

Review

Readiness of Turkish Education system for Multicultural education

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The purpose of this study is to analyze multicultural education and evaluate the Turkish education system regarding the acceptance of diversity. In this era, cultural diversity and identities are given equal importance in the world. Multiculturalism gives the opportunity for each citizen to secure life styles with equal rights, grow in a world of cultural heritage and raise children in the same world without being discriminated. Multicultural education advocates that everyone should have the equal educational opportunities on the basis of gender, social class, race, ethnicity and cultural variety. As a result, it has a purpose of ensuring equal opportunities, solving problems arising from cultural conflicts, supporting students to develop empathy, introducing each other's cultures and increasing academic success. Diversity is not yet promoted in Turkish Education system and it is one area that is lacking in the system. It is also uncertain the benefits gained by living together in the community. As the schools are responsible for shaping the future of students, it is very important for teachers to consider diversity of culture and language to enhance their academic performance.

Key words: Multiculturalism, multicultural education, identity, diversity.

INTRODUCTION

According to Fitcher (2006), diversity is an important subject in the field of Sociology, which is an objective reality. It is a holistic approach to the analysis of a phenomenon and is a prerequisite for objectivity. Social facts and events are influenced and shaped by many factors. Therefore, social phenomena and events in the field of sociology and education should be analyzed from the historical and social context in which they are present (İnal, 1994). Sociology examines the regularity of human association (Fitcher, 2006).

Taylor (2014) makes Rousseau's concept of morality more concrete by combining individual and dependent relationship with Herder's "ideal of authenticity". Being loyal to yourself and to its originality is something that only one can discover himself, and he defines himself when he voices it. This is based on the "satisfaction" and "self-realization" approaches that underlies the modern approach to authenticity. This approaches also applies to cultures.

The birth of a democratic society is stated to be

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insufficient to eliminate the identity of habits of old societies based on their social position, the place they acquired and the roles associated with it. Identity is defined in dialogue or conflict with the things considered important. Thus, identity means who we are and “where we come from” (Taylor, 2014).

Culture is regarded as the collective form of practical life. It is a collective way of life, it is not only based on attributed partnership, but also on the shared partnership of experience (Nohl, 2009). It is possible to think of culture as the spirit of a society (Parekh, 2002). A social culture is an organized life style that is established on a common tradition and determined by a common environment. Culture is a form of society, a moral community owing common beliefs and common thinking styles rather than a physical unity (Dawson, 2014). Culture determines how one thinks, believe and behave, which in turn affect how one teach and learn (Gay, 2014).

On the social level, the understanding of identities are formed in an open dialogue without being formed by a previously determined social scenario that emphasized equal recognition policy. The denial of this right, in accordance with a widespread modern view, can cause great harm to those who refuse (Taylor, 2014). According to Habermas (2014), Taylor considers Canada and the Qubec case and legal problem with its own elective reading of liberalism as a theory that gives all legal partners equal rights of individual choice and action as fundamental rights, but this view on rights is an incomplete interpretation of autonomy and equality of citizens. When they do not understand it well, they cannot use their equal individual freedoms.

Recognition is expressed on two levels, personal and public, which emphasize identity and self. The universalization policy and the development of the concept of modern identity has formed the *policy of diversity*, emphasizing that equal recognition is equal dignity of all citizens. However, these two policies, which are based on equal respect, are in conflict with Taylor. While the universalism policy puts people in a uniform pattern, the different policy ignores the principle of non-discrimination (Taylor, 2014). Equal respect for everyone is based on the condition that respect is towards the other due to his being different. Solidarity as one of us against the other allows us to be a moral community that constitutes “we”. This moral community is based on the idea of adopting marginales on the basis of mutual respect with the abolition of discrimination and injustice (Habermas, 2015).

CULTURE AND VARIETY

Multiculturalism policies have been developed in order to overcome the problems caused by the failure of cultural diversity to survive in political and social life. It is

suggested that cultural identities should be evaluated on the basis of “equivalent respect”, based on a tolerance based approach rather than a hierarchical approach pertaining to the supremacy of culture (Ergil, 2010).

According to Habermas (2015), the multicultural societies can be held together, regardless of how much the political culture has achieved itself, when democracy proves itself not only by the rights of liberal liberty and political participation, but also by the rights of social and cultural partnerships. Citizens of the democratic state can only be an integrative force when there is a mechanism that prepares the necessary conditions of the desired lifestyles. According to Modood (2014), the public culture pressure of the unified and sovereign nations according to Kymlicka (1998) exclude religious groups, especially Muslims, from multiculturalism as a citizenship and policy design.

It is known that the solution of social problems lies in pluralistic democracy, dialog and reconciliation. Taylor's recognition policy allows people to look at others more effectively and accurately, not only to recognize people and cultures outside theirs, but also to those who share their cities, libraries and schools with them in a closer and less selective manner. In our course programs, our history, literature and culture should be included. Focusing more on our own culture also requires knowing who we are as a community (Wolf, 2014).

MULTICULTURALISM

The unity in a land is held by the constitution, that is, by the decision of the founding ancestors to regulate their lives in a legal way together with positive law. In multicultural societies, securing life styles with equal rights gives every citizen the opportunity to grow in the world of cultural heritage and to grow their children in the same world without being separated. However, through legal guarantees, each individual can take the opportunity to re-produce the culture medium (Habermas, 2014). However, policy makers regard the attitude of not being personal to being neutral against differences, “identity equation” of public entities that belong to an important part of contemporary liberal societies as the cost citizens should deliberately pay (Gutman, 2014). However, today's democracy adopts the principle that not all brothers are brothers, and all brothers are different (Ergil, 2010).

The “equation reflex” that mostly belongs to liberal democracies does not recognize specific identities by public entities but only reminds common interests such as citizenship rights, responsibilities, political rights, income, health and education (Gutman, 2014). By ensuring this equity among culture sets just like it has been maintained among individuals would provide domestic peace, this will be achieved through legal

security of multiculturalism (Ergil, 2010). The nations ability to sustain different cultures together in a controlled manner becomes permanent with appropriate educational policies (Çınar, 2010). One of the goals of citizenship classes taught at schools is to introduce national identities of the society they live in and their own cultures to the members of the marginal groups. However, current citizenship education strengthens status quo and dominant power relationships in the society (Banks, 2015).

Governments have some concrete reservations in multiculturalism policies. These reservations are insecure ethnical relationships, human right, border control, variety of immigrant groups and economic contributions (Kymlicka, 2012). However, despite all of these, contemporary societies deal with the representation of different cultures at local, national and universal level as a democratic right (Gezgin, 2015).

MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION

Regrading gender, social status, race, ethnicity and cultural diversity in societies, education theorists and researchers propose multicultural education approaches which argue that everyone should have equal educational opportunities (Banks, 2013). The ultimate goal of multicultural education is to maintain social transformation by contributing to the form, implementing and sustaining social justice and equity in the society (Gorski, 2010).

Regulations and policies to be implemented at schools for people coming from different segments of the society must be secured on the basis of structural equity (Apple and Beane, 2011). According to social agreement approach, societies and the states are based on contract, whereby the individuals who make up themselves are subjected to mutual commitments to form a society as equals and thus improve their interests (Edgar and Sedgwick, 2006). Conformity in the society is an emotion provided by adopting that differences are respectable and acceptable (Ergil, 2010). Thus, this diversity offers both challenges and opportunities for teachers, schools and countries (Banks, 2013).

Multicultural education provides advantages for schools such as removing prejudices, providing harmony, interaction and tolerance and eliminating obstacles (Aydın, 2013). In such an education, the goal is to provide equal opportunities in education, solve problems arising from cultural conflicts, support students to assist each other, get to know each other's culture and increase their academic success (Banks, 2013). Thus, this educational initiative may teach how to handle diversity as richness, provide empathy development among students and form strong connections regarding life.

The source of tension that exist in pluralistic and democratic societies is the dilemmas in educational

policies (Perry, 2009). Since the 19th century, due to some factors, societies have lost their homogeneous structures and have become multicultural. According to United Nations (UN) statistics, today there are 600 language groups and 5000 ethnic groups within 184 independent states in the world. This reveals the requirement for the national unity concept to be implemented within the framework of multiculturalism rather than homogeneity concept (Ergil, 2010). Several sets with very different languages, beliefs, life philosophies and styles have met in Anatolia during their trips in history. Therefore, life and art in Anatolia are multicultural (Ergil, 2010). The traces of multicultural education in Anatolia dates back to the conquest of Istanbul (Kırpık, 2013). It is seen that multiculturalism in Ottoman madrasah was presented in harmony (Gündüz, 2013; Akyüz, 2012).

A multicultural education introduces the individual to a world of meaning, as it opens the door to the cultural richness and diversity of his country. The fact that differences can live together causes a person to realize that diversity is not a threat to social cohesion but an ordinary phenomenon (Ergil, 2010). Situations where differences are not understood, accepted and not well managed may create problems at the personal and social level. The basis of this is prejudiced attitudes and behaviors. When managed well, it is seen as a dimension that provides competitive advantage to the organization and provides different experiences and perspectives; it increases the flexibility of the organization and its ability to adapt to changes (Barutçugil, 2004). Fukuyama criticizes Huntington's thesis of the clash of civilizations because of cultural differences, arguing that new solutions and changes can be produced from the interaction and competition of different cultures (Fukuyama, 2000). On the other hand, acceptance of diversity facilitates competitive advantage by providing the fast and flexible mobility required to be successful in the world market, where national, cultural and ethnic boundaries are increasingly eliminated (Barutçugil, 2004).

The success of the students in schools and the meanings they put on the concepts are influenced by the level of income, class and family characteristics as well as their personal success (İnal, 1994). Since the second half of the last century, in developed countries, developments in political and economic fields have also affected the field of education; it is seen that a number of opinions on the transition from representative democracies to participatory democracies have accelerated the formation of democratic and liberal policies in education (Şişman and Turan, 2003).

Some researchers have defended culturally adapted education, which ensures that academic success of students from different cultures increases, their cultural skills improve and they gain a critical perspective about the current situation (Hoy, 2010). This education can be

summarized using the slogan “all are different, all are equal” and the values behind are respect for human rights, cooperation, equal opportunities and relationships between participation and democracy (Tekeli, 2004). Cultural values-sensitive teaching is a series of values and skills that cover a wide range of factors including academic achievement, social awareness and criticism, cultural acceptance, community building, personal relationships, self-worth and individual skills, as well as a moral understanding based on charity and compassion develops (Gay, 2014).

Values are abstract and general belief or judgments about what is right and what is wrong, what is good and what is bad. Values have contents about individual behaviors, social and political histories. Schools have to find ways to stand against the culture wars surrounding them and structure society; while meeting society's different values, interests and needs. What schools need today is the skill to structure the society and create common emotions (Schlechty, 2011).

At the International Democratic Education Conferences [IDEC], the students have a say on their own learning, based on principles and values of democratic education such as human rights, freedom, social equality, social justice, environmental responsibility, participation, pluralism, diversity and tolerance. It is seen that it refers to an education model that requires them to participate in decisions affecting their learning (IDEC, 2005, 2006, 2008). One of the aims of these efforts, known as decentralization in education, is that the outcasts, poor groups, emerging trends in the society are included in the school system and benefit from equality of opportunity (Şişman and Turan, 2003).

School as a social system has a specific culture, purpose and structure. The most important factor that helps schools to appear is the needs of individual and society. School protects society's culture, order and law, and help transfer them to the new generations. This function of school ensures the stability and safety of organizations in the society (Özdemir et al., 2012). Education and school in functional terms are regarded as a tool that protect and maintain the current culture and adapts the new generations to the society; however, critically speaking education is considered as a mechanism that changes and transforms the society when needed (Şişman, 2010).

According to Marshall (2004), education management has not yet been able to face issues such as poverty, immigration, gender, race difference, ethnical structure, religious, language and culture, which are the marginal issues of social justice. The general approach towards education management is based on the understanding that schools have a “homogeneous” cultural structure. However, redefining the understanding of democracy and pluralistic perspective as well as multicultural democracy vision, need have objective racism, classism, sexism and

other illegal classifications beyond a naive tolerance (Scanlan, 2012). Separating communities or using labels to standardize based on these differences cause fractions and status systems that decrease democratic potential of the community and shadow individual's honor (Apple and Beane, 2011). As Dewey (1938) pointed out, there is no meaning in gaining the literacy skills if individual loses his/her spirit; in other words, him/her identifies the power to appreciate the values related with valuable stuff and the meaning of concepts that the society gained him/her (Apple and Beane, 2011).

If school leaders learn how to form a supportive society that respects differences and treats discrimination, schools may improve (Schlechty, 2011). Both school administration and families should accept that the setting their children have formed is multicultural. Indeed, societies have to do this in order to understand the world and their own realities in this age where it is not possible to isolate one from global developments (Ergil, 2010). However, instead of serving the society, unfortunately educators have to serve more than one community, interest groups and organized lobbies, each of which are looking for different demands and expectations. Today, education administrators have become a tool among the pressure groups that are in conflict with each other instead of answering the question: “How can the best service be given for the benefit of the society?” (Schlechty, 2011).

The competencies based on the relationship that facilitates the co-existence of the teachers to the students should necessarily include knowledge, valuation, fulfillment, interest and the sharing of resources and responsibilities of power (Gay, 2014). According to Schlechty (2011), today schools, the developer of the idea of society, and the creator of the common vision, symbolize the fragmentation and contrast of the sense of society rather than preparing the students for the future according to their interests. In schools, however, it should be ensured that long-term associates are taught to restore fragmentation and to teach them a long-term partnership. In order to prevent the racism and chauvinism which is one of the main reasons of fragmentation in society (Wolf, 2014):

- (i) To teach the individual how to put themselves in others' shoes, in other words, empathy,
- (ii) to be in social cooperation, and encouraging it to happen among various sets rather than considering and implementing it as a inner set phenomenon,
- (iii) to ensure patriotism and humanism approach within the whole education system.

Educators should not only seek to reduce the intensity of social injustice at schools but also change the conditions that create them. They should not consider students as homogeneous readiness but assess them as

heterogeneous groups coming from different parts of the society. Also, they should guide them towards justice and equal accession along with academic achievements (Apple and Beane, 2011). According to Sergiovanni (2001) schools should be regarded as a moral communities. Moral connections should occur at school among teachers, students, parents and others. The basis of such attachment is neither rules nor psychological needs but cultural elements. Another issue is that there is a loose structure in education world in terms of management but a tight one in terms of culture. Therefore, the school building process should be developed for legitimacy and freedom of practice in schools.

It is expected from the education system and schools to raise individuals who are responsible, sensitive to social problems, independent, thinking critically and have democratic values in this constantly changing world. Nowadays, when the individual comes to the fore and the differences become more important, the preservation and maintenance of these differences can be possible with the individuals who grow up in a democratic culture. As a democratic organization, there is a consciousness of co-existence in school, society and community (Şişman et al., 2010). This training includes the activities to gain adaptability to keep individuals, groups and society together according to Perry (2009). According to Şişman (2006), the function of education is to help each child develop the character, character and virtues that he/she can realize himself/herself. According to him, the two criteria that determine the quality of social life are; It is the level of freedom that reflects the richness of mutual relations with the social units and the diversity of experiences that consciously reflect shared interest (Şişman, 2006).

According to Sezgin (2006), a strong organizational culture that would support value-oriented behaviors should be formed at schools. Differences should not be regarded as a problem at schools and schools should reflect the diversities in terms of age, ethnical origins, gender, socio-economic class, goals and skills within the communities. These diversities enriches the society by presenting different perspectives (Şişman et al., 2010).

Teachers can make the opportunities in the classroom setting equal for everyone by using students' knowledge of multiculturalism quality. Teachers' role is to create high expectations in students and ensure that they have enough knowledge and attitudes towards multiculturalism and aim at their high achievements (Kaya and Aydin, 2014). Gorski (2010) suggests that teachers should avoid criticism, prejudices, impartial and subjective. Thus, it can be expressed that it is required for teachers to design instructional process in a structure open to cultural richness (Başbay and Bektaş, 2009).

Three different functions of school in terms of social context are as follows. First, to protect students from the

difficulties of the outer setting and facilitate life for them. Second, is to disallow the undesired elements to school that can easily be found outside and manage students' behaviors. Third, to balance the school. Students coming from the different conditions of the external environment are together at school under similar conditions and they get to know and understand each other better by being impressed by their living styles (Başar, 1999). According to Dewey, the main function of schools is to transfer the cultural heritage to the younger generations through simplification, contraction and balancing (in Dewey by Bakır, 2014).

In the context of multiculturalism research, encouraging educators to build a libertarian school promotes the use of democratic rights (Ty, 2011; Wilson, 2013); it is understood that it is effective and therefore gender-based barriers to access to education should be removed (Habib, 2013). In Turkey, It is understood that cultural identities are not included in the textbooks and that there is a marginalizing discourse about minorities (İbrahimoğlu, 2014; Yazıcı, 2013; Akin, 2009). Among the researches conducted within the context of multicultural education, Watanabe (2010) showed Japan education policies have a narrow vision in terms of multiculturalism and it should require the development of new policies, preventing non-isolating school structures and creating learning opportunities. Jashari (2012) found out that in Macedonia there is a multicultural society, however, cultures out of the dominant one are expressed in textbooks in an excluding manner, which continues conflict in society. Blanchet-Cohen and Reilly (2013) stated that there is a need for policy change towards raising eco-citizens who are sensitive to cultures and conform to nature. Hinton (2011) recommends for China and other countries with diversity that teachers should avoid hidden curriculum for multicultural education, they should know the features of a multicultural classroom and learn how to create curriculum for such classrooms and develop a model for multicultural education as well as ensuring an attitude change by involving parents of the students. Brandwein and Donoghue (2011) expressed that in order to reduce the social distance emerging from differences, it is required to improve school structures and prejudices should be broken through transformative learning experiences.

Jimenez et al. (2014) found that when presented with multicultural education, administrators and teachers in Southern Texas regarded multiculturalism more positively and it is not only important for minorities but also for the members of the dominant culture that they gain a lot from different cultures and acknowledge the differences. Sugimura (2015) discussed the changing roles of languages within the context of multicultural education over Chinese immigrant minorities in Malesia and Japan and concluded that national functions of language education policies are not strategic any more, working

and better work opportunities are more important in language policies now and thus it would be more beneficial to handle them on the basis of equality. Joseph and Hartwig (2015) found out in their study on introducing African music in teacher training, that introducing the multicultural music prior to the training would gain knowledge and experience with regards to cultural codes and thus creating more dialog. According to a study by Alsubaie (2015) about multicultural classrooms, teachers' learning more information and gaining skills about their students' past and culture would make them more skillful and efficient in their profession.

In studies conducted in Turkey about multicultural education, according to Acar Çiftçi (2015), teachers regard themselves as sufficient although not high level in terms of cultural competency. Kaya (2013) found that teachers stated positive opinions at a high level regarding multicultural education. In a study by Bulut (2014), teachers' multicultural competencies were examined and they were found to perceive themselves as "highly competent" in terms of awareness, knowledge and skills dimensions of this competency. In-service teachers were found to be sufficient in terms of having a multicultural personality in a study by Polat (2009) while in a study by Marangoz (2014) school principals and teachers were found to have a high level of positive perception towards multicultural education. In a study by Polat (2012), where school principals' attitudes towards multiculturalism were questioned, it was found out that school principals had a positive attitude in general. In a study by Damgacı (2013) scholars consider multicultural education is advantageous for our country by 92%. In another study by Alanay (2015), where in-service teachers' personality traits were examined, students at the faculty of education have positive opinions towards multiculturalism and multicultural education.

In a social field study by KONDA (2006), it is seen that individuals in Turkey have identities based on their learnings and preferences such as love for their country rather than the objective identities that they had inherited from their ancestors such as ethnical origin and religion. In the same study, it is seen that almost half of the individuals (46%) see problems in others' experiencing their identities and religious differences and foreigners are more obvious in tolerance and acknowledgment (KONDA, 2006). Thus, acknowledging diversity at schools, foreigners and students with different religious preferences should be considered more.

DISCUSSION

There is need for serious change, training and maturation on how people can live together with differences and how they can develop their principles, values and ability to experience their differences (Sambur, 2013). In order to

better understand the students' problems and to understand their problems, school management and teachers should have cultural knowledge and cultural skills to use appropriate intervention methods and techniques that are sensitive to students' cultures (Kağnıcı, 2013). For this reason, it is thought that cultural conflicts will be solved with the idea that multicultural education will improve the understanding and perspectives of individuals (Damgacı, 2013).

The laws and regulations that apply to schools in Turkey, appropriation of cultural values, conservation and development is situated in general terms. Equality of opportunity and opportunity is limited to the lack of financial means. Furthermore, democracy education does not reflect cultural diversity (MEB, 1973, 2015). Therefore, the diversity which is considered as an area that should not be seen is not enough in schools. The process-based formation of a pedagogical school culture based on the construction of knowledge is appropriate for social reality in schools and the reduction of prejudices can strengthen and sustain national unity and integrity.

Like other multicultural countries in the world, various problems emerging from ethnical and cultural differences are experienced in Turkey as well. It is not clear in Turkey what kind of precautions should be taken and how to proceed in schools about the current and possible issues related to the multiculturalism in the society (MEB, 1973, 2015). Similarly, an uncertainty is seen regarding how multiculturalism would be synthesized. Most importantly, there are gaps in laws and in practice to help individuals develop a common vision at schools, where a common future is shaped.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study is to analyze multicultural education and evaluate the Turkish education system regarding the acceptance of diversity. Literature review reveals that attitude towards multicultural education in Turkey is generally positive; however, foreigners and students from different religions should be considered more in terms of acknowledging differences.

It is not clear whether students' cultural values in Turkey exist in the educational process. Also, what type of behavioral patterns teachers choose, what they think or what materials they use regarding this issue are unknown.

It is unlikely that students do not carry the cultural values that they have acquired from their environment and families to the school and classroom setting. Since students' cultural history is quite effective within the learning process, it is expected that teachers set up an educational setting that is sensitive to their students' cultural values. If schools and teachers could benefit from students' cultural and language strengths, it would lead

to academic success.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The authors have not declared any conflict of interests.

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