

Article

Multicultural Education Policies and Connected Ways of Living during COVID-19: Role of Educators as Cultural Transformers

Necla İzbul Kirac ^{1,*}, Fahriye Altınay ¹, Gokmen Dagli ¹, Zehra Altınay ¹, Ramesh Sharma ², Rustam Shadiev ³ and Menil Celebi ⁴

¹ Faculty of Education, Institute of Graduate Studies, Societal Research, and Development Center, Near East University, University of Kyrenia, Northern Cyprus, Via Mersin 10, Girne 99320, Turkey

² Department of Instructional Design, Dr. B R Ambedkar University Delhi, New Delhi 110015, India

³ School of Education, Nanjing Normal University, Nanjing 210098, China

⁴ Faculty of Health Sciences, Societal Research and Development Center, Near East University, Northern Cyprus, Via Mersin 10, Lefkosa 99138, Turkey

* Correspondence: izardnecla@hotmail.com; Tel.: +90-533-8760785

Abstract: Multicultural education plays a significant role in eliminating prejudices and developing concepts such as tolerance, understanding, respect for differences, and empathy. The northern part of Cyprus exhibits the characteristics of a society that has received increasing numbers of immigrants in recent years, and where the experiences of living together with individuals from different cultures begin to differ rapidly. As a result of increasing immigration to the northern part of Cyprus in recent years and the changing lives based on digitalization, students from different cultures have started to receive education in schools. The aim of this research is to evaluate the multicultural education policies to contribute to the creation and implementation of multicultural education policies according to the results of the evaluation of the role of digital educators in transforming cultures. In addition, the qualitative research model was adopted, and the Case Study pattern was used. The interview technique was used for data collection. The research universe consisted of 31 participants, including teacher training faculty members, administrators, and teachers working in public schools in the 2020–2021 academic year in the northern part of Cyprus. Educators participating in the research expressed more positive views on multiculturalism, multicultural education, and multicultural education.

Keywords: multicultural education; online community; policies; sustainability; quality of life



check for updates

Citation: Kirac, N.İ.; Altınay, F.; Dagli, G.; Altınay, Z.; Sharma, R.; Shadiev, R.; Celebi, M. Multicultural Education Policies and Connected Ways of Living during COVID-19: Role of Educators as Cultural Transformers. *Sustainability* **2022**, *14*, 12038. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su141912038>

Academic Editors: David Molero and Óscar Gavín-Chocano

Received: 17 August 2022

Accepted: 8 September 2022

Published: 23 September 2022

Publisher's Note: MDPI stays neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.



Copyright: © 2022 by the authors. Licensee MDPI, Basel, Switzerland. This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

1. Introduction

One of the most important issues spoken of in every field worldwide is multiculturalism. The main problems faced by many societies involved in the process, starting in the middle of the 20th century and reaching to the present day, are the linguistics, identities, cultures, and religions of different ethnic origins, groups not restricted to their countries in the past, and this has become a universal problem. After the disappearance of assimilation policies, the idea of “multiculturalism” emerged, which was applied in different countries and made it possible to express cultural, linguistic, religious, and racial wishes. Political developments in the 20th century, organizations, migrations between states, and the migration of people from rural areas to cities have led to the fact that the countries' populations have become “multicultural” with different cultural affiliations [1].

Multiculturalism, in terms of its general characteristics, is a solution proposal that aims to make it possible for the differences to live together, despite the cultural, social, and political wishes of foreigners due to international migration. As a result, multiculturalism is based on the principle that the state or country recognizes differences in a tolerance-based manner, despite foreigners' cultural demands and differences [2]. It includes the search for a solution on how to ensure equality and justice among those who believe in national culture

and see their ethnic identity as a cultural resource and their religion as a cultural resource [3]; the balance of the values of diversity and the political attitude towards the complex situation in the globalizing world [4,5] is an alternative to assimilation [6]; a political organization specific to communities with group consciousness in democratic states [7]; the view that diversity is adopted and accepted in society instead of standardized ethnic and cultural elements and homogeneous social structure [8]; ensuring the public visibility of different cultures, ethnicities, identities, and minorities [9]; the coexistence of cultures equally and in peace [10]. Although more than one idea explains multiculturalism, the common point is that many different cultures live in the same place simultaneously. Some literature uses the term intercultural. The Spring Institute (springinstitute.org) describes multicultural “as a society that contains several cultural or ethnic groups. People live alongside one another, but each cultural group does not necessarily have engaging interactions with each other”, while “Intercultural describes communities in which there is a deep understanding and respect for all cultures. Intercultural communication focuses on the mutual exchange of ideas and cultural norms and developing deep relationships”. In our work, we have opted for the term multicultural as it more suits the context of our research.

Multicultural education, integrating the egalitarian and fair idea of multiculturalism policy into the education system, was born against monocultural education [10]. When considering studies on education today, it is obvious that the research on multicultural education is increasing daily. It affects multicultural teaching proficiency. The search for a solution to the problem of the expectation that cultural communities will display positive behaviors toward other cultural groups that have emerged in contemporary societies is one of the leading problems that lead to the emergence of multicultural education [11]. References [12,13] draw attention to the field of education as an essential indicator of the country’s multiculturalism. Reference [12] points to the changes made in education programs to monitor how the state looks at foreigners in the context of multiculturalism. It moreover [12,13] emphasizes the importance of changing the education programs of primary and secondary education institutions, as well as people from different ethnic backgrounds to be admitted to the social science departments of universities to recognize foreigners in the country and to take an active part in social life [13]. While multicultural education reveals the similarities between cultures, it also allows us to see differences. Multicultural education mainly tries to convey tolerance toward other cultures, not allowing racism to be eliminated, raising awareness about different cultures, and allowing the student to see the universe in which they live through the eyes of different cultures [14].

Reference [15] stated that multicultural education aims to provide individuals with the knowledge and skills to see themselves through the eyes of other cultures, to know themselves better, to respect different cultures, and to behave toward different ethnic groups [16]. Multicultural education is a reform movement prepared to realize radical changes in the education system [15]. Reference [15] defined multicultural education as the right of students to receive education in an equal and tolerant manner regardless of race, religion, age, gender, culture, disability, and ethnic identity. Students experience social, cultural, and racial differences in the same environment as students with different cultures and individual characteristics with multicultural education. In developing students’ perceptions of multiculturalism, both at school and in society, teachers, school administrators, the community, and families have significant duties [16]. Multicultural education enables students to live with different cultural groups; it is an educational philosophy that aims to achieve success with equal and fair academic opportunities. It is an education policy with a pluralism-based arrangement at all levels of education [6]. Media literacy plays a great role in multicultural education. Its impact on the perception of people about gender, ethnicity, race, etc., is significant as it may give a direction on how people would perceive gender roles in terms of masculinity and femininity, nationalism, or racial segregation. Reference [17] recommends participatory action research for the inclusion of a diversity of views to address the complexities of multicultural societies. They further impress upon critical consciousness to address identity issues, cross-group or within-group prejudices,

and similar factors to tackle these; an inclusive media literacy policy [18] for the entire society is an essential strategy for effective communication and understanding among multicultural societies.

Educational policies are shaped in a multidimensional process with ideological and political aspects and social and economic dimensions. Education policies have a crucial place in shaping the individual and society. The state effectively uses education policies to reshape the individual on the one hand and the society on the other. There are many studies on multicultural education in the Far East and European countries. In this respect, it is important to realize distinctions between national values and immigrants who need to learn about them.

2. The Need for the Study

Countries such as the northern part of Cyprus control the textbooks used and the education programs. Education programs and textbooks, which are critical aspects of education policies, are effective in explaining the common self of society. Two events can be mentioned that necessitate the application of multicultural policies to the agenda. The first is the migration from emerging countries to rich industrialized countries after the Industrial Revolution. The second is that after the Second World War, there was an intense social displacement of guest workers to rebuild countries. These migrations, experienced for economic reasons, also revealed some social problems. One of these problems is how to create education policies suitable for the changing multicultural structure. As long as large migrations increase, the diversity of individuals who need education will also increase. Therefore, there is a need for a multicultural education policy that accepts different cultures in all societies. Creating multicultural education policies is vital in deciding how the country will treat people from different cultures regarding multiculturalism, how the government and society want to welcome people from different cultures, and what policies and practices should be towards foreigners [19].

Recent studies point out the importance of understanding the collective way of living and multicultural education regarding Covid-19 through the merits of technology for the future of education [20–25]. The study of [20] sheds light on the effects of Covid 19 on multicultural education and online learning. The study [20] revealed that cultural diversity is beneficial for learners. Further to this, the factors of motivation, communication, anxiety, and confidence create positive impacts on cross-cultural learning. Reference [21] emphasized social learning culture and examination of resources and strategies by using new technologies, assessments, and flexible curriculum. The study underlined that using powerful tools for building language, curriculum, and social-cultural communication bonds across generations is essential. Existing literature examines multicultural education and the problems of international students. Still, no research could be located on whether there are multicultural education policies in the northern part of the Cyprus education system. The difference between this research and other studies is that it generally investigates the existence of multicultural education policies in the northern part of Cyprus education system and reveals the views of education stakeholders on multiculturalism and multicultural education. The research aims to examine the roles and suggestions of stakeholders on multicultural education for connected online communities in the quality of life.

3. Research Questions

Research Question 1: How do educators as cultural transformers define multicultural education?

Research Question 2: What are the obstacles to multicultural education?

Research Question 3: What are suggestions for overcoming barriers in multicultural education for establishing policy making?

4. Method

Model and Approach of the Research

This study was taken up to evaluate the opinions of stakeholders about the multicultural education policies in the northern part of Cyprus public schools. For this purpose, the qualitative research method was adopted. In qualitative research, the data collection techniques such as observation, interview, and document analysis are preferred. A process is followed to describe the facts in a realistic and holistic way in a natural environment. In other words, qualitative research is an approach that prioritizes researching and understanding social phenomena in their environment [26]. The Case Study pattern was also used in this research. Case studies seek answers to 'how' and 'why', allowing the researcher to examine the situation that he cannot manage comprehensively

4.1. Study Group

The participants consisted of 31 people, including teacher training faculty members, administrators, and teachers working in public schools during the 2020–2021 academic year of the northern part of Cyprus. The purposive sampling method was adopted to determine the participants of the study. Purposive sampling is a probability and non-random sampling model. The sample consisted of 23 women (74%) and 8 men (26%). In terms of their vocation, 3 (10%) were lecturers, 10 (32%) were school administrators, and 18 (58%) were teachers. The mean age of 31 participants was 40. The data on their educational qualifications showed that 3 (10%) had completed their doctorate, 9 (29%) master's degrees, and 19 (61%) undergraduate education. A total of 15 (48%) of the participants were from Kyrenia, 8 (26%) from Nicosia, 4 (13%) from Morphou, 1 (3%) from İskele, and 3 (10%) from the Famagusta region.

4.2. Data Collection Tool

To collect the research data, semi-structured interview questions were created following the qualitative research method. Care was taken to ensure that the questions were not multidimensional, precise, open-ended, and not directive. Nine open-ended questions were prepared by scanning the literature and examining the documents. To obtain more explicit and clear information during the interview, additional sub-questions were also asked. For example, the following questions approved by three experts were asked to research participants:

1. How do you define multiculturalism?
2. What are the components of multiculturalism?
3. What do you feel about multiculturalism?
4. In your opinion, what should the aims of multicultural education be?
5. What do you think about multicultural education in the northern part of Cyprus?
6. What are the policies about multicultural education? Etc.

In addition, the Personal Information Form prepared by the researchers was used to determine the demographic information of the participants participating in this research. The participant's gender, age, graduated school and department, educational status, job, and place of residence were recorded in the Personal Information Form.

In this study, external validity was ensured by protecting the originality of the data and using direct quotations from the participants' views. In addition, the sampling method suitable for the study flow was used to reflect the variability and diversity in the managers' opinions regarding their official duties.

4.3. Data Collection

A one-to-one interview was conducted. Each interview lasted from 25–40 min. Interviews were held in the second term of the 2020–2021 academic year, with permission from the Ministry of National Education, at the place and time deemed appropriate by the participant. The interviews, conducted face-to-face with the participants, were recorded with a voice recorder, with the consent of the participants. The researcher asked questions and

tried to explore the reflections of the research participants. The interview form was sent via e-mail to those who could not attend the interview. The collected data were transferred to electronic media after each interview. The information recorded during the interviews was turned into a written document. Then, the data, which was turned into a written document, was read to the interviewees, confirming that the records were correct and complete. Thus the reliability of the information was verified. The interviews were conducted according to the Interview Form created by the researchers.

The reliability formula suggested by [27] was used to calculate the reliability of the study.

$$\text{Reliability} = \text{Consensus} / (\text{Agreement} + \text{Disagreement}) \times 100$$

As a result of the calculation, the reliability of the research was calculated as 89%. Reliability calculations over 80% are considered reliable for research [27]. The result obtained here is considered reliable for research.

4.4. Analysis of Data

Descriptive analysis was used in the data analysis of this study. According to [26], the themes are examined from the data obtained in the “descriptive analysis”, and the views and experiences of the participants are summarized and interpreted. A description is made by presenting the obtained results to the reader in an organized and interpreted form. Among the comments to be made by the researcher, there are processes of associating the emerging themes, making sense of them, and making future predictions.

In analyzing the data obtained during the research process, firstly, the audio recordings of the interviews were transcribed word by word using a Word program. After considering the opinions and corrections of Turkish Language and Literature experts, the data were coded. Words and phrases were chosen as the unit of analysis in coding. While the codes were being processed, the interview texts were first coded with open coding from beginning to end. Categories were created based on the similarities and differences between the generated codes. Research themes were reached through categories. In presenting the findings, direct quotations from the interview text of the participants were provided.

This section is not mandatory but can be added to the manuscript if the discussion is unusually long or complex.

5. Findings

In the findings section, the participants’ opinions about multicultural education policies have been analyzed descriptively.

Interpretations about Multiculturalism

Participants were asked to define the concept of multiculturalism. Their responses are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. The Emphasis of Participants in Definitions of Multiculturalism.

Definition	Participants	Percentage of Participants
Coexistence	All participants except participant 6	97%
Different cultures	All participants except participant 6	97%
Cultural exchange	Participant 5 and Participant 16	6.5%
Justice	Participant 1 and Participant 21	6.5%
Equality	Participant 1	3%
Tolerance	Participant 2 and Participant 21	6.5%

Participants generally explained multiculturalism as the coexistence of individuals belonging to more than one ethnic origin, having various beliefs, different lifestyles, and ways of thinking. They stated that equality, tolerance, and respect are essential for living together, resulting in the formation of new cultures through interaction. When it comes to different lifestyles, the acceptance of individuals with different cultural values, individuals with different sexual preferences, and their living with equal rights with other people are included in multiculturalism.

The important opinions of some of the participants are given below as direct quotations.

Participant 1 defined it as “A system (philosophy) that enables different cultures (religion, language, ethnicity, race, gender, sexual orientation, social class, etc.) to coexist in a just and egalitarian way”.

Participant 5 said, “It is the ability of people from different countries and those who carry the culture of the countries they come from to live together with these cultural differences and to exchange cultures”.

Participant 31 said, “It is the temporary and/or permanent presence of socialized individuals in societies dominated by a different culture”. It is seen that multiculturalism refers to the ability to live together in cultural differences and respect different cultures.

Opinion on Components of Multiculturalism

Participants were informed about the elements and dimensions of multiculturalism, such as multiple lifestyles, behavioral patterns, multiple ethnicities, multiple languages, multiple belief systems, common cultural heritage, common tradition, equality between differences, understanding of cultures to which the individual does not belong, and respect when necessary (Table 2). Participants touched on differences and diversity in the question of the elements of multiculturalism and emphasized ordinary situations, mutual understanding, and respect among diversities.

Table 2. Elements of the concept of multiculturalism.

Elements	Participants	Percentages of Participants
Religion	K1, K3, K5, K6, K13, K15, K19, K20, K22, K24, K25	35%
Language	K1, K3, K5, K6, K7, K12, K13, K15, K17, K18, K19, K22, K24, K25, K27	48%
Race	K1, K3, K15, K20, K22, K24, K25	22.5%
Caste	K1, K3, K13, K18	13%
Gender	K1, K3, K13, K20	13%
Sexual Orientation	K1	3%
Disability	K1	3%
Respect	K2, K9, K10, K18, K21, K23, K28	22.5%
Difference	K2, K19, K23, K24, K25, K29, K30	22.5%
Understanding	K2, K10, K19	10%
Values	K2	3%
Cultures	K3, K15, K17, K22, K23, K24, K26	22.5%
Coexistence	K4, K7, K14, K25, K28	16%
Education level	K5, K13, K20, K26	13%
Family	K5, K7	6.5%
Food Culture	K5, K26, K30	10%
Marital relations	K5	3%
Human	K6, K7, K17, K21, K22, K24	19%
Political thoughts	K7	3%
Cultural exchange	K6, K8, K11, K23, K29	16%
Democracy	K9, K31	6.5%
Human rights	K9	3%
Heterogeneous structure	K11	3%
Globalization	K11	3%
Migration	K12	3%
Ethnicity	K1, K12, K13, K16, K18, K21, K27	22.5%
Love	K21	3%
Peace	K18, K21	6.5%
Empathy	K19, K21, K31	10%

The participants mostly answered the question of the elements included in the concept of multiculturalism, the concept of “language”. The concept of “religion” took second place. The concepts of race, respect, difference, culture, and ethnicity are among the most preferred answers. Sexual orientation, disability, love, migration, globalization, heterogeneous structure, human rights, political thought, marital relations, and values were mentioned by one participant. The participants’ views considered important are listed

below. Participant 3 expressed his thoughts as “Language, religion, race, social classes, gender, cultures, beliefs . . .”. Participant 12 defined it as “immigrating due to different ethnic origin, language, and economic reasons”.

Multicultural Education and Its Practices in the northern part of Cyprus

Participants stated their thoughts about multicultural education.

Participant 1 said, “In today’s world where diversity is inevitable, multiculturalism should be an understanding and practice that should be included in education policies. Within the education programs, the subjects should be allowed to be examined from different perspectives, and the transformation of the society should be served. Environments should be created where experiences can be shared on issues such as values education, tolerance education, and human rights that will enable awareness and acceptance of differences”.

Participant 3 said, “Multicultural education is to provide equal educational opportunities to all students, regardless of their religion, language, race, gender, social status, and cultural characteristics. In a way, it is a learning process to understand and respect students’ differences”.

Participants 5 and 21 said that in multicultural education, people from different cultures should respect other cultures and accept it with their own culture. He emphasized that education and educational institutions should allow people from these different cultures to recognize and learn the culture of the country they live in without putting pressure on them to change their own culture by respecting it.

Participant 9 said, “There is no multicultural education plan in our country. Students are stuck between their own culture and other cultures. They are influenced by their friends. Meanwhile, they are trying to learn about the Cypriot culture, which is included in their curriculum. I think that Cypriot culture should be supported by widespread, concrete and encouraging activities because many of these children will live here in the future. Besides this, opportunities to introduce their own cultures should also be given”.

Participant 15 said, “As a teacher, it is difficult to unite many cultures on a common point in the classroom environment. While we know how to respect, it is difficult to expect and teach these from children, especially at a young age”.

Participant 27 said, “Yes, education should be given to everyone equally by respecting other cultural structures within the multicultural structure, but this should be done without degenerating the current country’s native language and culture. Respecting other cultures or languages is one thing; continuing education in the mother tongue of the current country is quite another. Of course, knowing the language of the country where the religious lesson teaching a Christian or Jewish child about Islam in a Muslim country is compulsory. It must be made compulsory for him to learn that language thoroughly by the state, he must be trained to recognize the culture, and then his children can continue their education and parents can continue to work in that society”.

In an analysis of the above statement by the participants who have a positive view on the subject, they explained that the priority of multicultural education is learning about multicultural life based on “meeting on the common ground, respect, empathy, and tolerance”. Many participants argued that multicultural education should be included in the education system. In the negative thoughts about multicultural education, it is seen that the education policies and education system in our country are insufficient. The idea that there is no education planning in our country has come to the fore. It has been presented that it is impossible to provide multicultural education given this lack of planning.

Regarding their thoughts on multicultural education in the northern part of Cyprus, the participants offered various answers. Most participants reported that multicultural education is needed but not satisfactorily implemented in the northern part of Cyprus. Some participants explained that multicultural education is necessary and should be implemented in the northern part of Cyprus. Some participants stated that multicultural education is being discussed today, but no concrete steps have been taken. Some participants explained that today’s conditions are not suitable for multicultural education and that there is not even an education policy yet. Regarding implementing multicultural education

in the northern part of Cyprus, learning environments should be enriched to foster the value of respecting differences in the same context.

In addition to this, participants reflected on the reasons for the need for multicultural education.

Population transfers from Turkey, migrating for reasons such as work in recent years, increase the number of foreign students due to the increase in the number of universities, women's movements becoming more visible, the movement on sexual orientation, and the rights of people with disabilities. Mobility is an indicator of the necessity for multicultural education. Participants stated that although multiculturalism has increased in the northern part of Cyprus in recent years, no visible work has been carried out. Although there is a need for multicultural education in primary and secondary education in the northern part of Cyprus, multicultural education is fragile. It is stated that teachers as cultural transformers do not have the infrastructure for multicultural education in the northern part of Cyprus. Children were educated entirely by the teachers' efforts and started to train with their own groups without any adaptation process for the children.

Participants 2, 8, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 19, 20, 22, 24, 25, and 29 reported about people who have come to the northern part of Cyprus from other countries in recent years for short-term work or education. It is difficult for teachers to unite many cultures at a common point in the classroom environment. They argued that there was no systematic study conducted by the state on this issue.

Participants stated that there are obstacles in front of multicultural education in the northern part of Cyprus (Table 3).

Table 3. Obstacles to Multicultural Education.

Sources of Obstacles	Participants	Percentages of Participants
The absence of an education policy in this direction	K1, K12, K18, K28, K3, K8, K15, K22, K24, K25, K27	35%
Lack of knowledge of lawmakers and education workers	K1, K18, K21, K8, K11, K16, K25, K27	26%
Deficiencies in education programs	K1	3%
Lack of integration programs for students coming from different cultures in educational institutions	K1, K7, K26, K29, K3, K6, K15, K19	26%
Prejudice against different cultures	K2, K23, K20, K25, K27	16%
Not being taken seriously by ever-changing government and education ministers	K12, K18, K21, K28, K30, K16	19%
Lack of planning	K17	3%

Participants reflected government policies are not suitable for multicultural education and that the situation negatively affects education policies. Lack of policy, lack of knowledge of lawmakers and education workers, and lack of integration programs for students from different cultures to educational institutions are the main obstacles to the sustainable implementation of multicultural education. In addition, some participants think that one of the obstacles to multicultural education is prejudice and disagreement between individuals and groups in society. Some participants stated the deficiencies in the training programs as obstacles. Some indicated that the people in the field of education do not have enough information on this subject. On the other hand, some participants indicated that the issue was not taken seriously by the ever-changing government and education ministers, and that lack of a plan appeared as an obstacle. One of the participants reported that there is no obstacle standing before multicultural education policies.

As the policies require cultural transformers, participants make suggestions for removing barriers in multicultural education for policies (Table 4).

Table 4. Participants' Recommendations for Removing Barriers.

Suggestions	Participants	Percentages of Participants
In-service training courses to be given to educators	K3, K11, K16, K20, K4, K10, K14	22.5%
Psychological counseling and guidance services to be given to foreign children from other countries at schools	K3	3%
Immediate creation of multicultural education programs	K3, K8, K15, K17, K16, K22, K24, K25, K13	29%
Teaching in a common language	K6, K19	6.5%
Developing integration programs for foreign students	K27, K5, K9,	10%
Organizing language courses for teachers	K27	3%
Teaching Turkish to foreign students	K27, K19	6.5%

Nine participants argued that multicultural education programs should be prepared and implemented immediately in our country. Seven participants think that in-service training courses to be given to educators, especially teachers, will be productive. Three participants argued that integration programs for international students should be developed. Two participants thought that education should be given in a common language. Another set of two participants argued that international students should be taught in Turkish. One participant emphasized that there should be psychological counseling and guidance services for foreign children from other countries. One participant also said that foreign language education should be given to teachers according to their needs.

Furthermore, the majority of the participants think that multicultural education is needed but not implemented in the northern part of Cyprus. Some of the participants stated that multicultural education is being talked about today, but no concrete steps have been taken. Some participants explained that today's conditions are not suitable for multicultural education and that there is not even an education policy yet.

Participant 1, citing population transfer due to war, migrations due to reasons such as work in recent years, the increase in the number of foreign students due to the increase in the number of universities, women's movements becoming more visible, the movement on sexual orientation, and the rights of disabled people, stated that mobility is an indicator of the necessity for multicultural education. However, he stated that the issue of multicultural education in the northern part of Cyprus is on the agenda, especially with the increase in the number of students in schools who do not speak Turkish. Participant 3 stated that although there has been an increase in multiculturalism in the northern part of Cyprus in recent years, no visible work has been done. Participant 21 stated that in the northern part of Cyprus, multicultural education is very weak in primary and secondary education and strong at the higher education stage. Participant 31 stated that he found multicultural education in the northern part of Cyprus positive, provided that it is not an alternative to the curriculum and does not create a hierarchical structure by threatening personal culture.

Regarding implementing multicultural education policies in the country, participants 16, 19, 20, and 28 expressed their ignorance related to this question. Participant 2 stated that the European Union has some initiatives on this issue and expressed that he thinks the "home for cooperation" campus in the south of Nicosia, where students from two communities can benefit, is a structure that will adopt multiculturalism. However, he argued that the Turkish administration did not have a constructive policy regarding this issue. Participant 31 argued that there should not be only a multicultural education policy, but it should be implemented in pre-university institutions in line with national education policies. He further stated that private schools do not show the necessary sensitivity and care and are concerned about this issue. All the remaining participants argued that no multicultural education policy is implemented in our country.

Participant 3 stated that the increasing multicultural structure in recent years necessitates the implementation of multicultural education policies. However, he thinks there is a misconception about multiculturalism in studies conducted in the northern part of Cyprus in recent years. He said that multiculturalism is believed to be only a language difference and that teachers and administrators have minimal information on this subject. Participants 4, 14, and 15 explained the necessity for multicultural education policies as integrating children into society, transferring social norms to students at a minimal level, and ensuring that the changing demographic structure of the society adapts to all. The reason is that foreign children, especially in the younger age group, feel psychological pressure, and this difference may lead to bullying in the future.

Participants 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 16, 17, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 26, 28, 29, and 30 explained the necessity of multicultural education policies, they explained it as the presence of a large number of people and a large number of students. However, they said that thanks to multicultural education policies, people of different languages, religions, and cultures could be respected, and those people can live peacefully and safely in this country.

The participants stated that the returns are generally positive if multicultural education policies are implemented within the education program.

Participant 1 cited critical thinking and the transformation of society to a multicultural structure as the major benefit. Participant 2 said social cohesion is the biggest benefit, a factor that can contribute a little to people's happiness, helping build democracy in the long run. Participant 3 expressed that learning about different cultures and enriching the nation makes it easier to produce solutions for individual or social problems in the country, reduces discrimination, racism, and religiousness, develops a sense of belonging to the country, society, environment, educational institutions, and increases efficiency in education. Participant 4 said preventing the events that may occur in case of preventing integration and exclusion of people from different cultures may have a shocking effect on society. Participant 5 indicated that ensuring that foreign children are respected and promoted to their own culture and respecting the cultures of their friends with whom they are educated. Participant 9 supported understanding the concept of culture, developing intercultural respect and tolerance, providing self-development by learning about different cultures, reducing adaptation problems at school, a better understanding of our own culture, and providing self-confidence in foreign students. Participant 10 said that students have the chance to receive a better and more inclusive education from a young age, and as a result, their success and happiness in life will increase. Participant 12 reported that the families on the island for economic reasons could receive education in social harmony without exclusion and discrimination. Participant 13 said that the possible conflict between differences could be minimized.

Participant 16 reported that problems arising from cultural differences would decrease, communication skills would increase, and adaptation problems would decrease because people respect each other's differences. Participant 17 said it would be much easier for children from different cultures to adapt to school. Children can get to know lives outside of their own culture. Participant 21 indicated that by adapting to the Turkish Cypriot community, peace and harmony in the society would be ensured. Participant 24 said that adopting the schools to all students will make them willingly attend and receive an education. Participant 25 said that the biggest benefit of this is to win children from different cultures. In today's conditions, these children receive education in an environment far from their own culture, in an environment where their own culture is not mentioned. While some of them adapt easily to their environment, many of them feel distant and separate. This causes problems such as not feeling one belongs to that class, not being willing to attend the class, and not being able to socialize with friends. Effective multicultural education will make this situation more positive. Thus, the classroom environment will become better both academically and socially. Participant 26 indicated that foreign students would adapt better to the classroom, and the burden on the teacher would be lightened. Other students will be able to learn different cultures and languages from foreign students. Participant 27

explained that social integration would be facilitated, and thus social distancing would be prevented on behalf of foreigners. Participant 31 opined that individuals who protect their society, history and future, national identity, and culture by not ignoring national education and culture better understand the world with multiculturalism and think without breaking away from their own culture with the globalizing world.

As can be seen in detail in the comments, it is stated that the most significant benefit is the elimination of racism, respect for different cultures, and the elimination of prejudice. Apart from this, it was mentioned about the comfort of adapting foreign children to school. It is explained as the increase in the quality of education and the ability to direct more accurately as a result of the teachers knowing the subject.

6. Conclusions

Migration as a global phenomenon is due to political conflict, natural disasters like feminine or quakes, and people looking for means of livelihood. In [28], they found that in Greece, the migrants have been considered cultural, economic, and security threats and thus constantly excluded from mainstream developmental projects. At the same time, with the rise in the migrant student population, multicultural classrooms are being constituted though educational inequities and barriers are visible. Educators participating in the research expressed common views on multiculturalism and multicultural education in the northern part of Cyprus. Educators participating in the research generally have a more positive view of multicultural education. Negative approaches are also expressed regarding multicultural education in the northern part of Cyprus. The information presented by the participants is in line with the opinion of international multicultural experts. Participants approached the subject constructively and positively. According to the participants, multiculturalism is a concept that expresses individuals belonging to different cultures, social classes, and those who have different lifestyles as a normal structuring to have equal rights and live together in peace. Most of the participants who are headmasters, teachers, and academicians, agreed on similar views. As they are on a small island, multiculturalism is perceived and experienced similarly. In this respect, they stated that multiculturalism is the respectful coexistence of individuals and groups with various cultures. Participants explained that the elements of multiculturalism consist of elements such as language, religion, traditions, lifestyles, and cultural elements. They define it as the coexistence of individuals and communities from different ethnicities and beliefs, that is, members of different religions/sects. Participants differ in their roles, and academicians are more inclined to implement multicultural education. On the other hand, teachers and headmasters do not perceive possible opportunities in the current system, and they want to reform the education system to manage diversity. Therefore, building knowledge on multicultural education is needed for sustainable multicultural education practices. Teachers, headmasters, and academicians as educators act as cultural transformers for constructing knowledge for the community through the facilitation of multicultural education. Many researchers share a common view with the participants. For example, according to [29], the leading researcher on multiculturalism, multiculturalism is the adoption of the differences of all different groups in societies of different nationalities and the acceptance of all people of different ethnicities and cultures with respect and diversity in that society. Participants pointed out that multiculturalism is a concept that emerged as a result of different intercultural interactions and interactions. This finding is in line with the opinions in the literature. In the Asian context, rising globalization has led to a multiculturalism burst. Multiculturalism challenges modern societies on social, economic, and political fronts [30]. To safeguard the customs, languages, and traditions of a nation, there is an urgent need to maintain cultural equality [31]. According to [32], multiculturalism provides an environment for people from different cultures to establish a dialogue with each other, influence each other, and provide mutual benefit. With the interaction of different cultures, traditions, moral, artistic, literary, and musical values, question each other, investigate, and challenge each other. With the effect of the different ideas put forward, ideas are exchanged, and communities with more

prosperous, more developed cultures and knowledge are formed [32]. In socio-economic conditions, populism is a strong determinant of globalization [33]. Cultural sensitivities and social identity have impacted populist measures and economic conditions. Other factors contributing to it are rising economic inequality, automation, the rise of the gig economy, etc., in recent times. In such situations, when the workforce is multicultural, traditional identities and cultural values tend to be defined by the dominant group. Reference [34] also examined the impact of the populist movement on the culture, lifestyle, and economy in the European context.

According to [35], there are "Intercultural education" departments in education faculties of universities in many European countries, and graduate students receive education in these departments. It serves only in a structure that teaches multicultural and intercultural education to all branches in the form of service courses, and academic studies are carried out in this field [35].

The issues stated by [29] match the answers given to the question "obstacles in front of multicultural education in the northern part of Cyprus" in our research. Participants noted that multicultural education is being discussed in the northern part of Cyprus today, but no concrete steps have been taken. They explained that state policies are not suitable for multicultural education and that education programs are insufficient at this point. They think there is prejudice and conflict between individuals and groups in society, another obstacle. In addition, they explained that the lack of adequate and healthy studies on the subject in academic environments and that non-experts handle the concept of multicultural education are among the obstacles. Suggestions of the participants on what can be done to remove the obstacles they see in front of multicultural education in the northern part of Cyprus are given. Nine participants argued that multicultural education programs should be prepared and implemented immediately in our country. Seven of the participants think that in-service training courses for educators, especially teachers, will be productive. Three participants argued that integration programs for foreign students should be developed, and two participants thought that education should be given in a common language. Again, two participants argued that international students should be taught Turkish. One participant emphasized that there should be psychological counseling and guidance services for foreign children from other countries. One participant also said that foreign language education should be given to teachers according to their needs. Participants also explained that multicultural education is needed in the globalizing world. The problems encountered both in the country and worldwide are due to the lack of multicultural awareness. They explained that multicultural education is an activity that enables the training of non-uniform individuals, develops a sense of belonging, unites individuals, and ensures the continuity of cultures. Multicultural education's priority and prerequisite is "eliminating prejudices in the administration and the public". The reason for the problems that have been felt more and more in the northern part of Cyprus in recent years is the denial of the existence of different groups. Education and training institutions are one of the essential pillars of this problem, and the problem can be minimized through education/training programs [36].

According to [37], the existence of multicultural teachers is only possible with multicultural teacher training. Multiculturalism is vital in EU education policies and teacher education in the USA. Reference [38] recommends restructuring the teaching strategies based on principles of multicultural education curriculum framework in any learning field or context. On the other hand, it is impossible to talk about multicultural education in teacher education in the northern part of Cyprus, which has many different ethnic, religious, sectarian, etc., differences. Participants stated that it is very difficult to say that there is no course, seminar, or adequate program regarding multicultural education and teacher competencies, neither pre-service nor in-service training. [39] report about a color-blind caring model which presumes that race does not exist and thus racial and cultural differences does not impact an individual's learning. However, it is crucial to consider the racial and demographic factors so that the culture of caring can be integrated into multiculturally conscious

and culturally responsive teachers and students. The fact that the research does not deal with the obstacles facing multicultural education, both in teacher training and the multiculturalism of the textbooks, is connected to the laws of the Ministry of National Education.

7. Recommendations

The northern part of Cyprus in particular and the geography of Cyprus in general receives immigrants depending on various immigration patterns, making the multicultural society structure a necessity. Multicultural education is the basis of the multicultural society structure. In line with the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Beginning in early childhood, activities should be organized so that multicultural education can reach its goal.
2. In-service training courses should be organized in the Faculties of Education and all educational institutions for teachers to have the knowledge, skills, and positive perceptions about multiculturalism.
3. Because there are not enough scientific studies and data on multiculturalism and multicultural education in the northern part of Cyprus, the number of scientific studies on these subjects should be increased.
4. Education policies in general and multicultural education policies, in particular, to be implemented in the northern part of Cyprus, and education programs to be created in line with these policies, should be created and put into practice.
5. Opportunities and educational activities should be prepared in the Faculties of Education, where teacher candidates can experience multicultural environments.
6. Integration programs for international students should be prepared.

Author Contributions: Conceptualization, N.İ.K., G.D., F.A. and Z.A.; methodology, G.D. and R.S. (Ramesh Sharma); software, M.C.; validation, R.S. (Ramesh Sharma), Z.A. and F.A.; formal analysis, M.C.; investigation, G.D.; resources, Z.A. and R.S. (Rustam Shadiev); data curation, R.S. (Rustam Shadiev); writing—original draft preparation, R.S. (Rustam Shadiev); writing—review and editing, F.A. and R.S. (Ramesh Sharma); visualization, G.D.; supervision, G.D.; project administration, F.A.; funding acquisition, N.İ.K. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Institutional Review Board Statement: The study was approved by the Ethical Board of the Near East University, Northern part of Cyprus, which reviewed the study and approved vide YDÜ/EB/2021/603 dated 23 February 2021.

Informed Consent Statement: Informed consent was obtained from all subjects involved in the study.

Data Availability Statement: Not applicable.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

References

1. Ergil, D. *Barişı Anlamak: Dilde, Hayatta, Kültürde*; Timaş Yayınları: İstanbul, Turkey, 2010.
2. Doytcheva, M. *Çokkültürlülük*; İletişim Yayıncılık: İstanbul, Turkey, 2016.
3. Baumann, G. *Çokkültürlülük Bilmecesi, çev. Işıl Demirakın*; Dost Kitabevi: Ankara, Turkey, 2006.
4. Bağlı, M.; Özensel, E. *Çokkültürlü Vatandaşlık: Kanadalı Türklerin Aidiyet Çabaları ve Değer Yapıları*; Çizgi Yayınları: Konya, Turkey, 2005.
5. Özensel, E. *Çokkültürlülük Uygulaması Olarak Kanada Çokkültürlülüğü. Akademik İncelemeler Dergisi* **2012**, *7*, 55–70.
6. Kaya, İ.; ve Aydın, H. *Çoğulculuk Çokkültürlü ve Çokdilli Eğitim*; Anı Yayıncılık: Ankara, Turkey, 2014.
7. Kastoryano, R. *Alman Birliğini Yeniden Tanımlamak: Milliyetten Vatandaşlığa*. In *Vatandaşlık ve Etnik Çatışma*; Güralp, H., Ed.; Metis Yayınları: İstanbul, Turkey, 2000.
8. Evkuran, M. Migration, Cultural Interaction and Multiculturalism in Global World. *Hitit Üniversitesi Sos. Bilimler Enstitüsü Derg.* **2014**, *7*, 8–20. [[CrossRef](#)]
9. Yanık, C. *Dünyadaki Çokkültürlülük Tartışmaları Bağlamında Türkiye’de Çokkültürlülük Eleştirel Bir Bakış*. Ph.D. Thesis, Uludağ Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, Nilüfer, Turkey, 2012.
10. Parekh, B. *Çokkültürlülüğü yeniden düşünmek. (Çev. B. Tanrı Seven)*; Phoenix: Ankara, Turkey, 2002.
11. Cırık, İ. Çokkültürlü eğitim ve yansımaları. *Hacet. Üniversitesi Eğitim Fakültesi Derg.* **2008**, *34*, 27–40.

12. Kymlicka, W. *Çokkültürlü Yurttaşlık: Azınlık Haklarının Liberal Teorisi*; Ayrıntı: İstanbul, Turkey, 2015.
13. Taylor, C. *Tanınma Politikası. Çokkültürcülük Tanınma Politikası*. ss. 46–93; Yapı Kredi Yayınları: İstanbul, Turkey, 2014.
14. Noddings, N. *Eğitim Felsefesi*; Nobel Yayınları: Ankara, Turkey, 2016.
15. Banks, J.A. *Çokkültürlü Eğitime Giriş, (Çev. Aydın, H.)*; Anı Yayınları: Ankara, Turkey, 2013.
16. Gezer, M.; Şahin, İ. Çokkültürlü Eğitime Yönelik Tutum ve Kültürel Zekâ Arasındaki İlişkinin Yem ile İncelenmesi. *Doğu Coğrafya Derg.* **2017**, *22*, 173–188. [[CrossRef](#)]
17. Neag, A.; Bozdağ, Ç.; Leurs, K. Media literacy education for diverse societies. In *Oxford Re-Search Encyclopedia of Communication*; Nussbaum, J., Ed.; Oxford University Press: Oxford, UK, 2022.
18. Cervi, L.; Pérez Tornero, J.M. Changing the policy paradigm for the promotion of digital and media literacy. The European challenge. In *Pursuing Digital Literacy in Compulsory Education: Reconstructing the School to Provide Digital Literacy for All*, 1st ed.; Drenoyianni, H., Stergioulas, L.K., Eds.; Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona: Nova York, USA, 2011; pp. 50–70.
19. Akman, Y.; ve İmamoğlu Akman, G. Öğretmenlerin Çokkültürlü Eğitim Tutumunun Sosyal Zekâ Algısına Göre İncelenmesi. *Sak. Univ. J. Educ.* **2017**, *7*, 34–48.
20. Dautbašić, A.; Saračević, J. The Relationship Between Covid-19, Online Learning and Intercultural Education. *J. Educ. Humanit.* **2020**, *3*, 53–66. [[CrossRef](#)]
21. Pittman, J.; Severino, L.; DeCarlo-Tecce, M.J.; Kiosoglous, C. An action research case study: Digital equity and educational inclusion during an emergent COVID-19 divide. *J. Multicult. Educ.* **2021**, 68–84. [[CrossRef](#)]
22. Brazill, S.; Munday, P. Brave New World: Transformational Teaching for a Web-Based Multicultural Education Course in the Age of COVID-19. In *Teaching and Learning for Social Justice and Equity in Higher Education*; Palgrave Macmillan: Cham, Switzerland, 2022; pp. 163–185.
23. Ivenicki, A. COVID-19 and multicultural education in Brazil. *Perspect. Educ.* **2021**, *39*, 231–241.
24. Emuh, D. Effectiveness of Online Multicultural Education During The Covid-19 Pandemic. *J. Mantik* **2021**, *5*, 771–776.
25. Alhumaid, K.; Ali, S.; Waheed, A.; Zahid, E.; Habes, M. COVID-19 & Elearning: Perceptions & Attitudes Of Teachers Towards E-Learning Acceptancein The Developing Countries. *Multicult. Educ.* **2020**, *6*, 100–115.
26. Yıldırım, A.; ve Şimşek, H. *Sosyal Bilimlerde Nitel Araştırma Yöntemleri*; Seçkin Yayınları: Ankara, Turkey, 2011.
27. Miles, M.B.; Huberman, A.M. *Qualitative Data Analysis: An Expanded Sourcebook*, 2nd ed.; Sage Publications, Inc.: Thousand Oaks, CA, USA, 1994.
28. Sotiropoulou, P.; Polymenakou, E. Multicultural Initial Teacher Training in Greece: Preparing Pre-Service Teachers for Migrant Education and Social Justice. In *Education as the Driving Force of Equity for the Marginalized*; Boivin, J., Pacheco-Guffrey, H., Eds.; IGI Global: Hershey, PA, USA, 2022; pp. 90–112. [[CrossRef](#)]
29. Taylor, C. *Multiculturalism Examining the Politics of Recognition*; Princeton University Press: Princeton, NJ, USA, 1994.
30. Torres, C.A.; Tarozzi, M. Multiculturalism in the world system: Towards a social justice model of inter/multicultural education. *Glob. Soc. Educ.* **2020**, *18*, 7–18. [[CrossRef](#)]
31. Lin, Y. Multiculturalism in Higher Education: Multicultural Policies in Australia’s Group of 8 Universities. In *Handbook of Research on Practices for Advancing Diversity and Inclusion in Higher Education*; Me-letiadiou, E., Ed.; IGI Global: Hershey, PA, USA, 2022; pp. 49–64. [[CrossRef](#)]
32. Giddens, A. *Modernityand Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age*; Stanford University Press: Stanford, CA, USA, 1991.
33. Rodrik, D. Why does globalization fuel populism? Economics, culture, and the rise of right-wing populism. *Annu. Rev. Econ.* **2021**, *13*, 133–170. [[CrossRef](#)]
34. Cervi, L.; Tejedor, S. Framing “The Gypsy Problem”: Populist Electoral Use of Romaphobia in Italy (2014–2019). *Soc. Sci.* **2020**, *9*, 105. [[CrossRef](#)]
35. Arslan, S. Çokkültürlü eğitim ve Türkiye: Mevcut durum, beklentiler, olasılıklar. *Elektron. Sos. Bilimler Derg.* **2016**, *15*, 412–428.
36. Keskin, Y.; Yaman, E. İlköğretim sosyal bilgiler programı ve ders kitaplarında yeni bir paradigma: Çokkültürlü eğitim. *Turkish Stud.* **2014**, *9*, 933–960. [[CrossRef](#)]
37. Polat, İ.; ve Kılıç, E. Türkiye’de çokkültürlü eğitim ve çokkültürlü eğitimde öğretmen yeterlilikleri. *YYU J. Educ. Fac.* **2013**, *10*, 352–372.
38. Dimici, K.; Başbay, A. Integrating Multicultural Education Into English Language Teaching: Practical Examples for Language Teachers. In *Trends and Developments for the Future of Language Education in Higher Education*; Xiang, C., Ed.; IGI Global: Hershey, PA, USA, 2021; pp. 17–40. [[CrossRef](#)]
39. Moore, M.N.; Smith, M.D. Multicultural Critical Consciousness: It’s the New “Caring”. In *Research Anthology on Culturally Responsive Teaching and LearningEd.*; IGI Global: Hershey, PA, USA, 2021; pp. 565–578. [[CrossRef](#)]