

## Teachers' Awareness of Multicultural Education and Diversity in School Settings

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### Abstract

*Problem Statement:* The concept of multiculturalism was in general perceived in terms of ethnic background or difference in race and so brought forth negative viewpoints and apprehensions with regard to the issue. It is undoubtedly of great importance to provide comprehensive educational systems in which individuals in multicultural societies can live together in peace. Therefore the attempt to determine the perceptions of the teachers towards multiculturalism is essential as they are responsible for the organization of class learning environments. Likewise it is important to analyze the degree to which educational programs actually carry or incorporate these multicultural principles with view to ensuring an education that will include all students and ensure they are raised in a way that embraces peace Nevertheless the number of studies conducted in Turkey on this topic to date remains very small.

*Purpose of Study:* The purpose of this study is to investigate the perceptions of teachers' with regard to multicultural education and diversity and to highlight the awareness of teachers concerning this issue.

*Method:* A qualitative case research design was employed for this study. Within the study there was an attempt to present the thoughts of teachers with regard to multicultural education and at the same time to examine yearly plans to determine to what degree multicultural education had been incorporated into the teaching process. In order to determine the study group, a purposeful sampling technique was used, with the research group consisting of 6 teachers employed during the 2012-2013 academic year at a primary school situated in the province of Istanbul, Turkey. The data of the study were collected by means of semi-constructed interviews, observations

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and document analysis, and interview questions and an observation form and yearly plans were used as data collection tools. The data obtained were then evaluated in accordance with the content analysis technique.

*Findings and Results:* On analysis of the results it was found that the actual knowledge of the teachers with regard to multicultural education and diversity was found to be adequate and their opinions towards multicultural education were observed to be largely positive. Nevertheless, there were serious confusion and prejudices with regard to certain concepts connected to multicultural education and on these issues teachers were seen to suffer from certain inadequacies. Furthermore, analysis of the yearly plans revealed that the number of attainment goals and activities as well as types of assessment and evaluation tools included that emphasized multiculturalism and diversification were insufficient.

*Conclusions and Recommendations:* In order for teachers to understand the importance and necessity of multicultural education, and for teachers to be able to transfer this into practice in the educational environment itself, the implementation of educational reforms which recognize equal opportunities of learning is a pressing priority. For this reason it is suggested that teachers need to adopt multicultural educational principles and include these in their teaching programs, while the training opportunities available to teachers and academic studies conducted on this topic need to increase.

*Keywords:* Multiculturalism, Multicultural Education, The opinions of teachers

## Introduction

Certain multicultural constructs which included various characteristics emerged as a result of an interaction of experienced geographical, sociological and economic elements connected to developments that accumulated through the course of history. Thoughts with regard to the concept of multiculturalism that incorporates recognition of elements such as race, ethnic background, language, sexual preference, age, disability, social class and religious denomination (APA, 2002; Kaya, 2015) have become better defined as a result of its inclusion within the education system. Multicultural education is a comprehensive school reform process that aims to provide a basic standard of education for all students and one in which racism and segregation in all its manifestations is rejected and in which the diversity of society members is supported (Aydin, 2012). Banks (1999) described multicultural education as an educational type in which students of different genders, races, ethnic and cultural backgrounds were to be afforded the same opportunity of success in education. Wilson (2012) defines multicultural education as it relates to schooling and instruction designed for the cultures of several different races in an educational system. The aim of this type of education was to guarantee equality of opportunity, to solve the problems arising from cultural conflicts, and to support students in developing empathy so as to recognize their mutual cultures and in so doing, increase their academic success. The actions of the leading theoreticians and researchers of the multicultural education movement in trying to reconstruct

educational institutions support the assertion that this is indeed a reform movement (Banks & Banks, 2002). In such a way, all students from a diversity of cultural and ethnic backgrounds including white, male and middle-class students can gain knowledge, skills and attitudes that can help them to contribute to the future of their own nation and the planet in a productive manner (Banks & Banks, 2002). On account of the fact that, multicultural education necessitates the taking into account of the differences cited above, one can come to the conclusion that multicultural education is a form of education that champions freedom (Parekh, 1986)

According to Gay (1994), multicultural education is an educational policy that ensures that individuals are allowed to express their ethnic and cultural differences, and that aims to present equal academic opportunities so as to raise students to success and one that encompasses educational materials and organizational structures. Multicultural education aims to help students acquire positive behaviour traits such as the ability to empathize, and the showing of respect and tolerance to others (Sinagatullin, 2003). Aydin (2013a) stating that the goal of multicultural education is to consider the ethnic and racial differences of students as an educational alternative and contribute to the knowledge, skills and behaviors of students. Halvorsen and Wilson (2010) underline the fact that multicultural education is aimed at all children, and defend the view that it is an undertaking that helps in establishing equal opportunities in education for those originating from different cultures as well as to allow the acquisition of knowledge, skills and behaviours that will allow students to participate in democratic society. Gay (1994) specified the main aims of multicultural education as being equality and excellence in education, expression of values and attitudes, necessary multicultural social awareness, the acquisition of basic skills, the development of cultural and ethnic literacy as well as personal development.

Aydin (2013b) argued that the multicultural educational program is organized by way of applications which allow the values and goals of multicultural education to come to life, the setting of goals and learning targets, specification of content, learning and teaching activities and assessment evaluation tools that allow multicultural education's basic values and goals to come into existence. A program is designed that reflects the viewpoints of students belonging to different racial, ethnic, linguistic and social groups (Banks, 2006). Multicultural educational programs, through the variety of the experiences and the relationships (between knowledge) established through those experiences ensure the differentiation of knowledge for students undertaking different constructivist routes of learning (Tonbuloglu, Aslan & Aydin, 2013). Leangan (2000) argued that students obtained information about other cultures and important universal themes that necessitated cooperation with different people and so gained deeper insights into knowledge and the wider world. In applications of multicultural education in Turkey, Polat (2009) found that when examining the educational programs introduced in the 2004-2005 academic year, elements of multicultural education reflected themselves sometimes directly and on occasions in more subtle ways. On examining the lesson in which the most time was allocated to multicultural education, namely Life Sciences it was found that students had been found to have acquired numerous positive skills and attitudes. The writer and other researchers (2009) specified that in the applications of the new programs it

was expected for teachers to give support to learning in accordance with the constructivist approach and with regard to individual differences and therefore needed to be informed so as to acquire a better consciousness of multiculturalism and related educational issues.

One of the fundamental elements of an educational program is undoubtedly the teachers themselves. As indicated by Costa (1997), the success of formal education is connected to the attitude and professional preparedness of the teacher himself. This increases the importance of the qualities of the teachers themselves and the multicultural elements found within and related to these qualities. Gay (1994) indicated that teachers in general perceived values, beliefs and events in standard terms, and taught with regard (principally) to what they knew themselves. As they did not understand the ethnic, social, racial or linguistic diversities of their students, they knowingly or unknowingly applied the wrong educational techniques in their classes. In order to allow the teacher to deliver effective education in multicultural classes, the teacher must be encouraged to employ cultural sensitivity strategies and ensure equality of opportunity so as to ensure the academic success and personal development of all students (Sharma, 2005). Penny, Forney and Harlee (2000), set out the following nine principles that should be followed so as to guarantee multicultural education.

1. By way of using materials and approaches sensitive to students' socio-cultural backgrounds and experiences, students must be helped to raise their academic success in all areas.
2. An essential part of multicultural education ought to be to allow the hearing of different voices.
3. The verbal and non-verbal communication models of the teacher need to be analyzed continuously so as to raise the participation of students in their learning process.
4. The learning styles of the students and the teaching styles of the teacher ought to be highlighted and used in order to develop the content and lesson design.
5. Multicultural education should occupy a place in the formal educational program.
6. Multicultural education should be a program that encompasses all levels.
7. Multicultural education should teach students think critically so as to develop objective research and learning tools and allow them to ask questions freely.
8. Multicultural education necessitates an understanding of the family culture of that community.
9. Multicultural education should be evaluated as a source of benefit for the community.

Tonbuloglu and Aydin (2014) highlighted that in Turkey, where education in one's native language or bilingual education was not largely accepted, the content and meanings of terms multiculturalism and multicultural education were not widely known, and for that reason were rarely referred to during pre-service or in-service teacher-training programs. The concept of multiculturalism was in general

perceived in terms of ethnic background or difference in race and so brought forth negative viewpoints and apprehensions with regard to the issue (Karatas & Oral, 2015). In addition, Kaya and Aydin (2014) argued that it is undoubtedly of great importance to provide comprehensive educational systems in which individuals in multicultural societies can live together in peace. Therefore the attempt to determine the perceptions of the teachers towards multiculturalism (Faltis, 2014) is essential as they are responsible for the organization of class learning environments. Likewise it is important to analyze the degree to which educational programs actually carry or incorporate these multicultural principles with view to ensuring an education that will include all students and ensure they are raised in a way that embraces peace. Nevertheless the number of studies conducted in Turkey on this topic to date remains very small (Yazıcı, Başol & Toprak, 2009) and few teachers are provided with the skills to become true practitioners of multicultural education either prior to or during their professional service (Yazıcı, Başol & Toprak, 2009).

The purpose of this study was to determine the points of view of teachers with regard to multicultural education and diversity and to highlight the position of multiculturalism in the yearly plans applied by teachers. The opinions, apprehensions and suggestions with regard to multiculturalism, and the examination of education programs within the context of multiculturalism is thought to make a valuable contribution to the academic literature on this topic. The following research questions were sought to answer for this study;

1. What are the viewpoints of teachers with regard to multicultural education?
2. What were the initial evaluations of teachers with regard to multicultural education and its related sphere of activity?
3. What are teachers' suggestions regarding multicultural education?
4. What are the levels of proficiency of teachers with regard the to design of yearly plans with respect to multiculturalism

## **Method**

### *Research Design*

A qualitative case study was used for this study. According to Yin (2009), the case study is a research method which observes the phenomenon under observation within its own environment and which is used in cases where there are no clear lines or divisions between the phenomenon under observation and where there is more than one type of evidence or source of data. In this study, the 'case' was defined as an attempt to present the thoughts of teachers with regard to multicultural education and diversity and at the same time to conduct research by examining the content of yearly plans to ascertain the degree to which multicultural education was incorporated into lessons. This design was able to incorporate a variety of evidence, including observations, interviews, and documents, to deeply explore the multifaceted social phenomenon of family partnerships (Haines, 2015, p.25; Yin, 2009).

### *Participants*

The study group for this research consisted of 6 teachers employed at a primary school in the Istanbul province during the 2012-2013 school years. Purposeful sampling techniques were selected because they allowed the researcher to select participants who have the potential to inform to the research question to be addressed (Charmaz, 2006; Stake, 2006). Attention was paid to teachers' length of service, their differencing age groups, and ethnic origin. Creswell (2012) stated that a qualitative research study deals with a small number of people or events, from a very small number such as one or two individual subjects up to larger groups of twenty to thirty subjects. This is because it necessitates the preparation of a report that provides details for every person or event. The reason for the choice of this school was the fact that it was situated in the province of Istanbul, one that incorporates a multicultural structure in terms of race, ethnicity, language, sexual orientation, gender, age, presence of handicapped citizens, social class, religious denomination and other social factors. In addition, the school in question was located near to a number of districts with a cosmopolitan make-up and the quality of the information received from school administrators regarding the general student profile of the institution proved useful for the purpose of this research.

The average age of the study group that consisted of two male and four females was 37 years old. (m=37) All were class teachers who had completed the bachelor's degree program for the training of class teachers. The teachers had seen periods of service of 19, 16, 15, 13, 7 and 5 years respectively. On the form in which teachers were asked to indicate their ethnic identity, three teachers answered as 'Citizens of the Turkish Republic', one teacher wrote 'Turkish (Migrant from Thessaloniki, modern Greece)', one teacher replied Turkish (Father Migrant from Thessaloniki, Mother Eastern Turkey, Kurdish), one teacher (Father: Caucasian, Mother Bulgarian Migrant) None of the teachers included in the study were disabled in any way and all of them indicated their religion as 'Muslim/Islam'.

#### *Data Collection*

For the aim of this research, participants were first asked to submit a consent form and then complete a second form with demographic information. On the consent form, the purpose of the research was specified and information was provided on the topic of confidentiality prior to asking for their consent. Following this stage, demographic information regarding the participant teachers' race, ethnic origin, language, gender, age, any handicaps or disabilities, education and religious confession was collected with the aid of the information collection form. The study group was then determined in accordance with this demographic information, and observation and semi-constructed interviews were conducted with the members of the study group. There then followed the collection of one copy of the yearly plans of each teacher in the study group, and these were analysed with regard to the manner in which they conveyed multicultural elements. In such a way, the limitation in the diversity of data collections when safeguarded through the use of other data collection methods serves to increase the reliability and validity of the findings obtained from an academic study (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2005)

*Observation form.* The participants were first asked to complete a consent form and a demographic information form. Appointments were made with each of the

teachers and on the agreed dates observations and interviews were conducted. Following this stage, yearly plans were requested from every teacher and a descriptive analysis method was used with view to ascertaining the degree to which multicultural elements were incorporated into the plans.

Two researchers observed the teachers in the classroom setting and recorded notes on the observation form. The researchers were careful to ask teachers in advance for the necessary permission to attend their lessons and having agreed on appointment times that were mutually appropriate observed the lessons. The behaviour of the teachers during the lessons, their attitudes towards students and the activities they employed in class were observed and then the researchers compiled the findings of the observation supporting in their observations with the findings obtained from the interview stages.

*Interview questions.* The questions that were devised by researchers with regard to the views, apprehensions and suggestions concerning multicultural education in the classroom environment were put to the teachers by way of the semi constructed interview model and their answers were recorded. These questions were organized after a thorough analysis of academic literature on the topic, consideration of the specific conditions and circumstances of the Turkish education system and after elicitation of the opinion of four expert opinions from academic staff members currently serving at the Educational Sciences Department at Yıldız Technical University, Istanbul. A pilot application was conducted on three doctoral students currently studying at the Department of Educational Sciences and sections that were deemed incomprehensible or difficult to comprehend were removed. The recorded questions and answers were then transferred to a computerized format and after this stage the questions and answers were written in report form. The teachers of the study group were then asked for their approval as to the accuracy of what had been reported. In such a way the internal validity or feasibility of the findings obtained from the researched was increased.

*Document analysis.* One example was taken from every teacher of the lesson plans that they had prepared for their lessons and these were analysed with respect to multicultural elements. Each researcher analysed these lessons with regard to what was written under the headings specified on the yearly plans, and the findings obtained were compared before reaching a common result. Furthermore, three doctoral students at the curriculum and instruction department were asked to examine the analysis found in the document and alterations were made to the document in the light of their opinions.

#### *Data Analysis*

With the permission of the teachers concerned, the notes took using type recording equipment were turned into a computer-usable format and the findings of the interview and observation stages were analyzed together. The data was then evaluated using a "content analysis" technique. According to Yıldırım and Şimşek (2005), the aim of content analysis is to summarize and interpret data according to pre-defined themes or topic headings. As the data can be organized according to themes that have emerged from the questions, data can also be presented by focusing attention on the questions or the dimensions of the interview (Yıldırım & Şimşek,

2005). The findings reached were confirmed by three doctoral students at the curriculum and instruction department. The data obtained from this study was then presented with attention paid to the questions featured during the interview process and the findings of the observations.

#### *Validity and Reliability*

a) To increase the internal reliability (feasibility) the researchers aimed to collect a diversity of data (triangulation), and the findings were based on analyses of the observations, teachers' opinions and documents. Each interview was conducted for duration of one hour, during which the views of the participants with regard to the topic were elicited in detail. After the questions and answers were written up in report form, they were then read back to the teachers in the study group and confirmation was taken from the teachers as to the accuracy of the answers recorded. Furthermore, the analyses of the yearly plans and findings of the interviews were analyzed and the codes created from them and document analyses were also checked for accuracy and certain alterations were made in the light of the opinions of experts in the field.

b) In order to increase the reliability of the research study, all of the findings were submitted without making any comments. The findings of the observations that were conducted by two researchers were then compiled. The findings of the interview were read separately by three different researchers, and during these reading sessions possible codes were created. It was then discussed under which themes or topic headings these themes could be grouped together. The analysis process was conducted separately, the experts then came together and a final decision was made as to the codes and themes to be included. The yearly plans were also analyzed separately by each researcher, then the findings reached were compared and a common result was reached. In such a way, there was an attempt to ensure the consistency of the study.

The first author a teacher employed at the same school as that where the teachers were interviewed for the study. The fact that the researcher was situated at the location of the research allowed the participants to feel at ease and to reply to questions in a relaxed and sincere manner. However, the possibility of partisanship or bias arising was kept in mind at all times and so as to overcome any limitations the duration of the interviews conducted with the participants' were kept relatively long. Furthermore, in the interviews care was taken to ask the same question in different ways and the answers were each carefully checked for accuracy, the findings from the observation stages were carefully compared with those from the interview stage and were explained in detail. Moreover, after the report was written the answers were read to the participants and the findings were confirmed. At the same time, when the findings were published, there was an attempt to refer directly to the quotations (of the participants) and comments were made with references to the quotations of the participants.

### **Findings**

Within the context of this research, the findings arrived at from the data obtained from the interviews and observations and examination of the yearly plans were then written up and organized according to eleven main themes or topic headings. These

were: "The present knowledge of teachers with regard to the topic", "The thoughts of teachers with regard to the necessity of multicultural education", "Apprehensions concerning multicultural education", "Thoughts regarding teachers themselves", "The abilities of teachers to describe their students", "The thoughts of teachers regarding the school and class atmosphere", "What teachers can do (to implement multicultural education)", "what can be done with regard to students speaking different native/minority tongues", "Adaptation of teaching methods", "Teachers' in-service training" and "The adequacy of yearly plans in a multicultural context". The themes and categories that were created from the context of the findings are presented in Table 1 below.

**Table 1.**  
*Themes and Categories that were Created from the Data Analysis*

(Themes)	(Categories)
1. Opinions of teachers with regard to multicultural education	1.1. Teachers actual knowledge of the topic. 1.2. Teachers thoughts with regard to the necessity of multicultural education. 1.3. Apprehensions with regard to multicultural education
2. Teachers' Self-Assessment with regard to multicultural education and its sphere of influence	2.1. Thoughts with regard to teachers themselves 2.2. Teachers' ability to recognize/describe their students 2.3. Teachers' thoughts with regard to the school and class atmosphere.
3. Suggestions with regard to multicultural education	3.1. What teachers can do (to help implement multicultural education) 3.2. What can be done to help students with different native/minority languages 3.3. The adaptation of teaching methods. 3.4. In-service training of teachers.
4. The adequacy of teachers with regard to their yearly plans with respect to multicultural elements.	

#### *Opinions of Teachers with regard to Multicultural Education*

The teachers were asked their views with regard to multicultural education and within the context of the first research question/area, the questions that attempted to highlight the actual knowledge of teachers concerning the subject and their thoughts regarding the necessity of multicultural education were thoroughly analyzed.

*The actual knowledge of teachers with regard to the topic.* At the end of the analysis of the question that was aimed to ascertain the actual knowledge of teachers with regard to the topic, three teachers gave a definition of multicultural education as a type of education in which people with different characteristics and from different cultures could receive education at the same time and place, one teacher supplied the

definition of multiculturalism as an “education that raised the individual in every aspect”, while two other teachers described the concept as one in which “an appropriate education was provided to people from different cultures”. A teacher who had been educated abroad, defined multicultural education, with the support of numerous examples, as follows:

Multicultural education is when people from different cultures come together to receive education at the same place. After the Holocaust, in Germany great importance was attached to multicultural education that manifested itself in many ways and a type of education was created that did not put anyone under social pressure. For example, as Muslims, (those from my culture) were not obliged to participate in Religious Education lessons.

*Teachers’ thoughts with regard to the necessity of multicultural education.* At the end of the analysis of the question which attempted to elicit the thoughts of teachers with regard to the necessity of multicultural education, it was understood that all teachers interviewed thought that multicultural education was necessary. One teacher thought that diversity should not be overlooked or ignored and the segregation or division of people into classes (both within and outside school) was wrong, and three teachers argued that in order for teachers to establish equality of opportunity and create a more cohesive society, teachers needed to behave more sensitively with respect to cultural differences. Furthermore it was observed that in the classroom setting, all teachers attempted to be behaving in a fair and equal way towards their students and create a democratic classroom environment and maintained an equal distance to all students (Lafer, 2014). The thoughts of two teachers’ thoughts on multicultural education were as follows.

If people with different religions, languages and of different races live together in the same society and are present in the same class, we are forced to grant them equal rights.

Turkey is a ‘mosaic’ in the sense that there are unique cultures specific to particular regions. The teacher should not evaluate students according to his own social environment or culture, but should learn the lifestyle of the students, and without reflecting this fact explicitly, should behave more sensitively (towards them).

*Apprehensions with regard to multicultural education.* When teachers were asked questions regarding their apprehensions towards multicultural education, it was identified that two of the teachers interviewed argued that problems may be experienced that emanated from family backgrounds of the students, two teachers were of the view that problems would not be experienced should teachers take the necessary precautions, one believed multicultural education was a rich source of benefit and for this reason, problems would not be experienced whereas one teacher argued that differences among students may actually be causing conflict. One of the teachers expressed this viewpoint as follows:

I believe that the biggest disagreement or opposition (to multicultural education) may originate from the families themselves. Families may feel that not enough interest is being shown to their own children.

Another teacher expressed his thoughts on the topic as follows:

Turkey is a 'mosaic' the fact that our types of regional cuisine are so different, and that our traditions and cultures are so different is our true source of wealth. This is a point that doesn't separate us, but on the contrary, unites us.

Five teachers were of the view that the responsibility would inevitably fall on the teacher to resolve the problems, and that teachers would be forced to pay great attention to the creation of an appropriate learning environment and to their words in class. By methods such as bringing families together to talk to one another and teachers, these problems could be solved. Two teachers were of the opinion that in-service training was necessary for teachers on this topic. One teacher articulated his view in the following way.

Here the most important responsibility falls most probably on the teacher himself. Providing he behaves to every student in the same way, and does not exclude anyone on account of their culture, I do not think he will experience any difficulties.

*Teachers' Self-Assessment with regard to Multicultural Education and Its Sphere of Influence*

Teachers' evaluations with regard to multicultural education were analyzed through questions which aimed to elicit teachers' thoughts regarding themselves, their abilities to describe/recognize their students, their thoughts concerning the school and class environment and their apprehensions with view to multicultural education.

*Thoughts of teachers regarding themselves.* When the thoughts of teachers were examined with regard to themselves in relation to multicultural education, it was observed that they saw themselves as competent as regards the way in which they felt they implemented a teaching approach appropriate to the requirements of multicultural education. Two of the teachers stated that they saw students first and foremost as people and as children and did not exercise any kind of discrimination in their thoughts or actions, one teacher mentioned the fact that he had educated students of many different ethnic origins, another argued that the ethnic origin of students did not interest him and that he had always behaved equally towards all students. One teacher expressed his views in the following manner.

As a child from a different culture, I can see what it means to receive education in another culture. For this reason, my approach towards people is perhaps different from those who have been born in, grown up or taught in only one country. I strive to evaluate people first as people, rather than on account of their race or religion.

Another teacher used these words to argue that he regarded himself as competent with regard to multicultural education.

I personally think that I do not discriminate in any way. In any case, as I do not know who is of Laz, Circassian or of immigrant origin, this does not greatly interest me.

One teacher who had described herself at first as inadequate with regard to this subject as she had never taught a student of another race, on being reminded of the researcher's definition of multiculturalism, recalled that she had indeed taught students of different ethnic origins and changed her mind on the issue. One teacher,

expressing the fact that she had insufficient knowledge with regard to the topic, summarized her feelings as follows:

I sometimes see myself as inadequate and ill-equipped with regard to this issue. I feel inadequate sometimes as regards the knowledge required. I see my inadequacies when I am asked to provide information regarding multiculturalism as a teaching approach or any type of deeper knowledge on the topic.

*The abilities of teachers to describe/recognize their students.* Five of the teachers stated that they sufficiently were able to describe their students while one teacher felt he was not able to do this adequately. Those teachers who felt that they could sufficiently describe their students, had by way of house visits, parent-teacher meetings and by studying the information on students' identity cards managed to gain a more detailed profile of their students. Three teachers, rather than asking parents directly about their religious beliefs or ethnic origin, instead, made judgements on the students and parents' behaviours and on things that they heard from outside concerning the families. By asking these types of questions about identities, this was wrongly perceived by many parents to constitute a type of discrimination, while one teacher felt it was easier to ask for these types of information from students themselves.

I have striven as much as possible to visit our students' houses. Most of them are Muslim and of Turkish origin. Of course among these students there are many Kurds, but you can't ask directly (about their ethnic origin). When the teacher asks this directly, they think like this: "Why is the teacher asking this, is the teacher discriminating against us?" This is not because I want to know the child's values so as to develop a specific attitude towards him; however, it seems that if you ask such things, people make a big deal"

One teacher put his thoughts in this way.

I have enough information about the students in my classroom. However, in my class there isn't a multicultural situation, as they are students all at the same academic level. When I've held parent meetings I've asked them where they are from and their home cities but I haven't asked too many questions. If they want to express something on the issue, they're free to do so.

*Thoughts of teachers with regard to the school and classroom environment.* Three of the teachers indicated that the school and classroom environments were not suitable for multicultural education while three teachers believed they were appropriate. One of the teachers who did not think the environments were suitable cited the reasons as being large class sizes and the low educational level of parents. He also added that state schools would not be able to shoulder such a type of education and that it could lead to the division of students into groups. In order to prevent this comprehensive study needed to be carried out as to its feasibility in state schools. Another teacher stated that classes did have a multicultural nature but little attention was paid to this fact:

At the moment, to be frank, I do not think that state schools can shoulder the burden of responsibility that multicultural education could bring about. Students could divide up into groups, even if this might be secretive and only by way of whisper or hearsay. Bu students whispering that someone is one race or another, I

feel, it may hurt the pride of the student. For his reason, I feel that a study should be contacted comprising all elements from the principal at the top to the student portfolio at the bottom.

One of the teachers, who stated that the school and class environment was suitable for multicultural education, stated that the present class environment was appropriate, two teachers that the curriculum was of a comprehensive nature in that it included all cultures and so it rendered the class and school environment suitable for multicultural education. However, one teacher taking into account the different cultures present in the school environment, felt that the introduction of multicultural education could fan the flames of discrimination and as a result was a wrong step. He expressed his views in the following manner:

There is an element of unity when we talk about education. Turkey If the Turkish Republic indeed means the Turkish Republic it follows that there is a curriculum that gives expression to the mosaic nature of our country. It follows that there is no need to do anything in addition to this. Cultural education can provoke discrimination in my view. This is because a child feels uncomfortable when you behave to him differently.

#### *Suggestions with regard to Multicultural Education*

In order to ascertain the suggestions of teachers with regard to multicultural education, the answers to questions designed to elicit their views on the following topics were asked: the things that teachers can do to support multicultural education, the things that can be done for students who speak different mother tongues and teachers' suggestions concerning the adaptation of teaching methods and in-service training.

*Things that the teacher can do.* When teachers were asked what could be done so as to know their students better, five teachers highlighted the need to establish communication with the family and to observe their living conditions. In so doing they will gain a better knowledge of their students. Furthermore, one teacher suggested that through conducting trips one gained better insights into the attitudes and lives of ones students. Another participant stressed the importance of creating a relationship of sharing between the parents and teacher at all times, and finally another teacher expressed the way that he had obtained useful information about the families he was involved with via a parental observation form. One of the teachers set out his suggestions as follows:

In order to get to know the families, the first priority is to see the environment in which the family lives. However, just seeing the house in which the family lives is not enough. To reduce these gaps in knowledge on my part, I give the children homework assignments from time to time. They create presentations and videos for me that help me to understand their real lives better.

One teacher stated that the cultural backgrounds of his students did not greatly interest him, and referring to the fact that he felt that this situation prevented any kind of discrimination on his part.

I don't do anything in particular. Why, you might ask? In this way, you don't run the risk of discriminating in any way. What the students eat, drink or their traditions don't interest me.

*The things that can be done for students speaking different native/minority languages.* Four teachers stated that students speaking different minority languages should be able to receive instruction in this language. While one teacher supported the idea that students should be able to receive their general education from a teacher proficient in that language, another teacher, stressing the necessity of using a common language in education defended the view that the use of more than one language in education could lead to the disintegration of the country. The teachers articulated their views on the topic as follows.

The thing to be done is to allow the student to receive education from someone who knows that language. Or at least such an application can be tried, and in that school, for whichever ethnic group has the most students, the teacher can deliver cultural adaptation lessons. When I arrived in Germany, I didn't know German, and because there were many Turkish students like me who did not know German, for certain lessons during the week, they would send us to Turkish teachers who would teach us German.

While no-one should interfere with anyone who speaks Kurdish or the Laz language, a concept of Turkishness should remain at the forefront of our education. Perhaps Turkish education should be unified and refined, because Turkey is at a very sensitive stage in its development. We are politically and socially at a very sensitive juncture. I do not think we should allow this (multicultural education) to spread from a very specific cultural aspect. Because if we split like Yugoslavia, no-one will be able to stop our decline. Because these cultural divisions, especially as far as language is concerned, will take us to a very different place. In all state and educational affairs, Turkish is spoken. This does not mean that Turkish is a language of racism, but rather simply the common language.

Another two teachers felt that it was necessary to approach students who spoke other languages with understanding and to use a common language, stressing the importance of using gestures and impersonation, as well as playing games in order to reach a common understanding. One teacher expressed his opinion in the following way.

Even if the child's native language is different, one can create a situation in which the student can be made to feel that he or she is speaking the same language. Even if the languages of the teacher and student are different, through the use of gestures and impersonation, even if they do not understand each other completely, a road to understanding can be opened. They may even communicate through the use of games. In this regard, it is necessary to understand the way a child thinks, the situation that he finds himself in, what he feels and behave accordingly.

*The adaptation of teaching methods.* Five teachers indicated that it was necessary to use different teaching techniques and methods for student groups from different cultures. Two of the teachers argued that multicultural elements could only be added as topics to lessons such as Life Sciences and Social Sciences, one teacher suggested the teaching of multiculturalism through the offer of optional lessons one teacher suggested that the multicultural elements could be spread across numerous subjects in the curriculum. One teacher stated that as all students were different, for that reason it was necessary to use a variety of methods so as to address all their needs. One of these teachers summarized his views on the topic in this way:

I think that multicultural education is better provided in Social Sciences or Life Sciences lessons. The richness of our culture is expressed better in Social and Life sciences lessons than in Mathematics or Science lessons. I believe that students from every region can, by using technology and preparing slides for presentations, show the positive aspects of their regions and so destroy the prejudices of others.

One teacher expressed the opinion, that the curriculum taught in school was already designed in such a way that it already incorporated all cultures and for that reason there was no need for different methods or techniques. He defended this view as follows:

In Turkey there is an important concept, namely unity in education. During the preparation of the curriculum, it is not merely created according to the culture of the West or the east of the country. Therefore, in lessons, when we explain/discuss about music or pictures, there is in my opinion no discrimination.

During the lesson observations, it was seen that teachers did not mention the term multicultural education; neither did they resort to any different strategy or methodology. Rather it was observed that multicultural elements were spread among the different principal lessons of the curriculum.

*In-service training of teachers.* Five teachers put forward the view that multicultural education should be included within in-service teacher training programmes, while one said there was no need for extra training or education on this topic. One of the teachers who mentioned that in-service education needed to incorporate multiculturalism defended the view that multiculturalism should be a separate lesson and should be taught by a dedicated subject teacher. One teacher indicated that this type of education should be offered in places where there was the greatest number of cultural differences, and elsewhere according to the needs of those areas or regions. One teacher admitted that due to the fact that he had never had any experience of the issue, he was unable to generate any ideas as to how multiculturalism could be applied. Another teacher confessed that he had previously never thought very much about multicultural education however expressed the opinion that such an education could be very beneficial. Two teachers' views on this issue were as follows:

I think so, yes. If it did happen, it would be wonderful. Because the teacher will get to know his students better, and will know how to better approach his students. At the moment, the teacher does what he himself has read, or what he himself knows (from habit). However, if he receives a more scientific in-service training, I think it will be of great benefit. Indeed, if such a thing were introduced, I would be one of the first participants.

On this issue, the teachers who will provide the education must be clear; they must become specialists in this area and will then be able to teach students at certain periods of the week using this specialist knowledge.

*The Adequacy of Yearly Plans with reference to Multiculturalism*

The yearly plans of the classroom teachers who teach different classes were analyzed according to the number of achievement goals, number of activities and types of evaluation and assessment. The number of these that stressed multicultural elements were then defined and recorded as examples. The teachers indicated that the yearly plans had been prepared collectively (in conjunction with other teachers)

and they had tried to remain true to the achievement goals, activities and evaluation and assessment criteria included within them. In Table 2, Table 3, Table 4 and Table 5, space is allocated to the results of the analysis of the yearly plans for first, second, third and fourth grades. As a result of the pre-interviews conducted with teachers, the fact that teachers focused largely on the four principal lessons meant that these lessons were chosen for focus, and the yearly plans for these four lessons were taken into account for analysis. Moreover, due to the fact that Science lessons are included within the scope of Life Sciences lessons for the first three years of the primary school, the content of the yearly plan for the separate subject of Science and Technology was only analyzed for fourth grade.

**Table 2.**

*Analysis of Yearly Plan with regard to Multicultural Elements*

Class/grade	Life Science Lesson		Examples
	In fourth Classes this lesson becomes Social Sciences)	f	
1st grade	Number of achievement objectives	86	
	The number of achievement objectives that emphasize multiculturalism	7	Similar and different characteristics of friends.
	Number of activities	77	
	Number of activities that emphasize multiculturalism	7	Our Similarities and Differences
	Types of assessment and evaluation		Based on observation, fill in the blanks, true/false answers, multiple-choice, short answers to questions, oral presentation and self-evaluation
	Assessment and evaluation methods emphasizing multiculturalism		Evaluation using a self-evaluation form and evaluation
2nd grade	Number of learning objectives	95	
	Number of learning objectives emphasizing multiculturalism	7	Participation in school and class election activities so as to contribute to democratic culture.
	Number of activities	92	
	Number of activities emphasizing multiculturalism	7	Democracy in school
	Types of assessment and evaluation		Assessment and evaluation included observation, fill in the gaps, true/false, multiple choic, short answers to questions, oral presentations and self-evaluation.
	Methods that emphasized multiculturalism		Evaluation using self-evaluation form and evaluation
3rd grade	Number of achievement objectives	111	

	Number of achievement objectives that emphasized multiculturalism	8	The supremacy of democratic practices was debated with vigour supported with examples from school life.
	Number of activities	105	
	The number of activities that emphasized multiculturalism	8	Differences are natural.
	Types of assessment and evaluation		Assessment included observation, filling in the blanks, true/false responses, multiple-choice questions, short response type questions and self-evaluation
	Evaluation methods that emphasized multiculturalism		-Evaluation using a self-assessment form
	Number of learning objectives	46	
	Learning objectives emphasizing multiculturalism	7	To meet others' feelings and thoughts with respect.
	Number of activities	39	
<b>4th grade</b>	Number of activities that emphasized multiculturalism	7	Respect for feelings and thoughts of others.
	(Types of assessment and evaluation)		
	Assessment and Evaluation Methods that emphasized multiculturalism		Evaluation using a self-evaluation form

As can be seen from table two, in the yearly plans collectively prepared by teachers for the Life Sciences lesson taught and applied in the first four grades of primary school, the number of learning achievement goals and activities as well as the range of types of assessment and evaluation were extremely limited.

**Table 3.**  
Turkish lessons with respect to multicultural elements

Grade	Turkish lesson	f	Examples
	Number of learning objectives	132	
	Number of learning objectives that emphasized multiculturalism	12	Oral expression of feelings, thoughts and dreams
	Number of activities	41	
<b>1st grade</b>	The number of activities that emphasized multiculturalism	8	The student is asked to speak about events that have made him happy or sad.
	Types of assessment and evaluation		Observation forms, worksheets, individual evaluation forms, written work, visualization may be used as means of evaluating the student.
	Methods that emphasize multiculturalism		Evaluation using a self-evaluation form

<b>2nd grade</b>	Number of achievement objectives	172	
	The number of achievement objectives that emphasized multiculturalism	13	The student writes introductory pieces of writing to describe his family and environment.
	Number of activities	47	
	The number of activities that emphasized multiculturalism	8	The student is asked to write about his dream house, school, friend, teacher, car, toy etc.
	Types of Assessment and Evaluation		Observation forms, worksheets, individual evaluation forms, written descriptions, and visualization may be used as means of evaluating the student.
	Assessment and Evaluation methods that emphasized multiculturalism		Evaluation using a self-evaluation form.
<b>3rd grade</b>	Number of achievement objectives	185	
	The number of achievement objectives	18	The student highlights the similarities and differences between the thoughts present in a text and his/her own thoughts.
	Number of activities	60	
	The number of activities that emphasized multiculturalism	9	"By creating a "Respect Tree" and by using certain expressions attached to the trees students may be asked to bring certain situations to life.
	Types of assessment and evaluation		Observation forms, worksheets, individual evaluation forms, written descriptions, visualization exercises may be used as means of evaluating the student.
	Types of assessment and evaluation that emphasize multiculturalism		Evaluation using a self-evaluation form
<b>4th grade</b>	Number of achievement objectives	249	
	Number of achievement objectives that emphasize multiculturalism	18	Student uses expressions that direct the reader into thinking differently.
	Number of activities	92	
	The number of activities that stress multiculturalism	4	Student may be asked to group words that describe various feelings into positive and negative categories.
	Types of assessment and evaluation		Evaluation of students according to the activities and project evaluation form.
	Assessment and evaluation methods that emphasized multiculturalism		Evaluation using a self-evaluation form

As can be understood from Table 2, the number of achievement objectives and activities as well as assessment and evaluation types found in the lesson plans

prepared and applied collectively for Turkish lessons in the first four grades of primary school is extremely low.

**Table 4.**

*Analysis of the Yearly Plans for Mathematics with respect to Multiculturalism*

Grade	Math lesson	f	Examples
1st grade	Number of achievement objectives	47	
	The number of learning objectives that emphasized multiculturalism	-	
	Number of activities	38	
	The number of activities that emphasized multiculturalism	-	
	Types of assessment and evaluation		Check lists for achievement objectives, open-ended questions, group evaluation, observation form, measurement of attitude.
	Assessment and evaluation methods that emphasize multiculturalism		Group work, individual activities
2nd grade	Number of achievement objectives.	59	
	Number of achievement objectives that emphasized multiculturalism	-	
	Number of activities	80	
	The number of activities that emphasized multiculturalism	-	

	Types of assessment and evaluation		Multiple-choice, linking exercises, short answer responses, tests requiring extended responses.
	Assessment and evaluation methods that emphasized multiculturalism	-	
	Number of achievement objectives.	69	
	The number of achievement objectives that emphasize multiculturalism	-	
	Number of activities	-	
3rd grade	The number of activities that emphasize multiculturalism	-	
	Types of assessment and evaluation	-	Multiple-choice, matching exercises, short answer responses, extended responses.
	Methods of assessment and evaluation that emphasize multiculturalism	-	
	Number of achievement objectives.	85	
	The number of achievement objectives that emphasized multiculturalism	-	
	Number of activities	134	
4th grade	Number of activities that emphasized multiculturalism	-	
	Types of assessment and evaluation		Progress tests are employed as a means of assessment and evaluation
	Assessment and evaluation methods that emphasized multiculturalism	-	Methods of assessment and evaluation that emphasized multiculturalism.

As can be seen from Table 4, in the yearly plans prepared and applied collectively by teachers for mathematics lessons in the first four grades of primary schools both

the number of achievement objectives and activities as well as the types of assessment and evaluation employed were rather limited.

**Table 5.**

*Analysis of the Yearly Plans for Science and Technology lessons with respect to Multicultural Elements*

Grade	Science and Technology	f	Examples
	Number of achievement objectives	178	
	The number of achievement objectives that emphasized multiculturalism	-	
	Number of activities	119	
	The number of activities that emphasize multiculturalism	-	
4th grade	Types of assessment and Evaluation		Project and performance assignments, concept maps, concept tree, thinking hats, constructed grids, puzzles, concept trees multiple choice questions, open-ended questions, true-false questions, matching exercises and filling the blanks.
	Methods of Evaluation that emphasized multiculturalism		Thinking hats, Project and performance assignments

As can be seen from Table 5, in the yearly plans prepared and applied collectively by teachers for Science and Technology lessons in fourth grade classes, both the number of achievement objectives and activities as well as the types of assessment and evaluation can be seen to be extremely limited.

The low number of achievement objectives and types of assessment and evaluation does not correlate with the opinions expressed by teachers that different teaching methods and techniques should be employed for various groups in the same class. In this respect, we can reach the conclusion that the teachers' ideas with regard to multicultural education were not sufficiently reflected in their yearly plans.

This situation does not correspond with the opinions of teachers obtained from the interview that different teaching methods and techniques were necessary for groups from different cultures or that multicultural elements could be added as themes to lessons of the curriculum such as Life Sciences or Social Sciences.

### **Discussion, Conclusion and Recommendations**

Multicultural education is a field of study that aims to help students in acquiring behaviours such as establishing empathy with and showing respect and acting tolerantly towards others (Sinagatullin, 2003). Furthermore, it endeavors to allow students to equip themselves with the necessary knowledge, skills and behaviours to enable them to participate in democratic society and to obtain equal opportunities in education (Halvorsen & Wilson, 2010). So that teachers can understand the importance and necessity of multicultural education and so that they can transfer this philosophy into effect in a real educational environment, it is a priority that they are able to put the principles of multicultural education into practice. As Costa (1997) has indicated, the successful application of formal education is connected to the attitude and professional preparedness of the teacher, and in multicultural education this represents an even more important factor. Multicultural educational programs are based on a philosophy that allows students belonging to different racial, ethnic, linguistic and social groups to express their individual points of view (Banks, 2006b). The application of multicultural education is related to both the competency of the teacher and the adequacy of the education program. In this study, there was an attempt to analyze the thoughts of teachers with regard to multicultural education and the yearly plans of teachers within the context of multicultural education by means of a case study approach.

Schlusser (1992) defines the most effective teachers as being those who are able to learn to understand their students' cultures and who impart self-confidence to them. When examining the findings of this study it can be observed that the teachers' actual knowledge with respect to multicultural education is sufficient and they display a largely positive attitude towards multicultural education. Teachers agreed unanimously that multicultural education was something necessary and the concept on which they focused the most attention was that of equality in education. Banks (2005) proposed that all educators need to ensure equal access to and equal opportunities in education. However, teachers harbour great prejudices and suffer from serious confusion regarding key concepts related to multicultural education. Moreover, teachers often see themselves as having insufficient knowledge or practical training in this field.

Most of the teachers interviewed for this study saw themselves as proficient as far as being practitioners of multicultural education as they considered that the attitude they adopted in class was in keeping with the tenets of the philosophy. In this regard, they cited as the (principal) reason their belief in their own proficiency as the fact that they behaved equally to all students. However, when the responses submitted by teachers to the questions regarding the degree to which the school and class

environments were appropriate for multicultural society, they expressed apprehensions that the introduction of multicultural education could lead to a division of students into 'groups', and that such a type of education could fan the flames of discrimination and that the school infrastructure would not be able to endure such an educational 'burden'. In contrast, Banks (2008), in his explanation of the misconceptions with regard to multicultural education, articulated the fact that rather than setting out to divide a country, multicultural education in fact is designed to unite a country that has already become divided. The findings reached in this study show that teachers tend to agree with the argument that multicultural education is indeed necessary, however harbour certain apprehensions with regard to problems that may be experienced at the application stage. Such a situation may be evaluated that teachers lack the adequate background or preparation with regard to multicultural education, and so may be deemed not yet ready to put it into practice.

Pena (1997) indicated that the experiences of students from cultural minority groups tended to show that on account of the teacher's perception that they and other similar student groups were uneducated, such groups were largely ignored by the teacher. Glazer (1997), put forward the view that the teachers' defense of the dominant culture could lead to a situation in which other sub-cultures felt under pressure and lead to their complete forced assimilation. In this study, the viewpoints elicited from the participant teachers who stated that there existed no multicultural environment in their classes, could be interpreted as a sign that the teachers interviewed were closed to cultures outside their own, and rather than highlight differences among their students preferred to conceal them so as to create uniformity within their class. Moreover, most teachers, on account of the fact that they had not undergone such an educational experience (or training), expressed the idea stated that they could not conceive of any ideas regarding how such an education could be put into practice.. With regard to the opinions expressed with regard to the fact that the present curriculum incorporates all cultures, these seem to contradict the findings reached as a result of analysis of the yearly plans the teachers had created,

When the suggestions of most teachers with regard to multicultural education are analyzed, the participants emphasized the fact that teachers themselves would be able to solve any problems that might arise, and would also be able to prevent any problems related to the application and administration of the process. Pena (1997), in his analysis regarding the perceptions of educators noted that teachers allocated very little time so as to get to know their students and as a result possessed little concrete information about them. Similarly, in this study, the overwhelming majority of teachers stated that for the teaching and learning process to conduct itself effectively, one needed to learn as many details as possible about the origins of the student(s); nevertheless, there were also teachers who expressed that they felt no need to acquaint themselves with the cultural background of the students as this may lead to discrimination. Whereas in fact the ethos of multicultural education lies in getting to know students in all aspects so as to shape an educational milieu in accordance with

their needs and interests and to ensure an educational environment that is democratic in nature. Teachers' becoming better acquainted with their students, is not a means to create discrimination, but rather is an endeavour to shape education in accordance with the differing needs and priorities of students.

Nelson (2001) stated that the attachment of value to socially-constructed belief systems and racial and cultural differences was the key to achieving equality of opportunity in education. In this study, the majority of the teachers interviewed did not wish to ask families questions regarding their ethnic origin, race or religion for fear of it being interpreted as a form of discrimination on the part of the teacher. This situation may be an indication that we in Turkey are not yet ready to be considered a truly multicultural society and that certain prejudices still persist in our society in which people of different beliefs or racial and cultural values are not approached or treated in an equal manner.

Most of the teachers interviewed expressed the need for different teaching methods and techniques to be employed for student groups from different cultures; in general, they stated that multicultural elements could be added as topics to the course content of lessons such as Social Sciences or Life Sciences or could be spread across subject disciplines. This situation is in keeping with the supplementary and contributory approaches specified by Banks for the inclusion of multicultural educational content into school programs. Banks mentioned that so as to integrate cultural content into school programs, different approaches had been attempted; yet, in both contributory and supplementary approaches traces of the dominant culture could still clearly be seen. However, in the transformation approach there was an intention to allow students to evaluate concepts and problems from different viewpoints. One teacher stated that so as to bring school and class environments to a level in which multicultural education can be applied in an appropriate manner, it was first necessary to conduct a comprehensive study encompassing every aspect of the school from the head teacher right down to the student portfolio. This is an expression of opinion in keeping with the transformational approach.

Gorski (2000) vehemently defended the view that it was important for teachers to constantly examine their prejudices, partialities and any perceptions that may influence the experiences of their students. An effective multicultural educator and teacher should be forced to continually examine and transform himself. Cırık (2008) in light of the studies he had conducted felt that trainee teachers' comprehension of issues such as multicultural education, race or ethnic origin was inadequate. For this reason he expressed the need for lessons to be provided on teacher training programs from the first years of study that would deal with issues such as the relationship between education and culture, the differences between cultures, and include knowledge and skills that may help to address these problems. Polat (2009), Başbay and Kağnıcı (2011) in their studies focused upon the multicultural competencies of teachers and stressed the fact that in order for multicultural education to be applied, teachers must possess particular skills. In this study, in a similar fashion, it has been indicated that there is a need for in-service training on the subject of multicultural education. In this regard, for the development of teachers skills, a particular basis or

background on the part of the teacher is. In such a way, teachers with heterogeneous classes may be able to develop their skills so as to foster an atmosphere of respect, empathy, tolerance and democratic consciousness; in so doing they will be able to consider diversity as a source of richness. Furthermore, they will gain the opportunity to allow students to see things not merely in black and white, but instead in colors and to acquire greater abilities to listen to others.

The fact that in the modern world, citizens possess such differing values, characteristics, and religious and philosophical beliefs renders multicultural education essential. As Stradling (2003) stated multicultural education allows the opportunity for students to accept that there exist other viewpoints, and to consider them equally; it also allows us the opportunity to attempt to understand the feeling of other parties. Multicultural education, in addition to preparing students to work in a world in which diversity is ever more prominent (Gaff, 1992; Morey & Kitano, 1997) by assigning students an active role in a safe class environment and by approving experimentation and experience also serves to raise the communication skills of its students (Gay, 2000). From this perspective, it is suggested that multicultural education should be included in education programs and teachers should be encouraged to adopt its principles. Furthermore, it is proposed that teachers should be educated and trained in this subject and the number of studies conducted in this area of research should be increased.

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