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Article in *Eğitim ve Bilim* · January 2020

DOI: 10.15390/EB.2019.8274

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Refugee Children and Adaptation to School: An Analysis through Cultural Responsivities of the Teachers

Ayşe Soylu ¹, Ahmet Kaysılı ², Mustafa Sever ³

Abstract

Schools have a key role in adapting refugee children from different sociocultural structures to social life. In recent years, approximately 4 million people have had to emigrate from Iraq and Syria to Turkey. With the participation of so many refugees in social life, their educational processes have become an important actual problem. The existence of refugee students has led to cultural diversity and triggered the emergence of social conflicts in schools they attend. Culturally responsive education based on the argument of creating a learning environment in which students' cultural backgrounds are considered and valued forms the conceptual framework of the study. The aim of this study is to analyze teachers' experiences of teaching to refugee students through culturally responsive education. This study is a qualitative research. Face-to-face interviews were conducted with 14 volunteer teachers from four different schools in Ankara, where the refugee population predominantly lives. The findings obtained from the analysis of the data were gathered in three themes: (1) What teachers know about the students; (2) Teachers' approaches to the education of refugee students; and (3) Teachers' experiences of preparing culturally responsive learning environments. It is the most general result that the lack of knowledge about cultural backgrounds of refugee students and systematic problems arising from that the Turkish educational system was not ready for refugee education are the main obstacles to culturally responsive education. The other important result, regarding to the first one, is that the teachers do not have sufficient tools to overcome these problem in pedagogical terms.

Keywords

Culturally responsive education
Refugee education
Cultural responsivity

Article Info

Received: 11.08.2018
Accepted: 08.28.2019
Online Published: 01.22.2020

DOI: 10.15390/EB.2020.8274

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Introduction

Education of refugees has become a major problem in Turkey's agenda as a result of its being a border neighbor to Iraq and Syria suffering from war for many years. Since the beginning of migration arising from war, the Republic of Turkey has adopted an "open door" policy stipulating that nobody would be forced to repatriate and basic needs of refugees would be met in camps (Ihlamur Öner, 2014); thus, Turkey has opened the doors for the migrants all the way. As required by this policy, none of the Syrian refugees to Turkey were repatriated and they were given the "temporary protection status" (Özdemir, 2017a, p. 115). As of April 2011, a large wave of migration to Turkey has occurred and the number of the Syrian refugees in Turkey reached 3,658,250 in September 2019 (Directorate General of Migration Management, 2019). While 63,434 refugees are living in temporary accommodation centers located on the border with Syria, a much larger majority comprised of 3,594,816 refugees are living in primarily border cities such as Gaziantep, Şanlıurfa and Hatay and in other big cities of Turkey such as Ankara, İstanbul, Adana and Bursa (Directorate General of Migration Management, 2019). War-induced forced migration to Turkey is not only limited to Syria. With the invasion of some parts of Iraq by the ISIS terrorist organization in June 2014, they imposed some pressure on the people of the invaded regions; thus, a mass migration started particularly from the city of Tal Afar to Turkey and more than 70 thousand Turkmen were forced to migrate to Turkey (Center for Middle Eastern Studies (ORSAM), 2017, p. 5).

The necessity of meeting the educational needs of these people as well as the basic needs such as health and safety has emerged with the decreasing of expectations on returning to their home country. Schools have a crucial role in the integration of refugee children from different socio-cultural backgrounds into a new socio-cultural life. Entering into social life of nearly 4 million people within a short time, required to deal with educational matters. When they arrived at Turkey from Syria, the refugee children attended to Contemporary Education Centers (CEC) and got training compatible with the curriculum of their home country. The main objective of this attempt is to make provision against falling behind when they return. When it was understood that the war and migration will not be over in the expected time and therefore the refugees will not return in a short time, the CEC started to be closed and attempts for adaptation of refugee children to Turkish education system have been started. One of the most important and comprehensive works carried out within this framework is the Promoting Integration of Syrian Children into the Turkish Education System (PICTES) project. The Project, which has been carried out by the Ministry of National Education (MoNE) and Delegation of the EU to Turkey cooperation, has aimed to facilitate Syrian refugees' access to education in Turkey and to provide support to the MoNE for integration of Syrian refugee children into the Turkish education system (Ministry of Education (MoNE), 2019). Within the scope of the PICTES project, activities such as Turkish and Arabic language courses, provision of educational materials, administrative staff and teacher trainings, and support trainings were carried out. As a result of policy changes of the Republic of Turkey aiming to integrate Syrian refugees into the society, the number of Syrian children studying at schools especially in the cities where the refugees live intensively has exceeded 645.000 (UNICEF, 2018).

Refugees, in the social life of the migration-receiving cities, face a state of exclusion arising from their cultural life practices or from the negative perceptions of society about them (Özdemir, 2017b; Bakioğlu, Artar, & İzmir, 2018). Because the refugees are regarded as low-cost labor, they have been employed instead of Turkish people (Tumen, 2016), and this poses another social conflict area. Beside being environments where adaptation to the new social structure can be easily achieved, being social areas reflecting the sociocultural patterns of the society in which they are located, and being the places where human interactions densely occur, schools are the center of these exclusions and conflicts. Therefore, the refugee students included in Turkish education system have inevitably led to cultural diversity in schools where they have triggered the social conflicts emerged from the contact with the

others. Turkish families seeing refugees as the source of that they face losing their jobs do not want their children to study with refugee children at the same school, and some school administrators and teachers even exclude refugee children in school settings because they consider the refugees as traits for social order (Kaysılı, Soylu, & Sever, 2019).

The fact that Syrian refugees have been included in society so quickly, and accordingly, that some conflict areas have come to exist in Turkey brings up the concept of multiculturalism on the agenda of the research. Multiculturalism means that many groups, which are culturally different from each other, can live in the same society together while conserving their own cultural differences. (Parekh, 2002, 2005). Conserving cultural differences requires that acculturation and cultural transmission should be sustainable for the groups and that education should be designed with a multicultural approach. In multicultural education, which aims at understanding cultural differences and is based on democratic values that foster cultural pluralism (Gezi, 1981; Acar Çiftçi & Gürol, 2015), cultural contents of groups are reflected in the curriculum, prejudices are minimized and school culture is empowered (Banks, 1993). It is aimed to have equal educational opportunities for each individual by respecting the differences without discrimination and to create a multicultural school climate in this way (Bağçeli Kahraman & Onur Sezer, 2016). In other words, the aim of multicultural education is to create educational environments that will promote pluralism in the school and to increase the level of cultural awareness of individuals about other groups (Başbay & Kağnıcı, 2011).

There are many opinions that there may be disruptive effects, especially for nation states with unitary structures, in case each cultural group living in the community claims political rights about the differences within the scope of multiculturalism (Başbay & Kağnıcı, 2011). Schools, as the areas where these differences discussed in the context of multiculturalism are transported to, are at the center of the discussions as 'which cultural codes should be passed on to students' or 'around which culture should the curriculum be shaped'. The Republic of Turkey, as a nation-state making policies in line with its founding principles, precludes schools from being potential disruptive areas by not including a multiculturalist perspective in its macro educational policies. But yet, it can be said that the educational practices conducted by the Republic of Turkey for refugees have been reflecting the multicultural education approach as well. Multicultural education requires that education environments should be organized in accordance with the cultural differences of the students (Türkan, Aydın, & Üner, 2016). In this regard, the "Inclusive Education" model conducted by the Republic of Turkey for Syrian refugees can be exemplified for multicultural education policy due to its approach considering the refugees' cultural demands (Özcan, 2018).

In a multicultural school setting, it is essential that individuals respect each other's differences. In this context, schools in Turkey continue to be a challenging area for Syrian refugee students, in spite of all efforts and initiatives. The absence of multicultural education practices in the Turkish education system imposes important responsibilities on the teachers in schools. Because the strongest character in a school is the teacher who can lead intercultural interactions (Kurtuluş, 2018). The concept of cultural responsivity, which is the main research interest of the current study, becomes more important at points where the existing cultural structure at schools in Turkey comes into contact with cultural patterns of the refugees. Teachers' adoption of a culturally responsive education approach at these contact points is considered vitally important in the integration of Syrian refugees into society through school.

Culturally Responsive Education

Gay (2000) defines culturally responsive education as the use of cultural knowledge, previous experiences and performance styles to make learning more relevant and effective for students. The basic idea in culturally responsive education model is that culture influences learning styles of students. For culturally responsive education, teachers should understand that behaviours and thoughts of individual are affected from cultural structure, social class that they belong and the language they use

and should improve a sociocultural awareness (Villegas & Lucas, 2002). In a culturally responsive learning environment, the effects of features such as culture, gender, language etc. that make some students different from the majority are recognized (Huber, 1991). An educational process to be conducted in such a culturally responsive environment is built on the conviction that the culture has influence on students' learning styles. Culturally responsive education implies that various cultural heritages affect learning approaches and attitudes (Idrus, 2014). Culturally responsive education is based on the argumentation that when a student is taught in relation to his/her life experiences, an easier and more meaningful teaching process can be achieved (Gay, 2000). Thus, culturally responsive teaching practices require creating a safe, inclusive and tolerant learning environment where diversity is respected to motivate all learners to learn.

Through culturally responsive education, the focus is being aware of and valuing the social structure that students belong, the language they use and the cultural identity they have (Gay, 2000). However, understanding the differences is not enough alone, they should be cared at the same time, these differences should be valued, new knowledges should be built on these differences and the students from different cultural backgrounds should be interacted with through these experiences (Mackay & Strickland, 2018). Culturally responsive teachers make use of communication processes reflecting students' values and beliefs (Brown, 2004). Villegas and Lucas (2002) asserted that culturally responsive education enable students to associate new learnings with the formers and teachers can catch their interest by providing samples from their life and languages, and different dimensions can be added to learning processes through various activities.

Having knowledge about students is the main and common necessity of culturally responsive education (Walter, 2018). What is important in cultural responsiveness is not teachers' learning the cultural backgrounds of each individual student or ensuring that all students reach the same cultural background level rather their having ideas and strategies that enable teachers to make these cultures meaningful in the classroom. Villegas and Lucas (2002), in their culturally responsive model, defines the culturally responsive teacher as; a) having sociopolitical awareness; b) recognizing the opinions of students coming from different cultural origins; c) having competences required to realize educational transformation and feeling responsible for this; d) adopting constructivist teaching and learning approaches; and e) carrying out the student development process by building it on their prior knowledge and beliefs. Gay (2000), on the other hand, defines the basic competencies of teachers who are culturally responsive as; to develop knowledge-base about cultural diversity, to include ethnic and cultural diversity in programs, to promote tolerance by building a learning culture, to develop the skills of communicating with culturally diverse students, and to reflect cultural differences into their instruction. Rychly and Graves (2012) defines the main four qualifications of a teacher having cultural responsivity as caring about students and being empathetic to them, being aware of both his/her approaches or thoughts for other cultures and his/her own cultural referans and having the knowledge essential for a responsive approach.

Gay (2002) states that teachers' having knowledge about different dimensions of cultural diversity is very important for students from different cultural backgrounds to anticipate learning outcomes because culture can facilitate success in education as well as constitute an obstacle to learning processes. Teachers should also not forget that positive or negative reactions they show may affect the self-esteem and academic achievement of students from different cultural, ethnic and linguistic backgrounds (Brown, 2007). In order to reinforce the learning process, teachers should be aware of cultural backgrounds of students (Idrus, 2014). Teachers practicing the method of culturally responsive education regard the culture as an effective means for strengthening academic and social success (Ladson Billings, 2006 as cited in Bassey, 2016).

Researches have shown that as the cultural backgrounds of students are taken into account and included in classroom practices, the sense of belonging (Ladson Billings, 1995; Villegas & Lucas, 2002), motivation and attending to learning (González, 1996; Villegas & Lucas, 2002) and academic success (Farinde Wu, Glover, & Williams, 2017; Yuan ve Jiang, 2018) can increase. On the other hand, as the difference between the culture of the student and the normative school standards increases, it becomes difficult for the student to succeed at school (Sever, 2015). And culturally responsive education is a powerful mean in eliminating the differences in success, in producing equal outcomes in success (Ladson Billings, 1995; Delpit, 1995; Gay, 2002; Farinde Wu et al., 2017) and in creating effective learning environment where identities and cultural backgrounds of students are valued (McKoy, MacLeod, Walter, & Nolker, 2017).

The differentiating characteristics of students from different cultural backgrounds generate a variety at schools (McKoy et al., 2017). When teachers begin to learn cultural information about students in their classrooms, a natural process such as utilizing this information in classroom processes and in the implementation of the curriculum is also to begin spontaneously. For example, it is very important for teachers to know their students' different language codes and communication forms, or to be responsive to these differences and to have the ability to communicate with them properly (Rychly & Graves, 2012). Because the teacher may be able to involve alienated students in educational and instructional processes by this way. Within culturally responsive education, the alienation arising from negative educational experiences is prevented and more positive experiences are provided (Morgan, 2010).

However; when teachers prefer to apply the teaching methods, strategies or program packages they find appropriate instead of conducting student-based activities, they reduce the possibility of success of the students from disadvantaged groups having low academic achievement already (Bartolome, 1994). According to Wlodkowski and Ginsberg (1995), an education and training system in which learners' views and backgrounds are ignored, and in which necessary precautions are not taken for all students to benefit from teaching practices causes to the unequal distribution of opportunities. In environments that are not responsive to cultural diversity, students feel that they are not valued and do not belong to the environment they are in; as a result of this, they lose their self-confidence and start to become alienated to in-school processes (Brown, 2004). In addition, students exhibit negative behavioral patterns when they know that their teachers do not care about them (Ganter, 1997). However valuing the culture that students belong to has positive outcomes in classrooms (Idrus, 2014).

In order for a teacher to create effective and democratic learning environments for students from all levels of society, he/she must be aware of the effect caused by the cultural backgrounds that students bring with them into the school on their knowledge, skills and communication styles. Wlodkowski and Ginsberg (1995) argue that the greatest challenge to educators is to achieve educational objectives within the cultural integrity of each student in this multicultural and tiered structure. Culturally responsive education arising from a search for a solution to this challenge can be described as an approach that believes in the importance of diversifying learning environments in such a way as to be compatible with the mental and social characteristics of the students and that defines the ways of doing this.

What culturally responsive education stipulates is the transformation of teaching practices of teachers (Walter, 2018). Teachers should improve their knowledge, capability and competency for students from different cultural backgrounds (Farinde Wu et al., 2017). Teachers' considering the differences between students stemming from out-of school environments and organizing their instructional settings as sensitive to these differences are important in making education inclusive for all the groups in societies where different socio-cultural structures co-exist. The cultural sensitivities that teachers develop about their students can be a barrier to the problems of social, individual and cultural aspirations and possible conflicts (Rengi & Polat, 2014). Refugee students who have developed successful social interaction practices within the school are able to transfer these practices to their social lives. The need for a more inclusive teaching model for integration and adaptation of refugee students

is evident. Miles and McKenna (2016) suggested that a successful integration of refugee students could be achieved in both social and academic respects when it is carefully planned. At this point it is important to provide integrative learning experiences to students at school in social, academic and intellectual contexts. Schools where refugee students attend can turn the differences into learning opportunities (Bajaj & Bartlett, 2017). However, making the teaching process more inclusive for these students requires a serious effort. The key person who will invest this effort is the teacher. Teachers are the main source of inclusive education for refugees. However, teachers' classroom approaches or actions can also be barriers to this process (Engelbrecht, Nel, Nel, & Tlale, 2015). In the success of the social adaptation at school, teacher attitudes encountered by refugee students can be quite decisive. In other words, how the different cultural codes encountered in schools will be regarded as a means of interaction and integration, and from what point of view the culturally responsive education will be handled is determined mainly by the teacher's approach (Ebersole, Kanahele Mossman, & Kawakami, 2016). Therefore, it is clear that the teacher should define this process well, understand the source of the problems and implement certain strategies by reviewing the students' characteristics and the resources they have in order to ensure both active participation of refugee students in academic processes and the adaptation of new cultural contexts in which they are included. Thus, the main problematic of this study is the main characteristics of culturally responsive education and the culturally responsive practices that teachers should perform within the education system. For this research, the role of teachers in the process was questioned. Accordingly;

This study aims to analyze the adaptation processes of refugee children through the cultural responsiveness of teachers. In the line with this aim the following questions were answered:

-On which resources do teachers understand about the cultural background of refugee students?

-How do teachers interpret the presence of refugee students?

-How do teachers transform their teaching practices through the presence of refugee students?

Method

Research Design

This study is a qualitative research. Qualitative research aims to reveal the meaning structured through the experiences of individuals, and in such researches the researcher tries to understand the meaning of a phenomenon according to the participants of the phenomenon. (Merriam, 2013). Basic interpretive research design was used for this study. In a basic interpretive qualitative study, the researcher is interested in how people comprehend and interpret their experiences (Merriam, 2013). The focus of this study is the forms of teachers' meaning and interpreting refugee students' existence in their classrooms. Merriam (2013) indicated that the basic interpretive qualitative study is always framed by a concept, model, or theory. The conceptual framework of this study is based on Culturally Responsive Teaching.

Sampling and Research Group

Maximum variation sampling method employed to document different variations and to define important conventional patterns (Glesne, 2015) was conducted. Considering relatively fewer participants, the maximum variation sampling provides heterogeneity and makes it possible to reveal the common patterns arising from differences, common dimensions of a case and experiences (Patton, 2014). In this regard, primarily the schools in the regions of Ankara where Syrian and Iraqi refugees mostly live were examined and the schools where these students attended were determined. Refugees have been predominantly living in the provinces of Altındağ, Mamak and Keçiören, in Ankara. Thus the schools that the refugee children attend have different characteristics depending on the proportion of the refugee population to the general population. While there are classes where all the students are Syrians in some districts of the Altındağ Province where Syrian population is predominantly located, the proportion of the refugee students in the schools located in the Mamak Province, where the refugee population is relatively low, falls in parallel with the decreasing proportion of the general refugee

population. This research was conducted in four different schools; one of them was in Altındag and three of them were in Mamak. The school in Altındag (A1) was a primary school where Syrian students attend intensively, the school in Mamak (M1) was a secondary school where Iraqi students continue, and the other schools (M2 and M3) were the schools where refugee students attend lower rates. During the research process we visited the schools, interviewed with principals, and asked about the refugee students. The principals met us with the teachers teaching to refugees, we informed the teachers about our research and invited them to our research. The current study was conducted with the participation of 14 volunteer teachers from one school in Altındag and from three schools from Mamak. The data about the branches and professional experience of the teachers are given in Table 1.

Table 1. Comparison of Participants by Field of Study and Experience of Teaching

Participant	Field of Study	Experience of Teaching	School
P1	English Language Teacher	11 Years	M1
P2	Social Studies Teacher	16 Years	M1
P3	Mathematics Teacher	4 Years	M1
P4	Mathematics Teacher	9 Years	M1
P5	Primary School Teacher	23 Years	M2
P6	Primary School Teacher	30 Years	M2
P7	Primary School Teacher	18 Years	A1
P8	Primary School Teacher	28 Years	A1
P9	Primary School Teacher	11 Years	A1
P10	Primary School Teacher	15 Years	A1
P11	Primary School Teacher	11 Years	A1
P12	Primary School Teacher	24 Years	M3
P13	Primary School Teacher	23 Years	M2
P14	Primary School Teacher	24 Years	M3

Procedures

The interview technique, one of the basic data collection techniques of qualitative research, was employed in the current study. According to Packer (2011), semi-structured interview is the most common and most useful interview technique used in qualitative research. In semi-structured interviews, the interview questions are prepared in the direction of the research questions, but it may be necessary for the interviewer to ask different questions to give a proper direction to the interview. The interview form was prepared on the basis of a literature review and according to the main research problem of the study and was presented to the expert review. After receiving the opinions of the experts specialized both on qualitative research methods and on the subject of the current research, the final form of the semi-structured interview was decided. The form was structured through the objectives of the study. Accordingly, the form consists of three main parts beside the questions about the basic demographic information about the teachers. In the first part, with the aim of understanding the ways of getting information about the refugee students, the teachers were asked if they do anything in order to recognize the refugee students included in their classrooms and what are the reflections of knowing about these students' sociocultural characteristics to the classroom environment. In the second part, we focused on the reflection of the existence of refugee students to classroom processes. And in the third part, we asked questions such as "what do you think about the most important needs of the refugee students?", "What is necessary for a culturally inclusive education". By this way, teachers' transformation styles and approaches within their teaching practices on the basis of refugee students were examined. The interview form is comprised of a total of 18 questions.

Before the interviews, the participating teachers were informed about the main research problem and objectives of the research and then face-to-face and in-depth interviews were conducted. All the interviews were conducted by the researchers. After receiving the consent of the participants, the interviews were tape-recorded. Each of the interviews lasted for 35-40 minutes on average. The first step was to transcribe the recordings for the analysis. Transcriptions were checked by listening to recordings and some incomprehensible statements were corrected. In order to ensure the confidentiality of respondents, pseudonyms were used.

Data Analysis

In the analysis of the interview data, inductive analysis method was conducted. The inductive analysis method means the discovery of patterns, themes and categories within the data (Patton, 2014, p. 453). Researches analyzed the data collaboratively. The analysis of the data was carried out in four stages. In the first phase of the analysis, codes were derived from the texts. In this regard, the statements thought to be related to the content of the study were determined in the data set. In the second phase, the data coded with short phrases or words were reviewed and in the next phase, the codes thought to be related were gathered under categories. Finally, the themes under which the categories were subsumed were reached. Details of themes and categories have been tabled in Chart 1.

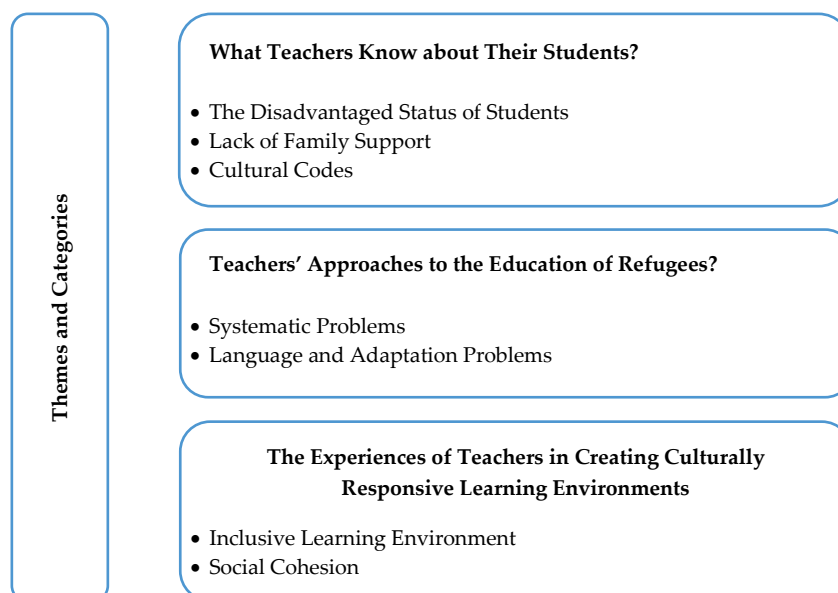


Chart 1. Themes and Categories

Three main themes were formed: “What Teachers Know About Their Students”, “Teachers’ Approaches to Educating Refugee” and “The Experiences of Teachers in Creating Culturally Responsive Learning Environments”. The categories collected under the themes were interpreted in relation to the relevant literature and supported with direct quotations.

Validity and Reliability

In qualitative research, there are transferability, credibility, reliability and verifiability strategies to ensure validity and reliability (Merriam, 2013, p. 201). The basic strategies employed in this study are transferability and consistency. According to Lincoln & Guba (2013), the main strategy to ensure the transferability of the research is detailed descriptions. In order to meet this criterion, data collection and analysis processes were explained in detail. The necessity to reach detailed descriptions of the research context was taken into account in the preparation of the interview form. In this connection, questions were asked to the teachers who had refugee students in their classes to obtain a detailed data set on the process of teaching refugees. In the process of analyzing the data, it was attempted to describe the ways in which teachers handled refugee students' educational experiences, the roles they undertook in the process and the practices they performed in detail so that transferability could be ensured to the greatest

extent. The dimension of consistency is related to the question “whether the proposed results can be obtained from the data at hand” (Akar, 2016, p. 135). Accordingly, after analyzing the data, descriptions were enhanced with direct quotations. Direct quotations formed the basis for comments and explanations on the subject. In addition, interpretations of research findings were supported by the literature and both internal comment and external comment criteria were met.

The Role of The Researcher

For qualitative researches, the characteristics and approaches of the researcher are considered important because the researcher may develop prejudices or assumptions about the research subject (Creswell, 2005). Researcher should be aware of his/her personal approach about the problematic of the study and should manage the process independently from personal opinions, in order to avoid being effected of the research process form the researcher’s characteristics (Creswell, 2005). Therefore, the theoretical framework in which the research is designed has crucial importance. For this reason, first of all, literature review was carried out to understand all the parameters of Cultural Sensitivity and the research was constructed within this framework. In addition, migration, education and cultural studies are the study fields of the researchers, and they have experience in research and teaching in these fields. And this enabled them to recognize and distinguish the personal and theoretical approach.

The field study of this research was carried out in the 2016-2017 academic year, summer term. It was considered that teachers may be more likely to allocate time for interviews. However, observation was not possible. In addition, the discourses and responds of teachers about refugee students that the researches about refugee phenomenon are useless in terms of eliminating the problems in the classroom can be cited among the main difficulties of the data collection process. An important part of the teachers responding in this way did not accept to participate in the study.

Interviews with teachers was the most significant stage that researchers should have bracketed (Creswell, 2005) themselves. Since teachers’ pedagogical competency is not sufficient to carry out a multicultural education and their ongoing teaching practices are interrupted by the refugee students, teaching to refugees becomes a problematic process for them. Therefore, the teachers changed the course of the interviews to their individual problem areas rather than the questions addressed to them and this has led to focus shifts. Some teachers have frequently asked for pausing of the recording, narrated events related to the research problem and asked that the narratives that they told should not be recorded. This required researchers to work more rigorously, especially in data analyzing processes.

Results

What Do Teachers Know About Their Students?

What teachers know about refugee students, through which sources they obtain this information and from which reference points they evaluate it are seen as an important component of the teacher dimension in the education of refugees.

One of the conflicts in the process of inclusion of refugee students into the Turkish education system is that there is no regulation or policy to inform students about the socio-cultural environment they belong to. Explanations provided by the participating teachers about the process of inclusion of refugee students in their educational environment and the general profiles of these students showed that teachers’ opinions and knowledge about the out-of-school lives of these refugee students and their family structure are shaped by their viewpoints of the students. Teachers describe the refugee students’ profiles on the basis of their disadvantaged positions, lack of family support and cultural background in general.

The Disadvantaged Positions of Students

Teachers describe the refugee students in terms of their disadvantaged positions and the lack of support mechanism for a qualified education. The main issue teachers deal with within the context of the disadvantaged positions of these students is the economic conditions students have and their past lives. Teachers who assess the existence of refugee students in the context of problems stemming from

their past experiences focused on the reasons for their immigration and challenges such as losing relatives, lack of life security and economic problems that they experienced during the process of immigration and addressed the behaviors and general attitudes of students as the reflection of their past experiences and the difficult conditions they are in. Teachers asserted that students perform problematic behaviors and this is the result of the psychology of war and migration.;

P1: Now they have had great traumas. There are some children who were next to their fathers when they were shot. Some of them used to have comfortable lives ... for example, one of the children had a father who was a doctor but then he was shot.

P7: They are always fighting. Then I have thought, I said "They have just come out of a war; they are having a trauma, they are poor..."

P9: This much fighting, violence is not normal. They have experienced a trauma. They left everything, their houses, homelands, behind. This is not easy.

Teachers regard refugees' being devoid of economic resources is an important part reflecting to in-school processes. According to a significant proportion of teachers participating in the current study, deprivation from economic sources and inadequate satisfaction of basic needs of individuals are among the reasons for education to be ignored. In addition, deprivation from economic resources can also be an obstacle to participation in school activities that can be considered an important step for the integration process.

P6: Syrian families try hard to get by; they are starving. Many of them lost their relatives there. Their main aim is to survive, not being educated or trained. Thus, children do not care about education. Accordingly, they cannot learn reading and writing.

P8: As they have serious financial problems, they cannot spare money for educational activities; they do not want their children to participate in 23 April National Day celebrations or Reading Festival. Yet, I cannot separate the students in the class [...] When we take a trip, they do not give any money. What can I do? How can I discriminate these five children? If they do not take part in these social activities, then what is the meaning of their attendance to school?

P7: They do not bring anything to eat. I have bought a package of biscuits and some toast bread and I have put them into cupboard. I give them these students every day. They do not have notebooks, pens, and erasers. For a long time, I myself bought such materials for them.

P4: M. did not come to school. We have learned that he started to work. His master came and said that this child is very clever; carpentry workshop is not his place. We called his mother and talked. We persuaded her. Then M. did not go to work but came to school.

Lack of Family Support

In the case of refugee students' education, participation of the family can be considered in terms of variables such as resource deprivation, cultural differences and meaning loaded to education. An important dimension of the refugee students' disadvantageous living conditions in their educational lives is the lack of family participation in educational processes. The low level of involvement of families, both at school and at home, means a lack of family support that students need. Considering the disadvantaged positions of the families, it seems to be natural for them not to participate actively in the educational process. It is not possible to say that families are away from school processes because of lack of resources in light of the research findings. The views of teachers in this direction suggest that there are some cultural barriers preventing families from interacting with schools.

P2: I called their families. Yet, we were not able to get in touch with them. They do not have telephone numbers. We cannot find someone to talk, as they do not come ... Iraqi children are only known by other Iraqi children. They are only interacting with each other. They do not communicate with us. I think, they do not want to.

P1: Families do not come to school, meetings. [...] We do not know what the families are doing; parents do not come to school even to talk about the problems of their children. I think they are afraid. They have the same hopelessness as their children do.

One of the family-based limitations in the education of refugee students is that the efforts of the teacher to ensure the active participation of the family in school processes are unrequited due to lack of adequate information and communication resources.

P10: We have experienced some problems in communicating with the family because they don't know enough Turkish to communicate. While they are approaching you, they behave under the influence of their own cultural values. We do not have chance to visit them at home ... Thus, we cannot see their challenges, opportunities provided for children at home etc.

Cultural Codes

The teachers, who define the general characteristics of students through cultural differences and deal with the education of refugees in the context of the conflict of cultural codes, have evaluated the reflection of the traditional and patriarchal social order dominant in Middle Eastern societies in the students' in-school practices in terms of gender roles and obedience culture. The views on the determinant roles of cultural acceptances and belief systems that prioritize male predominance and place women in secondary position versus men and limit women's life to the home are as follows;

P7: Boys do not count girls as people. You cannot make them to sit next to a girl. When you want to conduct an activity in the class, boys never get into a group including girls.

P12: For example, when we play a game, boys do not hold the hands of girls. When they need to sit next to a girl, they overreact. They said that boys and girls were in separate classes in their classes in their own country.

Teachers' Approaches to the Education of Refugees

It is seen that teachers' thoughts on the education of refugees are shaped by the problematic nature of the processes of inclusion of refugees in the education system. The reason of defining the inclusion process in terms of its problematic structure is the individual experiences of teachers. They focus on the education of refugees through the situations and barriers beyond teachers' control arising from political policies. The thoughts of teachers about the education of refugees were handled within the sub-categories as systematic problems and language and adjustments problems.

Systematic Problems

Inclusion of refugee students in the education system without completion of systemic regulations led the teachers to structure the teaching process spontaneously with their own efforts and individual predictions. The systematic problems addressed within the framework of the education of refugee students have become visible in two dimensions. First of these dimensions is related to problems that may arise from teachers' lack of competences to teach in multicultural classes. The main topic that teachers focus on in describing the process of starting to teach in classrooms of refugee students is that they are not qualified professionally for sustaining teaching processes by regarding the existence of refugee students. Lack of resources supporting teachers in terms of how to teach in a multicultural classroom and how to include these students from different cultural background in educational processes or how to expand teaching activities in order to address them is an important dimension of these systematic problems.

P4: If students' knowledge base is enough, I can easily transform my lessons. Yet, I do not know how qualified and knowledgeable I am in this sense. As teachers, we need to have the knowledge to transform the lesson, otherwise, how will it happen?

P10: Teachers do not have the chance to get to know the culture students came from. I wish we had more knowledge about it; that is, what were the living conditions of these students, how did they live, what did they play and watch? Namely, if we had some information about their habits of cleaning, daily lives, tongue twisters, plays, we could have more chance to reach and get in touch with these children.

P14: There is a large cultural gap. Their upbringing styles are different. We say "come and meet here", it is very difficult to organize. The child is very clever but my teaching style is different, there is a mismatch. They have not seen such a system.

Teachers are generally of the opinion that if they were more knowledgeable about the individual characteristics and educational and individualistic backgrounds of their students, and if they were supported with the appropriate resource materials, they could make teaching practices more effective for these students. It has been understood that structural reforms are required for supporting teachers in terms of both professional competencies and teaching to refugees.

P14: I need to be given some special materials to do something in compliance with their culture. We need to be given information about where they come from, the conditions they live in. That is, what can be done should be presented to me in a planned manner so that I can do correct things as a practitioner.

P9: They only told us that we would teach these students but they did not make any arrangements. We were only given a seminar once. We went there with the hope of learning something; yet, what we did was only to listen to each other's problems. It did not make any contribution to us. If the Ministry of National Education had given more support, there had been some kind of preparation, we could be psychologically more prepared. None of these things were offered to us. We suddenly found these students in our classes.

The second dimension of the systemic problems addressed in this study is the student-related points of the policies developed for the inclusion of refugee students into the education system. Teachers who deal with the presence of refugee students in the context of classroom practices are of the opinion that the presence of refugee students in the class slows down and complicates the teaching process, which has disadvantages for both refugee and native students. According to these teachers, the educational processes are interrupted and at the same time a structure that is far from equality and justice is emerging.

P8: Their education is not complete. While we are attending to our children, they are somehow neglected. We do not pay equal attention to them. Therefore, it would be better to gather refugee students in the same classes.

P9: If the classes were constituted only by Syrian students, it would be better. The teacher must be divided into two. We need to design two different activities... Syrian students do not understand our instructions. They do not understand what they read ... We have always this conviction in our minds; "Turkish students are not cared enough. My time is not enough. My lesson is interrupted. If there were only Syrian students, I could focus on them."

Language and Adaptation Problems

High majority of the refugee students attend state schools in the residential areas in which they live, not temporary training centers. Thus, it is clear that the main obstacles to be overcome are language and adaptation problems. In this framework, problems of language and adaptation are intertwined. The main topic emphasized by the teachers in relation to the sources of the problems experienced by refugee students in education and some legal regulations to be put into practice to solve these problems is linguistic problems and integration of the refugee students into the system without being subjected to any orientation program. Teachers, in general, are of the opinion that these students should come to school after undergoing a serious linguistic and cultural orientation program.

In other words, before integrating refugee students into public education, they should be given such a transition or preparation education. P1's narrative about the necessity of including students in the education system after completing the language education is regarded important in terms of presenting that the approach and interpretations of teachers are crucial for students.

P1: First it should be determined what these children can do, what they cannot do, or which deficient they have; there should be a preparation stage first. Children should be integrated into

the education system after they have completed their language and reading and writing education [...]As I do not know Arabic, I try to teach Turkish to them. We for example start writing from left, yet they start from right. In their alphabet, some letters are missing, we have learned these things by trial and error. I first thought that they were suffering from dyslexia. Then I talked to religious culture teachers. They said that they read from right to left. We learned many things from them; for example, vowels are different in their language, which makes learning Turkish quite difficult.

Speaking different languages interrupt to transmit messages, and accordingly to establish a healthy communication. When a student does not receive the messages sent by the teacher, teaching objectives will not be come true, and the development of teaching strategies through the identification of individual characteristics and needs of a student becomes impossible. Some participants pointed out that the most basic problem of students in the classroom is not knowing the language, as follows;

P4: What needs to be done first is to teach them our language as they will read and write in Turkish in our schools.

P5: They say "include them all" but ... It would be better if they had learned Turkish and come to class. If they go on living here. They do not know how to read and write; they fail. It is meaningless, they just come and go.

P7: Children do not understand me, I do not understand them. I generally use sign language, body language.

P2: As they do not know much Turkish, they fail. As long as they do not learn Turkish, they come to school in vain, I think.

The fact that teachers and students do not use a common language can be regarded as a natural consequence of the language barrier that causes pedagogical consequences as well as various conflicts in terms of classroom communication processes. Teachers trying to overcome the language problem with their own efforts or with refugess who speak Turkish have problems arising from misunderstandings related to translation and believe that the problems can be solved through translators in the short run.

P9: There should be a translator. We are always looking for someone to consult. We want help from either janitors or students who know Turkish. But this is not very healthy.

P7: There should be a translator here in the school all the time. Once I need to talk about the National Goods Week. I made a child who knows some Turkish to explain it. I said they had brought some food for you. He translated what I said as "there is a meeting tomorrow so your mothers will come".

P11: We have accepted Syrians, it's ok. But where is the translator? I cannot communicate not only with the parents but with the children. We must get some help from children who know a little Turkish.

Approaches to where and how refugee students should be positioned within the education system can be addressed within the context of the problems of these students' adaptation into the new society. It has been seen that there are two basic approaches; one of which argues that refugee students should be trained in their own communities independently of the existing education system, and the other one argues that education should be used as a means of social integration and adaptation on the basis of integrative function of education. Some of the participating teachers have expressed the critical importance of education for students to gain a sense of belongingness to the society; that is, for the provision of social integration with the following statements;

P1: These girls should receive the correct education, they should adapt to the society, they should be in reciprocal interactions with the society. The children should not be isolated. They should feel that they belong to this society.

P13: I do not need to do anything special as they are Iraqi because it means discrimination. It is something like saying "you are different, that's why I am doing this". That is, if we try to do different things with them, then they will feel different.

On the other hand, some participant teachers stated that these students should go through separate education in separate classes. Teachers think that refugee students should be taught in separate classes so that they can live effective learning experiences and can avoid being exposed to marginalization stemming from differences.

P12: Gather them all together in a separate class and task a teacher only to teach them. But the Ministry of National Education does not accept this as it might prevent their integration. A separate group would be better for learning.

P6: Adaptation classes or schools should be opened. They should not directly come to the class, first they need to learn Turkish. They should learn reading and writing before coming here. Such a teacher would be more beneficial for them as he/she received special training for that. Include them into the class, or into the society so that they integrate. It does not happen so!

P8: A separate classroom only for these students would be better because they are excluded and they are aware of this.

The Experiences of Teachers in Creating Culturally Responsive Learning Environments

In Turkey, education of refugees is an unfamiliar for teachers terms of the application of instructional programs, teaching practices etc. The fact that refugee students have different cultures and traditions implies differences within the classroom and the need for teachers to transform their teaching practices in order to meet the different needs of refugee students. It is expected that teachers' individual approaches to the student and ways of interpreting the absence of refugees within education system give direction to teaching practices within the classroom. In another word, the roots of the teaching practices can be found in the approaches of teachers to the education of refugees.

The findings of the research show that teachers address the existence of refugees, the process of their arrival in the country and their inclusion in the education system through disadvantages and a political approach focusing on systematic problems. Teacher discussions included in these themes usually focus on the structural barriers and negative aspects of the process. However, it has been understood that the practices of teachers being supportive can contribute to the provision of inclusive and social cohesion when examining what they do based on the presence of refugee students in the classroom.

Inclusive Learning Environments

Explanations of teachers, who have created learning environments allowing students to share their past experiences or cultural specificities within the classroom, about these practices and the reflections of these practices on students show that the situations supporting students to find or to share something from themselves in the class will be conducive to their inclusion. The teachers stating that students should be given the opportunity to present something from their own culture, expressing the commonality of cultural codes and giving positive feedbacks to their students think that such things contribute to the involvement of students in lessons and the other activities in classroom. Some of the views of teachers about this subject are as follows;

P2: For example, I am talking about Hidrellez and Nawruz holidays. They like it very much. They talk about what they were doing in these holidays. They can involve in the lesson. Other times, they do not participate in lessons.

P9: There are some words similar in Turkish and Arabic, or there are some words we know from the Koran. When I use an Arabic word, they get excited and ask me how I know this word. This makes them interested as they think the teacher knows something about us, our society.

P12: They like using Arabic words as it is their own language; when they hear an Arabic word they get excited and be happy. They feel happy as they think we like them. When they draw a picture, I immediately hang it on the bulletin board. They like this very much.

Social Cohesion

The inclusion of refugees in the education system is also a factor that affects native students as well as teachers. Some challenges as whether being accepted in the new environment or not can become a current issue for the refugee students. All these factors can lead to social or cultural conflicts in schools. So what teachers do to prevent conflicts or to strengthen interaction among students and managing cohesion gains great importance. The necessity of understanding and recognizing certain cultural sensitivities of the students should also be taken into consideration. Some example situations in which refugee students' integration with the native students is encouraged or native students' excluding behaviors are stopped are given below;

P4: M. was so lonely and it was felt in the class. I talked to children, I talked about his conditions. I wanted them to imagine what had changed in his life and the problems he experienced with our language. I tried to encourage them to develop empathy. I explained that it was an obligation for him to come here, not a preference. Then they decided to get to know M. better.

P12: I have always reminded students by saying "Do not leave them alone, play together". We organized an end-of-year party. I saw one of my male students who is shy was standing alone while other children were playing. Then another male student went to him and held his hand, and then he also started to play. I liked this so much that I hugged and kissed the student helping him by holding his hand.

Conclusion, Discussion, and Suggestions

Education of refugees has become an important problem in Turkey's agenda since a large wave of migration to Turkey has occurred as a result of war in Syria and Iraq. The most general result of this research that aimed to analyze the adaptation processes of refugee children to the schools through the fundamental dynamics of culturally responsive education is that the lack of knowledge on the cultural backgrounds of students and systematic problems are obstacles for culturally responsive education.

Culturally responsive education is based on the argument that it is necessary to look at outside the school, to understand students' past experiences and their current situations and to define their relationships with education in to manage the educational processes of refugees coming from divergent cultural backgrounds efficiently. Teachers in this respect must be more qualified, more knowledgeable (Stewart, 2010 as cited in Miles & McKenna, 2016) and more responsive (Ogilvie & Fuller, 2016) in relation to refugee students' past experiences and learning needs to meet their different learning needs adequately. The lack of systematic and valid sources of information on the education of refugee can lead to a form of interpretation that is shaped by the individual characteristics of teachers. Thus, these interpretations may make the process disadvantageous for refugees. For example, teachers often misinterpret students' and their families' efforts to stay in the new environment because they did not go through a training system that allows them to understand the experiences of refugee children and the difficult conditions they are in (Lee, 2002). This misinterpretation may also have disturbing consequences, such as continuing social inequalities among students (Roux, 2014) or not being aware of students' performances, initiatives or skills (Roxas, 2008). The results of the study revealed that teachers who do not know enough about the cultural and educational backgrounds of the children cause misdiagnosis of students. Roxas (2011) asserted that it is compulsory for teachers to understand the lives of these students and to differentiate their teaching activities based on past educational experiences of students and available resources in the school in order to avoid the disturbing effects that the teacher may cause due to lack of knowledge about refugee students. In the current situation, however, educational processes cannot be differentiated, and it leads to the academic retreat of refugee students.

The basic proposal of Gay's (2000) Culturally Responsive Education is that teachers must be aware of who these students are and where they come from during the education of refugees. Having knowledge of the students' past experiences and the dynamics of their cultural heritage can be considered prerequisite to this awareness. It can be said that it would be very difficult for the teachers who are foreign to this knowledge to prepare a supportive learning environment functional for the integration of students into the new education system. The lack of knowledge of teachers about the cultural backgrounds of students is an obstacle for culturally responsive teaching (Banks & Banks, 2009). Results of the research have shown that teachers do not have sufficient resources to understand out-of-school life of the refugee students, and this is the reason for teachers' forming their knowledge assessments about students through the general models of refugees. In the context of forced migration, the conditions in the host country are also challenging for children as well as for families. This makes these children disadvantaged in the host country (Ereş, 2015, p. 19) and lack of economic sources has a curial importance in increasing their disadvantaged positions (Lucas, 1997). According to Peterson, Dahya, and Adelman (2017, p. 1041) "refugee children are among the most marginalized groups in the field of education in the world, as they have been socially, politically and economically disadvantaged and lacking in many resources". On the other hand, it is not possible for families, who are in resource deprivation within their own life struggles, to help their children or to support their educational processes (Ogilvie & Fuller, 2016). The teachers who participated in this research both addressed the role of the families in the education process within the framework of the lack of economic resources and emphasized the importance attributed to education and their lack of resources to mediate their inclusion in educational processes such as knowing language and cultural competency.

Within the context of this research, it has been concluded that teachers' defining the status of the refugee students through their disadvantaged position and the lack of support mechanisms for their educational processes has become a legitimization mechanism for not supporting the students that they can put into practice individually. Arrival stories of refugee students, or the reasons why they are in that classroom can be seen more important than the current situation, and teaching approaches are generally addressed on the basis of where children come from, how they come, what they bring with them, that is, on the basis of the implications about the resources of the wider environment. However, these implications are often not sufficient to present effective learning experiences to students or to create a supportive atmosphere for their adaptation process. At this point, what the teacher needs in order to manage a successful integration process is to develop awareness and sensitivity towards the socio-cultural status of refugee students. If teachers do not design learning activities in accordance with the cultures of their students, this may lead to negative consequences for children, families and the social group to which they belong (McDermontt, Gormley, Rothenberg & Hammer, 1995 as cited in Gess-Newsome & Southerland, 2000). Creating a classroom atmosphere in which the individuals and their cultural backgrounds to which they belong are recognized emerges as an important necessity and an important component of the Culturally Responsive Education. Because, in environments that are not responsive to cultural diversity, students do not feel that they are valuable and that they belong to the environment they are in; as a result of this, students develop low self-esteem and alienation towards school (Phuntsog, 1999; Brown, 2004).

The dimension focusing on classroom teaching practices corresponds to pedagogical processes. Teachers approach to these processes and classroom practices through systematic obstacles and address the education of refugees within the problematic nature of the process. In schools where refugee students are attending, teachers are usually unfamiliar to the cultural backgrounds of their students and their professional competences for the education of refugee students are limited (Goodwin, 2017). Anwaruddin (2017) stated that such teachers could be trapped within a political approach to the

education of refugees, depending on the contradictions between the needs of refugee students and the order of the existing system. However, what is important for in-class processes is that educators need to adjust their pedagogical approaches in order to meet their students' academic and social needs (Ogilvie & Fuller, 2016). The lack of knowledge needed by teachers to meet the educational needs of refugee students becomes visible at this point. One of the main implications of the current study is that teachers are desperate about how to deal with such a phenomenon in pedagogical sense. The education system in Turkey has been in a tight situation between the problematic areas such as multiculturalism and multilingualism in terms of the education of refugees, and this constitutes a major obstacle to the individualization of the education for refugee students. It is often challenging for teachers having students from different cultural backgrounds in their classes to make their teaching inclusive for all students to offer equal learning and development opportunities for each student. The reason for this challenge is that cultural differences are seen as deficit (Fullam, 2017, s.131; Hurn, 2016, s.172). As refugee students talk in different languages, teachers cannot establish healthy communication with their students, and it is considered to be the most important obstacle in front of refugee students' learning. It is very important for refugees to learn Turkish in order to integrate better into the Turkish society, because cultural integration is only possible through language (Kanat & Üstün, 2015). Crawford (2017, p. 348) suggested that overcoming of the language problem contributes to refugee students' feeling more comfortable or integrated at the school.

Even though teachers take into consideration the past experiences of refugee students, their living conditions and their positions in the social system while conducting instructional processes, they are devoid of the support mechanisms that can transform this process; thus, they are confronted with a serious challenge. Some dimensions of this challenge are realities of these refugee students' lives, professional responsibilities to be fulfilled and lack of knowledge about what to do to make these students adapted to educational processes. This suggests that cultural responsiveness depends not only on the individual characteristics of teachers but also on the existence of the educational policies and implementation processes and structural regulations that will allow teachers to behave in this direction.

Teachers' having cultural responsivity in the school settings, where the basis of social integration is formed, requires attaching importance to students' cultural roots, seeing this information not as an obstacle but as an asset on which learning is built, and using this asset to contribute to students' development and learning (Aceves & Orosco, 2014). Understanding the cultural backgrounds of refugee students will make it easier to meet their educational needs (Walick & Sullivan, 2015). This situation leads to the breakdowns between students' home lives and the new society. On the other hand, inclusion of students' culture into educational processes by establishing links between the school and the community will strengthen the respect for students and help students to feel the sense of belonging to society and to feel valued, and to develop new relationships (Ogilvie & Fuller, 2016, p. 92). Making arrangements to increase the social and academic involvement of refugee students in the classroom atmosphere and to make the contents of curricula interesting enough to cover all students can be considered to be an important stage for the integration of these students. The research findings show that teachers' awareness of different cultural backgrounds of the students, caring about these differences, and adopting a constructive attitude towards the inclusion of refugee children in teaching process have positive reflections on the classroom atmosphere.

Through the results of this study, some suggestions about the problematic of the research can be offered. It is necessary to implement some structural regulations with regard to educational processes of the refugees, who have an important place in the policies of the country. In this context, it is necessary to take measures to enable teachers to acquire knowledge about the basic characteristics of different cultural structures and how to transfer them to the practices of classroom teaching. Including teacher training programs, this component of the education system should be taken into consideration both in pre-service and in-service trainings of teachers. And in order to perform this, the subjects about how culture affects learning should be included in teacher training programs and opportunities for pre-service teachers to improve their cultural knowledge and relating the knowledge with inclassroom practice and curriculum. In addition, the need for a more inclusive teaching model for integration and adaptation of refugee students is evident. Comprehensive orientation programs should be developed that will speed up the involvement of refugee students in the school processes and in particular to address their language problem. Teachers need to be aware of differences in their own and their students' viewpoints, attitudes, behaviors and preferences stemming from different cultures, which is very important for culturally responsive education. The necessity of a system to develop and support teachers to gain proficiency in how to deal with these differences in the classroom environment is quite obvious.

In the light of the results of this study and similar studies examining the adaptation process of immigrant children in terms of teachers' culturally responsiveness, new researches can be conducted on how the process works for students. On the other hand, the studies focusing on the effectiveness of legal policies related to the education of refugees are regarded important in terms of revealing the strengths and weaknesses of the practices and preparing an inclusive education model for the education of refugees. In addition, investigating the patterns of transition to upper grades and educational levels of refugee students through surveys and longitudinal studies is also considered important in terms of structuring educational policies.

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