

Views of The Social Study Teachers on Multicultural Education and Its Potential Applications

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Abstract

The present study was designed on the views of social studies teachers on multicultural education and its potential applications. The participant group of the study consisted of 46 (27 Female-19 Male) social studies teachers teaching in 9 different provinces of Turkey. The criterion sampling method was utilized in the selection of the participants. The study was methodically designed in accordance with the case pattern, which is one of the qualitative research methods. The data obtained with the "Personal Information Form" and the "Teacher Interview Form" were interpreted by content analysis. The MAXQDA2022 program was used in the analysis of the data. As far as the results are concerned, it was clear that the social studies teachers' sentiments and views about multicultural education were positive, but they had a lack of relevant knowledge about the relevant concept. The teachers explicated their definitions mostly in terms of cultural and ethnic diversity. As far as the implementation of the study is concerned, the participant teachers offered a wide variety of views on the active teaching processes such as group work, collaborative learning, increasing intercultural communication and extracurricular activities.

Keywords: Multicultural education, Cultural diversity, Respect for differences, Social studies teachers

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Introduction

The escalating migration tendencies all over the world augment the cultural communication and this particular state of affairs leads to the formation of unequal groups in terms of power (number, economic and political) within the society (Berry, 1997). Homogeneous nation structures of governments alternate in this process and turn into multicultural social structures (Kymlicka and Cohen-Almagor, 2000). It is possible to define multiculturalism as the coexistence of differences in religion, language, race, disability, gender, ethnicity and cultural elements (APA, 2002; Kymlicka, 2015). Multiculturalism, which is based on a post-modern understanding in a cultural and intellectual perspective, has the characteristics of pluralism and is defined as richness (Yakışır, 2009; Parekh, 2000; UNESCO, 2005). This phenomenon, which stands out in the social structure of societies, has transformed into a multicultural education theory as an inclusive education reform.

Multicultural education historically emerged for the first time with the advent of minority rights in the USA in the 1960s (Aydın, 2012; Koçak, 2010). By the 1970s, this phenomenon commenced to be implemented starting from the pre-school classes so that the immigrants living in multinational states such as the USA, Canada, Australia, England and Germany could represent their culture (Güven, 2005). Multicultural education is based on the perception that all the students with different sexual orientation, social class, ethnic, racial or cultural characteristics should have equal opportunities in education (Banks, 1993; Gay, 1994). Ramsey (2018) explicated the purposes of multicultural education as training individuals who were aware of differences, and who could think democratically and critically. The basic principles of the concept include awareness of the transfer of values (NCATE, 1986), mutual respect, acceptance and understanding, social justice and moral commitment. Banks (1993), one of the pioneers of the theory, addressed multicultural education with regards to the dimensions of content integration, structuring knowledge, reducing prejudice, egalitarian pedagogy

and empowering the school culture and social structure. It is significant to recognize how much the teachers base their cultural groups on when teaching the information about their subject or discipline, and how they are affected by the factors of race, ethnicity, gender and social class while structuring the knowledge. It is possible for the students to acquire a more democratic approach in their racial attitudes through the successful implementation of the dimensions of multicultural education.

In the multicultural education process that explicates a comprehensive reform mobility (Gay, 1994; Banks, 2007), various courses, programs or a single course designed to meet the demands and needs of different groups are insufficient (Banks, 2007). Teachers, on the other hand, should also be included in this process with awareness of multicultural education. In fact, the teachers are not only responsible for educational materials and teaching. Similarly, they play a leading role in teaching the concepts of equality, tolerance, reconciliation and cultural differences etc., on which the multicultural education paradigm is based, in providing the same success opportunity to all the students (Başbay and Kağnıcı, 2011). It is possible to provide appropriate communication environments thanks to the teachers who are role models for the students and designate the classroom climate (Forrest et al., 2017; Hyson, 2004). The teachers should be able to encourage the students to react differently to the same situation and make sense of different perspectives and meanings (Ryanand and Grieshaber, 2005). In particular, the attitudes of teachers who are in contact with the students at an early age towards multicultural education are effective in ensuring the academic success of students from different cultural backgrounds (Brown 2007). Therefore, it is critical for the teachers to have an egalitarian, fair and democratic attitude and display a motivating teaching style within intercultural harmony.

Turkey, due to its geopolitical position, is a country that has historically experienced many migrations and has different religions, languages and ethnic groups. This multicultural structure of Turkey, where refugees and immigrants live closely, has also been reflected in education and some arrangements have been made in the curricula over time. When we consider the primary education programs implemented in Turkey in 2005-2006, the aim, content and learning-teaching processes of the education programs come to the fore in terms of the development of social skills such as effective communication, cooperation, human rights, respect for differences, tolerance, empathy, conflict resolution, taking responsibility and helping individuals etc. (Özdemir, 2011). Furthermore, there is a conceptual and logical relationship between the constructivist approach and multicultural education in the program (Akhan and Yalçın, 2016). In this context, it is clear that the content of the social studies curriculum is largely compatible with this education model. 17.2% of the achievements in the social studies course content in Turkey are related to the elements of multicultural education. Respecting the feelings and opinions of others and the importance of living together with different cultures are just some of them (Cırık, 2008).

Therefore, the views and suggestions of social studies teachers are of great importance in Turkey, a multicultural country where people from 36 different ethnic backgrounds live side by side (KONDA; 2006; Başbay, 2014). Considering the relevant current literature, it is noteworthy that even though the studies on multicultural education have been on the rise in recent years, they are still limited in number (Mena and Rogers 2017; Banks, 1993; 2007; Gay, 1994; Kymlicka, 2015; Parekh, 2000; Bifuh Ambe, 2006; Başarır, 2012; Güçlü-Yılmaz, 2020). In national and international studies, it is apparent that the teachers who mostly have a mediocre and good attitude towards multicultural education (Bahadır, 2016; Arslan and Çalmaşur, 2017; Teymur and Beldağ, 2023; Yıldırım, 2016; Özdemir, 2011; Yazıcı, Başol and Toprak, 2009), have some prejudices and lack of knowledge regarding this concept (Tünkler, 2020), and there has been more inclination towards quantitative studies (Cherng and Davis, 2019; Aragona-Young and Sawyer, 2018; Nelson, 2010; Sherman, 2011; Başbay and Kağnıcı, 2011). Considering the insufficient number of qualitative studies on the subject and the lack of literature in the implementation process, qualitative research including the views of social studies teachers was required. In this sense, the aim of this study is to reveal the perspectives of social studies teachers teaching in schools in Turkey on multicultural education and identify their views on potential multicultural education practices. The research questions designed for this purpose are as follows:

1. What are the views of social studies teachers on multicultural education?
2. What do the social studies teachers think about potential applications of multicultural education?

Method

Research Design

The study was designed and implemented in accordance with the case pattern, which is one of the qualitative research methods. Case studies are used in an attempt to discover, describe and explicate events or situations that have causal connections between them (Yin, 2014). In the present study, the steps such as collecting information about the views of social studies teachers on multicultural education and its potential applications, organizing the collected information, interpreting and obtaining the study results were systematically followed (Merriam, 2018). In the present study, in which teachers' views were obtained with semi-structured data collection tools, an in-depth analysis was implemented and shaped within the framework of the identified themes (Creswell, 2015). Throughout this procedure, the researcher did not intervene in the process, or environment nor the event (Yin, 2014).

Participants

The participants of the study consisted of 46 social studies teachers teaching in public secondary schools in different provinces of Turkey in the spring term of the 2022-2023 academic year. Social studies have a program content that is based on intercultural understanding and awareness and considers the sensitivities regarding the cultural differences. It also encapsulates the elements of multicultural education with skills such as empathy, recognizing stereotypes and prejudice. Social studies textbooks, to a large extent, cover the subjects related to social sciences, different cultures and the elements related to this culture as well. In this sense, the views of social studies teachers on multicultural education are crucially significant.

The criterion sampling method, which is one of the purposive sampling methods, was utilized in an attempt to select the participants. The criterion sampling is to study all the cases that meet a predetermined set of criteria. The criterion is created by the researcher or a previously prepared criteria list can be used (Marshall and Rossman, 2014). Therefore, there are some importance criteria prepared by the researcher: These criteria include such issues as the fact that the participants taught in a state public school, that they were social studies teacher, and that there were students from different ethnic groups in the classes in which the teacher taught. Some characteristics of the participants are illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1

Characteristics of the Participants

Characteristics of the participants		N	%
Gender	Male	27	58,69
	Female	9	41,30
Age	25-30	20	43,47
	35-45	22	47,82
	45+	4	8,69
Length of Teaching Experience	1-10	21	45,65
	10-20	19	41,30
	20-30	6	13,04
Graduation status	B.A	34	73,91
	M.A	9	19,56
	Ph.D.	3	6,52
Province	Van	16	34,78
	Diyarbakir	8	17,39
	Antalya	5	10,86
	Samsun	5	10,86
	Kocaeli	5	10,86
	İstanbul	3	6,52
	Bursa	2	4,34
	Düzce	1	2,17
Tekirdağ	1	2,17	
Total		46	100

Data Collection Tools and its Implementation

Semi-structured interview technique was utilized as the data collection tool. The semi-structured interview technique is recognized as an accommodating technique in terms of preventing the fixed-choice answers and enabling in-depth investigation in the relevant field (Büyüköztürk et al., 2011). Therefore, "Personal Information Form" and "Teacher Interview Form" were used in the study. The questions in the Personal Information Form created by the researcher were related to the participant's gender, age, length of teaching experience, graduation status, province of residence and having students from different ethnic backgrounds in the class. In the Teacher Interview Forum, there were 10 questions to identify the views of the participants on multicultural education and potential practices. These questions were designed to identify how teachers perceived multiculturalism and multicultural education, what the teachers, classroom and curriculum for the aims, elements, contributions and potential applications of multicultural education should possess. While designing the questions, initially, a question pool was created by scanning the relevant literature. In line with the feedback received from two faculty members who were experts in their fields, these questions were asked to 3 social studies teachers, thus the data collection tools were finalized. The questions organized in the form of online forms were sent to the participants and they were asked to answer the questions at the most convenient time for them. The participants were asked to fill in the relevant forms "on a volunteer basis". Consequently, data were collected from a total of 46 social studies teachers.

Data Analysis and Process

The content analysis technique was utilized for the analysis of the data. Content analysis is a method frequently used in qualitative research (Straus and Corbin, 1990) and its main adjective is to obtain concepts and relationships that can explicate the collected data (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2006). In this approach, meaning units and concepts that are similar to one another in the data set are considered as a whole and analyzed in a systematic way (Creswell, 2015). The way followed in content analysis is

to collect similar data within the framework of certain codes and themes and organize and interpret them as such (Wimmer and Dominick, 2009; Saldana, 2019).

The MAXQDA2022 program was utilized in the analysis of the data. MAXQDA is a software program that helps the researchers to qualitatively analyze and evaluate their work, texts and field findings and interpret the data collected (Çayır and Sarıtaş, 2017, p. 526). In this respect, the transcribed data were coded and these codes were compiled under various themes based on their similarities and differences. In this sense, the views of the participants in each data set were analyzed in detail and their statements were coded as T1, T2, T3.

Credibility

In order to ensure the credibility of the data, the peer review technique suggested by Patton (2014) was utilized. Peer review is based on the system in which an academic study is evaluated by the experts of that subject (Esen, 2021). While interpreting the results generated in this process, the views of two faculty members were consulted. Furthermore, in order to enhance the internal reliability and validity of the results, the views of the teachers were presented by making direct quotations under the themes.

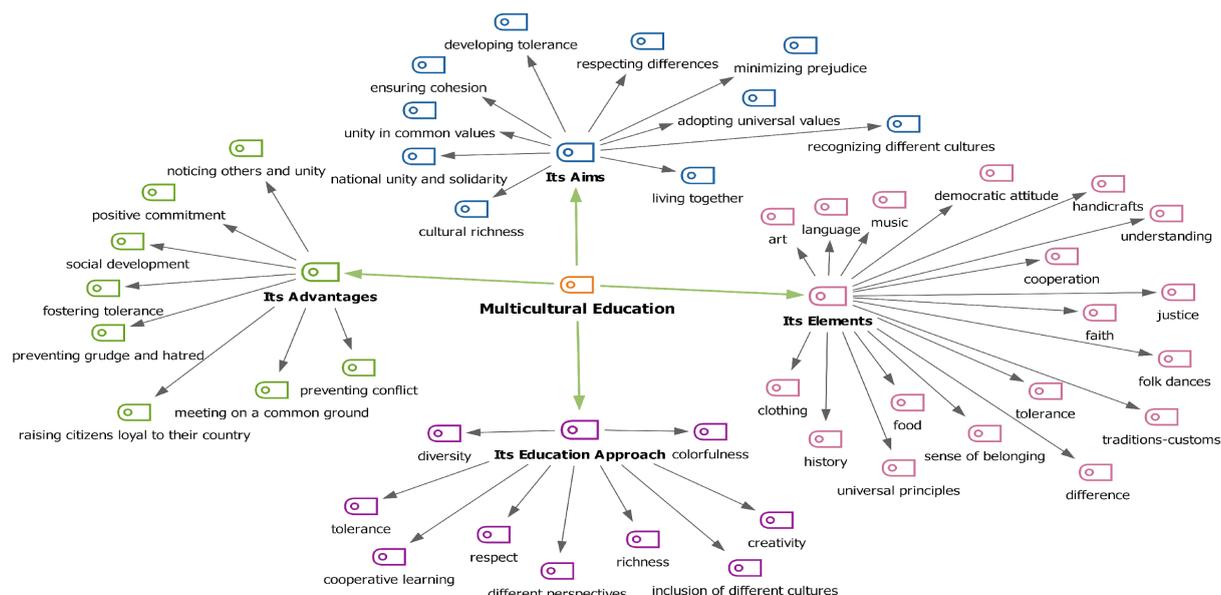
Findings

In this part of the study, the views of social studies teachers on multicultural education and its practices were analyzed multi-dimensionally. As a result of the analysis, teachers' views on multicultural education were shaped around four main themes. Their views on the practices of multicultural education were formed by coding them under three main themes.

In the present study, principally, the views of Social Studies teachers on multicultural education were debated. For this purpose, the following questions were asked; "What are your views on multicultural education? In your opinion, what should be the aims of multicultural education? What elements do you think multicultural education includes? What can be the positive contributions of multicultural education to the current education system?" The themes and codes created as a result of the answers obtained from the teachers are presented here. (Figure 1).

Figure 1

Views of the Social Studies Teachers on Multicultural Education



When Figure 1 is examined, it is clear that teachers' views on multicultural education were grouped under four different themes. These themes are the perception of multicultural education, its educational approach, its aims, elements and advantages.

Multicultural Education Approach

The general statements of social studies teachers about multicultural education were coded as *"colorfulness, creativity, inclusion of different cultures, richness, different perspectives, respect, cooperative learning, tolerance and diversity"*. The sample statements of some participants about the concept are as follows:

"Multiculturalism refers to the coexistence of more than one culture, not just one culture. It also means respecting the differences and expressing different views and opinions." T46

"I think that multiculturalism means richness in society in every respect. After ensuring the same language and homeland bond, the individuals with different traditions, cultures and lifestyles lead to differences in the society and respect for these differences. As a result, versatile individuals are trained and raised." T21

"As far as the society we have today is concerned, multiculturalism is a very important issue with the effect of migration. If we, as teachers, instill this multiculturalism in our students, we will prevent possible conflicts... In this respect, I consider it crucially significant. We should teach the students that multicultural life is the colors of the rainbow and that they will be aware of its beauty when they see the whole." T1

Its Aims

The statements of social studies teachers about the aims of multicultural education were coded as *"cultural richness, national unity and solidarity, unity in common values, ensuring cohesion, developing tolerance, respecting differences, minimizing prejudice, adopting universal values, recognizing different cultures and living together"*. The sample statements of the participants regarding the aims of multicultural education are as follows:

"To train students who are free from prejudices, who have internalized democracy, who can empathize with the concept of the other, and who have adopted universal rules." T2

"To keep the cultures of different nations alive, to integrate them into society, to keep them line side by side, to gain social resistance, to respect differences, and to ensure social development," T7

"Being able to reach a more culturally developed level should be the most important aim of the society. It is because every culture has its own beauties. Multiculturalism should be used as a stepping stone in order to generate a sophisticated society that reflects many cultures." T39

Its Elements

When the statements of social studies teachers about the elements of multicultural education were examined, especially the elements of the concept of culture were noteworthy. These were *"art, language, music, democratic, handicrafts, understanding, cooperation, faith, justice, folk dances, traditions-customs, tolerance, difference, sense of belonging, universal principles, food, history, and clothing"*. The sample statements of the participants regarding the elements of multicultural education are as follows:

"Culture is a multidimensional concept, so we can consider many elements that make up culture, such as customs and traditions, music, handicrafts, holy days and spiritual values, clothing, religious rituals, and food." T6

"Empathy, understanding, mutual sharing, tolerance..." T36

"Universal and human principles, cultural integration, inclusiveness..." T28

Its Advantages

The social studies teachers expressed their statements about the advantages of multicultural education as follows; "preventing conflict, meeting on a common ground, raising citizens loyal to their country, preventing grudge and hatred, fostering tolerance, social development, positive commitment, noticing others and unity". The sample statements of the participants regarding the advantages of multicultural education are as follows:

"Even though multiculturalism does not directly contribute to our national education, it contributes to the country's goal of raising global citizens and raising individuals who have adopted the universal values. I also think that it will contribute to the chaos-free life of the society." T1

"Multiculturalism can break down the prejudices that are fundamentally difficult to overcome. As students get to know each other more and learn from each other, they can see that their differences are a richness." T2

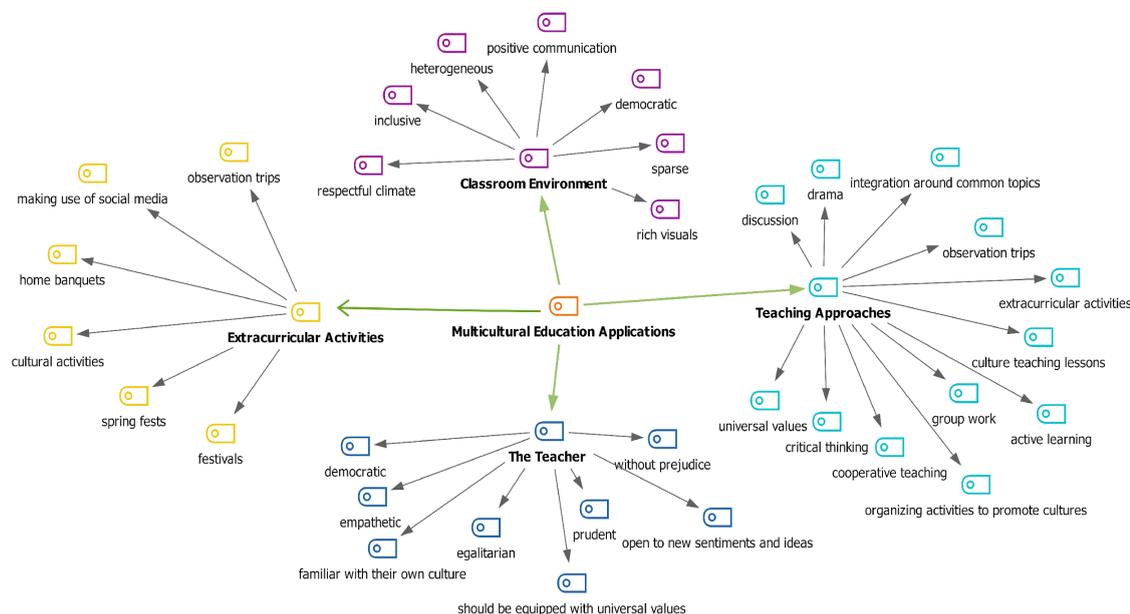
"Multiculturalism enables one to realize that each and every person in the world or in the country can have a different disposition. It also enables the students to develop tolerance for other cultures or values." T6

Multicultural Education Applications

In order to identify the views of the Social Studies teachers about the potential applications of multicultural education, the following questions were asked: "What do you think about the applications of multicultural education? How should a teacher and classroom environment be like that is appropriate for the multicultural education system? What teaching approaches do you think can be used in multicultural education?" In line with the answers obtained from the teachers, the views of the social studies teachers on the potential applications were examined under the themes of classroom teaching approaches, classroom, teacher and extracurricular activities. (Figure 2).

Figure 2

Views of the Social Studies Teachers on the Multicultural Education Practices



Teaching Approaches

The statements of social studies teachers about potential teaching approaches of multicultural education were coded as "discussion, drama, integration around common topics, observation trips, extracurricular activities, culture teaching lessons, active learning, group work, organizing activities to

promote cultures, cooperative teaching, critical thinking and universal values". The sample statements of the participants about the teaching approaches of multicultural education are as follows:

"I think that multicultural education can be delivered with peer learning, research and analysis approach. I believe that the outputs will be the students who learn by being tolerant, respectful to differences and learning by experience and permanence will be ensured." T1

"I think group work is very convenient for students to get to know each other and mix with each other. Similarly, collaborative learning can generate an environment where children can learn from one another and share with each other. Traditional methods, the methods and strategies where the teacher explains everything and the student remains passive do not serve the purpose of multicultural education." T2

"All approaches can be utilized if the readiness is sufficient and language teaching has already commenced before the general learning starts." T46

Classroom Environment

Social studies teachers' views on the classroom environment that is essential for multicultural education are: *"respectful climate, inclusive, heterogeneous, positive communication, democratic, sparse, and rich visuals". The sample statements of the participants regarding the classroom environment of multicultural education are as follows:*

"There should be an environment in the classroom where everyone respects each other, regardless of ethnicity. There should be no sarcastic remarks or hurtful jokes. An environment where everyone regards each other as only human beings." T2

"There should be an environment free of empathy and prejudice. Positive attitudes and behaviors should be exhibited. Students should not be marginalized, a climate of love and respect and a tolerant environment should be generated." T7

"Sufficiency of technical materials and keeping the existing ones sparse, which will facilitate overcoming the compliance problems that may be experienced." T12

"A fair and democratic classroom and teacher." T38

The Teacher

Social studies teachers identified the qualities that a teacher should possess within the scope of the practices of multicultural education as *"should be equipped with universal values, without prejudice, open to new sentiments and ideas, prudent, egalitarian, familiar with their own culture, empathetic and democratic". The sample statements of the participants regarding the teacher characteristics essential for multicultural education are as follows:*

"The teacher should act and behave knowing that no culture is superior and that each culture is valuable in terms of its contribution to human history. The classroom environment should be democratic, the opportunity for children from different cultures to express themselves should be generated and the language of communication should be used in a positive way." T32

"There should be a teacher profile that is open to students' free thinking and acceptance of different cultures. However, this is entirely up to the teacher's personality trait. The classroom environment of a teacher with this personality will be positive and multiculturalism will be recognized as a good value in the classroom environment." T39

"Teachers should have a scientific mind, equipped with universal values, free from prejudices, and an intellectual infrastructure based on respect." T4

Extracurricular Activities

Social studies teachers also offered suggestions for some extracurricular activities regarding potential applications of multicultural education. These suggestions were coded as; *spring fests, festivals,*

extracurricular cultural activities, observation trips, making use of social media and home banquets. The examples of extracurricular activities suggested by the participants for multicultural education are as follows:

"Activities such as spring fests, festivals, charity sales can be held in rural and big cities. T39

"Extracurricular activities can be home visits and picnics with the families of the students in the class. Charity sales and musical events can be organized within the school. In other words, education can be implemented by using the active learning method by doing and living it." T39

In the present study, the social studies teachers were also asked what sentiments they had about multicultural education and it was clear that their views were shaped by positive and integrative concepts. Relevant statements of the teachers were presented as a code cloud. (Figure 3).

Figure 3.

Social Studies Teachers' Feelings About Multicultural Education



Conclusion, Discussion and Recommendations

In this study, the views of social studies teachers on multicultural education and its potential applications were investigated. As far as the results obtained are concerned, the teachers correctly identified some potential practices while describing multicultural education, even though they lacked the essential knowledge and information. The social studies teachers, who sought conceptual meanings for multicultural education and cited the refugee students as examples, based their definitions on cultural and ethnic diversity. Furthermore, it was found that teachers' definitions and approaches to multicultural education were mostly positive. In this sense, the present study is consistent with many studies that investigated the attitudes of pre-service teachers, teachers and academicians towards multicultural education (Yıldırım, 2016; Yazıcı, Başol and Toprak, 2009; Akman, 2020; Çoban et al., 2010; Aydın and Damgacı, 2013; Aslan and Kozikoğlu, 2017; Gholizadeh-Avval, 2018; Kuzu and Deniz, 2019; Özdemir and Dil, 2013; Güçlü-Yılmaz, 2020; Çalışkan and Gençer, 2016). The fact that teachers had a democratic and universal attitude towards students from different cultures can be assessed by the education process they maintained with these students in the schools where they taught.

In this study, the teachers adopted an attitude towards multicultural education that supported the national unity, such as respect for differences, belief in national unity and solidarity. This attitude towards multicultural education can be associated with the participant teachers' concerns that Turkey's unitary state structure may break down (Cırık, 2008; Parlak, 2005; Ünlü and Örtün, 2013). In fact, when explaining the benefits of multicultural education such as raising citizens loyally connected to the country, creating positive commitment and preventing chaos, teachers' statements support this concern (Teymur and Beldağ, 2023). The social studies teachers, who regarded multicultural education as a part of social development, pointed out the ability to get rid of prejudices against differences with multicultural education competence.

Social studies teachers' views on potential teaching methods and techniques of multicultural education were mostly shaped around the elements of constructivist education such as group work, cooperative

learning, and increasing intercultural communication. The constructivist approach, which is based on reconciliation, cooperation and culture, has many elements that overlap with multicultural education in this sense (Şimşek, 2004). This particular result demonstrates that the teachers who were in contact with the students from different cultures had the awareness of offering alternative teaching methods (Kardeş and Akman, 2018). In the present study, the teachers who emphasized the understaffed and heterogeneous class groups exhibited an approach with universal values in this process.

Another result obtained in this study was that the social studies teachers defined the qualities that a teacher should possess as an active and effective teacher within the scope of multicultural education practices. It was clear that the teachers who emphasized the concepts of being unbiased, were open to new sentiments and opinions and respect the differences, had new ideas and views. Regarding the same subject, Ladson-Billings (1995) and Cross et al. (1989) defined the fact the teachers who would teach in a classroom environment where individuals with different cultural values coexisted should have this awareness and enriched the teaching environment accordingly, as professional competence. In his study, Beynon (1985) stated that the teachers with a developed sense of empathy had a more positive attitude towards the students of different ethnicities in their classrooms. The studies in the relevant literature demonstrate that teachers' unsatisfactory approaches to the students from different cultures cause negative learning experiences in the students (Li, 2003), while the intercultural experiences affect the teachers positively (Bryan and Sprageu, 1997).

As far as the studies in the relevant literature are concerned, it is clear that one solo person, place and institution is not sufficient for multicultural education (Banks, 2007; Villegas and Lucas, 2002). Multicultural education can acquire qualifications with a more inclusive understanding, especially in the curricula, teachers, school administrators, families, school climate, and extracurricular activities (Ambe, 2006). In this sense, the suggestions offered within the framework of the results obtained in the study are as follows:

- Considering the incomplete definitions and some prejudices of the social studies teachers regarding multicultural education, in-service training programs can be offered in an attempt to understand the concept better.
- Considering the positive sentiments and opinions towards multicultural education, which are prominent in this study and many studies in the relevant literature, some experimental studies can be implemented regarding the school applications.
- A needs analysis study to be conducted with the social studies teachers in an attempt to implement multicultural education practices will contribute to the relevant literature.

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