

TEACHERS' MULTICULTURAL COMPETENCE PERCEPTIONS

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ABSTRACT

Teachers are crucial actors in the adoption of the multicultural education approach in schools. Determining the multicultural competence perceptions of teachers will enable the development of practices that can be put forward to create a multicultural education environment in classrooms and therefore schools. The purpose of the current study is to determine the multicultural competence perceptions of classroom teachers and preschool teachers and to examine them according to the different variables. The study was carried out in a survey model suitable for quantitative research methods. The measurement tool was applied to 283 teachers working in a city center and its districts located in the Marmara Region. The data were analyzed and interpreted with the SPSS-23 package program. The multicultural competence perceptions of the teachers differed statistically significantly according to the branch, having students from different cultures in the classroom, working in different regions of the country, the region where he was born/raised, and the working year. There was no significant difference according to the educational status related to multicultural education. In line with the results of the study, recommendations for future research are presented.

Keywords: *Multiculturalism, Classroom Teacher, Preschool Teacher.*

ÖĞRETMENLERİN ÇOK KÜLTÜRLÜ YETERLİLİK ALGILARININ İNCELENMESİ

ÖZ

Çok kültürlü eğitim anlayışının okullarda benimsenmesinde en önemli aktör öğretmenlerdir. Öğretmenlerin çok kültürlü yeterlik algılarının belirlenmesi, sınıflarda ve dolayısıyla okullarda çok kültürlü eğitim ortamı oluşturmaya yönelik ortaya konulabilecek uygulamaların geliştirilmesini sağlayacaktır. Bu çalışmanın amacı, sınıf öğretmenlerinin ve okul öncesi öğretmenlerinin çok kültürlü yeterlik algılarını belirlemek ve farklı değişkenlere göre incelemektir. Çalışma, nicel araştırma yöntemlerinden tarama modelinde gerçekleştirilmiştir. Başbay ve Kağnıcı (2011) tarafından geliştirilen "Çokkültürlü Yeterlik Algıları Ölçeği" veri toplama aracı olarak kullanılmıştır. Ölçme aracı Marmara Bölgesinde yer alan bir il merkezi ve ilçelerinde görev yapan 283 öğretmene uygulanmıştır. Veriler SPSS paket programı ile analiz edilerek yorumlanmıştır. Öğretmenlerin çok kültürlü yeterlik algılarının bransa, sınıfta farklı kültürden öğrenci olmasına, ülkenin farklı bölgelerinde görev yapmasına, doğduğu/büyüdüğü bölgeye ve görev yılına göre istatistiksel olarak anlamlı farklılık gösterdiği

görülmüştür. Eğitim durumu değişkeni bağlamında çok kültürlü eğitime ilişkin anlamlı bir farklılık bulunmamıştır. Çalışmanın sonuçları doğrultusunda gelecek araştırmalar için öneriler sunulmuştur.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Çok Kültürlülük, Sınıf Öğretmeni, Okul Öncesi Öğretmeni.

INTRODUCTION

Ethnic diversity existing in many parts of the world is explained by the concept of multiculturalism (Watson, 2000). Multiculturalism is a social phenomenon based on interpersonal differences with dimensions such as ethnicity, age, disability, social status, religion, and language (American Psychological Association [APA], 2002). Cross-border trade activities, migrations, and global activities led by wars form the basis of multicultural social structures. As a result of the intertwined living conditions of different cultures, interaction increases, and since the influence of the dominant culture can affect other cultures, multicultural education aims to prevent cultural assimilation. Culture manifests itself with common values and cultural products that are formed over a long period. Societies with common life and cultural consciousness can create social products that reveal common works of art, social architecture, and general lifestyles. The values, norms, and other qualities that determine the characteristics of societies cannot be determined based on the borders of the states (Carens, 2000). In multicultural societies, a common historical consciousness, common social events, common social acceptance, and orientations, societies that have not formed a common memory, living together and living together with different cultures, and social construction in this direction are a global necessity. Democratic rights based on a pluralistic understanding are indispensable for a democratic order, which is the guarantee of people living together, adopting different cultural phenomena, different belief systems, and having different mother tongues, respecting each other's rights and respecting the values they adopt. While societies were building their cultural structures, they interacted with different societies, affected each other, and were affected by each other (Habermas, 2002; Çelik, 2008). The diversity and speed of this interaction have increased greatly, although multiculturalism is not a new phenomenon, it differs in terms of its effects on the social structure. The presence of people who consider diversity as the construction process of a new system adorned with different features, instead of describing the difference in lifestyles, accepted social values, and judgments as negative, will create global democracy based on global peace. In the formation of a multicultural social structure, teachers who can evaluate the negative situations within the framework of common values, and who can internalize and reflect the awareness of democracy, who evaluate the ethnic and cultural differences, play an important role.

Determining educational goals to train people who can adapt to global conditions also forms the basis of the multicultural education approach (Banks & Banks, 2019). In multicultural education, the experiences of people who have grown up in different cultural structures come together and affect the education content (Whitaker & Valtierra, 2018). The educational process, which includes different cultural characteristics as well as the characteristics of their own culture, is effective in the development of the skills of positive communication between people and showing positive attitudes towards each other. The increase in social differences is due to various reasons especially the awareness and competencies of teachers, who are the main element of the education process, about multicultural education, which has become a need depending on the theme of cultures (Banks & Banks, 2019). One of the features of multiculturalism is that everyone who participates in the education process has the opportunity to encounter teachings related to their cultural codes (Taylor, 2014). Increasing success for all students, and recognizing the historical and social characteristics of cultures instead of cultural awareness and intercultural prejudice are among the goals of multicultural education (García-Peñalvo, 2012; Demirdağ, 2018).

Multiculturalism studies, which are related to sociology, politics, and anthropology, were created with a comprehensive structure, cultural differences and differences based on cultural diversity should be given importance and course contents should be made. Teachers should be equipped with the

characteristics that will adapt to the situations arising from intercultural interaction, to gain knowledge, skills, and attitudes towards diversity of language, religion, and ethnicity, and to provide teachers with in-service training both in undergraduate education and in the task process. Educational programs, curricula, and especially the course contents have different perspectives, are related to different cultures, and include different language and religion features, which will broaden the students' perspectives on these issues and cause them to adopt the understanding of being respectful to every thought and human structure. With the multicultural education approach in the curriculum of the Ministry of National Education (MoNE) in 2004, regulations were made in the curriculum. By supporting students in terms of intellectual and academic development, one of the important goals of the training, which is offered to develop independent decision-making skills, is to respect different lifestyles and ways of thinking with a sensitive attitude. The quality of the practices based on the multicultural education approach determined in schools and classrooms, in line with the regulations made in line with the stated objectives, should comply with these characteristics.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is to investigate the multicultural competence perceptions of primary and preschool teachers. In this context, the following research questions were answered:

1. What is the level of multicultural competence perceptions of classroom teachers and preschool teachers?
2. Do the average scores of classroom teachers and preschool teachers regarding multicultural competence perceptions differ according to the variables of the branch, having students from different cultures in their classes, working in different regions of the country, and working year?

Importance of the Study

Raising students with different cultural characteristics together in the education process requires education planning for multiculturalism (Eldering, 1996). Multiculturalism and education gain importance in the process of growing up as people who can look at the world from a wide perspective about different cultures and evaluate events and people with a multicultural understanding of different norms and criteria. Teachers play the biggest role in the implementation of the education plan created by adopting the characteristics of multiculturalism but it is difficult for teachers who have not had a multicultural education experience to adapt to the educational environment with students from different cultures. In the past ten years, unpleasant attitudes towards differences, especially among refugee children, bring along some problems within the country (Bulut & Sarıçam, 2016). Teachers, on the other hand, should be sufficient in terms of providing their students with the skills to interact with students who have differences, since they are the basic elements of the education process. Considering that culture is also directly influential in the child's early development (Vygotsky, 1978), the effect of culture should not be ignored while supporting the child's personal and social skills starting from preschool education, and teachers should create educational practices sensitive to culture (Zakin, 2012). In this regard, the current study is significant in terms of planning the studies that can be used for the training process and in-service training that will meet the needs of multicultural education, in line with the results obtained by determining the multicultural competencies of the teachers.

METHODOLOGY AND FINDINGS

Research Design

The current study is in the survey model which is suitable for quantitative research in which the teacher's competencies of multiculturalism are the subject of research. The quantitative research method, in which interests, attitudes, perceptions, and skills are examined, is conducted with a larger sample size (Fraenkel, Wallen & Hyun, 2012). In the model of the research, the situation is tried to be explained in a way that is suitable for its characteristics. In the research, the competencies of teachers for multicultural

education were described. The model is used to scan large groups based on surveying a group belonging to the universe to reach a general judgment about the universe (Karasar, 2012, Büyüköztürk, Kılıç-Çakmak, Akgün, Karadeniz, & Demirel, 2012).

Population and Sample Group

177 classroom teachers and 106 preschool teachers were included in the study who works in different cities of the Marmara region. The branches of the teachers who participated in the research were determined in a simple random nature. The number of teachers belonging to the selected branches was determined by the stratified sampling model.

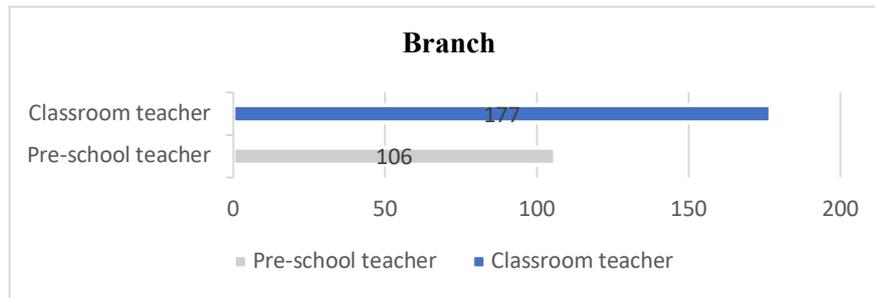


Figure 1. Distribution of teachers by branch

177 classroom teachers and 106 preschool teachers participated in the study.

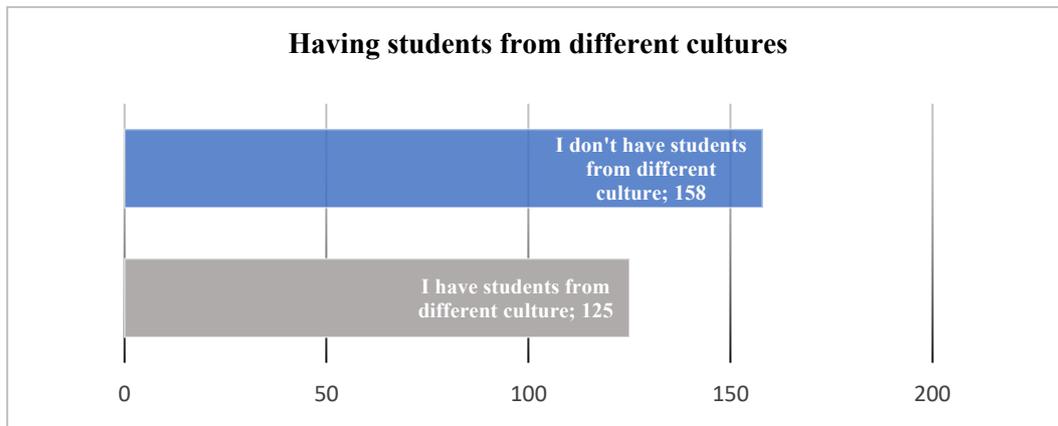


Figure 2. Distribution of teachers by having students from different cultures in their classes

There were 125 teachers with students from different cultures in their classes, and there were 158 teachers, all of whom work in classes with the same cultural characteristics, contribute to the study.

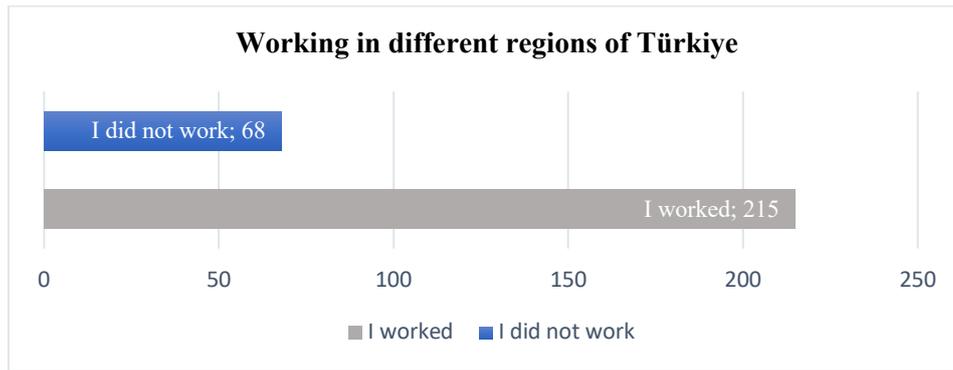


Figure 3. Distribution of teachers by working in different regions of Türkiye

While 215 teachers worked in different regions of the country in the study, 68 teachers worked in the same region until now.

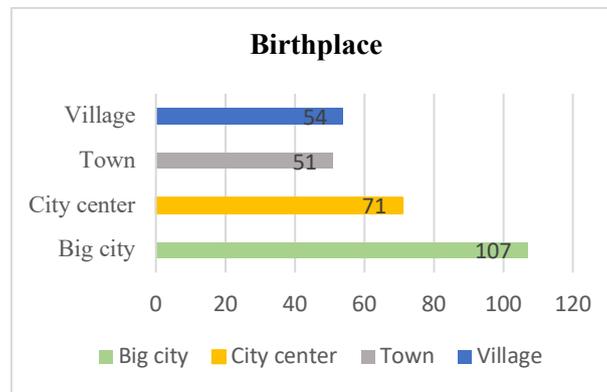


Figure 4. Distribution of the teachers by the region where they were born

When the place where the teachers were born/raised was examined, 54 teachers were educated in the village, 51 in the town, 71 in the city center, and 107 in the big city.

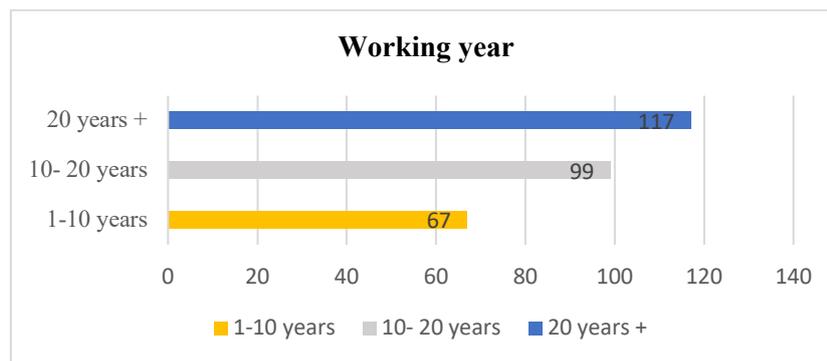


Figure 5. Distribution of working years of teachers'

177 of the teachers have worked 20 years or more, 99 teachers have worked 10-20 years, and 67 teachers have worked a period of 1-10 years.

Data Collection Tools

Data were collected with the “Multicultural Competence Perceptions Scale” to examine the multicultural education competencies of teachers in terms of various variables with the scale developed by Başbay and Kağnıcı (2011). The multicultural competence perceptions of teachers were tried to be determined by using the measurement tool. The scale consists of 41 items and three sub-dimensions. There are 16 questions in the “awareness” dimension, 16 questions in the “skill” dimension, and 9 questions in the “knowledge” dimension. The scale was prepared with a 5-point Likert type. Reliability analyses of the scale are carried out, and Cronbach’s Alpha reliability coefficient is .863. According to the result, the reliability of the scale is high (Sönmez & Alacapınar, 2011).

Data Analysis

The data collected within the scope of the research were analyzed using the SPSS-23. To determine the analysis tests, the skewness and kurtosis values of the data were examined. As a result of the analysis, the skewness and kurtosis values of the data are between -0.33 and 0.14, and these values are between -1.5 and +1.5, revealing that the data show a normal distribution (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). T-Test and One-Way Analysis of Variance were applied to normally distributed research data.

RESULTS

To determine whether the multicultural competence perception average scores of the teachers differ according to the branch, the t-test was performed and the results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Comparison of teachers’ perceptions of multicultural competence by branch

Branch	N	\bar{X}	S	sd	t	P
Preschool teacher	106	3.50	.463	281	-2.467	.014
Classroom teacher	177	3.62	.371			

According to the t-Test results, the perceptions of classroom teachers and preschool teachers towards multicultural education competencies differed statistically ($p < .05$). Classroom teachers’ perception of competence towards multicultural education ($\bar{X} = 3.62$) was higher than that of preschool teachers ($\bar{X} = 3.50$).

Do the multicultural competence perception average scores of the teachers differ according to the status of students from different cultures in the class?

To determine whether the mean scores of teachers’ multicultural competence perception differ according to having a student from different cultures in the class, a t-test was conducted and the results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. A comparison of teachers’ perceptions of multicultural competence on the status of students from different cultures in their class

Student	N	\bar{X}	S	sd	t	P
Yes	125	3.64	.333	281	3.025	.012
No	158	3.52	.458			

When the t-Test was examined, the multicultural education competence perceptions of the teachers who had students from different cultures in their classes and who did not have students from different cultures in their classes differed statistically ($p < .05$). The competence perceptions of the teachers who have

students from different cultures in their classes ($\bar{X} = 3.64$) are higher than the teachers who do not have students from different cultures in their class ($\bar{X} = 3.52$).

Do the multicultural competence perception average scores of teachers differ in different regions of the country?

To determine whether the multicultural competence perception average scores of the teachers differ according to working in different regions, a t-test was conducted and the results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. A comparison of teachers' perceptions of multicultural competence by working in different regions of Türkiye

	N	\bar{X}	S	sd	t	p
I worked	215	3.61	.358	281	2.29	.023
I did not work	68	3.48	.538			

When the t-Test was examined, the multicultural education competence perceptions of the teachers who worked in different regions differed statistically significantly compared to the teachers who worked in a single region ($p < .05$). The competence perceptions of the teachers working in different regions of Türkiye towards multicultural education ($\bar{X} = 3.61$) were higher than the teachers who did not work in the same region ($\bar{X} = 3.48$).

Multicultural Education

Do the multicultural competency perception average scores of the teachers differ according to the educational status of multiculturalism?

To determine whether the mean scores of teachers' perception of multicultural competence differ according to the receiving education on multiculturalism, a t-test was conducted and the results are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. A comparison of teachers' perceptions of multicultural competence according to their educational status in multicultural education

	N	\bar{X}	S	Sd	t	p
I received an education	62	3.63	.353	281	1.126	.261
I didn't receive	221	3.56	.426			

The t-test was conducted to determine the difference between the multicultural competence perceptions of the teachers according to their participation in the training activities for multicultural education. According to these results, the multicultural education competence perceptions of the trained and untrained teachers did not differ statistically in a meaningful way ($p > .05$).

Comparison of Teachers' Average Scores on Perceptions of Multicultural Competence according to the Region Where the Teacher Was Born

One-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to examine whether the mean scores of teachers' multicultural competence perceptions differ according to the region where they grew up and the results are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. A comparison of teachers' perceptions of multicultural competence according to the region where they were born

Variance	Sum of Squares	Mean Squares	sd	F	p	Significance
Between Groups	1.68	.556	3	3.353	.019	Big city-town
Within Groups	46.25	.166	279			
Total	47.91		272			

According to the results of the One-Way Analysis of Variance, there was a significant difference between the scale mean scores according to the region where the teachers were born and raised. When the Games Howell test results were evaluated, the teachers who grew up in the big city ($\bar{X} = 3.62$) had higher competence in multicultural education than the other teachers.

Do the mean scores of teachers on perceptions of multicultural competence differentiate according to the working year?

One-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to examine whether the mean scores of teachers' multicultural competence perceptions differ according to the working years, and the results are presented in Table 6.

Table 6. Comparison of teachers' multicultural competence perception average scores of working year

Variance	Sum of Squares	Mean Squares	sd	F	p	Significance
Between Groups	1.30	.654	202	3.92	.021	+20 years/ 10-20 years
Within Groups	46.61	.166	80			
Total	47.91		282			

According to the results of the One-Way Analysis of Variance, which was conducted to compare the perceptions of teachers' competence in multicultural education according to their working year, there was a significant difference according to working year. When the Games Howell test results are evaluated, teachers who have worked more than 20 years ($\bar{X} = 3.65$) are more than teachers who have worked less than 20 years.

CONCLUSION

The current study examined the competence perception levels of teachers toward multicultural education. The teachers' competence perceptions towards multicultural education were found to be high.

Teachers' perceptions of multiculturalism competence are related to having lived and worked in places where people from different cultures are, and accordingly, being in contact with people from different cultures. In studies conducted with teachers from different branches examining the perception levels of teachers towards the multicultural education approach, teachers' perception levels were high (Forrest, Lean & Dunn, 2017; Aktoprak, Yiğit & Güneçli, 2017; Kervan, 2017; Karacabey, Ozdere & Bozkus, 2019; Arsal, 2019; Çapçı, 2020).

In the study, teachers' perceptions of competence towards multicultural education were examined according to the branch, and the competence perception levels of classroom teachers were high. Depending on the working conditions of classroom teachers in various schools with students with different cultural characteristics, the presentation of course contents for students from different cultures in undergraduate education may vary depending on the characteristics of the environment and region where they grew up. Hong (2017) conducted interviews with preschool teachers about cultural diversity in their classrooms. There are insufficient knowledge and skills of teachers about multicultural education in classrooms and schools, and the support services provided in this field are not sufficient. Berthelsen & Karupiah (2011) highlighted that preschool teachers have positive views on multicultural education, but they have difficulty in diversifying the practices for their students with different cultural characteristics. Park (2014) identified teachers' opinions about multicultural education and they were positive. Onur-Sezer and Bağçeli-Kahraman (2017) revealed that attitudes toward multiculturalism have a positive quality. Tortop (2014) determined that the attitudes of university students studying at the faculty of education regarding multicultural education did not differ according to the branch.

Arslan and Çalmaşur (2017) explored higher qualifications for multicultural education, and the branch variable differed in terms of multicultural education attitudes, while primary school teachers had more competencies regarding multiculturalism. The high level of multicultural competence is related to the fact that primary school teachers have worked in different regions compared to other branch teachers, and that they have interacted with teachers and parents of students who have been trained in various cultural characteristics as well as students. In the study, the perception of competence towards multicultural education of the teacher who has students from different cultures in his class is higher than the teacher who does not have students from different cultures in his class. Similarly, Bektaş (2022) noted that it is necessary to include studies that support the different developmental characteristics of students in the process of adaptation to the school of students from different cultures. In the study, the level of multiculturalism perception of teachers working in different regions of the country was higher than teachers working in the same region. Taştekin, Bozkurt-Yükçü, İzoğlu, Güngör, Işık-Uslu, & Demircioğlu (2016), and Başbay, Kağnıcı & Sarsar (2013) indicated the average scale scores regarding the attitudes of teachers who worked in different regions were high, Bulut & Başbay, (2014), Çoban, Karaman & Doğan (2010) explored that there was no difference between the attitude scores regarding working in different regions.

Regarding taking multicultural education, there was no difference between their attitudes. Reasons such as the absence of a statistical difference regarding this variable, the fact that the teaching of courses on multiculturalism as a course in education faculties does not date back a long time, and that people's awareness of multiculturalism has not developed depending on their experiences can be given. In this regard, Ndemanu (2012) gave a course on multicultural education to students and the effectiveness of the course was examined. At the end of the course, the attitudes of the students toward multicultural education differed positively. Perkins (2012), in his study with pre-service teachers, revealed the competencies and awareness of students about multiculturalism and examined these results. According to the results obtained from the research, pre-service teachers do not feel sufficient about being ready for multicultural education. If the pre-service teachers had a high awareness of multicultural education, they would engage in various activities for research and self-development for multicultural education (Perkins, 2012).

Määttä (2008) examined the competencies of teachers for multicultural education in the basic education process. According to the results of the study, the knowledge and skills of teachers in multicultural education are not sufficient, but they need teaching experience in a multicultural environment. In Bekerman's (2004) study, the attitudes of students and their families towards multicultural education, who were educated in a multicultural school, were examined. Many positive values have emerged in schools where different cultures coexist, and cultural characteristics contribute to education. People living in places where there is cultural diversity are more competent in multicultural education, and they are more likely to ignore each other and negative situations.

According to the place where the teachers were born and raised, the perceptions of multicultural education were higher for teachers who were born and raised in big cities than teachers who grew up in other places. In the studies of Arslan and Çalmaşur (2017), and Akkaya, Susar-Kırmızı & İşçi (2018), there was no difference between the multicultural education attitudes according to the variable of the place where the teachers grew up. The attitudes of university students towards multiculturalism regarding the working years were examined. In the study examined, as the grade level and age of university students increased, their attitudes toward multicultural education changed positively (Çalışkan & Gençer, 2016). According to Szabo and Anderson (2009), the promotion of schools with low socio-economic levels contributes positively to the attitudes of teacher candidates towards multiculturalism. In the study conducted by Aslan and Kozikoğlu (2017), the attitudes of teachers with a high period of working years towards multicultural education are higher than those of teachers with a low period of working years. Yıldırım (2016) explored teachers' views on multiculturalism. The classroom practices of teachers from different nationalities working in different regions regarding multicultural education attitudes were examined. Teachers have high perceptions of multicultural education from the studies they have done in the classroom and their attitudes (Yıldırım, 2016). According to Hong, Troutman, Hartzell & Kyles (2010), the awareness level of teachers toward multicultural education is high, and the necessity of education to provide studies that can be done for these students, whom they welcome to have students from different cultures in their classrooms and to develop in this direction. Abu-Ghazalah (2017) indicated that preschool teachers' attitudes towards multicultural education are at a positive level and that children's multicultural education also contributes to their personality development and social skill development. In the research that Akar (2017) conducted with pre-service teachers, critical thinking dispositions predicted their perceptions of multiculturalism. Based on these results, the most influential factor in teachers' perceptions of multicultural competence is interacting with groups of people who grew up in different cultures due to intercultural interaction. Democracy-based practices and practices related to administration and courses should be implemented in schools. In line with the results of the study, courses can be organized at all educational levels, especially teacher training courses based on intercultural interaction and education. The creation of the courses in the curriculum from content that has a global nature and has more validity, and it would be appropriate to use languages that are used more globally, such as English, in the lessons. Teachers and pre-service teachers should be included in exchange programs to expand international exchange programs and increase interaction with different cultures within the scope of national and international programs. Studies on multiculturalism should be carried out in different regions of the country and with the participation of different sample groups. Qualitative studies that deal with multiculturalism in depth in the education and training process should be carried out.

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