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Evaluating Elementary Teaching Undergraduate Programs In Terms Of Culturally Responsive Elementary Teacher Training

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Cover Page Footnote

This study was produced from the PhD dissertation titled “Evaluating elementary teaching undergraduate program in terms of culturally responsive pedagogy” submitted to Dicle University Graduate School of Educational Sciences Program in Curriculum and Instruction.

Evaluating Elementary Teaching Undergraduate Programs in Terms of Culturally Responsive Elementary Teacher Training

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Author Note: This study was produced from the PhD dissertation titled “Evaluating Elementary Teaching Undergraduate Programs in Terms of Culturally Responsive Pedagogy,” which was submitted to the Dicle University Graduate School of Educational Sciences Program in Curriculum and Instruction in 2018.

Abstract

The purpose of this study is to evaluate the elementary teaching undergraduate programs in Turkey in terms of educating culturally responsive elementary teachers. In this direction, the phenomenological design was preferred. We collected data from the elementary teacher candidates and instructors via interviews. In the light of the findings and conclusions obtained, we saw that the processes and experiences are not given at the level of acquiring the knowledge and skills related to culturally responsive teaching for the elementary teacher candidates. Furthermore, we determined that the subjects related to culturally responsive teaching are very limited in the content of the course, and they are not carried out with a culturally responsive pedagogy conception in the learning-teaching process. Additionally, we saw that instructors in the elementary teacher education program do not have professional formation knowledge and skills related to culturally responsive teaching. Finally, we made proposals to update the program to promote responsiveness.

Keywords: Cultural responsiveness, culturally responsive teaching, teacher training, multicultural education.

Introduction

The conceptual framework of culturally responsive teaching is based on the principles of multiculturalism, politics, and social justice. Multicultural education, which reflects a multicultural polity in the field of education, is an approach that advocates the principle of “education for all.” Multicultural education is defined as an educational innovation that enables students to benefit equally from education without regard to differences such as religion, language, race, gender, age, social class, or economic level (Banks, 2008). Multicultural education is based on the social, personal, and intellectual development of all students, democratic values, beliefs, and cultural pluralism (Bennett, 2001). Discussions of multicultural education have led to the recall of many old concepts and the production of new concepts. One of these concepts, culturally responsive teaching, is an “inclusive” understanding for all students on a democratic and equal basis. (Taylor & Sobel, 2011). In the historical process, culturally responsive teaching has emerged as a product of multicultural educational reform efforts to expand democratic opportunities for all students and their families, as well as the social gain of the civil rights movement. Culturally responsive teaching has a philosophical basis for defending social justice and equality, impartiality, and objectivity (Bassey, 2015), as opposed to the oppression of ideological or cultural hegemony (Hayes & Juarez, 2012). At this point, an important function is being imposed on culturally responsive teaching in terms of the provision of educational equality and a democratic environment in education. Phuntsog (1999) states that culturally responsive teaching provides an environment of respect for the diversity of all learners. It includes respect among learners for one another, the creation of a safe learning environment, the integration of culture-based teaching practices into all learning disciplines, and the adaption of a curriculum according to the principles of social justice and social equality, all points that equip students with an intellectual and practical base. Culturally responsive teaching is not only an approach that will contribute to students in the classroom, but also a social approach that will enable the development of feelings of citizenship and social justice, voluntary participation in social change, and equality through active participation (Bassey, 2016). That teachers adopt a culturally responsive teaching approach and strengthen their pedagogical infrastructure is important for this approach to operate in the educational process. In fact, the skills of a teacher, who is aware of an individual’s cultural experiences and the environmental conditions in which he or she grows, will be strengthened and the attainment of student goals can thereby easily be achieved. Teachers who are not aware of the impact of the cultural environment or context on the learning of individuals are said to be unable to design an effective learning-teaching process (Hutchison, 2006). At this point, teachers are expected to acquire a sociocultural awareness and to have the knowledge and skills of a culturally responsive teacher in order to design the learning-teaching process with awareness.

The Culturally Responsive Teacher

Teachers are important components of any educational system. Teachers’ knowledge, skills, and competencies determine the efficiency of their teaching and learning processes. In this respect, teachers have different roles and responsibilities in designing the learning-teaching process from a sociocultural point of view and involving cultural experiences during the educating process. When teachers learn about cultural differences and diversity, when they look at the information they acquire from different cultural and ethnic perspectives, and when they take steps to make their lives more culturally responsive and diverse, they are able to sustain cultural diversity within the classroom. It has been said that if teachers adopt a culturally responsive pedagogy and create an appropriate learning environment, they will

achieve cultural integrations while the success of their learners' increases. Teachers should be able to adapt a program based on cultural responsiveness, manage the learning-teaching process, and develop and evaluate content, as well as have a multitude of cognitive and affective skills. This is because, by respecting the cultural characteristics of their students and by making changes in their teaching to respond to their cultural structures and learning styles, the teachers embrace great responsibilities. On the other hand, an effective and successful teacher is defined as a person who understands teaching behavior, shapes teaching methods in accordance with set objectives, adopts an appropriate teaching approach, evaluates the teaching, and reorients the objectives and the learning-teaching process in this direction (Senemoglu, 1992). In this respect, the professionalization of future teachers is related to the structure of undergraduate programs, which are considered the professional training grounds of culturally responsive teachers (Coban, 2011).

Chisholm (1994) states that in order to educate teachers to become culturally responsive through teacher training programs, the training of prospective teachers should be structured in a way that will increase the teachers' cultural self-consciousness, increase their appreciation of diversity, increase their cultural knowledge, and prepare them to work effectively with students and their families using different cultural responses. Hudson, Bergen, and Chryst (1993) developed a four-component framework to increase prospective teachers' experience with cultural responsiveness: (1) establishing a cultural knowledge base; (2) internalizing and synthesizing different social and cultural values; (3) applying culturally responsive teaching practice models; and (4) providing auditing through the intercultural field experience of expert teachers. In order for teacher candidates to be able to teach at different grades of culture, Hudson, Bergen, and Chryst emphasized that increasing cultural awareness and developing positive cultural values identifies teachers who are willing to establish intercultural communication; reduce prejudices; accept and appreciate individuals from different cultures; and have an anti-racist, anti-sexist, anti-imperialist, and pro-justice perspective (Seeberg & Minick, 2012).

Considering that teaching is a process with contextual, situational, and personal dimensions (Gay, 2010), the cultural responsiveness of the individual is closely related to these dimensions and researchers have emphasized that cultural responsiveness should not be ignored in this process (Karatas & Oral, 2015; Yurtseven & Altun, 2015). In the teaching process, exposing students to cultural responsiveness will be effective in revealing their academic potential and will contribute to the development of affective characteristics (Karatas & Oral, 2015; Yurtseven & Altun, 2015). In this respect, positive perceptions towards culturally responsive education among teachers and prospective teachers is considered to be an important sign that they will tend to ignore cultural differences in the learning-teaching process and make cultural diversity live within the classroom.

In Turkey, studies that have examined the perceptions and attitudes of teachers and prospective teachers toward multicultural education and culturally responsive teaching in general appear to show they have positive feelings and opinions (Alanay & Aydin, 2016; Coskun, 2012; Demircioğlu & Özdemir, 2014; Karatas & Oral, 2015; Ozdemir & Dil, 2013; Unlu & Orten, 2013). However, the researchers emphasize that both teachers and prospective teachers do not have sufficient knowledge or awareness regarding culturally responsive teaching in order to teach in a class environment where different cultures combine, and that it is necessary to acquire knowledge and skills in this subject area (Acar-Ciftci & Aydin, 2015; Basarir, Sari, & Cetin, 2014; Hamurcu & Demircelik, 2015; Karacam & Koca, 2012; Karatas & Oral, 2015; Kotluk, & Kocakaya, 2018). In addition, there are positive changes in the

attitudes, beliefs, and discourses of teacher candidates who had experienced multicultural education courses (Cho & Ambrosetti, 2005; Middleton, 2002; Valentin, 2006). Research has emphasized that teacher candidates should be educated as culturally responsive and accumulative teachers in their undergraduate education. While it is expected that teachers from each branch will be teachers who are culturally responsive, it is also more important for elementary teacher candidates to acquire knowledge, skills, and awareness in this area. Because they differ from other professional branches, teachers, in terms of the characteristics of the students they are responsible for educating and the time spent with that age group, also play a significant and critical role in their students' cognitive and affective developmental stages. Senemoglu (1992) states that the quality of education that children receive in their early years has a significant impact on their future success and their outlook towards school, courses, and their own attitudes.

Therefore, it is important that elementary teachers play a major role in shaping children's futures, and that the children develop healthy personalities. By adopting a correct teaching approach, elementary teachers can accelerate the development of their students, but when they adopt an inappropriate teaching approach, they limit their students' development. Primary school students start school with information they have gained through informal cultural and social experiences. They will try to structure the information they learn at school with their early acquisitions and sociocultural perspectives. In this respect, classroom teachers are expected to be sensitive to the cultural values of their students, and teachers need to build bridges between students' experiences and learning before starting school and their lives after starting school. On the other hand, it is important to take into account the social context of the primary school students and to make cultural resources a tool, in order to develop their belonging to the school, facilitate learning, and provide motivation for learning and to develop their academic skills. In fact, field experts emphasize the importance of the elementary school period, in terms of the development of academic skills of students and their academic successes during their secondary and high school periods (Conklin, 2010).

When elementary teachers are culturally responsive, the classroom environment will transform into an environment where cultural diversity is experienced. Therefore, valuing cultural diversity and keeping it alive in the classroom will also create positive interactions among students. In this respect, when the elementary teacher creates a class environment in which social justice and equality is emphasized, the teacher is valued and strengthens cultural diversity, while the students respect and accept each other. Researchers believe that this will prepare the ground for the development of many emotional properties. In this context, it is thought that elementary teacher candidates will graduate having acquired knowledge and skills related to cultural responsiveness, and that employing culturally responsive elementary teachers will benefit education generally. In this respect, researchers consider necessary to examine what level of skills and awareness information regarding cultural responsiveness education is necessary for elementary teacher candidates within undergraduate degree programs in Turkey. The findings and results of the research are expected to contribute to the teacher training process both in Turkey and in other countries. This is especially true in the case of elementary teacher candidates, by creating a theoretical basis for the development and widespread impact of cultural responsiveness into other branches of teaching. In addition, it is believed that prospective teachers should be educated according to cultural responsiveness and that this education should be accelerated.

Therefore, the importance of this research is that it can act as such an accelerating step. We have answered the following questions:

- What are the opinions of elementary teacher candidates and instructors regarding the elementary teacher undergraduate program in terms of culturally responsive teaching?
- What are the suggestions of elementary teacher candidates and instructors regarding the elementary teacher undergraduate program in order to educate culturally responsive teachers?

Method

Research Design and Participants

In this research, we aimed to examine the elementary teaching undergraduate program in terms of culturally responsive teaching. In this direction, we preferred the phenomenological design (Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 2009). Research participants consisted of two groups. The first group is the elementary teaching undergraduate program students. The second group is the instructors of the elementary teaching undergraduate program. We selected participants through criterion sampling, which is one of the purposive sampling methods. A better understanding and disclosure of a subject in the criterion sample provides an opportunity to study in-depth situations where it is important (Johnson & Christensen, 2008). The first group of the participants was assigned as the senior class students from the elementary teaching undergraduate program. The reason why we chose senior students is because we assumed that they are the closest to being a teacher, and they have more information about their own learning area. At this point, data was gathered from 22 elementary teacher candidates, 10 male and 12 female, all of whom were receiving education at six different Turkish universities. Furthermore, the participants were selected from six different universities because of the typical characteristics of elementary teacher candidates in terms of their cultural characteristics, the researchers' availability for research, ease of transportation, and cost considerations. While deciding on the instructors constituting the second group of the research, we considered individuals who have an undergraduate or graduate degree in elementary school teaching or who have experience or academic studies in elementary school teaching, even though they have an undergraduate or graduate degree in a different field. We introduced such a criterion because the richness and credibility of the results are thought to be related to the knowledge and experience of the instructors related to the investigated phenomenon. Data was collected from 23 instructors, 14 male and 9 female, working in the elementary teaching undergraduate programs at 13 different universities in Turkey.

Data Collection

In the data collection process of the research, we adopted the interview method from qualitative research methods. We collected research data through face-to-face, semi-structured interviews with elementary teacher candidates and instructors. Semi-structured interviews, which are frequently used in qualitative research, provide researchers with the opportunity to identify the main framework of the topic and to ask questions within the context of their own subjects. They also provide a flexible structure that allows researchers to add questions according to new situations that may arise during the interview (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). Firstly, we developed a semi-structured interview form for the instructors and teacher candidates. We made necessary corrections to the interview forms after receiving the opinions of two pedagogy experts and three elementary teacher experts. After this, in order to determine whether the interview questions were suitable for the

research aims and apprehensible within the scope of the study, came preliminary interviews conducted with two elementary teacher candidates and an instructor from the department of elementary teaching. At the end of these interviews, we finalized the questions in the semi-structured form and started the actual implementation. We asked questions of teacher candidates and instructors to learn their opinions on the elementary teaching undergraduate program and their suggestions for the elementary teaching undergraduate program in the context of learning cultural responsiveness as teachers.

Within the scope of the research, we obtained permission from the related institutions to contact participants. In addition, before the interviews took place, we clearly explained the purpose of the research to the participants to ensure the confidentiality of the data obtained after disclosure, and so that the data could be terminated at any stage of the interview, if so requested, after both verbal and written consent of the participant concerned was obtained. While selecting the environments where the interviews were to be carried out, we took care to ensure that the participants were able to access comfortable transportation and feel at ease. After we gave the collaterals and obtained the verbal and written consent of the participants, we conducted the interviews. At the commencement of each interview, we asked questions to introduce the participants. In addition, 5 to 10 minutes of conversation with each participant about their daily life took place in order to make the participants feel relaxed, express their emotions easily, and engage in qualified communication with the researcher. After this, we asked questions from the semi-structured interview form for approximately 25 to 50 minutes, with the necessary data being provided for the research. During the interview process, the researchers adopted a detailed, sensitive, and questioning attitude to better reveal an understanding of the participants' knowledge and experience. At this point, while an effective communication process was achieved, we displayed a reflective and questioning attitude, which helped to provide valuable data. With the approval of the participants, we recorded the interviews and took notes. If a participant did not want to be recorded, we only took notes.

Data Analysis

In the analysis of the qualitative data, we adopted a content analysis approach. Content analysis is an attempt to reduce and quantify any qualitative data to determine basic consistencies and meanings by taking the extensive qualitative material (Patton, 1990). In the content analysis of the data, we adopted an inductive approach. Qualitative data analysis is mainly inductive in nature (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). After the formation of patterns, themes or categories by inductive analysis, one can adopt the deductive approach to testing and validating the reality and appropriateness of inductive content analysis, including the examination of data that does not meet the categories or the deviations in the final phase of qualitative analysis (Patton, 2014). Yildirim and Simsek (2011) describe the process of analyzing qualitative data in four stages; (1) coding the data, (2) finding the themes, (3) arranging codes and themes, and (4) stating and interpreting the findings. In this study, we analyzed the qualitative data obtained from the instructors and elementary teacher candidates while taking these stages into consideration. No qualitative data analysis computer program was used in the analysis of the qualitative data.

We started analyzing the qualitative data by transcribing the interviews that were voice recorded. A separate file was opened for each interviewer in the computerized transcriptions. On the whole, we read over the data several times and researched semantic patterns in detail, in order to prepare for coding and theming after the breakdown and editing of the data. Key words and short phrases containing reminder notes were kept in the margins of the

documents when reading the data. Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014) propose strategies, such as writing marginal notes on the data in the qualitative data analysis process, extracting summaries of field notes, and taking notes on themes. For the next step, we created codes and themes to define, classify, and interpret the data. During the coding process, important information within the text data was grouped into small categories of information. Richards (2005) states that this coding is an interpretation and reflection of the meaning. On the other hand, data is extracted in the coding process. Creswell (2013) reports from Wolcott that in a qualitative study, not all information is available and some may be ignored. The codes obtained in the next stage were reduced to themes in the light of the sub-objectives of the research and within the framework of the questions directed during the interview process. At this point, we transformed close codes and concepts pointing to the same semantic pattern into specific themes. While we named the themes, we paid attention to compatibility with the aim and theoretical framework of the research and also to ensure that the themes were as sensitive and comprehensive as possible to the data.

In addition, we consulted three educational science teachers and four primary school teachers in the compilation of the nomenclature, and we took their opinions in the naming of the themes. With a deductive approach to the testing and validation of the authenticity and suitability of the inductive content analysis, including an examination of data that did not meet the categories or the deviations of the noncategorized data after the thematization, we checked the compatibility and functionality of the themes with a few randomly selected pieces of data from the data set. After this control process, we created images obtained from the data. Finally, the thoughts of the participants were explained while expressing the findings. At this point, the participant teacher candidates and instructors were given codes. The elementary teacher candidates were coded E.T.C.1, E.T.C. 2 and E.T.C. 3, with the instructors being coded I.1, I.2 and I.3. In terms of the themes, both positive and negative perspectives were given to both teacher candidate and instructor dimensions.

Validity and Reliability of the Research

In order to develop an in-depth understanding of the participants' culture and philosophy, we adopted strategies for ensuring the validity and reliability of the research, with sufficient time given to data collection. We deemed this to be important for understanding and examining the phenomenon in depth. In addition, we collected data from a sufficient number of participants during the data collection processes. In the process of analyzing the data, we continued the interviews until the results of the repetition of the findings, and information obtained from the data, reached a satisfactory level with no new information to be had. For theoretical validity of the study, we attempted to ensure the meaningfulness and unity of the themes obtained from the interviews and the theoretical knowledge in the related literature, for the significance and completeness of the relationships among the findings of the research. We compared the results of the research with the findings of the research in the literature, with both compatible and incompatible areas being reported.

In order to improve the consistency of the research, we used peer review or questioning to examine and critically evaluate the data collected from the research design, the themes, and the results. Peer review is where the researcher's comments and conclusions are discussed with others. At this point, peer evaluation is conducted in order to increase the proof of interpretations and results, and to evaluate these from different perspectives.

Another application to increase the credibility of the research was the use of multiple methods for data collection. Interviews with instructors and teacher candidates at different universities by using multiple data sources was another process to increase the credibility of the research. In this respect, we obtained participant confirmation on the themes and findings obtained from the analysis of data from some researcher participants.

In the presentation and interpretation of the findings, we created a rich and intensive description, with a detailed description made to enable readers to see how the situation, person, environment and phenomenon overlapped with each other, thereby increasing the transferability of the research findings. Moreover, we shared raw data with readers within the framework of specific themes by quoting directly from the opinions of the class teacher candidates and instructors for transferability.

The methods, techniques, documents, and characteristics of the participants and how they were selected, and the data collection process are given in detail in the research. In addition, the limitations of the research process have been put forward to present the framework of the context in which readers should understand and evaluate the findings and results of the study. In addition, the selection of maximum diversity and typical sampling methods in the selection of the research samples are a different feature that will enable the research to be applied and to transmit the findings to different fields. Nevertheless, in accordance with the nature of qualitative research, we attempted to determine the research participants in a neutral way. Therefore, any bias on the part of the researcher is avoided. In addition, we provided all information and assurance concerning the aim of the study and the data collection process, the protection of the participants' privacy, the known risks and gains related to participation in the study, the right of the participants to withdraw from the research at any stage of the interview or after the research, and the storage of the data obtained on a recording device.

Results

Opinions and Suggestions of Elementary Teacher Candidates for an Undergraduate Program

Elementary teacher candidates are asked to evaluate undergraduate education programs in terms of their contribution to developing their knowledge, skills, awareness, and competencies related to culturally responsive teaching. At this point, the teacher candidates are not given the goal of creating cultural responsiveness in the program's overall objective and course objectives. The content of the course is extremely superficial. In the process of teaching and learning, we saw that there is nothing beyond the experience sharing of instructors. They also state that undergraduate programs do not reflect the reality of cultural diversity in Turkey and have a monotype/standard understanding.

Goal. We saw that elementary teacher candidates agree on the point that elementary teaching undergraduate programs do not transfer knowledge of different cultures living within Turkey, by not having cultural awareness related to classroom management skills in classes experiencing cultural diversity. They also seem to agree that there is not enough information about how classroom management will be in classrooms where there is cultural diversity, and that it is far from creating cultural awareness.

E.T.C. 12: Our country has a multiple structure in terms of culture. Each region and each city has a different culture. We will encounter diversity in places

where we go. However, I did not receive information about these different cultures during this educational process. This is because here we are in a closed box.

E.T.C. 2: Syrian children, who are now involved in our culture, are not given any information as to how Kurdish children should be raised in such an environment. It definitely should be given.

Content. Teacher candidates state that they do not receive lectures or course units that will improve their cultural responsiveness in the educational process, and they have acquired much theoretical knowledge that will not be useful in their professional lives. They also say that the courses that will improve their culturally responsiveness are not included in the program as an elective.

E.T.C. 15: The sociology course can actually help us understand societies. But our teacher can't convey much information about it, he says time is limited . . . Today's family structure, family life, cultural characteristics, the current structure of society should be explained; talking about the cultures of societies in the past does not benefit us very much.

E.T.C. 19: Only in the life science lesson is there a topic about our cultural values. Only there does it mention as traditional East Anatolia, Southeast Anatolia, about what kind of folklore is played and what kind of dishes are prepared. Such a slide show was made, but I do not know how to communicate with the children. We will learn about it by living there when we go. Then we will find out.

Learning-teaching process. Elementary teacher candidates say that some of the teaching staff superficially touch on the cultural diversity on the geography of Turkey in relation to being sensitive to cultural values in the learning-teaching process. However, some faculty members informally share their knowledge in conversations outside the classroom. Contrary to this situation, some instructors have stated that they do not in any way raise awareness of issues related to cultural diversity. Quotes from elementary teacher candidates on this situation are presented below:

E.T.C. 22: In the Social Studies course or in an introduction to pedagogy, only the developmental characteristics and intelligence levels of people are emphasized. The language spoken, the race, and the place where they live, and issues related to them were not mentioned.

E.T.C. 27: They do not give us anything about cultural responsiveness and obviously they give more theoretical courses about education. Only during informal conversations with them do they inform us from their own life experiences.

Suggestions. Elementary teacher candidates have suggested that the current classroom teaching undergraduate program should be designed to improve cultural responsiveness. At this point, during undergraduate programs, prospective teachers should be provided with information regarding Turkey's geography concerning the characteristics of individuals from different cultural and religious backgrounds. In addition, some elementary

teacher candidates emphasize differences in the way these things are realized in an enriching and integrative manner, not in terms of discriminating differences while imparting such information. On the other hand, they think that this will contribute to the professional readiness of the teacher candidates, if it is not just a one-semester course or limited units, but rather if it is of a quality that offers continuity through an integrated understanding of the whole undergraduate education process. Some quotations from elementary teacher candidates regarding this situation are as follows:

E.T.C. 19: Firstly, the emphasis on “unity and togetherness” should be at the forefront culturally in the undergraduate education process. When we say “their culture is like this and their culture is like this” without the union touching the integrity, there will be discrimination. But “we are one, we are one,” after the idea, differences will be seen as wealth and diversity.

E.T.C. 10: It could be a course to gain the competences of multicultural education. This course should be given every year. Class management in multicultural education, school management in multicultural education, and integration of students in multicultural education. These courses should be conducted both theoretically and practically.

In order to provide a basis for interacting with individuals from different cultures, the elementary teacher candidates recommend that the school practice and internship course experience in the undergraduate education process should be at places and schools where cultural diversity is culturally responsive. In the undergraduate education process, it is thought that culturally responsive teachers will increase through the various methods and techniques to be followed. These include providing the opportunity for excursions and observations for the teacher candidates in different cultural groups, watching films and videos, and observing teacher candidates who have different cultural characteristics. Some opinions of the teacher candidates regarding this are as follows:

E.T.C. 4: The undergraduate program should be courses in a way that improves our culturally responsive teaching. The content of these courses should cover all the different cultures living in the seven regions of Turkey The course should be enriched not only in the theoretical sense, but also in the practical dimension; with trip observation methods, video, case studies, and experiences.

E.T.C. 16: Instructors have a very important role. Our undergraduate program could include a course called “cultural responsiveness” or “cultural differences.” In fact, this course could begin during the sixth grade of secondary school. We need to apply what we have learned in the undergraduate process to inform our students at school. The various features of living cultures in Turkey could be described. Cultural exchange would be enabled by making trips and observations.

E.T.C. 10: For example, if our university allows us to do our internships at a different school in a different region every month. For example, students from Elazığ can present the culture of Elazığ and students from Siirt can present the culture of Siirt.

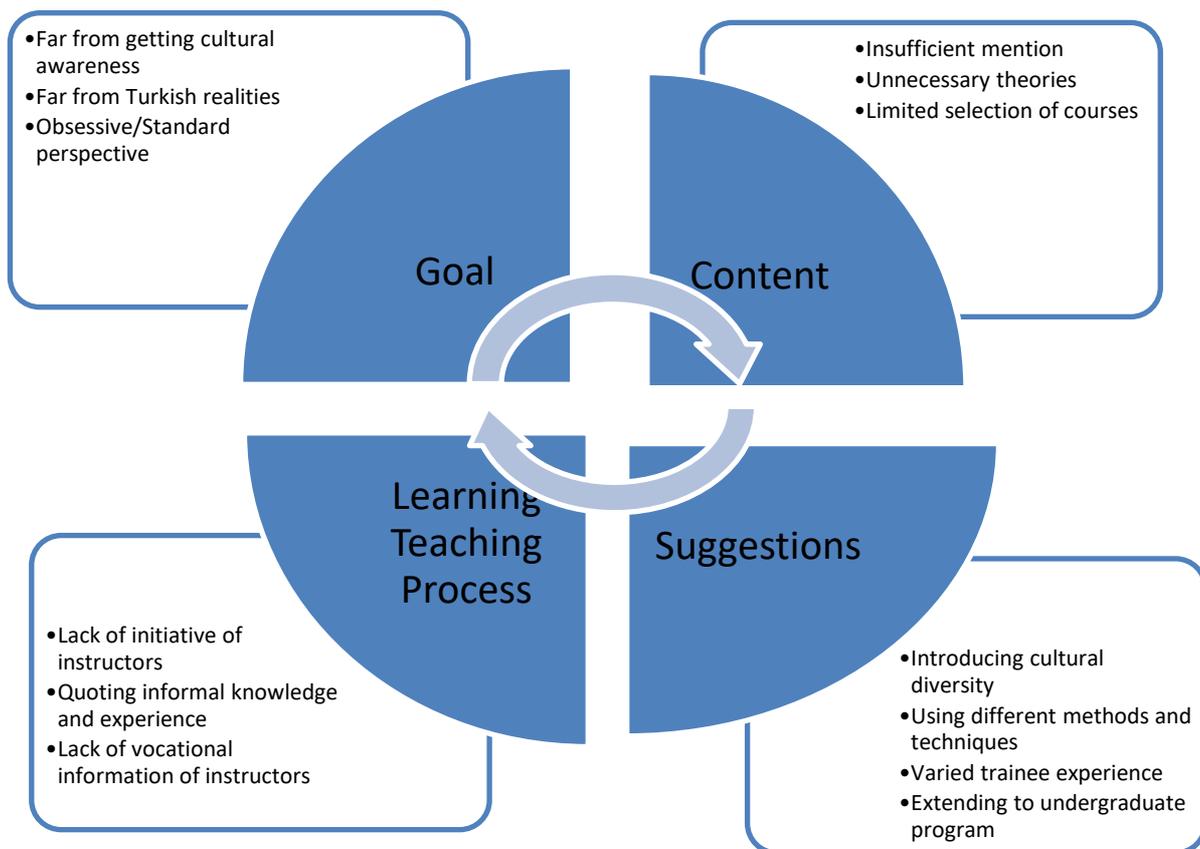


Figure 1. Subthemes in the context of the opinions and suggestions from the elementary teacher program

As can be seen from Figure 1, in general, the teacher candidates believe that the elementary education, teaching and learning-teaching process of the elementary teaching program are insufficient in creating knowledge, skills, awareness, and competence related to cultural responsiveness. From this point of view, it can be seen that students studying in the undergraduate program offer realistic suggestions in terms of creating cognitive and affective competences related to cultural responsiveness.

Opinions and Suggestions of Instructors Regarding the Undergraduate Program

Inadequacies of the program. In general, the instructors of the Department of Elementary Teaching Undergraduate Program state that the program is insufficient to be culturally responsive and does not raise awareness about cultural diversity. They also say that the candidates for classroom teachers were raised without considering the possibility of being a teacher in a classroom where there is cultural diversity in the future. However, they state that the courses in the program remain very weak on the point of gaining knowledge and skills for education that are sensitive to cultural values in terms of their content. A number of the instructors’ opinions are presented below:

I.19: Turkey is a country with different cultures! Black Sea culture, Eastern culture, southeastern, Central Anatolian culture, Aegean culture, Thrace culture . . . We can't tell our students about different cultures. Because the program content is weak!

I.16: We are in a department with an obligation to train teachers with different cultural responsiveness. This is because if we think about the geography of the country or today's global world, we have to develop a teacher profile that accepts different cultures and one that accepts such cultural differences as cultural richness. However, I find it inadequate in terms of program goals.

Instructors state that the theoretical and practical experience of the elementary teacher candidates, such as with school experience and teaching practice as part of the classroom teaching program, provide important opportunities for these elementary teacher candidates to confront and experience things related to cultural diversity. However, in the selection of the schools where the teacher candidates have their teaching practices, they state that the students could not get cultural awareness and responsiveness to the desired level due to varying conditions or faculty management decisions. Some of the expressed views are as follows:

I.5: We are allowed to conduct teaching practice and we send our teacher candidates to a school, staying there for a while. However, the regulation also requires seeing the village schools. Teaching practice should be performed in different schools, at different locations and in different cities. A teacher candidate may have an internship at a quality award-winning school in the city. Two weeks should be experienced there, and a week or two at a medium-level school. There may even be schools with mixed classes in the school. Here too, you may see different cultural situations and student differences.

I.6: There are practical courses, such as teaching practice, school experience, and suchlike, but these courses are usually taken by students merely for the "to do" value. They are not suitable for the purpose. So, now our students are sent to schools in city centers. We are sending them for practical experience for a week or two. Therefore, it is very likely that they will experience the life of the village or combined classrooms in their professional lives. However, I do not think they have any knowledge of how to implement these classes, or how to adapt to the environment.

Several instructors state that during the learning-teaching process, by taking the initiative, they aim to impart cultural awareness to elementary teacher candidates by sharing their experiences about the lives of individuals with different cultural characteristics within the geography of Turkey or outside the classroom environment. They state that they contribute to the readiness of teacher candidates by presenting their predictions through chatting with teacher candidates in an informal environment about paying attention to cultural responsiveness in places where different cultures coexist.

I.2: We speak about all cultures. In fact, there are children from different regions, and from different cities. For instance, we ask them how are weddings conducted there, and how are funerals there. We associate them with current topics related to course content. We learn from the richness of each culture by listening and also by asking them to revive them.

I.14: We are taking them through internship to schools. However, in Ankara, you know, the schools have almost the same as levels of success. Therefore, I am not sure that cultural diversity awareness had been created.

The content of the subthemes obtained, as a result of the interviews with the instructors, is presented in Figure 2.



Figure 2. Subthemes gathered under the title “inadequacies of the program”

As shown in Figure 2, the instructors consider the undergraduate program of elementary education to be inadequate in terms of providing awareness and competence regarding education that is culturally responsive teaching.

Recommendations for the undergraduate program. In order to find a place for the understanding of culturally responsive teaching in the elementary teacher education program, the instructors state that the importance of universal values should be given first. However, they say that cultural diversity should not be discriminated against when describing the cultural differences in Turkey’s geography and that cultural diversity should be seen as wealth. They also state that only one course will not suffice to gain proficiency in education that is sensitive to cultural values. For this reason, they emphasize that various courses and applications must be done during the undergraduate program.

I.12: While we are developing any program, we only do the following by copying examples. We do not think about any need for analysis. We do not say what our students need or what we need in order to prepare for the needs or determine the regional differences when we create course content or create course content based on the goals.

I.8: Universal values are the same throughout the world. In terms of human beings, everyone is equal. These are cultural diversities. Humans should not be prevented from being culturally diverse. So, our students need to provide it. Cultural diversity is a good thing, richness, but should not override the human as an element factor.

Goal. After the instructors made suggestions concerning how they should be involved in designing the elementary teaching program, their opinions were also taken on how the overall objectives of the program should be structured. The department instructors' programs on cultural diversity, bringing awareness of living within Turkey's geography to teacher candidates, emphasizes that they should serve to provide the cognitive and emotional readiness for the length of the candidates' professional lives. They also point out that the program should have the skills to develop the knowledge and consciousness of the teacher candidates at both cultural and universal responses, and to manage cultural diversity within the class regarding behavioral aspects within the professional process. In the context of the objectives of the program, we invited suggestions on how to organize course content from program instructors. At this point, the instructors draw attention to the fact that the current course content is updated in order to create cultural responsiveness in the elementary teacher candidates. However, information about the sociological groupings within Turkey, its cities and its cultures is proposed for inclusion in the program. Some opinions from instructors regarding this point are as follows:

I.2: We are only doing so by copying the previous examples when determining the course when developing any program. We don't do needs analysis. We're not saying what our students need. We need to prepare for balance regional differences when we are creating them or setting courses when we are creating course content based on goals.

I.15: When a teacher trainee goes to the far east of the country from the far west, he knows that when he goes to this far corner, he feels ready for that sociological structure and creates a living space. There is at least a little bit of self-determination to turn to academic work. The other kind of cultural shock will be reflected in the academic dimension and will be reflected in the children.

Learning-teaching process. The instructors made suggestions on how to organize the teacher candidates' process of acquiring knowledge and skills about cultural responsiveness. In the context of these suggestions, the students should be able to use a variety of methods and techniques, such as travel, observation, drama, video screening, and e-learning within the scope of the course or unit related to education and cultural responsiveness. They state that during internships, the teacher candidates should be allowed to practice and experience in different places. In addition, they suggest a rotation among faculties of education over certain periods of time in order to provide a vision of cultural diversity for teacher candidates, thereby broadening their horizons. However, where the teaching staff in situ are culturally

responsive, the candidates also benefit from the knowledge and experience of newly appointed and senior teachers in terms of the contribution to their readiness for education.

I.20: There must be learner-centered activities. In addition, students must be able to see and observe different cultures and to make comments about this. I mean, I would like to support the student with extracurricular activities in order to recognize different cultures and to be able to present it with the learner's activity in the classroom.

I.21: In the case of internship practices, it is more useful to give them a chance to breathe more of their environment, especially to those from the west of our country, or in the west of our country. It should be put into practice. The understanding of the instructor should also guide them.

The instructors see themselves as the main actors in the learning-teaching process. However, due to a lack of knowledge of the instructors concerning cultural awareness and cultural responsiveness, they state that they were unable to share information on these subjects with teacher candidates. At this point, instructors emphasize the need to have sufficient knowledge to allow the instructors to give information about cultural responsiveness. Some views from instructors about regarding this finding are as follows:

I.1: At this stage, I think that teaching staff behavior is very important. Yes, we are trying to teach something by ourselves. We have many shortcomings, because we did not ourselves receive any courses related to cultural values during the undergraduate and graduate programs. Perhaps this could have an effect.

I.13: First of all, I think, along with other staff members, that there is a lack of knowledge on this subject and that there is a need for more information about it. I have come to this conclusion from observations that I have made and from student thoughts concerning lesson activities.

To summarize, it is explained that the teaching staff of the elementary teaching program are a long way from instilling the knowledge, skills, and awareness related to cultural values in elementary teacher candidates. In terms of goal, content, and the learning-teaching process, they have made numerous recommendations about updating the program and making additions to the elements of the program. Figure 3 presents information on the scope of these recommendations:

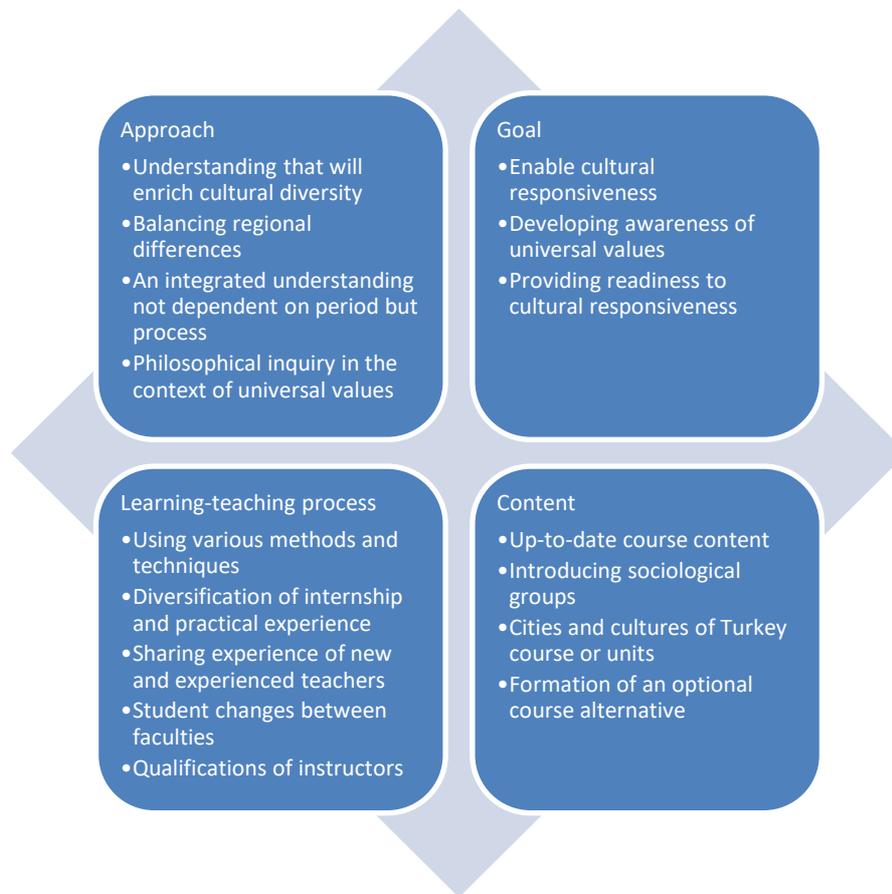


Figure 3. Recommendations of the teaching staff about the undergraduate program in the context of culturally responsive teaching

In summary, according to the findings obtained from the research in general terms, elementary teacher candidates express that in the development of knowledge, skills, awareness, and competencies towards cultural responsiveness, the teacher training program is insufficient. They state that it does not provide the knowledge and skills required in the professional process and, therefore, it is not qualified to contribute to the readiness of culturally responsive teaching. Similarly, the teaching staff working in the undergraduate education programs are of the opinion that the program is insufficient in terms of developing the personal experience of the teacher candidates in the context of culturally responsive teaching and providing the necessary pedagogical knowledge and skills in their professional lives. In the light of these findings from the stakeholders of the program, it can be said that the undergraduate program is insufficient or weak in terms of culturally responsive teaching.

Discussion, Conclusion, and Suggestions

Developing intercultural sensitivity is seen as a necessity by providing the cultural readiness of teachers (Barnes, 2006). In this sense, it is considered a necessity for teacher candidates to use culturally responsive tendencies and to apply to their students' cultural references, as well as use culturally responsive teaching skills when designing in-class and out-of-class applications (Kidd, Sanchez, & Thorp, 2008). At this point, the teacher training program is

considered to be an important process in which teacher trainees can acquire their knowledge, skills, awareness, and competencies to the point of cultural responsiveness. Gay (2014) states that necessary cognitive and affective acquisitions are required for the implementation of culturally responsive teaching. For this situation, it is stated that the teacher candidates should begin with the education period, a formative period, and continue practicing their professional development. Banks (2008) found that teachers themselves were able to learn cultural diversity and to become more culturally responsive. In this sense, it can be stated that if the educational programs of teacher candidates reflect cultural diversity, then the necessary knowledge, skills, and perspectives can be obtained.

Teachers are like a crossroads at the intersection of cultures. In order to fulfill the role and responsibility of cultural diversity within the classroom, by blending and synthesizing cultures, teachers must be aware of their own prejudices regarding cultures and, in particular, have knowledge about the cultures represented in their own classes. In line with this requirement, one of the objectives of the elementary teacher undergraduate training program process should be an awareness of the teacher candidates for cultures and the elimination of inconsistencies in cognitive and affective stereotypes. Within this context, it is expected that elementary teacher undergraduate programs will be updated on the basis of pedagogical principles and practices regarding cultural responsiveness and will provide the necessary competencies for the elementary teacher at this point. In fact, teacher competences are related to the formation of a positive classroom environment, increasing the success level of students and differentiating teaching behavior (Tran, 2015). The fact teachers have a high level of self-efficacy and a positive attitude towards their profession is reflected in their accepting differences, respecting them, enriching classroom practices, and being more culturally responsive (Slot, Halba, & Romijn, 2017).

On the other hand, classroom teaching has a very different place compared to all other teaching areas. This difference is evident both in undergraduate programs and in the content of the students, as well as in the student groups it addresses. The first noticeable difference is in the field of elementary teaching, in which there are many different disciplines. For example, this is an area where many disciplines are applied, such as initial reading and writing, Turkish, science and technology, mathematics, and social studies. From this point in the elementary teaching degree program of elementary teachers, to know the characteristics of different cultures within Turkey and to demonstrate respect from both theoretical and practical aspects of professional life, it is necessary to know how to benefit from this position. Chisholm (1994) emphasizes the need to prepare teacher candidates in accordance with class diversity: identifying philosophies that will help to make sense of the nature and principles of multiculturalism; creating opportunities to understand how culture affects behavior, thoughts and reactions; listening to the experiences of people from all walks of life; avoiding teaching materials that create certain stereotypes and prejudices; spreading the principle of equality in education; and preferring multicultural contents and teaching methods. In addition, teachers who have not acquired the necessary cultural responsiveness have a prejudiced approach to their students and believe that they can easily fail academically (Aronson et al. 2009; Chamberlain, 2005).

However, it is expected that the elementary teacher will be respectful of cultural diversity, that students will have a high level of success, and that cultural differences will not hinder high academic performance. Ashton and Webb (1986) state that teachers' expectations of high achievement from their students affect their teaching behavior and, in this sense, if teachers learn more about cultural diversity, they will make more effort to create cultural

resources in the learning-teaching process. In this sense, considering the responsibility of elementary teachers in forming a basis of knowledge in a variety of fields through the education given to their students, it is becoming more important that elementary teacher candidates graduate with qualities required by culturally responsive teaching.

Gay (2010) says that teacher candidates should be informed about cultural values, cultural characteristics, and pedagogical principles, as well as methods and materials related to cultural diversity and this should be supported through learning experiences. In this sense, in order to systematically question the beliefs of teacher candidates about cultural diversity and to create a thought infrastructure, this has to be a component (Cochran-Smith, 1995). At this point, it is considered important to include courses and units in the program related to the cultural diversity of teacher candidates in the undergraduate education process. These should show the importance and value of culture for society, and awareness for teacher candidates about cognitive and affective prejudice and patterns. Ladson-Billings (1995) emphasizes the importance of preserving the cultural competencies of teacher candidates and increasing the academic achievement of students in the professional process, learning cultural norms, values, traditions, customs and developing sociopolitical consciousness. In fact, it is known that culture can be reflected on individual differences as values, behavior, perspectives, world views, reference frameworks, languages, and dialects, as well as nonverbal communication.

Therefore, Banks (2008) states that teachers should be able to reflect cultural responsiveness in the learning-teaching process within the classroom, and that teachers should have a sound knowledge of culture and history. In this context, teachers should be able to guide their students to knowledge-building in the learning-teaching process. Areas such as origins and migration, shared culture, value and symbols, ethnic identity and human perception, prejudice, discrimination and racism, assimilation, and culturalization, as well as demographic, social, political and economic status and so on should be included. Teachers should be informed about these issues. In this sense, it is considered important to place these components in the course content of the elementary teacher training program and to include them in relevant textbooks. As a result, it can ensure that elementary teacher candidates recognize and acquire knowledge about social and cultural phenomena and contribute to the development of their professional readiness. On the other hand, in this research, instructors state that courses such as school experience and teaching practice, included in the undergraduate program content, provide a significant opportunity for class teacher candidates to face and gain experience related to cultural diversity and to contribute to their own professional readiness. Skepple (2011) believes that the elementary teacher training program constitutes a basis of knowledge and skills related to culturally responsive teaching; however, Skepple stated that they would contribute to curriculum curricula in terms of culturally responsive teaching contributions and ensure that the population would have better readiness if they had an area/internship experience in a variety of places.

As a result, the ability to educate an elementary teacher who is culturally responsive depends on providing qualified acquisitions for this purpose during the undergraduate program. In this sense, elements of cultural responsiveness, such as the general objectives of the program, course content, and the learning-teaching process should be qualified to internalize awareness-raising education, a knowledge base, skills, and pedagogical understanding. In this context, we concluded that the philosophical structure of the elementary teaching program should be evaluated in the context of social justice and universal values, in order to understand cultural responsiveness within the basic elements of the program.

In the pragmatist framework of the elementary teaching undergraduate program, it is necessary to have a purpose, such as re-addressing the program and raising the understanding of elementary teachers. This should include both individual and cultural experiences in the context of building information in accordance with the principles of democratic and social justice, which emphasizes the social and cultural dimension of the education process as well as the individual. For this aim, the program's goal, content, learning-teaching process and evaluation elements need to be designed with an approach that keeps cultural diversity in a balanced way, rather than a perspective that dissolves and ignores cultural differences. Thus, the cultural responsiveness of the elementary teacher candidates can be improved. In this context, the more efficient the undergraduate education process is in terms of providing cultural responsiveness, the more efficient the teaching experience is thought to be. In addition, it is important to establish program goals related to education which are culturally responsive and which deliver contributing objectives. In terms of the integrity of the program, it is necessary to adopt methods and strategies appropriate to the goal and content in the learning-teaching process to enable elementary teacher candidates to assimilate the information contained in the program content and to transform the information into permanent behavior. In this sense, it is important to strengthen the professional capacities of the program with the methods and strategies to be followed during the learning-teaching process. In addition, we concluded that it is important for instructors to be role models for elementary teacher candidates who will be practitioners of culturally responsive teaching and who will be able to conduct their lessons with a pedagogical understanding of cultural responsiveness.

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