

3rd World Conference on Learning, Teaching and Educational Leadership (WCLTA-2012)

## Student teachers' global perspectives and attitudes towards cultural diversity: The case of Uludağ University

Aynur Oksal, Mehzudil Tuğba Yıldız Ekin \*

*Faculty of Education, Uludağ University, Bursa 16059, Turkey*

### Abstract

Globalization is driving a revolution in educational institutions, as the international community moves toward greater interdependence. The present study aims to measure and compare the level of global perspective and attitude toward cultural diversity among student teachers who visited a foreign country within the framework of the Erasmus program during their higher education and the student teachers who have not been abroad for such purposes. Results indicated that, in general, Erasmus student teachers tended to have a higher global perspective and a positive attitude toward cultural diversity. Student teachers who had more contact with international people also scored higher on the global perspective and cultural diversity scales.

© 2013 The Authors. Published by Elsevier Ltd. Open access under [CC BY-NC-ND license](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/).

Selection and peer review under responsibility of Prof. Dr. Ferhan Odabaşı

*Keywords:* Cultural diversity, globalization, student teachers, higher education, Erasmus.

### 1. Introduction

In recent years, the issues of globalization and cultural diversity have gained increasing attention in higher education. According to Hett (1993), a global perspective is an ecological world view which promotes the unity of humankind and the interdependence of humanity, universal human rights, loyalties that extend beyond national borders, and a future-oriented perspective. An attitude toward cultural diversity is defined as one's feeling, thought or disposition about the differences among people with respect to race, class, ethnicity, socioeconomic level, religious affiliation, age, language, physical and mental ability, sexual orientation, and other human attributes (Grogan & Eshelman, 1998; Stanley, 1996).

Several researchers (Odell, Williams, Lawrence, Gartin, & Smith, 2002; Zhai & Scheer, 2002) revealed that overseas experiences tended to have a positive influence on students' global perspectives. Previous research found that overseas experiences provided the opportunities for students not only to open their minds to people with different ideas and values but also to increase young students' awareness and appreciation of cultural diversity (Ayers, 1996; Hutchins, 1996; Garvey, 1996; Kauffmann et al, 1992; Burn, 1980). Students prefer teachers who are tolerant and understanding, as well as knowledgeable (Harrison & Dempsey, 1998). Then it is expected that teachers as an important role models should take an active role in the area of globalization and cultural diversity. Many student teachers have too limited or no experience with persons from another ethnicity or social class (Banks, 1991; Finney & Orr, 1995; Grant, 1991; Irvine, 1990,1992) to be effective teachers of diverse students. Thus, having

\* Mehzudil Tuğba Yıldız Ekin. Tel.: +90-224-294-2247

*E-mail address:* [metuy76@uludag.edu.tr](mailto:metuy76@uludag.edu.tr)

healthy attitudes and behaviors in relation to globalization and cultural diversity are important acquisitions for student teachers. As being future educators, student teachers' characteristics, attitudes, and intellectual and interpersonal dispositions can influence both the explicit and the hidden attitudes of their students toward cultural diversity in the school environment. As Causey et al (2000: p. 34) claims that "...dramatic changes or reorganization of one's belief structure can be viewed as a radical restructuring of one's world view". If teachers are to meet the issues related to diversity facing students in their classrooms, they must first face their own fears and belief systems relating to these issues, which they are certain to encounter. Only then can teachers interact and react positively with all students. Thus, teachers need to be provided with opportunities and learning experiences that shape students' perceptions, attitudes and intentions toward the issues of globalization and cultural diversity. This in turn requires that teachers themselves develop more knowledgeable and tolerant attitudes and perceptions regarding cultural diversity. However, little is known about student teachers' approaches to cultural diversity-related issues in Turkey. Thus, the present study aims to provide important and necessary data on student teachers as being potential generators of changes that determine the healthy attitudes of young people toward the issues of globalization and cultural diversity in Turkey.

The major objective of this study was to measure and compare the level of global perspective and attitude toward cultural diversity among student teachers who have been to a foreign country for a semester with the Erasmus program during their higher education and the student teachers who have not been abroad for such purposes. Two adapted survey scales for these constructs (Hett, 1993; Stanley, 1996; Zhai & Scheer, 2004) were completed by 202 student teachers at Uludağ University, Bursa, Turkey. The following research questions were developed:

1. What is the level of global perspective for these student teachers?
2. What is the attitude toward cultural diversity among student teachers?
3. What is the relationship between students' global perspectives and their attitudes toward cultural diversity?
4. Student teachers' scores on Global Perspective Scale and Attitudes toward Cultural Diversity Scale will be higher if they:
  - ε have an overseas experiences with Erasmus program,
  - ε have contact with international people.

## 2. Methodology

### 2.1. Participants

The design of this study focused on survey research. The participants were 202 student teachers (147 females, 55 males) who were attending to various teacher training programs of Uludağ University, Faculty of Education during the spring term of 2011-2012 academic year.

### 2.2. Instruments

The Turkish version of Hett's (1993) Global Perspective Scale (30 items), and Stanley's (1996) Attitudes toward Cultural Diversity Scale (19 items) were used to measure student teachers' global perspectives and attitudes toward cultural diversity variables were measured by obtaining students' agreement with various 6-point Likert-type questions ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree). Negatively worded items were reversed when calculating the overall mean. The higher the total score, the more positive the participants' attitudes towards the issues of globalization and cultural diversity are. Several demographic questions were also included in the survey to obtain student background information. Reliability coefficients were calculated based on current sample. Internal consistency was assessed using coefficient alpha, which was .80 for Global Perspective Scale (30 items), and .76 for the Attitudes toward Cultural Diversity Scale (19 items). Correlational analyses were performed to investigate the relationships between the overall rating of global perspective and attitude toward cultural diversity scales. The survey scales were administered in classroom settings during class hours.

### 3. Results

The first two research questions were designed to measure the level of global perspective of the student teachers and attitude toward cultural diversity among student teachers. The level of global perspective was measured by student ratings on 30 Likert-type questions adapted from Hett (1993). The ratings ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree). Table 1 presents the mean score by the overall level of global perspectives and attitude toward cultural diversity.

Table 1. Mean and standard deviation of student teachers' global perspective and cultural diversity scores

	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
<b>Cultural Diversity</b>	96,6	202	8,8
<b>Global Perspective</b>	135,9	202	13,8

The highest score that can be taken from the scale was 180 (30 items X 6 pts.). As seen in Table 1, the student teachers' overall mean score for the global perspective scale was 135.9, indicating a moderate global perspective.

Student teachers' attitudes toward cultural diversity were measured by obtaining agreement ratings on a 19-item survey adapted from Stanley (1996). The ratings ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree). The highest score that can be taken from the scale was 114 (19 items X 6 pts.). As Table 1 illustrates it was found that student teachers had a positive attitude toward cultural diversity (mean = 96.6).

The third research question investigated the relationship between student teachers' scores on Global Perspective Scale and Attitudes toward Cultural Diversity Scale. Correlational analysis was performed to examine the relationships between the overall ratings of global perspective with attitude toward cultural diversity scale.

Table 2. Correlation between student teachers' global perspective and cultural diversity scores

	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Statistics (r)
<b>Cultural Diversity</b>	96,6	202	8,8	,617**
<b>Global Perspective</b>	135,9	202	13,8	

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

As it is seen in Table 2, there was a strong and positive relationship ( $r = .617$ ) between student teachers' global perspectives and their attitudes toward cultural diversity. This implies that students with a higher level of global perspectives tended to have a more positive attitude toward cultural diversity.

In the present study it was also hypothesized that student teachers' scores on Global Perspective Scale and Attitudes toward Cultural Diversity Scale would be higher if they had overseas experiences with Erasmus program, and if they had contact with international people.

Table 3 presents the comparisons of student teachers' (Erasmus vs. non-Erasmus) scores on the scales administered.

Table 3. Comparison of student teachers' scores on cultural diversity and global perspectives

	N	M	SD	Statistics (t)
<b>Cultural Diversity</b>				
Non-Erasmus student	158	95,6	8,8	-2,696*
Erasmus student	44	99,7	7,9	
<b>Global Perspective</b>				
Non-Erasmus student	158	134,2	13,3	-3,415**
Erasmus student	44	142,1	13,8	

\* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$

As Table 3 indicates, there was a significant difference between students who had a prior overseas experience with Erasmus program and those without overseas experiences on their mean scores for global perspectives ( $p < .05$ ).

Similarly, a significant difference was found between these two groups of students on their mean scores for their attitudes toward cultural diversity ( $p < .01$ ).

As mentioned earlier, the present study hypothesized that the student teachers who had more frequent contact with international people would score higher on both scales. Table 4 below illustrates the comparisons of the cultural diversity and global perspective scales scores of the student teachers who had contact with international people.

Table 4. Mean cultural diversity and global perspectives scores and univariate test for contact with international people

Contact with international people	Cultural Diversity				Global Perspectives			
	N	M	SD	Statistics F(4,197)	N	M	SD	Statistics F(4,197)
Never	95	95,8	8,1	1,818	95	133,1 <sup>a</sup>	12,7	3,742*
Rarely	34	95,5	8,9		34	136,7	15,1	
Sometimes	30	96,0	10,4		30	136,8	15,9	
Often	23	97,6	8,7		23	136,8	13,7	
Always	20	101,2	8,5		20	145,6 <sup>b</sup>	8,8	
Total	202	96,5	8,8		202	135,9	13,8	

\* $p < .05$

Note: Means with different subscripts indicates significant differences. No subscript indicates no significant differences.

As Table 4 illustrates ANOVA results revealed a statistically significant overall difference in global perspective with respect to contact with international people; however, no significant overall difference in cultural diversity. In order to identify the source of the differences among the student teachers concerning global perspective, Scheffe post-hoc test was conducted. With regard to global perspective, this test revealed that the main difference was between students who always had contact with international people (mean=145,6) and those who never contact with international people (mean=133,1).

### 3. Discussion

The present study was conducted to investigate student teachers' global perspectives and their attitudes toward cultural diversity. Besides, it was hypothesized that student teachers who had an overseas experience with the Erasmus program or who have contact with international people would have higher global perspective scores and more positive attitudes towards cultural diversity. The responses of the first two research questions revealed that, in general, the level of global perspective of the student teachers was moderate. The attitude toward cultural diversity among student teachers was positive.

With regard to the relationship between student teachers' scores on Global Perspective Scale and Attitudes toward Cultural Diversity Scale, there was a strong and positive relationship ( $r = .617$ ) between student teachers' global perspectives and their attitudes toward cultural diversity. This implies that students with a higher level of global perspective tended to have a more positive attitude toward cultural diversity. This conclusion coincides with Pike's (2002) conclusion that students who had more opportunities to interact with diverse group of students were more open to diversity. Thus, integrating global perspective and diversity in teaching and learning programs would increase students' level of global perspectives and help them to develop positive attitudes towards cultural diversity (Baker, 1999; Banks, 1991; Finney & Orr, 1995; Grant, 1991; Merryfield, 1996; Zhai & Scheer, 2004).

When the first part of the fourth question of the study considered, there was a significant difference between students who had a prior overseas experience with Erasmus program and those without overseas experiences on their scores for global perspectives. Similarly, a significant difference was found between these two groups of students on their mean scores for their attitudes toward cultural diversity. For the second part of the question, results showed that the student teachers who had more frequent contact with international people scored higher on both scales. A statistically significant overall difference in global perspective with respect to contact with international people was found, whereas no significant overall difference in cultural diversity was identified. Findings revealed that the main difference was between students who always had contact with international people and those who never contact with international people when global perspective was considered. Several other researchers (Herm, 1996; Odell, et al., 2002; Zhai & Scheer, 2002) have also found that participation in overseas international programs tended to have a positive influence on students' global perspectives or attitudes toward cultural diversity.

The results of the study have some implications for developing programs addressing globalization and diversity issues for student teachers. Integrating global and diversity issues in teacher training programs in Turkey seems essential for promoting student teachers' positive attitudes toward cultural diversity and for increasing their level of global perspectives. The strong relationship between global perspectives and attitudes toward diversity can serve as a rationale for teacher training programs to continue to enhance their global/multicultural educational programs through Erasmus or other culture exchange/immersion programs for student teachers to gain both global and cross-cultural competencies. Hence, a well-planned program with attention to diversity issues over several semesters will lead student teachers toward greater cultural sensitivity and knowledge and toward strength and effectiveness in culturally diverse classrooms (Grant & Secada, 1990; McDiarmid & Price, 1993; Pohan, 1996). As Banks (1998:14-15) notes, "An important goal of teacher education programs should be to identify future teachers who 'are able to acquire the knowledge, skills, and perspectives needed to become insiders within the communities in which they teach'".

## References

- Ayers, D.P. (1996). *Attitudes of American students Toward International students: Programming effects (study abroad)*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Kansas State University.
- Burn, B.B. (1980). *Expanding the international dimension of higher education*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Baker, F. J. (1999). Multicultural versus global education: Why not two sides of the same coin? *The Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies*, 12, 97-101.
- Banks, J. A. (1991). Teaching multicultural literacy to teachers. *Teaching Education*, 4, 134-144.
- Banks, J. A. (1998). The lives and values of researchers: Implications for educating citizens in a multicultural society. *Educational Researcher*, 27(7), 4-17.
- Causey, V.E., Thomas, C.D., & Armento, B..J. (2000). Cultural diversity is basically a foreign term to me: the challenges of diversity for preservice teacher education. *Teaching and Teacher Education* 16, 33-45.
- Finney, S., & Orr, J. (1995). 'I've really learned a lot, but....'. Cross-cultural understanding and teacher education in a racist society. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 46, 327-339.
- Garvey, D.E. (1996). *Cross-cultural experiences and moral development in a selected group of college students*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Colorado At Boulder.
- Grant, C. (1991). Culture and teaching: What do teachers need to know? In M. Kennedy (Ed.), *Teaching academic subjects to diverse learners* (pp. 237-256). New York: Teacher's College Press.
- Grant, C. A., & Secada, W. (1990). Preparing teachers for diversity. In W. R. Houston, M. Haberman, & J. Sikula (Eds.), *Handbook of research on teacher education* (pp. 403-422). New York: Macmillan.
- Grogan, S., & Eshelman, B. (1998). Staffing strategies for a more diverse workforce: Case examples in Cornell cooperative extension. *Journal of Extension*, 36(1). Retrieved July 18, 2012 from: <http://www.joe.org/joe/1998february/a1.html>
- Herm, N. B. (1996). *The Impact of study abroad experiences on the psychological development of college students*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Ohio University.
- Hett, E. J. (1993). *The development of an instrument to measure global mindedness*. Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, University of San Diego.
- Hutchins, M.M. (1996). *International education study tours abroad: students' professional growth and personal development in relation to international, global, and international perspectives (study abroad)* Unpublished Doctoral dissertation, The Ohio State University.
- Irvine, J. J. (1990). *Black students and school failure: Policies, practices, and procedures*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.
- Irvine, J. J. (1992). Making teacher education culturally responsible. In M. E. Dilworth (Ed.), *Diversity in teacher education: New expectations* (pp. 79}92). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Kauffmann, N.L., Martin, J.N., Weaver, H.D., & Weaver, J. (1992). *Students abroad: Strangers at home. Education for a global society*. Yarmouth, Maine: Intercultural Press, Inc.
- McDiarmid, G.W., & Price, J. (1993). Preparing teachers for diversity: A study of student teachers in a multicultural program. In M.J. O'Hair & S.J. Odell (Eds.), *Diversity and teaching* (pp. 31-59). Fort Worth, TX: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.
- Merryfield, M. (1996). *Making connections between multicultural and global education: Teacher educators and teacher education programs*. Washington DC: American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education.
- Odell, K. S., Williams, M.E., Lawrence, L. D., Gartin, S.A., & Smith, D. K. (2002). Evaluation of the international 4-H youth exchange (IFYE) Program. *Journal of International Agricultural and Extension Education*, 9 (1), 57-64.
- Pike, G. R. (2002). The differential effects of on- and off-campus living arrangements on students' openness to diversity. *NASPA Journal*, 39 (4), 283-290.
- Pohan, C. A. (1996). Preservice teachers' beliefs about diversity: Uncovering factors leading to multicultural responsiveness. *Equity and Excellence in Education*, 29(3), 62-69.
- Stanley, L. S. (1996). The development and validation of an instrument to assess attitudes toward cultural diversity and pluralism among pre-service physical educators. *Educational and Psychological Measurement*, 56 (5), 864-870.
- Zhai, L., & Scheer, S. D. (2002). The influence of international experience on agriculture student personal development. *Journal of International Agricultural and Extension Education*, 9 (3), 23-29.
- Zhai, L., & Scheer, S. D. (2004). Global perspectives and attitudes toward cultural diversity among summer agriculture students at the ohio state university. *Journal of Agricultural Education*, 45 (2), 39-51.