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The Relationship Between Critical Thinking Skills And Citizenship Behaviours

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Abstract

This paper reports on research into students training to become primary school teachers at the University of Usak, Turkey. The research aimed to find out two things. Firstly, to determine how high the student teachers' scored on measures of Citizenship behaviour. The second aim is understand whether there is a relationship between citizenship tendencies of student teachers and their critical thinking skills. There is a growing body of research finding evidence in linking critical thinking and citizenship in the literature (Hicks, 2001; Gürkaynak, 2008; Colville and Clarken, 1992).

The sample consisted of 93 student teachers randomly selected from a population of 300. Two different measurement tools were employed for the study. A Citizenship Questionnaire, developed by Acun and colleagues, and Cornell Critical Thinking Test Level Z (CCTT Z), adapted by Akar and his colleagues were employed. Analysis of the data suggests that student teachers score high on (mean 3.95 out of 5) citizenship tendency scale. Their score on CCTT Z is relative low (19.60 out of 100) compared to their counterparts in the USA. There is statistically significant relationship (.31 positive correlations) between citizenship tendencies and critical thinking skills.

Key words: *Citizenship, Citizenship Behaviours, Critical Thinking Skills, Student Teachers*

Introduction

Citizenship Education for empowerment has been given greater emphasis in recent years and has become an important element in the modern schooling system. The emphasis has shifted from creating 'good citizens' to that of equipping students with knowledge and skills, such as participation, collaboration, reflection and critical thinking skills. Thus, as a generic skill critical thinking has a direct and profound effect on citizenship education. As in other countries, its primary aim and philosophy has focus on the individual. Turkish Primary Curricula states that 'an individual, in a global 21st century globalizing world, must be: a law abiding person; an investigator person; a problem solver; capable of using technology datum and able to make academic researches; an entrepreneurial and a creative person; a critical thinker; not an obedient person (The Curriculum, 2005). At the core of the new programme, critical thinking skills and educating conscious citizens take a very important place. This research was done to find out what kind of relationship there is between student teachers' critical thinking skills and their citizenship behaviours.

Those student teachers will be responsible for teaching citizenship to educate youngsters in line with aims of primary curriculum cited above. This study focused on the student teachers studying at the faculty of education, University of Usak, Turkey.

Citizenship and Critical Thinking

Citizenship and Citizenship Education

Citizenship and Citizenship Education received increasingly strong attention during the last two decades. There are several reasons for this increase. Prominent among those reasons is globalization: 'Globalization has impacted on highly differentiated societies creating a situation where the national governments don't have the power or influence to make the changes regarded essential by the community' (Heck,2003). As in many other countries, Turkish citizenship education aims: to create 'good citizens' while helping pupils to acquire social and civic skills and to make pupils actively involved in social duties and sharing common virtues values at a national and global level (Kepenekçi, 2003).

Citizenship and citizenship education in this study will refer to school education for pupils, which aims at ensuring their active and responsible involvement as citizens capable of contributing to the progression and well-being of the society that they live in. Citizenship education focuses on social, political and civic institutions, as well as human rights, social issues and social problems.

Citizenship Education and Critical Thinking

Critical thinking and citizenship education both seeks to promote among students the skills needed to participate actively in public life; develop recognition of and respect for oneself and others; acquire social and moral responsibility, construct values, with due regard for differing social perspectives and points of view; learn to listen and resolve conflicts peacefully; learn to contribute to a safe environment. Critical thinking is reasonable reflective thinking that is focused on deciding what to believe or do (Norris and Ennis, 1989). Critical thinking can be considered to consists of three steps: Becoming aware that assumptions exist, making assumptions explicit, assessing their accuracy (Livestrong 2010). According to Ennis this is high order thinking.

Colville and Clarcken (1992:8-7) 'Describe research showing the effectiveness of citizenship education in developing socially responsible citizens by improving their knowledge and abilities such as clear reasoning, critical thinking, empathy, reflection, and decision-making'.

Similarly Gürkaynak (2008) and Leming (1998) put great emphasis on the skills such as questioning, evidence seeking, and reasoning. Those skills are deemed necessary skills for an individual to operate in a complex, modern and democratic society. Efforts to help students develop thinking skills and their own values while studying social studies include values clarification and the promotion of higher order thinking skills (Leming 1998). Schooling and the curriculum are put in place in order to make sure students become independent individuals. Those individuals should be actively involved in every

level of society This is possible when critical thinking purposefully integrated into the curriculum (Gürkaynak, 2008).

The philosophy that underpins Turkish primary curriculum shifted from essentialism to progressiveness and then re-structurism. This philosophy is also affected by pragmatist existentialism that aims to change society toward more democratic structure by creating true democratic individuals. Existentialism focuses on humanism. The curriculum that is humanist and democratic aims to create individuals capable of critic thinking (Sönmez, 2001). As it is cited here, critical thinking and citizenship critically involve each other in democratic societies.

Methodology

Research questions

The main research questions formulated for the study are:

1. What are student teachers' levels in exhibiting Citizenship Behaviour?
2. What are student teachers' levels in Critical Thinking?
3. Is there any relationship between their Critical Thinking Skills and Citizenship Behaviours?

Population and Sample

The population of the study consists of approximately 300 freshmen student teachers studying at Faculty of Education, *Uşak, Turkey*. The sample of the study consisted of 93 student teachers randomly selected from a population of 300.

Procedures

A survey methodology was employed for the study. Two different measurement tools were employed for the study. A Citizenship Questionnaire, developed by Acun and colleagues, was employed to determine student teaches' citizenship behaviours scores. The scale had three dimensions dealing with knowledge, attitudes and behaviours of student teachers in line with global citizenship and citizenship education trends. Likert type scaling was used across all items in this questionnaire. For items in knowledge dimension, student teachers were asked to rate their behaviours on the fallowing scale: from (1) None to (5) A great deal. For items in attitudes scale, teachers were asked to rate their attitudes on the following scale: (1) None to (5) A great deal. Student teachers were asked to rate their citizenship behaviours on the following scale; (1) Never to (5) Always.

Table 1 The Reliability of Citizenship Questionnaire

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.89	67

The total reliability of the scale is .89 Alpha Cronbach.

To measure the critical thinking skills, the Cornell Critical Thinking Test Level Z (CCTT Z), adapted by *Akar* and his/her colleagues into Turkish, was used. The test had seven dimensions; Deduction, Semantics, Credibility, Induction in judging, Induction in prediction, Definition and Assumption Identification.

Table 2 The Reliability of CCTT Z (Cornell Critical Thinking Test Level Z)

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.60	40

The total reliability score of the adapted measurement instrument is .60 Alpha Cronbach. Consistency' (reliability) estimates range from .67 to .90 on Level X and .49 to .87 on Level Z. (Ennis; Millman; Tomko, 2005). Although, .60 is a low score of reliability, it is acceptable in terms of both consistencies' estimates as shown above and the test being adapted to Turkish.

Analysis

SPSS package programme was used to analyze the data. Descriptive statistics such as mean and frequency were used to compare student teachers' total scores on CCTT Z and their scores on citizenship questionnaire. Correlation analysis was carried out to find out the whether there is statistically significant relationship between student teachers' total scores on CCTT Z and Citizenship scores.

Results

In pursuit of answering first two research questions, the data were subjected to analysis in SPSS. The results were compared in terms of mean scores. First, students' mean scores from the Citizenship Questionnaire in three dimensions is given and discussed.

Table 3 The Mean Scores of Citizenship Knowledge, Behaviours and Value Attributing

	Knowledge	Behaviours	Value Attributing
N	93	93	93
Mean	3,70	3,82	4,25

Student teachers' knowledge, value attributing and behaviour levels were given. The results show that their scores are high in general. Their scores are similar in knowledge and behaviour dimension. The Value Attributing dimension has the highest mean score among all three of the dimensions. This may mean that although teachers feel exhibiting good citizenship behaviours is important they do not necessary act in a way they feel to be important. This is not surprising, having knowledge on something and giving importance to it does not necessarily mean people will act accordingly.

As for the research question one, student teachers total citizenship scores are high. This is an indication that those students teachers (having been asked to be rate their knowledge, behaviours and attributing value are good citizens at a national and international level with the criteria widely accepted among scholars.

Table 4 The Mean Scores of Citizenship and Critical Thinking

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
CCTT Z Total Score	93	19.60	4.93
Value Attributing&Behaviours	93	3.95 (% 78)	.60

The table above summarises and compares student teachers' citizenship mean score with their mean scores from CCTT Z. As can be seen, students mean score is 19.60. This result is low compare to Cornell's own study. Cornell' study among 1 year university students found 26.4 mean score. This indicates that student teachers' critical thinking skills are not very high. This group of students was not subject to an educational programme that includes critical thinking skills as an integral and important part of the education. Turkey's new primary curriculum of 2005 puts a strong emphasis on critical thinking skills as part of equipping pupils with higher order skills agenda. Student teachers low level of critical thinking skills can be explained the result of this lack of education towards it.

This result is evidence itself in showing the student teachers low level of critical thinking skills as an answer to research question two of this study.

Table 5 The Correlations of Citizenship and Critical Thinking

	CCTT Z Total	Mean Value + Behaviour Total
CCTT Z Total	1	,314(**)
Mean Value Attributing & Behaviours	,314(**)	1

The correlations table shows a statistically significant relationship between students' total scores on CCTT Z and their total scores on Value Attributing & Behaviours from citizenship questionnaire. Knowing their scores from knowledge dimension (Ennis, 1989) of citizenship questionnaire will not have any effect on their critical thinking scores, it was excluded from correlation analysis.

The positive correlation at .31 level is a moderate (even low) correlation. This is lower than expected. Nevertheless, it is evident that there is a relationship between critical thinking skills and citizenship behaviours. Theoretically, the relationship has more direct relationship between these two variables (Colville& Clarken, 1992; Gürkaynak,2008; Leming,1998)

Conclusion

Critical thinking and citizenship equally are important both at a school and societal level. The skills that are regarded as pre-requisite for being active and responsible citizens and individuals collide with each other in the literature both on critical thinking and citizenship.

Student teachers who are involved in this study scored low on critical thinking skills test. There is also low relationship between their critical thinking skills and citizenship score. Nevertheless, theoretically sound relationship between critical thinking and citizenship cannot be dismissed easily. Low level of relationship in this study is explained by Turkish students' lack of exposure to the schooling which integrates critical thinking schools in every tier of the system.

Further studies should concentrate on both improving Turkish adaptation of CCTT Z and widening sample of the studies. That is, researchers should go to pupils that are already subjected to the new curriculum of 2005 which puts strong emphasis on higher order thinking skills with a better measurement scale.

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