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The Relationship Between Perceptions of Multicultural Competence and Democratic Values: Examining Science Teachers Working with International Students

M. Said Doğru
İbrahim Demirbaş
Kastamonu University, Turkey

ABSTRACT

The present study aims to determine the perceptions of multicultural competence and democratic values of science teachers in schools where international students study and to find out whether there is a relationship between them. The study surveyed 436 secondary school science teachers in the Western Black Sea region in the 2018–2019 academic year. Data were collected using the Perceptions of Multicultural Competence Scale and the Democratic Values Scale. We found positive and moderate relationship between teachers' perceptions of multicultural competence and their democratic values. As teachers' democratic values increased, their perceptions of multicultural competence increased, and as their democratic values decreased, their perceptions of multicultural competence decreased as well. Understanding teachers' opinions about democratic values, justice, respect for differences, and equality reveals an important relationship between their multicultural competence and their democratic values.

Keywords: democratic value, multicultural competency, multiculturalism, science teachers

INTRODUCTION

To improve their social and economic situation and to have more positive expectations for their future, people move within or outside their country of origin (International Organization for Migration, 2019). This phenomenon, which is called migration, is one of the sources of cultural diversity in today's societies (Doytcheva, 2009). In countries receiving immigrants, workforce, economic, and cultural diversity grows, and multiculturalism takes root (Günay et al., 2017). Multiculturalism is defined as the ability of different societies with different cultures to live together with equal opportunities within the boundaries of a nation state (Say, 2013). Multiculturalism also refers to cultural diversity arising from the existence of two or more groups with beliefs and practices that often create a unique sense of collective identity linked to racial, ethnic, or linguistic differences (Heywood, 2013). Parker (2002) described the effects of multiculturalism on social unity as follows: "Unity without difference results in cultural repression and unrest. And difference without unity leads to the shattering of the nation-state. In a multicultural democratic nation-state, diversity and unity must coexist in a gentle balance" (p. 133). Living with different cultures creates a culturally open-minded and tolerant community (Gordon & Newfield, 1996). Kılıç and Kılıç (2016) stated that social peace and democracy can be achieved when society accepts that all humans are born equal, when they are not considered different in terms of race, color, gender, economic differences, religious beliefs, and social status, and when all people enjoy rights and freedoms equally. Respectful and tolerant societies where individuals live without marginalizing each other are a must for democracy (Akkaya et al., 2018). Democracy enables the adoption of human rights by society, the resolution of social conflicts, and the establishment of bridges between different cultural structures (Kaya & Aydın, 2014). In this sense, multiculturalism and democratic values overlap. Multicultural education is a democratic, participatory education that advocates for equal opportunities in education for all individuals, regardless of their language, religion, gender, race, ethnicity, social class, and cultural background. This educational approach is seen as a solution to some social and individual problems, wherein differences are considered as wealth (Aydın, 2013). Multicultural education opposes xenophobia, involving equality and social justice (Hidalgo et al., 1996; Nieto, 2017). The present article focuses on teachers' self-perceptions of their multicultural competence, their democratic values, and the relationship between them.

Culture and Multiculturalism

The concept of culture includes shared values, attitudes, behaviors, habits, aesthetics, language, belief, etc. that affect the individual's and society's behavior, sociological status, and understanding (Spencer-Oatey, 2012). Parekh (2002) defined culture as a system of meanings and beliefs created to understand, organize, and structure the individual and collective life of a group of people. Multiculturalism is the awareness and acceptance of the differences among people affirming each group's right to maintain its own language and culture, and to

participate fully in the civic culture of the democratic state as long as each group conforms to a set of basic state values (American Psychological Association, 2002; Castles, 2004). Multiculturalism is diametrically opposed to the concept of assimilation, which expects ethnic and linguistic minorities to forsake their original culture and adopt the mainstream culture (Bennett 2001; Castles, 2004). It enables groups to express their differences and encourages the cultural appreciation of all individuals, regardless of their origin (Doytcheva, 2009). Multicultural education provides social justice for all students, using strategies that "[support] and [spread] the concepts of culture, diversity, equality, social justice and democracy in the school environment" (Gollnick & Chinn, 2009). Multicultural education makes significant contributions to community peace and democracy by seeing different cultures as sharing a common heritage of humanity rather than promoting one ethnic identity. It also ensures equality in all areas of education, providing students with critical thinking skills and reducing prejudices (Yazıcı et al., 2009). In a multicultural classroom, concepts such as culture, migration, racism, sexism, cultural assimilation, structural assimilation, ethnic groups, stereotypes, prejudice, and institutional racism are addressed. Teachers use their understanding of these concepts to help students identify their emotions and experiences, and to make connections between different topics (J. A. Banks, 2009). J. A. Banks (2009) regarded egalitarian pedagogy as one of the dimensions of multicultural education and emphasized the importance of implementing egalitarian pedagogy in multicultural classes. Egalitarian pedagogy is defined as employing effective and different teaching strategies and preparing appropriate classroom environments in order to provide students from different groups with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to be effective individuals in a fair, humanitarian, and democratic society (C. A. M. Banks & Banks, 1995).

Democratic Values in the Classroom

Values are the most fundamental elements that shape societies and differentiate them from others. Concepts such as equality, respect for life, freedom, justice, honesty, understanding, cooperation, self-confidence, tolerance, sensitivity, responsibility, accepting differences, security, and peace constitute democratic values (Y. R. Kıncal, 2007; R. Y. Kıncal & Işık, 2003; Kinnier et al., 2000). According to Irvine and Armento (2001), culturally responsive education focuses on creating positive classroom climates based on social justice, democracy, and equity. Schools are the places where principles of multiculturalism can be systematically delivered, as school life and culture have a significant impact on children's gaining democratic values (Doğanay & Sarı, 2004). Colombo (2006) stated that schools and teachers who see the world through an intercultural lens develop teaching and training skills through the focus of this lens, and creating safe classes where students can improve their academic achievement and express their cultural identity. Therefore, to facilitate the democratic values of multiculturalism, teachers should accept students' biological, sexual, racial, religious, cultural, economic, and political differences as natural and, when planning teaching-learning processes, highlight these

differences and create a multicultural education environment to encourage positive attitudes toward differences (S. Aslan, 2017; Polat, 2009).

Teachers are agents of social change that empower their students and support democratic values (Banks, 2004). Therefore, teachers must be aware of the strong influence they have on the ways of thinking, decision-making, behaving, and defining events of students from different cultures. According to Washington (2003), teachers need to have skills of self-understanding, understanding the cultures of others, and academic-multicultural competences. Teacher competence is defined as the knowledge, skills, understanding, and attitudes that teachers should have to effectively fulfill the responsibilities required by the teaching profession (Şahin, 2007, as cited in Akdağ & Yıldız, 2011). Estimating one's self-efficacy as a teacher is understanding to what extent they can or cannot achieve a goal through their beliefs, attitudes, and experiences in situations where their competence cannot be directly observed (Akhtar, 2008; Bandura, 1997; Schunk, 1990). Gavora (2010) furthermore explained teacher self-efficacy as a teacher's personal belief in their skills of planning the lesson, achieving goals, and teaching their students effectively and efficiently in an educational environment. Previous studies (Buluç & Demir, 2015; Fackler & Malmberg, 2016; Günbayı & Tokel, 2012; Morgül et al., 2016; Wertheim & Leyser, 2002) have determined that teachers' high self-efficacy has a positive effect on their organizational commitment, job satisfaction, teachers and students' performance, and students' academic achievement.

Context of the Study

As a result of the war and humanitarian crisis that began in Syria in 2011, millions of people have been displaced. In Turkey, migration from neighboring countries has caused multiculturalism and diversity to come to the forefront in the curriculum renewed by the Ministry of National Education in 2018. Therefore, a teaching approach that considers the sociocultural differences of students has become inevitable with this new situation. According to the Grand National Assembly of Turkey (2018), as of the beginning of 2018, approximately 3.4 million Syrians lived under temporary protection status in Turkey, which has implemented a humanitarian asylum policy. In addition to Syrians, as of the end of 2017, 300,000 refugees from countries such as Iraq, Afghanistan, Iran, and Somalia had sought temporary protection in Turkey (Grand National Assembly of Turkey, 2018). Today, 5.7 million refugees (of whom 3.5 million are under temporary protection, 300,000 under international protection, and 600,000 with residence permit) from around 190 different countries live under different statuses in Turkey. Therefore, in our country, foreign children are encountered in schools in the provinces where asylum seekers have congregated. With this social change teachers must develop multicultural competencies and effective multicultural education in schools, promoting democratic values. According to Kesici (2008), to create democratic classrooms, teachers need to display behaviors such as openness to communication with an objective perspective, consistency, equal opportunities in the classroom, openness to criticism and innovation, guidance for

students, and respect for differences. Teachers' efficacy in creating a supportive educational environment is closely related to their multicultural education competencies and democratic values. Thus, an evaluation of teachers' perceptions of their self-efficacy, multiculturalism, and democratic values in classrooms with international students stands out as a topic worth researching.

Based on the influx of international students in Turkey coming from countries like Iraq, Afghanistan, Iran, Somalia, and especially Syria, a study of teachers' adoption of democratic values and multicultural perceptions is warranted. These findings will shed light on the determination of policies for implementing multicultural education training programs for teachers. Therefore, the present study aims to determine science teachers' self-perceptions of multicultural competence and democratic values in schools where international students study, and to find out whether there is a relationship between perceptions of multicultural competence and democratic values. To this end, answers to the following questions were sought:

1. What is the level of perception of multicultural competence of science teachers who work in schools where international students study?
2. What is the level of democratic values of science teachers who work in schools where international students study?
3. Is there a significant relationship between the perceptions of multicultural competence and democratic values of science teachers who work in schools where international students study?

METHOD

Research Model

The purpose of the present study was to determine the perceptions of multicultural competence and democratic values of science teachers in schools where international students study and to find out whether there is a relationship between them. To this end, we employed the relational screening model in the study. The relational screening method is used to identify relationships and connections between variables and to predict possible results. The level of relationship between two or more variables is tried to be measured using statistical tests. The relational screening model aims to describe a situation that exists or existed in the past, and in this model, we try to describe the relationship between perceptions of multicultural competence and democratic values (Büyüköztürk et al., 2009).

Population and Sample

The universe of the study consists of 835 science teachers working in secondary schools where international students study in eight provinces of Turkey's Western Black Sea Region. Since it is not possible to reach all the teachers in the universe, sampling was been taken. It is suggested to select

approximately 400 sample sizes from this universe in the amount of deflection and margin of error (Büyüköztürk et al., 2016). When sampling from the universe, we applied nonprobability sampling methods to teachers who could be reached. Teachers who filled out this sampling scale incorrectly, did not want to answer, or did not complete the survey were not included. On the basis of confidentiality, the names of these teachers were not taken. We determined the schools that have international students (nationals of Syria, Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, and Turkmenistan) from information received from the school administrators. Of these 835 science teachers, 436 science teachers constituted the sample of the study. Of these 436 teachers, 210 (48.2%) were female, while 226 (51.8%) were male.

Data Collection Tools

Data were collected using the Perceptions of Multicultural Competence Scale, developed by Başbay and Kağnıcı (2011) to determine teachers' perceptions of multicultural competence, and the Democratic Values Scale, developed by Çermik (2013) to determine the democratic attitudes of teachers.

The Perceptions of Multicultural Competence Scale measures the levels of multicultural awareness, knowledge, and skill of teachers. The awareness dimension of the scale includes items reflecting teachers' attitudes toward different cultural structures. The knowledge dimension includes items aimed at revealing teachers' efforts to gain knowledge about the cultural characteristics of both themselves and the individuals around them. The skill dimension includes items that reflect the skills that a teacher is expected to have about multiculturalism both inside and outside the classroom. Cronbach's alpha coefficients obtained from the scale were as follows: .85 for the awareness dimension; .87 for the knowledge dimension; .91 for the skill dimension; and .95 for the total scale (Başbay & Kağnıcı, 2011).

It has been argued that the scale can also be used in research with teachers working in the field (Başbay & Kağnıcı, 2011). To use this scale in his research, Bulut (2014) first conducted a validity and reliability study for the usability of the scale for teachers. Bulut (2014) found the χ^2 value as 2263.72 ($p < .001$) in confirmatory factor analysis. The χ^2 value was significant as expected. The χ^2/d value was 2.91; the nonnormed fit index was .95; the normed fit index was .93; comparative fit index was .95, and the root mean square error of approximation was .068. For the reliability of the scale, Cronbach's alpha coefficients of the dimensions were calculated as follows: .84 for the awareness subdimension, .83 for the knowledge subdimension, .84 for the skill subdimension, and 0.93 for the total scale. The results of the confirmatory factor analysis showed that the scale was reliable and valid, and the scale was used in the thesis study titled "An of Teachers' Perceptions of Multicultural Competence" (Bulut, 2014).

The Democratic Values Scale was developed by Çermik (2013). The scale contains 5-point Likert-type items. The scale was applied to a total of 1,022 prospective teachers studying at Pamukkale University Faculty of Education. As a result of factor analysis, 24 items were excluded from the scale, and factor

analysis of the scale was conducted with 17 items. As a result of factor analysis, Kaiser-Mayer Olkin value was calculated as .848. Bartlett's Test of Sphericity of the data used in the study was found to be significant ($\chi^2 = 4971.442$; $p < .05$). The fact that the Kaiser-Mayer Olkin value was .848 indicated that factor analysis was applicable to the data. As a result of the analyses, we found that the scale had a one-dimensional and four-factor structure. The subfactors of the scale were named as (a) "claiming rights," (b) "respect for differences," (c) "justice," and (d) "equality." The first factor explained 27.97% of the total variance, the second factor 12.90%, the third factor 7.74% and the fourth factor 6.36%, and 17 items explained 54.97% of the total variance. Factor load values were found to be between .40 and .87 for all four factors. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient of the total scale was found to be .848 (Çermik, 2013). In this study, Cronbach's alpha coefficients were calculated as follows: .90 for the claiming rights dimension; .89 for the respect for differences dimension; .91 for the justice dimension; .71 for the equality dimension; and .94 for the total scale.

Data Analysis

To teachers working in schools in Kastamonu, Karabuk, and Sinop, we delivered and collected the surveys by hand. To teachers working in schools in other cities, we delivered and collected the surveys by mail. SPSS 20.0 package program was used for data analysis. Descriptive statistical techniques such as percentage, frequency, arithmetic mean, and standard deviation were used in the analysis of the research data. Pearson's correlation coefficient was used to determine whether there is a relationship between teachers' perceptions of multicultural competence and their democratic attitudes. To determine the strength of the relationships obtained in the correlation analysis, 0.70–1.00 high, 0.69–0.30 medium, and 0.29–0.00 low ranges were used. Data were tested at the .05 significance level (Büyüköztürk, 2002; Köklü et al., 2007).

RESULTS

Science Teachers' Perceptions of Multicultural Competence

The findings related to the question "What is the level of perception of multicultural competence of science teachers who work in schools where international students study?" are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Study Science Teachers' Perceptions of Multicultural Competence ($N = 436$)

Subfactors	*M*	*SD*	Rating	Explanation
Awareness	3.81	0.48	Agree	Sufficient
Knowledge	3.75	0.62	Agree	Sufficient
Skill	3.69	0.51	Agree	Sufficient
Total scale	3.75	0.45	Agree	Sufficient

Table 1 shows the arithmetic mean of the scores of science teachers from the subdimensions of the perceptions of the multicultural competence scale. When we examine the arithmetic means we see that the highest mean belongs to the awareness factor ($M = 3.81$), followed by the knowledge ($M = 3.75$) and skill ($M = 3.69$) factors, respectively. The arithmetic mean of the total scale is $M = 3.75$. The findings show that science teachers "agree" with the items related to multicultural competencies.

Democratic Values of Science Teachers

The findings related to the question "What is the level of democratic values of science teachers who work in schools where international students study?" are shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Democratic Values of Science Teachers ($N = 436$)

Subfactors	*M*	*SD*	Rating	Explanation
Justice	4.63	0.63	Strongly agree	Well-adopted
Respect for differences	4.41	0.55	Strongly agree	Well-adopted
Equality	4.30	0.74	Strongly agree	Well-adopted
Claiming rights	4.11	0.59	Agree	Well-adopted
Total scale	4.35	0.48	Strongly agree	Well-adopted

Table 2 presents the arithmetic mean of the scores of science teachers from the democratic values scale. When we examine the arithmetic means, we see that the highest mean belongs to the "justice" factor ($M = 4.63$), followed by "respect for differences" ($M = 4.41$), "equality" ($M = 4.30$), and "claiming rights" ($M = 4.11$), respectively. The arithmetic mean of the total scale was found to be ($M = 4.35$) The findings indicate that science teachers agreed with the items related to the "claiming rights" dimension, while they strongly agreed with the items related to the "justice," "respect for differences," and "equality."

Relationship Between Science Teachers' Perceptions of Multicultural Competence and their Democratic Values

The relationships between the three dimensions of multiculturalism (awareness, skills, and knowledge) are examined. The awareness dimension has a high positive relationship ($r = 78$) with the skill dimension and a moderately positive ($r = 43$) relationship with the knowledge dimension.

When the relationships among the four subdimensions (claiming rights, respect for differences, justice, and equality) of democratic values are examined, there is a moderately positive relationship between claiming rights and respect for differences ($r = 59$), between claiming rights and justice ($r = 60$), and between claiming rights and equality ($r = 64$). Similarly, there is a high positive relationship between respect for differences and justice ($r = 69$) and between

respect for differences and equality, while a moderately positive relationship between justice and equality ($r = 62$).

When we examine the relationships between the subdimensions of perceptions of the multicultural competence scale and the subdimensions of the democratic values scale, we see a significant positive relationship between all subdimensions. In Table 3 a moderately significant relationship between awareness and respect for differences is shown ($r = 39$), between awareness and justice ($r = 31$), and between awareness and equality ($r = 38$). There is a moderately positive relationship between skill and respect for differences ($r = 39$), between skill and justice ($r = 31$), and between skill and equality ($r = 37$). Again in Table 3, we see a moderately positive relationship between knowledge and respect for differences ($r = 40$), between knowledge and justice ($r = 32$), and between knowledge and equality ($r = 37$). Also, there is a low positive relationship between knowledge and claiming rights ($r = 28$), between awareness and claiming rights ($r = 22$), and between skill and claiming rights ($r = 25$). In conclusion, we found that there was a moderate positive relationship between science teachers' perceptions of multicultural competence and their democratic attitudes ($r = 41$).

Table 3: The Correlation Values between the Perceptions of Multicultural Competence and Democratic Values

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Multicultural competences									
1. Awareness		.78**	.43**	.22**	.38**	.31**	.38**	.81**	.32**
2. Skill		—	.63**	.25**	.39**	.31**	.37**	.86**	.33**
3. Knowledge			—	.28**	.40**	.32**	.37**	.71**	.33**
Democratic values									
4. Claiming rights				—	.59**	.60**	.64**	.38**	.92**
5. Respect for differences					—	.69**	.74**	.42**	.90**
6. Justice						—	.62**	.36**	.88**
7. Equality							—	.34**	.90**
8. Multiculturalism								—	.41**
9. Democratic values									—

Note. $N = 436$ *$p < .01$, ** $p < .05$

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The present study was conducted to determine the relationship between self-perceptions of multicultural competence and democratic values of science teachers in schools where international students study.

As a result of the data analysis, we found that the science teachers in schools where international students study agreed with the items related to the awareness dimension of the perceptions of multicultural competence scale ($\bar{x} = 3.81$). This

finding shows that teachers' levels of awareness of different cultural structures are sufficient. Based on this finding, we conclude that teachers have embraced values and attitudes of different cultures, believe that cultures should be protected, and think that communicating with students from different cultures does not disturb them and that students are not culturally superior or weaker, showing a sufficient level of awareness.

These findings are consistent with those obtained in other studies. In the study conducted by Strickland (2018), it was found that teachers working in various American schools with different ethnic backgrounds had multicultural experience medium level close to high. Akyıldız (2018) determined that teachers' multicultural competencies and their scores from the awareness, knowledge, and skill subdimensions were sufficient. Bulut and Başbay (2014) found that teachers had sufficient awareness of multicultural competencies and the awareness, knowledge, and skill subdimensions. Similarly, in other studies conducted on teachers, it was determined that teachers' multicultural competence perceptions were sufficient in awareness, skill, and knowledge (Cırık, 2014; İsmetoğlu, 2017; Özdemir, 2018; Perkins, 2012; Yüksel, 2018). Sheets and Chew (2000) also found that prospective teachers generally adopted multicultural education, and they were aware that multicultural education provided for the development and change of the school environment. Gorham (2001) also revealed that teachers have multicultural competences. The findings indicate that science teachers who work in schools where international students study consider themselves sufficient in multiculturalism (Aslan & Kozikoğlu, 2017; Kaya & Söylemez, 2014; Taştekin et al., 2016; S. Yazıcı et al., 2009).

For teachers to prepare a multicultural education environment in schools and classrooms where students from different cultures study, their perception of multicultural competence should be much higher. However, as the findings of this study show, teachers' perceptions of multicultural competence are not at a "quite sufficient" level. The reason teachers do not consider themselves quite sufficient in terms of multicultural competence may be due to the lack of multicultural education in preservice and in-service training programs. A training program for teachers and prospective teachers on this subject may raise their perceptions of multicultural competence. In O'Byrne & Smith, (2015), Brady (2014), and Johnson Wells (2011), multicultural education practices had an impact on prospective teachers' attitudes toward and competences in multicultural education.

Prospective teachers agreed with the items related to the claiming rights dimension of the democratic values scale, while they strongly agreed with the items related to the justice, respect for differences, and equality dimensions. Teachers showed a high level of agreement ($M = 4.63$) with the items related to the justice dimension of democratic values, and a lower level of agreement ($M = 4.11$) with the items related to the claiming rights dimension. The justice dimension of democratic values includes items related to the exercise of democratic rights, the impossibility of progress without justice, equal application of the principle of justice to all, and the functioning of democracy based on the legal guarantee. The claiming rights dimension, on the other hand, includes items

related to taking decisions voluntarily, the courage to challenge the opinions of high-status people, boldly expressing one's opinions even if they are contrary to the opinions of the group, never putting up with injustice, struggling for justice, and being undaunted in the struggle for justice.

While teachers showed a higher level of agreement with the items related to the justice, respect for differences, and equality dimensions of the democratic values, they showed a lower level of agreement with the items related to the claiming rights dimension. This finding is similar to the findings of other similar studies. Turnsek and Pekkarinen (2009) found that the democratic attitudes of teachers were above average. Almog and Shechtman (2007) found a positive relationship between teachers' democratic attitudes and their ability to use methods. Kesici et al. (2017) found that teachers had high perceptions of democratic behaviors in the classroom. Wang (2004) found that the democratic attitudes of teachers were positive. Similar to these findings, Demoulin and Kolstad (2000) found that prospective teachers had high democratic values.

In our study, we found a generally positive, moderate, and significant relationship between teachers' perceptions of multicultural competence and their democratic values. The most significant relationship was found between the respect for differences dimension of democratic values and the awareness, skill, and knowledge dimensions of perceptions of multicultural competence. Accordingly, as science teachers' level of agreement with the respect for differences dimension of democratic values increased, their level of agreement with the awareness, skill, and knowledge dimensions of perceptions of multicultural competence increased. Based on this, we concluded that teachers' high levels of perceptions of multicultural competence in a multicultural society are related to their adoption of democratic values. This can be interpreted as teachers' perceptions of multicultural competence increase as their democratic values increase, and their perceptions of multicultural competence decrease as their democratic values decrease (Akyıldız, 2018; F. Yazıcı et al., 2016).

Based on the findings of the research, the following suggestions can be put forward: In a multicultural society, teachers have an important role in providing multicultural education. The presence of students from different cultural backgrounds in the teachers' classrooms gives the experience of multiculturalism. In this context, the presence of students with differences can contribute to the development of multicultural education. Teachers should organize out-of-school educational activities for students of different cultural backgrounds to protect their culture and to integrate with the place where they live. In-service training related to the attitudes and values teachers should have in a multicultural education environment and the methods and techniques they should use can be organized for the teachers in schools where international students are located. The implementation of projects on multicultural education in higher education institutions and among teachers should be encouraged. In addition, within the scope of teaching practices, prospective teachers can gain awareness and democratic attitudes by visiting international students' schools, making observations and organizing activities in classrooms. Further qualitative research

can be done on multicultural education and democratic values of teachers working in schools where international students are concentrated.

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M. SAİD DOĞRU, PhD, is an Assistant Professor at Vocational School of Vehicle Rafet Araç. His major research interests lie in the area of health, multiculturalism and science education. Email: msaid.dogru@yahoo.com

İBRAHİM DEMİRBAŞ is a doctoral student in the Department of Social Sciences Education at Kastamonu University. His major research interests lie in the area of social science education and multiculturalism. Email: idemirbas28@gmail.com