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# **Perceptions of Turkish And British Student Teachers On European-ness and The Role of Citizenship Education**

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## **Abstract**

*This study aims to find out Turkish and British student teachers' perceptions of Turkey's place in the European Union and of what it means to be 'European'. Perceptions and beliefs are strong determinants of people's action, and teachers' actions shape the hearts and minds of pupils in schools, and so this study also explores the role of citizenship education in shaping European citizenship. Data was collected through a semi-structured questionnaire with the sample selected from among student teachers of the University of Usak, Turkey and the University of Leicester, England.*

A key finding suggests that neither the Turkish nor the British student teachers consider Turkey to be an integral part of Europe. However, whilst both groups think citizenship education is key to creating 'good citizens', the Turkish student teachers place a strong emphasis on national identity and Turkish citizenship whilst the British focus more on democracy, social justice, global citizenship and human rights.

## **Introduction**

This paper explores perceptions on Turkey's European-ness and the role of citizenship education in creating 'European citizens' of British and Turkish student teachers. First, the theoretical framework is drawn to discuss the need and the basis for citizenship education touching upon the Europeanisation process. Then Turkey's Europeanness will be discussed. The findings from the data are presented in two dimensions: the role of citizenship education in creating good citizens and Turkey's Europeanness through the views of British and Turkish student teachers.

## **Citizenship and Citizenship Education**

For a number of reasons, social theorists have given citizenship and citizenship education increasingly strong attention during the recent decades. Globalisation has impacted on highly differentiated societies, reducing the power of national governments to make changes regarded as essential by the communities they serve (Heck, 2003; Gülmez, 1993). One of the responses of national governments to globalisation has been the inclusion of citizenship education in their national curricula, in an attempt to "...protect and reconstruct national identities, not least through the development of national curricula...in which elements of national culture and heritage figure strongly" (Hargreaves, 1997: 342). It has been particularly important for multi-cultural societies such as Britain to revive and re-create a national identity through recognition of cultural differences and with the voices of the professionals (teachers) actively involved in that process (Hargreaves, 1997). Establishing common goals and shared visions became very important for teachers as change agents (Ben-Peretz, 2001; Esteve, 2000).

Citizenship has many different meanings depending on the countries and contexts in which it is used; for the purposes of this study we take Bryan Turner's definition of "a set of practices (juridical, political, economic and cultural) which define a person as a competent member of society, and which as a consequence shape the flow of resources to persons and social groups" (Turner, 1993: 2). Citizenship education has commonly been intended to help integrate a diverse population into a single national culture, based on the principles of freedom, equality and human rights. Its basis is the conviction that the state is responsible for transmitting basic values and that these values are those of the public sphere. In this model, whilst individuals/families may bring up children to respect certain values, the state makes it very clear that these so-called private values must be relativised by reference to public values (Osler & Starkey, 2000).

Citizenship education is a very important medium for creating 'good citizens' as well as helping young people acquire social and civic skills. These include being aware of basic rights and liberties, taking active responsibilities in social duties and sharing common virtues and values at a national and global

level. Whilst formal education has a direct influence on pupils' citizenship behaviors (Osler and Starkey 2000), the degree to which teachers may influence their pupils according to their own social values has long been a cause of contention (Fogelman, 1991; Kerr, 1996; Wilkins 1999). However, teachers' perceptions and beliefs clearly have an impact on their actions, and so teachers' actions are likely to have an impact on shaping the hearts and minds of pupils in schools. Thus, it is important to understand their views on citizenship and citizenship education.

The 1990s saw a resurgence of interest in citizenship education across most European countries (including both the UK and Turkey), with differing forms emerging, variously emphasising:

- developing the political literacy of pupils, covering the theory of human rights and democracy, how political and social institutions function and the appreciation of cultural and historical diversity, etc.;
- developing the attitudes and values needed to become responsible citizens (learning self-respect and respect for others, listening and resolving conflicts peacefully, contributing to harmonious coexistence among people, developing values consistent with a pluralist society, building a positive self-image, etc.);
- stimulating the active participation of pupils by enabling them to become involved in the life of the school and local community, and to acquire the skills needed to make a responsible and constructively critical contribution to public life. The last is based on the belief that pupils should be given the opportunity to experiment practically with democratic principles. Their capacity to act on each other's behalf and engage in other appropriate initiatives should also be encouraged. (Eurodyce, 2005).

Overarching these aims of citizenship education at state level, the European Union (EU) has developed a strategy of 'Europeanisation', comprising of a range of educational and cultural policies aimed at developing a culturally, economically and politically united Europe.

### **The EU, europeanisation and Turkey**

The EU established by the Treaty of Maastricht 1993, is now an economic and political union of 27 member states, and in the Lisbon Treaty of 2000, its leaders have set an ambitious goal; to become the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world, capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion. In pursuance of the social agenda, the EU has implemented a number of educational programmes to encourage mobility of students, teachers and researchers and exchange of information and best practice. These programmes (such as Comenius, Erasmus, da Vinci, Socrates and Tempus) variously support inter-state study/training programmes and other activities designed to harmonize education systems, to provide opportunities to cooperate and establish networks and to promote greater understanding across European countries ([www.eurunion.org](http://www.eurunion.org)). Thus, education and training has been seen as a key driver of the process of Europeanisation, and so has gained momentum through official EU agendas.

Turkey is still in the process of seeking membership of the European Union. Turkey's policy can be traced to the earlier attempt towards modernisation and westernisation that began in the early twentieth century. All of those effectively meant Europeanisation for Turkish officials, and the reforms made in judicial, fiscal and education areas have been carried out according to the European 'philosophical norms'. Hence, Turkey's aspiration to become a member of the EU is neither new nor surprising; nevertheless, it's Europeanness at a both a societal and a political level is still a matter for debate.

One of the issues in Turkey's Europeanisation is about human rights and democratic values, with particular emphasis on how these are acquired through education. In Turkey, there is an effort in society to constitute individuals as respectful of human rights and holding democratic values. For these reasons, "The Education of the Human Rights and Citizenship" course has been inserted into the curriculum of public Primary schools in Turkey since 1998-1999 academic year (Gozutok, 2003; Kepenekci, 2003). As a country waiting to enter the EU, Turkey is still struggling to develop a democratic tradition comparable to that of other Western European countries.

On the other hand, whilst the United Kingdom has a longer democratic tradition, citizenship was not formally made part of the national curriculum of England until 2002. As such, it makes a valuable site of comparison for this study. This study, which compares the views of student teachers in England and

Turkey, was made possible by an EU-funded exchange programme between the universities of Leicester (in UK) and of Usak and Dokuz Eylul in Turkey. It is the first study of its kind in Turkey.

## Methodology

In order to provide answers to the questions of Turkey's place in the EU and the role of citizenship education for creating a common identity in Europe from the student teacher point of view, a survey methodology is employed in this study. A semi-structured questionnaire was used to collect data; participants were 79 postgraduate students teachers from University of Leicester (Primary and Secondary strands) and 581 final year undergraduate student teachers from the University of Usak (Primary strand).

The quantitative data is analyzed in relation to the sub-research question categories and expressed in percentages and frequencies, whilst the qualitative data is also analyzed under the predetermined categories by using the constant comparison method. New categories also emerged from the qualitative data.

A second phase of this study is currently underway, with the findings of focus group interviews with both cohorts of student-teachers intended to supplement this data, and to reported at a later date.

## Findings\*

*\*In this section, findings from the data are discussed and figures include tallies drawn from both quantitative and qualitative data. Thus, number of answers given for some of the questions might be higher than total number of the students responding to the questionnaire.*

### 1. Citizenship Education and its relation with the EU

**Table 1: The importance of Citizenship education**

Turkish student teachers (n=581)	British student teacher (n=79)
Citizenship rights and responsibilities: 326 (56,11%)	It will make students aware of their cultural/own identity: 21 (26%)
Culture, traditions, history and values: 29 (4,99%)	Open minds to global responsibilities and European issues: 14 (17%)
National identity: 29 (4,99%)	Learn about own country's government: 20 (25%)
Crucial period 27: (4,64%)	Learn how being a good citizen benefits all: 18 (22%)

Student teachers were asked to reply to the question of importance of education for Citizenship. There was a difference in concern between Turkish and British student teachers. Turkish student teachers thought citizenship education helped pupils learn about their rights and responsibilities. They talked about learning their own culture, tradition, values and identity. They did not mention European values, information about Europe or about global responsibilities/affairs. British student teachers on the other hand, appear to be having ideas about the role of citizenship education in informing pupils about global and European issues.

**Table 2: Important aspects of Citizenship education**

Topic	Turkish student teachers (n=581)	British student teacher (n=79)
Social Justice - freedom and fairness	530 (91,22%)	65 (82%)
Human Rights and responsibilities	538 (92,59%)	69 (87%)
Equal Rights for All	525 (90,36%)	66 (83%)
Democracy	521 (89,67%)	61 (77%)
Forms of Government – e.g. parliamentary democracy	398 (68,50%)	45 (57%)

Individual and collective action	455 (78,31%)	51 (64%)
The global dimension – inequalities, international relations, the UN	354 (60,92%)	58 (73%)
Sustainable Development – poverty, environment, future	461 (79,34%)	64 (81%)

Comparison of the two cohorts about important aspects of citizenship education reveals both some similarities and key differences. Both sets of students find social justice, freedom and fairness, human rights and responsibilities, equal rights for all, democracy to be important. However, when it comes to global dimensions, inequalities, international relations and European interconnections, Turkish students think these are less important compared to British students' views.

**Table 3: If Turkey joined the European Union, what do you think might be the impact on Turkey:**

Turkish student teachers (n=581)	British student teacher (n=79)
Economic development (248) (42.68%)	Economic development (52)
Cultural, social and religious deformation (188) (32.35%)	Lose of Islamic identity (7)
Damages national identity and freedom (147) (25.30%)	Increase of immigration (11)

The question of possible results of Turkey's expected EU membership also reveals similar results mentioned above. For example, among other things Turkish students expressed feelings like cultural, social and religious deformation and damages to national identity and freedom. This point takes us to the other dimension in question.

## 2. The EU and Europeanness

In order to understand the participants' understandings of Europe, the EU, and what it means to be a European, they were first asked to identify founding members of the EU and draw the boundary of Europe on a map of the region.

**Table 4: Name three of the founder member countries of the EU**

Countries	Turkish student teachers (n=581)	British student teacher (n=79)
Belgium	72 (12.4%)	25 (31%)
Germany	311 (53.5%)	63 (79%)
France	483 (83.13%)	72 (91%)
Netherlands	40 (6.9%)	4 (5%)
Luxembourg	50 (8.6%)	3 (3%)
Italy	137 (23.6%)	22 (28%)

Both Turkish and British students lack a clear idea of the geographical boundaries of Europe, and also show large gaps in their knowledge of the history of the EU (although a majority of both cohorts managed to identify France and Germany as founder members of the EU, they struggled to go beyond this).

**Table 5: What it means to be a Citizen of Europe**

Turkish student teacher (n=581)	British student teacher (n=79)
Nothing: 208 (35.80%)	Be part of a group of countries with common goals, but different cultures. 13 (16%)
Development in human rights and democracy: 55 (9.46%)	Live in harmony with other European countries: 7 (8%)
Lose national identity: 40 (6.88%)	Part of a larger community/ don't just belong to one

country: 8 (9%)
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When it comes to the question of being European, the views of British and Turkish students differs greatly from each other, with over one-third of Turkish students stating that being a citizen of Europe means nothing to them. Nevertheless there were slight differences in their opinion about the development of human rights and democracy through a European dimension. Although both groups have a concern about retention of national identity, analysis of the British cohort's responses to the same question shows that they put more emphasis on European-ness. Their responses included comments like "*being a citizen of Europe means a part of a larger community*", "*being part of a group of countries with common goals but different cultures*" and "*live in harmony with other European countries*". It may, of course, be that this result can be explained by the fact that Turkey is not officially a member of EU, and thus Turkish students are not citizens of EU, although if this was the case, this in itself is interesting, presuming a conflation of 'Europe' with 'the EU'.

**Table 6: If Turkey joined the European Union, what do you think might be the impact on Turkey?  
Number of Turkish students=581 and British Students=79**

	Agree	Not sure	Disagree
Removes trade barriers to boost growth and create jobs	Br: 64 (81%) Tr: 295 (50,77%)	Br: 7(9%) Tr: 117(20,13%)	Br:148(25,47%) Tr:148(25,47%)
Improves our environment	Br: 26(33%) Tr: 220(37,86%)	Br:37(47%) Tr:113(19,44%)	Br:12 (15%) Tr:235(40,44%)
Improves standards and rights for consumers	Br: 58(74%) Tr: 366(62,99%)	Br: 14 (18%) Tr: 97(16,69%)	Br:2(3%) Tr: 110(18,93%)
Fights international crime and illegal immigration	Br:38 (48%) Tr : 244(41,99%)	Br:20 (3%) Tr: 134(23,06%)	Br:18 (23%) Tr: 194(33,39%)
Brings peace and stability to by engaging with its neighbours	Br: 55 (70%) Tr: 217(37,34%)	Br:17(22%) Tr: 139(23,92%)	Br:4 (5%) Tr: 222(38,20%)
Gives a more powerful voice in the world	Br:62 (78%) Tr: 316(54,38%)	Br:10 (2%) Tr : 94(16,17%)	Br:4 (5%) Tr: 165(28,39%)

Analysis of the set of data concerning about the advantages of membership of the EU also shows a similar pattern of differences in perspective between the two cohorts. Whilst the British participants emphasise the EU's role in bringing peace and stability the EU and its neighbours, for the Turkish participants the most important issue appears to be the political strength of the EU. Again, this might possibly be readily explained by Turkey's status as candidate nation, with an emphasis on the extent to which membership of a globally-powerful EU might provide Turkey with increased global political influence.

**Table 7: The impact of being part of the EU on your country**

	Turkish student teachers (n=581)	British student teacher (n=79)
Reduce your country's national identity	223(38.38%)	19 (24%)
Change your country's identity positively	98(16.86%)	25 (32%)
Sustain your country's identity	3(0.51%)	12 (15%)
Submerge your country's identity	228(39.24%)	6 (8%)

The most striking difference in opinion is about the impact of being part of the EU on Turkey and Britain. British participants worry less about losing their national identity because of the EU whilst amongst Turkish participants there appears to be a focus on the negative impact of EU membership on national

identity. Of course, a comparison of perceptions of a current political arrangement with perceptions of a possible future one must be carried out with extreme caution, but the relative negativity of the Turkish cohort is certainly noteworthy.

**Table 8: In terms of your own identity, place in order of priority / importance**

Choice of identity	British student teacher (n=79)			Turkish student teachers (n=581)		
	1st	2nd	3rd	1st	2nd	3rd
Turkish or British Citizen	55	14	6	499	42	24
European Citizen	3	47	20	15	184	320
Global Citizen	18	8	44	174	294	51

One of the most expected results is yielded when participants were asked to prioritise their affiliation in terms of citizenship among Turkish/British Citizen, European Citizen and Global citizen. Both cohorts stated that their national citizenship by far is the most important citizenship affiliation to them.

**Table 9: Is Turkey an European or an Asian country?**

	Turkish student teachers (n=581)	British student teacher (n=79)
European country	30	55
Asian country	168	9
Both	317	9
Neither	62	1

When it comes to the question of Turkey's Europeanness, the most striking result comes into the light. That is; the majority of British students think that Turkey is a European country. Contrary to this point of view, Turkish students think otherwise. Whilst a relatively unsophisticated questionnaire such as this cannot hope to untangle the likely complexities behind these results, they do provide an interesting starting point for the focus group interviews to follow.

## Conclusions

Firstly it should be pointed out that this questionnaire data will be supplemented by data emerging from focus group interviews carried out with some of the participants in this survey. The topics covered in these focus groups were determined by the data gathered from the questionnaires, and once analysed will enable a more in-depth discussion findings in the context of the theoretical framework established for Europeanisation, Europeanness and citizenship. However, the questionnaire data does produce some results of interest and these are summarized below.

The most important results emerging from the analysis of data appear to be as follows. Both Turkish and British student-teachers do not have a clear idea about either the geographical or political boundaries of

Europe, nor do they agree on Turkey's Europeaness. Although British students stated that Turkey is a European country, the majority of Turkish students think otherwise.

Answers to the questions about the EU's role in Europeanisation reveal notably different ideas between Turkish and British participants. British student-teachers focus is mostly on the EU's role creating peace in Europe and its neighbours, on being a part of larger community and sharing common goals. Whilst Turkish participants did not fundamentally disagree on these issues, their concerns concentrated more on the EU's role in having increased political power and influence in the world.

The cohorts were generally in agreement in seeing a crucial role for citizenship education in creating a common ground for advancing human rights, democracy and equality, leading to a sense that 'Europe' (or, perhaps, the EU?), is commonly seen as representing broadly universal virtues of 'citizenship for a common good'.

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