

Perceptions of Peace: Human Rights and Citizenship Education in Turkey



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Antonia Mandry
Doctoral Candidate
Teachers College, Columbia University
adm2129@columbia.edu



Introduction

Whereas recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world,

Preamble, UDHR

- ◆ UDHR (1948) explicitly enjoins states to educate for human rights (Article 26, 2).
- ◆ *The intersection of citizenship and human rights:* Shifting concepts of identity, both globally and in Turkey, range from a nationally-bound concept of citizen to a transnational concept of individual identity with attendant human rights.
- ◆ Taking a look at Turkish education as a whole, three major paradigms of education have emerged to address the role of the individual in the state, in the world and in their community
 - ◆ Citizenship Education
 - ◆ Human Rights Education
 - ◆ Social Responsibility*

Context: Education for Human Rights and Citizenship

Tertiary

- variety of courses available
- dependent on the individual university

Secondary

- Democracy and Human Rights; elective
- National Security Course; required

Primary

- Citizenship and Human Rights
- required course

Snapshot on Primary & Secondary

- Citizenship Education and the National Security Course (1923)
- Human Rights Education Committee (1998-2007)
- Government recommendation for civic involvement projects (2005)

Snapshot on Tertiary

Site	Ankara	Bilgi	Sabancı
Course Title	Human Rights Education	Social Responsibility	Civic Involvement Project
Type	Elective; 1 semester	Elective; 1 semester +	Mandatory, 2 semesters
Framework	HRE	HRE	Mixed
# of Sts	50	100	900+
Age	Undergraduates in education	Undergraduates	Undergraduates; generally 1 st years
Institution Type	State	Private	Private
Transmission Type	T → Sts	T → Sts	Sts → Sts

Research Context

- ❖ Sabanci University and the Civic Involvement Project (CIP)
 - ❖ How does it work?



The Study

- ◆ Study the students and teachers at a given university which offers creative academic approaches to teaching about human rights and citizenship.
- ◆ Examine the perceptions of human rights and citizenship knowledge and skills in this educational community.
 - ◆ Administer a questionnaire in which students can respond to a fictional scenario gauging perceptions of human rights and citizenship.
 - ◆ Engage them in conversations about themselves and these concepts in relation to them personally, academically/professionally and theoretically.
 - ◆ Observe them engaging with each other about these topics.

Researcher: Antonia Mandry
adm2129@columbia.edu
0541 574 8500

QUESTIONNAIRE: STUDENTS

English Version

Student Name: _____ Date: _____
University: _____ Email Address: _____

The Story

You will read an imaginary story, but pretend that it is real. Be honest in your opinions and responses to the story's questions. In this story, 1000 different people from all over the world have decided to move to a deserted island in the middle of an ocean in order to create a new community. These individuals all have different opinions, backgrounds, and experiences. In this questionnaire, you will be introduced to different problems and issues that the new island community has been discussing about how their new community would work. The most interesting thing here is what kind of solutions you would suggest to the given situations; in general, what your opinions are regarding each question. There are no right or wrong answers! Please, read carefully and answer all questions honestly. If you need clarification, ask for help!

1. Some people were talking how laws were necessary and others believe in freedom. What is your opinion, is it necessary to have some laws or not (check one answer)?
 It is necessary to have some laws.
 It would be good, but it is not necessary.
 It should be just a few most basic laws.
 No laws are necessary.

2. Later, one person said that only some people should have to follow the laws, but not others. What is your opinion, is it everyone have to follow the laws or not (check one answer)?
 Everyone should follow the laws without exception.
 It would be good, but depending on what law is broken, it should not be punished too severely. For example, if someone is hungry and steals food, this should not be punished too much.
 The laws should be only followed if they are good laws, and that depends on each person's personal opinion.

3. What do you think, is it sometimes acceptable to break the law? Yes No
Explain your opinion:

4. "Only those who work harder should have the right to vote," said one of the island community.

Major Themes

- ◆ Core concepts of human rights understood in a Turkish context: dignity and *namus*;
- ◆ Volunteerism as help; coming from the Turkish word “gonullugu” meaning “with the heart”
- ◆ Duties versus Rights
- ◆ Voting as an elite right
- ◆ The impact of the 1980 military coup on civic participation and the depoliticization of civil society

Expansion: Duties and Rights

- ◆ Students discuss citizenship and human rights:
 - ◆ Words occurring with frequency when talking about *citizenship*
 - ◆ Duty, responsibility, have to
 - ◆ Words occurring with frequency when talking about *human rights*
 - ◆ Rights, universal
 - ◆ Rights & Responsibilities are taught as something separate and not joined
- ◆ When asked to expand on their ideas, Turkish students talk about what it means to be a Turkish citizen:
 - ◆ “Askerlik olması zorunlu” – “You have to do military service.”
 - ◆ “Türkçe konuşması gereklidir” – “You have to speak Turkish.”
 - ◆ Several students expressed discomfort with this; they knew that there were people born and raised in Turkey who did not fit these criteria.

Expansion: *Namus* and human dignity

- “When I start each class [every semester], I start with a discussion of human dignity ... Because they don’t understand.” (Participant BUi014)
- “It’s bad ... Because it’s an issue of health.” (Participant SUs1019) *in response to a primary student claiming that sexual abuse is bad because it effects the victim’s namus*
- “What is it?” (Participant SUs1023) *when asked what they understood by human dignity*

Expansion: Volunteer and *Gönüllüğü*

Expansion: *Eşitlik* and Equality

Expansion: The Threat of Violence

- ◆ When students and educators mention use the word “darbe” [coup], they are almost always referring to the 1980 coup that stopped factional violence between leftists and rightists. If they say “dARBeler” [the coups], they are referring to the 1980 coup and the coup of 199?.
- ◆ “My uncles was executed because of his involvement [in the a leftist political group].” (BUi00?)
- ◆ “My grandfather was arrested” (SUs1111)
- ◆ “You know the *darbe*? ... (SUs1009)

Expansion: *Şımarık*, an Awareness of Privilege

- “I’m lucky, I’m happy, I have my family, I have money...” (SUs1109)
- “Here [on campus at the university] is different [it’s better], but on İstiklal Caddesi ... I’m not comfortable.” (SUs1054)

Thank you

- ❖ Words like *freedom, justice, democracy* are not common concepts; on the contrary, they are rare. People are not born knowing what these are. It takes enormous and, above all, individual effort to arrive at the respect for other people that these words imply. (James Baldwin, 1985, p. 156)
- ❖ Antonia Mandry
 - ❖ adm2129@columbia.edu

Questions for Discussion

- ◆ In Turkey, we have seen the education system take a very limited approach to the notion of citizenship as per an individual-state relationship. How do you see the relationship between human rights and citizenship, and the education for each, in your own countries?
- ◆ What may be the conceptual challenges to educating for human rights in a culture of *namus* (honour) rather than *human dignity*?
- ◆ The Sabanci CIP model is taking different forms throughout Turkey and at different education levels. Are there similar models in your country? And what form are they taking?