

The Evaluation of the Opinions of Prospective Teachers about the Objectives of Human Rights Education

Ramazan ÖZBEK¹

¹ Department of Educational Sciences, Faculty of Education, Inonu University, Turkey

Correspondence: Ramazan ÖZBEK, Department of Educational Sciences, Faculty of Education, Inonu University, Turkey. E-mail: ramazan.ozbek@inonu.edu.tr

Received: April 27, 2017

Accepted: May 29, 2017

Online Published: September 28, 2017

doi:10.5539/ies.v10n10p64

URL: <https://doi.org/10.5539/ies.v10n10p64>

Abstract

The aim of this study is to evaluate opinions of prospective teachers attending Social Sciences Teaching Department Primary Education Section on the objectives of Human Rights Education in the scope of Citizenship and Democracy Education Curriculum. This study is vital for learning of democratic life. 25 prospective teachers studying in the 8th semester were selected by purposive sampling method. Prospective teachers' opinions generally converge at the point where sufficient success is not being achieved in the realization of educational objectives. Other issues include human rights violations, causes of human rights violations, teaching the ways of protecting human rights, not only giving theoretical knowledge but also using different samples and methods in teaching activities with the help of technology, using environment, educating patriotic individuals who are sensitive to environment and human rights and willing to solve problems, educating individuals who can build and develop positive relationships with people in different races, thoughts and geographical regions, democratic individuals oriented to create a democratic society.

Keywords: human rights education, democracy education, citizenship education

1. Introduction

In order for education and training activities to reach the goal of democracy and democratic education as Pepeler (2016) expressed that teachers need to be aware of factors such as thoughts and beliefs that affect their behavior. Human rights are the sum of all necessary rights that every people need just because they are human beings without any discrimination, as a requirement of human dignity. Qualitatively these rights are inviolable, inalienable and connected to personality. They cannot be delimited and eliminated arbitrarily by the state or by another power and neither the individuals themselves can transfer them to others, nor can they give them up (Uygun, 1996; Kocaoğlu, 1997; Ray and Tarrow, YTY, 3 Quoted from Yeşil, 2002, p. 25).

Human rights education which is a human right by itself, like all human rights, is one of the indispensable requirements of democracy. Human rights education is the prerequisite of placement, protection, strengthening and securing of democracy by the citizens who have the awareness and commitment of keeping it alive in all circumstances (Kepenekçi, 2000, p. 12).

Human Rights Education is classified in different ways: Mumcu (1994, pp. 294-300) describes human rights dividing it into three categories. These rights are; 1. Personal Rights, 2. Political Rights, 3. Social and Economic Rights. Wilson and Branka (1996, p. 16) categorises it as 1. Civil and Political Rights, 2. Economic and Social Rights, 3. Environmental, Cultural and Development Rights.

Human rights express some of the needs of every human being. These needs arise as demands to recognize and protect the human value. In other words they arise as demands to protect the human beings just because they are human beings (Kuçuradi, 1996, p. 49).

Nowadays, tourism, economic, political and military relations and mainly the influence of mass media constitute fundamental changes in the cultural structure of the societies. As Bilhan expressed, one of these changes is the acceleration of interpersonal relations, citizen-state relations, state-state relations, human, environment and nature relations in accordance with the benefits of individuals and communities (Bilhan, 1996, p. 179). As a result of this interaction, human rights are seen as universal rights in all societies and strict sanctions can be imposed on the societies that don't respect to these rights.

Human rights education may be understood as teaching human rights from some sources but it is not limited to teaching human rights it also includes transferring related values and creating specific behaviours. During human rights education, it is also important to provide information about international regulations and transfer efforts for the protection of human rights in national, regional and international levels and prevention of human rights violations. That is why human rights education is not just teaching the principles of human rights. At the same time it tries to demonstrate ways of eliminating the factors that impede understanding of human rights (Kepenekçi, 2000, p. 10).

It can only be possible to make the individuals become aware of the rights that they have just because they are human beings, wish sincerely to use and protect them and become conscious of the necessity of preserving these rights by an education in which the individuals participate actively in the education and training processes. When it is looked from this perspective “human rights education” is also a part of democracy education.

Since our effort to become a member of the European Union is increased recently, human rights and its education have gained much greater importance. According to Ross (Ross, 2008, p. 99) the heart of the European idea is human rights, and these are keys to both the identity of Europe and to engaging young people a sense of citizenship. Rights can be seen as a defining characteristic of the Union. Young people are interested in rights, and particularly keenly interested in injustice (Ross, 2008, p. 99). European countries need citizens to be engaged in social and political life not only to ensure that basic democratic values flourish but also to foster social cohesion at a time of increasing social and cultural diversity (Vassiliou, 2012, p. 3)

In this course, it is aimed to make the students gain awareness and sensitivity, and develop thoughts, attitudes and behaviours about preserving and implementing human rights as well as introducing some basic concepts related to citizenship, democracy and human rights. In this regard, citizenship and democracy education is dealt in the context of democratic citizenship in the curriculum. Human Rights Education has been applied in different ways over time. Some of these applications were given with names such as Citizenship Education, Social Studies, Citizenship Information and Citizenship and Human Rights Education.

“Citizenship and Democracy Education” course was started to be given in the 8th grades of primary school as an elective course for one hour a week in 2010-2011 Education Year. In 2012-2013 Education Year “Human Rights, Citizenship and Democracy” course was started to be given in the 4th grades as a compulsory course for two hours a week and now it takes part in the 8th grades curriculum for one hour a week as “Citizenship and Democracy Education”.

Overall objectives of Citizenship and Democracy Education, which is given as a compulsory course, were determined as follows:

Students:

- Contribute to the formation of a democratic and equitable society, as individuals who are free, independent, tolerant, self-confident and in favour of peace,
- Adopt the importance of protecting and developing of shared common values,
- Fulfil their responsibilities by using their fundamental rights and freedoms as citizens of the republic of turkey,
- Take part in the development and strengthening of social life as active, responsible and democratic citizens,
- Contribute to the solution of personal and social problems being convinced of the importance of democratic participation and democratic life.
- Adopt democracy as a way of life by developing democratic attitudes and behaviours as individuals with a sense of democracy,
- Contribute to the formation of a democratic Republic of Turkey by understanding the importance of Atatürk’s principles and reforms,
- Show sensitivity to the issues that concern his/her country and the world with the awareness that he/she is a part of humanity.

Thematic approach was used in order to prepare “Citizenship and Democracy Education” curriculum. Four themes are included in the curriculum. These themes are; “Every Human is Precious, Democracy Culture, Our Rights and Freedoms and Our Duties and Responsibilities” (Ministry of National Education, BOE, 2010, p. 6).

2. Method

2.1 Research Model

This study was designed as a phenomenological research. When studies concerning “Citizenship and Democracy Education” course, which take part in primary education curriculum, are analysed; it is seen that there are severe

criticism about the quality of the course objectives and their realization level. Because democratic life has gained importance nowadays, questioning the quality of democracy education is also being seen to be important. Phenomenological researches, which are among qualitative research methods, are oriented to discover the individuals' experiences, perceptions and meanings which they ascribed to them regarding a phenomenon (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2013).

2.2 Study Group

This study was held at İnönü University in the spring semester of 2013-2014 academic year. 25 prospective teachers attending the 8th semester of Faculty of Education, Elementary Education Social Sciences Teaching Department participated in the study. 15 male and 10 female prospective teachers were selected by purposive sampling method. Prior to application, prospective teachers were informed about the purpose and scope of the study and about the main principles of completing the form.

2.3 Improving Data Collection Tool

A written form, which requires the students to find and write the answer themselves, was used as a means of data collection tool. While developing the form, some experts were consulted and the actual form was developed after the criticism.

The open-ended question which was asked to the prospective teachers was: "What is your opinion about the objectives of Human Rights Education in the context of Citizenship and Democracy Education course curriculum?"

2.4 Data Analysis

The data were analysed by the researcher himself using content analysis which is a qualitative research technique. Strauss and Corbin (quoted from Yaşar, 2014) mention three types of coding: 1. Coding which is made according to predetermined concepts, 2. Coding which is made according to the concepts derived from the data, 3. Coding which is made in a general framework. In this study, the coding was made according to the concepts derived from the data. The responses of prospective teachers were grouped in terms of similarity and the thoughts which have the same meaning were interpreted considering their frequency values. In order to improve the reliability of the study, the analyses of an expert were taken into consideration and common points were identified.

3. Results and Discussion

Table. 1. Prospective teachers' opinion on human rights education objectives

Opinion on Human Rights Education Objectives and Content of the Course;	Prospective Teacher (N=25)	F	%
Education objectives are not being realised.	PT1,PT2,PT6, T24	4	16
Human rights violations, causes, ways of protection should be taught.	PT1,PT4,PT15,PT20	4	16
Individuals who are patriotic, responsible, respectful to environment and human rights should be raised.	PT4,PT8,PT11,PT16,PT22,PT1	6	24
Human rights education should be intended to democratic individuals oriented to create a democratic society.	PT4,PT5,PT6,PT8,PT15,PT16,PT17,PT18,PT19,PT24, PT20	11	44
Developing social and humanitarian values should be prioritised.	PT4,PT7,PT15,PT17,PT24,PT25,PT9,PT15,PT18,	9	36
In teaching activities not only theoretical knowledge should be given but also with the help of technology different samples, methods and education environments should be used.	PT1, PT4,PT6	3	12
It is not possible to achieve human rights course objectives 1 hour per week in only a year.	PT1,PT2,PT15,PT23	4	16
In developing values the quality of rights and principles of utilization should be taught by choosing appropriate methods and role models.	PT3,PT6,PT11,PT13,PT15,PT23,PT1,PT8,PT11,PT15,PT22	11	44
One should be open towards innovations and positive changes.	PT6,PT1,PT14, PT22	4	16
Lessons are being limited to course book different sources are not being used adequately.	PT1,PT23,PT25,PT7,PT10,PT22,PT25	7	28

Everyone should be provided equal rights, no one should be privileged, duties and responsibilities should be taught.	PT3,PT15,PT19,PT20,P T23,25,PT1, PT4,PT13	9	36
Human rights education should start in very early age and mentality should be taught.	PT9,15	1	4
Human rights education course should be activities of making an individual more respectful in society and giving it a universal quality.	PT9,PT10,PT11,PT12,P T14,PT15,PT16,PT19,P T20,PT21,PT22,PT24,P T1, PT21	14	56
In human rights education course students should gain ability to live by synthesizing universal values with national values, course should aim to raise standards of living, it should aim to enhance all aspects of individual, it should aim to raise individuals with the skills and determination who have ability to live in harmony with their environment, who can provide appropriate solutions.	PT16,PT21,PT22,PT1,P T18	5	20
Not only with a Eurocentric view but with a universal perspective all countries should be criticized by analysing relative events in their history, they should be open to innovation and change.	PT1,PT23	2	8

In Table1 Prospective Teachers' Opinion on Human Rights Education Objectives is shown. When data is analysed it is observed that opinions are converged in few points.

The most important finding is observed on the subject of "Human Rights Education should be about activities of making an individual more respectful in society and giving it a universal quality". %56 of prospective teachers did express their opinion on this subject. We can specify the opinions of the prospective teachers focusing on this subject as following.

PT8: "Human rights education should be based on individual's self-awareness, its ability to act informed both individually and socially in the name of respect, love and tolerance and its ability to build his thoughts upon individual and social life. Making an individual first self-responsible than responsible towards community in the name of country and nation is to carry it to future."

PT9: "The aim of human rights education is to see human more important in the society."

PT10: "Human rights education should include individuals learning their rights and forms of defending them"

PT11: "Human rights education is to make human valuable because it is a human being and valuing him/her without discriminating toward any religion, language, race."

PT14: "Human rights education should be towards adapting to new conditions and creating a flexible lifestyle."

PT15: "Human rights education should teach national moral values, democratic rights and responsibilities, it should teach being sensitive to rights and responsibilities of others, it should teach recent and applicable skills."

PT16: "Human rights education should be towards teaching universal rights and how to use them. It should be towards rising standards of life by teaching developments and practices from other countries. It should be aimed to bring up individuals who are sensitive to environment, responsible, concerned and who can take active roles."

PT19: "Human rights education should be towards teaching skills to protect human dignity and should be towards acquiring knowledge and skill serving individual's moral and material development, educating individual in scope of democratic understanding."

PT20: "With human rights education individuals will be aware of themselves, they gain democracy culture and they acquire awareness by comparing applications around the world."

PT21: "With human rights education individuals acquire a democratic personality by knowing themselves ant their environment. Individuals and society gain knowledge on democratic state structure and they make effort to improve life in that direction."

PT22: "With human rights education individuals acquire reconciliation culture by this way they can contribute to the solution of the disputes and problems."

Another remarkable opinion is "Human rights education should be intended to bring up democratic individuals oriented to create a democratic society". %44 of prospective teachers did express their opinion on this subject. We can specify the opinions of the prospective teachers focusing on this subject as following.

PT4: "Main goal is to bring up good citizens. Individuals who are patriotic, sensitive to environment and human rights, loving each other should be brought up."

PT5: "Citizenship skills should be developed, democratic structure should be developed, skills and subjects covering whole society should be included."

PT6: "The main objective of human rights education is to develop a democratic society structure. Values like homeland management, understanding, responsibility, freedom, equality and respect should be addressed."

PT8: "Objective of the course is to lay foundation of basic behaviours and thoughts in the name of individual and social life. It should be directed towards raising primarily individuals who are aware of themselves secondarily who are sensitive and responsible towards their environment."

PT15: "To build a democratic society national and moral values, rights and responsibilities should be taught, individuals who are respectful in interpersonal relations should be raised."

PT16: "To improve standards related to human rights not only institutional information should be taught but also applicable information should be taught. Individuals' self-improvement, living in harmony, being interested in decisions and applications, taking effective and useful responses should be the aim."

PT18: "Primarily subject of human rights should include aspects as equality, personal security, freedoms, political rights. Democratic structure should construct individual rights in the light of criteria set forth universally."

PT19: "Main subject of human rights education should be protecting human dignity, educating individual in scope of democratic understanding, ensuring personal security."

pt20: "Individuals' self-recognition, internalization of democracy culture, living in harmony is to develop a love and respect culture."

PT24: "In human rights education it is vital to educate people who are respectful to each other, who embraced democratic rules and free thinking."

Other important aspects which prospective teachers expressed on the table are as following.

PT1: "It is observed that human rights education objectives are focused on factors that are effective on reducing human rights violations. For this, technology is not being used adequately. It is usually limited to textbooks, not enough external sources are being used. This situation makes it an abstract lesson and prevents the objectives to be realised."

PT2: "Human rights education course is given only one hour per week for a year. This is not adequate and could not create enough awareness on students."

PT3: "Amongst human rights education objectives values should be highlighted, during practice no one should be given privileges and all individuals should have equal rights."

PT4 "Main goal of human rights education is to bring up good individuals who have the qualities of patriotism, sensitivity to environment and human rights, love each other etc."

PT5: "Human rights education course aims to teach students citizenship skills and educate them as sensitive individuals towards society."

PT6: "The objective of human rights education is to develop a democratic society. Values like understanding, love, respect, responsibility, freedom and equality can be taught by this course. It is important to be open minded... Content of the course is different than what it should be in a modern country and it is not comprehensive enough."

PT8: "The human rights education content should be devoid of theoretical information and should be oriented towards behavior. It's being based on theoretical information, not being oriented towards behavior brings up some problems."

PT10: "It is important that students have abilities to defend their rights from their teachers when it is necessary. Information and explanations in the course should be tangible, different examples and methods should be used."

PT11: "Individuals should know their citizenship duties and they be able to have skills for fulfilling them. Approach of critical thinking should be actively used."

PT13: "In Human rights education course independence, equal rights and necessity of justice should be taught by studying all kinds of personal differences. It should be focused on the course content that all people living in different continents have same basic rights and this should be taught to all people as a lifestyle."

PT14: "Societies which are not equipped with necessary information on the subject of human rights are open to be abused by other societies."

PT15: "The Human rights education content should be connected to real life, it should be vital that an understanding of "differences are treasures" is taught, not only theoretical knowledge but applicable practices are given, rights and responsibilities of others are taught, on the aspect of content values education is given and opportunities of application should be provided."

PT16: "The subject of human rights education is human. That is why rights and freedoms should be learned. On the other hand in the course the idea and understanding that human rights are inseparable part of democracy should be taught by classifying them. All international declarations and importance of their basic articles in democratic life should be taught."

PT21: "Content of the course should be designed in a way that it should create awareness on students. How an individual could contribute to human development, how a human should be, should be taught in accordance with democracy and state management."

4. Conclusion and Suggestions

When the prospective teachers' opinions evaluated in the scope of Citizenship and Democracy Education towards the "Human Rights Education" objectives following conclusions are reached.

Objectives of education are not being achieved.

Human rights violations, their reasons and ways of preventing them should be taught.

Individuals should be raised who are patriotic, responsible, sensitive to environment and human rights.

Human rights Education should be intended to democratic individuals oriented to create a democratic society.

Developing social and humanitarian values should be prioritised.

In teaching activities not only theoretical knowledge should be given but also with the help of technology different examples, methods and education environments should be used.

It is not possible to achieve human rights course objectives 1 hour per week in only a year.

In developing values the quality of rights and principles of utilization should be taught by choosing appropriate methods and role models.

One should be open towards innovations and positive changes.

Lesson is being limited to course book; different sources are not being used adequately.

Everyone should be provided equal rights, no one should be privileged, and duty and responsibility should be taught.

Human rights education should start in very early age and mentality should be taught.

Human rights education course is activities of making an individual more respectful in society and giving it a universal quality.

In Human rights education course students should gain ability to live by synthesizing universal values with national values, course should aim to raise standards of living, it should aim to enhance all aspects of an individual, it should aim to raise individuals with the skills and determination, individuals who have ability to live in harmony with their environment and who can provide appropriate solutions.

Not only with a Eurocentric view but with a universal perspective all countries should be criticized by analysing relative events in their history, they should be open to innovation and change.

Human Rights and Democracy Education should be planned and executed not only as a lesson but also as life itself. It is obvious that with only one hour of theoretical activities individuals can not acquire necessary skills. Without suffocating students with theoretical information it would be more useful to include family and environment and continuing the education with TV, cinema, theatre etc.

Starting educational activities from pre-school, choosing suitable content, method and tools for all education levels, maintaining a positive, critical and universal attitude will provide greatly positive results.

Many studies done on this field have shown us that class environment, disciplinary problems students have or lived, results of socio-cultural interactions, qualities of counselling activities must absolutely made functional in application of program.

Consequently; Teaching and education to promote respect for these rights and freedoms" is the foundation of human rights education (HRE). However, before looking at what human rights education is and how it is practised, it is necessary to clarify what "these rights and freedoms" are that HRE is concerned with. We begin,

therefore, with a short introduction to human rights. A culture where human rights are learned, lived and “acted” for. HRE must mainstream gender awareness and include an intercultural learning dimension. Human rights education should be about learning human rights, Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights, every individual and every organ of society shall strive by teaching and education to promote respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, The World Programme on HRE was established in 2004 to promote the development of a culture of human rights and Providing young people with equal opportunities and experiences enabling them to play a full part in society (Council of Europe, 2017).

References

- Başaran, T. (2007). *İlköğretim okullarında vatandaşlık ve insan hakları eğitimi programının uygulanışına ilişkin sosyal bilgiler öğretmenlerinin görüşleri*. Yayınlanmamış Yüksek Lisans Tezi, Trakya Üniversitesi, Edirne.
- Bilhan, S. (1996). *Eğitim sosyolojisi*. Ankara: Ankara Üniversitesi, EBF Yayınları.
- Council of Europe, (2017), *Introducing Human Rights Education, Council of Europe Portal*. Retrieved from <http://www.coe.int/en/web/compass/introducing-human-rights-education>
- Kepenekçi, Y. K. (2000). *İnsan hakları eğitimi*. Ankara: Anı Yayıncılık.
- Kuçuradi, İ. (1996). *Felsefe ve insan hakları, insan haklarının felsefi temelleri*. Ankara: Türkiye Felsefe Kurumu.
- MEB, TTKB (2010). *İlköğretim vatandaşlık ve demokrasi eğitimi dersi, 8.Sınıf öğretim programı*. Ankara.
- Mumcu, A. (1994). *İnsan hakları&kamu özgürlükleri*. 2.Basım. Ankara: Savaş Yayınları.
- Pepeler, E., & Livan, N. (2016). Ortaokul İngilizce öğretmenlerinin dilbilgisi öğretimine yönelik algıları (malatya ili örneği). *Eğitim ve Öğretim Araştırmaları Dergisi, Kasım 2016 Cilt: 5 Sayı: 4, Makale No: 11* (pp 100-112)
- Ross, A. (2008). *Human rights and education for citizenship, society and identity: Europe and its regions*. London Metropolitan University President, Children’s Identity and Citizenship in Europe ERASMUS Thematic Network. Retrieved May 31, 2014, from <http://dspace.mah.se/bitstream/handle/2043/8204/Human%20rights%20and%20education.pdf?sequence=1>
- Vassiliou, A. (2012). *Citizenship education in Europe*. Retrieved May 31, 2014, from <http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/Eurydice>
- Wilson, N., & Branka, E. (1996). *First steps: A manual for starting human rights education*. Human Rights Education Team, Amnesty International Secretariat, 1 Easton St, London WC1X 8DJ, United Kingdom. London, August.
- Yaşar, M. (2014). *Nitel araştırma*. Retrieved May 31, 2014, from <http://egitim.cu.edu.tr/myfiles/open.aspx?file=2099.ppt>
- Yeşil, R. (2002). *Okul ve ailede insan hakları ve demokrasi eğitimi*. Ankara: Nobel Yayın Dağıtım.
- Yıldırım, A., & Şimşek, H. (2013). *Sosyal bilimlerde nitel araştırma yöntemleri*. Genişletilmiş 9. Baskı. Ankara: Seçkin Yayıncılık.

Note

Note 1. This study is partially based on reports presented at 1st EPO congress May 2010 Balıkesir.

Copyrights

Copyright for this article is retained by the author(s), with first publication rights granted to the journal.

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).