

# Cultural competency and special education

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Cultural Competence and Special Education Number: Introduction Basically, cultural competence in special education refers to the ability (of the teacher, instructor or the learner) to interact effectively with persons of diverse cultures, particularly in the context of a learning environment in which children or learners with special needs are involved as the center of focus. Many scholars have penned their schools of thoughts on the essence and requirements of cultural competence in special education.

According to Friend (120), understanding the emotional and social characteristics of students with learning disabilities is key. The same is the case with understanding a child's academic and cognitive traits. This will have the teacher learning how learners esteem themselves and their peers and their adeptness in social situations. The import of what Friend is saying is underscored by her persuasion that 75% students with special needs have a deficit in social skills, lower self-esteem and lower status. Friend explains the lower status as occurring through the consistent act of the peers viewing the disabled student as less-desirable. Secondly, the attribution of lower status to the disabled student is brought about by the absence of social competence, which Friend sees as the capacity to accurately receive, decode and give appropriate response to subtleties that accompany interpersonal intercourse.

In respect to the immediately foregoing, Friend charges that children with poor social competence and learning disabilities have a knack for forming and consigning themselves to distinct subgroups with nonverbal learning disabilities (NLD).

Friend (121) charges that one of the most important ingredients that ought to be added to these children's social lives and academic endeavors is <https://assignbuster.com/cultural-competency-and-special-education/>

motivation. Friend gives the proposition that the learner and the teacher's desire to engage in a particular activity must be spurred onwards with both intrinsic (curiosity and zeal) and external (good payment and rewards) motivation. Friend classifies motivation as being applicable to students with either learning disabilities or behavioral problems.

Shelton (75) also tackles the same problem of cultural competence on the side of the student. Shelton maintains that in order that cultural competence is realized in tending to the needs of students with special needs, there should be the recognition of the very learning disabilities besetting the student(s). In this case, Shelton is categorical that the teacher should be able to distinguish cognitive challenges, emotional disabilities and behavioral problems from one another.

In another wavelength, Shelton observes that there is dire need for the maintenance of successful teacher-parent conferences. The rationale behind this proposition is that parents know their children best and therefore play a critical role in unlocking the problems that accost the learner with learning disabilities. Thus, through teacher-parent conferences, the teacher can make a distinction among cognitive challenges, emotional disabilities and behavioral problems.

Shelton also advances the idea that effective plans for professional training and learning should be put in place to help inculcate cultural competence. To Shelton, it is these learning and training programs that equip teachers to understand students' needs and how to deal with them. Shelton also proposes the need to consistently make alternate assessments, modify educational terminology and make provisions for emergencies throughout the school setting (Shelton, 92).

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In a closely related wavelength, Shelton advances the idea that there should be put in place, best instructional practices which aim at getting the best or the most out of the students.

#### Personal Reflection/ Reaction

From the foregoing, it is clear that in order to entrench cultural competence, it is best that Friend's and Shelton's postulations are both integrated into one formula. The indispensable nature of Friend's postulation that external and internal sources of motivation should be applied is underscored by its resonance with behaviorism. Behaviorism acknowledges the application of appropriate stimuli to bring about a desired effect and can therefore not be discounted in learning and teaching. Shelton's proposals are equally important, in that they help capture the fluid dynamics that characterise learning and the personality of students with learning disabilities. Thus, Friend's and Shelton totally need each other, in order for cultural or social competence to be realized. For instance, Friend's internal and external motivation cannot be inculcated without the teacher knowing the student, and the student cannot be known without Shelton's facilitation of consistent teacher-parent meetings.

#### References

- Friend, M. (2005). *Special Education: Contemporary Perspectives for School Professionals*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon/Longman.
- Shelton, C. F. (2000). *The Exceptional Teachers Handbook: The First-Year Special Education Teachers Guide for Success*. Corwin Press.