Perceptions of 8th Grade Students in Middle School towards Citizenship Values

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Abstract

The principal aim of this study is to highlight how students in 8th grade of middle school perceive the principal concepts present in Citizenship Education (lessons), namely the values of: citizenship, (personal) rights, responsibility, the state, the law, military service, the right to education, the right to vote and participate in the political process, equality and freedom. The study was conducted using a phenomenological reseacrh model/design which is a type of qualitative research method. The participants in the study comprised of students receiving education at middle school level. While the sample group consisted of a total of 6 students, 3 of which were female and 3 of which were male selected using a purposeful sampling method. As a data collection tool, a partially-completed interview form was used prepared in accordance with the aims of the study. The data obtained from these interviews with the participants were then analyzed and interpreted following the steps prescribed in the phenomenological design model. On examining the results of the study, it was observed that both male and female students held similar views with regard to concepts of citienship which corresponded to various perspectives formed in accordance with their own semantic worlds/interpretations of meaning. Their general perceptions towards the key concepts, were seen to correspond to the learning objectives that the school aimed/intended to teach.

Keywords: values of citizenship/citizenship values, citizenship education, perception, middle-school students, learning objective

1. Introduction

While the concept of citizenship is one that was first discussed with great interest in Ancient Greece, it was not placed within a clear theoretical framework until the renaissance period. This is on account of the fact that in ancient Greece, while certain people were granted citizenship rights, these rights were not accorded to women, children or slaves (Heater, 2007). However, with the onset of the renaissance period, by applying the thoughts of modern intellectuals such as Rousseau and John Locke, a firm foundation was laid that could underpin the concept. In other words, the concept of citizenship that emerged in the ancient Greek states, only found its full expression in modern times (Bauineau, 1996, p. 110; Williams, 2003, p. 209). Rousseau's understanding of citizenship "respect for the human rights and honor of the person" that should be ensured for all individuals (Rousseau, 1996) consituted an important foundation stone to support the development of the concept of citizenship reights. In such a way, the outlines of the concept of citizenship that still represents one of the most discussed sociological concepts in our modern age were drawn, and a framework took shape, the content of which was shaped by modernism to a great degree.

Citizenship may be defined in general terms as a legal bond that sets out the reciprocal/mutual relationships between the state and the individual person with regard to rights, duties and responsibilities (Aybay, 2004, p. 4). Therefore, claims of an individual regarding affiliation or belonging to a particular state and his legal status with regard to that state came to be expressed in terms of a political identity (Erdem, 2010, p. 5). In short, the concept of citizenship defined in ancient Greece, encompasses a number of ideas related to concepts found in modern definitions of citizenship from human rights to obedience to the law, from liberties to responsability, from democratic to civil participation (QCA, 1998).

As a result of modernity, nation-states that were founded with a Republican form of government and that desired to raise individuals who thought and acted in a fashion appropriate to the new political regimes, opened educational institutions that adopted the standards set down/stipulated by modernism. Nation states such as

Germany and France embraced the concept of educational institutions that would create national unity or a sense of national culture, while simultaneously outlining a framework for the citizenship education that would be provided in these schools (Borne, 1996, p. 157; Seeley, 2014). The U.K. and U.S.A. established educational institutions within the context of clearly-defined political, social and cultural goals and this exerted a great influence on developing countries around the World (Cubberley, 2014, p. 379). The processes outlined above involved assisting students to acquire certain skills and values, and to equip them with information regarding citizenship that they would later require to participate in democratic society (Milligan, Moretti, & Oreopoulos, 2004, p. 1669).

The values that education systems should aim to instill, were shaped by the thoughts of the architects of the enlightenment period including Locke and Kant. John Locke who argued that all men (humans) were born free and equal at birth attached great importance to the human mind and conscience. Locke, who likened the human intellect to an empty slate (tabula rasa) believed that were citizens to receive a particular kind of education, following acquisition of certain virtues and skills, they would be rendered capable of undertaking any profession or duty. Locke, who put forward the idea that education should be designed with these fundamental goals in mind, believed in the necessity of raising citizens who from an early age were able to express their individual wishes and desires and were able to act in accordance with a framework of rules so becoming obedient, virtuous, confident, just, and loyal subjects who capable of feeling love and showing respect and who were well acquainted with the nation and world in which they lived.

Kant who emphasized that schools were the effective tool/way to raise citizens, considered it necessary through these insitutions to teach children what should be considered as the "universal good" and raise them to be of benefit to other people (in society) (Kant, 2009, s. 44, s. 57). In addition, the "good citizen" through education becomes one who establishes harmony with society, is conscious of the need for obedience to the law, has gained values of truth/goodness and honesty, is tolerant and able to show empathy, is helpful and respectful of human rights, is respectful to himself and others, is reliable and has acquired and internalized rights and responsibility, such as the payment of taxes and spending for the good of others (Kant, 2009, ss. 109-112, s. 122, s. 125).

Through measured consideration of these thoughts, modern nation states have adopted in accordance with the nature of their political systems citizenship education to serve as a way of ensuring that every individual as a "good citizen" knows his rights and responsibility and is able to exercise these in daily life (Lafer, 2014; Ozfidan & Burlbaw, 2016). In particular, in today's world, such efforts have assumed an even more critical importance to raise individuals who are able to establish harmony with the quickly-changing social values of the contemporary age. For this reason, political administrations attach increasing importance to citizenship edcuation and endeavor to allocate space for it in the school curriculum to the necessary degree.

In this respect, citizenship education has until present been included within the education programs of different countries in different formats including as single discipline (that is as a single subject), multidiscipline lessons (in which the main concepts are broken up into individual courses) or courses as well as a sub-discipline through specific courses presented for limited periods of the school program or indeed through cross-curricular or interdisciplinary studies (teaching the same concepts across a number of school subjects). Values are usually taught within the concept of a subject or discipline taught for a limited period of time or through interdisciplinary or cross-curricular teaching.

Although citizenship eductaion is not considered a discipline in itself in Turkey, it is approached as a subject to be taught at intervals within the context of various other disciplines or subjects. Citizenship education that is particularly featured within the context of Social Studies lessons attempts to raise citizens (of the Turkish Republic) who possess democratic understanding and values, are open to scientific thinking, are respectful to human rights, are able to cooperate with others, have a love of the Republic and a developed democratic consciousness, know their rights and have a sense of responsibility (Turkish Ministry of Education, 2006).

Citizenship education is taught in Turkey, as is the case in many countries, both as an independent lesson and as a subdiscipline, the learning objectives of which are included within other lessons (Merey & Karatekin ve Kuş, 2002). Citizenship education that begins in earnest with the Life Sciences lesson in first grade of primary school, is incorporated into the program of social studies lessons from first grade of the middle school. In particular, within the citizenship education realised within the context of Life Sciences and Social Studies lessons, priority is given to the acquisition of values that will assist in the carrying out of particular responsibility and tasks as citizens. The objectives of these lessons are closely related to the learning objectives of the human rights and

citizenship program; a primary school program sensitive to the program of human rights and citizenship has been recently developed in Turkey (National Ministry of Education, 2006).

When we examine research studies on the topics of the concept of citizenship or perceptions towards it, we find that these are focused primarily on the concept of the "good citizen". To this end, the Turkish model of citizenship aims to raise Turkish citizens who may be described as "good citizens", equipped with democratic attitudes and values, open to scientific thinking, respectful to human rights, with a love for the Turkish Republic and democratic consciousness, who knows their rights and have a sense of responsibility.

While citizenship has been a constant topic of discussion from the time of Aristotle and Plato to our present time, in particular from the start of the 21st Century, the issue has featured prominently on the educational agenda at both a national and international level. The relationship between citizenship and democracy, has meant that the concept of citizenship has become a much researched and debated one. Several studies found out that the concept of citizenships' discussions are continuing as to what actual aims citizenship education, that occupies an important position in the teaching of values within educational programs (Aydin, 2012; Kaya & Aydin, 2014), and by extension what the content of those citizenship lessons should be so that they reach the goals that they set (Faltis, 2014). In designing a citizenship program, a number of factors exert an influence, most notably relating to educational policies but also including such aspects as socio-cultural composition of students, geographical location, economic structure, historical development and position globally (Aydin & Tonbuloglu, 2014; Kaya, 2015). The question as to which of thse factors should be given priority is an issue which is still under research and discussion in Turkey as is the case in other countries in the World (Doğanay, 2009; Doğanay & Sarı, 2009; Yılmaz, Tunç Şahin, & Bengiç, 2009).

Citizenship Education, that is included within the framework of different school subjects from the first years of primary school, is incorporated into the Social Studies curriculum as a subdiscipline or a course to be taught at a specific time within the framework of the humanities. In particular, in 8th Class through the Human Rights and Citizenship lesson that is taught as a subdiscipline/course within the framework of social sciences, there are attempts to help students to acquire certain values within a clear framework of objects. The main aim of this study is to reveal how students perceived the principal learning objectives of the Human Rights and Citizenship Lesson that had been incorporated into the Social Studies program. In this regard, the researcher tried to find answers to the following questions.

What are the perceptions of students towards:

- the concept of "citizenship"?
- the concepts of "rights" and "responsibilities"?
- the concept of "the state"?
- the concept of "the legal system/laws"?
- the concept of "partipation in elections"?
- the concept of "military service"?
- the concept of "right to education"?
- the concepts of "equality" and "freedom"?

2. Method

2.1 Research Model/Design

In this research study, that attempted to determine how students in eighth-grade classes perceived the principal concepts of Citizenship Education, a phenomenological model was selected as the research design model. According to the phenomenological method, the role of the researcher is to "identify and describe unmediated experimental data, to analyze and interpret" (Schrag, 2006, s. 206). Phenomenology has as its essence the focus on individual experiences. Therefore, the researcher through this approach focuses on the personal experiences of the participant, and examines his perceptions and the meanings that he associated with particular events. Furthermore, phenomenology, on account of the fact that it is a descriptive research method, rather than generalize facts, prioritizes the description of them (Baş & Akturan, 2008). In such a way, this design aims to analyze at depth how the individual expresses experiences he/she has göne through in light of his/her own semantic world namely the meaning he/she attaches to those experiences. On account of its suitablitiy for the purposes of the research in question (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2011), the method outlined was chosen for this study.

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2.2 Study Group

The group of participants (sample group) for this study, on account of the fact that it was a phenomenological study, consisted of six students from an 8th grade middle school class appropriate to the aim of the research study situated in X province within the Marmara region of Turkey. Within the context of the study, a total of 6 students (3 male, 3 female) were interviewed. The selection of the participants was carried out using a purposeful sampling method. In order to keep the identities of the students secret, all students were given a codename; a name and number from 1 to 6 (Male participants were known as M1, M2 and M3 and female participants as F1, F2 and F3).

2.3 Data Collection and Analysis

In phenomenological studies, a successful study depends on the uniform collection of data. In this respect, in the research study that was conducted in 2014-2015 school/academic year, interviews were used as the tool for data collection. Interviews that consitute one of the most effective ways in accessing the semantic worlds of/semantic connections established by individuals, are a frequently employed technique in phenomenological research studies on account of the fact that they allow participants to give expression to the semantic interpretations that they make during the course of the research (Yıldırm & Şimşek, 2011).

On a date announced in advance, participants attended an interview conducted using a semi-completed interview from that had been prepared in accordance with the aims of the research study. The interviews were conducted on an individual basis; the shortest of which took 25, and the the longest of which lasted 50 minutes. The interviews conducted were then recorded and then written transcripts of the audio recordings were then made. After each interview, the text was encoded and a comparison was then carried out between all of the interview texts. The transcripts of the interview recordings, were then examined by researchers from a holistic perspective, and an overall idea was obtained with regard to the meanings expressed by the participants. According to Yıldırım and Şimşek (2011), the detailed reporting of the data with explanations of how the results were arrived at and how the data were analyzed and presented represents an imprtant criterion for the validity and reliability of this type of research study.

In the analysis of the data for the study, a method of analysis appropriate to the descriptive analysis method was employed. According to Sanders, this method is realized in four steps (cited, Baş & Akuman, 2008):

• The reading of data so as to understand the information as a whole concept.

• The division/separation of the explanations of participants into meaningful units.

• The transformation into meaningful units.

• By merging/synthesizing the transformed significant units, the highlighting of the composition/make-up of the phenomenon and its essence.

3. Findings and Interpretation

The participants had their views recorded in accordance with the phenomenological nature of the study; the answers that they procided with regard to each concept were then separately placed under different headings and interpreted. The views of students collected under certain headings were evaluated according to the way they were recorded, namely as common or shared viewpoints.

3.1 Perceptions of the Concept "Citizenship"

When considering the perceptions of students who participated in the research towards the concept of citizenship, in general a viewpoint emerged which regarded citizenship as "having (a) responsibility towards the state and society and obeying the rules". We observed that descriptions such as "being part of a 'motherland' or living in a nation" were also submitted. When asked as to the responsibilities of the citizen, these were generally expressed as "paying taxes and doing your military service".

When we look at these expressions more closely we can understand that students perceive that concept of citizenship as more of a social than a political one. In addition to the general perceptions outlined above, some students in their expressions/responses highlighted more than a single aspect. For example, M2 in his words, stated:

When we speak of a citizen, usually responsibilities come to mind. Just as a person has responsibilities towards the state and his own society, the state has responsibilities towards us in the areas of education, health and law. The citizen at the same time has certain duties such as voting, performng his military service or paying taxes.

As can be seen from the student's comment, the students' perceptions of citizenship have taken shape from the information he has received from his environment and school; it can be clearly understood that these perceptions have tended to emphasize responsibility. This is because the responsibilities that students mentioned are generally learned from these two areas.

On examination of how the concept of Turkish citizen was perceived, it could be observed that in general students held a perception close to the definition included in the Turkish consitiution: "everyone who feels he is a Turk is a Turkish citizen". Rather than Turkish citizenship being based on blood ties, they expressed the thought that it was much more closely related to how they described themsleves or how they felt about themselves. Moreover, certain participants were seen to hold perceptions such as those of a Turkish citizen being: "of a good character", "someone who loves their country", "who gives everything for his country" or " a person of 'high' value(s)".

It could be seen that on examining the perceptions of students towards the concept of the Turkish citizen, their viewpoints were largely similar to that adopted by Atatürk (the first President of the Turkish Republic) and the definitions included in the text books they used. Furthermore, it was observed that in addition to the general perception, there were also opinion expressed that reflected the nationalist atttude of exalting the status of Turkish citizenship. Indeed, F5's comments that there needed to be an examination to measure certain values before allowing people to obtain Turkish citizenship was indicative of this viewpoint. The students perceptions as to the concept of citizenship can be seen to originate from one of three important factors; first of all, the information included in the present school curriculum. The other two factors may be said to be the immediate environment and the influence of the media.

3.2 Perceptions of the Concept of "Rights"

When we examine the general perceptions of the students who participated in the research study with regard to the concept of rights, it can be observed that the participants perceive this concept as comprising "freedoms that the state provides so that we may live peacefully and comfortably". In addition, other perceptions were articulated such as "rights that come from birth (originating from birth) (M1)", "rights of behavior, speech and thought (M2)", "when they don't exist, something that is missing is a person's life (F3)", "rules of behavior set out in the constitution (F5) and "personal freedom (M6)".

The fact that the students who participated in the study, generally regarded the concept in terms of the areas that the state had provided to them (as citizens), demonstrates that this concept was perceived more from a political perspective. The responses of some of the students to this concept do however indicate that the concept is perceived as the demand or asking for rights or expectation of rights within an ordered relationship with the state.

When participants were asked regarding their perceptions regarding the fundamental rights that they enjoyed, "the right to education, right to life and the right to vote and right to representation" were mentioned. Furthermore, it was observed that participants also held different perceptions of fundamental rights such as "the right to work (F3)", "the right to travel (F3)", "the right to shelter (F4)" and "the right for a woman to receive an inheritance (F4)".

With regard to fundamental rights, while for children of this age or students who are receiving education in the present age, the right to education and right to life may be seen as natural rights (however much this concept may be considered as erroneous or not), the emphasis on the right to vote or right to representation may be expected to be observed more frequently among students of a higher age group. While the fact that one of the fundamental rights expressed by the students, that of the right to education may be a natural result of the participants' perceptions formed on account of their being students, the right to life is seen to be a right that is featured in the perceptions of all members of society. In this context, it can be claimed that as concerns the source of perceptions regarding the right to vote and right to representation, the political perceptions conveyed through the school curriculum, immediate environment and by means of the media exercise a great influence.

3.3 Perceptions of the Concept of "Responsibility"

With regard to the perceptions of the students who participated in the study concerning the concept of responsibility, these were expressed in the form of "duties towards society and first and foremost, the state and the immediate environment". Moreover, when we examine the perceptions towards the concept of responsibility, different descriptions were offered such as "the duty that is assigned to us to raise the prosperity and welfare of the country (F4)" and to "fulfill our duty". The participants, in their capacity as students felt the responsibility to include (the need to) "to continue education and to pass exams successfully".

As seen above, when the concept of citizen is considered in light of the students' perceptions of responsibility within an even wider general concept of (social) responsibility, they may be examined in the concept of perceptions of duty towards society and the state. Furthermore, it may be obesrved that the concepts of citizenship and responsibility correspond with one another. It follows that the existence of such a perception leads us to consider the concept of citizenship as a wide area/space that encompasses the concept of responsibility.

As a citizen, students' perceptions as far as what constitute fundamental responsibilities are seen to be aspects such as "doing military service and paying tax". Furthermore, although "the right to vote and right to represenation" are considered (in general terms) as "rights", they were observed to be perceived by students as basic responsibilities. In addition, the statement "to continue education and to be successful" as something that is to be evaluated within the context of a right, namely the right to education, was perceived as a responsibility by students. It was also observed that certain students held the perception that "protection of the environment and behaving sensitively to the environment (M2 and F3)" were important.

When examining the perceptions held by students towards fundamental responsibilities, they mentioned responsibilities that could be recalled and expressed by all citizens. The fact that the same perceptions were formed and shared by both female and male students with regard to military service, may be regarded as a result of the manner in which every section of society looks positively on the institution. This is because military service is regarded more as a source of honor and pride than a duty in itself. There is another important point that should be stressed with regard to the students' perceptions of responsibility; at this age where education is given priority by the students, their continuing at their studies and the consciousness of the importance of being successful at them, it would be expected that students would form perceptions of responsibility with regard to the these aspects.

3.4 Perceptions of the Concept of "State"

The perceptions with regard to the concept of state held by students who participated in the study were identified as "the construct or system created to govern/rule society and to meet the needs of society". In addition to this, it was observed that students perceived the concept of the state in the following ways: "a politically unified territory (M2)", "a construct that ensures a good and equitable life (F3)", "something that protects people from confusion and disorder (F5)" and a "form of governance, a prime minister or president (M1)".

There has been an attempt to define the concept of the state from ancient times to the present, and if attention is paid to the fact that the state is a concept, the definition of which has been subject to great change over time, this means that there exist a lot of different perceptions in this regard. Nevertheless, the state was seen in the general perception of students to be above all "an organisation that meets the needs of people". Another important perception of students was the perception of the "duty of the state to govern society". With respect to this perception, some of the students also held another political perception of the state, namely that it was a political entity that enjoyed territorial intergrity. Another important perception among students was seen to be the idea that the state maintained order and served to provide the creation of conditions where people could live well.

As regards views concerning the elements that make up the state; these were expressed in general terms as "the people, the laws and the government or administration". Furthermore, there were students who held different perceptions to these and expressed "language (M1 and M2)", "territory (M2 and M6)", "the flag (F4)", "the leader (F5)" and "the form of governance (F4)" as elements of the state.

On examining the perceptions of students with regard to the elements that make up the state, it can be identified that the elements of the person and governance or administration were regarded as important. Laws, were regarded by students as essential elements in the formation of a strong state, for its permanence and survivability and the guarantee of social order. Moreover, in addition to some students who regarded the fundamental elements of the state as being territory and the flag, there were others who considered elements such as the form of government and the leader as important. In general, on examination of the students perceptions regarding the elements that constitute a state, it can be identified that different types of perception exist in their semantic worlds and in the way they attach meaning to concepts.

3.5 The Perception of the Concepts "Legality and the Law"

When we examine the general viewpoints of students participating in the study with regard to the concept of "Legality and the Law", it can be identified that these concepts are generally perceived in terms of "rules that are necessary to provide order in society and in particular expression of what we are not to do". In addition ,we see the feelings articulated by certain participants regarding the concept of law expressed as follows "(something)

that ensures a comfortable and safe life (F5)", "our rights and responsibilities that determine what we should do inside society (F4)", "the thing that creates the principles for life in society (M1)", and "the thing that prevents the emergence of problems in society (F3)".

Laws, that are perceived as being among the elements that constitute a state, are seen from the perspective of regulatory rules that ensure order in society. While these regulatory rules represent in the perceptions of some students rules for a secure and safe life within society, according to other students' perceptions these are rules that emerge as a natural result of the damaging behavior of people. When we examine the perceptions of students with respect to laws, it can be stated that although their perceptions may differ they all feel the existence of laws as a state of affairs which is correct.

3.6 Perceptions of the "Right to Vote and Right to Representation"

When we examine the views of students participating in the study with regard to the right to vote and the right to be represented, we can observe that a general perspective emerges of "the choice of individuals in society to choose a person or party in accordance with their own thoughts". In addition to the above, it was identified that students had different levels of perception on the topic with statements such as "it is a right necessary for the existence of democracy (M1)", "it is a positive right for the existence of justice and equaliry (F4 and F5)", and "it is the right to be able to vote freely (F3)". However, the perception that was emphasized most frequently by participants was "the reflection of thoughts in the governance or administration (of the state)". In such a way, they expressed the value they attached to the human aspect of representation.

If we think about the age group and level of the students and the experiences that have had with regard to voting and representation in their own lives, these are mainly found in the elections held to form school councils. Nevertheless, in addition to the perceptions formed through their own experiences with voting and representation, it is seen that factors such as their environment or media are seen to exert an influence on their thinking. Indeed, if we look at the general perceptions of students, it can be seen that students are supporters of the perception of democracy as being a society that elects or chooses people to rule it in accordance with its own thoughts and that elements such as equality and freedom of thought are necessary for democracy.

3.7 Perceptions of the Concept "The Right to Education"

While the perceptions of students who participated in the study are examined with regard to the concept of "the right to education", it can be observed that in general this right is perceived as "the open access to knowledge to everyone in society on a free basis (without money)". Other perceptions of students were identified as "something that contributed to the development of society and its reaching of a level of contemporary civilization (F5)", "a material opportunity that brought about investment in the (development of the) country and a defeat of ignorance (M6)", "and the provision of equal rights in education to create a conscious society (F3)".

With regard to the right to education it was observed that students held perceptions that education should be delivered in conditions of equality or in other words, within a spirit of equality of opportunity, education should be free of charge to all and accessible to to all with all students who are able to succeed having the right to continue their studies at higher levels. Furthermore, by ensuring the right to education and other such measures, society will develop and reach a level of contemporary civilization and contribute to the wider progress of the nation.

3.8 Perceptions of "Equality"

When the perceptions of students participating in the study are considered, it can be observed that these generally express the thought that "everyone should be able to benefit to an equal degree from the opportunities provided by the state". The students who were seen to have different levels of perception with regard to the concept of equality submitted statements such as "it is an important right for the continuation of society (M1)", "the absence of disorder or confusion among people and the absence of superiority of one person over another (M1)", "the equality of all (people) before the law irrespective of race, langauge, religious difference or income" and "possessing the same rights: when this doesn't exist this leads to a lack of balance in the country and is related to the principle of populism (M6)". It was observed that students in general held perceptions that there should be equality within the field/sphere of education.

It was also observed with regard to the concept of equality, that students generally felt that the state should maintain an equal distance to all citizens. It can be suggested that the basis for this perception lies in the belief that the state should be an institution that ensures equality among citizens. Furthermore, it can be stated that there existed the perception that citizens could not manage to ensure equality among themselves. Moreover, students, with regard to the concept of equality, were seen to attach impotance to order in society as reflected by

perceptions such as society is seen as important for the continuation of society, everyone is equal as human beings, and if there should be no equality, then there would be a lack of balance/order in society.

3.9 Perceptions of the Concept of "Freedom"

When we examine the perceptions of students who participated in the research study with regard to the concept of freedom, it can be seen that in general an expression emerges of "not interfering in the freedom of another and/or not doing this within the framework of rules that we requested/demanded". Students offered other perspectives that did not differ greatly from the general perspective offered above. "not depriving another of a right (M1)", and "Freedom is a right that ends where it started (M6)". The liberties that were seen as being the most important were "the freedom to life", "freedom of movement" and "freedom in education/of thought".

When we examine the perceptions of students with regard to the concept of freedom, a general expression was elicited that when a person causes damage or harm to others then the rights granted to that person may be curtailed. This can be seen clearly in the types of freedoms that they mentioned. These were types of liberites that could be exercised without causing harm to the rights to freedom of others. These may be described as basic liberties.

4. Discussion and Results

It can be observed that students in 4th class have formed concepts of citizenship in accordance with their perceptions as a result of their encountering of them during their education from the early periods of primary school, first and foremost through the topic of Human Rights and Citizenship that has been included as a topic of study within the school program and as a result of their internalization of these concepts both from personal experience and exposure to factors such as their environment, the media and other forms of communication. However much an education institution may endeavor to help students as individuals to acquire social and personal attributes through the inclusion of concepts, principles and generalizations in their educational processes, there still exist a number of other factors that influence students in their personal lives. It should be particularly emphasized that the worldview of every student develops under the influence of his family, friends and other environmental factors and takes shape through his individual experiences through a process of exposure over time to concepts, principles and generalizations.

Students encounter human rights and citizenship values in particular in 7th grade as a subdiscipline/component of Social Studies lessons and these also are included as a partial discipline/study course taught over a prescribed period in 8th class as part of History of the Turkish Revolution and Kemalism.

In this study, there was an attempt to determine perception towards certain concepts the understanding and internalization of which are considered as the fundamental learning objectives of the Human Rights and Citizenship educational program such as citizenship, rights, responsablity, the state, the right to education, military service, the law, equality and freedom.

When we examine the perceptions of students participating in the study with respect to the concept of citizenship, it can be seen that the participants emphasised responsibility that encompassed both social and political dimensions. It was observed that these feeling of responsibility were displayed to both the state and the society. While the perceptions of responsibility towards the state were seen to largely correspond to those found in the 1998 lesson program/curriculum, the feelings of responsability towards those in society were seen to be related more to those found in the 2010 curriculum/program. It follows that the fact that the citizenship concept is perceived by students in the form of both responsibility to the state and to the society, may be a reflection of the validity of the effect of both programs... It was observed that the perception of what it meant to be a Turkish citizen was of a democratic nature and that citizenship was seen as a measure of how one felt to be a Turk.

With regard to the issue of rights which is considered to be one of the two basic elements of the concept of citizenship, it was identified that from the point of view of students, this was perceived first and foremost as the freedom that was granted by the state. The perceptions of the students with regard to this concept were still perceived as the searching or demand for rights or expectations of rights along an axis that defined the relationship to the state. The rights that the students focused most frequently upon were the right to education, right to life and the right to vote and the right to representation. In particular, the fact that the right to education featured so prominently in the perceptions of the students is a natural one.

It was also observed that the concept of citizenship was seen in the students perspectives of students as being related to the duties the individual was required to fulfill towards society and the state. The fundamental responsabilities of the citizen were identified as continuing education, performing military service and paying taxes. Yılmaz, Tunç Şahin and Bengiç (2009) in a similar study observed that the majority of students regarded

the most important duty of citizenship was military service. In addition, other responsabilities cited by students included obedience of laws and payment of taxes. In a study conducted by Öcal and Kemerkaya (2011), values, such as payment of taxes and love of the motherland were regarded as fundamental duties of citizenship. In a similar way, it was observed in this study that students perceived continuing in education, serving in the military and paying taxes as important responsibility. At the same time, serving in the military and to paying taxes that shows people are responses their citizenship duties and it may be considered as demonstrations of patriotism (Feldmann, 2007). In such a way, it may be seen that the students hold perceptions of responsibility which are closely related to patriotism.

When the 2010 program for Citizenship and Democracy lessons is examined, although it is important to notice that rights and freedoms have been kept separate from duties and responsibility so that students may appreciate the differences between the concepts (Elkatmış, 2013), it was observed that these two concepts are often intertwined or indistinguishable in the perceptions of the participants (Abowitz & Harnish, 2006; Feldmann, 2007). In many studies, rights and responsibilities have been seen to be confused in the same way, and in certain cases responsibilities and in others rights have been prioritized (Abowitz & Harnish, 2006; Feldmann, 2007). In this regard, there is a clear indication of a situation that highlights the necessity to differentiate between these concepts. However, on inspection of the 2010 lesson program, importance was emphasized of stressing that "duties and responsibilities are not merely towards the state, but also between people, other living things and objects" (Elkatmış, 2013); this was seen to have provided added value during the sharing of the perceptions of the participants.

One of the most striking concepts, and yet for the students one of the most abstract ones, namely that of the state, was perceived as a construct or duty established to govern or administer the state so as to address/meet the needs of the people. Certain students also shared the peception that, in addition to the above the state was responsible for maintaining order and ending chaos or disorder. In a similar study carried out by Yılmaz, Tunç Şahin and Bengiç (2009), students saw the state as a (source of) power or authority with a democratic structure or composition entrusted to apply the law and obliged to carry out service to the nation. Although there exist different perceptions between the two studies, it should be emphasized that there is a common perception that the state is a construct/institution that above all is obliged to serve the nation and meet the needs of the nation/people. When we examine the students' perspectives in this study with respect to the elements that make up the state, while the students emphasize the elements of individual person, the government or administration and the law, according to the results of research conducted by Yılmaz, Tunç Şahin and Bengiç (2009), the participants explained the concept of the state more with reference to values of the law and the nation.

The perceptions of the students regarding legality and the law, demonstrated that there was a general perception of rules designed for things people should not do so as to ensure order in society; it was also observed that students expressed that there were both prohibitive and regulatory laws. Simultaneously, it was observed that students also held the perception that in order to maintain order, there needed to exist prohibitive laws and interdictions.

It was also observed that the students who participated in the study, also perceived democratic rights first and foremost as the right to vote and to be represented and to choose rulers who would be able to represent their thoughts or act in accordance with their thinking. It also emerged that students held the perception that the right to vote and be represented were among the greatest necessities of an equal, fair and free society.

It was also observed with regard to the students' perceptions concerning military service that they saw the necessity for a trained army that would protect them in certain situations such as war or other kinds of attack, and that military service was a responsibility that had to be shouldered. Furthermore, certain studnts were seen to hold perceptions that established connections between military service and patriotism and regarded it as a duty necessary for the survival and protection of the nation.

The right to education was regarded in general by students as a fundamental right; education was perceived as a right that should be free and accessible to everyone. While certain students were of the perception that through this right to education and opportunities offered to students, society will be able to acquire knowledge and reach the level of contemporary countries. Some students also held the perception that the right to education would help ensure the esatblishment of equality and progress in the country. In a similar study carried out with teacher candidates/teacher trainees, it was identified that participants to a great degree attached value to the concept of the right to education (Yazıcı, 2011). The fact that both the teachers of the future and students hold similar perceptions is a situation which adds value to the educational process and the realization of educational targets and goals.

The concept of equality, that represents one of the fundamental values of advanced democracy, is seen to be perceived in general as the deriving of equal benefit from the opportunities offered to all citizens by the state. In other words, it can be seen that rather than defining what equality is, students focused more on how it should be. When we examine similar studies carried out on the same topic (Sadık & Sarı, 2012), it has been observed that participants are aware of concepts such as equality and justice.

The concept of freedom, that consitiutes one of the fundamental elements of advanced democracy, was considered by students within the wider framework of rights. It was seen that students in their general perceptions took freedom to mean exercising one's own rights without infringing or harming the rights of others Nayır and Akar (2009) in their study conducted on the issue also reached the conclusion that freedon is largely seen in terms of not causing harm to yourself or others. This also showed that students held the perception that a limit could be placed on freedom emanating from a shared understanding that freedom lay in the right to exercise one's own rights while not harming or hurting others. In a similar study, researchers indicated that the concept of freedom was placed at a higher level than the other values of citizenship (Gürbüz & Gündüz, 2011). This is an indication that this concept occupies an important place in the thinking of students. A similar result emerged in a study conducted with regard to attitudes of teacher trainees/teacher candidates (Yazıcı, 2011). Therefore, it can be clearly identified that the concept of freedom is an important one in school environments.

In conclusion, the citizenship values that have been considered for inclusion in this study are covered at length both in the textbook used Citizenship and Democracy Education as well as in the form of a course element within the textbook used for Social Studies. It has been observed that participants hold a number of reflexive values that featured prominently in the old program related to patriotism, execution of duties and responsible citizenship as well as harboring a number of perceptions that were given priority in the new program such as rights and responsibilities regarding voting and representation, the exercising of military duties, payment of taxes and obedience of the law.

In certain studies (Kaldırım, 2005), it has been determined that fundamental concepts of citizenship have not been sufficiently taught in schools (Kıral & Kıral, 2009); the results of many similar studies have served to support this research.

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