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Teacher Candidates' Opinions about Multiculturalism and Multicultural Education

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Abstract
Teachers, who raise future generations, are expected to indigenize certain themes such as social justice, critical thinking, reducing prejudices, fighting against discrimination, strengthening intercultural diversity, human rights, democracy and equality of opportunities. This research is about knowledge levels of preschool and classroom teacher candidates about multiculturalism and multicultural education and it asks them whether they would practice multicultural education or not. Survey Method was used in this reseach. The sample of the research was formed through random sampling. The sample of the research was formed of Classroom (N=113) and Preschool (N=106) teacher candidates. The data of the research was collected through a questionnaire that is formed of three open-ended questions to determine the opinions of teacher candidates about multiculturalism and multicultural education. The related body of literature was scanned and open-ended questions were formed within the scope of research objectives. Three expert opinions were taken to validate the questionnaire and it took its final shape in accordance with these expert opinions. There are questions in the questionnaire to determine the opinions of teacher candidates about multiculturalism, multicultural education and their capacities to practice this multicultural education. The data was analyzed through descriptive analysis method. The descriptive analysis was implemented in four stages. In the first stage, the data was read by researchers and draft codes were built. Draft codes were combined and themes were created in the second stage. Then themes and codes were reorganized in order to make them easier for readers to understand. In the last stage, findings obtained were presented in tables as frequencies and percentages. In order to increase the internal reliability of the research data, the data was recoded individually by two researchers and then two researchers came together to examine the consistency between analyses. General agreement coefficient between researchers was determined to be .78. When the answers of teacher candidates to the question "Define multiculturalism concept?" were examined, it was seen that opinions fell under two different themes; in terms of individuals and Society. It was determined that classroom and preschool teacher candidates define multiculturalism as to know about different cultures in terms of individuals and various cultures living together in terms of society. When the answers of teacher candidates to the question "What does multiculturalism mean to you?" were examined, it was seen that opinions fell under two different themes; in terms of education and in terms of Teacher/Student. Classroom and preschool teacher candidates define multicultural education as an education with various cultural values.
Key Words: Multiculturalism, multicultural education, preschool and classroom teacher.

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1.Introduction

Culture is the mix of our customs, traditions, beliefs and values. Through education, individuals learn the values, rituals, traditions and consumption habits of their societies and get ready for the society. That being said, education also helps individuals comply with global culture (Doğan, 2012; Topses, 2014). Cultural values are multidimensional, changeable, open for improvement and transferable. This transfer may be simultaneous or it may be handed down from generation to generation (Başbay, 2014).

Multiculturalism is a concept where different ages, sexual orientations, social classes, ethnicities, religions, languages and cultural differences can live together (APA, 2002). Multiculturalism is a notion that can be expressed with postmodernism. The things that are meant with this notion are the policies of 1960 in America that were put forward to protect cultural differences of immigrants. After becoming widespread in Europe, these policies arose out of the ideal to create a society that lives together with different cultures in harmony and tolerance (Kalaycın, 2002). Multicultural education is a process of structuring school environment where children with different races, ethnicities, genders and social backgrounds can have an equal education (Cırık, 2008).

According to Gay (1994), multicultural education is an education policy with values and rules that aims to make students respect cultural differences and provide equal educational opportunities for everybody based on principal of pluralism. Multicultural education expresses ideas and approaches that support multiculturalist policies in education. It is based on equality of education and opportunity. The aim in education is to minimize the inequality. In this respect, multicultural education is an interdisciplinary process that prepares students to live, learn and cooperate for common goals in a world full of many different cultures (Sultana, 1994).

Respecting individual differences, increasing awareness levels of children and carrying out studies on multiculturalism are needed to create a multicultural environment (Tezcan, 1999; Başbay and Kağnıcı, 2011; Doğan, 2012). In today's sense of education, teachers need to pay attention to the pasts and characteristics of their students and they must consider them individuals. In this respect, it is important that teacher candidates

respect different cultures and have multicultural and global perspectives. Since differences are considered natural, education is diversified and expectations from students get varied accordingly (Polat, 2009). Teachers play the most important role in education. They are the ones who carry out education programs, choose proper methods, techniques, educational tools and diversify them and also assess and evaluate the education. For this reason, teachers need to have multicultural personalities (Polat, 2009).

Furthermore, teachers, who raise future generations, are expected to indigenize certain themes such as social justice, critical thinking, reducing prejudices, fighting against discrimination, strengthening intercultural diversity, human rights, democracy and equality of opportunities. It is stated in researches carried out with both university students and teacher candidates that knowledge and understanding about multicultural education is insufficient (Çoban, Karaman and Doğan, 2010; Keengwe, 2010; Polat, 2009; Cırık, 2008; Neutrach-Pritchett, Reiff and Pearson 2001). This research is about knowledge levels of preschool and classromm teacher candidates about multiculturalism and multicultural education and it asks them whether they would practice multicultural education or not.

2.Method

2.1.Research Model

One of quantitative research methods, Survey Method was used in this reseach. Survey Method is aims to describe a situation as it is (Karasar, 2010).

2.2Sample

The sample of the research was formed through random sampling. Sample group was formed by means of random sampling in accordance with target population (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2006). Within this framework, the sample of the research was formed of Classroom (N=113) and Preschool (N=106) Teacher Candidates from Uludağ University Faculty of Education.

2.3.Data Collection Tool

The data of the research was collected through a questionnaire that is formed of three open-ended questions to determine the opinions of teacher candidates about multiculturalism and multicultural education. The related body of literature was scanned and open-ended questions were formed within the scope of research objectives. Three expert opinions were taken to validate the questionnaire and it took its final shape in accordance with these expert opinions. There are questions in the questionnaire to determine the opinions of teacher candidates about multiculturalism, multicultural education and their capacities to practice this multicultural education.

2.4.Data Analysis

The data was analyzed through descriptive analysis method. The descriptive analysis was implemented in four stages. In the first stage, the data was read by researchers and draft codes were built. Draft codes were combined and themes were created in the second stage. Then themes and codes were reorganized in order to make them easier for readers to understand. In the last stage, findings obtained were presented in tables as frequencies and percentages.

In order to increase the internal reliability of the research data, the data was recoded individually by two researchers and then two researchers came together to examine the consistency between analyses. The consistency of data that was coded by two researchers was calculated by using Miles and Huberman's (1994) formula (agreements / agreements + disagreements). General agreement coefficient between researchers was determined to be .78. Because values above .70 for agreement coefficient is considered enough, it can be said that internal reliability value of the research is sufficient. In order to reflect the opinions of teacher candidates about multiculturalism and multicultural education in a clearer way, a code number was given one by one (S1, Ö1) and direct quotations were given place. It is thought that this increases the internal reliability level of the research. Saving questionnaire and draft codes in a way to be examined by others is considered important in terms of external reliability level of the research.

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3.Findings

The answers of teacher candidates to the question "Define multiculturalism concept?" were listed in Table 1.

Table 1. The opinions of teacher candidates about multiculturalism

Themes	Codes	Classroom Teacher		Preschool Teacher		Total	
		f	%	*f*	%	*f*	%
IN TERMS OF INDIVIDUALS	It is to know about different cultures	26	19.4	12	9.5		
	To be influenced by other cultures	21	15.7	6	4.8		
	To understand individuals from different ethnicities and races.	11	8.2	10	7.9	103	39.6
	To be open to different cultures	7	5.2	8	6.3		
	Self-developments of individuals.	1	0.7	1	0.8		
	Total	66	49.3	37	29.4		
IN TERMS OF SOCIETY	Coexistence of various cultures.	60	44.8	82	65.1		
	The richness created by different classes.	2	1.5	2	1.6		
	A communication instrument.	2	1.5	-	-		
	A different lifestyle.	1	0.7	2	1.6	152	58.5
	A concept emphasizing variance.	1	0.7	-	-		
	Total	66	49.3	86	68.3		
UNANSWERED		2	1.5	3	2.4	5	1.9
Total		134	100	126	100	260	100

When the answers of teacher candidates to the question "Define multiculturalism concept?" were examined, it was seen that opinions fell under two different themes; in terms of individuals (f=103,%39.6) and Society (f=152,%58.5). It was determined that classroom teacher candidates (f=66,%49.3) expressed more opinions than preschool teacher candidates (f=37,%29.4) under "in terms of individuals" theme. It was also determined that preschool teacher candidates (f=86,%68.3) expressed more opinions than preschool teacher candidates (f=66,%49.3) under "in terms of society" theme. A total of 260 data was obtained from 219 teacher candidates. It was confirmed that classroom teacher candidates (f=26,%19.4) and preschool teacher candidates (f=12,%9.5) principally identified multiculturalism as to know about different cultures in terms of individuals. It was also confirmed that %44.8 (f=60) of classroom teacher candidates and %65.1 (f=82) of preschool teacher candidates principally identified multiculturalism as to know about different cultures in terms of society. S85 identified multiculturalism concept as "a mix of values we get from our families or environments and values adopted by other people." On the other hand, Ö160 identified it as "people from different cultures living in a certain area in peace and within certain rules."

The answers of teacher candidates to the question "What does multicultural education mean to you?" are shown in Table 2.

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Table 2. The opinions of teacher candidates about multicultural education

Themes	Codes	Classroom Teacher		Preschool Teacher		Total	
		f	%	*f*	%	*f*	%
IN TERMS OF EDUCATION	Education with different cultural values.	17	15.4	27	18.8	119	46.9
	Richness and tolerance in terms of education content.	11	10	24	16.7		
	To establish equality of opportunities.	5	4.5	6	4.2		
	Education based on practice.	3	2.7	2	1.4		
	Modern, democratic and global education.	3	2.7	17	11.8		
	Chaos.	-	-	3	2.1		
	Education against nationalism.	-	-	1	0.7		
	Total	39	35.4	80	55.6		
IN TERMS OF TEACHERS/STUDENTS	To know about different cultures and understand them.	35	31.8	21	14.6	130	51.2
	To respect different lifestyles and philosophies.	19	17.3	11	7.6		
	A healthier communication instrument.	7	6.4	-	-		
	To view something from a different standpoint.	6	5.5	13	9		
	To help develop understanding and respect.	1	0.9	10	6.9		
	People from different cultures understanding the given education.	-	-	7	4.9		
	Total	68	61.8	62	43.1		
UNANSWERED		3	2.7	2	1.4	5	2
Total		110	100	144	100	254	100

When the answers of teacher candidates to the question "What does multiculturalism mean to you?" were examined, it was seen that opinions fell under two different themes; in terms of education (f=119,%46.9) and in terms of Teacher/Student (f=130,%51.2). It was determined that preschool teacher candidates (f=80,%55.6) expressed more opinions than classroom teacher candidates (f=39,%35.4) under "in terms of education" theme. A total of 254 data was obtained from 219 teacher candidates. It was confirmed that classroom teacher candidates (f=17,%15.4) and preschool teacher candidates (f=27,%18.8) principally identified multicultural education as education with different cultural values. It was also confirmed that %31.8 (f=35) of classroom teacher candidates and %14.6 (f=21) of preschool teacher candidates principally identified multicultural education as to know about different cultures and to understand them. S57 identified multicultural education as "individual differences bringing educators, environments and communities certain features and rise of various opinions and practices." Similarly, Ö139 identified it as "the education system with a wide cultural diversity involving individuals from different cultures".

The answers of teacher candidates to the question "Do you think you can put multicultural education into practice?" are shown in Table 3.

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Table 3. The opinions of teacher candidates on whether they can put multicultural education into practice

Themes	Codes	Classroom Teacher		Preschool Teacher		Total	
		f	%	*f*	%	*f*	%
YES	I practice it to make them realize that they are living with different cultures.	51	42.9	30	27.3		
	I practice it in accordance with individual differences.	12	10.1	17	15.5		
	I practice it because it would make the child respect other cultures.	9	7.6	14	12.7		
	I think that teachers need to teach everything.	7	5.9	12	10.9		
	I practice it because they will have problems if they only experience their own cultures.	6	5	4	3.6	170	74.2
	I practice it but I may have some shortcomings.	4	3.4	-	-		
	I practice it because I think multiculturalism is a richness.	2	1.7	3	2.7		
	I can teach if the ideal ambience and conditions are provided.	-	-	2	1.8		
	I practice it because we had multicultural education.	-	-	1	0.9		
	Total	91	76.5	79	71.8		
NO	I don't know much because I didn't get multicultural education.	12	10.1	7	6.4		
	I think that different education systems would confuse the child.	3	2.5	1	0.9		
	I don't think I can practice it.	2	1.7	2	1.8	35	15.3
	I can't practice it if I can't go abroad.	1	0.7	-	-		
	I think there will be only one culture at my designated place.	1	0.7	-	-		
	Our education system is not suitable for this.	-	-	6	5.5		
	Total	19	16	16	14.5		
I'M NOT SURE	I practice it if I better myself.	2	1.7	6	5.5		
	I need to know about the society I'm in.	2	1.7	2	1.8		
	I may have difficulties in learning about other cultures since I was born in a nationalist area.	2	1.7	1	0.9		
	I'm not sure.	1	0.7	-	-	20	8.7
	I can't do anything for a culture unless I speak their language.	-	-	2	1.8		
	I need to have adequate information about multicultural education.	-	-	1	0.9		
	I need to know about class structure.	-	-	1	0.9		
	Total	7	5.9	13	11.8		
UNANSWERED		2	1.7	2	1.8	4	1.7
Total		119	100	110	100	229	100

When the answers of teacher candidates to the question "Do you think you can put multicultural education into practice when you become teacher?" were examined, it was seen that most of the teacher candidates expressed that they could put multicultural education into practice and 229 data was obtained from 219 teacher candidates. 42,9% (f=51) of classroom teacher candidates and 27,3% (f=30) of preschool teacher candidates stated that they would put multicultural education into practice in order to make their students realize that they are living with different cultures (without race, language, religion discrimination). 10.1% (f=12) of classroom teacher candidates and 15.5% (f=17) of preschool teacher candidates principally choose to put multicultural education into practice in accordance with individual differences. However, classroom teacher candidates (f=12,10.1%) and preschool teacher candidates (f=7,6,4%) think that they can't practice multicultural education because they don't have sufficient knowledge about it. As for "I'm not sure" theme, 1.7% (f=2) of classroom teacher candidates and 5.5% (f=6) of preschool teacher candidates stated that they could practice multicultural education in their classes if they could better themselves. *All students are individuals and they are all different. Of course,*

there will de difficulties but if we take these differences into consideration, the classes will be more entertaining, the children will be happier and there will be a better learning environment.“ said S77. Ö121 also stated *“My aim is to determine cultural differences between my students and give the them their own cultural values, help them improve their social roles and make them luckier in their lives.“* S78 expressed that he is not sure by saying *“The efforts in the country regarding this issue are not sufficient and we all feel this lack in our educational lives. As a result of this, teacher candidates in education faculties lack desired qualifications.*“ Ö115 also stated that he is not sure by declaring *“I did researches on different cultures, lifestyles, education systems but I lack the required experience to give a multicultural education.“*

4.Discussion, Conclusion and Recommendations

When the answers of teacher candidates to the question “Define multiculturalism concept?” were examined, it was seen that opinions fell under two different themes; in terms of individuals and Society. It was determined that classroom and preschool teacher candidates define multiculturalism as to know about different cultures in terms of individuals and various cultures living together in terms of society. Along with these definitions, according to APA (2002) multiculturalism is a concept where different ages, sexual orientations, social classes, ethnicities, religions, languages and cultural differences can live together. Thus, definitions of teacher candidates are considered insufficient. There many people from different cultures in Turkey. Cultural harmony needs to be improved in order to make all groups live together in peace. Teachers and education systems play the most important role in achieving this. Teachers need to accept and respect different cultures through education (Aydın, 2013).

When the answers of teacher candidates to the question “What does multiculturalism mean to you?” were examined, it was seen that opinions fell under two different themes; in terms of education and in terms of Teacher/Student. Classroom and preschool teacher candidates define multicultural education as an education with various cultural values. They also define it as to know about different cultures and understand them in terms of teacher/student. Although there are many different definitions for multicultural education, Cırık (2008) defined it as a process of structuring school environment where children with different races, ethnicities, genders and social backgrounds can have an equal education (Cırık, 2008). When data is analyzed, it is seen that definitions of teacher candidates are accurate but they lack some points. Some teachers stated that multicultural education leads to chaos. Nevertheless, one preschool teacher candidates defined multicultural education as a way to stand against nationalism. Especially in Turkey, some people see multicultural education as a danger to the integrity of the country (Cırık, 2008). Yet, multicultural education is an education system that respects differences and that doesn’t discriminate.

It is seen that teacher candidates think of practicing multicultural education in their classes when their answers to the related question are examined. It was determined as a result of the studies that most of teachers and teacher candidates have positive opinions about multicultural education (Jimenez, Guzman and Maxwell, 2014; Kaya and Söylemez, 2014; Kaya, 2013; Özdemir and Dil, 2013; Çoban et al., 2010). But there are also considerable amount of teachers and teacher candidates who state that they are not sure about practicing multicultural education. Different studies show that most of university students know a little about multicultural education and so they are afraid of working in places where cultural values are diversified (Neutrach-Pritchett, Reiff and Pearson 2001; Keengwe, 2010). Similar to their discontents, Polat (2009) also stated that teacher candidates are inclined to multicultural education but they are not psychologically and emotionally sufficient to deal with different cultures.

Teacher candidates express that multicultural education is rewarding and practicable. The topics in multicultural education such as democracy, human rights, equality of opportunities, social justice, cultural diversity, respect for differences need to be in education systems. Education faculties need to update their programs and give place abovementioned topics in their classes. Practicality studies on multicultural education are useful in overcoming these problems. Foreign and exchange programs like Erasmus and Comenius need to be popularized to give teachers and students chances to know about different cultures.

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