Opinions and Expectations of Turkish and Foreign National Students Studying at Northern Cyprus Universities Concerning Multicultural and Inclusive/Integrated Education Settings †

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Abstract: As of 2018 there are 18 universities active in Northern Cyprus offering education. According to the data provided by the Ministry of Education, there are nearly 93,000 students studying in this country. Approximately 65,000 of these students are of Turkish origin (Republic of Turkey–Northern Cyprus) whereas 27,000 students are foreign nationals. An examination of the universities in Northern Cyprus shows that, in addition to Northern Cyprus nationals, students from various countries, such as Turkey, Egypt, Morocco, Libya, Lebanon, Palestine, Syria, Iraq, Jordan, Iran, Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Azerbaijan, Nigeria, Ghana, Somalia, Sudan, Kenya, Ghana, Brazil, Moldova, Brazil, and Ukraine, are studying in this country. Paying attention to the cultural and social structures of individuals in such a wide student spectrum is an extremely delicate, but essential, topic. Concepts such as race, ethnic origin, language, sexual orientation, age, special needs, social class, religion, and sect are elements of multiculturalism and inclusive/integrated education should be considered at every level of education, including university, thus education settings and curricula should be planned accordingly. In the paper, opinions of Turkish and foreign national students studying at Northern Cypriot universities in “multicultural and inclusive/integrated education settings” are obtained, their expectations are identified and comparisons and recommendations are provided. The conclusions drawn from the research indicate that fundamental expectations of students from multicultural in inclusive/integrated education settings is providing equal opportunity to education whilst making sure that everyone can have the chance for experiencing their culture properly. In addition, other expectations of students include organization of new activities for socialization, development and display of positive and supporting attitudes by lecturers towards different social groups and cultures and being able to easily express their ethnic identities in different settings in universities. Another conclusion obtained from this study is that Turkish students appear to have more positive opinions compared to foreign students in terms of experiencing multiculturalism in university settings in Northern Cyprus.

Keywords: multicultural education; inclusive/integrated education; foreign students; Northern Cyprus; university
1. Introduction

Despite lacking a long history, “as a result of the increase in requests for equal rights and opportunities by human rights movements, ethnic minorities and women, which is the consequence of the rise in social diversity in the USA in 1960s, multiculturalism and diversity came to the forefront as new concepts which was partly due to the new awareness concerning racism, sexism and pressure towards these groups in 1970s” [1]. Multiculturalism policy first came to the agenda in such countries as America, Australia, and Canada; among them, Canada was the first country to introduce multiculturalism as a government policy in its constitution in 1971 [2].

In Turkey, multiculturalism has been debated since the late 20th century [2]; however, it can be said that academic studies on multiculturalism and multicultural education gained impetus in the early 2000s creating an awareness and, albeit on a limited scale, leading to some positive changes [2].

Settings which are shaped considering multicultural education are those which include diverse people coming from different social environments [3]. Multicultural education settings also include processes which provide equal opportunity in education: “An empowering school culture and social structure describes the process of restructuring the culture and organization of the school so that students from diverse racial, ethnic, and social-class groups will experience educational equality and empowerment. This dimension of multicultural education involves conceptualizing the school as a unit of change and making structural changes within the school environment so that students from all social-class, racial, ethnic, and gender groups will have an equal opportunity for success” [4].

With its recently broadened meaning, inclusive/integrated education aims at recognizing and responding to various needs of all students and eliminating discrimination in an education system. Such an education environment allows all children to acquire a shared vision. Inclusive/integrated education is a process which requires the reorganization of education institutions and processes so as to respond the requirements of all children regardless of their gender, ethnic origin, language, religion, residence, health status, socioeconomic status, etc., or other conditions [5].

“Inclusion is not about integrating groups of students with special needs into an already pre-defined school structure. An inclusive school is an institution that changes and adapts to the needs of all students according to the general goals of inclusion. This is a process of changing the school to facilitate all students. However, this implies a process that will continually change according to the tasks faced in education” [6].

An examination of Northern Cyprus which is the research area of this paper indicates the lack of a multicultural and inclusive/integrated education policy at elementary and secondary education [7]. However, for individuals with special needs, separate special education schools equipped with the infrastructure required for this type of need, as well as schools serving regular individuals can offer some education opportunities to individuals with special needs through inclusive education where they enjoy the chance of receiving education with their regular peers. Inclusive education is recognized as the most modern teaching style on a global scale when addressing the education of students with special needs; it provides both students and/or teachers with the support services they need to positively affect the quality of teaching and learning.

In Northern Cyprus, specific education practices are maintained in the light of such national and international regulations such as UN Convention on the Rights of the Children, Salamanca Statement and the Constitution and National Education Law of Northern Cyprus [7]; in addition, there efforts are made to prepare a new special education law based on inclusive education in order to improve the education of individuals with special needs in order to provide them with a more contemporary special education [8].

Ethnic and cultural minorities living in a country constitute one of the fundamental parts of multicultural education. In this context, an overview of the education settings of these minorities living in Northern Cyprus makes clear for example, that Maronites enjoyed certain opportunities for receiving education from Maronite teachers and preserving and practicing their language and
culture before 1970s [9,10]. Today, Cypriot Turks are performing some initiatives so as to respond to the demands of the Maronite community. For example, the schools in traditional Maronite villages were repaired and a Maronite Cultural Centre was opened [11]. In addition, Gurbets in Northern Cyprus are also being granted the right to receive education in the national schools of the state and according to the national curriculum [10]. In a similar vein, currently a school provides education in Greek in the Karpaz region for Greek children.

In addition to the multicultural structure of the local people of Cyprus, foreigners who come and settle in the island from various countries are part of its multicultural construct. Of those who settle on the island, the majority are British, Russians, and Arabs.

The meaning of multiculturalism concept is being understood better globally on a daily basis and more attention is paid to the concept. Multiculturalism does not only include cultural differences based on race and ethnicity; differences related to sexual orientation, age or special needs are also evaluated within the scope of multiculturalism when they are displayed by individuals in the society through cultural actions/ideas/peculiarities. However, people with such differences are evaluated within inclusive/integrated education if they cannot display themselves within the society through different cultural actions, ideas, and peculiarities [12]. The concept of multiculturalism usually includes people with different racial origins who reside in the same society or people from different nationalities who come to a country from various regions. Additionally, inclusive education embraces all regardless of their different beliefs, languages/dialects, socioeconomic standing, gender or sexual orientation. Of course, class and gender differences exist in every society. Even in the most egalitarian, libertarian, democratic, and developed societies of the 21st century, the concepts of multiculturalism can be ignored, not to mention in less developed countries where it can be completely neglected. Serious and sustained efforts need to be made to include individuals learning in different cultural contexts. These efforts need to specifically focus on education processes.

The concept of a multicultural education can be used as an important tool in terms of protection and popularization of multiculturalism to improve equal opportunity in welfare, peace, and education in the entire society [13–15]. Approaches in multicultural teaching and learning find their impetus in multicultural policies in education [16].

According to Banks et al., “multicultural education is an idea, an educational reform movement and a process. Multicultural education, as an idea, aims to create equal education opportunities for all students, including those of different races, ethnic and social classes. Multicultural education tries to create equal educational opportunities for all students by altering the school environment” [17].

The fact that there are almost no scientific studies and publications in the field of multicultural education and education settings in Northern Cyprus is an indicator of a dire need in this area. One of the studies conducted in Cyprus on multiculturalism is the master’s thesis titled “Opinions of Academics on Multicultural Education: the Case of TRNC” prepared by Ahmet Gülmez under the supervision of Ali Efdal Özkul [18]. In this study, the opinions of faculty members on multiculturalism and multicultural education were displayed and, in this context, an attempt was made to identify the problems in Northern Cyprus and solutions were proposed. Another evaluation in this field belongs to Mehmet Çağlar whose newspaper article titled “Multicultural Education Settings and the Education of Immigrant Children” [19] explained that migration flow to Northern Cyprus increased recently and that these immigrant children should be adapted to education. However, Çağlar did not mention multiculturalism in the society; instead, he examined the problems experienced by children who come to the island as immigrants.

Scientific studies conducted on inclusive/integrated education in Cyprus are usually focused on the education of children with special needs. It is noted that these studies mostly emphasize basic topics such as the needs and perspectives of teachers and administrators at schools where inclusive education is offered, their competencies in terms of inclusive teaching and examination of social acceptance levels of peers [20–23].
An overview of multiculturalism and inclusive/integrated education settings in Northern Cyprus universities, which constitute the basic topic of the study, shows that students of every age and social class, varying religions, languages, different sexual orientation, ethnicities, and cultural groupings are receiving education together at universities on the island.

2. Methodology of the Study

2.1. Purpose and Question of the Research

As mentioned above, students at Northern Cyprus universities come from various socio-cultural structures which add richness to the universities. In addition, individuals from different social structures (gender, age, etc.) and individuals with special needs, jointly receive education at universities. University management are trying to administer such a multicultural structure and inclusive/integrated education as accurately as possible. However, it is clear that there are deficiencies. For example, despite efforts to provide the suitable physical conditions for individuals with special needs so that they can receive suitable education, it appears there are deficiencies in this area. In addition, there are cases where adequate funding is not provided to deprived students for their education. For this reason, it is essential to determine the opinions of various university students concerning their experience of multiculturalism and their individual social differences and to ascertain their expectations.

As a result, the basic purpose of the study is to identify the opinions and expectations concerning multicultural education of Turkish and foreign students studying at Northern Cyprus universities. For this purpose, answer has been sought to the question “what are the opinions and expectations of Turkish and foreign students concerning multicultural education?”

2.2. Universities and Sample

The context and the sample of the study was chosen from among students studying in Northern Cyprus because there is a considerable number of foreign students (approximately 27,000) studying at Northern Cyprus universities in the same environment with Turkish students. Additionally, the researchers are working at one of these universities. The main reason for comparing foreign students and Turkish students (both from Northern Cyprus and Turkey) is to different attitudes of Turkish students, as opposed to foreign students in terms of multiculturalism and inclusive/integrated education. Secondly, this study aims to develop and understanding and awareness to increase the contribution of Northern Cyprus universities towards a more inclusive, integrated, multicultural learning environment.

According to the data provided by the Northern Cyprus Ministry of National Education, there are as of 2018 approximately 93,000 students studying at 18 universities in Northern Cyprus [24]. The same data source explains that some 65,000 of these students are of Turkish origin (Republic of Turkey–Northern Cyprus), 27,000 are foreigners. Students from Asia, Africa, Latin America, and Europe, as well as citizens of Republic of Turkey, make up the rest.

A total of 140 students constitute the sample of the study; some 70 identify as Turkish nationals and the other 70 are foreign nationals. Sample groups were chosen among the sample group there are learners from Asia (Syria, Palestine, Lebanon, Iraq, Jordan, Qatar, Oman, Iran, Pakistan, India, Thailand, Bangladesh, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Azerbaijan), Africa (Egypt, Morocco, Libya, Sudan, Nigeria, Zimbabwe, Ghana, Rwanda, Kenya, Somalia, South Africa), South America (Brazil), and Europe (Moldova, Ukraine) in addition to Northern Cyprus—Republic of Turkey (Turkish) citizens.

2.3. Collection and Analysis of Data

A questionnaire was used in obtaining the data which would form the basis of the research. The questionnaire consisted of two sections with 10 questions (2 + 8) in total. After the questions were prepared, one educationist and one sociologist were consulted and the questionnaire was restructured
in accordance with their opinions. The first section focused on the social-demographic characteristics of the participating students. In the second section, Turkish and foreign students were presented with eight multiple choice questions with the purpose of determining their opinions about and expectations of multicultural, inclusive/integrated education. The questions in the survey can be basically grouped under three headings:

Part I. Questions on the opinions of students on whether they can properly practice their multiculturalism and social differences in the various teaching settings of the university;
Part II. Questions on the main objective of multicultural education; and
Part III. Questions on the attitudes of lecturers at their university towards different social groups and cultures.

The questions in the survey offered options to be marked by the participants which were based on the literature. The questions in the survey offered options to be marked by participants which were based on the literature. In this context, the answer given to the questions in the thesis study titled “Opinions of Academics on Multicultural Education: the Case of TRNC” [18] were taken as the basis and options were prepared accordingly. The mentioned master’s thesis was conducted with academics. However, this paper is conducted with Turkish and foreign students studying at Northern Cyprus universities on a comparative basis and the subject is examined in more detail. The IBM SPSS Statistics 24.0 data analysis package (IBM Corporation, Armonk, New York, United States) was used in the statistical analysis of the research data.

3. Findings

In the tables provided below, whether students can display their multiculturalism and social characteristics in various teaching settings at the universities was questioned and the main objective of multicultural education, as well as attitudes of lecturers towards different socio-cultural structures in the education institutions were investigated. Frequencies and percentages are provided depending on the answers. In addition, findings were interpreted, similarities were identified, and significant differences were determined based on the distribution of the answers.

An examination of the data provided in Table 1 shows that Turkish students (64.28%) can more easily display their ethnic identity compared to foreign students (57.14%) in university settings, e.g., classroom, library, cafeteria, and dormitory.

|                        | Turkish | %   | Foreigner | %   |
|------------------------|---------|-----|-----------|-----|
| No, I definitely cannot display it. | 5       | 7.14| 10        | 14.28|
| I can display it only in limited settings. | 20      | 28.57| 20        | 28.57|
| Yes, I can definitely display it. | 45      | 64.28| 40        | 57.14|

An examination of the ratio of students who claim that they can display their ethnic identity only in limited settings shows that Turkish and foreign students have the same ratios (28.57%).

The ratio of students who explained that they definitely could not display their ethnic identity is higher among foreign students compared to Turkish students (14.28%). This means that Turkish students can display their ethical identity more easily in educational settings than foreign students.

The findings in Table 2 show that Turkish students receive more respect (75.71%) compared to foreign students (57.14%) in terms of religious beliefs and convenience of practicing their religion. The ratio of foreign students who claim that their religious beliefs are definitely not respected and that they cannot practice their religion is much higher compared to Turkish students (28.57%). The ratio of
Turkish students who indicate that their beliefs are not respected is considerably lower compared to foreigners (5.71%). This means that Turks are more able to practice their religion in learning settings whereas foreigners feel they cannot practice their religion as much as Turkish students.

**Table 2.** Findings concerning the question “do you think that your religious beliefs are respected and you can practice your religion easily at education settings?”

|                               | Turkish |   | Foreigner |   |
|-------------------------------|---------|---|-----------|---|
|                               | f       | % | f         | % |
| No, I am definitely not respected and I cannot practice my religious beliefs. | 4       | 5.71 | 20        | 28.57 |
| I am slightly respected and I cannot practice my religion easily.           | 13      | 18.57| 10        | 14.28 |
| Yes, I am respected and I can practice my religion easily.                  | 53      | 75.71| 40        | 57.14 |

The most dramatic difference in Table 3 is that Turkish students definitely think that students who speak different languages receive education in education settings easily (52.85%), whereas foreign students firmly disagree (38.57%). This shows that more Turks than foreigners think that students who speak different languages receive education properly and can attend university settings.

**Table 3.** Findings concerning the question “Do you think that students who speak different languages in your educational environments can study easily and attend university environments (class, library, cafeteria, dorm, gym, etc.)?”

|                               | Turkish |   | Foreigner |   |
|-------------------------------|---------|---|-----------|---|
|                               | f       | % | f         | % |
| No, I do not.                 | 6       | 8.57 | 27        | 38.57 |
| I partly do.                  | 27      | 38.57| 18        | 25.71 |
| Yes, I definitely do.         | 37      | 52.85| 25        | 35.71 |

An examination of Table 3 shows the ratio of students who claim that students who speak different languages cannot receive education properly is considerably low among Turkish students (8.57%). In both groups, the ratio of students who claim that students who speak different languages can partly receive education properly is at medium level.

Table 4 questions the attitude towards students coming from different countries in education settings and asks whether students from every nationality can receive proper education. An examination of the results shows that Turkish students (68.57%) are more positive in thinking that they receive education properly. Foreign students, however, display lower rates compared to Turkish students (52.85%). In addition, a considerable amount of foreign students claim that they receive limited education (41.42%).

**Table 4.** Findings concerning the question “What is the attitude towards students from different countries in your educational settings? Can students of all nationalities receive proper education?”

|                               | Turkish |   | Foreigner |   |
|-------------------------------|---------|---|-----------|---|
|                               | f       | % | f         | % |
| It is negative, I cannot receive education properly. | 3       | 4.28 | 4         | 5.71 |
| It is slightly positive, I partly receive proper education. | 19      | 27.14| 29        | 41.42 |
| It is definitely positive and I receive education properly. | 48      | 68.57| 37        | 52.85 |

The ratio of students who claim that they do not receive education properly is rather low in both groups (4.28% for Turks and 5.71% for foreigners). This shows that, generally speaking, students who come from different countries believe they receive education properly at Northern Cyprus universities.
Table 5 shows that the ratio of students who think that individuals with special needs are included in education settings, that physical and social conditions are adequate for them, and that they can receive proper education, is higher among foreign students (41.42%) compared to their Turkish peers (30%). In addition, Turkish students reveal higher ratios in terms of thinking that there is no proper education setting for individuals with special needs (32.85%) compared to foreign students (28.57%). A majority of Turkish students believe that individuals with special needs can participate in education settings at negligible levels (37.14%), whereas 30% of foreigners agree with this proposition.

Table 5. Findings concerning the question “Do you think that individuals with special needs (disabilities) can participate in education and physical and social conditions are sufficient for them in your educational environments?”

|                                                                 | Turkish |       | Foreigner |       |
|----------------------------------------------------------------|---------|-------|-----------|-------|
| No, there is no proper education setting for individuals with special needs. | 23      | 32.85 | 20        | 28.57 |
| Individuals with special needs can participate in education at negligible level. | 26      | 37.14 | 21        | 30    |
| Individuals with special needs receive education at university properly. | 21      | 30    | 29        | 41.42 |

This means that Turkish students state that students with special needs can attend education settings at negligible levels whereas foreigners claim that individuals with special needs can receive education at university properly.

Table 6 shows that students are asked about the main objective of multicultural education and the majority of both Turkish and foreign students (48.57% for Turks and 50% for foreigners) stated that improving and increasing intercultural interaction and respect was the main objective of multicultural education. The second highest ratio among Turks (28.57%) was about ensuring that everyone can live and improve their culture properly whereas for foreigners it is related to providing equality of opportunity to all students in education (34.28%). Racism and struggling with discrimination is the least mentioned objective in both groups (7.14%).

Table 6. Findings concerning the question “What do you think should be the main objective of multicultural education?”

|                                                                 | Turkish |       | Foreigner |       |
|----------------------------------------------------------------|---------|-------|-----------|-------|
| Improving and increasing intercultural interaction and respect | 34      | 48.57 | 35        | 50    |
| Struggling with racism and discrimination                      | 5       | 7.14  | 5         | 7.14  |
| Providing equality of opportunity in education to all students  | 11      | 15.71 | 24        | 34.28 |
| Ensuring that everyone can live and improve their culture properly | 20      | 28.57 | 6         | 8.57  |

An examination of Table 7 shows that considerably higher amount of foreign students (41.42%) than Turkish students (8.57%) claim that adequate number of social and academic activities, such as festivals and conferences, are being organized so that students from different cultures at the university can know each other and socialize. Turkish students claimed that very few (55.71% or no (35.71%) activities were organized for this purpose. A considerable amount of foreign students (37.14%) also stated that very few activities were organized; however, as mentioned above, the number of activities is adequate according to foreigners.
Table 7. Findings concerning the question “Are social and academic activities organized such as festivals, and conferences to ensure that students from different cultures at the university can know each other and socialize?”

|                                           | Turkish |   | Foreign |   |
|-------------------------------------------|---------|---|---------|---|
| No, no activities are organized for this purpose. | 25      | 35.71 | 15      | 21.42 |
| There are very few activities.            | 39      | 55.71 | 26      | 37.14 |
| Yes, sufficient number of activities is organized. | 6       | 8.57  | 29      | 41.42 |

Accordingly, a majority of Turkish students stated that there were inadequate social and academic activities at universities such as festivals and conferences whereas foreign students found the number of activities to be adequate. This could be due to the fact that universities provide funding for festivals and social activities which are organized among foreign students.

Table 8 provides the interpretation of answers given by students to the question “is the attitude of lecturers towards different social groups and cultures positive and supportive in your institution?” Accordingly, both Turkish (65.71%) and foreign (51.42%) students mostly stated that the lecturers displayed positive and supportive attitude. This means that in both groups positive answers are in the majority. On the other hand, a considerable ratio of students stated that the lecturers display partially positive and supportive attitude towards diverse social groups and cultures but that this is not enough. This ratio is 28.57% among Turks and 41.42% among foreigners. The ratio of students who claim that the attitude of lecturers is totally negative is rather low in both groups (5.71% among Turks and 7.14% among foreigners).

Table 8. Findings concerning the question “Is the attitude of lecturers towards different social groups and cultures positive and supportive in your institution?”

|                                         | Turkish |   | Foreign |   |
|-----------------------------------------|---------|---|---------|---|
| No, it is definitely not positive and supportive. | 4       | 5.71 | 5       | 7.14 |
| It is partly positive and supportive but it is not enough. | 20      | 28.57 | 29      | 41.42 |
| Yes, it is definitely positive and supportive. | 46      | 65.71 | 36      | 51.42 |

These results show that according to both groups of students the attitude of lecturers towards diverse social groups and cultures is positive and supportive.

4. Conclusions and Discussion

This study attempted to identify the opinions and expectations of Turkish and foreign students studying at Northern Cyprus universities concerning multicultural education, and some highly significant findings have been obtained.

For example, in the first question which examines whether students can easily display their ethnic identities in different education settings (classroom, library, cafeteria, dormitory, etc.) it appears Turks can display their ethnic identity more easily at university settings compared to foreigners. However, based on the amount of positive answers given by foreign students, it can be claimed that they can express their ethnic identities in university settings. As explained in the study titled “Multicultural Education and Democracy according to University Students”, students take it for granted that the cultural differences are based on the regions where people are raised and expect that teachers should show respect to students with different ethnic origin, that everyone should be treated equally regardless of their origin and that no culture is superior to another [25]. As a result, the answers given to this specific question indicates that expectations of foreign students are mostly met.
The answers provided by Turkish and foreign students to the question whether their religious beliefs are respected in education settings and whether they could practice their religious beliefs reveal that Turks feel they can practice their religious belief unhindered in learning environments whereas foreigners believe they cannot practice their religious as easily as Turks. However, when the answers given by foreigners are evaluated within themselves, it can be seen that positive opinions are much more frequent than negative opinions. Parallel to this finding, in the study titled “Examination of Adaptation Problems of International Students and A Study on the Expectations towards the Solution of these Problems”, the researcher stated that in Turkey the majority of people (69%) did not perceive religious beliefs as a source of conflict and argued that Mongolian students experienced more problems than other students [26].

The question which examined whether students speaking different languages can receive proper education at education settings and whether they can attend university settings (classroom, library, cafeteria, dormitory, gym, etc.) revealed significant differences. According to the answers given to the third question, a higher portion of Turkish students believe that students speaking different languages receive proper education whereas foreign students do not necessarily agree with this proposition and provide a lower ratio of positive answer. However, only very few students revealed totally negative opinions. This result shows that students coming from different countries can receive proper education at Northern Cyprus universities. The high number of international students coming to Northern Cyprus is an indicator of the fact that they can express themselves easily in English which is the common language in the entire island. “Indeed, an examination of the preferences of international students shows that common language is the most important factor they consider when choosing the countries where they want to study” [27].

An examination of the ratio of students who think that individuals with special needs can be included in education at universities and enjoy adequate physical and social facilities shows that foreign students have higher positive opinions compared to Turkish students. According to Turkish students, students with special needs can participate in education settings only at negligible levels, whereas foreigners believe that people with special needs can receive proper education at universities. This may be due to the higher awareness levels among Turkish students concerning the requirements of accessible living. The existence of special education laws in both Northern Cyprus and Turkey within National Education and the high sanction power of these laws and the intensity of inclusive education settings at schools might have led to this higher level of awareness among Turkish students. A study titled “Social Acceptance of Students with Special Needs from Peer Viewpoint” which was conducted on 595 students at public elementary schools in Northern Cyprus shows that elementary school students display largely positive attitudes towards their peers with special needs. “[In] This research we conducted on the students in Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, it is seen that the peers who participated in our study have generally positive social acceptance attitudes towards inclusive students” [28].

According to students who participated in this survey, the main objective in multicultural education should be to develop and enhance intercultural interaction and respect. In addition, a secondary objective indicated by Turkish students is ensuring that everyone can live and improve their culture properly whereas the second objective mentioned by foreigners is providing equality of opportunity to all students. It can be seen that the answers provided to the question which evaluated the main objective of multicultural education aligns with the globally accepted basic objectives of multicultural education. Cited in Polat and Kılıç, Gay claimed that “multicultural education is based on an education philosophy which provides ethnic and cultural differences legitimacy and aims at offering equal academic opportunities to lead students to success; based on the foregoing, it is an education policy with unique values and rules which includes teaching materials and organizational structure and regulating all elements of teaching-education and education curricula based on pluralism” [29].

Students were also asked to provide their opinions concerning whether adequate social and academic activities were organized, such as festivals and conferences, so that students from different
cultures could know each other and socialize. The answers to this question provided significant differences. Foreigners thought that such social and academic activities were adequate whereas Turkish students found activities very few or not adequate at all. Foreigners are especially encouraged and funded by universities for social and academic activities which might explain the more positive opinions provided by foreign students. A thesis titled “Examination of Adaptation Problems of International Students and A Study on the Expectations towards the Solution of these Problems”, emphasizes that foreign students socialize more with students from Turkey and other countries than their compatriots and that social activities organized at universities played an essential role in this respect. For this reason, the researcher stated that activities which would allow for the promotion of unique outfits, food, music, and other cultural values of the countries of the students need to be considered seriously [26].

The last topic examined in the study was whether the lecturers showed positive and supportive attitude towards diverse social groups and cultures at the university where the student studied. The answers show that both Turks and foreigners believe that lecturers are positive and supportive towards different social groups and cultures.

Certainly the number of students who find the attitude and support of lecturers inadequate is not low. An important finding revealed by studies shows that several teachers who do not have the necessary infrastructure are unprepared to formulate a learning environment suitable for students from different cultures [30]. Indeed, the findings of a comprehensive study conducted with the faculty members of four education faculties showed that lectures frequently encountered with students from different cultures (94%) believed that culturally sensitive education curricula were needed but that they had difficulties in implementing such curricula [31].

There are experienced lecturers in the international universities in Northern Cyprus who have been lecturing students coming from different places of the world in a multicultural setting for long years. Although concepts such as multiculturalism and inclusive/integrated education are relatively new in Northern Cyprus, these lecturers display more positive attitude towards such teaching settings compared to young teachers as they are familiar with this kind of structure.

Multicultural or inclusive/integrated education are new concepts for Cyprus. For this reason, some faculty staff at universities in Cyprus are having problems in formulating a teaching environment for students who come from different cultures and display different characteristics. This might explain why a considerable amount of students who answered this question did not find the attitude of lecturers adequate.

In conclusion, it can be seen that Turkish students gave positive answers at a higher ratio in the first, second, third, fourth, fifth, and eighth questions, whereas foreigners gave positive answers at a higher ratio in only the seventh question. This the suggests Turkish students think more positively in terms of practicing multiculturalism and inclusive/integrated education in university settings in Northern Cyprus than their foreign counterparts. The fact that Turkish and foreign students differ in their answers to research questions can be explained by social-cultural differences. Nevertheless, differences in the education system that they received in their respective countries prior to coming to university is another factor adding to this conclusion.

This study includes essential information on the position of universities in Cyprus with regards to the knowledge and understanding of multiculturalism and its inclusion in tertiary educational environments and makes a valuable contribution to the formulation of multicultural inclusive/integrative education policy in Cyprus.

5. Recommendations

An evaluation of the findings of this study shows that some regulations are needed to further improve multicultural and inclusive/integrated education in Northern Cyprus. In particular, an overview of universities in European countries shows that by-laws enacted within EU laws provide that multicultural inclusive/integrated education settings are created where students coming from
different countries receive education more properly. This study conducted on foreign and Turkish students studying at schools in Cyprus did not reveal negative findings; yet, laws and by-laws enacted in European countries and universities should be considered and applicable ones should be examined for their usefulness in Cyprus and considered for implementation.

It is an obligation for the NGOs to cooperate with both the government and university managements in the design and implementation of such laws and by-laws. In addition, based on the research findings, it has been noted that almost no scientific studies have been conducted on multiculturalism in Northern Cyprus tertiary educational setting. In order to take multicultural education further in Northern Cyprus, academics have to be encouraged in that direction, too. In addition, the elimination of existing problems at universities concerning multicultural and inclusive/integrated education settings requires providing teachers and pre-service teachers with necessary insights and appropriate training. Teachers and pre-service teachers have to be equipped with the skills needed to design learning environments that are supportive of students with different social characteristics and cultural origins. In addition, more social, sportive, and academic activities should be organized so that different cultures and social groups can get to know each other and socialize better. Steps should be taken so that university management can encourage and support multiculturalism and inclusive/integrated education and formulate education settings accordingly. Likewise, orientation days should be organized so as to ensure rapid adaptation of students who enrol at universities so that students can get used to the environment more easily and experience their culture properly.

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