Multicultural Classrooms in European Higher Education: Findings From Interviews with International Students and Teaching Staff

Mehmet Emin BAKAY
Izmir Katip Çelebi University
ORCID ID: 0000-0002-8985-6002
Email: mehmetemin.bakay@ikc.edu.tr

Abstract

The primary objective of this study is to explore the experiences and challenges faced by academic faculty and university students in universities across several European countries, specifically within multicultural classrooms. The research aims to identify these challenges and formulate recommendations to enhance the effectiveness of these multicultural educational settings. The research sample comprises 80 individuals, evenly divided into students and faculty members, drawn from 8 partner universities in Belgium, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Spain, Romania, and Turkey. Utilizing a qualitative research approach, data is collected through semi-structured interviews, and content analysis technique is employed for data analysis to inform the development of recommendations. Key findings from the research conducted in various European countries on internationalization in multicultural classrooms emphasize several critical points. English proficiency is universally acknowledged as essential, requiring measures to address language disparities. All countries place a high value on cultural diversity and support systems for international students. Challenges linked to cultural differences and language barriers are recognized, underscoring the importance of cultural sensitivity and inclusive academic environments. Additionally, the importance of training and development for educators is highlighted. These insights are invaluable in shaping internationalization efforts in higher education, both in Europe and worldwide.

Key words: Higher education, education management, multicultural education.

Introduction

The escalating diversification of societies worldwide has accentuated the presence of cultural heterogeneity within educational contexts to an unprecedented extent. In this context, multicultural education has emerged as a prominent and pertinent subject of discourse in the contemporary era. It represents a profound transformative endeavour within the educational domain aimed at fostering individuals who possess a capacity for critical thinking and are actively engaged in societal matters. It transcends being a mere revision of curricular content or the inclusion of supplementary activities; rather, it encompasses a dynamic movement necessitating the adoption of novel mindsets, innovative methodologies, and a resolute commitment to implementing fundamental societal change.

According to James A. Banks (1994), a multicultural classroom may be described as an educational milieu wherein students from diverse ethnicities, religious affiliations, or linguistic backgrounds collectively participate in the same learning space. It is characterised as an educational setting where students gain the invaluable chance to understand and draw knowledge from each other's experiences. Similarly, Sonia Nieto (2000) conceptualises a multicultural classroom as an inclusive and hospitable learning environment that embraces and accommodates all students, irrespective of their cultural origins. Correspondingly, Christine E. Sleeter and Carl A. Grant (2009) characterise a multicultural classroom as an educational setting where the curriculum, teaching methods, and evaluation procedures are designed to mirror the diverse backgrounds of the students in the class. Furthermore, Banks (2010) clarifies the concept of multicultural education as a tripartite construct comprising an idea, an educational reform movement, and a process. The overarching aim of this educational approach resides in transforming the organizational framework of educational institutions to facilitate equitable educational opportunities for students from heterogeneous racial, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds.

These definitions underscore the significance of three fundamental aspects of a multicultural classroom. Firstly, it becomes a melting pot where students from various cultural, racial, ethnic, and linguistic backgrounds converge to engage in collaborative learning. Secondly, it fosters an inclusive atmosphere, ensuring every student feels embraced and welcomed, irrespective of their cultural heritage. Lastly, the curriculum, teaching methodologies, and assessment strategies are thoughtfully designed to reflect the

diverse profiles of the students, valuing and celebrating their unique backgrounds. These elements create an enriching and harmonious learning environment that promotes understanding, acceptance, and appreciation of cultural diversity.

The multicultural classroom confers numerous advantages to students. Primarily, it fosters an enhanced comprehension of diverse cultures, thus nurturing an appreciation towards diversity and cultivating cultural awareness (Banks, 1993a; Thompson, 2020). Secondly, this form of education stimulates critical thinking by exposing students to varied perspectives and urging them to transcend their cultural backgrounds (Banks, 1993a; Ford, 1995). Thirdly, multicultural education engenders self-awareness, prompting students to reflect upon their cultural identities and biases (Solorzano & Yosso, 2002). Educators play a crucial role in effectively implementing multicultural education in this context, necessitating a profound understanding of ethnic cultures and experiences to seamlessly integrate ethnic content, experiences, and viewpoints into the curriculum (Thompson, 2020). By incorporating multicultural education in their teaching approaches, instructors facilitate students in developing a more profound comprehension of different cultures, refining their critical thinking aptitudes, and cultivating heightened self-awareness.

The multicultural classroom offers considerable merits for educators as well. One notable advantage pertains to the cultivation of heightened cultural expertise and consciousness. Educators accrue discernment into diverse systems of beliefs, values, and practices through their engagements with students from disparate cultural backgrounds. This engenders a more profound comprehension of how these constituents mould students' vantage points and encounters (Banks, 2016). Furthermore, instructors encounter novel standpoints and discernments about societal and global difficulties within multicultural education, augmenting their erudition and subsequently influencing their instructional methodology. The exposure of educators to varied perspectives contributes substantively to their vocational maturation and augments their efficacy as pedagogues (Nieto, 2000). By giving teachers valuable pedagogical strategies and cultural competencies, embracing this diversity in a multicultural setting can significantly advance their personal and professional development (Bennett, 2009). Overall, the advantages of teaching in a multicultural setting go beyond academia, having a transformative impact on teachers' perspectives and abilities.

In addition to its benefits, addressing students' challenges in multicultural classrooms is also imperative (Alsubaie, 2015). These challenges include difficulty in dealing with students and teachers from different cultural backgrounds (Nieto, 2000), limited range and depth of multicultural education lessons presented by teachers (Vavrus, 1994), lack of understanding and appreciation of diversity among students (Nieto, 2013), resistance to change and lack of support from educational institutions (Gay, 2010), prejudice and discrimination based on race, ethnicity, and social class (Vavrus, 1994), and lack of clear policy statements and guidelines for promoting multicultural education in the classroom (Banks, 2010).

Multicultural classrooms introduce an array of challenges for teachers as well. One notable challenge is the interaction between students and teachers of dissimilar cultural orientations. Teachers might find themselves unfamiliar with the cultural norms and values intrinsic to their students, consequently engendering potential misunderstandings and conflicts (Banks, 2016). Furthermore, educators might necessitate an adeptness in effectively managing classrooms encompassing students from varying cultural milieus, each characterised by distinct learning styles (Sleeter, 2001). The dearth of comprehensive comprehension and appreciation of diversity among students compounds the complexities. Teachers may either lack awareness regarding the diverse cultural compositions of their classrooms or fail to attribute due significance to the contributions proffered by these various cultures (Banks, 1993b). Students may experience marginalisation and exclusion within the learning environment (Alsubaie, 2015). The resistance to change and inadequate institutional support emerge as another salient challenge. In some instances, educators may manifest reluctance towards adopting the tenets of multicultural education, aggravated by a perceived dearth of backing from their educational institutions (Nelson, 2003).

Moreover, manifestations of prejudice and discrimination rooted in race, ethnicity, and social class pose substantial impediments. Teachers might be subject to prejudicial attitudes and discriminatory behaviours from students, parents, or colleagues (Aronson & Gonzalez, 1988). This unfavourable dynamic can hinder the establishment of an inclusive classroom milieu that upholds the ethos of cordiality and respect across cultural boundaries. Additionally, the absence of lucid policy frameworks and guiding directives for promoting multicultural education within the classroom adds another layer of complexity. Certain educational establishments and districts lack well-defined policies or guidelines delineating the means to actualise multicultural education, making teachers uncertain about effectively integrating these principles into their instructional practices.

To effectively respond to these challenges, an adept pedagogical approach within the context of a multicultural classroom necessitates a directed emphasis on matters of cultural diversity, the integration of teaching methodologies that are attuned to cultural nuances, and the formulation of comprehensive policy directives and instructional guidelines aimed at advancing the cause of multicultural education within the classroom setting. Proficient instructional strategies that accommodate the diverse spectrum of learning styles present in multicultural classrooms encompass the utilisation of interactive, collaborative exercises, the establishment of connections between classroom content and the cultural heritage of students, the assimilation of culturally pertinent pedagogical frameworks, a thorough acquaintance with the student body, the incorporation of culturally pertinent course content, the employment of teaching methodologies and instructional techniques that endorse and validate a student's cultural and linguistic identity, the cultivation of robust student-teacher relationships, an approach characterized by inquisitiveness when engaging with students, the integration of policies, practices, and pedagogical methodologies aligned with multicultural education, the allocation of dedicated temporal provisions for multicultural education, and the adoption of teaching strategies that are intrinsically responsive to cultural diversity (Banks 2016; Gay 2010; Nieto 2000; Sleeter & Grant 2009).

This research, prepared for the Multicultural Classrooms: Inclusive Learning and Teaching in Higher Education Erasmus+ project, aims to assess the current state of multicultural classrooms in Europe based on interviews with lecturers and students at partner universities (Türkiye, Belgium, Romania, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, and Spain) in the project. This study aims to investigate the experiences and challenges encountered by academic faculty and university students in European universities, with a specific focus on multicultural classrooms. The research is guided by the following sub-questions:

1. What motivates individuals, both academic staff and students, to participate in multicultural classrooms, and what positive impacts do they experience?
2. What shared challenges are faced by academic staff and students in multicultural educational environments, and how do they address them?
3. What support systems, institutional and interpersonal, exist to help both academic staff and students adapt and succeed in multicultural classrooms, and what specific support needs do they have?
4. How do academic staff and students navigate language and communication barriers in multicultural classrooms, and what strategies enhance intercultural exchange?
5. How do both academic staff and students contribute to inclusive classrooms and cross-cultural understanding, and what recommendations can improve their experiences in these settings?

Method

In the course of conducting qualitative research, the criterion sampling technique, which is a form of purposeful sampling, is employed to efficiently identify and select cases that are rich in information. This process entails the identification and selection of individuals or groups who possess a notable level of knowledge or experience pertaining to the specific phenomenon under investigation, all while making the best use of constrained resources (Cresswell & Plano Clark, 2011; Palinkas et al., 2015). Semi-structured interview questions were collaboratively developed and approved by the Multiclass consortium. For the teaching staff, the questionnaire consisted of 20 questions distributed across five sections: Individual experiences and approaches (10 questions), benefits (2 questions), challenges (2 questions), mechanisms (3 questions), and needs (3 questions) (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). The student questionnaire comprised 14 questions, which were categorized into five sections: Individual experiences and approaches (6 questions), benefits (2 questions), challenges (2 questions), mechanisms (2 questions), and needs (2 questions).

The data collection tool was piloted with two participants in each country, and the data collection tool was finalized based on participant feedback, enhancing the reliability of the research (Trochim, 2006). The data were collected in Türkiye, Belgium, Romania, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, and Spain. Data collection was based on semi-structured interviews, a commonly employed method for qualitative data collection. These interviews involved 40 (25 female and 15 male) international students and 40 (21 female and 19 male) teaching staff members from partner universities. Interviews were audio-recorded with the consent from participants. The interviews usually took around 40-45 minutes. Data were collected in March and April 2023.

Interviewees' rights, privacy, and confidentiality were ensured during the interviews, and all participants signed informed consent, demonstrating a commitment to research validity (Maxwell & Miller, 2008). The collected data were transcribed in English. Data were categorized based on themes emerging from the data, a fundamental step in content analysis (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). To ensure validity of themes, two experts coded the data separately, and the consistency between two experts' coding was 85%. This collaborative approach to data analysis contributes to research reliability and validity (Trochim, 2006). Data were

analyzed using the content analysis method, a systematic approach for qualitative data analysis that helps in deriving meaningful insights from the data.

Findings

Academic staff experience

Through an evaluation of the common themes and perspectives emerging from the interviews conducted with academic staff from Türkiye, Spain, Romania, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, and Belgium, the following key observations have been made about their individual experiences and approaches:

1. Positive Attitudes and Motivation:

Across all the studied countries, academic staff exhibit a prevailing positive disposition towards teaching in multicultural classrooms. They recognise the presence of international students as advantageous, contributing to an enriched educational experience for all students. These teachers express profound motivation and interest in instructing in diverse settings, finding it both inspiring and challenging in a constructive manner. This positive attitude is vital as it can positively impact the learning environment and foster greater student engagement.

2. Inclusive Pedagogical Milieu:

The interviews underscore the emphasis on establishing an inclusive and welcoming learning environment by the academic staff. Lecturers recognise the significance of fostering open and inclusive dialogues, embracing non-judgmental attitudes, and nurturing intercultural competence as essential to facilitating meaningful student interactions. Lecturers create an inclusive and harmonious classroom environment by actively promoting attentive listening and accommodating diverse cultural backgrounds. This ensures students feel comfortable and encouraged to participate actively in classroom discussions and collaborative activities.

3. Promoting Cohesion within Diversity:

The interviews highlight the recognition of diverse challenges prevailing in multicultural classrooms. Language barriers, distinct behavioural patterns, and variations in cultural interpretations stand prominent among these challenges. Lecturers employ strategic measures to bridge these gaps, cultivating effective communication and fostering mutual understanding among students from different cultural backgrounds. Furthermore, adapting teaching materials and methodologies to encompass various cultural perspectives is a substantial challenge, demanding thoughtful and deliberate contemplation.

4. Embracing the Benefits:

The academic staff participants from the examined countries unanimously acknowledge and value the inherent advantages associated with the pedagogical experience of instructing within multicultural classrooms. These benefits encompass exposure to diverse cultural perspectives, personal growth, intellectual advancement, and the cultivation of global consciousness. The presence of international students is perceived as a catalyst for motivating and positively influencing the academic performance of local students.

5. Language Proficiency and Communication:

The language of instruction, especially English, is highlighted as a crucial aspect of teaching in multicultural classrooms. Teachers employ flexible language and communication strategies to ensure that all students comprehend the subject matter and actively engage in classroom discussions. International students' varying language proficiency levels necessitate adaptive teaching methodologies to facilitate effective learning.

6. Adaptation of Curriculum and Teaching Materials:

Academic staff acknowledge the necessity of adapting the curriculum and teaching materials to cater to students' diverse cultural backgrounds. Incorporating global illustrations, examples, and diverse perspectives is emphasized to enhance inclusivity and relevance in instructional content. Furthermore, lecturers express their commitment to continuous professional development, ensuring alignment with current trends and the evolving needs of multicultural classrooms.

7. Overcoming Cultural Misunderstandings:

In specific interviews, such as in Türkiye, the importance of exercising self-censorship and employing sensitive communication to navigate potential cultural misunderstandings, particularly concerning freedom of expression, is mentioned. Lecturers emphasize the significance of understanding cultural differences to facilitate smooth interactions within the classroom environment.

8. Variations in Academic Levels and Support:

Certain countries' interviews, such as in the Czech Republic and Türkiye, mention variations in academic levels among international students due to differences in educational systems. In response, Turkish

lecturers emphasize the significance of providing appropriate support and references to assist international students in pursuing job opportunities.

9. Interaction and Group Work Challenges:

In some instances, such as in Spain, challenges arise in promoting interaction and collaboration among students from diverse cultural backgrounds during group work. Efforts are made to ensure equitable participation and encourage effective student communication.

Overall, the interviews from the diverse countries collectively demonstrate a shared commitment among academic staff towards fostering a supportive and inclusive learning environment within multicultural classrooms. Lecturers value the benefits of cultural diversity and actively strive to overcome challenges through adaptive teaching strategies and an enhanced understanding of cultural nuances.

Benefits

The interviews conducted with academic faculty in Türkiye underscored the manifold opportunities and advantages lecturers encounter while instructing in multicultural classrooms. These advantages encompass factors such as motivation and self-assessment, proficiency in foreign languages, development of intercultural competence, cultivation of empathy, appreciation for diversity, promotion of tolerance and respect, enhancement of critical thinking skills, broadening of global perspectives, adaptability in pedagogical approaches, exposure to invaluable learning prospects, insights into socio-cultural landscapes, personal fulfilment, joy, intellectual benefits, exposure to exciting perspectives, acknowledgement of multicultural students, communication and contact, one-on-one learning experiences, understanding working conditions in different countries, increased general knowledge, cultural exchange, language practice, friendship building, the need for further explanations and perspectives, heightened utilization of the English language, enhancement of academic performance, and positive impacts on students. The results indicate that instructing in multicultural educational settings offers diverse benefits to lecturers. The active involvement with students from diverse backgrounds enriches their pedagogical encounters and cultivates personal growth and adaptability. The exposure to varying cultural and linguistic contexts empowers lecturers to enhance their intercultural skills and empathy, fostering a more comprehensive and nurturing atmosphere for learning.

The data from interviews conducted with lecturers in Belgium illuminated their perception of language proficiency as a valuable opportunity, particularly with English as the predominant medium of instruction. Moreover, the lecturers emphasized the advantages of engaging with culturally diverse cohorts of students, leading to what they referred to as an 'international exposure' experience. The lecturers expressed a genuine appreciation for the opportunity to interact with students from diverse backgrounds, as this interaction expanded their horizons and prompted a re-evaluation of their pedagogical approaches. Several lecturers reported adopting distinct teaching methodologies acquired from their experiences in international classrooms and implementing these techniques in their interactions with local students. The findings from this study suggest that teaching in global classrooms within the Belgian context not only facilitates the enhancement of language proficiency but also provides an avenue for exposure to diverse cultures and refinement of teaching practices. The presence of international students fosters an enriching environment that contributes to their professional growth and improved teaching methodologies.

The interviews with lecturers in Romania revealed several advantages associated with teaching multicultural classrooms, such as the opportunity to provide more diverse examples, adapt teaching methods to cater to students' initial knowledge levels, enrich cultural knowledge through experience sharing, raise awareness of multiculturalism, improve language skills, enhance confidence, and work satisfaction. Some lecturers specifically mentioned positive experiences, including sharing amusing stories and anecdotes, witnessing students' learning and idea formulation, receiving gratitude from international students, and being requested to continue collaboration after the course. The findings emphasise how teaching in multicultural classrooms in Romania provides lecturers with opportunities to broaden their cultural knowledge, improve language skills, and foster a positive and engaging learning environment. The interactions with international students engender fulfilment and appreciation for the diversity of experiences within the classroom.

Lecturers in Bulgaria identified the following advantages associated with teaching in multicultural environments: Embracing new cultures, comprehending diverse points of view, and delivering more comprehensive and lucid instruction. Lecturers found that teaching in multicultural classrooms was consistently exciting and motivated them to offer more examples and establish connections with different disciplines. The significant benefits also included positive feedback from international students, their expressions of gratitude, and increased confidence in their knowledge. The interviews suggest that teaching in multicultural classrooms in Bulgaria contributes to lecturers' personal and professional growth. The

experience of interacting with international students, mainly through language courses, fosters a sense of comfort for students within the local environment and promotes cross-cultural understanding.

The principal benefits of teaching multicultural classes in the Czech Republic, as reported in the interviews, encompass the expansion of horizons, the cultivation of tolerance, the perception of different experiences and approaches from other countries, the augmentation of enjoyment in teaching, the ability to integrate theoretical knowledge with students' experiences, the abatement of xenophobia and misconceptions about other countries, and the fostering of open-mindedness and respect for different cultures. Positive experiences include witnessing students defend their master's thesis, expressing a desire to contribute to their home countries development, and enjoying discussions and sharing experiences among students. The interviews indicate that teaching in multicultural classrooms in the Czech Republic positively affects both lecturers and students. It fosters an international perspective, enhances cultural consciousness, and encourages a readiness to embrace various viewpoints.

According to the interviews, the primary benefits of teaching multicultural classes in Spain lie in the unique and distinctive nature of these classes compared to others. The participation of international students brings fresh perspectives and examples from their countries, challenging local students to re-evaluate their realities and assumptions. The results indicate that instructing in culturally diverse classrooms in Spain cultivates an atmosphere characterised by dynamic engagement and the interchange of ideas. It encourages critical thinking and promotes cross-cultural understanding among students.

In conclusion, the interviews with academic faculty from different countries consistently underscored the advantages of teaching in multicultural classrooms. These benefits include personal growth, improved language skills, intercultural competence, adaptability in teaching methods, enhanced teaching practices, empathy, appreciation for diversity, and positive student impacts. The findings collectively indicate that teaching in multicultural classrooms provides lecturers an enriching and fulfilling experience, contributing to developing a more inclusive and globally aware educational environment.

Challenges

The challenges identified in Türkiye include students' difficulties acclimating to the lecturers' instructional approach, communication barriers arising from cultural disparities, and the need for cultivating a more diverse international student cohort to mitigate specific difficulties. The lecturers cited language proficiency and cultural comprehension variances among international students as primary concerns. To address these challenges, the lecturers emphasized the importance of lecturers and students embracing globalization and refining their instructional strategies. The faculty members recognized the positive outcomes of including international students in the classroom, particularly in enhancing Turkish students' English language proficiency and study habits. However, challenges were acknowledged, such as accommodating more international students in preparatory programs with inflexible curricula and larger class sizes. The prominence of the language barrier surfaced as a significant concern impacting lecturers. The variations in English proficiency among students impeded efficient communication, hindered class discussions, and constrained the clear expression of ideas. Additionally, the necessity for cultural sensitivity in instructing multicultural classrooms was underscored, emphasizing the importance of acknowledging diverse cultural norms and fostering an all-encompassing learning environment.

In Belgium, lecturers articulated the significance of fostering interactions among students from diverse cultural backgrounds to bolster cross-cultural comprehension. Challenges were encountered in tailoring the class content to captivate students with varying levels of background knowledge. Furthermore, the discrepancies in grading systems and academic expectations across different countries were identified as potential factors contributing to student dissatisfaction.

The lecturers in Romania acknowledged the significance of augmenting the presence of international students to prepare the younger generation for a multicultural society. Nonetheless, some lecturers believed that this endeavor would introduce challenges to their pedagogical approaches. The recurrence of language barriers was highlighted as an issue, underscoring the imperative of ensuring that all students comprehensively understand the lecture topics.

In Bulgaria, various challenges were associated with students' expectations, preconceptions, and local culture and customs adjustment. Some international students encountered difficulties related to organizational and administrative matters, necessitating supplementary support. In response, lecturers endeavored to foster engagement and motivation among international students by offering personalized assistance and a flexible approach to their academic needs.

In the Czech Republic, the faculty encountered challenges with teamwork and instances of academic dishonesty exhibited by some international students. Despite these difficulties, the positive aspect of diversity was duly acknowledged and recognized as an area warranting support and nurturing.

In the Spanish context, the challenges encompass effectively managing classes with a higher proportion of international students than local students, the potential risk of excluding local students, language limitations faced by educators teaching in English, and disparities in cultural norms concerning learning and approaching assignments. Lecturers emphasized the importance of establishing effective communication channels with international students and adapting student services to cater to their needs.

The interviews provide insight into the challenges of teaching in multicultural classrooms, encompassing language barriers, cultural diversity, and differing educational backgrounds among international students. Nonetheless, the research also underscores the favorable influence of a diverse learning environment, underscoring the significance of promoting inclusivity and fostering mutual understanding among students from diverse cultural backgrounds.

Mechanisms

In Türkiye, lecturers have identified the necessity for official support mechanisms tailored to address the challenges encountered in diverse educational settings. They have proposed additional remuneration and academic incentives for lecturers delivering English courses to motivate effective teaching. Furthermore, promoting extracurricular social activities has been highlighted as a valuable strategy to encourage interactions among multicultural students. These findings underscore the significance of establishing support structures that recognize and address the distinctive needs of multicultural classrooms. During the interviews, lecturers also expressed the absence of reliable support mechanisms explicitly designed for teaching in multicultural classrooms. However, they acknowledged, for instance, the presence of the Centre for Innovative Teaching and Learning as a helpful resource, particularly for international faculty. Nevertheless, it was commonly observed that sufficient training opportunities focusing on enhancing multicultural competencies were lacking. This highlights the critical need for comprehensive training programs that equip academic staff with the necessary skills to navigate multicultural teaching environments effectively. The interviews with lecturers unveiled language barriers as a prominent concern. Notably, the challenges faced by students lacking proficiency in English or Turkish were emphasized, as it significantly impacted their comprehension of lectures and hindered active participation in class discussions. Moreover, the absence of training in intercultural understanding was recognized as a contributing factor to difficulties in effectively addressing the academic requirements of international students.

In Belgium, lecturers highlighted insufficient institutional support, with certain teachers expressing a lack of interest in undergoing training or instructional activities. The active involvement of some lecturers in institution-led initiatives demonstrated a positive inclination towards interactive training. The interviews highlight the significance of devising tailor-made training programs that actively engage lecturers by providing them with resources to improve their pedagogical competence in multicultural classrooms.

In Romania, lecturers acknowledged the existence of specific university-supported mechanisms. The institution offers opportunities for faculty mobility, encompassing English training courses, and grants access to diverse teaching materials. However, the lecturers also noted a considerable gap in specialized training addressing the challenges of teaching multicultural classes. Additionally, the interviews demonstrate the value of integration programs for international students, which include language learning initiatives and opportunities for engagement with Romanian peers.

Conversely, the interviews conducted in the Czech Republic shed light on the limited presence of formal university mechanisms supporting lecturers in multicultural teaching environments. Despite general training on pedagogical methods, specialized training is lacking to address specific instructional needs in multicultural contexts. Furthermore, the discussions accentuated the significance placed on integration programs for international students, stressing the importance of fostering an inclusive environment conducive to nurturing a sense of belonging among diverse students.

USJ faculty members in Spain are granted access to a Content Language Integrated Learning training program. This program has proven beneficial in facilitating instruction within multicultural classrooms. This program has proven advantageous in promoting the education of multicultural classes. However, most teaching staff needed more pedagogical support and training focused on intercultural courses and classroom diversity. Additionally, they suggested the need for more intercultural communication training to cater to students' diverse learning styles based on cultural backgrounds. These findings underline the importance of providing comprehensive training and support to teaching staff to address multicultural classrooms' needs effectively.

Overall, the findings from these interviews indicate a clear need for improved institutional support, targeted training programs, and integration initiatives to create inclusive and culturally responsive learning environments in multicultural classrooms.

Needs

The interviews in Türkiye emphasize the significance of cultural competence for teaching in multicultural classrooms. Understanding diverse cultures and gaining insights through travel experiences can enhance lecturers' ability to create inclusive classroom environments. Recognizing that language proficiency alone is insufficient for effective teaching in foreign language courses aligns with research supporting the importance of communication beyond linguistic skills. The identified need for training in effective communication, consensus-building, assessment techniques, and intercultural conflict resolution underscores the importance of promoting positive classroom dynamics and managing conflicts in diverse educational settings. Moreover, the emphasis on adaptability skills and fostering an environment of empathy aligns with research highlighting the role of flexibility and compassion in addressing students' diverse needs and perspectives.

The findings in Belgium suggest that while some teachers appreciate training opportunities, others may not perceive training as essential. However, the openness to training indicates the importance of practical and engaging approaches to teacher professional development.

The need for essential skills such as language proficiency, cultural awareness, empathy, patience, active listening, and confidence resonates with research highlighting these competencies' significance in Romania's multicultural classrooms. The varied opinions on the need for training indicate the importance of catering to individual preferences and needs. The suggestion for training led by experienced instructors and incorporating examples from international settings aligns with the benefits of contextually relevant and culturally sensitive training programs.

The emphasis on good communication skills, language proficiency, open-mindedness, and cultural acceptance corresponds with research supporting these competencies for teaching in multicultural classrooms in Bulgaria. Recognizing the importance of flexibility and adaptability in teaching aligns with the significance of catering to diverse student needs and learning styles.

The emphasis on well-mastered language, insight, patience, and treating all individuals equally underscores the importance of effective communication and inclusivity in multicultural classrooms in the Czech Republic. The expressed need for training in multiculturalism and teaching in different cultures highlights the importance of providing comprehensive professional development for lecturers. The regular feedback and discussions with students indicate a positive classroom environment and an openness to incorporating student input into teaching practices.

The identified need in Spain for more training in intercultural pedagogies, managing mixed cultures in group work, and improving English proficiency aligns with research emphasizing the importance of intercultural competence and language skills for teaching in multicultural settings.

Overall, the findings from these interviews emphasize the significance of cultural competence, effective communication, flexibility, and empathy for successful teaching in multicultural classrooms. The expressed need for targeted training and support highlights the importance of continuous professional development to address diverse educational environments' unique challenges and requirements.

Student Experience

Individual experience and approaches

The common themes and perspectives from the interviews with students from Türkiye, Spain, Romania, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, and Belgium indicate several positive aspects of studying in multicultural classrooms across different countries. These common themes can be summarized as follows:

1. Enhanced Language Skills and Cultural Exchange: Students from all countries valued the opportunity to interact with classmates from various countries, as it enhanced their language skills and provided valuable cultural exchange experiences. The exposure to different languages and diverse perspectives in the classroom contributed to their personal growth and motivated them to excel in their studies.

2. Supportive Lecturers and Engaging Learning Environment: The students universally praised the teaching staff for their open-mindedness, adaptability, and friendliness. It has been emphasized that lecturers try to mitigate language and cultural differences among international students through various activities to foster integration and create a positive classroom environment.

3. Advantages of Exploring Different Cultures: Engaging in multicultural classrooms enables students to acquire specialised knowledge concerning various countries and cultures, nurturing a sense of acceptance and open-mindedness towards diverse perspectives. This enriching educational encounter transcends theoretical learning, providing students with valuable experiential insights.

4. Experiential Learning and Personal Growth: The students recognized the value of experiential learning about multicultural societies, which broadened their knowledge and led to re-evaluating their conceptions of the world. They appreciated the intrinsic value of getting to know other cultures and their contribution to their personal and professional development.

5. Challenges and Opportunities: Language and cultural differences were identified as significant challenges for international students. However, these challenges were also viewed as opportunities for personal development and language proficiency enhancement.

6. Personalized Support: The importance of personalized support from peers and faculty members in helping students navigate adaptation challenges in a multicultural environment was mentioned. Despite the obstacles, students reported a sense of motivation in their multicultural classrooms.

7. Efforts for Inclusive Ambience: Lecturers were observed employing diverse strategies to cultivate an inclusive ambience. Among these approaches, the most remarkable are assigning collaborative tasks, actively involving all students, and encouraging students to share their cultural backgrounds.

8. Lack of Institutional Support: Some students expressed the necessity for increased institutional assistance, particularly concerning practical matters such as accommodation and language courses.

Overall, the findings suggest that studying in multicultural classrooms offers numerous benefits for students, both academically and personally. While challenges must be addressed, students' positive experiences and transformative impact emphasise the importance of fostering inclusive and supportive environments in higher education institutions across the studied countries.

Benefits

The findings of the interviews in Türkiye underscore the significance of cultural exchange as a predominant and recurring theme among international students. Establishing friendships with peers from diverse nationalities brought them immense joy and facilitated language acquisition, improving proficiency in foreign languages. Their collective experience in a Turkish classroom fostered a cohesive atmosphere, contributing to their enjoyment. Exchanging amusing anecdotes during class activities further reinforced the cheerful ambience and played a pivotal role in forging meaningful connections among the students. Besides cultural exchange, exposure to different perspectives emerged as a substantial opportunity, broadening their worldviews and deepening their comprehension of diverse cultures and ideas. Language proficiency was recognized as a critical advantage, enabling access to resources in languages other than their own. Students highly valued interactive teaching methods, engaging in conversations and thought-provoking questions. They acknowledged the distinctive impact of these experiences on shaping their lives and recognized the advantage of possessing language skills and a multicultural background in future endeavors. Broadened perspectives and access to diverse resources were also identified as contributing factors to their personal and academic development. In conclusion, the interviews highlight primary opportunities for international students in multicultural classrooms, encompassing cultural exchange, exposure to diverse perspectives, networking, personal growth, and enhanced language skills.

Many students in Belgium appreciated the obligation to communicate in English as an excellent means to enhance their language skills, leading to improved proficiency. They recognized the importance of willingness to share in English for effective communication in the multicultural classroom, even with imperfect mastery. Adapting teachers' language and teaching methods to cater to different language levels was viewed positively, facilitating understanding and active participation. Cultural differences were regarded positively, motivating students to study abroad and enriching their educational experience. Exposure to diverse cultures and perspectives contributed to personal growth and an open-minded approach. The students highlighted the intrinsic value of learning about other cultures and recognized the significance of being open-minded, respectful, and possess good communication skills for a successful international experience. In conclusion, the findings emphasize the importance of creating a supportive and inclusive environment to enhance intercultural learning and promote personal growth and development for international students in Belgium's multicultural classrooms.

Evaluating the findings from student interviews in Romania underscores the numerous perceived advantages of studying in multicultural classrooms. These benefits encompass interactions with diverse cultures and traditions, learning about customs and cuisines, and honing language skills in English and Romanian. The exposure to varied perspectives and the opportunity to forge new friendships contribute to fostering a novel way of thinking. Additionally, engaging with international peers offers valuable insights into potential study and travel destinations, broadening horizons. Moreover, the diverse global pool of students enables information sharing on grants and scholarships, potentially benefiting students' career prospects. The students provided examples to substantiate these benefits further, citing cross-cultural understanding through storytelling, cultural learning at school-organized events, improved language

proficiency through interactions with students from different countries, and enhanced problem-solving abilities through collaborative exercises with classmates from diverse backgrounds. The overall findings emphasize the positive impact of multicultural education on academic and personal growth, indicating the significance of promoting diversity and intercultural exchange to enrich the educational experience in Romanian institutions.

Learning a foreign language and interacting with diverse peers from different countries was highly advantageous in Bulgaria. Furthermore, the students appreciated the kind attitude of their peers, valuing the support received in such an environment. Collaborating with individuals from diverse religious and racial backgrounds was considered culturally enriching, with team cooperation particularly valued. The experience of working effectively with individuals from various backgrounds reinforced the importance of multicultural teamwork skills for real-world preparation. Multicultural teams offered students a platform to showcase their knowledge and abilities while gaining insights into others' cultures and perspectives. These findings underscore the transformative impact of multicultural education, promoting language proficiency, intercultural collaboration, and global perspectives, which, in turn, hold the potential to shape students' personal and professional growth positively.

The primary advantages identified by the students in the Czech Republic encompass language improvement, knowledge expansion, and exposure to diverse perspectives in a different educational environment. The significance of building a network and advancing social capital through interactions with classmates from various backgrounds is acknowledged. The students value the platform for asking questions, sharing ideas, and exchanging experiences and traditions from their respective countries, thus enriching the learning environment with diverse knowledge and cultures. Adapting to individuals from different countries is a valuable learning experience that fosters exposure to new information and insights about various nations. Participating in discussions with classmates is particularly appreciated as it enhances their understanding of multiple perspectives and facilitates learning how to conduct interviews and consider different viewpoints in the focus group discussion course. These findings underscore the plethora of opportunities for personal and academic growth offered by studying in multicultural classrooms, highlighting the vital role of diverse perspectives and cross-cultural interactions in enriching the learning experience.

The students in Spain unanimously view this educational setting as instrumental in achieving enhanced learning outcomes and improved academic performance. They acknowledge the challenges of diverse perspectives, which stimulate effective communication and articulate their viewpoints. Additionally, the students appreciate the distinctive teaching methods that priorities practical applications over traditional approaches prevalent in their home countries. The prospect of studying abroad is exciting, as they recognize the potential to augment their curriculum vitae and enhance future career prospects. This enthusiasm for international experiences is evidenced by their participation in volunteer programs in Africa during the summer and plans for future study-abroad opportunities. The overall findings accentuate the positive impact of multicultural classrooms in fostering intellectual growth, intercultural communication skills, and a keen desire for further global experiences among the students.

Challenges

The evaluation of the interviews with students in Türkiye highlights a prominent focus on the challenges arising from the language barrier in multicultural classroom settings. The participants consistently expressed difficulties comprehending lectures, interacting with peers, and perceiving potential inequalities when courses were conducted in the local language instead of English. Nonetheless, it is essential to recognize that some participants also acknowledged the positive aspects of exposure to diverse cultures and languages, particularly regarding the potential benefits of language proficiency and intercultural understanding among Turkish and international students. Furthermore, the participants stressed the urgent need for enhanced support systems within the academic environment. They emphasized the importance of establishing mechanisms to provide emotional support, regular well-being check-ins, and comprehensive guidance and orientation programs tailored specifically for international students. Addressing these needs is crucial, especially during the initial stages of their educational journey when students might experience homesickness or a lack of guidance. In addition, the participants highlighted the pivotal role of fostering a sense of connection and support. Creating an inclusive environment is deemed of utmost importance, and the participants advocated for adopting policies that actively promote diversity and inclusivity. Encouraging English-taught classes emerged as one such initiative to facilitate the active involvement of international students. Moreover, raising awareness among local students about the inherent benefits of multicultural classroom environments can foster mutual understanding and collaboration among students from diverse backgrounds. Overall, the participants' perspectives underscore

the significance of addressing language barriers, enhancing support systems, and promoting inclusive policies to create a more enriching and supportive academic environment for international students in Turkish universities.

Evaluating students' challenges in multicultural classrooms in Belgium highlights critical issues impacting their educational experiences. Firstly, language variations and barriers, particularly in English proficiency, pose significant hurdles to effective communication and comprehension of academic content among students and teachers. Secondly, while cultural differences are generally regarded positively, they present challenges in adapting to diverse customs, habits, and teaching methods, necessitating greater cross-cultural awareness and understanding. Thirdly, the lack of institutional support, including limited assistance with practical matters such as housing and language support and insufficient orientation programs, hinders the smooth integration of international students. Addressing these challenges is imperative, and it calls for enhanced language support initiatives, cross-cultural training, and comprehensive institutional assistance to foster a more inclusive and supportive learning environment for international students in Belgian universities.

Evaluating the challenges students face in multicultural classrooms in Romania highlights several key themes. Notably, around half of the students expressed the language barrier, encompassing accents, as a substantial challenge that required efforts to overcome. Cultural differences and misunderstandings were frequently cited, with some students feeling intimidated during public speaking and perceiving certain classmates as impolite. Coping with unfamiliar study methods emerged as another noteworthy challenge. All students agreed that increasing the number of international students in the classroom was not a personal challenge; instead, they saw it as an opportunity for enriched learning, seamless integration into university life, and a sense of belonging within the international community.

Evaluating the findings from the interviews with international students in Bulgaria highlights several significant challenges in promoting diversity and multiculturalism. Language issues and false expectations emerge as prominent barriers. International students express communication difficulties as they form separate groups, hindering interaction with others. Language barriers further complicate communication within multicultural classrooms due to diverse linguistic backgrounds. Additionally, international students report experiencing racism, discrimination, and a lack of understanding, leading to slow integration and feelings of worthlessness. Instances of discrimination prompt initial negative responses, but students come to recognize the limitations of changing others' attitudes. Language barriers also impact academic performance, with students struggling to comprehend learning content.

Language barriers emerged as a prominent and recurring challenge in the Czech Republic, leading to feelings of isolation and difficulty comprehending opinions expressed by classmates with limited language proficiency, particularly among students from Asia or the Czech Republic. The lack of participation in discussions by some international students further compounds this issue, hindering effective communication and collaboration. Students desired increased international representation at universities, acknowledging the valuable contributions of diverse perspectives and experiences. Notably, some students reflected on the absence of international students at their home universities and appreciated the multicultural experience in their current setting. In comparison, initial difficulties were encountered in understanding classmates with strong African accents, language comprehension improved, fostering better integration and forming meaningful friendships.

The evaluation of international students' experiences in Spain reveals contrasting perspectives based on their duration of stay. Short-stay students, primarily ERASMUS participants, reported feeling well-supported through institutional orientations that facilitated their integration into the university. Conversely, full-time international students pursuing their entire degree in Spain expressed dissatisfaction with the lack of support during their adaptation process. They experienced a sense of isolation and disorientation within the distinct academic system, resulting in feelings of being on their own and lost.

Mechanisms

Evaluating experiences in Türkiye reveals varying levels of institutional support and assistance for international students. Participants praised the university administrators and instructors for their unwavering commitment to promptly addressing student inquiries and concerns. The university's comprehensive orientation programs equipped students with essential knowledge for their academic journey and facilitated integration into the university environment. Similarly, students expressed gratitude for the support provided by the student affairs manager, who played a crucial role in facilitating administrative procedures. While some participants mentioned a lack of meaningful engagement with assigned mentors, they found valuable assistance from fellow international students, underscoring the significance of personal initiative in adapting to the multicultural environment. However, the orientation

events do not specifically address the unique challenges faced in multicultural classrooms. In contrast, interviews with some students revealed a dearth of well-defined support mechanisms for international students in specific departments and faculties. These students faced difficulties comprehending lectures in Turkish and encountered a scarcity of English-speaking professors, initially hindering their academic progress. Although student clubs and occasional orientation meetings were available, they did not consistently provide active and comprehensive measures to address international students' challenges in multicultural classrooms.

Evaluating the interviews conducted in Belgian multicultural classrooms reveals several important mechanisms concerning language and cultural differences. Firstly, students reported experiential learning about multicultural societies, gaining insights into different cultures, perspectives, and approaches. This led to personal growth and heightened awareness of society's multicultural nature, prompting a re-evaluation of their worldviews and studies. Secondly, students acknowledged the intrinsic value of encountering diverse cultures in the classroom, recognizing its significance in personal and professional development, promoting open-mindedness, respect for differing perspectives, and practical communication skills. Lastly, students expressed the need for improved institutional support, especially in practical aspects like housing and language assistance, advocating for providing refresher courses to enhance language skills.

The students cited various mechanisms in Romania, including international students' meetings, scholarships, and financial support, designated accommodations for international students, Erasmus mobilities, employment opportunities through meetings with companies and internship prospects, and the presence of a professor responsible for incoming international students. Additionally, free English lessons and a preparatory year to learn the basic Romanian language were mentioned as beneficial mechanisms. However, it is noteworthy that one student was unaware of any existing mechanisms. The responses were mixed regarding orientation and guidance for studying in multicultural classrooms. While half of the students denied receiving such support, the others mentioned several forms of orientation, such as an orientation conference, an information system, a guide to university life, and a preparatory course explicitly teaching students the Romanian language. While some faculties have implemented various mechanisms to support international students, there may be room for improvement in providing consistent orientation and guidance to help students adapt to studying in multicultural classrooms effectively. Establishing a standardized approach across the university can foster a more inclusive and supportive environment for all students, encouraging a successful academic journey for domestic and international students.

In Bulgaria, scholarships for international students play a pivotal role in attracting and supporting international talent and fostering a diverse academic community. The university management's organization and support of internships offer valuable experiential learning opportunities, facilitating international students' integration and professional growth. Active participation in programs such as Erasmus and other student exchange initiatives contributes to establishing well-structured and functioning multicultural classrooms, facilitating intercultural engagement and broadening students' perspectives. On a practical level, the provision of newly equipped student dormitories enhances the living conditions for many international students, creating a conducive and supportive environment throughout their academic journey.

The students in the Czech Republic appreciated various activities, such as orientation weeks and excursions, for their role in promoting social interaction and a sense of belonging. Additionally, they valued the availability of study administration support and opportunities to participate in summer schools, exchange programs, conferences, and international projects. Financial assistance for research, access to a psychologist, sports facilities on campus, and food services in the university canteen were also well-regarded. However, the students expressed a need for more orientation and guidance tailored to navigating multicultural classrooms, suggesting room for improvement. While they felt confident in English-taught classes within the university, they encountered language barriers outside the campus.

Evaluating students' experiences in Spain reveals a consensus among the participants regarding the extensive support they have received, and the orientation days received particular praise for their effectiveness, explicitly highlighting the session addressing cultural shock and the adaptation process. There is a perceived need for additional support tailored to the unique requirements of full-time international students.

Needs

The evaluation of the interviews in Türkiye reveals crucial factors for success in multicultural classrooms. Language proficiency is vital for meaningful communication with diverse peers, particularly in English. Participants emphasized the importance of language support programs for non-native speakers. Open-mindedness and a genuine embrace of various cultures were fundamental for navigating multicultural

environments. Empathy, respect for diverse backgrounds, and cultural sensitivity were indispensable for effective intercultural communication. Participants advocated for university policies promoting diversity and inclusivity, including English as the medium of instruction and mechanisms for reporting classes conducted solely in local languages. Through well-being assessments and psychological services, emotional support was emphasized to combat feelings of isolation.

In Belgium, students stress the significance of language proficiency, particularly in English, in multicultural classrooms. Students' varying English language skills emphasize the need for language support programs, particularly for non-native speakers. According to interview results, cultural understanding and adaptability are fundamental attributes for navigating multicultural settings effectively. Students view cultural differences positively, recognizing them as opportunities for personal growth and learning. Open-mindedness and adaptability are deemed essential for fostering effective intercultural communication.

Furthermore, the multicultural classroom provides experiential learning, motivating students to study abroad. Encounters with diverse contexts and perspectives contribute to personal and academic development. The intrinsic value of meeting different cultures is emphasized, as it plays a vital role in personal and societal development. Students stress the importance of questioning one's beliefs and frame of reference, especially for future research endeavours. Finally, participants express a need for increased institutional support, particularly in practical matters. The demand for a refresher course in English underscores the importance of comprehensive language support programs.

The evaluation of students' responses on orientation and guidance for studying in multicultural classrooms in Romania reveals a mixed experience, with half of the students reporting not having received any orientation and the other half mentioning various forms of orientation, such as conferences, information systems, guides, and language preparatory courses. Language skills, mainly English proficiency, emerged as essential for success in multicultural classrooms, alongside communication skills, open-mindedness, tolerance, and patience, which were recognized unanimously by the students. The findings emphasize the importance of providing comprehensive orientation and support for students in multicultural educational settings to enhance their academic experiences and promote intercultural interactions. Moreover, students expressed the need for additional support from colleagues and suggested scheduling non-overlapping international students' meetings, courses on culture and confidence-building, and individual language lessons in Romanian.

The findings from the interviews with students in multicultural environments in Bulgaria reveal the paramount importance of practical communication skills, particularly the ability to speak a foreign language. Students emphasise the need for language courses and orientation materials to facilitate integration. Presenting themselves at the beginning of courses is a beneficial practice addressing specific multicultural class requirements. The interviews also emphasize the value of accepting students from diverse countries and promoting empathy, tolerance, and understanding to create a welcoming and inclusive environment. Mental support is identified as crucial, given that international students often feel isolated and misunderstood due to language barriers and cultural differences. Teachers are expected to demonstrate empathy, understanding, and patience, viewing language challenges as opportunities rather than obstacles. The overall emphasis is on fostering a supportive educational environment that values effective communication, language proficiency, and empathy to ensure the successful academic journey and integration of international students into the community.

The findings from the interviews with students in multicultural classrooms in the Czech Republic reflect the importance of essential skills and competencies necessary for success in such environments. Proficiency in English, flexibility, respect for diverse cultures, patience, and empathy were vital attributes. While students expressed overall satisfaction with the university's offerings, they provided valuable feedback on areas for improvement. Recommendations included English language improvement courses, more information on practical training opportunities, and support from student ambassadors and extracurricular activities to aid their academic journey. The suggestion to create a discussion forum for students to engage in meaningful discussions resembles practices in UK universities.

The students in Spain emphasized the importance of group work, flexibility, effective communication, and the willingness to step out of one's comfort zone. They also recognized the significance of institutional support, such as access to the international office and guidance from advisors, in navigating the complexities of a multicultural educational environment. Moreover, the students engaged in a comparative analysis between their local university's educational system and the university.

Results, Conclusions and Recommendations

The synthesis of conclusions from the interviews in Turkey, Belgium, Romania, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, and Spain illuminates several shared themes and fundamental aspects of the internationalization of higher education in the context of multicultural classrooms.

A prevailing observation in all the countries is the consistent acknowledgement of language proficiency in English as a pivotal determinant in successful internationalization endeavors. English is universally recognized as the primary medium of instruction for incoming students, prompting efforts to address disparities in language competency among students and faculty to ensure effective communication and knowledge acquisition.

Celebrating and appreciating cultural diversity emerge as a shared ethos in all countries. The experience of being exposed to diverse cultures and perspectives in multicultural classrooms is inherently valued as an intrinsic aspect of studying abroad, fostering personal development and an enriched understanding of multicultural societies.

Another shared concern centers around the provision of institutional support for international students. Participants across the studies advocate for augmenting orientation programs, disseminating comprehensive information, and establishing support mechanisms to facilitate the transition of international students into their new academic environment.

Challenges related to cultural differences and language barriers are acknowledged across all countries, underscoring the imperative of cultivating cultural sensitivity, adaptability, and intercultural communication skills among lecturers and students alike.

Efforts to create inclusive and nurturing academic environments for international students are emphasized in all countries. Lecturers in multicultural classrooms endeavor to establish inclusive learning settings that foster open dialogues and cultivate intercultural competence among students.

The significance of training and professional development for lecturers engaged in multicultural classrooms is highlighted, with recommendations for compulsory observation periods abroad and exchange programs to enhance cultural understanding and promote inclusive educational practices.

After an exhaustive analysis of diverse interviews, this research advances a compilation of recommended training courses deemed imperative for instruction to ameliorate the efficacy of multicultural classrooms.

1. Cultural Awareness, Sensitivity, and Competence:

Enhancing multicultural classrooms necessitates a thorough understanding of cultural awareness, sensitivity, and competence. Educators must acquire knowledge about global issues, diverse educational systems, and sociocultural landscapes of various countries to foster a global mindset and intercultural awareness. To support international students, an orientation and integration program can be designed that effectively conveys information about the host country's education and examination systems. Cultivating an appreciation for students' beliefs and practices is essential, creating an environment valuing diversity and encouraging respect for different perspectives. Establishing a welcoming and inclusive learning environment is imperative, ensuring that all students, irrespective of their cultural backgrounds, feel comfortable, accepted, and encouraged to participate fully.

2. Effective Intercultural Communication Skills:

Within the milieu of a multicultural educational environment, the cultivation of robust intercultural communicative competencies assumes paramount significance. The ability to adeptly navigate diverse cultural landscapes necessitates educators' cultivation of verbal and nonverbal communicative proficiencies. This aptitude for communication demands a directed emphasis on the comprehension and mitigation of cultural misconceptions, adeptly navigating a plethora of linguistic accents, and fostering productive discourse among students in the context of culturally diverse classrooms. At the core of these efforts lies the encouragement of effective communicative methodologies and the deliberate utilization of instructional methodologies that appropriately acknowledge the diverse cultural underpinnings of students.

3. Cross-cultural Adaptation and Culturally Sensitive Instruction:

Teachers must employ pedagogical methodologies attuned to diverse cultural contexts and cross-cultural adjustments to optimize the educational encounter within multicultural instructional settings. To achieve this objective, the adjustment of pedagogic techniques to align with the requisites of students encompassing a spectrum of cultural origins becomes imperative. Moreover, this undertaking involves the adaptation of instructional blueprints, illustrative instances, and teaching approaches to resonate with students' cultural heritage. Furthermore, establishing a multicultural learning milieu that augments the educational content and engrosses students from variegated cultural backgrounds necessitates the incorporation of multifarious cultural outlooks into the curriculum.

4. Strategies for Overcoming Language Barriers:

In multicultural classroom environments, a convergence of students possessing varying degrees of linguistic aptitude is commonplace. Targeted strategies need to be employed to surmount the challenges posed by language impediments. Teachers play a pivotal role in assisting students exhibiting diverse levels of language proficiency while also establishing protocols for addressing language barriers that may arise between students and lecturers. To facilitate efficacious information exchange and enhance comprehension, pedagogical methodologies must be enhanced to incorporate the nuances of linguistic and cultural diversity.

5. Conflict Resolution Strategies and Mediation:

In multicultural classrooms, effective conflict resolution strategies and mediation techniques are indispensable. Educators should acquire skills and techniques to manage conflicts and defuse intercultural tensions. Facilitating dialogue, promoting mutual understanding, and creating a positive and inclusive environment is critical to managing conflicts. Equipping educators with the ability to handle misunderstandings, mediate disputes, and employ negotiation techniques contributes significantly to maintaining a harmonious and productive multicultural learning environment.

6. Support Mechanisms and Incentives:

Sustaining successful multicultural classrooms requires the establishment of robust support mechanisms and incentives. Educational institutions must devise ongoing support systems tailored to the unique needs of multicultural classrooms. This entails providing academic staff with practical guidelines to navigate the challenges of teaching in such environments effectively. Offering remuneration and incentives for educators teaching in multicultural classrooms acknowledges the additional efforts required and incentivizes their commitment. Utilizing international student centers strategically can further contribute to problem-solving, fostering a sense of belonging, and enhancing the overall quality of multicultural education within universities.

In conclusion, the findings from these national reports collectively signify a shared dedication among the countries to foster inclusive and supportive environments for international students. Language proficiency, cultural understanding, and institutional support stand as pivotal pillars in the pursuit of successful internationalization efforts. Recognizing the importance of internationalization in the context of the global knowledge society is evident, prompting universities to navigate the challenges and seize the opportunities of an interconnected and diverse world. The insights garnered from these national reports hold significant value in shaping the future trajectory of higher education internationalization both within Europe and beyond.

Acknowledgement

References

Aronson, E., & Gonzalez, A. (1988). Desegregation, jigsaw, and the Mexican-American experience. In P. A. Katz & D. A. Taylor (Eds.), *Eliminating racism: Profiles in controversy* (pp. 301-314). Boston, MA: Springer US.

Banks, J. A. (1993a). Multicultural education: Development, dimensions, and challenges. *The Phi Delta Kappan*, *75*(1), 22-28.

Banks, J. A. (1993b). Multicultural education: Historical development, dimensions, and practice. *Review of research in education*, *19*, 3-49.

Banks, J. A. (1994). An Introduction to Multicultural Education. Seattle: Allyn & Bacon.

Banks, J. A. (1994). *An Introduction to multicultural education.* Seattle: Allyn & Bacon.

Banks, J. A. (2010). Multicultural education: Characteristics and goals. In J. A. Banks & C. A. M. Banks (Eds.), *Multicultural Education Issues and Perspectives* (pp. 3-30). Boston: Wiley.

Banks, J. A. (2016). *Cultural diversity and education: Foundations, curriculum, and teaching* (6th ed.). Routledge.

Bennett, C. I. (2009). *Comprehensive Multicultural Education: Theory and practice.* Pearson.

Creswell, J. W., & Plano Clark, V. L. (2011). Designing and conducting mixed method research (2nd ed.). Sage.

Ford, D. Y. (1995). Counselling gifted African American students: Promoting achievement, identity, and social and emotional well-being. University of Connecticut, The National Research Centre on the Gifted and Talented.

Gay, G. (2010). *Culturally Responsive Teaching: Theory, research, and Practice.* Teachers College Press.

Hsieh, H. F., & Shannon, S. E. (2005). Three approaches to qualitative content analysis. *Qualitative health research*, *15*(9), 1277-1288.

lsubaie, M. A. (2015). Examples of current issues in the multicultural classroom. *Journal of Education and Practice,* 6(10), 86-89.

Maxwell, J. A., & Miller, B. A. (2008). Categorizing and connecting strategies in qualitative data analysis. In P. Leavy, & S. Hesse-Biber (Eds.) *Handbook of emergent methods* (pp. 461-477). New York: Guilford Press.

Nelson, M. (2003). Multicultural education: Using Penn State's teacher education performance framework to help education students develop a multicultural perspective. *Penn State McNair Journal*, *10*(1), 235-246. Available at: https://gradschool.psu.edu/diversity/mcnair/papers2003/taliaferropdf/.

Nieto, S. (2000). *Affirming Diversity: The Socio-Political Context of Multicultural Education.* Longman.

Nieto, S. (2013). *Finding joy in teaching students of diverse backgrounds: Culturally responsive and socially just practices in U.S. Classrooms*. Heinemann.

Palinkas, L. A., Horwitz, S. M., Green, C. A., Wisdom, J. P., Duan, N., & Hoagwood, K. (2015). Purposeful Sampling for Qualitative Data Collection and Analysis in Mixed Method Implementation Research. *Administration and Policy in Mental Health*, 42(5), 533-544. doi:10.1007/s10488-013-0528-y.

Sleeter, C. E. (2001). Preparing teachers for culturally diverse schools: Research and the overwhelming presence of whiteness. *Journal of teacher education*, *52*(2), 94-106.

Sleeter, C. E., & Grant, C. A. (2009). *Making choices for multicultural education: Five approaches to race, class and gender*: John Wiley & Sons.

Solórzano, D. G., & Yosso, T. J. (2002). Critical Race Methodology: Counter-Storytelling as an Analytical Framework for Education Research. *Qualitative Inquiry,* 8(1), 23–44. https://doi.org/10.1177/107780040200800103.

Thompson, A. (2020). The benefits of diversity education. What every school leader should know. In J. B. Cuseo, A. Thompson, & H. M. Barber (Eds.), *Implementing Innovative Leadership in an Inclusive Learning Environment* (pp. 21-34). Kendall Hunt Publishing.

Trochim, W. M. (2006). Research methods knowledge base. Available at: https://www.socialresearchmethods.net/kb/reliablt.php.

Vavrus, M. (1994). A critical analysis of multicultural education infusion during student teaching. *Action in Teacher Education*, *16*(3), 46-57.