

THE PROS, CONS AND NECESSITY OF MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION*
(OLUMLU, OLUMSUZ VE GEREKLİLİK YÖNLERİYLE ÇOKKÜLTÜRLÜ EĞİTİM)

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to create a framework through which teachers and teacher candidates in Turkey will be better prepared to not only discuss issues of diversity but to also teach students from diverse backgrounds and culture. The primary purpose of this research is to become familiar with teachers' and teacher candidates' perceptions and true and false notions regarding multiculturalism, multicultural education and issues of diversity, once they have completed a graduate-level multicultural education course. This was facilitated via interviews, which provided the teachers and teacher candidates with opportunities to both share their own experiences. Through the research, teachers and teacher candidates examined what they have learned after taking a master's-level multicultural education course, and they discussed multiculturalism and its dimensions, which will be pertinent to their future classrooms. Further, they learned how this course would help them to build an understanding with regard to multiculturalism, multicultural education and diversity, and they learned how to successfully survive amidst cultural diversity.

Keywords: Multiculturalism, Multicultural Education, Teacher Education, Qualitative Case Study

ÖNSÖZ

Öğretmen eğitim programlarının etkililiğini ve gelecek öğretmenlerin insan çeşitliliğine karşı hazır olma durumunu incelemek, mevcut sınıfları oluşturan nüfus çeşitliliği nedeniyle her zamankinden daha önemli hale gelmiştir. Bu inceleme Türkiye de dahil olmak üzere tüm ülkeler için gerekebilir. Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'nde birlikte yaşayan farklı insan gruplarının sayısı tarihinin en üst noktalarına ulaştığı bu günlerde, bu farklı insan gruplarının yaşantılarının müfredata entegrasyonu Türk eğitim sistemi açısından giderek önem kazanmaktadır. Türkiye'deki bazı güncel arařtırmalar öğretmen eğitim programlarının, öğretmenlerin ve öğretmen adaylarının etnik, dil, din vs. açısından çeşitlilik arz eden popülasyonlarla çalışmasını sağlamak için hazır olmalarını önermektedir. Bununla beraber, yine bir çok arařtırmacı çokkültürlülük ve çokkültürlü eğitimin, Türkiye'nin küreselleşme çabalarının bir parçası olarak, Türk eğitim sistemi için kültür sentezini oluşturmak ve çeşitli grupların yerel, ulusal, ulusötesi veya uluslararası statüsü ne olursa olsun diğerleriyle interaktif bir diyalog kurmalarına yardımcı olmak için en uygun yaklaşım olabileceğini savunmaktadırlar. Bu nitel çalışma Marmara Bölgesi'nde yer alan bir devlet üniversitesinde yüksek lisans eğitimi alan öğretmenlerin ve öğretmen adaylarının çokkültürlülüğün ve çokkültürlü eğitimin Türkiye bağlamındaki görüşlerini ve algılamalarını incelemeyi amaçlamıştır. Bu çalışma için, "Çokkültürlü Eğitim" olarak adlandırılan bir lisansüstü dersin öğretmen ve öğretmen adaylarının düşünce, inanç, anlayış ve algılamalarına etkileri arařtırılmıştır. Veriler, yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmeler, yazılı dokümanlar, odak grup görüşmesi, sınıf gözlemi ve saha notlarından toplanmıştır. Katılımcıların görüşlerini incelediğimizde, çokkültürlülük ve çokkültürlü eğitim hakkında olumlu ve olumsuz düşüncelerin bulunduğu yanı sıra, bu tür bir eğitimin Türkiye için neden gerekli olduğuna dair belirttikleri düşünceler incelenmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Çokkültürlülük, Çokkültürlü Eğitim, Öğretmen Eğitimi, Nitel Örnek Olay İncelemesi

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INTRODUCTION

Today's societal systems all over the world have undergone significant changes, and many eastern and western countries have developed their educational systems such that they parallel or reflect these changes. Problem-solving and decision-making skills, academic programs, accessing information through new technologies, addressing issues of diversity through teaching have been adapted to new approaches for students' benefits. Now, many countries, including Turkey, place students at the center of their respective education systems and design those systems based on student needs and differences.

Developing educational systems are not limited such that they only offer opportunities to students. Teacher education programs need to adapt to societal changes as well. Teachers must closely follow the rapid development of educational systems, and these systems necessitate that the teachers be open-minded and modern or progressive in their approaches to teaching, interact with children and their families, and bring all students, regardless of background, etc., into the class to provide the appropriate learning environment to address all students' needs. As such, teachers are also granted opportunities through developing educational systems; they are given more opportunity to advance as teachers and to employ the skills necessary to address society's ever-changing issues regarding diversity.

Literature Review

Previous studies indicate that multicultural education aims to educate students such that they might develop self-confidence with the ability to communicate and interact with others without prejudice. The multicultural approach encourages students to familiarize themselves with other perspectives and cultures, because all individuals possess their own unique perspectives regarding the world (Parrish & Linder-VanBerschot, 2010). Teaching others' perspectives regarding the world and teaching others' cultures are essential to education systems, and teachers need to be armed with the necessary information and with the ability to teach others' values and beliefs in order to help students to develop the ability to think critically (Cole, 2008).

Researchers within the fields of multiculturalism and teacher education recommend that teachers should change their perspectives in order to take on critical points of view that will enable them to better understand the differences in their classrooms. Teachers are among the most significant people in pupils' lives and they should be familiar with the diversity that is part of the classroom makeup by way of the students (Baker, 1981). According to Gay (1994), teachers believe that students who come from diverse backgrounds will have low achievement, and this prejudice encourages teachers to possess negative attitudes toward cultural diversity in the classroom setting (as cited in Hopkins-Gillispie, 2008). However, Hidalgo (1993) mentions that teachers should start changing

themselves first so that they can better understand others and, therefore, learn more about diversity in their classrooms. According to same researcher, teachers should ask themselves two essential questions: “What framework do we bring into the classroom?” and “How does our cultural perspective color our view of the world?” (p. 99). When teachers bring students’ experiences and culture into the class and the overall learning environment, it is possible to provide students with more information regarding diversity.

In decades past, researchers have described the needs associated with teacher education programs. According to Gay (1997), preparation of teacher education programs to support multicultural understanding has always been sophisticated and demanding. In order to realize new directions for society that both encourage and necessitate a more responsible citizenry, teacher education programs need to address the pluralism that exist within society. Before notions regarding multicultural teacher education existed, teacher educators thought that teachers could simply teach everyone; however, variables emerged within societies and teacher educators began talking about differentiating teacher education programs (Gay, 1983). Then, teacher education programs needed the enrichment that was associated with the different teaching methods designed to address cultural diversity in classrooms and to establish positive attitudes toward multiculturalism (Ghosh & Tarrow, 1993).

Right after the Civil Rights Movement, researchers began discussing the importance of educating teachers with regard to the United States’ diverse groups, as well as the diverse backgrounds and cultures one might encounter in life at schools (Arnez, 1968; Washburn, 1975). According to Arnez (1968), teachers must understand the complex cultural structure of United States, and they must find an appropriate means of teaching in order to convey American culture to subsequent generations of the diverse American population. Like Arnez (1968), Washburn (1975) mentions that, “In-service training in multicultural education [enables teachers to be better prepared] to reach students whose cultural backgrounds may differ from their own, as well as to teach intelligently about the varying cultures in the U.S” (p. 636). As can be seen in previous research, providing teachers with information regarding diverse backgrounds and designing multicultural programs for teachers became necessary in recent decades.

Researchers have suggested and designed several improvements for the increased quality of teacher education programs. Burke (1976) has suggested one such improvement intended to help educators avoid or address some major concerns. The first major concern of educators and parents entailed issues regarding the backgrounds associated with the students assumed to be the targets of teacher education programs; the educators and parents believed that students taught by way of teacher education programs would generally come from middle-class or poor families and that teacher education programs would be incapable of educating future teachers to become well prepared to aid

the needs and concerns students have who come from diverse backgrounds. The second major concern is related to some defective teacher education programs. Those programs designed their own sub-programs in order to adapt culturally diverse students into society's major group. This idea was, of course, inappropriate because it suggested that there was something wrong with students' own diverse cultures, families or home environments, and that the students should be integrated into the dominant culture. Burke (1976) has suggested two essential characteristics that should be associated with teacher education programs including teacher candidates should be experts in particular disciplines, and they should have enough knowledge about the many different variables that exist within in a diverse society. Complimenting this, Burke recommends that as a teacher, having more human interaction is a key factor in education, as it means that teachers will have more active roles in shaping or positively influencing students' worlds. Teachers should examine children's worlds and be well informed regarding the children's particular cultures.

Teacher education programs continued developing curriculum in order to educate more culturally sensitive teachers among U.S. institutions, and these programs produced teachers who were educated with "cultural knowledge" (Davidman, 1990, p. 40). These programs were expected to educate future teachers such that they could build a culturally respective knowledge and effectively exchange their knowledge with their students. In addition, teacher candidates among U.S. institutions were also willing to acquire more knowledge pertinent to diversity and multicultural issues in order to be more effective teachers (Barry & Lechner, 1995). According to Berger and Luckman (1966), teachers should believe that all students are capable of learning regardless of their diverse backgrounds (as cited in Banks, 1992, p. 24).

Gay and Howard (2000) mention that they became more suspicious with regard to whether teacher education programs could cover all diverse issues and prepare future teachers such that they would be more aware of diversity in their classrooms. The authors strongly recommended that if future teachers want to address diverse issues and be more adequately prepared regarding multicultural education, then they should completely internalize the foundations of multicultural education such as "appropriateness of learning theories for use with ethnically diverse students" (p. 10). Additionally, they recommended that teacher candidates should have sufficient knowledge about cultural diversity, develop multicultural communication, increase multicultural pedagogical skills and use multicultural performance assessment, which refers to "measures and procedures used to determine achievement should be matched to the performance and learning styles of students from different ethnic groups" (p. 13). According to the researchers, these kinds of improvement will be helpful to support culturally diverse learning environments.

While some researchers have conceptualized how the teacher education programs should be shaped, other researchers have assessed the effectiveness of multicultural education courses on

teachers' and teacher candidates' perceptions, attitudes, knowledge and beliefs in teacher education programs. Research finds that a stand-alone multicultural education course results in primarily positive attitudes, beliefs and knowledge regarding classroom diversity (Cho & Ambrosetti, 2005; Ndemanu, 2012; Zygmunt-Fillwalk & Leitze, 2006). However, sometimes those courses may not be particularly effective at changing teachers' attitudes, beliefs and knowledge (Johson, 2006).

METHODOLOGY

This qualitative inquiry used qualitative case study model designed to examine opinions and perceptions of teachers and teacher candidates with regard to multiculturalism and multicultural education. For this study, semi-structured used as the data collection tool.

Participants

All of the students who took the MULT 500 course -nine teachers and teacher candidates-, as well as the course instructor, volunteered to participate in the study.

Data Analysis

During coding and while finding emerging themes and categories, the following steps were followed:

- a. Coding the data
- b. Finding the themes
- c. Creating categories with the similar themes,
- d. Creating a relation between the coding and the research question.

Research question

What rationales do teachers and teacher candidates use to justify their perceptions of multicultural education?

FINDINGS

Based on the participants' responses, findings relating to the research question are divided into three parts: (1) pros of multicultural education, (2) cons of multicultural education, and (3) the necessity of multicultural education in Turkey. The final findings section is presented under three themes: (a) current sociopolitical situations, (b) developing democratic view, and (c) empathy development. The following Table 1 shows the findings structure of the fourth research question.

Table 1 Overview of the Findings for the Research Question

Research question 4	Pros of multicultural education	Cons of multicultural education	The necessity of multicultural education
What rationales do teachers and teacher candidates use to justify their perceptions of multicultural education?	Theme(s) - Respect for diversity - High quality teaching	Theme(s) - Exaggeration of diversity	Theme(s) - Current sociopolitical situation - Developing democratic view - Empathy development

Pros of Multicultural Education

In the first part of the findings, I examined participants comments related to how multicultural education can be beneficial for Turkish teacher education programs. Five participants identified the pros of multicultural education in teacher education programs. Based on the responses, the advantages of multicultural education have been gathered into two themes: (1) respect for diversity and (2) high-quality teacher education.

Respect for diversity. According to Mete, designing the programs via a multicultural perspective is essential in order to educate the next generations with respect to diversity. He stated,

I think that this course should be given at least in the department of primary education and pre-school sections in the teacher education. It is very important for the teachers to be educated from a multicultural perspective to educate students with respect to individuals. In the future, those teachers who educate from a multicultural perspective will likely show more respect regarding differences, and this will allow students good role models that will encourage this respect for differences. (Mete, final interview, August 13, 2016)

Similarly, Rana believed that multicultural education is the only means of teaching or education that can encourage people to accept others. She said,

We live in our country and, especially today, we are not open to differences. When we see a person who is different, our thoughts can be negative. Through multicultural education, we can begin to fully accept differences. I think that this means of education will definitely be positive for students to be able to accept different people and different cultures, and it will better enable them to live together in the same country. (Rana, final interview, June 23, 2016).

High-quality teaching. Ayse believed that there are many unnecessary required courses in the teacher education programs, and she proposed that, instead of these unnecessary courses, courses related to multiculturalism and multicultural education should be made available to teacher candidates. Ayse also believed that multicultural education should not be limited to college education alone. She also supported the notion that this perspective must reflect on the programs at every level of education. She said,

I believe that this sort of education should be made available not only to university students but also to parents of students at every level. If you are in primary school, you have to educate the students with this consciousness, and then maybe they will not need this sort of course once they reach college. A person who grows up to the age of 18 might already have sufficient sensitivity to these issues if they were educated in this way at a young age. (Ayse, final interview, June 22, 2016).

Nalan believed that multicultural education is necessary in teacher education, but in her opinion, the issue that needs to be discussed first is the quality of education in universities. According to Nalan, who provided examples from her own experiences, after many students complete high school and go on to college, they find several other people in their dormitories who have the same goals and who talk to them, so they are less likely to be exposed to different types of people. She believed, however, that being exposed to differences is as important as getting a formal education related to multicultural education at the university. Nalan stated,

For example, I know very well in college that students with the same ideological views are doing their homework together, graduating from college without becoming aware that different ideas exist. First of all, with the adoption of multicultural education, I have to have project-based homework about cultural differences and living in the middle of different cultures. I think that one of the achievements of these courses should be to become familiar with someone else's idea and to learn how to respect it. In that sense, this perspective must be clear in education, especially in teacher education. In particular, our teachers are working to provide educational services throughout the country. If they do not recognize others' cultures, they create or perpetuate a problem. (Nalan, final interview, July 2, 2016)

Finally, according to Olcay, applying the lens of multicultural education through teacher education programs would increase the quality of educated people in educational fields. She said that this perspective would increase both sensitivity and respect regarding differences. She also believed that being exposed to this formal education would definitely cause a shift in one's way of thinking about differences or diversity, even if that shift is slight. She stated,

Even if people have narrow points of view, we won't be sure that there would be very small or big changes to those points of view once they complete this course. However, It is still more important for this type of person – a person with a limited point of view – to complete that kind of course. A teacher who does not take a course related to multicultural education would not likely be able to change him- or herself, and would not likely gain a new appreciation or respect for these issues. Taking course related to multicultural issues may not cause one's level of acceptance to increase, but it will surely heighten one's awareness. (Olçay, final interview, July 9, 2016).

Cons of Multicultural Education

In this part of the research question, two participants identified possible disadvantages of multicultural education. These two possible disadvantages focus primarily on the notion that people should stop exaggerating or over-emphasizing diversity. The participants' responses have been presented via the theme exaggeration of diversity.

Exaggeration of diversity. Fatma said that she is generally optimistic regarding most things; however, she believed that exaggeration or over-emphasis of differences might cause some serious problems. She stated,

Since I usually look at everything optimistically. However, there is a very visible problem in our country, and it results from minorities suffering perhaps because of the privileges given to the majority. The opposite can be a problem as well; sometimes the majority must make sacrifices in order to accommodate minorities. Whether a teacher or politician, it is very important to maintain balance. In order to achieve that balance, we have to be properly educated regarding issues of diversity. What else could be negative? Polarization may occur. Teachers are the people who will negate those negativities or at least mitigate their effects. (Fatma, final interview, June 17, 2016)

Similarly, Gokhan said that over-emphasizing differences could lead to some unnecessary subliminal messages. According to Gokhan, over-emphasizing the “difference, difference, and difference” can harm the idea of “coexistence.” He said,

Let's recognize the differences and understand that people do not choose their ethnicities. We have to respect this, but constantly emphasizing diversity can lead to people no longer caring about one another. Of course, multicultural education does not advocate this, but we can misunderstand teaching differences, which can have negative consequences. This is something that should be considered. (Gokhan, final interview, August 15, 2016).

The Necessity of Multicultural Education in Turkey

Current socio-political situation. Under this theme, three participants have linked the necessity of multicultural education to sociopolitical issues that take place in the country. For instance, Mete thinks that the terrorist incidents in the country and the clashes between the communities and other illegal groups demonstrate how multicultural education is necessary in our country. He said that it is known that the educational systems of each country vary depending on the political systems adopted by the countries. According to Mete, any reform that takes place in education must be scientifically objective and contemporary, and it must be morally beneficial (Mete, final interview, August 13, 2016).

Rana stated that Turkey has a history where different cultures, nations, and religions have lived together for years. According to Rana, some rule makers, or the hands behind them, are trying to put into place a system of thought that prevents people from accepting those who are from other cultures and backgrounds. She said,

Unfortunately, this system of thinking is already beginning to take effect. It is progressing toward alienation within society and not accepting differences. In the majority of the negative cases in our country, in recent times, the purpose has been to break the bond between the societies, to increase the alienation among the individuals, to attempt to make people more similar. Multicultural education is important to prevent society from being affected by these negative situations, to help ensure that individuals tolerate others' differences. (Rana, final interview, June 23, 2016)

Gokhan agreed with other participants and thought that multicultural education is important for Turkey. He stated, however, that multicultural education policies must be carried out very carefully in Turkey so as to prevent mishaps. Further, he said that the government should avoid defining such concepts as *subculture* and *superior culture*, and no one cultural should dominate another. He pointed out the importance of proceeding carefully in order to realize the goals associated with multicultural education. He emphasized that rule makers must pay attention to racial conflicts, social class conflicts, and sectarian conflicts, which exist in Turkey (Gokhan, final interview, August 15, 2016).

Developing a democratic view. Under this theme, three participants have linked the necessity of multicultural education with the development of a democratic view among the people. According to Zeliha, Turkey has a heterogeneous structure in terms of language, religion, ethnic origin, race, and social norms. She believed that Turkish people have adequate knowledge that would enable them to create cultural awareness in our country, develop a multidimensional perspective, adopt a democratic society structure, provide critical thinking about prejudices, and reject any discrimination via a humanist approach. She said,

However, it can be achieved through multicultural education practices because many social problems in our country are also problems for the education system. It is also important in our country, as it is in many developed countries, that we uphold individuals' rights to access equal educational opportunities regardless of their ethnicities or religious backgrounds. (Zeliha, final interview, July 13, 2016).

In addition, Ayse believed that the world's technological developments have increased communication among societies, and it has become necessary for the states to become more global. She stated,

With regard to the internal structure, it is important to create an education system in which common values are emphasized and the differences are observed ethically by the government. These common goals and values must never exalt a single ruling class; on the contrary, they are equally inclusive as the characteristics of democratic societies. (Ayse, final interview, June 22, 2016)

Olca said that when people look at the negativities in today's world, it is possible to think, "I must destroy the one that is not like me; only *I* must exist." She believed that this sentiment tried to find a place among our people. According to Olca,

It is necessary to achieve unity around the real values such as being tolerant of people no matter their beliefs, respecting differences regardless of ethnic identity, respecting people regardless of political thought, learning to live together whatever the differences, and learning how to approach or apply tolerance. (Olca, final interview, July 9, 2016).

She thought that people would be able to acquire such information and experiences by applying multicultural education in Turkey.

Finally, Nalan said that, through multicultural education, individuals would understand that their own cultures are not the only important cultures; other cultures are also important. Within this education system, people will have chances to recognize themselves, introduce themselves, and recognize others. She said,

People wouldn't think, "Those who are not like them are wrong." Educational scientists, schools, NGOs, managers, and public role models should be responsible for teaching that diversity is not a bad thing. Because this is a social need... Schools now teach values, however, they taught or cared more about teaching only the Turkish language and mathematics before. If they adopt the philosophy of multicultural education, people would realize the importance of partnership, virtue, respect, and love, and they would

recognize that these are needed, which might prompt them to act. (Nalan, final interview, July 2, 2016)

Empathy development. Fatma thought that multicultural education should be a priority in every country. A way to mitigate the ignorant brutality of humanity is through multicultural education, empathic thinking, and sensitivity lessons. She hoped that authorities would have similar thoughts regarding this and would support the application of things such as multicultural education. She focused especially on the word "applied," as she believed that the Turkish education system places too much emphasis on memorization and not enough emphasis on practice. She stated,

Whether it is verbal or physical, people have been violent to each other because of differences such as culture, national, ethnic, and racial differences. And the world does not appear to be showing a decline in violence. If people see that there are positive aspects of difference, see differences as richness, understand each other, and develop empathy, then everything could be different. Multicultural education-in a formal way-should be applied to individuals aged 15 to 22 in every country, not just in Turkey. People are obviously looking at things from a negative point of view because of a lack of education. If the people become educated with regard to diversity, then problems would likely be less serious. Multicultural education would result in a future in which individuals are more enlightened, which would lead to a more enlightened society. (Fatma, final interview, June 17, 2016)

According to Harun, the latest developments in Turkey indicate that an abundance of different ideas and different beliefs exists. He said that more tolerance regarding differences might be possible if differences are taught more accurately. He said,

The fact that people are blowing themselves up and acting out in negative ways is due to the fact that they prefer not to understand their differences. At least that's my opinion. As far as I can see, communication between people is carried out primarily as a means of violence (e.g., heartbreaking, mocking, humiliating). There is especially a tendency to act violently toward women. People do not look at cultural differences as being particularly positive. In fact, I do not think people in these places are tolerated. Scholars such as Yunus Emre and Mevlana lived in this country and they always supported diversity, and said, "Whoever you are, come again!" Even if people are familiar with this sentiment, no one has enough tolerance for differences. (Harun, final interview, August 2, 2016)

Lastly, as an expert, Dr. Mehmet said that multicultural education and intercultural education should be in all educational programs. According to his studies, it already existed as a hidden

curriculum, but it has not been defined. For example, he said that he taught a developmental psychology class that mentioned children's differences. Further, sociology makes use of multicultural education when it discusses macro-culture and micro-culture. He believed, however, that this could be clearer, more customizable. We need to know how to use this in programs. It is necessary to demonstrate that the primary role of the teacher is not only to teach in a high school or in a primary school, but also to be able to carry out multicultural education implicitly, sometimes explicitly. He said that it is absolutely necessary that it be made a part of every course. It is also necessary to teach candidates in teacher education schools. He said,

Teachers will absolutely encounter different races all around Turkey. For instance, English education teachers sometimes start teaching English from preschool to university level. At least, the age differences should be included in it. They encounter different genders or people from different socio-economic levels, but most teachers don't know how to behave. Another example is there are disadvantaged student groups in every class, and teachers need to integrate these groups. If universities don't give them this education, teachers will not know how to approach this. (Dr. Mehmet, final interview, June 1, 2016)

He also believed that the ways in which teachers are selected is very important. When choosing teachers, he recommended that universities accept more people from different cultures as well as more people who are flexible in their views regarding cultures other than their own. He said that it is necessary to choose people who recognize and respect different cultures. After colleges acquire these teachers, the teachers have to be exposed to pupils from different cultures. With regard to how to educate future teachers, he stated, "For example, it is necessary to take the school of education students to Hakkari (*a place located in the very southeastern part of Turkey, where more than 90% of the population is comprised of Kurds*) in order to expose them to differences. If you present the teachers with a village, then you need to ask, 'What are you going to do if you work here?' We need to design and implement a teacher-training program that will transform the disadvantages of teacher candidates into the advantages" (Dr. Mehmet, final interview, June 1, 2016).

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

Respect for Diversity

According to participants, multicultural education is a good way to develop respect for diversity. The participants believe that multicultural education is useful for the development of this respect, regardless of the source of the diversity (e.g., culture, religion, race). According to Nieto (2004), and Sleeter and Grant (2007), one of the major goals of multicultural education is to teach

respect for diverse people, and respect for and affirmation of cultural differences would be possible if teachers plan activities that encourage their students to assume this sort of respect. Although participants of the study believed that multicultural education would help them to support their students in their efforts to be respectful of diversity in the classroom, they sometimes struggled to come up with unique activities they had already planned and implemented or carried out. This indicates that even though the participants know the goals of multicultural education, and understand that encouraging respect for diversity is one of them, the lack of relevant experience with the issues of diversity has left them in a difficult position, as they are unable to provide examples of how to teach respect for differences in the classrooms.

High-Quality Teaching

Participants also noted that another advantage of multicultural education in teacher education is that it would increase the overall quality of the teaching. According to the participants, the word “quality” refers to being sensitive and respecting diversity. In addition to participants’ remarks regarding high-quality teaching, the literature (e.g., Cochran-Smith, 2003) suggests that educating future teachers via teacher preparation programs designed to address diverse issues in the classrooms and schools would yield high-quality teaching skills.

Exaggeration of Diversity

While the study participants have voiced the ways in which they expect multicultural education can be positive, they also believe that it is possible that it could be negative in some ways. For example, they believe that it is possible that multicultural education could lead to polarization within society. This finding is consistent with the literature; however, researchers have noted additional potential negative effects. For example, Birkel (2000) identified some potential misconceptions regarding what multicultural education is, and the researcher clearly identified what multicultural education is not. According to Birkel (2000), multicultural education does not suggest either protecting or destroying a particular ethnicity; it does not make use of any approaches intended to divide the people into separate groups by stressing ethnic loyalty over national adherence. Rather, it advocates the teaching of all components associated with cultural groups so as to build a nationwide or a global society. Multicultural education does not intend simply to criticize the political, educational or economic systems of a country; however, it does analyze these sociocultural factors, as this plays an important role in both determining and addressing social conditions and increasing students’ school achievements.

The possible negative aspects of multicultural education identified by the participants are similar to those identified in the literature. According to the participants, there may be people who will

perceive it as a means of dividing the people according to, for example, ethnic, religious and linguistic differences. Oksuz, Demir, and Ici (2016) conducted a study to examine teachers' and teacher candidates' thoughts regarding multicultural education. The results of the research show that %10 of the participants believed that multicultural education is a harmful idea meant to divide social union in Turkey. These negative considerations are in line with the thoughts of researchers working in this field. For this reason, the study participants believe that in order to mitigate these misunderstandings and possible negative effects, the differences in the country should not be emphasized or underscored in the most exaggerated way; instead, authorities might work on how the differences can best be adapted to the educational system.

Current socio-political situation

The Republic of Turkey has become more diverse than ever in its history. According to United Nations International Immigration Reports (2015), around 20 million of people immigrated to other countries in 2014 and Turkey was “the largest refugee-hosting country worldwide, with 1.6 million refugees” (p. 2). In recent years, however, Turkey has experienced several events or situations in addition to the influx of diverse Syrian citizens. Over the last five years, especially, Turkey has struggled with a number of sociopolitical issues. Street protests, terrorist bomb attacks, a military coup attempt, fighting against illegal organizations, etc. have served to shape participants' ideas regarding the need for multiculturalism and multicultural education and how it might possibly solve Turkey's social problems. The government has been advised to stand against these events; while the government determines its educational policies, it has been suggested that governing bodies keep in mind the fact that Turkey is now home to many people of different origins and backgrounds. The idea here is that education policies developed in the future can prevent or mitigate possible problems that might occur among these different groups, and none of the groups will be inclined to take the initiative in claiming superiority over other people.

Developing a Democratic View

Some participants have linked the necessity of multicultural education with the development of a democratic view among the people. When we compare this participant approach with the literature, we can see that there a number of researchers who share in their opinion or view regarding the features of multicultural education. For instance, Gay (2004) refers to multicultural education as being “integral to improving the academic success of students of color and preparing all youths for democratic citizenship in a pluralistic society” (p. 30).

Empathy development

Although participants stated that multicultural education would help future teachers to develop empathy toward those who are different, they did not come up with any useful ideas about how this might occur. Primarily, they created a general framework with regard to multiculturalism in the Turkish educational system; they struggled to specify the possible ways in which this could be applied. Further, though the participants' ideas regarding the ability of multicultural education to encourage empathy for people who are different aligned with the literature, but they were unable to example of this or to point to examples suggested in their MULT-500 course. However, in the literature, Cruz and Patterson (2005) identified ways in which multicultural education can help future teachers to develop empathy and understanding. According to their research, cross-cultural simulations “provide meaningful opportunities for developing cultural awareness and understanding” (p. 40). As an instructional strategy, cross-cultural simulations refer to creating “certain aspects of reality for the purpose of gaining information and understanding other cultures” (p. 43) and promoting awareness and appreciation of other cultures. Through this powerful technique, in addition to developing empathy, future teachers can internalize fully the differences and similarities.

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