric but students' experienced classroom-level practices.

Second, autonomy-supportive teaching is a well-evidenced causal lever for creating the interpersonal conditions necessary for cultural mediation. Reeve and Cheon (2021) synthesise intervention research showing teachers can learn autonomy-supportive instructional behaviours and that students benefit across motivation, engagement and classroom climate indicators. Their 2024 cluster RCT provides a mechanism-level account: a teacher workshop increases perspective-taking, which then predicts interest/value support and reduced control, leading to student need satisfaction and reduced need frustration over time. For cultural mediation, this matters because “bridging” cultural differences is rarely a purely cognitive task; it requires emotional attunement, patience with ambiguity and non-controlling language skills explicitly named in autonomy-supportive practice descriptions.

Third, innovation-oriented cultural literacy and culturally responsive pedagogies show measurable impacts on engagement, identity and intercultural learning. A mixed-methods quasi-experimental study of culturally responsive teaching with identity affirmation (Zeng, Isleem, Tejani, Jahami and Alnowibet, 2025) reports significant gains in engagement ($d \approx 0.68$), belonging ($d \approx 0.57$) and achievement ($d \approx 0.41$) in a US multi-institution sample and identifies identity affirmation as a substantial mediator of effects. Although not labelled “cultural literacy” in DIALLS terms, these outcomes align strongly with the relational and identity mechanisms cultural mediation seeks to strengthen.

Within formal “cultural literacy” research, DIALLS provides direct evidence that dialogic programmes can shift classroom discourse towards higher dialogicity and culturally relevant dispositions. DIALLS policy and programme documents define cultural literacy

as dialogic competence and dispositions (tolerance, empathy, and inclusion) and position teacher-facilitated dialogue as foundational. Empirically, DIALLS deliverables report statistically supported improvements in dialogicity scores across sessions, interpreted as beneficial for implementing cultural literacy dispositions, though noting that longer planned implementations would likely have produced clearer effects. Complementary discourse studies show how provisional language (“maybe,” “perhaps”) functions in classroom talk to help students navigate multiple perspectives—an interactional signature of cultural mediation rather than simple consensus-making.

Innovation through multimodal cultural production further expands what cultural mediation can look like. In a qualitative case study in upper secondary schooling, culturally-informed digital storytelling supported multimodal communication and cultural identity meaning-making through structured phases of planning, production and reflective discussion, using observations, artefact analysis and interviews with students and teachers (Handayani, Sumiyadi and Yulianeta, 2026). Photovoice-based creativity and discussion similarly fostered cultural literacy experiences among middle-school students by building shared language about culture and reflection processes (Straub, Cox and Slatinska, 2025). Virtual exchange research, even in small samples, provides pre–post evidence that sustained mediated online collaboration can raise self-rated intercultural competence; Higgins (2024) reports a substantial increase in mean self-evaluation scores from pre to post over an eight-week exchange and qualitative reflections describing expanded cultural understanding.

Finally, teacher autonomy and innovation capacity at the system level matter. Nguyen,

Pietsch and Gumus (2021) show in TALIS 2018 (48 countries; >241k teachers) that teacher autonomy and collaborative culture are directly associated with collective teacher innovativeness and professional learning mediates these relationships, implying that cultural mediation is unlikely to scale without organisational and leadership conditions that

protect teacher design capacity. OECD TALIS 2024 reporting similarly treats teacher autonomy and leadership opportunities as key dimensions tied to professional outcomes, while warning of declines in teacher involvement in some decision areas, which can undermine innovation capacity over time.

Table comparing key empirical studies

Study (context)	Design and sample	Autonomy/innovati on lever	Cultural literacy–relevant outcomes
Basarkod, Dicke, Allen, Parker, Ryan, Marsh, Carrick and Guo, 2024 (58 countries; PISA 2018)	Multilevel regressions; N≈451,846 students	Intercultural education practices and teacher intercultural attitudes	Student-reported intercultural education predicts wellbeing and belonging; teacher intercultural attitudes predict higher belonging and lower victimisation
Reeve and Cheon, 2024 (Korea; middle schools)	Cluster RCT; 28 teachers; n≈1,566 students	Autonomy-support PD centred on perspective-taking	Increased teacher perspective-taking and need-support pathways; improved student need satisfaction and reduced need frustration
Nguyen, Pietsch and Gumus, 2021 (48 countries; TALIS 2018)	Multilevel SEM; 241,426 teachers; 15,672 schools	Teacher autonomy + collaborative culture → innovativeness; mediated by professional learning	Teacher autonomy and collaboration predict collective teacher innovativeness, supporting system conditions for cultural mediation and innovation
Zeng, Isleem, Tejani, Jahami and Alnowibet, 2025 (USA; 6 institutions)	Mixed-methods quasi-experiment; n=863 students	Culturally responsive teaching + identity affirmation	Significant gains in engagement, belonging, achievement; identity affirmation mediates effects
DIALLS Deliverable 5.3 (multi-country Europe)	Mixed quantitative discourse metrics + qualitative analysis	Dialogic cultural literacy learning programme with teacher facilitation	Increased dialogicity score across sessions; dialogicity interpreted as mediating tolerance, empathy, inclusion in student participation
Cook, 2022 (England; DIALLS UK lessons)	Classroom talk analysis of recorded lessons (n=18 lessons)	Dialogic pedagogy; provisional language to manage ambiguity	Provisional language supports navigating multiple perspectives central to cultural literacy as dialogic practice

Handayani, Sumiyadi and Yulianeta, 2026 (Indonesia; upper secondary)	Qualitative case study; n=35 Grade 12 students	Culturally-informed digital storytelling + reflective viewing	Multimodal literacy growth, motivation, collaboration; cultural identity meaning-making through culturally grounded narratives
Straub, Cox and Slatinska, 2025 (USA; middle school gifted programme)	Creative workshop + thematic analysis; n=36 Grade 6 students	Photovoice + discussion	Cultural literacy experiences strengthened via reflection and shared language about culture

Table interpretation note: studies differ in constructs (cultural literacy, intercultural education, culturally responsive teaching, intercultural competence). The comparison treats them as overlapping operationalisations of cultural mediation outcomes (dialogic perspective-taking, belonging, identity affirmation, empathy/tolerance), enabling a coherent synthesis.

Hypothetical intervention outcomes aligned to empirical effect patterns

Because the target educational context is unspecified and no primary data are provided, this section presents hypothetical (simulated) results illustrating what a feasible “Teacher Cultural Mediation through Autonomy and Innovation Programme” (10–12 weeks) could produce if implemented with moderate fidelity. The simulated outcomes are calibrated to published trajectories: moderate-to-large gains in engagement/belonging under culturally responsive interventions (Zeng, Isleem, Tejani, Jahami and Alnowibet, 2025), measurable intercultural competence gains under structured virtual exchange (Higgins, 2024) and discourse-level dialogicity improvements under DIALLS-aligned dialogic pedagogy (DIALLS Deliverable 5.3; Cook, 2022).

Assumed sample (illustrative): 12 classes (6 intervention; 6 comparison), ~25 students per class ($N \approx 300$), with students aged 11–15 (grade bands only; demographic variables otherwise unspecified). Teachers ($n=12$) complete professional development combining autonomy-supportive routines (perspective-taking; invitational language; rationale-giving) and cultural mediation routines (facilitating pluricultural space; dialogic ground rules; ambiguity management). Students complete pre and post measures.

Measures:

- Cultural Literacy Dispositions Index (CLDI; 1–5): tolerance of ambiguity, empathy, inclusion orientation (aligned to DIALLS progression framing).
- Perceived Teacher Autonomy Support (LCQ short-form; 1–7). Intercultural Communication Confidence (ICC; 1–5): comfort discussing cultural differences and collaborating across cultures.
- Dialogic Participation Ratio (DPR): proportion of student turns coded as reasoning/inviting vs. low-dialogic moves (modelled after DIALLS dialogicity approach).

Table of hypothetical pre-post outcomes

Outcome	Group	Pre (M)	Post (M)	Δ	Standardised effect (approx. d)
CLDI (1–5)	Intervention	3.05	3.62	+0.57	0.60
	Comparison	3.07	3.20	+0.13	0.14
LCQ (1–7)	Intervention	4.10	5.05	+0.95	0.65
	Comparison	4.12	4.30	+0.18	0.12
ICC (1–5)	Intervention	2.95	3.55	+0.60	0.55
	Comparison	2.93	3.05	+0.12	0.11
DPR (0–1)	Intervention	0.33	0.46	+0.13	—
	Comparison	0.34	0.37	+0.03	—

Interpretation: The simulated pattern is “moderate gains under intervention, minimal gains under comparison,” consistent with empirical findings that (a) autonomy-support can shift perceptions and motivational climate (Reeve and Cheon, 2021, 2024), (b) dialogic cultural literacy programmes can increase dialogicity and culturally relevant dispositions (DIALLS Deliverable 5.3; Cook, 2022) and (c) structured intercultural projects (virtual exchange; multimodal storytelling) can increase intercultural confidence and reflective engagement (Higgins, 2024; Handayani, Sumiyadi and Yulianeta, 2026).

Synthesis: what the “teacher as cultural mediator” adds empirically

The empirical synthesis plus simulated outcomes support a practical conclusion: cultural literacy improves when cultural mediation is enacted as (i) a communicative competence (bridge-building), (ii) an interactional ethic (respectful, autonomy-supportive participation) and (iii) an innovative design practice (creating artefacts and dialogues that make meaning visible). The CEFR mediation framing provides a language for “bridge-building” and “pluricultural space,” DIALLS provides an operationalisation of cultural literacy dispositions through dialogic

practice and SDT provides a causal lever for shifting motivational climate so that cultural dialogue is experienced as agency rather than compliance.

Educational Implications

Repositioning teachers as cultural mediators has direct implications for teacher education, curriculum, assessment and school leadership. In teacher education and professional learning, the evidence suggests that cultural mediation should be taught as a learnable repertoire, not assumed as a personality trait. Programs can explicitly train (a) autonomy-supportive micro-practices (perspective-taking statements, choice within structure, rationale-giving, non-controlling language), (b) mediation practices (facilitating pluricultural space, managing ambiguity, interpreting standpoints) and (c) dialogic pedagogies that move beyond I–R–F recitation towards invitations, uptake and student-to-student reasoning. Such a design aligns with evidence that autonomy-supportive teaching is malleable under robust PD and that intercultural competence development is most likely when PD is embedded, reflective and connected to enactment. For curriculum design, the DIALLS approach implies that cultural literacy is strengthened when curriculum materials are interpretively open

(e.g., wordless texts, short films, cultural narratives, local traditions) and when lessons have dual aims: a cultural theme plus a dialogue skill. DIALLS planning tools emphasise that tolerance, empathy and inclusion are not separate “values lessons” but dispositions developed through repeated dialogic encounters with ambiguity and difference. In non-European contexts, parallel designs appear in culturally grounded digital storytelling and traditional-culture interdisciplinary teaching, where cultural objects function as catalysts for identity, engagement and collaborative inquiry. In assessment, the research suggests shifting from purely declarative “cultural knowledge tests” to performance-based evidence of mediation. Using mediation descriptors (e.g., “creates bridges,” “manages ambiguity,” “facilitates understanding between standpoints”) and dialogicity indicators (reasoning turns, inviting turns, metadialogue) allows educators to evaluate whether students can *do* cultural literacy—engage respectfully, interpretively and collaboratively—rather than merely *state* tolerant values. This aligns with DIALLS’ discourse-based measurement logic and with CEFR’s operationalisation of mediation as observable activity. Photovoice and digital storytelling further provide assessable artefacts (narratives, images, reflective commentary) that reveal cultural meaning-making processes, making cultural literacy more visible to teachers and learners. At the level of school leadership and policy, the role of teacher autonomy is pivotal. Large-scale TALIS evidence links teacher autonomy and collaborative culture to collective innovativeness through professional learning, implying that cultural mediation pedagogy will remain local and fragile if teachers lack discretion to adapt materials, co-design with colleagues and allocate time for dialogue and productions. OECD’s TALIS 2024 reporting—highlighting declines in teacher involvement in

some policy decisions in many systems signals a systemic risk: reduced autonomy can directly undermine the capacity to innovate for cultural literacy. A policy coherent approach would therefore protect structured teacher autonomy (within accountability frameworks) specifically for culturally responsive and dialogic innovation cycles.

Conclusion

This paper argues, with empirical grounding that repositioning the teacher as a cultural mediator is a practical, measurable and improvable approach to advancing cultural literacy. The synthesis shows that cultural literacy is best understood as a dialogic social practice involving dispositions (tolerance, empathy, inclusion) and competencies for engaging across cultural standpoints (Maine, Cook and Lahdesmaki, 2019; DIALLS, 2021). The Council of Europe’s mediation framework provides an operational language for teacher work as bridge-building and for creating pluricultural space, while autonomy-supportive teaching provides a causal mechanism for building the motivational and relational conditions under which students can participate agentially in cultural dialogue (Council of Europe, 2020; Reeve and Cheon, 2021, 2024). Empirical studies across contexts further indicate that intercultural education is associated with wellbeing and belonging at scale (Basarkod, Dicke, Allen, Parker, Ryan, Marsh, Carrick and Guo, 2024), that culturally responsive interventions can produce meaningful gains in engagement and identity affirmation (Zeng, Isleem, Tejani, Jahami and Alnowibet, 2025) and that innovative cultural production pedagogies (digital storytelling, photovoice, virtual exchange) can strengthen cultural meaning-making and intercultural confidence (Handayani, Sumiyadi and Yulianeta, 2026; Straub, Cox and Slatinska, 2025; Higgins, 2024). The hypothetical data presented here, explicitly marked as simulated,

demonstrate how these convergent literatures can be integrated into a feasible empirical intervention design when contextual variables are unspecified. The overarching conclusion is that autonomy and innovation are not optional enhancements; they are the enabling conditions through which teachers can enact cultural mediation with integrity and measurable impact. Without autonomy-support, cultural literacy can collapse into compliance. Without innovation, it can remain invisible and unassessable. Together, autonomy and innovation reposition the teacher as a mediator who builds bridges—between students, between cultures and between lived experience and curriculum—so that cultural literacy becomes a lived democratic competence rather than a rhetorical aspiration.

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