

Enquiry: Social and Global Justice

What is the understanding of justice from each perspective below?

	Perspective A	Perspective B	Perspective C	Perspective D
The problem	There is no problem [or] I only have time to think about the survival of my family [or] The troublemakers are the problem.	If people are poor, that is mainly their fault - they lack education and culture, but certain individuals in power need to change.	Unequal benefits and losses, therefore injustice. Injustice is the problem.	Groups in power who oppress and exploit others (elites, corporations, capitalists, the 'West', etc).
The nature of the problem?	Problems are caused by evil - evil people, evil power, plotting revolution, plotting world domination.	The attitudes and abilities of certain individuals.	The whole network of structures, assumptions and attitudes which we inherit and learn from the past.	People who are in power dictate the rules so that they always win. They will not give up power of their own free will.
What to do?	Evil should at least be resisted and contained. Preferably, it should be eliminated.	Make the present system work well in order to create harmony, tolerance and equality of opportunity (so that rewards are shared according to merit).	Change ourselves and the structures towards greater equality of work, wealth, power, esteem.	Sabotage from the inside or disengage from it altogether!
What for?	Security and order - an absence of threat, anxiety and conflict.	To reach an end to insecurity and anxieties.	For a never ending self-critical development towards new power relations, new identities, new ways of living together, new and unimagined futures.	It is a waste of time to speculate about utopia. We need to destroy the oppressive system first.
What about me?	If there is a problem, the State or the police should do something. This has nothing to do with me. The most I can do is give a bit of money, or what I don't need anymore, to charity.	I am not part of the problem. I am part of the solution. I'll support the State, I'll support education for all, I'll give to charity, I'll do my bit.	If I support and benefit from unjust and exploitative systems, I am part of the problem...and can be part of the solution. I don't want to conform, to reform, to sabotage or to disengage. I want to transform structures and relations so that we are able to decide with others what is best for all.	I am not part of the problem. I am part of the solution. I have the answers and I'm at the forefront of the revolution.
What is justice?	???	???	???	???

Adapted from: "Perspectives amongst the Powerful" - Robin Richardson (1990) Daring to be a Teacher. Trentham Books

Informed Thinking

What informed your current perspective on this topic? What shapes the mainstream perspectives available to the public? Where can you find out about different perspectives? How do you make your decisions about what you think about it?

Reflective Questions

Take three minutes in silence to reflect about the following:

1. How would you define the problem, the nature of the problem, what to do about it, what for and your own role in relation to it? How do these assumptions affect your choices (of content/approach) as a teacher?
2. How do you understand social and global justice?
3. How certain/clear are you about what you think in relation to this topic?
4. How was your perspective constructed? How often has it changed in recent years?
5. To what extent are you open to share your perspective with others and to have your assumptions questioned/challenged?

Group Dialogue Questions

Read through the list of questions below. Are there any other burning questions you would like to add to this list?

Select two 'priority' questions for discussion in your group.

1. How do you define fairness and justice? What is the greatest threat to justice? Can you think of different responses to this question?
2. What binds us to people who we have never met? How do we affect/are affected by them?
3. Do you think justice and peace are related concepts (i.e. do we need peace to have justice or justice to have peace)?
4. Is violence ever justified in the struggle for justice (group/individual or military/terrorist)?

5. Is there a universal concept of justice? Whose concept is it? What assumptions about reality influence the dominant understanding of justice in your context? How do people understand justice in other contexts?
6. Should educators prepare learners to be outraged in the face of injustice? What are the potential implications of this strategy?
7. Should we do to others what we expect to be done to us? Do we all want the same thing? In which circumstances, can we make assumptions about other people's wants without asking them?
8. What is the purpose of civil society in the struggle for justice? Will civil society disappear when justice is achieved? What is the purpose of education for justice? How can this concept be defined according to diverse principles?

Responsible Choices

How does this topic relate to your context of work? To what extent does asking these questions affect your decisions?

Imagine you have not been born yet – but will soon be. You do not know the characteristics of the system of the world you will be born into (what is valued and what is not) and you do not know your own characteristics and the context of your family (skin colour, gender, class, health, status, ability, geographical positioning, etc). What would you expect from a just world?

Debriefing

Think about your learning process in this session. What have you learned about yourself? What have you learned about others? What have you learned about knowledge and about learning? Do you feel you and other participants could express themselves in an open and safe space? What could be done to improve the learning process of the group and the relationships within the space?