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Educational Research Association  
The International Journal of  
Educational Researchers 2019,  
10(1): 42-59  
ISSN: 1308-9501



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## Investigation of the Effectiveness of a Stand-Alone Graduate-Level Multicultural Education Course in a Public University in Turkey

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### Abstract

The contents of multicultural teacher education courses are essential as well as examination of which philosophies, theories and approaches are taught in multicultural courses, in order to support teachers' awareness regarding pluralism. This qualitative case study aimed to examine the effectiveness of a course that designed to teach theoretical and practical foundations of multicultural education. For this study, the researcher gathered data and investigated a stand-alone graduate course referred to as MULT-500 Multicultural Education in a school of education at a Turkish university. For this study, a focus group interview, fieldnotes, the course syllabus, and transcriptions of the final interviews serve as the sources for the findings. The results of the study indicated that some of participants' expectations of this course were satisfactorily met, but it is worth noting that not all of their expectations were met. Although some participants thought that the course materials (books, articles etc.) that was used for the course have the high quality, some of them believed that the course materials and the assignments should be more related to Turkish schools and curricula concepts. Additionally, participants believed that course provided the new terms with regard to multiculturalism; however, the lack of multicultural experiences in the classrooms, which was not supported throughout the course, were one the major concerns of participants.

**Keywords:** Multicultural Teacher Education Course, Teacher and Teacher Candidates, Course Content, Expectations and Acquisitions, Qualitative Research

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The author completed this study in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a Ph.D. in Literacy, Culture, and Language Education at Indiana University, Bloomington, USA.

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## **Introduction**

The study of the concept of multiculturalism in teacher education has been an ongoing situation for many years. When we examine the literature in detail, we often see the studies with regard to the place of this concept in teacher education over the last 40 years. For instance, Baptiste and Baptiste's (1980) early detailed research indicates that there could be three classifications with regard to multiculturalism in teacher education programs. These three classifications are also the result of the development of multicultural teacher education that took place in the 1960s and 1970s. These classifications are *product level*, *process/product level* and *process/philosophical orientation level*. *Product level* refers to the fact that some teacher education programs create basic level courses in order to satisfy multicultural education requirements in their programs. These programs generally include a single culture or ethnic course such as "Psychology of Black Children, Education of Minority Students or Sexism in the Classroom" (p. 51). However, *product level* is usually created via "a faulty theoretical base exemplified by the haphazard development and arrangement of its courses and related experiences" (p. 51). *Process product level* refers to the creation of a multicultural teacher education program with both theoretical courses and experiences. On this level, "generic components of multicultural education are identified along with strategies for incorporating them into the entire training program" (p. 52). The most sophisticated teacher education programs were on the *process/philosophical orientation level*. On this level, teacher education programs are designed such that they adhere to NCATE standards, and they integrate ethnic and cultural diversity into the general and professional studies. Additionally, at this level, teacher education programs embrace a philosophy that is based on the principle of equality in their programs.

According to Baker (1981), most teachers received their all-professional development from institutions, and they paid insufficient attention to professional training in ethnically and culturally diverse classrooms. However, when multiculturalism became an important component of teacher education programs in the U.S. (Washburn, 1982), universities began offering different kinds of multicultural teacher education programs in order to support a culturally pluralistic society and the use of community resources. Initially, these programs were grouped under two types of teacher education programs, bilingual/bicultural teacher education programs and multicultural teacher education programs. According to researchers, multicultural and bilingual teacher education programs were usually initially designed to teach Hispanic, African, Asian and Native American cultures and languages. According to Washburn (1982), establishing multicultural and/or bilingual/bicultural teacher education programs was essential to the teaching of those specific human groups and to the creation of a theory and methods to teach regarding those cultures and languages. Additionally, Washburn (1982) believes that children of the time were capable of adapting to this sort of diversity once teachers were in the position to share their knowledge regarding these cultures and languages. Those teacher education programs were willing to cooperate with the pertinent communities such that they could share resources that became part of the programs. According to Hayes (1980), using community resources is essential if the populations are "culturally and ethnically" diverse (p. 94). At that time, there were only a few schools that offered a multicultural program intended to teach other cultures in addition to the aforementioned major cultures and languages.

In early 1990s, many researchers and theorists from different disciplines, such as curriculum theory, sociology and philosophy, developed different models of multicultural education in order to address the components of a pluralistic society and the major changes taking place with regard to the ethnic and cultural structure of the society. These developments appeared in teacher education programs, and many of them required multicultural education courses in order to educate future teachers so that they

would be prepared to meet the needs of children (Davis, 1995). Some major societal realities emerged, such as the number of teachers of color and segregation along racial lines and social classes, and they required future teachers to understand the following:

More contemporary discussions of which multicultural components should be included in teacher preparation reinforce the need for teachers to have culturally sensitive educational ideology, ethnic and cultural literacy, and skills in culturally centered pedagogy... teachers need to understand (a) different theoretical conceptions of multicultural education and their implications for classroom practice; (b) various assumptions and beliefs about the values and benefits of cultural diversity for learning, individual development, and the renewal of society; (c) cultural characteristics, heritages, contributions, and sociopolitical experiences of different ethnic groups; and (d) materials and techniques for doing culturally pluralistic teaching. (Gay, 1997, p. 163)

To add to the aforementioned characteristics of multicultural teacher education programs, Garcia and Pugh (1992) developed a set of guidelines in order to further develop multicultural teacher education programs. According to the authors, the United States' current demographic profiles, the proper matching of community resources with institutions, the needs of the teacher candidates, accepting global perspectives, and recognizing the importance of issues of diversity in education must all be considered if appropriate multicultural teacher education programs are to be developed. Cobellas-Vega (1992), however, emphasizes that teacher candidates should take at least one course in multicultural education and learn new teaching techniques for students with limited English proficiency. She also suggests that having field experiences with students from diverse backgrounds could further support teachers' awareness with regard to cultural diversity.

Teacher candidates have become more homogenous, white and middle class; however, the populations of diverse students have grown rapidly in United States (Causey, Thomas, & Armento, 2000; Gay & Howard, 2000). Disproportional changes regarding teachers' backgrounds and student diversity required researchers to reconsider how best to educate teachers to be culturally sensitive. Causey, Thomas, and Armento's (2000) longitudinal case study on a teacher education program aimed to examine the reversal of opinions on teacher beliefs. Causey Thomas, and Armento (2000) said, "teacher education programs should address the career needs of teachers as they face the joys and challenges of diverse classrooms" (p. 43). Another finding indicates that universities should offer more follow-up programs to support their graduated teachers' future careers among diverse classroom settings.

According to Jennings (2007), teacher education programs have increased the awareness of future teachers with regard to multiculturalism and diversity issues in the last 25 years. At the same time, numerous studies done in recent decades indicate that pre-service teachers have more respect for diversity and assume more responsibility in diverse classrooms (Larke, 1990; Milner et al., 2003; Ambe 2006). However, Milner et al. (2003) and Ambe (2006) agree that teacher education programs still need to become more comfortable regarding issues of diversity, and they need to better reflect multicultural awareness and appreciation. Additionally, Jennings (2007) believes that increasing the quality of programs intended to prepare future multicultural teachers is possible and perhaps more likely if educators first develop a better understanding of teachers' beliefs regarding multiculturalism.

The contents of multicultural teacher education courses are essential as well as examination of which philosophies, theories and approaches are taught in multicultural courses, in order to support teachers' awareness regarding pluralism. In order to assess the major philosophies and theories underlying course designs, Gorski (2009) examined 45 multicultural teacher education courses' syllabi that were collected from universities across the country. For this study, Gorski (2009) examined the syllabi from

undergraduate (30 out of 45) and graduate-level (15 out of 45) multicultural teacher education courses. The examination of multicultural teacher education courses' goals and contents took place with the following typology: "(a) develop sensitivity to and understanding of the values, beliefs, lifestyles, and attitudes of individuals and groups, (b) be aware of and understand the various values, lifestyles, history and contributions of various subgroups, (c) relate effectively to other individuals and various subgroups other than one's own" (p. 312). According to the author's findings, 15.6% of the syllabi were designed to teach "others," 57.8% of the syllabi were designed to teach "cultural sensitivity and tolerance," and 28.9% of the syllabi focused on increasing "personal awareness" toward diversity. Gorski (2009) mentions that these findings indicate that multicultural teacher education courses are designed to meet the criteria outlined by NCATE; however, they are not preparing future teachers to practice "authentic multicultural education" (p. 317). As can be seen in previous studies, multicultural teacher education programs have achieved some important milestones prior to now, and they have undergone notable changes throughout their history. However, developing appropriate multicultural teacher education programs and educating future teachers such that they possess adequate multicultural knowledge are ongoing processes that are based on the needs of a society, teachers and students' readiness, and the curriculum associated with teacher education programs.

### **Multicultural Teacher Education Courses**

Cho and Ambrosetti (2005) designed a study to examine the effectiveness of multicultural education courses on pre-service teachers' attitudes toward working with linguistically and culturally diverse students. To those pre-service teachers, researchers provided pre- and posttests during a stand-alone multicultural education course, and then they examined the results. Results indicate that most pre-service teachers' initial attitudes are positively changed after completing the course. According to researchers, these kinds of courses provide pre-service teachers with new perspectives that better enable them to work successfully in multicultural classroom settings.

In another study, Zygmunt-Fillwalk and Leitze (2006) conducted research via the Ball State University Urban Semester Program to examine the level of improvement in teacher candidates' attitudes regarding multicultural education in urban settings; the researchers conducted their study by employing the Teacher Multicultural Attitude Survey (TMAS). This Urban Semester Program requires students to take some multicultural education courses and to complete some specific tasks in urban area schools. The authors noted that most research mentions that schools in urban areas are more diverse than small town schools, and most pre-service teachers have negative feelings about working in those schools. This study provides teacher candidates with experience in an urban school setting, and the research findings show that those candidates develop positive post-experience attitudes.

Similar to previous studies, Ndemanu (2012) conducted a study to explore "the ways in which pre-service teacher interpret and come to understand a variety of issues related to human diversity in education in the U.S. upon taking a multicultural education course" (p. 1). To explore pre-service teachers' beliefs and perspectives regarding classroom diversity, the researcher collected data from interviews, document reviews, observation and focus group interviews. His findings indicate that those pre-service teachers' attitudes toward human diversity in the classroom are shifted; further, it is noted that pre-service teachers mentioned that they came to have more respect for diversity after taking a multicultural education course.

However, some researchers believe that sometimes stand-alone multicultural education courses may not be sufficiently effective to change attitudes, beliefs and knowledge. For instance, Barksdale, Richards, Fisher, Wuthrick, Hammons, Grisham, and Richmond (2002) completed a study that related to that of Causey, Thomas, and Armento (2000); this second study had to do with the preparedness of pre-service teachers with regard to multiculturalism. The results of this study indicate that even after

employing many different approaches and new techniques in teacher education programs designed to support teachers' beliefs and attitudes regarding multiculturalism, universities and faculties occasionally need to offer more opportunities for well preparedness. Barksdale et al. (2002) compared master's program students' knowledge and pre-service teachers' knowledge of multicultural education in a variety of colleges and universities. By way of their open-ended questionnaire, the authors asked 223 pre-service teachers and master's students to evaluate their feelings pertaining to working in diverse classrooms. The study findings indicate that 57% of pre-service teachers felt "they were not prepared to teach children with linguistic and cultural differences" (p. 31); however, 80% of students in master's programs felt that they were well prepared. Based on his findings, graduate-level multicultural education courses can sometimes be more effective than undergraduate-level courses in helping teachers and teacher candidates to gain new perspectives regarding diversity and change their beliefs, knowledge and attitudes.

### **Research on Multicultural Education in Turkey**

There are several studies was conducted to examine teachers and teacher candidates' knowledge on what that concept meant. In these studies, various findings and recommendations have been reached about what the teacher and teacher candidates should know about the differences and how the course contents need to be shaped based on teaching diversity. For instance, Tortop (2014) proposed an interesting approach to multicultural education, in order to examine the perceptions of teacher candidates regarding multiculturalism and education of gifted students. The author's findings indicate that teacher candidates tend to build a correlation between gifted education and multicultural education. This finding indicates that teacher candidates understand that multiculturalism is not only related to ethnic, language and religious issues, but it is also related to other diverse issues such as being gifted.

However, Polat's (2009) study aimed to examine the teacher candidates' level of inclination toward multiculturalism. For this study, the researcher employed the Multicultural Personality Questionnaire (MPQ) designed by Van Der Zee and Van Oudenhoven (2000). According to Van Der Zee and Van Oudenhoven (2000), the Multicultural Personality Questionnaire is "an on-line personality assessment questionnaire that was constructed specifically to describe behavior when one is interacting with people from different cultures" (p. 291). The MPQ examines five personality factors: "(a) cultural empathy, (b) open-mindedness, (c) social initiative, (d) emotional stability and (e) flexibility" (p. 291). By way of the MPQ, Polat's study confirmed that Turkish teacher candidates possess high-level inclination toward multicultural education; however, teacher candidates' emotional stability ranked at the lowest level of inclination toward multiculturalism. This result indicates that teacher candidates might struggle to cope with emotional and psychological problems when working in culturally diverse environments. Polat (2009) notes that this problem could potentially be solved if teacher candidates were to receive more training in diverse classrooms and counseling services that would enable them to better manage their emotions when working within a pluralistic society.

Similar to teacher candidates, teachers in Turkish schools have positive attitudes towards multicultural education (Yazici, Basol, & Toprak, 2009; Kaya, 2013; Ozdemir & Dil, 2013; Basarir, Sari, & Cetin, 2014). The first systematic study of multicultural education via the Teacher Multicultural Attitude Survey (TMAS), designed by Ponterotto, Baluch, Greig, & Rivera in 1998, was reported by Yazici, Basol and Toprak (2009) in order to assess Turkish teachers' attitudes toward multicultural education. Yazici and colleagues (2009) analyzed their findings based on teachers' genders, majors, years of teaching experience and educational levels. Their study has two significant points: first, this study is important in that it permits researchers to assess teachers' readiness to teach in a pluralist society; second, examination of teachers' knowledge regarding multiculturalism provides information that

serves to increase teachers' awareness and determine perhaps what they do not know regarding pluralism and multiculturalism in Turkey. Data was gathered from 415 teachers in a city, located on the mid-Black Sea region of Anatolia. The study found that 78% of teachers possess positive attitudes with regard to working with diverse groups in their classrooms; however, teachers also have some prejudices or lack of knowledge pertaining to multicultural education. Of the respondents, 20% believe that multicultural education refers to ethnic differentiation and that it is only associated with ethnic problems. Fortunately, nearly 74% of teachers believe that teachers should be educated about multiculturalism and that teacher education programs should include content relevant to multiculturalism so that they can teach issues of diversity pertinent to Turkey. Yazici and colleagues' results show that teacher education programs are in need of a significant change that would allow for the integration of multiculturalism into the Turkish programs' curricula.

Similarly, Ozdemir and colleague (2013) applied the same survey to 204 teachers working in public high schools in a city, located on the Central Anatolia Region in order to examine their attitudes regarding multiculturalism. The authors narrowed their study to include only high school teachers; however, this study confirmed previous findings and indicated specifically that high school teachers also have positive attitudes toward multiculturalism in Turkey. Additionally, this study found that teachers' attitudes were influenced by where they received their degrees. According to the findings, teachers who graduated from schools of education and schools of arts and sciences possess more positive attitudes than teachers who graduated from vocational schools.

Kaya (2013) completed a study in a city, located in Southeastern Anatolia Region of Turkey. The author gathered data from classrooms (311) – from Turkish language (65) and social studies (50) teachers, specifically – in order to analyze their points of view regarding multiculturalism, multicultural education and bilingual education. This study is essential, as it permits us to look at the perceptions of teachers who teach in that city, one of biggest and most ethnically diverse cities in Turkey. Unlike the study conducted by Yazici and colleagues, Kaya (2013) added the ethnic backgrounds of teachers to her analysis, and this enabled her to assess their perspectives based on ethnic structures. One of her findings indicates that 78.2% of teachers believe that students whose first language is not Turkish should be educated in their own language.

Basarir, Sari and Cetin (2014) have completed another relevant study; the authors' qualitative study examined the perceptions of teachers regarding multicultural education. For their study, the researchers conducted interviews with twelve teachers in the Central Anatolia Region of Turkey in order to analyze the meaning of multicultural education, multicultural practices of teachers, problems encountered in multicultural education, and advantages and disadvantages of multicultural education. According to the authors' findings, teachers defined multicultural education primarily as teaching different cultures, offering equal opportunities and using diverse materials. Seven of the interviewees mentioned that they tried to build a culturally sensitive environment in the classroom; however, they identified three major problems (student-centered, teacher-centered and parent-centered) when they tried to create culturally diverse environments. According to the researchers' findings, teachers struggle to communicate with students when their classrooms become more diverse. All teachers agreed that they possess little knowledge about the management of culturally diverse classrooms, and they all agreed that theoretical and practical foundations of multicultural education need to be integrated into teacher education programs.

There have also been studies conducted to examine both teachers' and teacher candidates' understandings of multicultural education. For example, when we examine the results of the research conducted by the Oksuz, Demir and Ici (2016), we see that the teachers and teacher candidates view multicultural education as a model of diversity, a wealth of education, and a means of helping people

to understand others and to become more familiar with and knowledgeable regarding differences. However, there is also a small group of participants that sees multicultural education as a model for dividing unity via differences.

Although many studies on multiculturalism and multicultural education has increased rapidly in last decade, some research indicates that there is still a lack of teaching experiences regarding the concept of multiculturalism (Demircioglu & Ozdemir, 2014). Studies have mainly focused on the perceptions of teachers, and teacher candidates; however, researchers have skipped the advantages of teaching what multiculturalism and multicultural education are. This qualitative case study aimed to examine the effectiveness of a course that designed to teach theoretical and practical foundations of multicultural education.

## Methodology

### Research Question

In this study, the following research question guided the research;

How have their experiences in the graduate course intersected and overlapped with their perceptions, beliefs, knowledge, understanding, and practices regarding multicultural education?

### Participants

The following table shows the detail of the participants of this study.

**Table 1. Participants of the Study n=9**

<b>Participants (pseudonyms)</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Ethnicity</b>	<b>Educational Background</b>	<b>Years of Experiences</b>	<b>Region of Origin</b>
Mete	Male	Turkish	BA in Elementary Education	1 year in a special education class ( <i>temporary appointment</i> )	Marmara Region
Ayşe	Female	Turkish	BA in Elementary Education	1 year in a public school ( <i>permanent position</i> )	Central Anatolia Region
Fatma	Female	Kosovo- Turkish	BA in Early- Childhood Education	Candidate (Not working yet)	Kosovo (Europe)
Harun	Male	Turkish	BA in Turkish Language Education	2 years in a public school ( <i>permanent position</i> )	Black Sea Region
Zeliha	Female	Circassian	BA in Elementary Education	1 year in a public school (Candidate- <i>temporary appointment</i> )	Marmara Region
Nalan	Female	Turkish	BA in Elementary Education	2 years in a special education class 4 months in a public school	Black Sea Region
Olca	Female	Turkish	BA in	1 year in a public	Black Sea

			Elementary Education	school (Candidate-temporary appointment)	Region
Rana	Female	Kurdish	BA in Elementary Education	3 years in a public school (permanent position)	Southeastern Anatolia Region
Gokhan	Male	Turkish	BA in ESL	4 years in a Military School	Marmara Region

### **Data Collection**

For this study, a focus group interview, fieldnotes, the course syllabus, and transcriptions of the final interviews serve as the sources for the findings.

### **Data Analysis**

Data Analysis should be very systematic. For this study, data were analyzed based on the following steps:

- a. Creating codes and identifying major emerged themes from the transcribed data and documents,
- b. Compiling emerged themes and connecting them to each other to identify the categories,
- c. Deciding how the findings relate to the initial research question.

### **Trustworthiness of the Findings**

To validate the accuracy of the findings, Creswell (2012) identified three approaches generally used by qualitative researchers. These approaches include “triangulation, member checking, and auditing” (p. 259). These three techniques were used to establish the trustworthiness of this study.

**Triangulation.** According to Creswell (2012), “qualitative researchers triangulate among different data sources to enhance the accuracy of a study” (p.259). This research employed multiple sources, such as interviews, focus group interview pertaining to multicultural education, written exams, fieldnotes, and in-class observations which served as sources of data and which were used to triangulate findings. The process of triangulation allowed me to construct a comprehensive understanding of the perceptions, ideas and beliefs of the participants with regard to multiculturalism and multicultural education. For this qualitative case study, data was collected from semi-structured interviews, participants written exams, classroom observation notes, transcriptions of audio and video recordings created via the discussions in class and focus group interview, and fieldnotes. Having so many different data sources helped me to make comparisons by seeing how the participants' perceptions and developments changed over time. In particular, the interviews and exams I did with the participants enabled me to see how their ideas and perceptions about multiculturalism, multicultural education and practices were consistent. With the triangulation, I saw that there were considerable similarities between the statements the teachers provided during the interviews and the exams they took.

**Member checking.** Member checking requires asking questions of either a single study participant or several participants about the research findings to determine whether the findings are accurate (Creswell, 2012). This technique is useful in increasing the accuracy of the study. I asked a participant to evaluate whether “description is complete, themes are accurate, and interpretations are fair and representative” (p. 259). In some instances, I contacted participants in order to seek further clarification regarding the thoughts they expressed during the interviews. In addition, and as mentioned earlier, all of the discussions, interviews and written exams were completed in Turkish and the necessary parts of those data were translated into English by the researcher. To ensure the highest



possible accuracy, a participant who works as an ESL teacher at a public school read the data and provided some feedback regarding possible translation-related changes.

**External Auditing.** According to Creswell (2012), the researcher may ask another person to review the study. This outsider may see the blind spots that can be easily missed by the author of the study. If the researcher hires an outsider, this outsider may more readily notice the strengths and weaknesses of the study. For this study, I hired another person “to review different aspects of the research” (Creswell, 2012, p. 260). This person is an expert in teacher education and multiculturalism topics and currently works in a public university in United States. Based on her recommendation and several face-to-face discussions, findings were revisited.

### Findings

**Table 2. Overview of the Findings for the Research Question**

Research Question	Views regarding the course content		Expectations of the participants			
	Theme(s)	- Course materials	Intersected Expectations		Differentiated Expectations	
How have their experiences in the graduate course intersected and overlapped with their perceptions, beliefs, knowledge, understanding, and practices regarding multicultural education?			Theme(s)	- Course materials	Theme(s)	- New terms with regard to multiculturalism
	- Knowledge of multicultural foundations	- Effectiveness of the course				

#### Views Regarding the Course Content

For the research question, participant views regarding the course content are addressed in the first part of the question. Here, the findings are gathered under one theme: (1) course materials. The course materials theme examines the articles and books the participants were required to read and discuss in the classroom as well as what the participants thought about those readings.

Before discussing the participants’ thoughts regarding the course content, I would like to share how and why the course content was shaped as it was. According the course syllabus, the course content was chosen or designed so that it could serve the following purposes:

[This course] equips candidates with in-depth knowledge on the emergence of multicultural societies and educational phenomena, globalization, social institutions of multicultural societies, and evolution in their educational policies; relationships between education and the law, multiculturalism, multiculturalism and education in the European Union; changing educational concepts among multicultural European societies during the process of European citizenship; multiculturalism and bilingualism in educational contexts; problems of bilingualism in education systems; and problems regarding the practices in multicultural education contexts. (course syllabus, Spring 2016)

As such, in accordance with the course syllabus, the course readings covered many aspects of multiculturalism and multicultural education. Table 7 shows the required course materials for the course.

**Table 3. Required Course Materials**

Material	Title	Original language of the material	Author
Book	Culturally Responsive Teaching 2 <sup>nd</sup> Edition	English	Geneva Gay
Book	Introduction to Multicultural Education	English	James Banks
Book	Debates and applications of multicultural education in the World and Turkey	Turkish	Hasan Aydin
Book	Les Identités meurtrières <i>(In the Name of Identity: Violence and the Need to Belong)</i>	French	Amin Maalouf
Book	Intercultural Education – Examples of Turkey and Germany	Turkish	Hasan Coskun

### Course Materials

The instructor of the course required the aforementioned books as course readings. All of the course materials were written in Turkish or translated into Turkish. While foreign authors or scholars wrote two of the books, Turkish scholars wrote the other three. However, most of the course reading assignments came from the translated version of James Banks' *Introduction to Multicultural Education*. In addition, the course instructor provided some of his own articles and conferences' proceedings as course reading materials. According to the participants, the most memorable readings came from Banks' book and an article written by Bennett related to intercultural sensitivity (focus group interview, May 30, 2016).

Based on the readings, some participants mentioned that the translated version of *Introduction to Multicultural Education* is the best source to teach the foundation of multicultural education and learn some applications of multicultural education in other countries. For instance, one participant stated, "The translation of this book has made a huge contribution to the literature" (Nalan, focus group interview, May 30, 2016). Another participant agreed with her and noted, "I think there were many examples in that book about what to do at school. There were more examples that could be applied in our country than we discussed throughout this lesson" (Olcay, focus group interview, May 30, 2016). Olcay believed that the course provided fewer examples of the possible applications of multicultural education in Turkey. She said that the information was always presented as theory, and that posed a problem for her, as she understands that if she was unable to determine how to implement it in practice, she might have a problem in the future. However, another participant, Harun, disagreed with Olcay; he thought that the course offered sufficient examples of how to put multicultural education into practice in the classroom. According to Harun, course discussions, the instructor, and the readings provided an abundance of examples about "what we should do when we encounter a situation related to issues of diversity" in a classroom environment (focus group interview, May 30, 2016).

In addition, some participants believed that course readings helped them to learn a number of important concepts and theories related to multicultural education. For instance, Ayse thought that she learned more conceptually; she knew some concepts related to multicultural education before the course, but she was able to learn new concepts from the course with which she was not familiar in detail (focus group interview, May 30, 2016). Another participant, Fatma, was more specific about what exactly she learned throughout the course. She stated, "Increasing exposure and communication ways were the two things I learned most. I will expose the child to differences, and I will help them to communicate with others. These were the most basic strategies I learned" (Fatma, focus group interview, May 30, 2016). Most participants agreed with Fatma and said that the course materials help them primarily to learn new concepts related to multiculturalism and multicultural education.

### **Expectations of the Course**

Examining participants' expectations of the course, it is necessary to again state the purposes of the course or what the course expected to achieve. The course aimed to help participants to achieve the following learning outcomes:

- Explain the aims, foundations, and reasons for multicultural education
- Explain multicultural education paradigms
- Explain the components and dimensions of multicultural education
- Explain the content organization approaches of multicultural education
- Express the personal qualities of people who will conduct multicultural education
- Explain the characteristics of appropriate learning contexts for multicultural education
- Critique curriculum in terms of multicultural education
- Propose suggestions regarding the problems of multicultural education. (Course syllabus, Spring 2016)

Even if some of the course goals seem too general or include too-general concepts related to multiculturalism and multicultural education, some of the participants' expectations regarding the course were satisfied. However, there were times when participants' expectations did not correspond to the course goals; and at the end of the course, participants noted that some of their expectations were not met.

### **Expectations that Intersected with the Course Goals**

I examined participants' expectations that intersected with the course goals as well as possible outputs at the end of the course. Participants' expectations that intersected with course goals were divided into the following two themes: (1) new terms related to multiculturalism and (2) knowledge of multicultural foundations.

**New terms with regard to multiculturalism.** According to Olcay, this course has been of value to her in accordance with its purpose. She stated,

Before I took the lesson, I have not taken such a course. When I heard that the multicultural education course was being offered in the department, I thought about how the different classes would be managed together within the same classroom. Similarly, I thought of multiculturalism in terms of just race, so I thought the course would provide information regarding how to manage a class full of students of different races. Through this course, however, I became familiar with different concepts and terms related to multicultural education. (Olcay, focus group interview, May 30, 2016)

Similarly, Zeliha claimed that the course provided some necessary information about multiculturalism

and differences in education; however, she believed that the course still needed to better enable students to increase their knowledge regarding the issues discussed. Zeliha continued,

We were talking about things that I wanted to learn. Cultural dimensions, such as the influence of a person's cultures, the influence of a cultural personality, and the influence of a society on culture, were examined separately. Of course, we have a little more in-depth knowledge regarding these topics, but that does not mean that we were able to learn about the topics completely over the duration of the course. I also think that the course was lacking with regard to issues such as the current status of differences in society and the redesign of education according to cultural differences, and we will be able to address this by reading about it over time or by gaining experience while in the teaching profession. (Zeliha, focus group interview, May 30, 2016)

In our final interview, Zeliha also said that the multicultural education course was helpful in that it suggested the idea of implementing a new structure in education. Before the course, she had considered multiculturalism only in terms of differences, but now, after the course, multiculturalism meant more to her. Further, she stated that she believes that the Turkish educational system is in need of new structuring with regard to its educational policies and services if it is to provide multicultural education. She said,

There must be restructuring from universities to primary schools, from physical construction to understanding, and the curriculum used should be changed as much as the content. Additionally, I have noticed recently that some of my beliefs have shifted and have gone in the opposite direction. I believed that multicultural education should be considered. I did not have prejudices about people. I already thought about issues such as getting a good education, benefiting from all the opportunities of the country, and living together. But considering the recent sad events in our country, some nationalist feelings have increased as we think about what some groups of people have done. My belief in multiculturalism has diminished, of course, because of this decline, not due to the course; my beliefs are a result of the hardness of the country. (Zeliha, final interview, July 13, 2016)

Rana believed that learning, evaluation, and discussion of concepts related to multiculturalism and multicultural education contributed tremendously to her knowledge; she also credits the course readings for enhancing her knowledge. She stated that this course allowed her to understand racial, linguistic and religious matters more so than she had been able to previously. However, Rana said that she was still suspicious regarding some issues such as those involving sexual preferences. "I have various suspicions that the issues of sexual orientation should be necessary to teach in schools. I believe that teachers can make mistakes when they teach these topics because these subjects require very precise and detailed study" (final interview, June 23, 2016). Rana believed that teachers much approach topics such as those involving issues of sexual preference with caution, and as such, she believed that teachers must become familiar with these topics in detail before attempting to teach them.

**Knowledge of multicultural foundations.** According to Mete, the graduate course provided a theoretical foundation of multiculturalism and multicultural education. He stated,

There were things that came to my mind in terms of multiculturalism and multicultural education before the course. My views were not reversed, but I did gain theoretical knowledge. I feel that my level empathy has increased since the course. I think that theoretical knowledge will contribute to my future practice. The professor said that this

course should be taught at the graduate level via the theoretical perspective and that we should not take the practical part. Nevertheless, there could have been some more detail regarding practice. I think that this is important because how I apply this to my teaching is becoming increasingly important. (Mete, final interview, August 13, 2016)

Another participant, Fatma, claimed that this course contributed greatly to the theoretical foundation of multiculturalism. She said that she learned more about the concepts she had heard previously, but this course forced her to make sense of them and to examine more closely how they were related to multiculturalism. According to Fatma, another advantage of this course was the readings. She thought that the vast majority of the articles and books recommended by the course teacher were not oriented toward practice, but they made a great contribution to her knowledge base as they provided theoretical information. She said,

Friends might say that we did not learn much about how to put this into practice, but think more academically because I am in the educational management department. It was bad that we did not see many examples of how classroom teachers would put this into practice, but it was good for those coming from the management department. (Fatma, final interview, June 17, 2016)

Harun is also another student who was a part of the educational management department, and he agreed with Fatma. According to Harun, this course was more of an academic proficiency, and it was sufficient enough. Because the books read had been translated, Harun believed that they were a bit lacking. He also thought that the lesson could have been more interesting, but it was productive nonetheless. He stated,

From the teacher's point of view, we have tried to prepare our lessons based on the belief that each child is different, each is unique. We were aware of differences among children before this class, but this course allowed us to learn about differences that exist in schools and in society in general. (Harun, final interview, August 2, 2016)

Nalan believed that the course gave her the support she needed to make her classroom instruction more efficient for the children who speak a language other than Turkish. She argued that this was useful for her, as it allowed her better to understand how to teach children with different language skills in order to get them more interested in the classroom. According to Nalan, teachers should be aware of students' language differences so that they can teach with those differences in mind. She said, "When a child speaks a language other than Turkish, I believe it is necessary to at least find someone from another class who knows that language and to translate for that child in order to maximize his or her participation" (Nalan, final interview, July 2, 2016). She said that this kind of thinking would greatly affect her class in the future. In addition, she sees this course as important in that has enabled her to recognize that the concept of gender is also a separate culture. Moreover, she noted that this course was important in terms of gaining different perspectives and increasing her capacity for empathy.

Gokhan is another participant who claimed that the multicultural readings in the class had a positive effect on him. According to Gokhan, course participants also served as major sources of learning, and they were of great value to him. He stated,

Ideas that come from friends from different branches, from cities, from socioeconomic situations, in classroom discussions are of great benefit in terms of learning multiculturalism. Thanks to the presentations presented, each participant was able to explore his or her own subject in detail and explain their findings in class with regard to every dimension; I believe that the participants contributed very detailed information

regarding issues related to multiculturalism. (Gokhan, final interview, August 15, 2016)

Ayşe noted that she enjoyed taking this course and was always interested in issues of multiculturalism and peace education, but she is not sure that these concepts were taught in a detailed or profound way. She stated that she is always lacking in knowledge regarding practices related to multicultural education and intercultural education, and she acknowledged that her background information was inadequate. Ayşe gave more detailed information about the achievements of this course, and she summarized her thoughts as follows:

I did not know the meaning of many of the terms related to multiculturalism. I did not know about most of the work that had gone into the national and international literature. Especially multilingualism in Turkey – how is this concept applied to education? I would have been unable to respond if, as a teacher, I were asked about the concepts of multiculturalism, multilingualism, and multicultural education. Honestly, I totally disagreed with these ideas because of my own misconceptions. I have now seen how important the foundations of these concepts are, and I fully support them now. (Ayşe, final interview, June 22, 2016)

### **Expectations that Differentiated from the Course Objectives**

In this part of the research, I examined participants' expectations that differentiated from the course aims. Participants' differentiated expectations were divided into the following two themes: (1) lack of experience and (2) effectiveness of the course.

**Lack of experience.** Some participants commented that the course did not fully meet their expectations, and the participants made some recommendations regarding how the course might have better served them. For instance, Rana predicted that this course would provide some sort of activities in the field in order to support children's and parents' understanding of diversity, or that would affect or shift those target groups' misunderstandings of multicultural issues. However, the lack of practices in the field prompted her to think about the effectiveness of the course. She said,

After I completed the first theoretical phase of the course, I was expecting to understand how I would be able to apply my learning to students, how I would be able to support my students and to help them to gain multicultural perspectives, or how I would be able to change their views that stem from their home environments. However, the question of how I can practice multiculturalism in the classroom is still staying in the place... such activities would be much more effective after the theoretical part if I did these activities. (Rana, focus group interview, May 30, 2016)

Mete and Nalan also claimed that this course did not really support them in terms of teaching them how to teach diversity in the classroom or how to educate people who come from minority groups in Turkey. Mete said,

We took into account the personal qualities of multicultural people such as empathy and openness; we learned them, but we still don't know entirely how we are supposed to create content or how to transfer that content. We do not know how to make people open to these issues or to social development. Additionally, we should have communicated with other people whose diverse backgrounds would have helped the course to better serve its stated purpose. (Mete, focus group interview, May 30, 2016)

In addition, Nalan specified the target groups that should be contacted during the class sessions in order to enhance course outcomes. According to Nalan, instead of only interacting with or learning from participants in the classroom, we should have contacted individuals associated with different

languages, religions, age groups, races, and sexual orientations, if possible. She advocated that if this opportunity was provided as a course purpose, the participants in the classroom might have developed more empathy with regard to what it means to be different in the society (Nalan, focus group interview, May 30, 2016).

Without interacting with members of all groups in a given society, Fatma said that there were only a few examples of how to apply multicultural education that stuck with her. According to Fatma, “A few examples we have heard about multiculturalism have remained unforgettable so far. If there had been more examples, such as ‘What can I use in the course?’, ‘Where can I use it?’, ‘Where can this method work?’, ‘What can I do about multiculturalism?’, ‘What event do I create?’ the examples would have been more memorable” (Fatma, focus group interview, May 30, 2016).

**Effectiveness of the course.** Other participants also question the effectiveness of the course. Ayse mentioned that the target of the course structure was not clear and that students in the class might not be able to clearly state the purpose of the course. Ayse stated,

Last week's topic was intercultural learning, and when we say learning, teachers or the school directly come to mind for me. At this point, I did not talk about the technique at all, so I thought I'd go through it, and I was intending to put into practice intercultural learning. We are already engaged in informal learning on our own, but we needed to engage more with formal learning. I wanted to see more practical applications that teachers can employ in their classrooms. The subject is not clear – what is the purpose of this course? Is the course taught so that teachers can better teach children, or is it taught so that teachers can become sociologist, or so that they can master the subject? (Ayse, focus group interview, May 30, 2016)

Harun expected that this course would provide sufficient examples regarding instructional strategies that support diverse students in the classrooms. Instead, he claimed that they learned about the characteristics of multiculturalism and diverse people.

## **Discussion and Conclusion**

### **Expectations vs. Acquisitions**

The research question was created to examine how participants' experiences in the MULT-500 Multicultural Education graduate course intersected and overlapped with their perceptions, beliefs, knowledge, understandings, and practices regarding multicultural education. The results of the study indicated that some of their expectations of this course were satisfactorily met, but it is worth noting that not all of their expectations were met.

According to several studies, teachers who have been taught the basics of multicultural education or who have taken courses intended to teach the basics of multicultural education are now at a level where they can successfully take part in their profession in multicultural classroom environments (Cho & Ambrosetti, 2005; Ndemanu 2012; Sleeter, 2001; Riedler & Eryaman, 2016). Further, the results of some research indicate that sometimes stand-alone multicultural education courses may not be sufficiently effective to change attitudes, beliefs and knowledge (Larke,1990). However, some research indicates that graduate-level multicultural education courses can sometimes be more effective than undergraduate-level courses in helping teachers and teacher candidates to gain new perspectives regarding diversity and to change their beliefs, knowledge and attitudes (Barksdale et al., 2002; Karakas & Erbas, 2018). Of course, similar situations have been observed in this study, and at certain points, the expectations and achievements of teachers and teacher candidates have intersected with the aims and outcomes of the course, and at other points these acquisitions and expectations have differed.

These results indicate that while some of the course content was sufficient to change participants' perspectives regarding diverse students, some content and assignments were insufficient to satisfy participants' expectations.

There were participants who stated that their expectations intersected with the course goals. According to their understandings, this graduate course helped them first to learn new terms related to multiculturalism. The course also helped them to acquire and apply new knowledge regarding multiculturalism and multicultural education. Earlier studies' findings support the participants' intersected expectations. For instance, according to Gay and Howard (2000), if future teachers want to address diverse issues and be more adequately prepared regarding multicultural education, then they should completely internalize the foundations of multicultural education such as the "learning theories for use with ethnically diverse students" (p. 10). Participants in this study, however, are not only seeking to learn the foundations of multicultural education for ethnically diverse students; they are also considering the possible differences that exist among current classrooms.

However, some participants believed that without any fieldwork requirements, the course did not permit them to effectively learn the concepts related to multicultural education. Some participants also indicated that a lack of experience in the field, and a lack of opportunities to conduct research related to course objectives would cause course outcomes to change such that they would likely no longer be beneficial in the same way. Participants frequently requested that the course requirements should be amended such that they include experimental application of what they learned from the course.

The findings related to the research question are supported by prior research that indicates that teachers should establish practical knowledge through field experience while taking a course related to teaching multiculturalism, multicultural issues, or multicultural education. According to Hollins and Guzman (2005), field experience is "the key component of preparation where prospective teachers learn to bridge theory and practice, work with colleagues and families, and develop pedagogical and curricular strategies for meeting the learning needs of a diverse population" (p. 493). Additionally, Cobellas-Vega (1992) noted that teacher candidates should take at least one course in multicultural education and learn new teaching techniques. The author also suggested that having field experience that involves students from diverse backgrounds could further support teachers' awareness with regard to cultural diversity. This practical knowledge helps teachers to more fully understand all possible diversities in the current classrooms in Turkey and help their students based on their differences. Even though all participants stated that their understandings and perceptions of differences in the classrooms improved, they still suspected that perhaps it would be difficult to apply these to their classroom environments. The application of this improvement in their classrooms. Participants also suggested that there should be another course after foundations of multicultural education that facilitates and requires more practical experience. Field researchers also recommend this. Gay and Howard (2000), for example, claimed that teaching teachers how to transfer information to pedagogical practice after they have enough information on cultural differences is the responsibility of each institution adopting a multicultural approach to teacher education.

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