

Similarities, Differences and Common Future between Cultures in North Cyprus

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ABSTRACT This study is the identification of existence conditions for cross-culturalism concept within the societies of North Cyprus in multi-cultural social structure that exists in northern part of Cyprus. It will also contribute to unveiling of common values of a social structure that internalise this concept, as well as of possibilities to establish a society living together and side by side. Qualitative research method was used for this study and data were collected through interviews and conversations conducted with semi-structured questions. Through the interviews that were conducted with various age groups and genders that had different culture structures, the opinions, experiences, their interaction during this process, future objectives, opinions on the future of their children, religious values, belonging feeling and their social evaluation as well as many other similar ideas were taken into consideration. The data generated from these interviews then improved with cross-examination method, and historical accuracies were checked.

INTRODUCTION

Following post-1974 conditions, the population of North Cyprus has become to contain many different human structures with different places of birth. Many people, who were born either in South Cyprus or different parts of Turkey, have gathered for several reasons and started living together. The study of Kurtulus and Purkis indicates that the labour force migrated from Turkey to North Cyprus between 1975-79 with the “incentives” for rights of use in properties such as Greek Cypriot houses, agricultural lands and citrus orchards. These people, who share same language but also some different cultural characteristic due to the places of birth and residences, generate different cultural interactions while they live together. One of such is as Giddens (2005) notes the multi-culturalism as an approach that accepts the diversity of cultural practices and traditions and allows their existence to continue (Sosyoloji, Siyasal Kitapevi, p. 178). Levi (2015) addresses a similar relationship of the Turkish House with the concepts of Ottoman, Anatolia, Muslim and tradition as well as coincidence and variations. This interaction has the cross-culturalism concepts within the multi-culturalism structure of society.

Some came to north whether from the towns or villages of South Cyprus together with their

cultural structure accumulated through the interactions due to living with Greek Cypriots and got used to living with it. Some came from the Central Anatolia Region of Turkey, while some came from Black Sea region, some from Eastern Anatolia and some from Mediterranean Region; they took their cultures with them and began to live in North Cyprus. (Cakmak 2008) These people left all their past memories where they left and started to live a life in a new place shaped with new cultural relations together with their own cultures.

Since mosaic represents a panel that includes static, lifeless and non-related colours, this living together is not a mosaic relationship with some boundaries (Yuvali 1996). In a mosaic, the cultures are considered as solid, fixed units that are homogenous and separated from other cultures with their net differences. There is a more rich and interrelated cultural interaction. As Atilla Durak (2007) noted in his book called ‘Reflections on Cultural Diversity’ under his EBRU project, ‘EBRU’ when compared with the alternatives like “mosaic” that was used to present Turkish cultural richness as a visual metaphor, which recalls fluidity, motion, flexibility, transitivity and variability, looks more meaningful and possible. The project participants think that the cultural diversity was constituted by the fluid, interactive and partly mixed colours.

While this study makes the differences and similarities that are generated with the gathering of people with different cultural structures be visible, it also aims to introduce their common futures. As it is in the art of EBRU, these people with different cultural colours will create a culture, which has fluidity as they move in the water without destructing the borders of each other, transitivity as they may improve their colours via mutual interaction, flexibility as they contribute to each other and form a shape, tolerance as the respect that they show to each other and aesthetic in terms of the visual beauty emerging within this and harmony.

Aim of Research

While this study makes the differences and similarities that are generated with the gathering of people with different cultural structures be visible, it also aims to introduce their common futures. This study is the identification of existence conditions for cross-culturalism concept within the societies of North Cyprus in multicultural social structure that exists in northern part of Cyprus. It will also contribute to unveiling of common values of a social structure that internalise this concept, as well as of possibilities to establish a society living together and side by side.

Status of Problem

Migration is a phenomenon of all periods of history. Today's numbers of migrants worldwide are not higher in relation to world population than during other periods of history (Karacasulu 2007). However, migration has become more important for Europe and Cyprus as well. In a few decades Europe has developed from a region of emigration to a major destination of immigration (Samur 2008). After the intervention to Cyprus in 1974, the population in North Cyprus got to include many different human structures with different places of birth. Many people, who were born in different parts of South Cyprus gathered for various reasons and started to live together after the war. This living together naturally created different cultural interactions and social traumas. Evre (2015) lights up the debates over national identity in Turkey, what he describes as "the process of changing Turkishness" as another major external factor which

"disrupted the large-group identity investments of Cypriot Turks". These lives of human structures together within this different culture generated many assessments from the sociological aspect.

METHODOLOGY

Model of Research

Qualitative data were collected in the research and research patterns were determined as "content analysis". Qualitative research is defined as to follow a qualitative process by using qualitative data collection methods such as observation, interview and document review, regarding the presentation of perceptions and events in a real and integrated way within a natural environment (Yildirim and Simsek 2011).

For this research, semi-structured interview technique was used for data collection tool. The advantage of interview technique is that it allows you to see the research subject from the perspectives of relevant individuals and ensures the appearance of social structures that form these perspectives (Yildirim and Simsek 2011).

Working Group

The working group includes 60 people in total that are immigrants from South Turkey, were born post 74 with immigrant parents, were born here with parents from Turkey, were not immigrants at all, migrated from UK and that have many different characteristics. Random sampling method was used for the determination of working group (Büyüköztürk 2009).

Data Collection Tool

In qualitative research approach, in-depth interview, direct observation and document analysis are generally used for the data collection (Legard et al. 2003). For the data collection under this research, cross-examination method was used, which allows to collect data that cannot be directly observed with other data collection tools, gives opportunity to understand the in-depth perspectives of participants and is disposed in interviews conducted by different people during data collection process.

During the development of semi-structured interview form, firstly a draft interview form was

prepared after reviewing the relevant domain, and the form was developed in the way that could reflect the complete opinions of participants. Following the content analysis, raw data texts were grouped in accordance with the questions included in semi-structured interview forms. Content analyses were performed on the grouped texts.

Data Collection Process

The data of research were generated via interviews that were conducted with the participants between 10th May-30th September 2013, at a time convenient to them. Cross-examination method was used for the interviews conducted with different people at the data collection process. The aim was to identify the different dimensions in line with the participant opinions.

Data Analysis

After the application of interview form, the data generated from the answers to the questions in the interview form were analysed with content analysis. In content analysis, the data are analysed in four phases (Kiral and Ugurlu 2011)

Open-ended questions were asked in semi-structured interviews. The participants were expected to give in-depth answers. After the completion of interviews, for the determination of main themes and categories, the researchers reviewed the data. These themes and categories were reviewed again in the framework of relevant literature, and categories with similar patterns were combined whereas different ones were coded under a separate category. The data generated from the answers to the research interview questions were analysed with content analysis. In content analysis, the data was analysed in four phases (Yildirim and Simsek 2011).

1. *Coding Data:* After the documentation of interviews, the data of participants were assessed and divided into significant sections. These sections that become a significant whole together, were named and coded. After all data were coded accordingly, a code list was prepared, which has become a key list in the evaluation and organisation of these data. Then each of the coding keys and interview documentations were read by the researchers, “agreement” and “disagree-

ment” issues were discussed and necessary adjustments were made.

2. *Finding Themes:* At this phase, the codes, which were determined at the data-coding phase, were gathered under specific categories and themes were produced. Twenty dimensions were created to identify the aims of participants.
3. *Organising and Identifying Data According to Codes and Themes:* At this phase, the opinions of participants were explained in a reader-friendly way and opinions were presented to the reader at first hand. In order to identify the owner of interview notes, footnotes were used and interview notes were given in quotation marks. Then the participant of that interview was indicated in brackets.
For example:”..... ”(G:T(18)) T: Turkey
4. *Interpretation of Findings:* The interpretation of detailed and presented findings by the researcher and announcement of some results were performed in this final phase. The collected data were interpreted by going through the required phases for qualitative research, and some results were concluded.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings generated as a result of analyses conducted for the data of participants, and comments were given under this part according to the purposes of this research. In the findings part, the data generated in the wake of interviews were subjected to analysis. The findings were presented just in the way delivered by the participants during the interviews:

1st Dimension: Especially the abilities of young people to struggle for life are very weak: “*There is a dialog available between Cypriot and Turkish people but no cohesion. So there is a relationship but no cohesion (G:T(5))*”.

2nd Dimension: There is a desire of parents to work hard to give a material future for their children and even for their grandchildren. In Turkey, everyone should stand on their feet after a certain age and fight for himself: “*Here, the relationship between relatives, traditional bonds are weak; I think that the reasons for this are working environment and work load. The people coming here from Turkey change as well, their relations also become weaker (G:T(18))*”.

3rd Dimension: We used to make football matches as Cypriots and Turks. There were no family relationships between homes in Alayköy. Families as Turks and Cypriots did not make home visits but there were visits between families whether it would be the military officer in the village or some friends from Turkey. While Cypriots do not consider them as equal but children were playing in school and get education: “*People that came after 74 adapted here, become similar and they start to defend the rights of here by saying in some mistakes or criticisms that here is similar to Turkey (G:T(23))*”.

4th Dimension: The only problem is that after the opening of border crossings, Turkish Cypriots have become EU citizens and they cross to the South, have the freedom to travel without any visa and send their children abroad other than Turkey for the education; all of which created a differentiation and deteriorated the equality. These citizens again started to experience an issue of belonging and identity confusion. A small minority can cross the border: “*There is no south in their live, this is like a wall. It comes and hits the wall. Like the Palestine Wall (G:T(1))*”.

5th Dimension: The origin that they look and see is Turkey; therefore the memory is still fresh. They have relatives and their villages. They have their bonds with relatives: “*People coming from Turkey are not able to say that they are Cypriots (G:T(35))*”.

6th Dimension: For the improvement of cohesion through social and cultural actions, particularly the local administrations should give some effort: “*Whether Turkish Cypriot or people who came from Turkey in 1974 can easily sell the properties on loots. However if this property is inherited and Turkish-owned, it is not that easy to sell (G:T(55))*”.

7th Dimension: PKK makes demonstrations, and my son say son of a b.... Kurds. I am Kurd but my children are Cypriots: “*There are even some people from Turkey here who died without any home visits with Turkish Cypriots. Or there are many people who work with a Turk at the same place but have not ever gone to the house of a Turk who had no home visits (G:T(47))*”.

8th Dimension: Turkish Cypriots individually protect their collective interest. Turkey origin people concentrate on one point, act collectively and gain individual interest: “*You fight for your children in their homeland where you didn't born to give them a better future (G:T(29))*”.

9th Dimension: When you go to Ýstanbul, people are very sly and you always keep your guard and on alert, but here is very relaxed, I don't keep my guard and there are no criminal events here: “*I think that people here more humane and the lifestyle that does not destroy each other attracted me; despite of coming here to leave, I haven't gone back to Ýstanbul (G:T(56))*”.

10th Dimension: For the improvement of cohesion through social and cultural actions, particularly the local administrations should give some effort: “*At that time, to my mind Cypriots were hard-working, helping to each other, did not care about anybody's business. Turks were sitting at coffee shops all day. But people here were working as a civil servant during the day while working in lemon field at nights. There were many craftsmen who were doing their business tiling, carpentry and many more (G:T(7))*”.

11th Dimension: The lifestyles of Cypriots were successive then, I wish that they would still live like that: “*In order to become a citizen, I swore on Quran. I was impressed in the Court that I would love and obey the rules of this country. It was so enchanting to swear like that (G:T(31))*”.

12th Dimension: While we are sensitive about citizenship, we create various challenges and obstacles for them by cut away the rights of non-citizens and push them to be a citizen: “*Life is easy in Cyprus whereas difficult in Turkey. And it is also practical here. The bad conditions here are good conditions for the ones coming from Turkey when they compare it with Turkey (G:T(52))*”.

13th Dimension: One living here should say that he is from here and move away from the obsession of being Turk. Thus NGOs and political parties should work for this. We live together and we can be successful if we fight for the future together: “*You say that all world works should unite except Turkish workers (G: T(60))*”.

14th Dimension: In one of the discussions, they called me naturalized Turkish Cypriot member of parliament: “*The problem of new migrants, new citizens and illegal workers restrains approximation (G:T(11))*”.

15th Dimension: During any political elections, a parliamentarian of Antalya or Black Sea region from Turkey or mayors come and try to change the destiny of elections: “*Post-74, Turk-*

ish Cypriots were defeated. They established an employment system and future that is completely based on string pulling. They do not feel the necessity to develop themselves since the important thing is not knowledge or performance; they do not feel the need of develop themselves and knowledge (G:T(23))”.

16th Dimension: We didn't have a private sector after 74; the one who had a hotel was given a hotel and one who came from south and had whether 500 donum or 10, got 100 donums: “The advertisements for the people, who want to come from Turkey, said that there would be money, land etc. At the same time, the burglars and stone-broke came. Retired military officers settled and started to establish political parties (G:T(43))”.

17th Dimension: We existed as Muslims more than with the Anatolian identity: “Converting from being Muslim to Turkish language cause changes in the history and language in the past, and this is a major change (G:T(12))”.

18th Dimension: Here, due to some differences they are Turk not Cypriot, and when they go to Turkey, they are not Turkish for their differences: “The concerns of Turkish Cypriots to become minority is at the core of this discrimination. We also do not care about the right of others, which embitters the discrimination (G:K(27))”.

19th Dimension: National policy was introduced but act without putting the concept of nation into place: “I wish that there was no war and no suffering happened, migration is always a trauma. People have bad memories and many people had to forget their memories (G:K(19))”.

20th Dimension: Turks from Cyprus and Cypriots from Turkey: “When they ask where I am from, I say that I am Cypriot. I was born in Trabzon but do not live there. If they ask me to describe Trabzon, I can't (G:K(3))”.

CONCLUSION

Although there has been no conscious harmonisation policy of state, there is increasingly a common culture especially in third generations. When the complete society together with all generations are reviewed, despite cross-cultural and common values, these people that come from different cultures particularly try to protect their own cultures and show the tendency of not being under the influence of other cultures.

Essentially all different cultures living here do not find the core origins of their own cultures but insistently try to maintain the cultures that do not belong here to this geography, yet this causes even alienation within their own cultures between old and new generations. For instance, we do not have any anchovy in our seas but ‘Anchovy Fest’ is organised. Although a child, who was born here, has never visited Black Sea, he tries to own the memories of his mother and father.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Intercultural harmonisation policies should be given importance and be available in this society. Local administrations should have an active role in such harmonisation policies.

Sociology departments should be established in universities. Sociology and social culture studies should be supported.

Population policies that would not deteriorate the demographical structure of north Cyprus should be enacted.

All policies and practices that would polarise different cultures of society should be eliminated.

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