Critical multicultural education and preservice teachers’ multicultural attitudes

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Abstract
Purpose – This study aims to examine the effect of critical multicultural education on the multicultural attitudes of preservice teachers in a teacher education program.

Design/methodology/approach – The study sample consisted of 76 preservice teachers enrolled in a teacher preparation program. This study used a pretest–posttest quasi-experimental research design with pretest-posttest. The multicultural content integration was implemented in an experimental group for one semester, and data were collected using the teacher multicultural attitude survey.

Findings – Analyses indicated that preservice teachers who were exposed to the critical multicultural education program showed significantly greater progress in their multicultural attitudes compared with teachers in the control group. The results of this study indicate that the integrating critical multicultural education content into teacher education program has a positive effect on fostering preservice teachers’ multicultural attitudes.

Practical implications – Teacher education program planners should integrate multicultural content, materials and activities into teaching methods courses to promote change in preservice teachers’ multicultural attitudes.

Originality/value – This study contributes to the multicultural studies on teacher education.

Keywords Teacher education, Multicultural, Content integration, Critical multicultural education

Paper type Research paper

Introduction
The student populations in many schools exhibit substantial racial, cultural, linguistic and socioeconomic diversity (Banks, 1994; Gomez et al., 2009; Larke, 1990). Preparing preservice teachers for multicultural education is critical because of the inherent complexity of working with a diverse student population (Delpit, 1995; Derman-Sparks and Brunson Phillips, 1997). Researchers emphasized that teacher education programs cannot adequately prepare preservice teachers to meet the needs of ethnically, racially, socially and linguistically diverse students. Preservice teachers frequently state that they have anxiety about teaching different ethnic groups and multicultural education content in their classrooms (Gay and Howard, 2000). According to Banks (2004), preservice teachers need to have knowledge about diversity and teaching practice about multicultural education. Banks also stated that there is a relationship between preservice teachers’ knowledge and practice about diversity and attitudes toward cultural diversity. If preservice teachers have negative attitudes toward student diversity, they maybe unwilling to implement the multicultural curriculum. Hence, preservice teachers’ attitudes toward diversity are crucial for multicultural education. Teachers have negative attitudes toward teaching children with both racial and ethnic diversity because of some reasons including racial prejudices, anxiety about lack of knowledge of ethnic and cultural diversity and pedagogical knowledge and skills for
multicultural education. In the multicultural education literature regarding teacher education, a number of researchers have reported that cultural diversity courses and field experience do not significantly influence preservice teachers’ multicultural attitudes and beliefs (Barry and Lechner, 1995; Berthelsen and Karuppiah, 2011; Cho and DeCastro-Ambrosetti, 2005; Lee and Dallman, 2008; Nadelson et al., 2012). For example, Brown et al. (2011) found that although preservice teachers had developed knowledge and skills related to teaching in culturally diverse classrooms, they continued to feel uncomfortable interacting with students who were either ethnically or culturally different from them. Furthermore, Lee and Dallman (2008) found that teacher education programs did not adequately prepare preservice teachers in the area of diversity and multicultural education. Investigating the attitudes of preservice teachers following their experience teaching culturally diverse students, Brown (2009) found that such experiences did not improve the teachers’ attitudes toward teaching culturally diverse students. Additionally, Deering and Stanutz (1995) conducted a study with a pretest–posttest design and no control group and found that field experiences in a culturally diverse setting did not change the attitudes of most preservice teachers.

The refugee student population in Turkey has been increasing, and the schools have many students from Iraq and Syria. The Ministry of National Education revised all of the program implemented in both elementary and high schools in 2017 (MEB, 2017). The new school programs based on multicultural education and include many goals and objectives on cultural diversity; therefore, teachers must gain the knowledge, skills and sensitivity necessary to teach students with different cultural backgrounds. However, the teacher education programs designed by Higher Education Council do not include courses on multicultural education (Higher Education Council, 2007). In Turkey, there are some studies examining the teachers and preservice teachers’ multicultural attitudes (Arsal et al., 2017; Bulut and Başbay, 2014; Ersoy, 2013; Özdemir and Dil, 2013; Şahin et al., 2013). Researchers stated that preservice teachers should have positive attitudes toward cultural differences. For instance, the results of the study conducted by Ersoy (2013) revealed that preservice teachers have some problems regarding cultural differences and bias in their cross-cultural experience and their negative attitudes need to be changed to positive. Furthermore, there are many studies indicating that teacher education programs in Turkey do not considerably improve preservice teachers’ skills and sensitivity in teaching culturally diverse students (Akın, 2016; Başarr et al., 2013; Ersoy, 2013). For instance, Başarr et al. (2013) investigated the multicultural education perceptions of teachers, and they revealed that teachers need to get a comprehensive education on multicultural education. Preservice teachers need to have multicultural pedagogical knowledge, skills and positive attitudes toward students with ethnic and cultural education. Teacher education programs and teacher educators play important role in improving preservice teachers’ positive attitudes toward cultural differences.

**Multicultural education**

Banks (2010) stated that multicultural education represents an idea, an educational reform and a movement that aims to change the structure of educational institutions and teachers’ roles to ensure that students of diverse racial, ethnic, linguistic and cultural groups have equal opportunities for academic achievement. Teacher educators need to design culturally responsive teaching approaches to develop the multicultural education skills and beliefs of preservice teachers. According to Irvine and Armento (2001), culturally responsive teaching focuses on creating positive classroom climates based on social justice, democracy and equity. According to Sonia Nieto (2000), multicultural education rejects racism and
discrimination but accepts pluralism in schools. It also promotes democratic principles of social justice and uses critical pedagogy as the basis for social change. McLaren (2003) introduced the notion of critical multiculturalism to “interrupt the diversity discourse that emerged to supplant and subvert the original intentions of theorists who set out to create a pedagogy of liberation and social justice” (Ladson-Billings, 2004, p. 52). Critical multicultural education provides students with opportunities to “investigate and determine how cultural assumptions, frames of references, perspectives and the biases within a discipline influence the ways knowledge is constructed” (Banks, 2004, p. 10). The main goal of critical multicultural education is to contribute to the transformation of society and to improve of social justice and equality in society. This approach aims to create a stronger society that fulfills the needs and interest of all groups by drawing attention to the oppression and inequality found within the social structure of society (Sleeter and Grant, 1987).

Banks (2006) proposed five dimensions of multicultural education: Content integration, knowledge construction, prejudice reduction, equity pedagogy, empowering school culture and social structures. The content integration is the first and one of the most important dimensions of multicultural education. Content related to ethnic and cultural diversity must first be integrated into the program before knowledge construction and prejudice reduction can be achieved.

Banks (2010) identified four approaches to integrating multicultural content into the curriculum: The contributions, additive, transformative and social action approaches. The contributions approach is the first and easiest approach that teachers can follow to integrate ethnic and cultural content into the curriculum. The main characteristic of this approach is that the basic structure, content and goals of the curriculum are unchanged. The additive approach adds ethnic and cultural content, goals and materials to the curriculum without changing the curriculum’s structures, goals and characteristics. The content related to ethnicities and cultures is not a main part of the curriculum. In the previous two approaches, ethnic and cultural content is added to the curriculum without changing it. However, in the transformative approach, the structure, content and goals of the curriculum are changed. The main goal of this approach is to enable students to view concepts and cases from multiple perspectives. For example, teachers should expose students to the music, dance and literature of different ethnicities and cultures. The social action approach contains the elements of the transformation approach and includes decisions and actions related to social change. The main goal of this approach is to help students gain knowledge, values and skills to engage in social criticism and social change. In this approach, teachers need to teach students the democratic values and ideals. For example, teachers plan activities in which students can examine, clarify and reflect on their values, attitudes and beliefs related to racial prejudice and discrimination. Teachers can provide case studies from various newspapers and magazines. In addition, teachers can use poetry, biographies and fictional stories as sources for case studies from different cultures. In this study, all of these approaches was used because the four approaches to integrating multicultural content into the curriculum are often mixed and moved from the first level to the last level. For example, the contributions approach is at the first level and can be used as a vehicle to advance the social action approach.

These content integration approaches were used in various ways to integrate ethnic and cultural content into teacher education programs. Some teacher education programs include courses on cultural diversity (Acquaha and Commins, 2013; Bodur, 2012; Brown, 2011; Castro, 2014; Cho and DeCastro-Ambrosetti, 2005; Gorski et al., 2013; Keengwe, 2010; Martin and Dagostino-Kalniz, 2015). For instance, Bodur (2012)
found that preservice teachers who attended a specifically designed course on cultural diversity had more positive attitudes toward teaching both culturally and linguistically diverse students than teachers who had not attended the course. Multicultural content can also be integrated into the field experience provided by teacher education programs (Pohan, 1996; Rudney and Marxen, 2001; Deering and Stanutz, 1995; Miller and Mikulec, 2014; Sassi et al., 2012; Wiggins et al., 2007). Investigating the influence of coursework and long-term field placement at a culturally diverse urban elementary school, Wiggins et al. (2007) found that field experience supported by coursework facilitated the preparation of culturally responsive teachers. Moreover, Sassi et al. (2012) found that field experience with students with different ethnic and cultural characteristics contributed to an increase in preservice teachers’ positive multicultural attitudes. Moreover, ethnic and cultural content can be integrated into subject areas of other courses in teacher education programs (Brown, 2005; Scott and Mumford, 2007). For example, Şahin et al. (2013) found that a media literacy course had a positive effect on preservice teachers’ multicultural attitudes.

For multicultural teacher education, how the multicultural content is integrated into the program and which approach is used for the integration are more critical than the multicultural education program’s courses on diversity, field experience, or integration of cultural diversity into a course. Many researchers who have examined the effect of diversity courses and field experience on preservice teachers’ multicultural beliefs and attitudes are not interested in approaches to integrating multicultural content when designing their programs. An empirical study examining the effects of an approach to integrating multicultural content into a teacher education program will contribute to the literature on multicultural education and teacher education. The current study examines the effect of critical multicultural education by using multicultural content integration approaches on the multicultural beliefs and attitudes of preservice teachers. The present study addresses the following research question:

**RQ1.** Is there a significant difference between the multicultural attitudes of preservice teachers exposed to the critical multicultural education program and those not exposed the program?

**Method**

**Research design**

The present study used a pretest–posttest quasi-experimental design (Shadish et al., 2002) with an experimental group and a control group to determine the effect of the critical multicultural education on preservice teachers’ multicultural attitudes. The teacher multicultural attitude survey (TMAS) was administered to both groups at the beginning of the study as a pretest and was again re-administered at the conclusion of the study as a posttest. The pretest–posttest TMAS scores of the preservice teachers in the two groups were compared to determine the effects of integrating multicultural content into teacher education program on these teachers’ attitudes toward multicultural education. The current study was conducted during the methods of teaching course, which is a pedagogical course in the teacher education program in Turkey. This course includes both objectives and topics related to preservice teachers’ knowledge and skills in designing and using instructional methods, technologies, materials and activities. The Methods of Teaching course in a teacher education program is a convenient context for implementing the integration of multicultural content into the teacher education program. In this course, preservice teachers
must possess positive beliefs about and attitudes toward ethnic and cultural differences to design teaching activities in accordance with multicultural education. The researcher, instructor of the experiment and control groups, implemented multicultural content integration in the experimental group 3 h in a week for 14-weeks period during the fall semester.

**Participants**

The study participants consisted of 76 preservice teachers (61.8 per cent female, 38.2 per cent male) who were enrolled in the Turkish Language teacher education program at a public university in northern Turkey. The sample was limited to the preservice teachers who were enrolled in the methods of teaching course. None of these preservice teachers had received any previous training in multicultural education. The participants were randomly assigned to the experimental group \((n = 38)\) or the control group \((n = 38)\). All preservice teachers voluntarily participated in the study.

**Data collection instrument**

The TMAS, which was developed by Ponterotto et al. (1998), was administered to measure the multicultural attitudes of the preservice teachers in the experimental and control groups at the beginning and end of the study. The TMAS is a unidimensional instrument specifically designed to measure teachers’ levels of multicultural awareness and sensitivity. Many researchers interested in multicultural teacher education have used this survey to assess the multicultural attitudes of teachers and preservice teachers (Cicchelli and Cho, 2007; Dotger, 2010; Ortiz, 2012; Turner, 2007; Yazıcı et al., 2009). The TMAS consists of 20 items and responses are rated on a five-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Sample items include the following statements: “I find teaching a culturally diverse student group rewarding”; “Teaching methods need to be adapted to meet the needs of a culturally diverse student group”; and “I am aware of the diversity of cultural backgrounds in my classroom.” The original reliability value for this survey was 0.86 (Ponterotto et al., 1998). The TMAS was translated and adapted into Turkish by Yazıcı et al. (2009). The reliability value for the Turkish version of this survey was 0.74.

**Process**

*Instructions for the experimental group.* In the current study, the multicultural content integration approaches were implemented in the experimental group. The researcher presented the theoretical bases for the integration of multicultural content integration approaches to the preservice teachers. The researcher also designed a model lesson plan that included methods, materials, activities and evaluations based on the multicultural content integration approaches defined by Banks. Under the guidance of the researcher, the preservice teachers designed instructional materials and lesson plans according to this approach. The preservice teachers implemented their lesson plans using these instructional materials for 20 min. The researcher observed and recorded notes on each preservice teacher’s teaching to suggest improvements regarding their teaching skills and attitudes. The researcher evaluated each preservice teacher’s lesson plans and teaching performance based on the criteria of multicultural education adapted by NCSS (1992).

The critical multicultural education activities in the course of method was designed and implemented in the light of multicultural content integration approach developed by Banks (2006).
In the first stage of the experiment on critical multicultural education, knowledge construction, the content on ethnic and cultural diversity of Syrian refugees was integrated into the Method Course on which the experiment of the current study was conducted. The content of method course includes teaching methods such as discussion, brainstorming, case studies and problem-solving. Content integration from critical theory perspective requires the deconstruction of presumed knowledge and truth while using culture as the medium (Gay and Howard, 2000). In the experimental group, case studies related to the real-life experiences and problems of Syrian refugees in Turkey were presented by the preservice teachers. At this stage, some documents such as several research articles, textbooks and magazines on Syrian refugees were provided to preservice teachers for critical multicultural education, and they used data sources such as biographies, fictional stories, poetry and dramas. Moreover, they designed instructional materials, such as movies, pictures and concrete materials and models reflecting ethnic and cultural diversity. For example, a number of preservice teachers designed teaching and used materials and books reflecting other perspectives, particularly Syrian Refugees. As a result of all of these activities, they had knowledge about Syrian refugees’ ethnic and cultural properties regarding knowledge construction defined by Banks (2006).

In the second stage of the experiment, prejudice reduction, the preservice teachers had the opportunities for self-reflection and dialogue with their classroom mates who had different ideas, knowledge and dispositions about Syrian refugees. In critical multicultural education, teachers help students to see that many of their conceptions, biases and attitudes come from a sociohistorical perspective (Nieto, 2000). The critical multicultural activities in the current study included questions related to the problem of prejudice and discrimination: Some example questions are as follows:

**Q1.** What is the Turkish teachers’ and students’ prejudice against Syrian refugee students? What is discrimination against Syrian refugee students?

**Q2.** What causes prejudice?

**Q3.** What causes Syrian refugee students to discriminate?

**Q4.** How can Turkish teachers and students address prejudice and discrimination?

The preservice teachers showed case studies from Turkish newspapers and magazines and used them for role-playing activities and discussions. For example, some preservice teachers presented stories reflecting the experiences of Syrian people in Turkey. The preservice teachers used the content in the textbooks, magazines, etc., and they critically analyzed the case studies about the prejudice and discrimination of the Syrian refugee’s people. Also, the discussion activities in the democratic environment during the course contributed to the reduction of prejudice of the preservice teachers to the refugees. The group discussion activities also allowed to preservice teachers to explore the biases of others to the refugee’s people and promoted the preservice teachers’ respect for different cultures. Therefore, they had more positive attitudes toward Syrian refugees with different ethnic and cultural backgrounds.

In the final stage of the experiment, equity pedagogy and critical multicultural education, the solutions that preservice teachers were found for the problems mentioned in the case studies were critically evaluated and they developed an action plan. In this stage, assessment methods such as observations, interviews and scales were used to identify the preservice teachers’ teaching competences on critical multicultural education. As a result,
they had the opportunity to create a school culture that empowers students from diverse racial, ethnic and cultural groups.

Instructions for the control group. In the control group, the instructor presented the theoretical bases of multicultural education. The preservice teachers in the control group were exposed to some memes, poetry and stories reflecting Syrian refugees, but they did not have experience on critical multicultural education and all of the multicultural content integration approaches. For example, they did not solve a problem related to prejudice and discrimination. As a result, the preservice teachers in the control group had experience in considering cultural diversity using the only contribution approach, but did not have experience in designing and implementing instruction based on critical multicultural education.

Data analysis
An analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was conducted to analyze the effect of the critical multicultural education program on the preservice teachers’ multicultural attitudes. The ANCOVA method statistically controls for the effects of continuous or scale variables that are of concern to the researcher, but are not the focal or independent variables in the study (Leech et al., 2008). In this study, the critical multicultural education program was the independent variable, the multicultural attitudes of the preservice teachers were the dependent variable and the teachers’ pretest scores were the covariate variable. The assumptions for the ANCOVA were as follows: the observations are independent, the variances of the groups are equal (i.e. homogeneity of variances) and the dependent variable is normally distributed for each group (Leech et al., 2008). The Kolmogorov–Smirnov test results indicated that the test distribution was normal (Kolmogorov–Smirnov = 0.069, p = 0.200). The result of Levene’s test of the equality of error variances was not significant (F = 3.55, p = 0.063), indicating support for the null hypothesis that the error variances of the dependent variables are equal between the groups. Therefore, the assumptions of the ANCOVA were satisfied with the current study.

Results
The descriptive statistics for the TMAS pretest and posttest are presented in Table I.

The results presented in Table I revealed an increase in the mean posttest scores of the preservice teachers in the experimental group, whereas there were no changes in the mean posttest scores of the preservice teachers in the control group.

The results of the ANCOVA are presented in Table II.

The results presented in Table II revealed a significant difference between the experimental and control groups in regard to the teachers’ multicultural attitudes at the end of the integrating multicultural content application, with the experimental group exhibiting more favorable attitudes, F (1,76) = 13.302 p < 0.05, Partial \( \mu^2 = 0.154 \). Moreover, the effect size was very large. The covariate (pretest) did not have a significant effect on the preservice teachers’ multicultural attitudes, F (1,76) = 0.221 p > 0.05, Partial \( \mu^2 = 0.003 \). The results of the current study indicate that a critical multicultural education program by using

<table>
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<th>Groups</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
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<td>72.21</td>
<td>6.63</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Posttest</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>72.07</td>
<td>7.65</td>
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</table>
multicultural content integration approaches in the experimental group was more effective in improving preservice teachers' multicultural attitudes than the control group.

**Discussion**

The current study aimed to examine the effects of the critical multicultural education program on preservice teachers' multicultural attitudes. The results revealed that the multicultural attitudes of the preservice teachers in the experimental group increased, whereas those of the preservice teachers in the control group did not change. According to these findings, the critical multicultural education program by using all form of multicultural content integration approaches used in the experimental group significantly improved preservice teachers' multicultural attitudes. However, the effect of the contribution approach to integrating multicultural content into the program was not statistically significant in the control group. This group's gradual increase in scores suggests that the addition of ethnic and cultural content and materials to the curriculum did not affect the preservice teachers' multicultural attitude scores.

The results of this study indicate that the integration of multicultural content in the teacher education program can improve the multicultural attitudes of preservice teachers. The current findings supported Banks' theory that the all forms of multicultural content integration approaches mixed and moved from the first level to the last level approaches, and is more effective in improving multicultural values, attitudes, beliefs and feelings than other approaches (Banks, 2010).

The results of the current study showed that the use of all form of multicultural content integration approach used in the experimental group resulted in positive changes in preservice teachers' multicultural beliefs and attitudes, but only one multicultural integration approach implemented in the control group may not be sufficient to change preservice teachers' multicultural attitudes and beliefs. The findings of this study are consistent with those of the study conducted by Şahin et al. (2013), who found that a media literacy course that integrated cultural diversity content had positive effects on the multicultural attitudes of preservice teachers. Also, the findings of this study are supported with the literature indicating that teacher education programs in Turkey have an impact on preservice teachers' multicultural attitudes (Arsal et al., 2017; Bulut and Başbay, 2014; Özdemir and Dil, 2013). Preservice teachers with skills in designing and implementing teaching with the mixed form of multicultural content integration approaches can mitigate their students' prejudice and discrimination against different ethnicities and cultures. According to Banks (2010), the final level of multicultural content integration approach enables students to synthesize their knowledge and values to determine what actions they should take to reduce prejudice and discrimination in their school. Rudney and Marxen

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Sum of square</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean square</th>
<th>$F$</th>
<th>$p$</th>
<th>Partial $\eta^2$</th>
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<td>7,297.850</td>
<td>154.595</td>
<td>0.000</td>
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<td>0.221</td>
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<td>47.206</td>
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**Notes:** *$p < 0.05$; $R^2 = 0.156$ (Adjusted $R^2 = 0.133$)
(2001) pointed out the value of a content integration approach of multicultural training for preservice teachers and provided evidence for the transfer of beliefs and actions to teachers’ professional lives.

The study findings indicated that the all form of multicultural content integration approaches can be used to integrate ethnic and cultural content into other pedagogical courses, such as educational psychology, instructional materials and measurement and evaluation. Indeed, Cho and DeCastro-Ambrosetti (2005) proposed that issues related to diversity should be infused throughout many of the courses offered in teacher education programs. Thus, teacher educators who teach these courses can improve preservice teachers’ multicultural attitudes and beliefs by using the mixed form of multicultural content integration approaches.

In the current study, the preservice teachers in the experimental group were exposed to content, materials and activities related to cultural diversity and had opportunities to examine, clarify and reflect on their values, attitudes, beliefs and feelings about prejudice and discrimination within integrating multicultural content. Additionally, these preservice teachers had experience with teaching students from different cultures. The combination of exposure to different cultures and teaching experience may have positively influenced these teachers’ multicultural attitudes. Several researchers (Causey et al., 2000; Garmon, 2004; Lee et al., 2009) have suggested that having personal experience with diversity and opportunities to appropriately process such teaching experiences maybe critical for improving multicultural awareness and sensitivity.

**Conclusion, implications and limitations**

This study demonstrated that a critical multicultural education program was effective in improving preservice teachers’ multicultural attitudes. One of the important implications of this study is that the effectiveness of multicultural teacher education programs depends on which approach is used to integrate multicultural content into the curriculum. Teacher education program planners should integrate multicultural content, materials and activities into teaching methods courses to promote change in preservice teachers’ multicultural attitudes. If teacher education programs do not include a course on cultural diversity or do not provide preservice teachers with field experience, program planners adopt the mix of approaches to integrating multicultural content into the program to promote preservice teachers’ multicultural attitudes. In addition, this approach can provide preservice teachers with the tools and knowledge needed to design and implement critical multicultural teaching activities. Ethnic and cultural issues can be integrated into subjects such as music, art, dance, and literature in the teacher education programs by means of the mixed form of multicultural content integration approaches. Thus, researchers should investigate the effects of integrating critical multicultural content into other subjects of teacher education programs on the multicultural beliefs and attitudes of preservice teachers.

This study has a number of limitations. Many personal factors, such as cultural background, language, ethnicity and race, can influence the multicultural attitudes of preservice teachers (Nadelson et al., 2012; Sleeter, 2001; Turner, 2007; Dee and Henkin, 2002; Kyles and Olafson, 2008). Additionally, some experimental factors have likely influenced the current results, such as the preservice teachers’ previous field experience, their experiences in other courses within teacher education programs and their experiences communicating with students from different cultures. For example, social science, language, humanities and music courses in teacher education programs include content, materials and experiences related to cultural diversity. These courses have been found to be effective in teaching
undergraduate students about other cultures (Goldberg, 2006; Howard-Hamilton and Hinton, 2004). All of these factors can influence the multicultural attitudes of preservice teachers. However, in an empirical study, it is difficult to control the effects of all personal and external factors on the multicultural attitudes of preservice teachers. Future researchers should consider the effects of all personal and experimental factors on multicultural attitudes in the empirical studies.

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