HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE DEMOCRACY IN THREE WORDS? PROSPECTIVE TEACHERS' UNDERSTANDING OF THE CONCEPT OF DEMOCRACY

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ABSTRACT

In successful democracies, teachers are expected to display strong support to and have knowledge about democracy, and show of democratic attitudes. However, little is known about how prospective teachers understand and describe democracy. This research is intended to disclose the perceptions of teacher candidates on the concepts of democracy. Teachers' and prospective teachers' understanding of the concept of democracy, which will affect how future generations think about the democracy, have been subject to many researches. This paper reports on a study of the ideological beliefs of 234 teacher candidates, who took pedagogical formation in Çankırı Karatekin University during the period of 2016-2017. Teacher candidates were asked two open-ended question and three rating questions in order to understand their conceptualization of democracy. Frequencies and percentages are calculated on the data. The data were analyzed by content analysis method. The research revealed that prospective teachers describe democracy with the concepts of justice, freedom and equality.

Keywords: The perception of democracy, the conceptualization of democracy, the democratic society, the obstacles behind democracy, prospective teachers.

DEMOKRASİYİ ÜÇ KELİMEYLE NASIL TANIMLARSINIZ? ADAY ÖĞRETMENLERİN DEMOKRASİ KAVRAMI ANLAYIŞI

ÖZET

Başarılı demokrasilerde, öğretmenlerin demokrasi ve demokratik tutumlar hakkında bilgi sahibi olmaları ve bunları desteklemeleri beklenmektedir. Ancak, öğretmen adaylarının demokrasiyi nasıl anladıkları ve tanımladıkları hakkında çok az şey bilinmektedir. Bu araştırma, öğretmen adaylarının demokrasi kavramlarına ilişkin algılarını açıklamayı amaçlamaktadır. Öğretmenlerin ve öğretmen adaylarının, gelecek nesillerin demokrasi hakkında nasıl düşündüklerini etkileyecek demokrasi kavramını anlamaları birçok araştırmaya konu olmuştur. Bu çalışmada, Çankırı Karatekin Üniversitesi'nde pedagojik formasyon alan 234 öğretmen adayının bakış açıları incelenmiştir. Öğretmen adaylarının demokrasi kavramından ne anladıkları ortaya çıkarmak için iki açık uçlu soru ve üç derecelendirme sorusu sorulmuştur. Veriler üzerinde frekanslar ve yüzdeler hesaplanmıştır. Veriler içerik analizi yöntemi ile analiz edilmiştir. Araştırma, öğretmen adaylarının demokrasiyi adalet, özgürlük ve eşitlik kavramlarıyla betimlediklerini ortaya koymuştur.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Demokrasi anlayışı, demokrasinin kavramsallaşması, demokratik toplum, demokrasinin önündeki engeller, öğretmen adayları.

1.Introduction

Democracy created by two words 'demos' and 'kratos'. Demos means 'native adult males or the people' and 'kratos' means 'power, administration, or rule' in ancient Greek language. Thus, democracy means "rule by the demos" (Ober, 2003 cited in Rabb & Suleiman). Democracy is a political system that permits people to select their government and effect its policies. Democracy is also a form of life that allows people to live together in harmony. It is the best form of government for creating more free, more tolerant and just societies based on a cultural heritage enriched by solidarity, common values and diversity.

The literature on democratization was sought to determine what conditions might be needed for democratic transitions. Then, it is revealed that values of equality, freedom, justice, national sovereignty, pluralism (multipartyism), the security of fundamental rights especially rights of women are indispensable for democratization. Democratization can only be possible if the monopolized, authoritarian, one-party powers evolve into multi-party, pluralist governments (National Research Council, 1992; Gauba, 2009). In his study of the process of democratization in Ghana, Oquaye (2008) focused on the role of traditional organs - legislative, executive and judicial on democratization process. In addition, the support of the rule of law, the creation of controls and balances and the elimination of arbitrariness, and the impartiality of the media, are important parts of judicial autonomy as a responsible, accountable and democratic constituent of the limited government. He also

considered human rights, particularly women's rights, and civil society organizations as essential elements of democracy's extending and consolidation.

In addition, it is also argued that economic development is the effect on democratization process. That is, inequalities in the distribution of wealth have a negative impact on the democratization. According to the researchers who analyze the process of democratization, there is a relationship between economic development and democracy transition (Boix & Stokes 2003; Epstein, Bates, Goldstone, Kristensen, & O'Halloran, 2006). However, Przeworski, Alvarez, Cheibub and Limongi (2000) suggested that even though there is no causal influence on democratic transitions, economic development reduces the probability of democratic deterioration. Democratization is more likely to occur when the income distribution is more equal, that is, when the countries reach higher development levels (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2001; Boix, 2003; Zak & Feng, 2003). Since democracies have the possibility to implement policies that reduce welfare inequality, as wealth increases the number of democratic countries will increase.

As said by Gauba (2009), broad principles of considerable democracy are government consent, public accountability, majority management, recognition of minority rights and the constitutional government. Democracy requires more than one political party to compete freely for political power, political offices not having any privileged class, periodical elections based on universal adult concessions, protection of civil liberties and independence of the judiciary.

The tools of the democracy are (1) parliament (assembly), (2) competitive-elections in which multiple political parties compete made with certain intervals (Przeworski et al. 2000) and (3) majoritarian. Parliament, in some countries, refers to the group of chosen representatives or politicians who make the laws for their country. The frequency of the general elections varies from country to country. However, the elections have common characteristics that are recognized by each country such as elections must be 'free and fair'. Majority is a traditional political philosophy or agenda claiming that the majority of the society has a certain level of priority in society and that it has the right to make decisions that affect society.

1.2. The characteristics of democracy

Freedom and democracy are not synonymous, although they are often used interchangeably. In other words, democracy involves a series of ideas and principles related to freedom, and at the same time consists of a long and often complicated history of practices and procedures (Cincotta, 2007). Democracy is a constant battle against all kinds of laziness, mediocrity and folly, it is not a state. The idea of democracy culture is the way of preparing a legal ground for peace culture, tolerance and non-aggression (Meyer-Bisch, 1995).

The characteristics of democracy are sovereignty with the people, the state and the government are considered as instruments, the belief in human rationality, freedom, equality, brotherhood, the provision of fundamental rights, independent and impartial judiciary, majority management, public respect, peaceful and constitutional methods freedom to set up parties, open competition for political power, periodical elections, independent propaganda tool, rule of law, local government, pluralism (the acknowledgement of a diversity of political systems).

The principles of democracy are as follows: a) the government is based on the will and the will of the people, the government wants everyone's well-being, c) management is good and responsible d) people are receiving political education, e) government is based on freedom, equality and brotherhood f) g) brings management efficiency, h) brings the unity spirit among the people, i) provides appropriate opportunities for the development of the people and i) provides protection of human rights and freedoms.

Critical aspects of democracy: the emphasis on democracy, not on quality but on the basis of non-natural equality, the domination of the bureaucracy, the unstable government, the negative effects of political parties, the dictatorship of the majority, the moral standards of people are reduced, not

everyone, government, the situation is weak, the politics becomes a profession, the national unity weakens and the voters are indifferent attitude.

1.3. Types of Democracy

Democracies are divided into two fundamental categories: direct and representative (Cincotta, 2007). In direct democracies, people take a direct role in state administration. It is the type of democracy that the people use their sovereignty personally and directly. It envisages the people being ruled by the people. It is the closest system to the ideal meaning of democracy. Today, direct democracy prevails only in the five cantons of Switzerland. But in a few countries, there are some features of direct democracy.

The principles of direct democracy: The people are based on sovereignty, they are the best way to get to know the public, there is a close relationship between the electorate and the parliament, the people get political education, the laws are more adhered to, the legislative bodies are controlled, the interests of the people are protected properly, and there is no fear of revolution.

In semi-direct democracies, even though there are representatives, it is influenced by the decisions taken by the people. The principles of semi- direct democracy: Referendum: a law approved by the parliament or accepted by the people. People's right to veto: People's initiative to make a referendum. In short, people want a referendum. People's enterprise: The public is to mobilize the legislature to collect a certain number of signatures to make a law on a particular issue or to make changes to the law. Brief Representatives: It is a method that allows the public to receive representatives who are not satisfied with their work.

Representative democracy is the practice of the country's administration, not the participation of all of the people, but the exercise of a community of voters, where citizens are represented with more knowledgeable, better-educated and experienced people in politics. The people should be governed by their own elected representatives. Participatory democracy arises when alternative means of participation are created and institutionalized in the public so that people's demands in the representative democracy can be found more on the agenda.

1.4. Democracy as a way of life

Democracy should not be regarded merely as a form of government; it is a way of life that is highly valued for the development of reason and principles such as freedom, justice, impartiality and respect for people, which necessitates the use of mind in social life. As principles, such as equality and freedom are the rights that every human being inherently possesses, it can be said that democracy is the most appropriate government and lifestyle for human nature.

Democracy will survive if people adopt it and live in accordance with its principles. Because democracy is seen as a way of living together in peace, it requires people to demand equal rights with others. In other words, in order to ensure peace and prosperity in society, everyone needs to seek equality, justice and freedom for all. All the individuals forming a society must be accepted with their differences, and these differences should be seen as diversity and wealth for society. Community members should respect each other's rights while living together and tolerate their differences.

In a society where people are aware of their rights, freedoms and responsibilities, they try to protect them. That is, the adoption and maintenance of a democratic way of life can only be realized through the understanding of that way of life. People can only evaluate and develop it when they internalize the principles and possibilities of democratic order.

In countries governed by democracy, the task of power is to ensure the prosperity and development of all citizens. In democracies, it is assumed that each individual is unique and valuable and it is aimed to preserve and develop this value. Democratic attitudes and values help to create a cultural mosaic, living together with the individual from different cultures and different beliefs. The changes in society and schools all over the world are mutually influential. A change in the education system cannot be considered apart from social and global changes. In the same way, a change in the curriculum

influences how citizens are trained, and therefore the way society lives and governs. Democracy can become a way of life through the use of democratic principles in family, in school, in society, or in short in all areas of life. If democracy is not adopted in a society and/or at home, the development of a democratic environment in schools is not possible.

The principles of democracy must be mastered to internalize democracy and to transform it into a way of life. They must be individuals who know their rights and responsibilities. Modern democracy should be practiced in all areas of life without any coercion and interference, and individuals should be using these practices on the basis of volunteerism. Constructive, non-violent, participatory and peaceful solutions to the problems surrounding the individual. Mass media and non-governmental organizations should be used to make democracy a way of life.

This research aims to explain the perceptions of prospective teachers on the concepts of democracy. In this context, the answers to the following questions were sought for teacher candidates:

1. What are the first three words that come to mind in the name of democracy?
2. How do they define democracy?
3. How are the views on political events?
4. How do you look at social events?
5. How often do they think about democracy?
6. How do they see democracy in their country?
7. What is the level of participation in political organizations?

In successful democracies, teachers are expected to have knowledge and support for democracy and democratic attitudes. However, very little is known about how prospective teachers understand and describe democracy. Teachers and prospective teachers' the concept of democracy that will influence how future generations think about democracy has been subject to many researches. It is believed that the research will provide insight into the views of prospective teachers on democracy and provide guidance in in-service studies on democratic education.

2.Method

2.1. Participants

The sample of the study involves 234 senior undergraduate students—150 females, and 84 males—studying at four year programs and currently attending pedagogic formation within Çankırı Karatekin University during the Spring term of 2016-2017 academic year. Following is the distribution of students according to their faculties: 207 students of Faculty of Letters, 3 students of Faculty of Science, 9 students of Faculty of Business Administration and Economics; 8 students of Faculty of Arts Education, 1 students of Faculty of Health Science, and 3 students of Faculty of Enginering. The age range of participating students is between 21 to 37, and the mean age is 23 for the whole sample. Distribution of students in terms of the place they grew up is as follows: 18,2% in villages, 5,6% in small towns, 25,5 % in counties, 19,5% in cities, and 31,2% in metropolitan cities. A majority of students (56,8%) have mothers with a primary school degree. 15%, 11,5%, .4%, 4,7%, and 11,5% of the sample have mothers with a secondary school, high school, college, undergraduate and other degrees respectively. Likewise, the educational backgrounds of students' fathers are as follows: 41,6% primary school, 23,6% secondary school, 23,2% high school, 3,9 % college, 5,6% undergraduate and 2,1% others. A majority of the students have family monthly income between 1405 and 3000 Turkish Liras (TL).

2.2. Data collection and analyses

Three rating questions and on open-ended question were asked teacher candidates to understand their conceptualization of democracy. Specifically, participants were asked to list the first three words that

came to their minds when it was called democracy, and to explain the meaning of the democracy. Participants were also asked about their participation in political events, their political views, the frequency of thinking about democracy, and the level of democracy in the country. The level of participation of students in political organizations has been examined with the following questions: "Are you a member of a party?" "Are you a member of the association?" "Are you a member of more than one association?" " Are you going to join the trade union when you start working? "

Frequency analysis and content analysis were performed on the data. Hsieh and Shannon (2005) defined content analysis as "*a research method for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns*" (p.1278). The data obtained through content analysis are classified within the framework of precise concepts and themes that will include the process of regulation and interpretation in a manner that the readers understand better (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2008). During the content analysis of the data the following procedures were carried out: (a) categories and coding scheme were developed, (b) data were encoded, (c) coding consistency was checked, (c) categories and themes were explained based on the context and the phenomenon, (d) the conclusions are drawn from the coded data. As a way of achieving reliability, the data were coded by 2 researchers, participants were selected from volunteers, and findings were supplemented by comments from participants.

Content analysis reveals three themes and 8 sub-themes. Themes emerged in the research can be called democracy as a form of government, democracy as a form of life together and democracy as a political figure. Sub-themes are the basic values of democracy, the principles of democracy, human rights and freedoms, democratic citizenship and active citizenship, diversity and pluralism (cohabitation), peace and reconciliation and according to performance and according to external appearance (Table 1).

3. Findings

Table 2 shows that participants mostly focus on the issue of first generation (basic or classical) rights such as equality, freedom of thought, conscience and religion, freedom of expression and the right to participate before the law. None of the participants are mentioned the rights of second generation (social rights) that is, right to social security, right to work, fair income and union, right to rest, right to education, right to participate in cultural life, right to health and the right of fourth generation (right to sustainable living rights: the right of the ecosystem, the right of future generations). It was seen that very few participants talked about third-generation rights (solidarity rights), such as the right to peace and the environment.

Table 1. The Themes Related to the Concept of Democracy

Theme	Sub-theme	Codes
Democracy as a form of government	The basic values of democracy	Equality, freedom, justice, tolerance, respect for differences
	The principles of democracy	Secularism, the separation of powers (legislative-executive-judicial), rule of law, selection choose, elected, vote, political parties, parliamentary structure, republic, sovereignty, pluralism, civil society, being based on human rights
Democracy as a way of living together	Human rights and freedoms	Rights and freedoms equal and valid for all, minority rights
	Democratic citizenship and active citizenship	Autonomy / individuality, participation in the decision-making process, responsibility and rules, knowing the rights freedoms, task, responsibility, being active, be free and independent, modernity, civilization, opposition
	Diversity and pluralism (Cohabitation)	Pluralism, discrimination, values, respect for differences, accepting differences, empathy, cohabitation, unity, solidarity, confidence, equal opportunity
	Peace and reconciliation	Peace, compromise, terror, fanaticism, being in peace with nature, serenity, environmental right
Democracy as a political figure	According to Performance	Mustafa Kemal Atatürk (modernism), secularism, social democracy, civilization, westernization)
	According to external appearance	Recep Tayyip Erdoğan (nationalism, conservatism, patriarchy)

In the study, the relations between the ideological position of the participants and the perceived charisma of political leaders and their democracy definitions were compared. Accordingly, it has been observed that the political orientations of participants prevent them from expressing their individual views. Thus, it has emerged that participants who position themselves as conservatives while identifying leaders with democracy have been assessed based on appearance (face expression, gestures and mimics, clothes, used words, etc.) rather than the leader's performance. On the other hand, those who see the political orientation as liberal criticize the leader's performance (reforms he has made for modernism, secularism and social democracy).

Most of the teacher candidates see democracy as justice, freedom and equality. Freedom of expression, human rights, secularism, parliamentary system, free will and media freedom are the most expressed concepts of republic, pluralism, solidarity, freedom of thought, thought tolerance, dignity, education, equal rights, people's sovereignty. When the question of democracy was asked, candidate teachers responded equally, equality of all people, freedom of expression, freedom of expression and rule of law without discrimination.

When asked whether prospective teachers are liberal or conservative in their political stance, it is seen that the answers given to the question of our country's democratic state became much more political than before. That is, the question has been answered without considering the principles underlying democracy and the role of citizens in government. Critical thinking is very important for educators and especially for teachers. Education is not just about giving information about things, it is a natural political process that actively works for specific purposes and for the future. Teachers' in-class approaches are one of the first steps in achieving a 'better, more open and humanized world, social justice and equality'. Individuals who can use their rights and freedoms to transform democracy into a lifestyle can only be trained through education.

Democratic education aims to make all students become democratic citizens. The role of teachers can not be denied in raising individuals who dare question interrogators, insist on receiving answers, think critically and creatively, participate in decision-making, demonstrate entrepreneurial and leadership qualities, and try to do something for themselves.

When teacher candidates were asked about their political views, 5,2% defined themselves as conservative, 32,6% neutral and 7,7% liberal. When teacher candidates were asked on the frequency of thinking about democracy, 3% said never and 26,1% said always. To the question of where is your country at the democracy scale, they replied as 28,2% not democratic at all and 6.9% very democratic. When asked whether they were a member of a party to the prospective teachers, 7,5% answered yes and 92,5% answered no. Only 9,3% of the group said that they are members of a civil society organization and 4.4% said they are members of more than one civil society organization. The percentage of those who say that after starting a job they will become members of an association is 49,1% (Table 3). Findings shows that most of the students do not associate themselves with any politic views, often think about democracy, find the country anti-democratic and have very low political participation level.

A point of interest in 234 people's perceptions of democracy was freedom. For this reason, when the meaning of democracy is asked, it is examined how many times the theme of freedom in addition to the theme and sub-theme is included. The theme of freedom has been encountered 82 times and also the theme of justice many times.

> Some of the teachers' statements about the meaning of democracy are as follows:
> *"People's self-expression, equality, health, peaceful and in fact it is possible to catch a non-utopian freedom."*
> *"To express individual feelings and thoughts comfortably in every environment."*
> *"Legislative execution and punishment can be carried out regularly in the country, secularism can be experienced."*
> *"People can freely express their behavior as long as they can think freely and do not restrict others' freedom."*

"Freedom of speech, freedom of opinion, no vote for fear of elections. Unfortunately, democracy is not free in our country."

"...it means to live in equal and free society and to preserve its identity by giving the state the basic right of management while living together in society.

Table 2. Views of prospective teachers on the concept of democracy

Themes	Sub-themes	The first three words that come to mind in the name of democracy						Meaning of democracy	
		1st place		2st place		3 st place			
		f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Democracy as a form of government	The basic values of democracy	133	58.1	114	50.2	98	44.1	8	3.7
	The principles of democracy	46	20.1	50	22	39	17.6	124	56.6
Democracy as a way of living together	Human rights and freedoms	25	10.9	28	12.3	25	11.3	48	21.9
	Democratic citizenship and active citizenship	5	2.2	9	4	21	9.5	31	14.2
	Diversity and pluralism (Cohabitation)	12	5.2	15	6.6	26	11.7	8	3.7
	Peace and reconciliation	2	.9	8	3.5	6	2.7		
Democracy as a political figure	According to performance	2	.9			2	.9		
	According to external appearance	4	1.7	3	1.3	5	2.3		
	Total	229	100	227	100	222	100	219	100

Table 3. Frequencies for demographic variables.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
What is your political opinion on social events?	Conservative	12	5,1	5,2
	2	14	6,0	6
	3	44	18,8	18,9
	Neutral	76	32,5	32,6
	5	48	20,5	20,6
	6	21	9	9
	Liberal	18	7,7	7,7
	Missing	1	,4	
	Total	234	100,0	100,0
How often do you think about democracy?	Never	7	3	3
	2	8	3,4	3,4
	3	27	11,5	11,5
	4	39	16,7	16,7
	5	45	19,2	19,2
	6	47	20,1	20,1
	Always	61	26,1	26,1
	Missing			
	Total	234	100,0	100,0
Where your country is at the democracy scale?	Not democratic	66	28,2	28,2
	2	19	8,1	8,1
	3	36	15,4	15,4
	4	50	21,4	21,4
	5	28	12	12
	6	16	6,8	6,8
	Very democratic	19	8,1	8,1
	Missing			
	Total	234	100,0	100,0
Level of political organization				
I am a member of a party	Yes	17	7,3	7,5
	No	210	89,7	92,5
	Missing	7	3,0	
	Total	234	100,0	100,0
I am a member of an association	Yes	21	9	9,3
	No	206	88,8	90,7
	Missing	7	3,0	
	Total	234	100,0	100,0
I am a member of more than one association	Yes	10	4,3	4,4
	No	217	92,7	95,6
	Missing	7	3,0	
	Total	234	100,0	100,0

I am not a member of an association but I join their work	Yes	40	17,1	17,6
	No	187	79,9	82,4
	Missing	7	3,0	
	Total	234	100,0	100,0
When I begin to work, I will join a union.	Yes	113	48,3	49,1
	No	117	50,0	50,9
	Missing	4	1,7	
	Total	234	100,0	100,0

Figure 1 shows the distribution of participants by gender for the first words that come to mind when called democracy. The first word that comes to mind for men and women when it called democracy was often value (58,78% female and 56,79% male). The other big slice is for principle, but males were twice more than females in this category (14,18% female and 30,66% male). In terms of human rights, females were twice more than males (13,51% female and 6,17% male). An interesting finding was seen in the dimension of diversity. While 8,10% of the females selected words that match in this category, men do not use this dimension at all. Except citizenship dimension, males selected more words that related to reconciliation, performance and appearance. When the meaning of democracy was asked, the definitions of females and males were related with principle dimension mostly (Figure 2). However, men used this dimension more in their descriptions than girls (51,08 % female and 66,25 % male). The second largest dimension associated with definitions is human right, and females used this dimension more often than males (26,52 % females and 13,75 % males). The rest of the definitions were related to citizenship, values and diversity. Except value dimension, males had more percentages than females in remaining two dimensions.

When asked about democracy the first word that comes to candidate teachers' mind were examined according to the grow up place. The first word that comes to mind is often associated with values dimension for all settlements (Figure 3). In addition, it was recognized that the residents of the city had more percentages for values (e.g. 57,1% village, 46,2% small town, 51,7% counties, 69,8% city and 58,6% big city). Other dimensions where definitions were most relevant can be listed as principles, human rights, citizenship and diversity. In the remaining dimensions, the percentages were extremely small for all. When the definition of democracy was asked, the first dimension in which definitions were gathered was principles (Figure 4). This was followed by human rights, citizenship and diversity dimensions, respectively.

When the monthly income of the participants' families was taken into account, it was comprehended that the first word that comes to mind was most associated with the dimension of values. This was followed by principles and human rights (Figure 5). In regards to value dimension, those with the highest income group, TL 4500, had higher percentage than other groups (78.57%), but it was not possible to say this for other dimensions. When the dimensions of individuals' definitions of democracy were examined, most of the definitions were in the dimension of principles (Figure 6). It is seen that human rights citizenship, differences and values dimension follow. Then, human rights, citizenship, diversity and values dimension were observed, respectively.

It was seen that the first word associated with democracy was most frequently involved in the value dimension, when political opinions of participant were examined (Figure 7). However, it is seen that conservatives associate democracy definitions with this dimension more than liberals (91,67% conservative, 44,44% liberal). While there are, no words associated with principles dimension for conservative, the percentage of words associated with the same dimension for liberal was 27.78.

When the frequency of thinking about democracy is examined, the first word that comes to individuals' mind about democracy is again mostly in the dimension of values. Nevertheless, there was a big difference between those who never thought of democracy and who always thought of democracy (100% never, 50%, always). Principles were the second most common dimension. The difference was striking between those who say they think of democracy very little and those who say they think of democracy always (37,5% very little, 14,75 % always). When individuals' definitions of democracy were examined, a more heterogeneous distribution was seen, in which definitions also include the second and third generation democracy. While the majority of the definitions were in the

dimension of principles, they were followed by human rights and citizenship dimensions. Diversity and values were lower than others. When the level of perception of the democracy of the country is examined, it was seen that the first word comes to mind in terms of democracy was most related to the dimension of values. This was followed by principles and human rights. When individuals' definitions of democracy were examined, results were very similar that of political view.

4. Conclusion

Democracy is both a form of life and a form of government that guarantees justice, freedom and equality. It was seen that candidate teachers used election and democracy synonymously, when the meaning of democracy is asked. Although elections are indispensable for the functioning of democracy, it is a known fact that elections cannot guarantee democracy. When the question of the meaning of democracy is asked, the candidate teachers give such answers equality of all people without discrimination, equality of justice, freedom of expression, expression freedom, and rule of law. One of the striking findings was obtained by asking the participants how they thought the democratic nature of the country of residence was. That is, the majority of participants gave similar answers: 'Our country is not absolutely democratic.'

In addition, the political views of the participants were asked; their answers to the question become more political rather than thoughtful. That is, they answer the question without thinking the principles underlying democracy and the role of citizens. The political perspectives of the prospective teachers seemed to influence their conceptualization of democracy, and interpretation of the democratic environment in the country. Although the words used by teacher candidates in defining democracy are almost identical, it is a surprising finding that prospective teachers who seem to themselves as conservative see the country democratic while those who define themselves as liberals think that the country is not democratic at all. According to liberal teacher candidates, Turkey is no longer secular as before. The stated that, government is using the democratic system, implements authoritarian practices, and applies programs that are primarily beneficial to conservative half of the country. In general, it is crucial for educators, and especially teachers, to think critically. To put it another way, education is not only gives information about things, it is a naturally political process actively working for specific purposes and for future. That is, the classroom approaches of the teachers are one of the first steps in achieving a better, more open and humanly possible world, social justice and equality. For this reason, teacher training programs should include courses that aim to encourage the candidate teachers to investigate the world that they have lived and studied in a critical manner.

In this respect, teacher training programs should include courses aimed at encouraging candidate teachers, lived and studied students to critically investigate the world. Teacher candidates can be trained in culturally sensitive education (inclusive education). Teacher candidates should be provided with trainings that will provide constructive, violent, participatory and peaceful solutions to the problems surrounding them. Teacher candidates should be trained on effective use of mass media. In order for democracy to become a way of life, it should be encouraged that prospective teachers participate in non-governmental organizations (such as TEMA, AKUT, LÖSEV).

It has recognized that the political ideology of the participants in the definition of democracy is very important. In addition, while describing democracy, participants responded with a viewpoint appropriate to their political stance. This can be interpreted as a sign that democracy culture has not yet been internalized by teacher candidates. This may lead to polarization of teachers on different political opinions. As noted in the literature, in developed democracies, political ideology is not very important. Quite the reverse, in emerging democracies, political ideology as organization principle is less important. Parties are often shaped around pre-existing social divisions, including differences in religion, ethnicity, tribe, language or culture. Proportional representation-based systems are increasing rather than reducing the sharpness of such divisions (Meisburger, 2012).
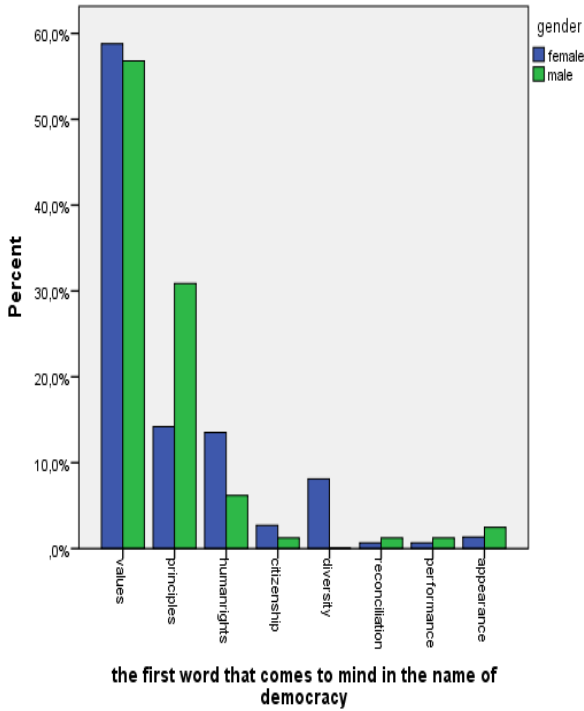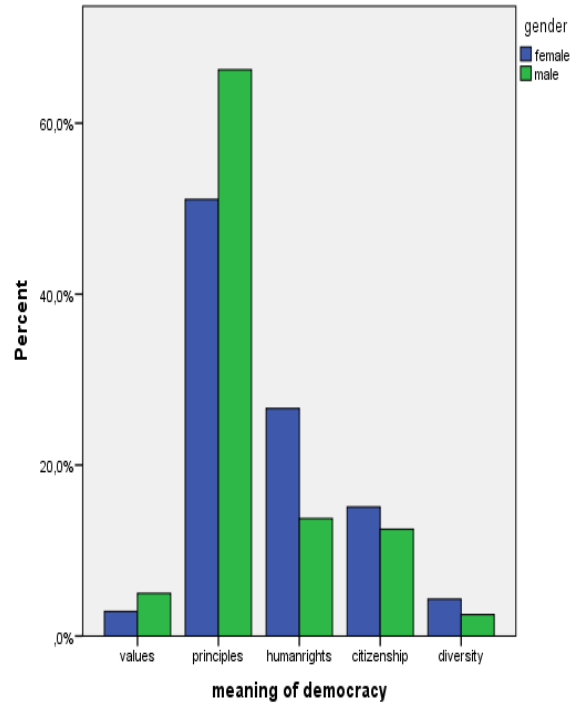
Figure 1. Gender by the first word
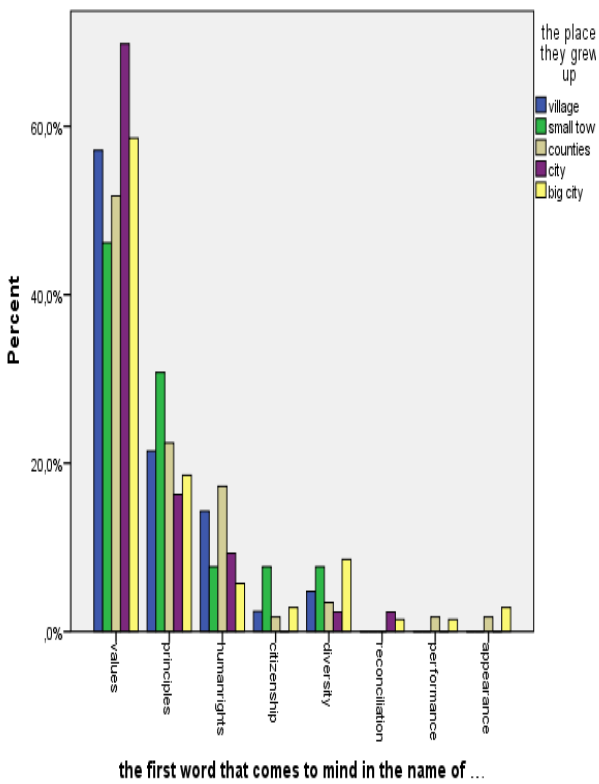

Figure 2. Gender by meaning of democracy

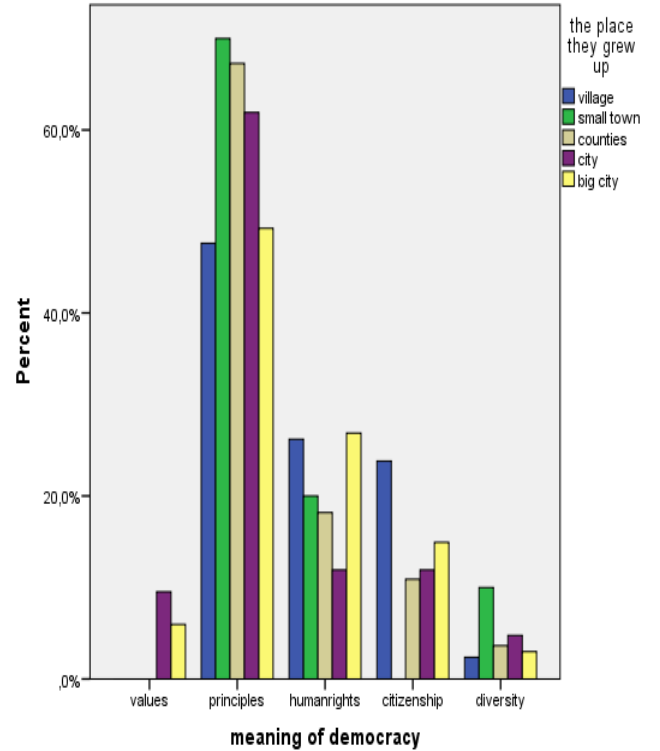**Figure 3**. Grew up place by the first word

Figure 4. Grew up place by meaning of democracy
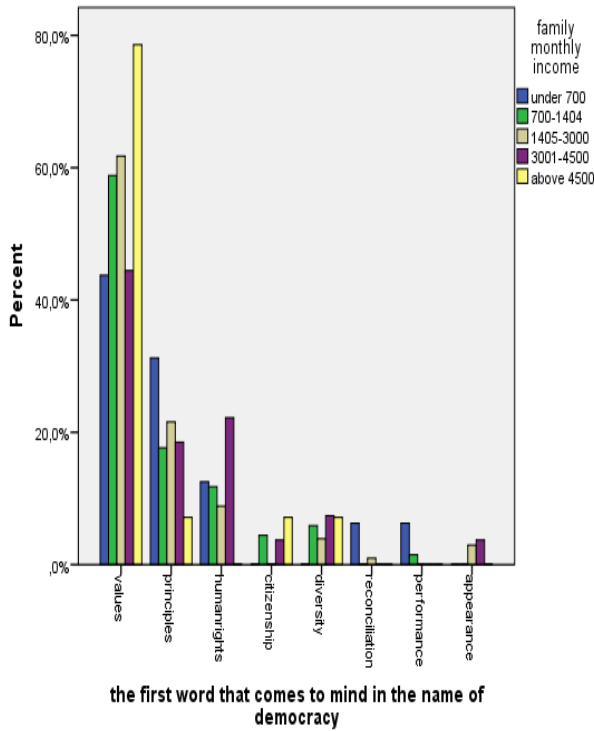
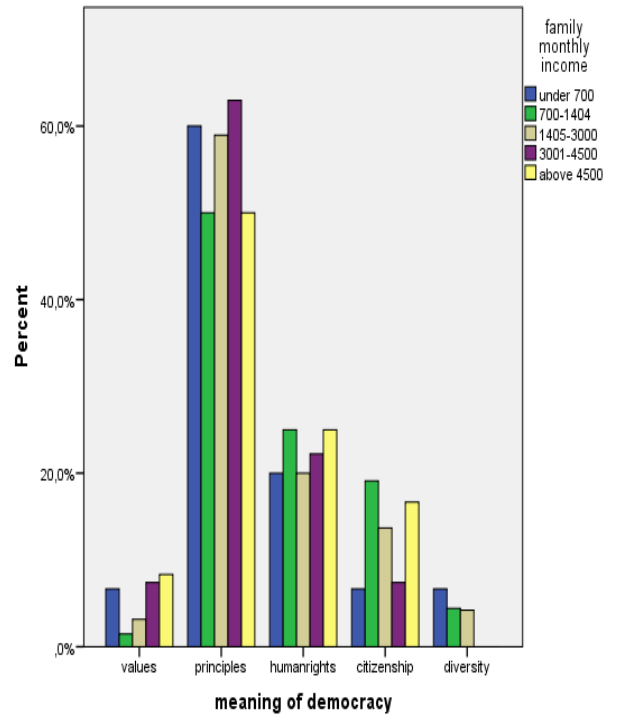**Figure 5**. İncome by the first word

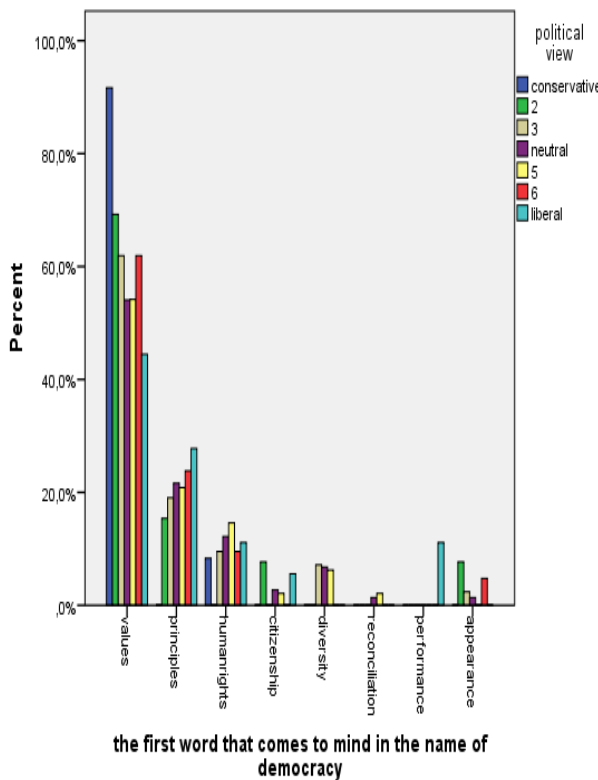**Figure 6.** İncome by meaning of democracy
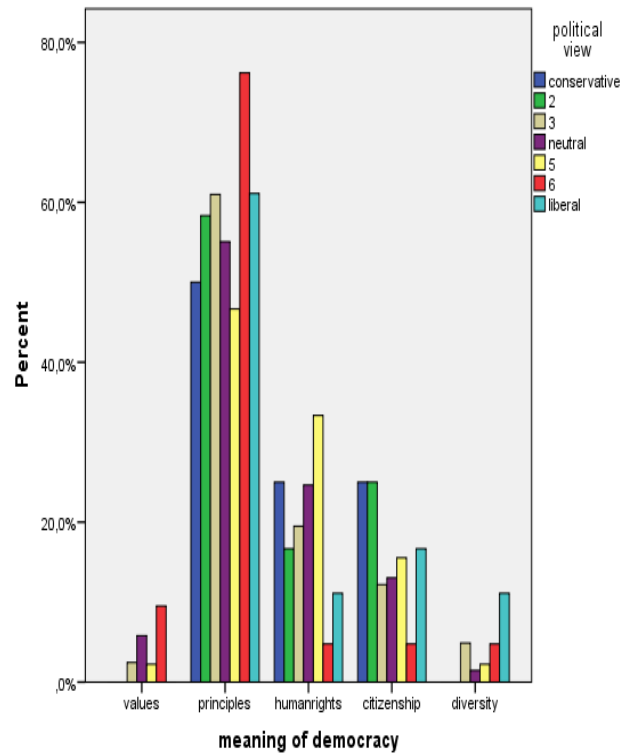

Figure 7. Political view by the first word

Figure 8. Political view by meaning of democracy

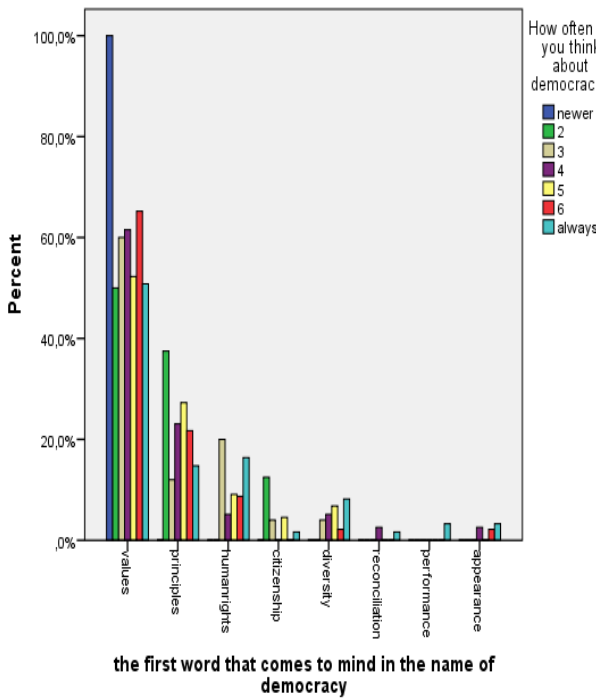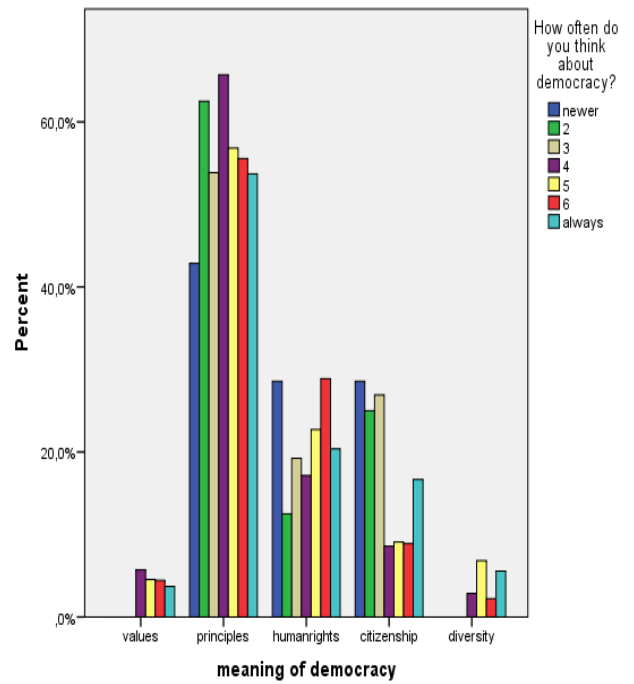**Figure 9.** Thinking of democracy by first word

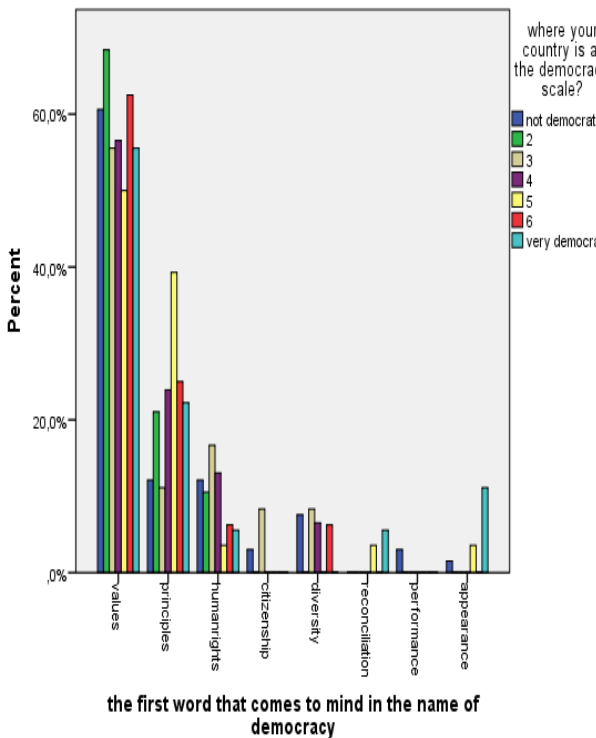**Figure 10.** Thinking of democracy by meaning of democracy

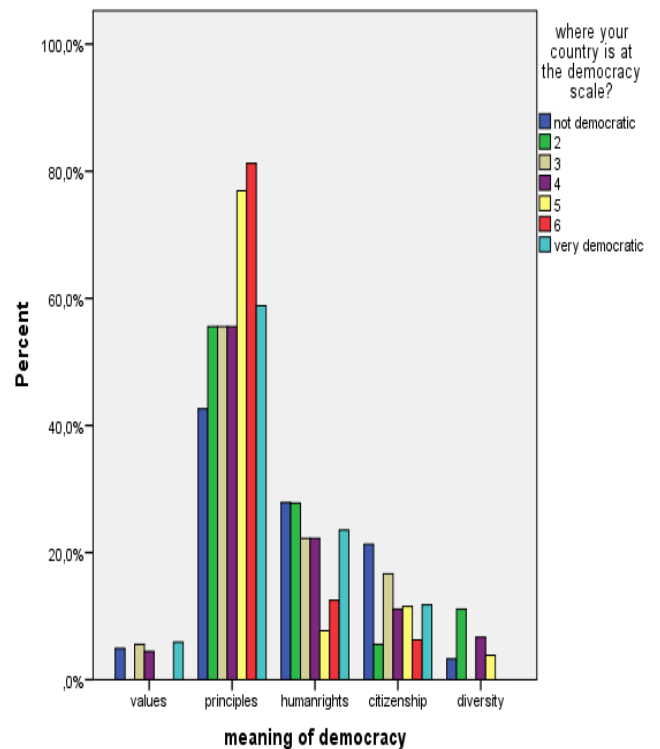**Figure 11.** Freedom in the country by meaning of democracy

Figure 12. Freedom in the country by meaning of democracy

Moreover, participating prospective teachers stated that most of them experienced some difficulties in terms of political rights and freedom of expression. These findings have been found to be consistent with the literature. Compared to the well-established democracies, Turkey can be considered as a country with an emerging democracy. As said by Piccone (2011), Turkey is seen as one of the world's six most influential emerging democracies (with Brazil, India, Indonesia, South Africa, and with South Korea). Each of these countries is at various stages of consolidating democracy. According to Freedom House, Turkey has achieved remarkable economic growth in recent years and have benefited from improved living standards. However, some problems arise in terms of political rights and freedoms in Turkey, so it located at the top of 'the partly free' category.

Turkey's EU membership goal has helped to bring the democratic standards and practices of the country into line with liberal international norms. The improvements in human rights and democratic practices in the country are positive evidence for democratization. Turkey, successful, competitive, multiparty and that the transition to a multi-ethnic society has quite successfully managed, has great potential as a defender of democracy and human (Piccone, 2011).

In the light of previous researches, it can be said that gender is an important variable affecting how we perceive democracy (Çuhadar, 2006; Doğanay & Sarı, 2009; Kaldırım, 2003; Karatekin et al., 2010; Kuş & Çetin, 2014). In a similar vein, this study supports that gender causes differences in democracy perception.

Previous studies have produced findings that the level of income of the families of the students affected their perceptions of democracy (e.g. Karatekin et al., 2010; Kuş & Çetin, 2014; Marcus, Mease, & Ottemoeller, 2001). In a similar way, the findings of this study support the literature.

Previously Karatekin and Elvan (2014) showed that cognitive structures for the concept of democracy differed according to the regions. This study also pointed out that the students' democracy perceptions differed according to the settlement place, and it should be investigated in detail. The research also pointed out that the perceptions of democracy differed across the political viewpoint, individual's perceived democracy level of the country and the frequency of individuals' thinking about democracy. Those who do not think about democracy frequently and who do not see problems at the level of democracy of the country and those who define themselves as conservative are closer to the first-generation democracy.

More comprehensive sampling is needed to generalize the results of the study. This is an important requirement for examining variables such as parental education and age, which were previously mentioned to have an impact on democratic perception in the literature. In the education of teacher candidates, it is essential to take together theoretical and practical studies for the transformation of the first generation democracy perceptions into second and third generation democracy.

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