

Knowledge Level of Pre-Service Teachers in the Faculty of Education about Student Rights

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Abstract

As regards this study, it was aimed to determine the knowledge level of pre-service teachers in YYU faculty of education about student rights. The population of the study consisted of 3538 undergraduates in 2010-2011 academic year of YYU. By stratified and multi-phase sampling, 538 students from all departments and grades were randomly selected. As a data collection tool, "Student Rights Knowledge Survey" which was developed the researcher, was used. The data were analysed by using SPSS statistical package. The survey was examined in terms of factorial structure and model appropriateness through exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis. As a result, it was found out that the rights' knowledge of prospective teachers studying at faculty of education was over the level. Another finding showed that they were knowledgeable enough about educational rights, registration rights, exemption and seeking justice, average about social rights and course selection. According to another finding, female students were more knowledgeable about seeking justice, educational rights and exemption rights, FAPT students had more knowledge about seeking justice rights than science students, and science students had less knowledge about educational rights than FAPT students and social students. It was also seen that junior students had less knowledge about social rights than senior students; freshman students had less knowledge about registration rights than senior students, and freshman students had also less knowledge about course selection rights than junior and senior students. The current research was ended by results and discussion.

Key Words

Student Rights, University Students, Faculty of Education, Knowledge about Rights.

Right is a benefit of an individual for being protected which is described by law (Akıntürk, 2008). Law defines an order; right, on the other hand refers to a benefit protected by law (Akyüz, 2006). The right gives individuals necessary power and opportunities about a subject, provides freedom about behaving and acting according to law or not, and means legal usage which can be used against others (individuals, groups, society, delegates of

society, humanity) (Tice, 1976). The rights are divided into two as public rights and private rights (Karaman Kepenekçi, 2004, 2008). Public rights are also divided into two: Generally qualified public rights and specially qualified public rights (Akyüz, 2006). Student rights are specially qualified public rights. Each right bases on a law rule. Each right has an owner. Beings that have rights are called as individuals in law (Akıntürk, 2008). College students studying at a university have rights as being individuals. Student rights, from general to specific, are human rights, participation rights in organizations and structural and other legal rights (Tice). It is possible to order these rights in the speciality of university as educational, participation, seeking justice, social, cultural rights (Resmi Gazete, 2010). Student rights are found first in forensic documents and national legislation.

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According to Universal Declaration of Human Rights accepted in December 10, 1948, each individual has the educational right. Education should be free at least during basic educational grades. Basic education is compulsory. Everyone should benefit from technical and vocational education. Higher education, on the other hand, should be open to every person according to their abilities (Şişman, 2006; Tice, 1976). International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights adopted by United Nations made Universal Declaration of Human Rights strengthened. The covenant, which was accepted on December 16, 1966, became effective on January 3, 1976. In the covenant, educational right was regulated comprehensively, and by the covenant countries were nominated to form basic facilities of educational system and to provide educational organizations and opportunities (Sencer, 1988). One of the international contracts related to education is United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. The convention was accepted by United Nations on November 20, 1989. It was inured in Turkey by the Official Journal of dated 27.01.1995 and numbered 22184 (Resmi Gazete, 1995). The convention became an internal source of law in relation to 90 of the Constitution article (Özdemir Uluç, 2008). The aim of the convention is to identify universal principals for protection and development of children, to protect them against all kinds of neglect, abuse and misconduct. Also, it is intended to form a frame which provides children programs for the development of their potentials and abilities (Akyüz, 2010). The Treaty of Amsterdam which integrated all other European treaties, made two crucial regulations regarding education. Those regulations are the 149 and 150 of the Treaty article. The articles put forth education and educational policies for consideration (Bolayır, 2000; Topsakal, 2003). Education was taken into consideration in the European Union Constitution (the Lisbon Treaty) that was accepted in 2009, and by Life-long Learning Program, student rights were determined (T.C. Başbakanlık Devlet Planlama Başkanlığı, 2010). Educational freedom was acknowledged in the European Convention on Human Rights which was prepared by the European Commission to protect human rights globally, and became effective in September 3, 1953 (Karaman Kepenekçi, 2008). The goal of education in international educational law can be expressed as to reinforce respect for human rights and freedom, to strengthen personal development, to make individuals take part in a free society actively, and to spread mutual friendship, understanding and tolerance (UNICEF, 2007).

Educational right was handled as a social basic right in the 1982 Constitution as a national legislation (Akyüz, 2006; Karaman Kepenekçi, 2006). Individual application to the Supreme Court was acknowledged after September 12, 2010 referendum with a new regulation (Arslan & Kayaçecek, 2010). The Turkish Educational System is being carried out according to the principals of the 14.06.1973 dated and 1739 numbered National Education Basic Law (Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı [MEB], 2007). Some goals in the Law such as general goals (e.g. raising citizens, personality development, professional development), specific goals (e.g. goals of preschool education, elementary, secondary, higher education and non-formal education), and some principles as universality and equality, orientation, educational right, and opportunity and facility equality are related to student rights (Akyüz, 2006). Education and students are identified in seventh section of the Law of Higher Education (Alışkan, 2007). Student rights take part in student regulations (Resmi Gazete, 2010).

It is observed in the related literature that student rights are handled according to both in general and levels of education (Abinanti & Tripp & Arcata CA, 1976; Aydın, 2003a; Bureau of Indian Affairs, 1974; Indiana University, 2011; Washington Office of the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, 1976; Wood, Kelley, Test, & Fowler, 2010). Another study focused on academic rights in American colleges (Horowitz, 2010). Student rights and responsibilities at the Technical University of Varna, Bulgaria were gathered in a guide (Varna Teknik Üniversitesi, 2011). Turkish educational institutions take some decisions about student rights and responsibilities as seen on studies abroad (Ankara Üniversitesi, 2001; Aydın, 2003b; Koç Üniversitesi, 2011). In a study focused on beliefs of high school students in America about which rights they had and which rights they did not, it was found out that although they gave ironic, funny and full of surprises responses, most of the students had knowledge of their rights. The other finding of this study was the manifestation of level of knowledge of rights (Kriebel, 2003). In another study which was conducted in the USA and focused on the importance of student knowledge and awareness of their legal rights, it was concluded that the subject was a necessity for teacher education programs, writing student rights booklets had great importance, and designing in-service trainings for teachers which are related to the subject in order to make them help students become aware of and minimize suffering was another necessity (Simpson, 1980).

Results and Discussion

The first result according to the findings of this study was that students at the faculty of education had enough knowledge regarding student rights. Educational administrators evaluated this result that students read regulations of their departments from the university's web page, and added that students were also getting information from educational administrators. This result was parallel to the findings of related studies in terms of students' general knowledge level (Tican, 2005) and their lack of knowledge regarding specific knowledge, treatment and detail (Dönmez & Özer, 2009).

The second result based on findings showed that students at the faculty of education had enough knowledge concerning educational rights, registration rights, and exemption and seeking justice rights. However, they had middle-level knowledge about social rights and course selection rights. This result was found to be parallel to related literature (Özden Aras, 2006).

The third result was that female students were more knowledgeable in terms of seeking justice, educational rights and exception and passing the course rights than male students. No significant difference was found between females and males concerning knowledge about social rights, registration rights and course selection rights. The result was also seen to be parallel with related literature (Dönmez & Özer, 2009; Güdek 2007; Gülveren, 2007; Karahan, 2003; Övet, 2006; Özdemir Uluç, 2008; Özden Aras, 2006; Tican, 2005).

The fourth result based on the findings of current study showed that fine arts and physical training (FAPT) students had more knowledge about seeking justice than science students, science students had less knowledge about educational rights than fine arts and physical training (FAPT) and social students, and science students also had less knowledge about social rights than fine arts and physical training (FAPT) and social students. For registration rights, exemption rights and course selection rights, on the other hand, no significant difference was found to be among departments. This result was also supported with related literature (Dönmez & Özer, 2009; Karahan, 2003; Özdemir Uluç, 2008; Türkçapar, 2007).

The fifth result based on the findings was that, regarding social rights, junior students had less knowledge than senior students. In terms of registration rights, freshman students had less knowledge than senior students. Concerning course

selection rights, freshman students had also less knowledge than junior and senior students. No significant difference was found among grades. The result was parallel with related literature (Dönmez & Özer, 2009; Karahan, 2003; Özdemir Uluç, 2008).

Suggestions

Based on the results, following suggestions can be recommended:

1. Student advisors and educational administrators should support the students according to following points:
 - a) To all students about social rights and course selection rights,
 - b) For departments; course selection rights to all departments, and social rights to science and social departments,
 - c) For grades; seeking justice to junior students, social rights to freshman and junior students, and course selection rights to all grades

Student rights seminars can be arranged during the academic year to achieve these points. Members of Office of Legal Affairs from the Rectorate can make contributions to these seminars.

2. Orientations can be arranged for freshman students who were found to have less knowledge about registration and course selection rights than upper grade students at the beginning of each academic year.
3. A booklet including student rights and advertisement of the university can be distributed to each student during registration.
4. Seminars and in-service trainings about practice of student rights can be arranged to student advisors and educational administrators. Members of Office of Legal Affairs from the Rectorate can make contributions while arranging these seminars and in-service trainings.
5. This study should be replicated with whole university students, and other educational levels such as elementary and secondary levels.
6. The rights are being studied with the responsibilities in the literature. Therefore, these two subjects can be studied together in other researches.

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