

Faculty Members' Opinions about Multiculturalism in Higher Education*

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ABSTRACT The aim of this paper is to determine what do faculty members and students think about multiculturalism? What educational strategies should there be in the multicultural educational environment? Because this paper was aimed at determining the current conditions, a descriptive model was used. This paper was carried out with 14 participants studying at universities in different countries, 17 university students at the Germany Westfälische Hochschule University of Applied Sciences. According to the results the participants have positive opinions about multiculturalism. The participants think that multiculturalism is useful in higher education, so projects that facilitate collaboration with other countries such as Erasmus should be supported. Moreover, the participants think that multiculturalism allows students to think in a versatile manner and to solve problems easily. The participants also emphasize that multiculturalism should not be seen as a disadvantage and that multiculturalism be adopted as a part of their lives.

INTRODUCTION

An individual is born as a social presence in society. Societies have common beliefs, traditions, lifestyles, and financial and emotional characteristics. These common characteristics form a society's culture. It is understood as the sum of the values which are transferred from generation to generation. It has an important effect on forming an individual's character and changing his/her behavior. An individual forms the culture where she/he lives. This culture in turn shapes his/her behavior. There is an inevitable relationship between culture and the individual.

When we look at the definition of culture we can see a lot of approaches (Buckland 2006; Duverger 2004; Guiso et al. 2006; Uygur 2006; Sargut 2001; Williams 1977). A common point in these approaches to culture is that it affects an individual's lifestyle, behaviors, and points of view. As Maslow (1943) mentioned in his hierarchy of needs theory, an individual needs to belong. In order to feel a sense of belonging, an individual must hold onto the culture of that place. This necessity can be a cause of culture. There are a lot of factors which help to form a culture. The place where people live determines people's clothes, agricultural products, cuisine, religious beliefs, funerals and weddings. Guven (2012) stated that language, religion, history, art, sports, traditions, economy, law, science, ethics, and aesthetics are the most important elements

of a culture. These elements are directly related to human beings, so we can state that people form their culture. From that point of view it can be said that there are cultural differences due to differences in human nature. In the same world people live with different cultures, and this causes multiculturalism.

Multiculturalism is a wide concept that includes race, ethnic structure, religion, language, sexual orientation, gender, age, disabilities, social class, and religious orientation (Banks 2013; Tiedt and Tiedt 2005). When these are taken into consideration it is inevitable that all societies have multiculturalism.

As Cirik (2008) mentioned, people in the same society develop different cultures according to their common past history, the place they live in, and their socio-economic statuses. Living in this new atmosphere brings cultural diversity.

Due to developments in technology people can reach far distances; it is now easy to connect with people who live far away. People who grow up in different cultures can share in the same place and affect each other. It is now obvious that multiculturalism can be commonly observed in the office, in the street, on holiday, and especially in education. A lot of students who come from different regions and who differ from each other interact with their teachers. There are cultural diversities in the world so it is obvious that there are cultural diversities in education. Yet, multiculturalism in education has come to light recently.

As Banks and Banks (2010) mentioned, the cause of the rising interest in multicultural education is that education accepts and reflects cultural diversity in the education process. Ameny-Dixon (2004) defines multicultural education as a teaching and learning approach which centers multicultural democratic values among students from different societies. Basbag and Kagnici (2011) agree with Ameny-Dixon's (2004) statement and adds that multicultural education provides equal conditions for students and establishes respect in the educational atmosphere.

In the light of studies about multicultural education we can state the benefits

of multicultural education as (Banks 2013; Bigelow et al. 2009; Boyd 2008; Bruba 2007; Caraballo 2009; Carjuzaa 2012; Davis et al. 2012; Demerath and Mattheis 2012; Gay 2004; Herrera et al. 2012; Putnam et al. 2011; Yao et al. 2009):

1. It helps individuals to understand their own culture better.
2. It helps individuals to know about different cultures.
3. It provides individuals with cultural options.
4. It helps individuals to tolerate different cultures.
5. It prevents students from feeling like foreigners in a dominant culture.
6. It helps to promote the success rates of students from different cultures.
7. It promotes assimilation.
8. It develops interactional skills among students who are from different cultures.
9. It helps to eliminate cultural boundaries.
10. It fosters and develops multiple-thinking skills.
11. It reduces individuals' prejudices.
12. It helps teachers to develop their teaching and personal skills.
13. It provides equality of opportunity and a democratic atmosphere in education.

Although multicultural education has lots of benefits there is also some criticism against it. Some of them are that it causes conflict in society due to neglecting one's own culture and it supports ethnic cultures (Berstein 1992; Grant 1994; Parekh 2002).

Scholls have so important role to solve the problems of cultural differences (Bryan 2009). Therefore it is emphasized that cultural diversity should be considered in teacher education and developing curricula (Cogan and Morris 2001; Ensign 2009).

Benefits and criticism are related to points of view in terms of the application of the educational process to improve productivity and to reduce the disadvantages of multicultural education. Banks (2013) stresses that this is a wide concept that can be classified as 1-content integration, 2-configuring information, 3-reducing prejudice, 4-egalitarian pedagogy, and 5-fostering school manager. The school and the curriculum should be organized according to Bank's (2013) statements in order to provide multicultural education.

In the process of designing a curriculum, the aims should be taken into consideration by the teachers and students. Henson (2015) remarks that both constructivism and multiculturalism create cooperative learning environment. Because of constructivist approach support active learning it encourages to students share their own culture, experiences and knowledges. Hence education provide students safe space and interact with each other thus learn from one another.

Curricula which are designed for a dominant culture are not suitable for multicultural education (Putnam et al. 2011). Establishing a democratic atmosphere and providing equality of opportunity for students are critical points in this process (Endo 2012; Gorski 2010).

Objectives

The reflection of multiculturalism in education is a subject of paper for researchers. The aim of this paper is to state the ideas of university lecturers and their students about the effects of multiculturalism in higher education. In this case these questions should be answered.

- 1- What do university lecturers think about multicultural education?
- 2- Taking into consideration the thoughts of the lecturers about multicultural education; do they differ according to their field of study?
- 3- What do the students think about multicultural education?

MATERIAL AND METHODS

Because this paper was aimed at determining the current conditions, a descriptive model was used. In order to reveal the participants' thinking about the research subject in detail, a case study was designed, which is one of the preferred qualitative research methods.

Working Group

This paper was carried out with 14 participants working at universities in different countries in the 2013-2014 academic year, as well as 17 university students at the German Westfälische Hochschule University of Applied Sciences. Because this paper was aimed at determining the opinions of individuals who presumably had some ideas about the paper subject and its various features, a maximum variation sampling method was used. The maximum variation sampling method aims at defining, bringing out, and understanding the general themes or basic ideas and summarizing a large proportion of the participants that reflects the maximum degree of variation among individuals (Patton 1990; Yildirim and Simsek 2008). The features of the academics in the working group are presented in Table 1.

As shown in Table 1, the participants consist of 13 professors and 1 project coordinator; 7 professors and 1 project coordinator working in Germany; 2 professors working in Poland; 2 professors working in Finland; 1 professor working in Russia; and 1 professor working in Belgium. It is possible to say based on Table 1 that the working group consists of 7 female (50%) and 7 male (50%) participants. It can be said that the number of years working at university and the participants' departments vary.

Data Collection

The data were collected by interviewing personnel at the universities and meeting students by using a focus group technique.

Data Collection Tool

In the paper, a semi-structured interview format was used as the data collection tool. In this process an interview form was prepared by screening one faculty member from the foreign languages department and two faculty members from the pedagogy department. This form was examined by a faculty member who teaches business management and finance in Germany, and with his contribution a form with 6 open-ended questions was prepared. The interviews were voice-recorded.

Analyzing Data

A content analysis technique was used for the assessment of the data. First, the voice recordings were changed into written data. Then the researcher and another faculty member coded the written data separately. In order to identify reliability, the "Reliability = Consensus / Consensus + Disagreement x 100" Formula was used. After the study the adaptation percentage was 78 percent. Data analysis can be accepted as reliable if the adaptation percentage is 70 percent or above (Miles and Huberman 1994).

FINDINGS

The participants' answers were analyzed and are shown in the Tables.

The faculty members' answers based on the question "What experience do you have of multiculturalism in Higher Education?" are summarized in Table 2.

Table 1: Information about participation in a working group

<i>Participant</i>	<i>Country</i>	<i>Department</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>Years working at university</i>
Prof. Dr.1	Germany	International relations	Female	5
Prof. Dr.2	Germany	Tourism management	Female	20+
Prof. Dr.3	Germany	Technological science	Male	18
Prof. Dr.4	Germany	Information science and communication	Male	20+
Prof. Dr.5	Germany	Mechanical engineering	Male	20+
Prof. Dr.6	Germany	Business management and finance	Female	20+
Prof. Dr.7	Germany	Economics and information technology	Male	20+
Prof. Dr.8	Polonya	Engineering management	Female	18
Prof. Dr.9	Polonya	Engineering management	Female	18
Prof. Dr.10	Finland	Industrial management administration	Female	20+
Prof. Dr.11	Finland	Business and administration	Male	4
Prof. Dr.12	Russia	Industrial Management and Economics	Male	20+
Prof. Dr.13	Belgium	Business and Marketing	Female	20+
Project Coordinator14	Germany	Strategic Projects	Male	3

Table 2: Faculty members' multicultural experience at university

<i>Opinions</i>	<i>f</i>
Diversity	10
Different behaviors	8
Communication problems	4
Immigrant students	3
Technical education	2
International relationships	3
Total	30

The faculty members' answers based on the question "What experience do you have in multiculturalism in Higher Education?" are shown below.

P5 "In technical fields I don't think that cultural differences are very important. I accept all students equally. We are talking about scientific facts in technical fields. Technical subjects are not open-ended so it is not possible to see the effects of multiculturalism in technical subjects."

P3 "It cannot be seen in technical education but it can be seen in international relationships, which is a social department at university. Different behaviors bring different comments. It is possible to see diversity in the class when students answer questions."

P6 "We have been talking about cultural differences as lesson content recently. There are a lot of students who come from different countries in the class. In Germany immigrant students can be seen in the classes more. Lesson content and student diversity create good harmony in the class. Students from different countries behave differently. For instance, there are differences between Asian and European students when they speak. Asian students are shy and they hesitate to speak."

P1 "It can be said that there are different behaviors between German and immigrant students. German students always come to class on time and punctuality is very important for them. Others come to class late and this is not important for them. I think this is because of cultural diversity, which causes different behaviors."

According to the faculty members, immigrant students bring multiculturalism and different types of behaviors into the educational atmosphere. Also, the students' answers are different in class. Faculty members who teach technical

subjects at university think that multiculturalism does not have much effect on technical subjects.

The faculty members' answers based on the question "What do you think about multiculturalism in Higher Education?" are shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Faculty members' opinions about multiculturalism in higher education

<i>Opinions</i>	<i>f</i>
Important	8
Necessary	7
Diversity	3
Inevitable	2
Globalism	5
Luck	1
Total	26

The faculty members' answers based on the question "What do you think about multiculturalism in Higher Education?" are shown below.

P2 "If we are talking about a global world it is inevitable to have multicultural education. Business life brings globalism so multicultural education is important."

P3 "It is 100% necessary because students will not study in a local area, they will work in an international area. They can learn a foreign language; they should also learn cultural differences. Companies will choose candidates who can think in a multicultural way to promote in their future career."

P8 "It is important because students who come from different cultures should know how to behave."

P13 "We live in a global world. We should think about it. It means multicultural education is inevitable."

It can be said that the faculty members' opinions about multicultural education is generally positive. The participants stress that globalism is important and necessary for multicultural education.

The faculty members' answers based on the question "What advantages of multiculturalism in higher education have you experienced? Do you consider further advantages as possible?" are shown in Table 4.

The faculty members' answers based on the "What advantages of multiculturalism in higher education have you experienced? Do you consider further advantages to be possible?" question are shown below.

Table 4: Faculty members' opinions about the advantages of multiculturalism in higher education

Opinions	f
To be more professional	3
Enhancing communication	4
Skills development	3
Tolerance	5
Self-confidence	2
Total	17

P4 "Every country is different from each other. But individuals have to live together. They have to learn to respect each other. Different languages, different religion, and different traditions require different behaviors. Students should learn cultural differences and they should tolerate these differences."

P10 "My students who went to London for a week and came back said that they weren't afraid of anything anymore. This is a sign of self-confidence. They were shy at first but when they experienced it they overcame this situation."

P11 "It professionalizes students in the global world because they have an opportunity to meet different behaviors at school."

In this study the faculty members stressed that understanding differences, being tolerant, developing efficient communication, and becoming self-confident are the advantages of multicultural education.

The faculty members' answers based on the question "What disadvantages of multiculturalism in higher education have you experienced? Do you consider further disadvantages to be possible?" are summarized in Table 5.

Table 5: Faculty members' opinions about the disadvantages of multiculturalism in higher education

Opinions	f
Homogeneous groups	5
Language problems	7
Prejudices	2
Different values	3
Misunderstandings	2
Total	19

The faculty members' answers based on the question "What disadvantages of multiculturalism in higher education have you experi-

enced? Do you consider further disadvantages to be possible?" are shown below.

P2 "One of the important problems happening in the multicultural educational atmosphere is that students who come from the same ethnic background stick together and create groups because they feel safer. In order to change this situation we are aiming to create heterogeneous groups for our activities"

P14 "Most of the foreign students generally come from a 'working-class background' and they have problems in higher education. Language problems reduce their success rates. Still there are some education personnel who behave with prejudice. After their education they also have problems. Training and looking for a job can be problematic for foreign students."

P12 "Students from different countries might misunderstand each other because of their values so they become aggressive toward each other. As a result arguments arise in class."

As we check their answers, the faculty members stress that multicultural education creates different groups because they feel safe in these homogeneous groups; this causes communication conflicts which can be seen as disadvantages.

The faculty members' answers based on the question "How does diversity in the structure of the culture of the students who are trained in Germany (religious, racial, national, and ethnic identity) affect their education?" are summarized in Table 6.

Table 6: Faculty members' opinions about the reflection of multiculturalism in higher education

Opinions	f
Learning from each other	2
Positive effects	3
Learning different languages	2
Total	7

The faculty members' answers based on the question "How does diversity in the structure of the culture of the students who are trained in Germany (religious, racial, national, and ethnic identity) affect their education?" are shown below.

P3 "Students have opportunities to interact with each other and to learn from each other in a multicultural education atmosphere."

P9 "I think multicultural education has positive effects on students. I don't think there are negative ones."

P7 "Students from different countries can communicate with each other. English is enough for communication but local languages shouldn't be forgotten. Students can use at least a few words from their language when they speak to each other."

As we check their answers, the faculty members stress that multicultural education helps students to develop communication skills, to learn new languages, and to understand different cultures in a multicultural atmosphere.

The faculty members' answers based on the question "Have you any suggestions on multicultural education in higher education?" are summarized in Table 7.

Table 7: Faculty members' suggestions on multiculturalism in higher education

Opinions	f
International projects should be supported	11
Prejudices must be prevented	1
Heterogeneous groups should be created	3
There should be a network between countries	2
There should be pre-training.	1
Business case	1
Total	19

The faculty members' answers based on the question "Have you any suggestions on multicultural education in higher education?" are shown below.

P14 "Generally, multiculturalism is accepted as a problem in Germany, which means they don't think that foreign students have great potential. In short, we should also consider this economical. We call it a 'business case'. Germany needs to consider the reality of multiculturalism strategically. It is not a problem, it is a potential. It should be considered as a 'business case' and there should be more foreign personnel. It must be a goal in the future."

P13 "Students can be pre-trained about multiculturalism before joining the class."

P7 "Everybody should apply for Erasmus at university. The university personnel also should be integrated in this international organization. Multiculturalism is not a simple concept. It should be considered in multiple ways."

P6 "Programs should be organized with the contribution of international universities. Projects should be created. The staff should learn English because it is an international language. Other languages should be learned as well."

As we check their answers, the faculty members suggest that there should be international collaboration between countries and there should be student exchange programs. They also stress that university staff members should be integrated into these programs. They stress that pre-training is important and prejudices should be avoided.

The students' answers based on the question "What do you think about multiculturalism in Higher Education?" are shown in Table 8.

Table 8: Students' opinions about multiculturalism in higher education

Opinions	f
Perfect	3
Amazing	2
Good	4
Fantastic	2
No idea	3
Total	17

The students' answers based on the question "What do you think about multiculturalism in Higher Education?" are shown below.

S7 "It is perfect because there are students here who say one word differently. It is very instructive to spend time with these students."

S3 "An international atmosphere is very interesting. It is a good place to have different experiences."

S12 "About my experience to study with different culture, amazing, because when you are with different people, different cultures, different wishes, you can share life experiences and learn a little bit more about their lifestyles. This coexistence provides excellent learning."

As we check the students' answers they think positively about multicultural education. They stress that they learn something from different cultures and they feel happy, although some students have no idea about this question.

DISCUSSION

The aim of this paper was to identify the effectiveness of multiculturalism in higher education. At this point some interviews were conducted with faculty members and students. Based on their answers tried to get their opinions about multiculturalism in higher education. After analyzing the study, it can be seen that

faculty members have experience of multiculturalism in higher education. Based on this experience they observed different behaviors among students from different cultures. Furthermore, according to the university departments the effects of multiculturalism are changing. For instance, in technical fields these effects cannot be seen, but in the international relationship department these effects are obvious.

It can be said that the faculty members are positive about multiculturalism when we see the words "important, necessary, diversity, and luck" in their answers. When other papers concerning this topic were analyzed, supporting findings were found (Basbay et al. 2013; Demir 2012; Okojie-Boulder 2010). According to Mutluer (2015) result history teachers have positive attitude towards tolerance education. Tolerance education is related to multiculturalism so it can be said that Mutluer (2015) result is proportional to this paper result.

It can be seen that the students are also positive about multiculturalism. Similar papers support these findings (Demir and Basarir 2013; Yavuz and Anil 2010). They stated their opinions about multiculturalism as "good, funny, and perfect." Kocak and Ozdemir (2015) found out pre-service teachers' attitude toward multi-cultural education and cultural intelligence are relatively high.

The participants explained the advantages of multicultural education with the words "to professionalize, to tolerate, to enhance relationships in a global world." The same findings were found in the literature. It was stated by McNeal (2005) that a multicultural educational atmosphere enables students to collaborate and to improve relationships. Also, Mayo and Larke (2011) emphasized that higher education prepares students for a global society. Chan (2002) stated that multicultural education helps students and educators to gain tolerance.

The participants explained the disadvantages of multicultural education as "homogeneous groups, language problems, prejudices, and different values." Educators have the important duty of reducing the disadvantages. From this point of view, disadvantages can become advantages. For instance, homework can be assigned to heterogeneous groups in order to prevent ethnic groups forming. Brown (2007) found that teachers are having problems in applying multicultural education. Yazici et al. (2009) also stated that a

lack of information and prejudices have a negative effect on multicultural education.

The participant faculty members stress that multicultural education has a positive effect on students as they have an opportunity to learn from each other. They also stress that they experience differences. It can be observed from Ware's (2006) study that a multicultural educational atmosphere has a positive effect on students' academic success. Furthermore, Schoorman and Bogotch (2010) stated that multicultural education has an important role for values such as "respect and tolerance." Parekh (2000) stated the importance of the application of multicultural education.

The faculty members have been making suggestions to maximize its effect. They stressed that international collaboration projects should be supported. They also mentioned pre-training. These pre-training studies can be directed to educators as well as students. As it can be explored other studies found supporting findings (Ezer et al. 2006; Kelm et al. 2001; Sevinc et al. 2009; Teresa and Piveral 2004). The faculty members and students have positive opinions about multicultural education. Fraise and Brooks (2015) emphasized strongly that there is a need to extend the idea of cultural dimensions of learning.

CONCLUSION

Multiculturalism has become a very important topic throughout the world. The rapid development of globalization has had a serious effect on the social environment. One aspect of this social environment is schooling, and in particular university. Students educated at university come from different cultures. Diversity in their various universities plays a crucial role in changing behavior.

At the end of this paper it is obvious that multicultural education has a positive effect on higher education. Generally participants specified their opinion positively about multiculturalism in higher education. Because of students came from different country behave differently. Students have different values so they create diversity in the classroom. According to academics diversity in the classroom is advantages. This situation helps students to become open minded. Also multicultural education contribute to students' developments and bring in skills. Some of them are skills development, professionaliz-

ing in higher education, becoming self-confident and improving communication. Faculty members who work technical department at university think that multiculturalism does not have much effect on technical subjects.

Academics point about some disadvantages about multiculturalism in high education. Inability to languages, misunderstanding and communication conflicts can be accepted as disadvantages in multicultural education. Problems such as conflicts, different values, and homogeneous groups can be solved by pre-teaching. Language is important to communication. English is necessarily for communication but other languages can be seen as a prosperity.

Participants emphasize that multiculturalism in education is not a problem it is a head start. In order to provide more benefit in multicultural education university staff and students should be integrated into multicultural environment. The faculty members also stressed that international collaboration projects should be supported.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations for Educational Environment

Academics, staff and students can be pre-trained about multiculturalism.

Language teaching should be care much more.

International collaboration between universities and student, academics and official staff exchange programs should support.

Projects should be developed between universities from different countries.

There should be more foreign student, academic and official staff in universities.

Some activities enable to study with heterogeneous groups should be organized.

Instructional curriculum should be revised considering multiculturalism.

Recommendation for Educational Researchers

Views of academics working at different universities about multiculturalism should be investigated.

Views of students studying at different universities about multiculturalism should be investigated

Scales for measure views about multiculturalism should be developed.

View of students or academics about multiculturalism should be investigated considering other variables such as age, religion and region.

NOTE

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