

Examining early childhood teachers' beliefs and practices about multicultural education*

Özge Özel¹

Abstract

Multiculturalism has become a crucial part of education in most countries and Türkiye since global migrations are constantly increasing. However, multicultural education is still being discovered by teachers and educators. Therefore, this study examined early childhood teachers' beliefs and practices through multicultural education in Türkiye. The study was designed as a qualitative study in which multiple case studies design was utilized for investigation. All six participants were selected by purposive sampling and working with 5-6-year-old children from different countries. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews, and inductive content analysis was utilized to analyze the collected data. The findings indicated that teachers are not aware of the meaning of multiculturalism and multicultural education. Teachers were not prepared to teach culturally diverse children. In addition, they believe that instead of preparing the classroom for children with different funds of knowledge and adapting the curriculum for them multicultural children should adapt to the current educational system. Finally, teachers claimed the language barrier is the biggest issue they had to cope with, and they use online translators, older siblings going to the same school as interpreters, and body language to solve this problem.

Keywords: Multicultural Education, Teachers' Beliefs, Teachers' Practices.

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¹ Corresponding author, Burdur Mehmet Akif Ersoy University, Faculty of Education, Early Childhood Education Department, Türkiye, ozgeozel@mehmetakif.edu.tr

INTRODUCTION

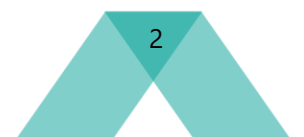
The concept of multicultural education was first introduced by Horace Kallen in 1915. According to Banks (2010), multicultural education is the coexistence of children with differences such as language, religion, race, social class, and ethnic group in schools where they receive education. The main purpose of multicultural education is to ensure the development of the individual by focusing on differences, improving behavior, attitudes, and values, gaining multicultural social skills, and providing equality in education (Gay, 2009). When the socio-cultural structure of children develops multicultural education, it will teach them to respect people from different cultures and offer equal opportunities in every field of education (Yazıcı et al., 2009). Multicultural education has become widespread in many countries, especially in America. Considering its historical background and geopolitical position, Türkiye is one of the countries where multicultural education is very important (Aydın, 2013).

Located at the intersection of the Asian, European, and African continents, Türkiye is in an important position regarding the coexistence of different cultures. Anatolia has hosted many civilizations since ancient times and is where other tribes and ethnic groups live (Aydın, 2013). Increasing migration movements in Anatolia, considered a bridge between Eastern and Western cultures, has also increased the multicultural structure in Türkiye. In the research conducted by KONDA in 2007 on ethnic origins in Türkiye, 78.1% of citizens over the age of 18 are Turkish, 13.4% Kurdish, 1.5% Laz and Turkmen. In addition, due to the civil war that started in Syria in 2011 and continues, millions of people migrated to Türkiye because it is a neighboring country. According to 2019 registration statistics, 32% of the 3.9 million refugees in Türkiye are children (UNHCR, 2019). Based on the figures announced by the General Directorate of Migration Management (2024), 1 million 113 thousand 529 people immigrated to Türkiye. These data also increased the importance of the concept of multiculturalism in education.

Schools play an important role in countries with different cultural characteristics (Bryan, 2009; Portera, 2008). Starting from preschool education, ensuring equality of opportunity and supporting the social development of children can be achieved by creating a democratic environment in the classroom (Ünlü & Örtün, 2013). At this point, teachers undertake the most important task. They implement the education program in the evaluation process and create the learning environment (Polat Unutkan, 2007). Furthermore, teachers must have certain knowledge, attitudes, and skills to apply multicultural education in their classrooms (Bekir & Bayraktar, 2018).

The preschool period is when children's beliefs and attitudes toward their culture and other cultures begin to develop (Çapçı, 2020). For this reason, preschool teachers need to know how to implement culturally sensitive teaching strategies and effective education to meet the needs of various children (Zakin, 2012). It has been found that teachers' academic knowledge and skills and their sensitivity to multiculturalism impact children's academic success (Banks et al., 2001). Aydın (2013) also stated that culturally sensitive education in classrooms and teachers' attitudes towards children from different cultures affect children's academic success.

The fact that multiculturalism needs to be sufficiently covered in our country's undergraduate and vocational in-service training is one of the reasons preschool teachers encounter problems arising from cultural differences (Balay, 2004). Çiçek (2017) stated that there is no standard program or practice related to multicultural education in the preschool period, and they do not know how to deal with the problems they face or may encounter. For this reason, Çiçek (2017) stressed that teachers expect support from the Ministry of National Education regarding multicultural education with in-service training, seminars, and conferences. In this context, there is a need to restructure existing education programs in line with multicultural education and to integrate multicultural education into the teacher training system (Balay, 2004; Cogan & Morris, 2001).



In light of all this information, multicultural education should be included in the teacher training curriculum so that new teachers can be equipped with multicultural education (Ambe, 2006; Ensign, 2009; Fox & Diaz-Greenberg, 2006; Gay, 2009; Karaoğlu & Özbay, 2022; Rao, 2005; Szabo and Anderson, 2009). It is a fact that teachers who have skills and equipment in multicultural education will be more confident in their profession (Polat & Kılıç, 2013). Integrating education into the undergraduate level and training well-equipped teachers is also important for teachers assigned to different regions, especially in the first years of their profession. In addition, Ambe (2006) argues that it is very important for pre-service teachers to have multicultural education skills to cope with the constantly changing demographics of their schools. In their study, Sheets and Chew (2000) examined the perceptions of pre-service teachers of Chinese origin regarding multicultural education courses in teacher training programs. The study determined that pre-service teachers internalized multicultural education, enriched the classroom environment with principles based on multiculturalism, were willing to do so, and understood how they could change and improve the educational environment.

When current literature was examined in Türkiye, it was seen that the majority of research was about teachers' thoughts, attitudes, and competencies toward multicultural education (Büyüктаşkapu-Soydan et al., 2022; Çapçı & Durmuşoğlu, 2022; Özdoğru et al., 2021; Simsar, 2020). In the study conducted by Ünlü and Örtten (2013) in Turkey, pre-service teachers' perceptions of multiculturalism and the concept of multicultural education were measured. They gave positive answers regarding knowledge and attitude, although they did not receive any training on multiculturalism during their undergraduate education. However, they were unaware of the lack of knowledge, which creates many problems when teaching multicultural children. In addition, they suggested it may be beneficial for prospective teachers to receive training within the scope of multicultural education in the vocational education process.

In Çapçı and Durmuşoğlu's (2022) study, they found out preschool teachers' perceptions of multicultural competence could vary based on where they live. For instance, their participants from the Mediterranean have higher positive attitudes towards multicultural education than teachers from Central Anatolia. In addition, as teachers' multicultural education attitudes and multicultural self-efficacy perceptions increase, their attitudes towards refugee children improve while there is a negative relationship between teachers' age and their attitudes towards multiculturalism (Akman, 2020; Dolapçı, 2019; Özdoğru et al., 2021). However, Kuzu and Deniz (2019) stated that there is a positive relationship between teachers' years of experience and their positive attitudes towards children from different cultures also increase.

On the other hand, Sakız (2016) stressed that teachers felt inadequate in different groups' education. Akman (2020) claimed that teachers' adequate knowledge about multicultural education will increase their positive attitudes towards refugee children. However, preservice preschool teachers are unprepared to teach multicultural children at universities. Büyüктаşkapu-Soydan et al. (2022) stated that it would be beneficial to increase the competencies of teachers in Türkiye by providing international learning experiences related to different cultures and education instead of trying to cope with the individual differences they encounter in the classroom through trial and error in their professional lives. As all these researchers mentioned, teachers play a key role in multicultural education, and even though research showed they have positive attitudes towards multicultural education, there is a lack of research about their practice. Therefore, this research aims to examine preschool teachers' perspectives on multicultural education and their classroom practices and to seek answers to the following questions:

- What are the views of preschool teachers on multicultural education?
- What are the classroom practices of preschool teachers regarding multicultural education?

METHOD

Research Design

The qualitative research model was used in this study, which was conducted to examine preschool teachers' perspectives on multicultural education and their classroom practices. The qualitative research model was determined by considering the purpose of the research, as it provides sensitivity to the natural environment, has a holistic approach, enables the perceptions to be revealed, has flexibility in the research design, and offers qualitative data (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2011). The case study design, one of the qualitative research types, was used as the research design. A case study is a research method in which one or more events, environments, programs, social groups, or interconnected systems are examined in depth (Stake, 2005). Stake (2005) and Yin (2003) emphasized that a qualitative case study was developed to investigate a real situation in a real-life context. They also noted that the case study gave the researcher a rich depiction of unique cases. There may be more than one case as well as the case under investigation (Büyüköztürk et al., 2010). For this reason, the research was completed by conducting a multiple case study to reveal teachers' perspectives on multicultural education and their classroom practices.

Participants and Procedure

Participants were selected through purposeful sampling among preschool teachers serving in preschool education institutions affiliated with the Ministry of National Education [MoNE] in the city center of Burdur. Stake (2005) emphasized that between four and 10 cases are sufficient for an in-depth understanding of the interaction between the case and the system in multiple case studies. For this reason, this study was conducted with six female preschool teachers to examine their perspectives on multicultural education and their in-class practices. Teachers were coded as P1, P2,..., and P6 to protect their identities.

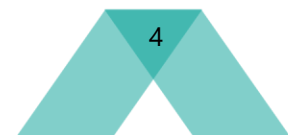
Measures

The interview method was used to collect the data for the research. An interview as a research technique is a controlled and purposeful verbal communication between the researcher and the person who is the research subject (Cohen & Manion, 1994). The researcher aims to systematically reveal the thoughts and feelings of the target person by directing the questions he has prepared beforehand about the subject he is researching or by running purposeful questions at that moment. The questions designed by the researchers were finalized (four questions were combined into two since they were overlapped) by taking experts' opinions in the field. In addition, Okuyan and Kapçak (2016) emphasize that to increase the validity and reliability of qualitative research, the researcher should explain how he reached the results and report the results in detail. For this reason, the coding stages and findings of the research are described in detail.

Data Analysis

Content analysis was conducted to analyze the qualitative data obtained in the research. According to Yıldırım and Şimşek (2011), in content analysis, it is stated that first, a key table should be created for coding the data. Then, the data should be coded according to this table, themes should be determined, categories should be made, and concepts should be revealed. For this reason, the interview transcripts were subjected to content analysis. The significance of the opinions was evaluated by comparing them with other data sets by looking at the themes and categories under which the frequently expressed opinions were wrong.

For the content analysis, first, the notes of the interview forms were examined, and a preliminary evaluation was made about how to create the themes. Each dataset was reviewed several times, and themes of opinions were formed. Teachers' opinions were gathered under these themes and categories and examined by determining each theme's categories. Content analysis was done in the following order:



- Marking the meaningful expressions according to the research purpose in the opinions in the interview forms.
- Creation of a list of identified opinions.
- Listing similar opinions together.
- Writing themes representing each group.
- Categorizing the opinions gathered under each theme.
- Discuss under which category the opinions may or may not be included.
- Establishing frequencies and percentages of themes, categories, and opinions.

Table 1. The Coding Process of the First Theme ‘The Term of Multiculturalism’

The Term of Multiculturalism	
Answers	Codes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Different country • Different cultural features in the same location • Raised in different regions. • Different country • Immigrant- migrant • Different cultures • Village origin • Different lifestyle • Different cultures • Different religion • Different race • Traditions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Those who traditionally classify the concept of multiculturalism <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Different race • Different religion • Different language • Descriptive classifiers of the concept of Multiculturalism

Validity, Reliability, and Ethical Considerations

The notion of "validity" in research produced for qualitative research was described by Yıldırım and Şimşek (2011) as objectively expressing the current reality in all its reality. According to Okuyan and Kapçak (2016), the most crucial validation technique involves explaining how a researcher arrived at the results and detailing those results. The analysis steps and themes were so thoroughly addressed in this study. The reliability of the research subject can be obtained via variation, participant confirmation, or colleague confirmation (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2011). To ensure the research's validity, each film included in the study was seen twice by two experts who were not the researchers, and the results were compared.

All procedures followed were by the ethical standards of the responsible committee on Burdur Mehmet Akif Ersoy University Non-Interventional Clinical Research Ethics Committee with the decision number GO 2022/750. Informed consent was obtained from all participants to be included in the study.

FINDINGS

The Term of Multiculturalism

The findings showed that most participants identified multiculturalism as coming from different countries and nations. For instance, the answer of P1 regarding the concept of multiculturalism is,

Multiculturalism, we have Turks in our class, we have Afghans, we have Syrians, we had Russians in previous years. It has been determined that he defines himself only as children from different ethnic groups by saying, "I think so." It did not include concepts such as religion, language, cultural characteristics, traditions, or socioeconomic status, and it was determined that children from other countries in the classroom were limited to multiculturalism.

P2 defined the concept of multiculturalism as being rich in culture by saying, *"I guess it means having an idea in every sense, having seen and visited many places, read or learned many things."* She also added that different geographies are not associated with other cultures. P3 treated the concept of multiculturalism as a descriptive one. She not only limited herself to people from different religions, languages, and nationalities but also grew up in different regions and used different cultural concepts. In other words, the coexistence of people from different cultures. According to her, it is an environment where the east, west, different hometowns, foreigners, and folk songs all come together.

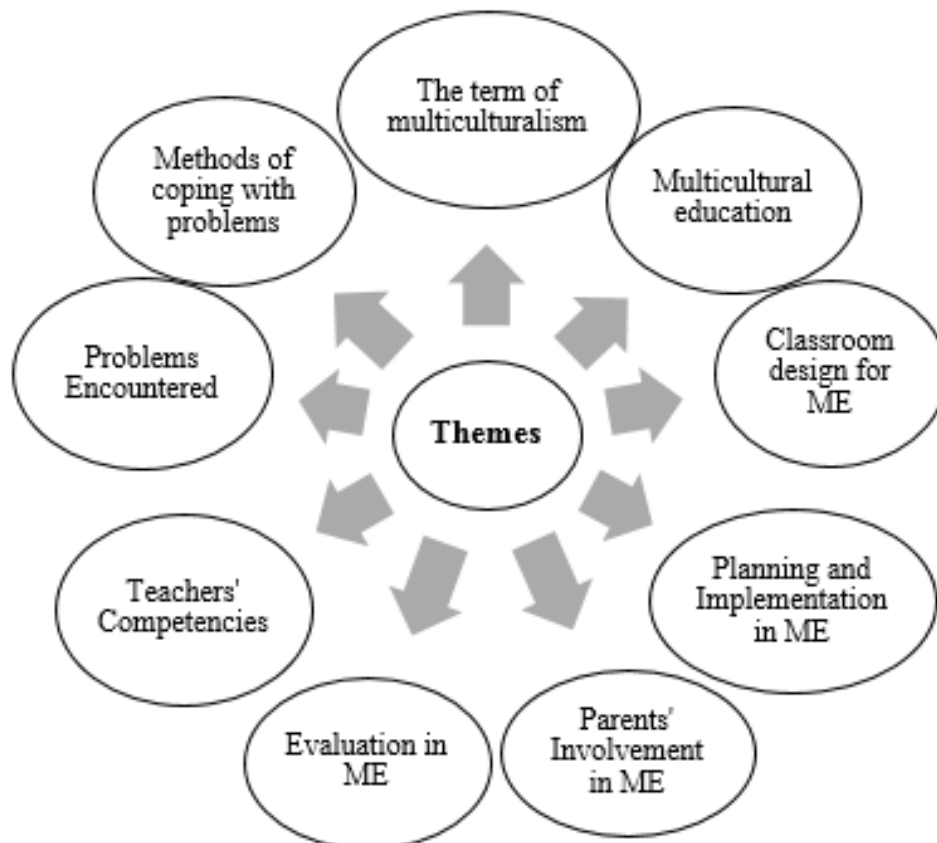


Figure 1. Themes Based on Created Coding Process

P4 defined the concept of multiculturalism in general as people coming from different regions. She also stated that she was working with multicultural children for the first time and that there was no conceptual difference. Also, P5 defined multiculturalism as growing up in different regions and countries. However, P6 did not limit herself while identifying multiculturalism as people who belonged to other religions, languages, and nationalities, but also treated different traditions and customs as different lifestyles brought up in different regions.

She added that different lifestyles, cultures, and religions influenced people's culture and gave an example: *"People's traditions are very different; for example, Christians had these egg things. They brought the Easter holidays with them. Russians are different, so I don't know how they breed. But really, their children were very different"*.

Multicultural Education

All participants claimed they needed specific teaching methods for multiculturalism. For instance, regarding multicultural education, P1 said, *"Again, the same thing is the gathering of those children in the same class; we continue normally,"* and stated there is no difference between normal preschool education

and multicultural education. In line with her answers, it was determined that she did not make any difference in the scope of multicultural education, did not express any information about the preschool education program, and continued the normal education process in the application part.

P2 stated that multicultural education is the education of children from different nationalities together, and she continues as a normal education process. She said, *"Recently, we met in our classroom; Syrian and Afghan citizens are our children"*. She defined multicultural education by saying, *"Education all together"* and emphasized that she used the same educational methods and strategies for all children.

P3 said that multicultural education is a normal education. She stated that the reason for this opinion was that she had yet to receive any training on multicultural education and that there needed to be more information on how to train and practice for children from different cultures in the classroom. She said that based on their experiences, they try to do something about it themselves, what they can do about the children who come, and how they should treat each child, they try.

P4 claimed multicultural children's family structures are different, and this is not related to education. She stated she could not give specific education to children coming from different cultures and supported her idea by saying:

Because when the class is mixed, what kind of special education can you make? There are 6-year-olds in the same class, 5-year-olds, 4-year-olds, and I can't even give them a different education. Unfortunately, only one teacher is in the classroom. Because it is so, there is no further education, so we do not know such an education, at least.

P5 stated that multicultural education is integration. From the answers given by the teacher on this subject, it was observed that she saw herself as inadequate in terms of experience and experience and, therefore, could not provide a comprehensive answer. Regarding multicultural education, P6 stated there is no difference between normal preschool education and multicultural education because there is nothing extra that could be done since individual differences are included in the preschool curriculum. She added, *"We don't have a problem with children from these different cultures in pre-school. Since we train according to individual differences and it is game-oriented, they can adapt very easily."*

Classroom Design in Multicultural Education

Based on participant's responses, they do not make any adjustments based on multicultural education. According to the findings, it was determined that P1 did not adjust the classroom layout, considering multicultural education. It has been seen that the classroom arrangement in multicultural education is perceived as teaching rather than the classroom arrangement for multicultural education and responds accordingly. She said, *"I have never done anything extra about multicultural education."*

P2 claimed she did not also adjust the classroom layout, considering multicultural education. She said, *"To tell the truth, we can't. But of course, I try to spend a little more time with them while teaching and talking. Sometimes, if there is something he doesn't understand, I show him"*. In addition, she stated that if she designs the classroom for multicultural children, this may cause discrimination among children. Furthermore, P3, P4, P5, and P6 said similar things to other participants and claimed they do not adjust for children with different cultures.

Plan and Implementation in Multicultural Education

When the data was examined, the participants did not include multicultural education in planning and practice for various reasons. For instance, P1 told children from different cultures to adapt to Turkish culture and the educational system. P2 also said, *"I didn't do anything extra about it. Children adapt a little quicker. When the school starts, we give a place for them to learn Turkish."* Another participant (P3) supported this statement: *"I do not do any special plan or activity for multicultural children since this could conflict with being equal for each child for me."* She added that children from other countries try to do most things by seeing their friends anyway, which works.

P4 also claimed she should have included something extra for multicultural education in planning and implementation. The only thing she needs to do is for the language barrier. Since most children from other countries speak little Turkish at home, they learn to speak Turkish in kindergartens. To solve this language barrier problem, she said using pictures, visuals, and games to solve the language problem in the adaptation process works. Regarding this, P4 expressed her thoughts by saying, *"Nothing extra can be done. We play games about it so that they learn their names singing 'I'm trying to take care of myself now. I am trying to take care of myself'"*.

P5 said she tried to include multicultural education in the planning; while doing this, it was done by introducing different cultures in the classroom. She also stressed the language barrier in working with multicultural education. She claimed she tried to teach the instructions with visuals until the children got used to it, even if they did not know the language. In addition, she thinks that children from different cultures should adapt without implementing activities such as teaching differences and making room for differences. She stated:

I show him things he doesn't understand. For example, I say bring your pen; the child is looking. I offer the pen, or I show where it is. I tell you will sit here. I designate a symbol for their location, like a kite or a bird. They can know the regions that belong to them according to the symbols.

In addition, when looking at the application part in a multicultural education environment, she reported that she included supportive teaching methods such as games, drama, and peer learning. She gave an example:

We can find a common way by talking to multicultural children and other children; for example, how do we share toys? If I go and pull the toy from his hand, he will react to me because he does not want to give it, or he will remove it, and there will be a fight. He does not get it when you want it, either. What will you do about it? You will show it with your actions. Even in front of children, I offer my children as if I am someone who does not understand them. I am trying to force their toys from their hands. He tries to push them away without hurting them; what did I feel when I do this? They think it, too. Because they cannot express their feelings, you can agree on whatever is done through drama. For example, I am standing before you; you will bring it. I do not give way to you. How can you ask me for permission? What can you do to pass? I try to make children find their way by doing such mind things and making storms. I would like to know if anything else can be done. These are the methods we learn and apply.

The last participant (P6) stated that she should have included multicultural education in planning and implementation. This is because she thinks preschool education is universal and takes place through play. Multicultural education is a subject that needs to be addressed at the primary education level. She stated:

These questions are like this: they always remind me of primary school. Normally, the first day of school requires the same attention for all children, so they are all small. So, for example, a foreign child will not know, maybe he came from scratch, so in that case, this is my opinion on the subject; alien children do more things about it than our regular Turkish children do. Therefore, the first day is easier with them because they are more eager for such adaptation. For example, our children are very dependent on their mothers. That is, children who have never been separated from their mothers.

She added that since all children are treated the same regardless of different cultures, there is no need to make an application about this. She gave another example:

Because if you are going to take them to that toilet on the first day, you take them by hand. The toilet is right there; you cannot go from there; it is already learning by doing them. Therefore, it does not matter if it is from a different culture. They are even easier. Because they have such a hand and their



economic level is generally low, it is as if the school has come to the playground for them. That is why they adapt much more easily to everything.

Parents' Involvement in Multicultural Education

For parents' involvement, all participants mentioned parents' language barrier. Based on participants' responses, it is understood that they thought of parents' involvement as family communication. For instance, P1 stated that parents' participation is insufficient in multicultural education because of a lack of parents' efforts in communication. Therefore, she uses body language and older brothers, sisters, or relatives in the upper classes as interpreters to communicate with her parents. She said these methods of communication negatively affected parents' involvement because they shared with their older siblings, and she did not see any family members during the academic year.

For the parent's involvement, P2 mentioned that when she calls parents to inform them, she constantly uses voice recording or inserts an interpreter. During meetings, she uses body language or online translators. She stated that parent communication and parent involvement in a multicultural classroom always require extra effort from teachers. She stressed that family communication is easier now than in the first year of working with children from other countries and takes less effort.

P3 claimed there is parental involvement in multicultural education, and she provides individual assistance to families who do not participate in class or meetings. It has been determined that she helps with phone calls and information from digital platforms. She also sends parents activities they can do on WhatsApp. She said parents are generally respectful and eager to participate. However, P4 mentioned that there is no parental involvement in multicultural education. She said, *"Foreign parents do not come to the class. They are not coming. They cannot come because they have 4 or 5 children at home; they must take care"*.

P4 said she uses various methods, such as a translator, an interpreter, and body language in family communication. She claimed this creates many problems, such as misconceptions. On the other hand, P5 stated that parents' involvement in multicultural education varies according to nationalities, saying, *"So families are different. The Russians were meticulous and obeyed the rules, but the Syrians were not. They are very different."* Finally, P 6 also agreed that no parents are involved in multicultural education. She uses the same methods, such as body language, an interpreter, and an online translator, to communicate with her parents. She added: *"We don't include any parental involvement specifically for multicultural children. When we do such participation activities, we send the same invitations to all families and expect the same contributions from them"*.

Evaluation in Multicultural Education

For evaluation in multicultural education, all participants claimed that they do not have any specific evaluation method for multicultural children. They evaluate all children, but they do not measure their funds of knowledge in the same way. P1 stated, *"I evaluate all children in the same way with the same methods,"* and said she does not use any method. P2 said she evaluated the normal process evaluation form in a multicultural classroom. It was determined that the evaluation method was made on the outcome indicators and individually.

P3 claimed, *"It's person-based, frankly. As I said, when I evaluate children, the thing is that we evaluate children among their groups"*. Also, P4 supported this idea by saying: *"I think it would be more accurate to evaluate them on an individual basis, so I think I would make that kind of assessment, I guess."* In addition, P5 stated she evaluated the form of normal process evaluation in a multicultural classroom. She said she did it by considering the achievements, indicators, and age group and stated, *"I evaluate them in line with our gains, with normal gains and indicators. In other words, we evaluate according to age group"*.

Finally, P6 stated that she evaluates them according to their developmental areas unless they are a child with special needs. She added:

I do not make a separate evaluation of the social domain, self-care skills, cognitive domain, and motor domain. Because if the child does not have such a learning disability, he can get comfortable with things in the mental field if he is at a normal level. I only make the same numbers, colours, or concepts, except for very comprehensive things, such as the program offering solutions to the situation in the social field. Therefore, I expect what I know from the same normal children. One or two things in the cognitive field, for example, in expressive work, they understand what they read or in the field of Turkish language. In other words, I expect such understanding in every field from them to be more meaning-oriented gains, and if there are indicators, they are more flexible. Almost all my children say the same gains by hand.

Teachers' Competencies

According to the participants, two sub-categories were formed: teachers' knowledge and teachers' experiences for teacher qualifications. P1 stated that her competence was not related to her expertise and experience; it was based on children's needs and behaviors. Furthermore, P2 said she felt inadequate because she did not take any course related to multicultural education during either her bachelor's degree or after graduation. She said:

We did not take any special course about children having different funds of knowledge, but the Minister of Education centrally assigned us. I was given to the east part of Turkey, and most of my children were speaking only Kurdish. I was trying to figure out what to do since I was unprepared.

She added that she learned how to deal with these problems by experiencing them. P3 claimed she was not prepared to teach multicultural children, but she is trying to find the best method for them by saying:

I am figuring out what I can do by establishing a one-to-one dialogue with the children. I do not know whether the methods I have applied are correct, but at least 2-3 months after the opening of the schools, good communication has been established between the children.

P4 stated she felt inadequate because she did not take this course during the undergraduate period and still needed training. She thinks that this situation has been decreasing as she gains experience. However, she thought it would have been better if she had given us information at universities. P5 claimed she made an effort to improve herself, but she still needs to receive an education on multiculturalism, and that training should be given on this subject. She said: *"So something special had to be done for this, of course. Teachers should have received an education"*. Finally, P6 stated that teachers had to be given the basic communication skills of "sit, get up" and "come, go, do, don't" just to communicate for a month. Otherwise, the state of education is already a universal thing. She said: *"I have a lot of Arabic children; it has been happening every year for years. I take individual Arabic lessons myself to improve it, but that should be normal."*

Problems Encountered in Multicultural Education

When the answers given were examined, it was determined that the teachers mostly encountered language problems for all participants. P1 said, *"Turkish is our most important problem."* She stated that some methods had been tried to solve the problems encountered by saying: *"I think they need to be trained because they did not undergo any training to adapt to our country even though they will live with us."* She claimed the language problem directly affected the family communication, but nothing was done about it. Most of the mothers do not speak Turkish. P2 gave an example to support this statement: *"The problem is that they don't understand. You say you sit; he doesn't sit; you say get up; he doesn't get up"*. In addition, P3 said: *"He comes to you, he can't say he has a toilet, he wants to drink water, he can't tell you. So, first, you can't teach the classroom rules"*.

P4, P5, and P6 also agreed with that idea and said the most significant and common problem is a language barrier, and they gave examples. For instance, *"There are Syrian children here; we had much trouble with the language, so we can't get along"* (P5). *"Families that do not speak the language create many issues"* (P6).

Methods of Dealing with Problems

According to the findings, one of the problems encountered is the language problem. Parallel to this problem, coping methods were determined as opening language courses and doing something with their efforts. Regarding this, P1 said, *"One of our teachers opened a Turkish course for a year because they did not know Turkish, but many children's parents. In other words, there is no learning effort"* and emphasized that the solution attempts are insufficient.

It has been determined that a method of coping with the problems encountered is doing something with their efforts. For instance, *"I try to play games and communicate between friends in language problems. Feelings of empathy and cooperation among them"* (P2). Another method to cope with this language barrier is showing and illustrating the directions. *"For example, I said to cut, and I hold it with scissors and show it. Each event needs to be dealt with individually, but the most important thing is to show it"* (P3).

P4 stated that she used various methods such as games, music, drama, visuals, and language development activities. She added: *"I mean, if I talk about puppets or something, I encourage those kids to use puppets."* P5 mentioned using an interpreter in language problems to cope with the problems encountered, but she also stated that this is insufficient. She said:

I mean, it is hard; it is hard. As I said, you can get some help and support from the family in the first weeks, or if he has an older sister going to the same school, they come to check more often and help with communication and translation, but of course, it is not possible during the lesson. As I said, showing helps more.

She stated that he found solutions by dealing with and helping them personally with the problems he encountered with the activity and practice. On the other hand, P6 noted that the concept of multiculturalism in preschool education is not very important because the preschool period is universal, and the problems encountered. Ways of coping will become more crucial at the next education level.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

When the data from the interviews with six teachers during the research process were analyzed, the teachers' opinions were discussed in nine themes. According to the results obtained from the data, it was seen that all teachers defined multiculturalism by using common terms to explain the concept of multiculturalism, which was determined as the first theme. Many have described the idea of multiculturalism using terms such as different countries, different races, different religions, and different upbringings. When the literature is examined, similar definitions of multiculturalism have been found. Sezer and Kahraman (2017) defined multiculturalism as the coexistence of individuals' social class, age, language, ethnicity, religion/sect, and cultural differences. Another definition, which is different from these, was made by Banks (1993), as it includes not only those belonging to stereotypes such as other ethnic groups, social classes, and religion but also those of different genders, giftedness, and intelligence.

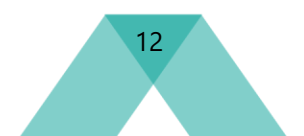
Regarding education in multiculturalism, which was determined as another theme, a few teachers responded as children from different cultures receiving education together. In contrast, a few responded as imposing our culture on children from different cultures. Two teachers, on the other hand, stated that

they learned and will learn by experiencing it over time since they did not receive an education for education in multiculturalism. Considering all responses, it can be concluded that teachers need more knowledge about multicultural education. Because when the literature is scanned, in the beginning, without changing the multicultural education curriculum in significant ways, it consists of infusing bits and pieces of ethnic and cultural content into the education system. But recently, through various stages of development, multicultural education has turned into a transformative idea that requires significant changes in all its fundamental variables applied in schools. Thus, children from different racial, ethnic, cultural, linguistic, and religious groups can experience educational equality (Banks, 2009). Also, Dere and Demirci-Dölek (2023) categorized potential problems in multicultural education as lack of experienced teachers, academic unsuccessfulness, lack of educational material, difficulties in school enrollment, and decline in school enrollment by levels.

Regarding the classroom layout in multicultural education, which is the third theme determined because of the opinions made within the scope of multicultural education, all the teachers said that they did not make any special physical changes regarding the classroom layout and continued their education according to the current order. Tarman and Tarman (2011), in their study, found that more than recognizing cultural diversity alone is needed. They reported understanding and respect for different cultures should be developed in early childhood classrooms. They said teachers should be aware of their beliefs, values, perspectives, and prejudices about cultural diversity and develop them through multicultural education. They also emphasized that they should be sensitive and knowledgeable about other cultures and that to improve the quality of life of children, early childhood teachers should create an environment suitable for cultural diversity and implement an anti-biased, multicultural curriculum in the classroom. For this, in the classrooms, the photographs and posters should show the diverse cultural backgrounds of the people in the school (children and families). Dramatic play equipment and objects should reflect cultural diversity. Cooking utensils, clothing, personal objects, and objects used for holiday celebrations should reflect a variety of cultures. Art supplies should include skin tone (tan, brown, and black), paint, paper, felt-tip pens, and crayons. Babies should represent a variety of races and ethnicities. Manipulative materials (puzzles, small human figures, and games) should portray diversity in race and ethnicity. Music is a universal language, so teachers should have a variety of musical instruments and CDs in their classrooms. Singing and teaching songs in another language reflects a variety of cultural styles. Teachers should use music from other cultures for background, movement, dance, and bedtime lullabies (Tarman & Tarman, 2011).

When the teacher's responses about planning and implementation in multicultural education, which was determined as the fourth theme, were examined, it was determined that they still needed to make changes regarding multiculturalism, especially in planning. Against these results, Nikawanti (2016) stated that to provide the best service for multicultural education at school, all the elements that will support the school multicultural education process should be well designed, planned, and controlled, and that in schools, it is necessary to encourage the attitude of multicultural children to be members of a democratic society. He said that the learning process should be planned.

Considering the answers given by the teachers about multicultural education practices within the scope of the fourth theme, it is understood from their statements that although some teachers do practice this, they do not adopt this as an application for multicultural education. It has been shown that the practices do not include special practices that respect different cultures and welcome children from different cultures in education. Lee and Walsh (2005) talked about the practices of Mary, a teacher who teaches in a multicultural classroom. Among these, he spoke about getting to know the foods of different cultures, making family visits, inviting the family to school, providing cultural acquaintance, playing video games that are common to other cultures for this time, and even getting a master's education to become more expert in this subject. This highlights the importance of multicultural education practices in preschool education.



The answers given by the teachers for the theme of family participation, which is the fifth theme created from the collected data, can be summarized as not making family participation and only communicating to convey the necessary notifications to the family. A teacher said he included the family in the process by getting the digital tools (video, song, etc.) suitable for the activities of the online social groups. However, family participation in multicultural education is very important for breaking prejudices and for each child to receive education under equal conditions for the close recognition and acceptance of different cultures. Lee and Walsh (2005) talked about activities such as family visits and family invitations to school and introducing their culture; Pattnaik (2003) argued that parents are their children's first teachers and role models and that parents' attitudes and practices towards diversity influence and shape children's attitudes towards people different from them. Therefore, it is important to discover, change, and expand parents' attitudes and knowledge about multicultural education. In addition, he argues that since multicultural education includes emotional, knowledge, and skill components, the participation of parents in schools' multicultural education policies and practices will facilitate their children's acceptance and understanding of diversity.

According to the results of the collected data, another theme was determined as an evaluation of multicultural education. Most of the teachers stated that they did not make a specific assessment. They answered that we evaluate the children from our own culture the same way we assess the children belonging to our own culture. One teacher said that this assessment should be individual. Another said that he evaluated them according to age skills that were younger than expected for their age, especially in language development. Besides these, Sirin et al. (2009) examine how teachers' views on immigrant families predict their evaluations of first-year children's academic competence and behavioral problems. The results showed that when teachers perceived parents as having inconsistent value differences, they evaluated children more negatively regarding academic competence and behavioral problems, even after controlling for children's gender and ethnicity, parental education, and parental school involvement. It has been observed that teachers' prejudices are also effective in their evaluation of children.

The seventh theme is the proficiency levels of teachers in multicultural education. Most teachers think they need to be more competent and educated. In a qualitative study by Demirçelik (2012), it was concluded that teachers with children from different cultures tired them more and that teachers and administrators felt the need to receive training from a team of experts on this subject, and Esen (2009) concluded that teachers saw themselves as inadequate and needed in-service training. Also, Dere and Demirci Dölek (2023) stressed that there is a lack of qualified teachers to teach multicultural children in Türkiye.

The problems faced by the teachers were determined as the eighth theme. According to the results obtained from the data, for this theme, the teachers mostly mentioned the language problem and the exclusion of children from different cultures. In the study conducted by Sözer and Işiker (2021), the most common problems faced by teachers who have Syrian children in their classrooms are problems based on communication and cultural difference sub-dimensions, while the least encountered problems are considered as problems in harmful habits and prejudice sub-dimensions. A study by Stier and Sandström (2018) in Sweden showed that cultural and religious differences lead to dilemmas and potential friction between children, preschool teachers, and parents. It also showed that the preschool curriculum provides little guidance, and instead, preschool teachers need to develop strategies to address the expectations and demands of children and parents.

As the last theme, the methods of coping with the problems faced by the teachers were discussed. According to the results, many teachers reported benefiting from interpreters, translation applications, peer children who knew languages, or older sisters and brothers for language problems. Many children need to have activities in learning languages from different cultures or preparing materials suitable for

that language (nutrition list, ingredient list, etc.). They reported not benefiting from the universal language of music, dance, or pictures. Anderstaf et al. (2021) stated in their study in a school in Sweden that contains 70% different cultures that teachers encounter similar problems. Still, they also use different cultures as the source and solution of the problem.

To examine the change in teachers' perspectives in the study more comprehensively, in-service training can be given to a group of teachers. It can be developed by comparing pre-and post-training interviews. For multicultural education for teachers, especially as a handbook, A guidebook that includes planning, implementation, evaluation stages, classroom arrangements, and tips on parents' involvement can be prepared. Teachers can be trained on this ever-increasing multicultural education, either during the seminars at the beginning of the year or with in-service training. A course on multicultural education in early childhood could be added to the undergraduate curriculum. A film can be prepared for teachers as a short film or animation, which will increase their awareness and motivate their desire to learn about multicultural education and can be sent to them to watch.

Statement of Researchers

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Author Biographies

The Author,

Özge Özel graduated from Muğla Sıtkı Koçman University Preschool Teaching Programme in 2009. Then, she won a scholarship from the Ministry of National Education to pursue her master's and Ph.D. in the U.S. After she completed her master's degree in Early Childhood Education Programme at the University of Texas at San Antonio in 2013 and her Ph.D. degree in Early Childhood Education Programme at University of South Florida in 2019, she has been working as an assistant professor at Burdur Mehmet Akif Ersoy University since 2019. Özel has been researching technology and multicultural education in early childhood education.

