The Competencies of the Culturally Responsive Teacher: What, Why and How?

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The Competencies of the Culturally Responsive Teacher: What, Why, and How?

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Abstract

This study aims to explore postgraduate teachers' perspectives regarding the "culturally responsive teacher." In doing so, it adopts a basic qualitative approach as the research design. I selected 11 teachers as the study group by using the criterion sampling method. I collected the data from five female and six male teachers from various branches through semi-structured interview forms. I used the thematic analysis technique during the data analysis. I categorized the findings under four themes: cultural responsiveness, self-assessment, teacher competencies, and desirable culturally responsive teacher. According to the results, being a culturally responsive teacher requires having certain personal and professional competencies, such as avoiding discrimination, respecting cultural differences, being a role model, having an empathic tendency, and having good communication skills as well as a pedagogical background. In the pre-service period, a number of special methods and practices should be implemented in order to develop culturally responsive teacher competencies of future teachers.

Keywords: Teacher Education, Teacher Competencies, Culturally Responsive Pedagogy

Introduction

Culture is an important concept that shapes an individual's thought processes and is a dynamic force at the basis of his or her behavior. While analyzing the behavioral codes of individuals, the dynamics that form a cultural and social context should be taken into consideration. In this sense, the cultural context gives a perspective on how people should think and react to events and situations (Neuliep, 2012). Schunk (2012) states that social and cultural elements are important in the realization of an individual's learning. Erturk (2013) states that there is a close relationship between the cultural values of an individual and the learning and interpreting behavior of that individual. In this sense, the frame of reference provided by cultural values affects the individual's cognitive activities. At this point, it is necessary to be responsive to the cultural values of the individual in order to bring the target behavior to the individual during the educational process. The theory suggesting that students' cultural and social experiences should be used in structuring the education process is "Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT)." CRT is theoretically based on the idea that "culture" is important for individuals to learn, realize and interpret information. In this sense,

it is considered important that teachers, who play a vital role in the learning-teaching process, also should have CRT competencies. The teacher is in a position that gives life to the educational system. Therefore, the success of applications related to the education system is directly proportional to the knowledge, skills, and competencies of the teachers. In this context, it is the responsibility of the teacher to design a learning-teaching process from a socio-cultural perspective and to include students' cultural background and experiences in this process. The fulfillment of this responsibility depends on the teacher adopting CRT and having CRT competencies.

It is of great importance that students who are going to form the society of the future should not only be academically successful, but should also gain basic values such as democracy, human rights awareness, equality, respect for differences, and social justice. Therefore, it is necessary for the educational process and teachers to contribute to this vision. At this point, it is foreseen that educational practices to be carried out on the basis of CRT will contribute to both individual and social development. In this context, teachers, who are an important component of the educational system, are expected to have knowledge, skills and awareness of CRT. In line with this expectation, it is considered important to examine teacher competency related to CRT and to seek perspectives and suggestions as to how these CRT competencies should be developed. In fact, Abacioglu, Volman, and Fischer (2019) plan to investigate in depth which practical contexts should be emphasized in the training of culturally responsive teachers, using qualitative research methods. In this research, examining the perspectives of teachers with different teaching experience regarding CRT will enrich the literature. In addition, it is expected that the findings and results of the research will contribute to the overall teacher training process by creating a widespread effect on improving the cultural responsiveness of prospective teachers.

The research questions of this study are as follows:

1. How do teachers define the concept of "cultural responsiveness"?
2. What is the self-assessment of teachers in terms of being a culturally responsive teacher?
3. According to teachers, what are the competencies of culturally responsive teachers?
4. What should be done to train prospective teachers as culturally responsive teachers?

Literature Review

Culturally Responsive Teaching

There are many factors that shape human personality. One of the important factors in shaping human personality is the cultural context. This cultural context consists of items such as language, religion, beliefs, values, tradition, and customs. It is often claimed that a cultural context is an important power that guides personality and therefore humans cannot be removed from their cultural context (Shweder, 1990). In fact, Berry et al. (2002) state that sociocultural factors play an important role on cognitive processes and that the differences in cognitive performance are shaped according to a cultural context. CRT is a reflection of the "education for all" approach. In this sense, instead of ignoring the individual and cultural differences of each student in the educational process, it proposes to design the educational process by considering these differences (Karatas & Oral, 2016). Banks (2008) states that

situations, such as gender, race/ethnic structure, socio-economic level, and religious belief of a learner, are important variables in making sense of student behavior. At this point, the components of the educational process, from the school climate to the curriculum, from teacher competencies to textbooks, should be structured according to students' cultural backgrounds (Karatas & Oral, 2019a, Karatas, 2020a). When teaching practices in schools are uniformed, the student needs, based on individual differences, may be ignored. At this point, CRT emerges as an approach that defends the belief that the cultural needs of learners should be found in the education process. According to Gay (2018) culturally responsive education is an effort to make learning activities more relevant and more effective for students, taking into account the cultural knowledge, past experiences, reference framework and performance styles of ethnically diverse students. According to Ladson-Billings (2009) CRT is an approach that empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally and politically. She also states that CRT contributes to students' academic success, cultural competence and critical awareness. CRT is accepted as a strong approach that contributes to increase student participation in classes, improve students' academic performance and increase their achievement levels (Byrd, 2016; Karatas & Oral, 2015). CRT is the effort of teachers to equalize the teaching purpose of teachers with the learning purpose of students (Pale, 2019).

CRT applications require creating a safe, inclusive and tolerant learning environment where diversity is respected to motivate all students to learn (Soylu et al., 2020). Otherwise, Gay (2018) states that in the educational system based on a single culture, the student can only look within the framework of a single culture and may tend to not accept anything outside this framework. Therefore, it can be claimed that the educational system, which is not responsive to cultural values, will not adequately prepare for the development of a student's critical thinking and gaining of a global vision.

The CRT approach contributes to the development of a sense of respect and acceptance for students of different cultures. For example, practices such as creating an inclusive classroom climate from CRT applications, promoting social cohesion, and expressing students' personal views and experiences comfortably will prepare students to approach cultural differences with understanding and increased tolerance (Gollnick & Chinn, 2017). According to Harriott and Martin (2016), CRT supports co-operation among students who differ in both cultural and academic achievement levels. Therefore, cultural information exchange among peers is facilitated, differences are respected, and social integration is ensured by valuing diversity. Moreover, according to Bassey (2016), CRT contributes to the development of students' sense of citizenship and social justice, and to being volunteer participants in the active spread of the idea of social change and equality. In the CRT, as we see it, the "other" is considered a resource to deepen and shape every student's learning. It is assumed that students must have a lively knowledge of themselves and of their own cultures, histories, and heritages in order to have substantive interaction with others (Barzanò et al., 2017). As is also understood from literature, CRT is an approach that contributes to the academic and affective development of students. The effective implementation of CRT depends on teachers with CRT competencies.

Culturally Responsive Teacher

It is emphasized that teachers should be aware of their own prejudices and assumptions about cultural differences in order to gain CRT competencies (Gorski, 2010). Teachers who believe in the pedagogical power of CRT create learning opportunities without isolating any students in the classroom environment and supporting all students' learning (Milner, 2011). According

to Villegas and Lucas (2002) culturally responsive teachers should have competencies, such as being socio-culturally conscious, feeling the responsibility of carrying out education based on CRT, actively using the learning resources of students in the learning process, supporting their students in structuring their knowledge, learning about their students' lives, and knowing culturally responsive teaching techniques and practices. Rychly and Graves (2012) point out four basic characteristics that should be in a culturally responsive teacher: caring about students, approaching students empathically, being aware of their cultural reference points, and having cultural knowledge of cultural responsiveness.

When a teacher adopts CRT and creates a learning environment accordingly, the academic success of learners increases (Aronson & Laughter, 2016; Karatas, 2020c; Vavrus, 2008). In case of being responsive to the cultural values of students in the process of learning and teaching, it will not only contribute academically, but also contribute to the development of their affective characteristics (Karatas, 2020b). Nieto and Bode (2012) state that students will be motivated for school and that their belonging to learning will be strengthened through CRT applications. Furthermore, it is stated that if cultural values are included in the teaching process, students' self-esteem, tolerance and acceptance of cultural differences will develop, and there will be no bias or discriminatory tendencies (Banks, 2008; Idrus, 2014; Ogilvie & Fuller, 2016). Alternatively, the teaching environment can be transformed into an environment where students will not feel a sense of respect and trust for each other and their teachers, and negative behavior will occur. In fact, Gaias et al. (2019) state in their study that when teachers do not manage their classrooms according to CRT, students are more likely to exhibit high levels of unwanted negative behavior. In this context, it is stated that teachers should make a pedagogical effort in associating the course content according to their students' cultural backgrounds during the teaching process (Lim et al., 2019). Teachers' self-efficacy of CRT is a prerequisite for an instructional process suitable for CRT. Teachers' self-efficacy belief in CRT is defined as a belief in competence for planning, implementing and evaluating all educational activities inside and outside the school by considering students' cultural values (Kotluk & Kocakaya, 2019). Lack of knowledge and competency of teachers regarding CRT will be a major obstacle to the efficiency of the instructional process. In fact, it is stated that teachers' positive or negative perceptions towards students with differences affect teachers' attitudes and behavior (Banks & Banks, 2010).

In general, since CRT provides benefits and contributes to the student in many respects, teachers should have CRT competencies and should adopt them. Indeed, preparing teachers to be responsive to cultural diversity is seen as an important issue (Kumar et al., 2019; Wetzel et al., 2019). Gaias et al. (2019), state that an important part of teachers' comprehensive professional development is CRT applications. In this context, it has been discussed in the literature that one important competency that prospective teachers should have in teacher training programs should be responsiveness to cultural values (Karatas & Oral, 2019b). In this regard, teacher training programs are expected to be prepared in such a way as to allow prospective teachers to gain CRT competencies. The concept of culturally responsive teaching in education should be at the center of the training, not as an extension of teacher training programs.

Method

I have adopted a basic qualitative approach in the present study (Altheide, & Johnson, 2011; Merriam, 2009). Percy et al. (2015) recommended that studies which investigate "people's attitudes, beliefs, or reflections of an experience in their environment should use a basic

qualitative approach." According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016), "basic qualitative study" research has the main characteristics of qualitative research, but can be used for research that does not include special cases, such as case study and phenomenology. Accordingly, I tried to examine in depth the ideas, perspectives, experiences and attitudes of teachers about the "culturally responsive teacher." In the same way, I expected teachers to benefit from their personal and professional experience. And I looked for answers to the question of how we can train teacher candidates as teachers who are culturally responsive teachers. In this context, I asked them to make recommendations on what arrangements should be made in the teacher training program.

Participants

I preferred the criterion sampling method, a purposeful sampling method, in the study. In this sampling method, researchers can select study participants within the framework of certain criteria (Patton, 2014). The criterion sampling method provides an opportunity to study in depth when a subject, situation, or concept needs to be better understood and revealed (Christensen et al., 2011). Within this context, I determined the criteria as having worked as a teacher for at least five years, and having received postgraduate education in the department of educational sciences. I determined these criteria for the reason of gathering a sufficient and rich amount of data regarding the researched phenomenon from the knowledge and experience of the participants. Within this context, to provide researchers an advantage in terms of economy and easy accessibility, I chose volunteer teachers who wanted to participate in the study, worked in a province in the South East Anatolia Region, and studied postgraduate education (master's degree with thesis and without thesis). For this purpose, I determined a total of 11 teachers, five female and six male, for the study. Of the participant teachers, five were classroom teachers, two were English teachers, two were social sciences teachers, one was a guidance teacher and one was a Turkish language teacher. In qualitative research, the aim is not to generalize information, but rather to bring forth in-depth, specific explanation regarding a situation or a case (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007). In this respect, the depth and width of the data obtained from the sample size is considered more important (Yildirim & Simsek, 2011). With this in mind, considering the nature of the researched concept, the nature and depth of the data obtained and the number of participants were sufficient.

Collection of Data

At the beginning of the data collection process, I obtained the necessary permissions from the institutions in order to access the participants. Within the scope of the ethical responsibility of the researcher, I clearly explained the purpose of the research to the participants. In addition, I informed the participants about the risks and benefits related to participation in the study, and the participants' right to withdraw from the research at any time. I guaranteed that the confidentiality of the data would be secured and that the personal information of the participants would not be included at any stage of the research report. In the study, I developed a semi-structured interview form, consisting of open-ended questions and then collected the necessary data from the volunteer participant. Open-ended questions provide an opportunity to analyze a concept in-depth, and to capture and understand the perspectives of the respondents (Patton, 2014). In the semi-structured interview form, there were questions including how the concept of cultural responsiveness is defined, how teachers evaluate themselves as being culturally responsive, what competencies a culturally responsive teacher should have, and recommendations as to what should be done in undergraduate education for

the training of culturally responsive teachers. During the development of the draft interview form, I consulted the opinions of three experts in educational sciences, and I made arrangements in line with the opinions and suggestions. By this way I determined the final version of the questions in the semi-structured form. The data collection took an average of 60–90 minutes.

Analysis of Data

I used the thematic analysis method when analyzing the data. Thematic analysis is a useful method for examining the perspectives of different research participants, highlighting similarities and differences, and generating unanticipated insights (Braun & Clarke, 2006; King, 2004). The process involves the identification of themes through "careful reading and re-reading of the data" (Rice & Ezzy, 2000). I followed the following steps while doing thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006): familiarizing with data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report. First, I read the data transcriptions many times. To become immersed in the data involves the repeated reading of the data in an active way, searching for meanings and patterns (Nowell et al., 2017). And then, I started creating the initial codes. During coding, I highlighted important parts of the data. I labeled data that I thought might be under a certain theme. I determined the themes and then categorized and organized the data under the related themes. While naming the themes, I paid attention to ensure that they were compatible with the theoretical framework of the research and that the themes were as sensitive and comprehensive as possible according to the data. Following this, I selected and combined the data suitable to the determined themes in a meaningful and logical way. I excluded certain data that did not conform to the thematic framework created during this process. Afterwards, I organized the data and provided direct quotations from the teachers' perspectives as a result of professional experience, attitudes, and lived experiences where necessary. I presented the related findings showing both positive and negative aspects. In order to ensure the confidentiality and protection of the personal information of the participants, I coded the participants as P1, P2, P3, etc., and gave their views using these codes. At this point, I presented only one of the same expressions in order not to repeat the findings.

Credibility

In the context of the credibility studies of the research, firstly, I collected the data in accordance with the principles of the determined study design. I presented general information about the development of the data collection tool and the data collection process. At the same time, I continued to collect the data until it reached a repetitive. For credibility of the research, I collected the data from teachers with various branches, and so I tried to provide multiple data sources. In addition, I took confirmation from the participant teachers on the themes and findings obtained within the scope of the study in order to prevent misunderstandings in the inferences and comments regarding the findings of the research, and to base the context of the study in a certain frame. Finally, I made a rich and intense description during the presentation and interpretation of the findings and reported the findings by presenting direct quotations from the participants' perspectives.

The Role of the Researcher

An important feature of qualitative research designs is that the researcher is the main tool in collecting and analyzing data. In this study, as the researcher I gave feedback by reporting what the participants understood from their narratives. When the participants understood the research questions incorrectly or incompletely, I tried to obtain data appropriate to the context of the research by asking the question again, appropriate to the participant's situation. In addition, being a graduate of psychological counseling and a guidance undergraduate program, I have a great deal of interview experience, which provided an advantage in terms of in-depth investigation of the interviewees' knowledge and experience with regard to the concept. In addition, I tried an effective interaction by adopting an open-minded, flexible, harmonious, patient, and empathic attitude. In this sense, it is important for the researcher to have knowledge and experience with regard to the related concept. Accordingly, having a PhD thesis related to CRT, publishing a large number of articles and giving undergraduate-level lectures on CRT enabled sufficient knowledge and experience related to this concept. Lastly, the fact that the teachers interviewed were from different branches gave different perspectives regarding the researched concept. A rich and deep set of data, provided from different perspectives, is considered an advantage for qualitative research. However, this caused difficulty in theming the data. In this sense, as the researcher I frequently consulted experts in the field, who are experienced in qualitative research, and received support in the process of determining the themes.

Findings

In light of the data obtained from the research, I categorized the findings into four themes. The themes are as follows: (a) cultural responsiveness, (b) self-assessment, (c) teacher competencies and (d) training culturally responsive teachers. The findings of the research are presented below within the framework of the themes.

Theme 1: Cultural Responsiveness

Under the theme of cultural responsiveness, I discussed the teachers' perspectives and attitudes about how they define cultural responsiveness. The perspectives of teachers regarding cultural responsiveness are generally considered as caring about the norms and values that are created with a common understanding, accepted as a heritage, and that create a society. In addition, as a necessity of cultural responsiveness, the teachers impose responsibility on the individual in maintaining and transferring cultural values to ensure cultural continuity. Here are the examples:

> P5: It is knowledge of the lifestyle, understanding of the perspective, behavior or norms, and customary traditions that belong to the same society to a certain level or its application and practice in real life.

> P6: It is the total of values of the individual and respecting the values of the individual, norms and rules of a society formed by individuals, knowing the norms of that society and acting accordingly.

> P1: It is being responsive to the customs, traditions and behavior that our society creates while living together from the past to the present and to care about them.

Another situation that teachers deal with in terms of cultural responsiveness is to be aware of respect for different cultural values. The statements of the teachers are as follows:

> P7: Respecting the values of all societies, not just their customs, traditions, language, and historical values. It is a responsive approach to values that make people human or that keep a society together.

> P3: Respecting or caring for the customs and traditions of a society, with the values that we consider good or bad ourselves.

> P8: To be tolerant by acting in accordance with the fact that people and communities are different from each other and have different perspectives.

The visual of the concepts associated with cultural responsiveness in line with teachers' perspectives is presented in Figure 1:
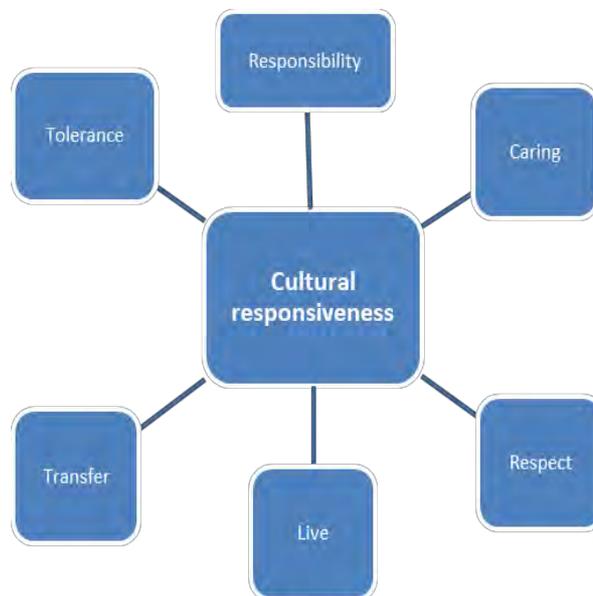
Figure 1. *Concepts associated with cultural responsiveness*

In the context of this theme, teachers relate the concept of cultural responsiveness to the individual's care and ownership of their own cultural values and their efforts and responsibility to ensure the continuity of the cultural heritage. In addition, they evaluate the state of respect and tolerance of individuals from different cultures within the scope of cultural responsiveness.

Theme 2: Self-Assessment

In the context of the self-assessment theme, I discussed the teachers' statements on how they evaluate themselves in terms of being a culturally responsive teacher within the framework of their personal and professional experiences. In this respect, I concluded that the teachers are making efforts to become more culturally responsive. At the same time, teachers state that they have an understanding of respect and an acceptance of cultural values, they share

cultural values, and they associate certain teaching activities with students' cultural values in the classroom. Quotes showing these thoughts and views are as follows:

> P4: Since it constitutes the most important step of cultural development, the teaching profession is one that students will adopt as a role model. Because of this importance, I try to approach and accept the values of students from a multicultural perspective.

> P5: I make students watch lots of videos from past religious holidays, hospitality material, and spiritual cultural elements of our country.

> P2: I provide our cultural values as much as possible by telling my students and organizing necessary trips in terms of being responsive to cultural values. I try to keep them alert as much as possible.

Some teachers, on the other hand, stated that they could not be sufficiently responsive to cultural values in their self-assessment, in terms of being a culturally responsive teacher. They attribute this situation to the influence of the media and alienation to the cultural characteristics and values of the region. The statements of teachers are as follows:

> P3: I am not very responsive to cultural values. The reason for this is TV, society, and the effects of the media.

> P4: I don't think I am fully qualified. Because I am not staying in the region where I work, I have become a foreigner to my parents, students, and the region.

In the context of the self-assessment theme, the teachers stated that they have an intention and have attempted to become culturally responsive in general, and those who stated that they are not culturally responsive offer external reasons. As a result of teachers' self-assessments, the concepts that stand out as being important in becoming culturally responsive teachers are presented in Figure 2.
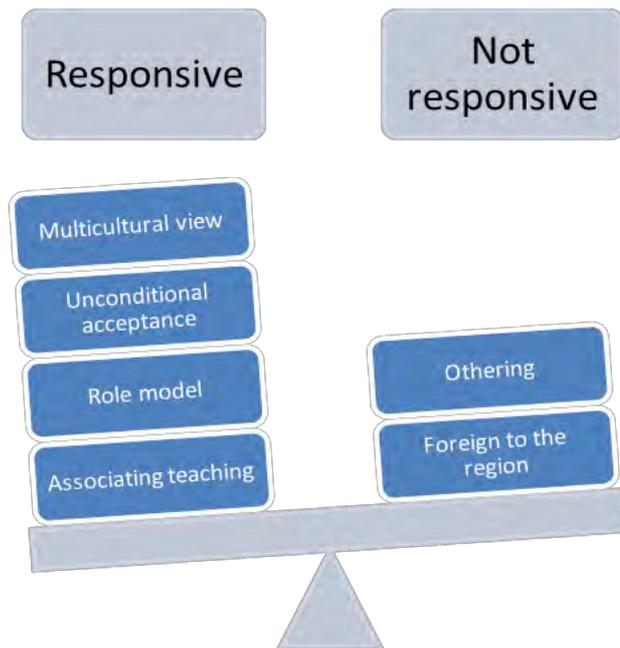
Figure 2. *Teachers' self-assessment of being culturally responsive*

Theme 3: Teacher Competencies

In the context of the teacher competency theme, I discussed the teachers' statements regarding the characteristics/competencies that teachers should have in order to be culturally responsive for their students and reflect this sensitivity to the education process. At this point, teachers state that culturally responsive teachers should avoid discriminatory thoughts and actions regarding different cultures, recognize their students' cultural values and behave in accordance with these values, respect cultural differences, show tolerance and understanding, be a role model in cultural responsiveness, express empathetic tendencies, and have healthy communication skills. Quotes showing these thoughts and views are as follows:

> P11: Teachers must avoid the potential to impose culture and to impose cultural stigma as well as the use of separatist language. An understanding of being responsive to the cultural values of the teacher will naturally be reflected on the students.

> P9: First of all, the teachers must recognize their cultural values, and then they must embrace their cultural values, show respect, and be responsive.

> P10: First of all, the teachers should know the language of students they address and the lifestyle and socioeconomic level of that society.

> P6: Teachers should have good communication skills with people, should have an understanding that every individual is valuable and unique, and know that such differences are our wealth.

In the context of this theme, the teachers emphasize that the personal characteristics of culturally responsive teachers should be developed, and also they need to have strong

professional capabilities as well as having pedagogical skills to design the teaching process by knowing the cultural needs of their students. The statements of teachers are as follows:

> P5: Starting from the fact that the individual is born into a certain culture and, therefore, the cultural values of the students are a part of the society, they should have the competencies to evaluate the student and the culture together.

> P4: Teachers should be responsive to the cultural values of their students and should pay attention to apply this sensitivity in their studies and activities.

> P8: Teachers should show this situation (cultural responsiveness) to their students through their behavior, and then they should transfer them to students with trips, drama, theater visits, and historical events.

> P3: Teachers should have a good competence of cultural values and be able to adopt them while lesson planning, and include cultural values into the program.

In line with the perspectives of the teachers, the visual representation related to the competencies of the culturally responsive teacher, is presented in Figure 3.
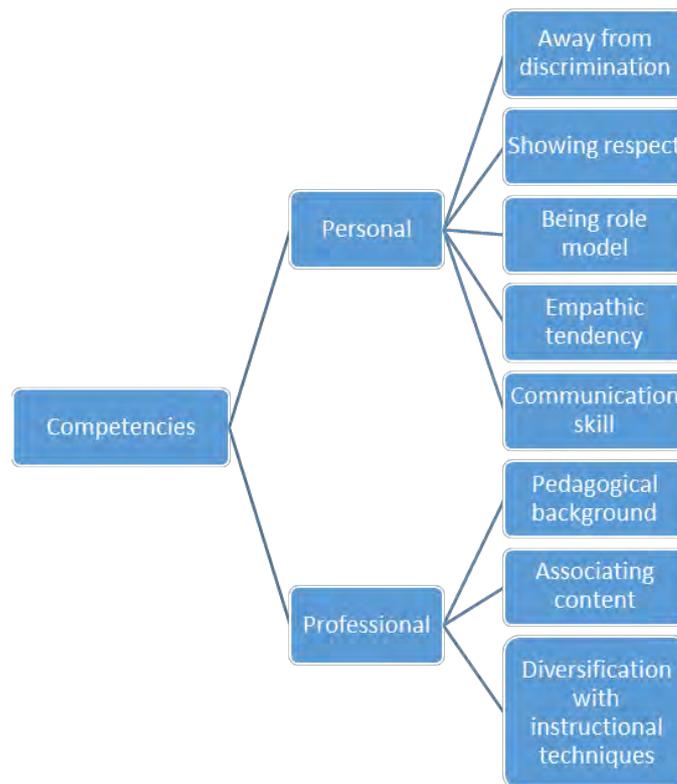

Figure 3. *The competencies of the culturally responsive teacher*

In this theme, culturally responsive teachers should have certain basic competencies in terms of personal and professional characteristics. For this case, the teachers should have cognitive and affective characteristics that cause responsiveness to cultural values as well as having pedagogical skills to apply cultural values in the classroom.

Theme 4: Training Culturally Responsive Teachers

The framework of this theme, I discussed the suggestions of the teachers regarding what should be done in order to train prospective teachers to be culturally responsive. In this respect, the teachers suggest that prospective teachers should take both theoretical and practical courses about cultural responsiveness during the undergraduate education process. They especially emphasize the development of empathetic awareness and the requirement of respect for cultural values in prospective teachers. The statements of teachers are as follows:

> P11: Prospective teachers should first learn and experience cultural differences among regions. Information should be given about what culture is, how building blocks are formed, and their common actions in building societies. Empathy education and language of education, free from communication conflicts, should be provided.

> P1: Studies on adaptation to society and the environment can be provided. In the educational process, interaction with different cultures can be achieved. A course on "Adaptation to Cultural Values" can be added.

> P9: The number of applied courses related to values should be increased in the programs of educational faculties regarding the training of teachers by giving more importance to cultural responsiveness, in line with these achievements.

> P2: In order for prospective teachers to gain this awareness, certain theoretical and practical applications could be made.

In addition, according to teachers, in order to create awareness of prospective teachers about the local culture in various geographic regions of Turkey and to experience cultural differences, trips to culturally diverse places should be organized, ensuring that they practice their teaching in places where cultural diversity exists. The statements of the teachers who have such thoughts and views are given below:

> P4: Intensive practice training programs should be prepared. Internships should be held in schools with multicultural students. In such internship schools, activities related to cultural elements, that are needed and which should be prominent, could be provided.

> P7: Before getting a teaching diploma, internships should be undertaken, not only in the city of study, but in different places to get to know different cultures.

> P4: In addition to organizing seminars and courses for the transfer of cultural values, trips should be organized at an institutional level.

A number of the participant teachers consider that orientation seminars and environmental education should be given to candidate teachers, who began teaching after the undergraduate education process, in order to develop the culturally responsive teaching capacities of the

candidate teachers and to make suggestions for this. The statements of the teachers with these views are as follows:

> P16: …orientation studies and introduction of their culture can be provided so that they (candidate teachers) can adapt to their destinations.

> P17: Orientation studies can be emphasized, especially for teachers appointed from east to west and from west to east, because a teacher far from culture is also far from society.

Findings are shown in Figure 4 regarding the theme of desirable culturally responsive teacher.
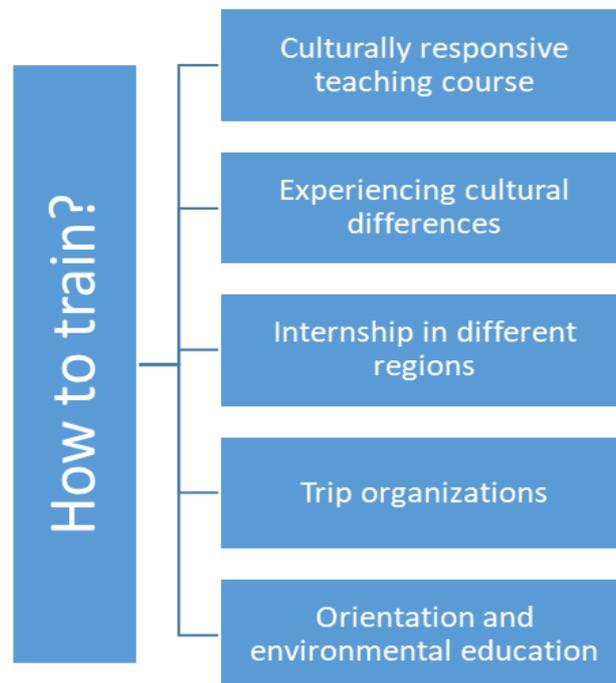

Figure 4. Methods for culturally responsive teacher training

In this regard, it is important to provide courses for prospective teachers about cultural values in the undergraduate educational process, in order to create opportunities to experience cultural differences, and to provide in-service training within the scope of professional development after becoming a teacher.

Discussion and Conclusion

I examined the competencies of culturally responsive teachers according to teachers' perspectives and experiences. In addition, I investigated how the participant teachers define cultural responsiveness and how they evaluate themselves as culturally responsive teachers. Moreover, I asked current teachers about how to train prospective teachers with CRT competencies. First of all, in order for teachers to be culturally responsive, it is necessary for them to correctly define the concept of cultural responsiveness. According to the findings of

this study, teachers explain cultural responsiveness by associating it with caring about the student's culture, respecting the culture and being tolerant. There are findings in the literature that coincide with the findings of this study (Akpinar & Genc, 2017; Sahin & Kaya, 2016; Skerrett, 2011; Tuleja, 2017). In their study, Sahin and Kaya (2016), according to the metaphorical perceptions of individuals about culture, show that different colors and patterns exist in cultures and that cultural difference is rich. In the study conducted by Karatas and Oral (2019a), individuals state that the concept of cultural values is important for humans and it can be seen that they accept it as an important power, shaping humanity with its material and spiritual elements. Being responsive to students' cultural values, respecting them, and being aware of the impact of culture on learning are priorities for a safe educational environment. In fact, Phuntsog (1999) emphasizes that the teacher should create a safe environment in which students respect each other and where cultural differences are not neglected in the classroom atmosphere. Howard (2010) states that if the teacher has an approach that accepts culture as a frame of reference, it will positively affect the academic, social, affective, psychological, and physiological development of the student. Teachers who believe in the pedagogical power of CRT will not have cognitive and affective barriers to being responsive to students' cultural values. Therefore, these teachers will use the cultural values of students, not as an insurmountable wall, but as a bridge to achieve educational purposes.

One of the findings of this research is that teachers have the desire and the effort to become culturally responsive teachers, and for an educational process suitable for CRT in the classroom environment. Similarly, teachers state that they give examples from their students' cultural values and ask for examples from their students. The fact that teachers strive to understand their students' cultural dynamics and social context is an important step for CRT. According to field experts, such as Banks, Gay, Bennett, and Sleeter, in order for the CRT to be applied successfully in the classroom, teachers must first have positive perceptions for CRT and consider CRT as important for the development of their students (Karatas, 2018). Rychly and Graves (2012) emphasize that teachers should have the desire to have knowledge of other cultures for CRT, as well as show care and empathy. Without this, teachers cannot be good CRT practitioners. In this study, certain teachers state that they are not culturally responsive. They attribute the underlying situation to the fact that they are far from the cultural values of the place where they work and therefore, it is foreign to them. If there are cultural obstacles to teachers' failure to develop a "belonging" to a school and its environment, professional performance will be significantly affected. In the same way, cultural incompatibility and alienation of teachers will certainly decrease their performance. Charles (2017) states that classroom teachers' prejudicial attitudes towards cultural differences constitute an obstacle to CRT applications. In this sense, teachers who realize CRT should be open to different cultural values and believe in the necessity to understand and experience these values (Karatas & Oral, 2015). On the other hand, if teachers do not take into account the cultural diversity of their classrooms, the pedagogical decisions they make during the teaching process will be incorrect (Banks & Banks, 2010; Gay, 2018). If there is no harmony between the teaching process and cultural values, the students will feel like strangers in the school environment. At the same time, if students' cultural identities are not affirmed or supported by teachers, it will cause them stress and anxiety (Acar-Ciftci & Aydin, 2014; Gay, 2018). Therefore, students cannot be expected to be successful in a teaching environment where they do not feel safe. However, when students realize that their teachers do not care about them, they tend to display negative behavior patterns (Ganter, 1997). In this sense, teachers should know how to narrow the cultural gap with students so that they can design a teaching curriculum suitable for CRT. Only in this way, the first step

towards having the competencies required of culturally responsive teachers is taken. In another finding, teachers express that culturally responsive teachers should avoid thoughts and actions of cultural discrimination, should know their students' cultural values, and should be tolerant and understanding. At the same time, they stated that teachers' professional pedagogies should be strong, in order to relate topics to their students' cultural characteristics and to use different teaching techniques. At this point, culturally responsive teachers should have certain personal and professional skills. Indeed, in the relevant literature (Gay, 2002; Karatas, 2020b; Ladson-Billings, 2009; Ramsay-Jordan, 2020; Slapac et al., 2020; Vavrus, 2008; Villegas & Lucas, 2002), it is emphasized that in order for the teachers to teach in accordance with CRT, they have to gain both personal and professional competencies. According to Kieran and Anderson (2019), educators should be aware of how cultural differences affect learning and should be responsive to their students' cultural values while guiding their pedagogical decisions. According to Vavrus (2008), teachers should be competent in issues such as cultural history and awareness, country history, democracy and human rights, effective teaching techniques, learning theories, social psychology, classroom management, co-operative learning and lifelong learning. Brown (2007) states that teachers with CRT competencies are aware of their racist thoughts and prejudices, understand their students' cultural background, social, economic and political contexts, and they develop classroom management skills in accordance with CRT. According to Siwatu (2007), in the teaching process, culturally responsive teachers should be able to connect with students' cultural past and life experiences, minimize the impact of cultural mismatch in the classroom, and establish a positive classroom environment by communicating effectively with their students. In general, the personal and professional capacities of teachers regarding CRT are expected to be strong. In this sense, preparing teachers to be responsive to cultural diversity is seen as a necessity (Kumar et al., 2019; Wetzel et al., 2019). Therefore, it is important that the educational process taken by teachers at university in the pre-service period should be based on CRT. Indeed, it is argued that modeling CRT is an important and efficient strategy in teacher education (Acquah et al., 2019). This is because in order for teachers to adopt and apply CRT as a pedagogical style, they must be trained to have CRT competencies. In the findings of this research, teachers suggest that prospective teachers should take theoretical and practical courses related to CRT during their undergraduate education. They also emphasize that it is necessary to create opportunities to experience cultural differences and to provide in-service training within the scope of professional development after becoming a teacher. Studies in the related literature (Gay, 2018; Kidd et al., 2008; Villegas & Lucas, 2002) emphasize that the educational process towards improving the CRT competencies of prospective teachers should be shaped in their undergraduate education. With regard to teaching in culturally diverse classrooms, teacher educational programs should provide cognitive and affective competencies on issues such as the education of culturally diverse students and give importance to cultural diversity, as well as organizing teaching content and activities in such a way as to address the cultural backgrounds of the learners (Karatas & Oral, 2019b). Gay (2002) states that prospective teachers should receive information with regard to cultural values and characteristics, pedagogical principles, and methods and materials belonging to different groups related to cultural diversity, and should be supported through learning experiences. Yuan (2017) emphasizes that prospective teachers should develop their multicultural knowledge, attitudes and skills in order to be able to think and reach every student in their professional lives. Vavrus (2008) states that, in the process of teacher training, prospective teachers should gain knowledge and skills on cultural awareness, cultural interaction, analyzing cultural differences as well as how to use cultural resources. Hayes and Juarez (2012) state that teacher training programs should be designed according to cultural diversity, considering the possibility of prospective teachers teaching in

classes where there may be cultural diversity in the future. Unless this happens, the professional readiness of prospective teachers may be adversely affected. Moreover, a teacher training program that condemns prospective teachers to their prejudices and stereotypes can lead to future teachers not having the CRT-related competencies and to them having a cultural gap with their students. In this sense, it is important that prospective teachers be equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills in both theoretical and practical dimensions. In order to experience the practical responses of theoretical information, regarding CRT in particular, prospective teachers should perform field practice/internships in places where cultural diversity is experienced (Taylor & Sobel, 2011). Jacobs (2019) proposes "critical practice-based field experiences" as a way of contextualizing practice so that prospective teachers can be trained as culturally responsive teachers. In fact, it can be seen that prospective teachers who have life experiences related to cultural diversity have higher awareness, knowledge, and skills perception regarding cultural responsiveness and have positive attitudes and competence perception towards multicultural education (Kaya, 2014; Szabo & Anderson, 2009). In addition to this, in the undergraduate educational process, it is necessary to create opportunities for prospective teachers to read the autobiographies of individuals from different cultures, to have group discussions, to make critical reflections, to benefit from the experiences of senior teachers, and to make home visits and suchlike (Karatas & Oral, 2019b; Levi, 2019; Martin & Spencer, 2020). On the other hand, a great responsibility is placed on teacher educators in the development of prospective teachers' competencies related to CRT (Banks, 2008; Howard, 2003). Teacher educators should have intercultural competencies and support and facilitate prospective teachers' pedagogical development related to CRT. More specifically, teacher educators should create inclusive classes, provide prospective teachers with knowledge about cultural diversity and provide authentic learning experiences (Acquah et al., 2019). Teacher educators should have a fair and equal understanding in their behavior and attitudes towards prospective teachers with different cultural characteristics and keep communication and co-operation strong with them (Karatas, 2018). When they behave in this way, they will be role models for prospective teachers and will develop an understanding of how to treat students with different cultural characteristics. In his research, Barnes (2006) attributes teaching staff having limited cultural knowledge as one of the reasons why prospective teachers cannot be trained to be culturally responsive. On this point, Prater and Deveraux (2009) suggest that teacher educators should have competencies related to professional diversity defined by professional organizations, accredited organizations, and the state. Therefore, they suggest that the professional development process should be strengthened in terms of culturally responsive pedagogy through course and field studies.

As a result, CRT applications are an approach that will meet the needs of students. During the teaching process, CRT applications for students will increase their motivation, and will positively influence their academic and affective development. Therefore, it is important for teachers to have CRT competencies and to adopt them. In this sense, the way to become a culturally responsive teacher is to have certain personal and professional competencies, such as avoiding discrimination, respecting cultural differences, being role models, having empathic tendency, and having communication skills and a pedagogical background. During the pre-service period, in order to develop culturally responsive teaching competencies of future teachers, teacher training programs should have goals that will promote knowledge, skills, awareness and competencies related to CRT. In line with this goal, teacher training programs, from the objectives of the program to the course content, should be revised. Such revision would include from the learning-teaching process to the assessment dimension, not with a perspective that destroys and ignores cultural differences, but with an approach that

maintains a balance of cultural diversity. Courses, such as "Social Justice, Critical Pedagogy and Culturally Responsive Education," could be included in teacher training programs as an independent course in which sociocultural awareness and multicultural education perspective are gained, and cultural responsive pedagogy practices are taught. Films with the theme of the importance of cultural responsiveness towards individuals could be viewed, and novels and story-style books could be read with this theme, in addition to course books. Conferences and seminars could be organized by inviting experts and senior teachers who have researched cultural diversity to universities, and an opportunity to share their knowledge and experience could be achieved. Incentives could be given to prospective teachers to participate in international student exchange programs. In addition, internships could be provided for prospective teachers in places where cultural characteristics are different and cultural diversity is intense. Similarly, teacher educators should create an open and safe learning environment, emphasizing that all prospective teachers have equal and shared responsibilities, and provide a comfortable environment for expressing contradictory and varied ideas.

In any future research, content analysis can be conducted in terms of the suitability of teacher training programs for CRT. Teacher educators' perspectives and the pedagogical competencies of CRT can be examined using qualitative research techniques. Further research can be conducted with a wide range of stakeholders focusing on teacher training regarding how CRT can be integrated into teacher training programs. Besides, meta-synthesis studies can be conducted on what methods and strategies should be followed in order to become prospective culturally responsive teachers. Quantitative research can be conducted to reveal the relationship between the prospective teachers' readiness for CRT and related cognitive and affective variables.

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