

## Chapter 48

# The Role of Culturally Responsive Teacher to Ensure Social Justice in Education

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### ABSTRACT

*In this chapter, the importance of having culturally responsive teacher competencies to carry out the education process in accordance with the social justice is discussed within the context of teacher roles and responsibilities. Indeed, education as a social institution is an important institution that provides individuals with an understanding of justice, equality, freedom, and solidarity in a way that enables individuals to live harmoniously within society. In this respect, education system components should be designed with culturally responsive pedagogy on the basis of social justice principles. Besides implementing a culturally responsive teaching in classrooms can be achieved with teachers who have culturally responsive teaching competencies. With these roles and responsibilities, teachers should develop their individual and professional competencies for culturally responsive teaching at teacher education programs.*

### INTRODUCTION

On the threshold of the 21st century; the developments in the field of science and technology closely affect the individuals as well as main institutions that regulate social life. The interaction among people that have different nationalities has increased even more thanks to the new communication means and increased mobility facilities. Now our world has become a more global village; multinational corporations and community structures that host individuals from many different cultures have emerged. Integrating culturally diverse individuals to the society in a culturally sensitive manner is one of the main concerns

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for many countries. Governments are trying to introduce new policies to ensure that different cultures are acknowledged and appreciated by all members of the society. To develop an understanding towards other cultures, educational institutions are trying to provide a school life which addresses all diverse cultures and other minority groups. In this sense, multicultural education, culturally responsive pedagogy and teacher competencies sensitive to cultural values are among the topics that have been widely discussed in educational circles in recent years.

The education process in schools is built on the individuals' acquiring the target behaviors. Individual, socio-economic and cultural characteristics should be considered from the very beginning of determining the aims to the students' acquisition processes. In fact, the main point of social justice in education is to provide education for everyone according to their needs and abilities, because in every society there are cultural, socio-economical, ethnic, religious and racial differences. Schools are small prototypes of the social structure that includes all these differences. Thus designing an education system which takes into account the individual and social differences is a necessity of the social justice principle. Otherwise ignoring the individuals' cultural or ethnic backgrounds and an assimilationist approach to differences will yield to social inequality.

Multicultural approach and multicultural policies are important indicators of the social justice demands. The assumptions of multiculturalism argues that people's cultural characteristics and differences should be kept in mind in every aspect (political, cultural, educational and financial) of the life. Multicultural education policy and practices lead to questioning the education system of the countries housing culturally diverse populations. It's emphasized in the existing literature that education systems which ignore cultural differences and serve to uniformity cause social inequality within society. In this respect, education systems should be transformed on the basis of the social justice principle in order to ensure social justice and to prevent inequalities in the education process.

Teachers, an important element of the education system, have an effective role in the implementation of the system. Therefore, teachers have great responsibilities in ensuring social justice and preventing the social inequalities. In this sense, it is expected that teachers primarily become an advocate of social justice, break their prejudices, do not discriminate and strengthen intercultural awareness. Teachers need to have the qualities of a culturally responsive teacher to foster the understanding of social justice in them and ground the teaching and learning processes on social justice. Culturally responsive teachers take into consideration the cultural knowledge and life experiences that diverse students bring to class. Such a teacher tries to ensure social justice minding cultural and ethnic differences of the students. Besides s/he tries to be a role model for his students to internalize the understanding of social justice. In the long run he lays the foundations of the future generation's beliefs towards social justice and supports their readiness to prevent social inequalities. This chapter consists of social justice and social justice in education, multiculturalism and multicultural education, the relationship between culturally responsive pedagogy and social justice, culturally responsive teacher competencies and recommendations for preparing culturally responsive teachers.

## **Social Justice**

Social justice is a value that has been valued in many societies from past to present, and has been tried to be kept alive. Justice in general terms is basically to provide equality between people on the basis of law. The concept of justice is an intuition that exist (or should exist) in human nature and a phenomenon that includes every human being has his rights in his relations with other people or does not suffer from a

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