

## Active and Democratic Citizenship Education and its Challenges in Social Studies Classrooms

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### Abstract

*Problem Statement:* Turkey's passive and task-oriented approach to citizenship education, which has endured since the Ottoman Empire period, has begun to change into more active and democratic citizenship education since Turkey joined the European Union. Identifying the practical problems as well as describing the challenges when practicing the Social Studies curriculum will contribute to citizenship education and its development, both in Turkey and in similar countries.

*Purpose of Study:* The purpose of the present study is to explore the active and democratic citizenship education procedures in Social Studies course in Turkey and to determine the challenges encountered in active citizenship education.

*Methodology:* The study was conducted using a holistic, multiple-case study design. Data were collected through interviews, classroom observations and documents. In this study, extreme or deviant case sampling was used. The study was conducted in two schools: a state school with a low socioeconomic background and a private school with high socioeconomic background. A total of six volunteer teachers and 30 students from both of the schools participated in the study.

*Findings:* The study found that the citizenship perceptions, political views and educational backgrounds of the teachers had an effect on the citizenship education in their lessons. Furthermore, the age, maturity level, gender and social environment of the students had an effect on implementing citizenship education. Also, the test-centered educational system, traditional school organizations and culture, and the relevant legislations and regulations limited the ability of teachers to handle

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political issues and had negative effects on citizenship education.

*Discussion and Recommendation:* The findings of the present study revealed that the students' task-based and passive perception of citizenship did not demonstrate any change at the beginning and end of the Social Studies course. The findings from this study suggest that, in general, citizenship education in Social Studies courses tends to offer, in part, a set of social moral values that focus more on theory and exams and lack opportunities for practice. At the end of this course, students are raised as apolitical citizens with low political literacy who lack effective thinking and participation skills. Therefore, teachers should be trained in active citizenship education, democratic school culture should be developed and the relevant legislations should be readjusted to provide teachers with more freedom in their academic concerns along with active citizenship education.

*Keywords:* Citizenship education, active citizenship, democracy, human rights, social studies.

Today, citizens are expected to be aware and responsible and lead an active life in society by taking part in decisions (Nelson & Kerr, 2005). Active citizenship education requires a democratic and participatory school structure and participation in society, as well as active and participatory curricula. When instruction is designed to develop active citizenship skills in lessons, students should be provided with a school structure and culture in which they can practice what they learn in lessons within the school by means of school council, elections and extracurricular activities. Students should also take part in organizations where they can reflect on their citizenship skills that they acquire both in class and outside of the school environment through community involvement. Therefore, course syllabi, democratic school culture and active participation in society are mutually complementary in active citizenship education (Potter, 2002). Moreover, students should be given an active citizenship education that is based on social and moral responsibility, political literacy and social participation (Qualifications and Curriculum Authority [QCA], 1998). However, active citizenship education is a process that is shaped through political, social, technological, economic and cultural developments on global and local scales. Citizenship education in non-Western societies is considered to be more nationalist and implemented within moral dimensions whereas it is more democratic and rights-oriented in Western societies (Lee, 2005).

The historical roots of citizenship education in Turkey originated from the educational systems in the monarchic Ottoman Empire (1299–1923), but it was restructured by the foundation of the Turkish Republic (1923), which is a democratic, secular, social and constitutional state currently still in a developmental process. This developmental process naturally reflects the transformation process of passive and loyalist Ottoman citizens to active and democratic Turkish citizens. The Ottoman public "*tebaa*," which consisted of Muslim and non-Muslim people in the empire (Kadioğlu, 2005), became citizens in 1908 when some constitutional amendments were put into practice. At that time, during the collapse period of the Empire, the

concept of “Ottoman citizenship” was introduced as a unifying ideology (Ottomanism) for the Ottomans. Hence, along with the ideology of Ottomanism, the patriotism and moral values were highlighted in citizenship education in the Ottoman Empire (Üstel, 2004). The development of the citizenship education process and citizenship perception in the new Turkish Republic, which was founded after the end of Ottoman Empire, can be examined under three main periods: the single party period (1923–1950), the multi-party period (1950–1987), and the European Union (EU) accession period (1987 to the present day) (Çayır & Gürkaynak, 2008).

The single party period involves the first years of the Republic. Atatürk, the founder and the first president of the Turkish Republic, declared that every person who lives within the national borders of the country is a Turkish citizen, regardless of religions or ethnicity (İnan, 1969). Similarly, Okçabol (2002) describes Turkish citizenship notion as an umbrella concept, which covers a variety of religions and ethnicities within the borders of the nation. The national citizenship education practices of the period were shaped by republican and nation state-oriented policies (Kadioğlu, 2007) and generally focused on teaching the duties and responsibilities of the good citizens while aiming to create a modern culture (Üstel, 2004). In the multi-party period, while social and political rights were established, the republican and nation state-oriented policies and practices of the previous period were nearly weakened (Çayır & Gürkaynak, 2008). The multi-party period, particularly the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, witnessed severe internal conflicts based on militarist and liberal youth movements and political chaos, which were ended by military coups. Events in this period also caused citizenship education to become isolated from politics. Various studies revealed that people, particularly youth in Turkey, became apolitical citizens (Doğanay, Çuhadar, & Sarı, 2007; Erdoğan, 2001). In the multi-party period, the national education curriculum started to include information on rights and textbooks highlighted the role of democracy in the family, as well as in schools (Üstel, 2004). The underlying principles behind Turkey’s long-lasting republican citizenship education policies and task-oriented citizenship education might have originated from the governance of republican and conservative governments (Okçabol, 2002), officially assigning the rights to the citizens by the governments, the need for devoted citizens for the new Republic and the blessed state concept that was rooted in Turkish history.

The EU accession period involved transformation procedures of active and democratic citizenship education. The Copenhagen criteria (1993) have played an important role in this transformation processes. The reforms that the government practiced concerning the Copenhagen criteria have strengthened human rights, civil society and democracy in Turkey. These criteria have directly affected citizenship policies and have led to a more democratic and liberalist concept of citizenship instead of a republican citizenship notion (Kadioğlu, 2007). In this respect, the Ministry of National Education (MoNE) developed a new curriculum based on the norms, aims and educational concepts of the EU (MoNE, 2004). At the same time, along with the EU accession process, the MoNE also started to perform a variety of practices to facilitate a smooth transformation in citizenship education. For instance,

the MoNE runs an EU-sponsored project of democratic citizenship and human rights education to revise regulations and curricula, raise school staff awareness of democratic citizenship education and human rights, develop teaching materials related to citizenship education and adopt a democratic school culture (MoNE, 2008). As a result of such practices, the republican nationalist citizenship education notion has started to evolve into more active and democratic citizenship education in Turkey.

The new Elementary Education Curriculum, developed in 2004 and based on constructivism, adopted a cross-curricular perspective in terms of effective and democratic citizenship education. Prior to the renovations in the curriculum, citizenship issues were handled through a behaviorist perspective in a separate course - *Citizenship and Human Rights* - in one-hour class sessions per week in the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades. In the current curriculum, Social Studies is a key course in which students gain practical knowledge related to political literacy and citizenship education. The Social Studies course is taught by classroom teachers in 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grades, whereas it is taught by Social Studies teachers in 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> grades. The 2004 Social Studies Curriculum (SSC) is designed to raise active and responsible Turkish citizens. Units of the SSC, which cover social science issues as well as citizenship issues in a cross-curricular aspect, are aimed at educating patriotic citizens who know and use their rights, fulfill their responsibilities and possess national consciousness. There is a shift from task- and responsibility-oriented citizenship to an active and democratic citizenship in the new curriculum. Unlike the previous curricula, the 2004 curriculum highlights the importance of non-governmental organizations and addressed relevant issues. In addition, the new curriculum attempts to raise global citizenship awareness about global issues. Additionally, learning through experience in school council and student clubs and some extracurricular activities facilitates citizenship education in schools.

Turkey's passive and task-oriented approach in citizenship education, which has endured since the Ottoman Empire period, started to change into a more active and democratic citizenship education since Turkey joined the EU. Considering the constructivist perspectives in teaching, the SSC of 2004 was introduced to produce active citizens in Turkey. The present study aims to describe the active and democratic citizenship education procedures in Social Studies in two elementary schools in Turkey and determine the challenges in active and democratic citizenship education. The present study seeks answers to the following two questions:

1. How is active and democratic citizenship education implemented in Social Studies courses?
2. What are the problems encountered in active and democratic citizenship education implemented in Social Studies courses?

The findings of the present study may contribute to the development of the SSC and Social Studies teacher training programs in Turkey. Furthermore, the results may provide teaching strategies for teachers to teach citizenship education. Identifying the practical problems, as well as describing the challenges encountered

when practicing the SSC, could contribute to citizenship education and its development, both in Turkey and in similar countries.

## Method

### *Design, Participants and Settings*

The study was conducted using a holistic, multiple-case study design. The extreme or deviant case sampling technique was used to select the participants (Glesne, 2011). This type of sampling was chosen in order to determine the differences between the problems that are encountered in active and democratic citizenship education implemented in Social Studies courses with respect to students' socioeconomic levels. Therefore, one state elementary school and one private elementary school were selected. Student profiles in the state school and the private school were different from one other. The students in the state school generally came from low socioeconomic backgrounds. Generally, their fathers were employed, but their mothers were housewives; the parents were either graduates of elementary schools or secondary schools. The average income of the parents of students in the state school was around 1,000 Turkish Liras (around \$500 USD). On the other hand, the students in the private school came from families with higher socioeconomic backgrounds. In general, the parents of the students in the private school had regular jobs such as tradesmen, doctors, lecturers or engineers, etc. The average income of the parents of the students in the private school was over 5,000 Turkish Liras (around \$2500 USD) and they were typically graduates of higher-education institutions or universities. A total of six teachers – all female – from both of the schools participated in the study voluntarily and their characteristics are listed in Table 1. This study was conducted with female teachers because there were very few male teachers in the schools chosen for the study and they were not willing to participate in the study.

Table 1

*Characteristics of the Teachers*

<i>Pseudonym</i>	<i>School</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Field</i>	<i>Grade</i>	<i>Professional experience (years)</i>
Hacer	State	40	Classroom teacher	4	14
Gaye	State	36	Classroom teacher	5	12
Derya	State	31	Social studies teacher	6, 7	10
Hande	Private	52	Classroom teacher	4	35
Nuray	Private	50	Classroom teacher	5	30
Leyla	Private	30	Social studies teacher	6, 7	7

A total of 30 students in these teachers' classes voluntarily participated in the study. Twelve students were male and 18 were female; 8 were in the 4<sup>th</sup> grade, 7 were

in the 5<sup>th</sup> grade, 7 were in the 6<sup>th</sup> grade and 8 were in the 7<sup>th</sup> grade. Eighteen students were attending the state school and 12 students were attending the private school.

#### *Data Collection and Analysis*

The study data were collected through observations, interviews with teachers and students, and documents. The Social Studies classrooms of each of the grade levels (from 4<sup>th</sup> grade to 7<sup>th</sup> grade) in both schools were observed over the course of seven months by the researcher acting observer as participant. Therefore, the researcher made observations only during the lessons and took field notes. In this respect, at least one (sometimes two Social Studies lessons of each teacher in each grade level were observed every week during the seven-month period; the lessons lasted 40 minutes. A total of 250 class-hours of Social Studies courses were observed.

Two sets of interviews with the teachers and students were held throughout the study. The first interviews were held at the beginning of the study (October, 2009) and focused on the teachers' perceptions on citizenship and citizenship education; the second set of interviews was held at the end of the observations (June, 2010) to make a final evaluation of practices of citizenship education in Social Studies. While the students were asked questions about perceptions of citizenship in the first meeting, they were asked questions about both perceptions of citizenship and what they learned in the Social Studies course in the second set of interviews. However, some focused interviews were also held whenever an emerging case occurred regarding citizenship and citizenship education. Additionally, the teachers' lesson plans and materials related to citizenship education were also examined.

Thematic analysis techniques were performed during data analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). As a part of this analysis technique, the themes emerging in the observations, interviews and lesson plans were coded first and then these codes were categorized under main themes and sub-themes. The data from the interviews, observation notes and document collections were compared and analyzed in terms of perception of citizenship among the participant teachers and students and their practice of citizenship education in the state and private schools. In order to enhance the reliability of the study, methodological triangulation of data from multiple sources and peer review was used in the analysis process (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

## **Findings**

### *The Reflections of Teacher Characteristics on Active and Democratic Citizenship Education*

According to the findings, active citizenship education in Social Studies seems to be associated with teachers' perceptions of citizenship, their political views, and their educational background. The challenges in active citizenship education in Social Studies classrooms are enumerated in Table 2.

Table 2

*Challenges to Active and Democratic Citizenship in Social Studies*

<i>Themes</i>	<i>Challenges</i>
Teachers	Teachers do not have an understanding of active and democratic citizenship. Teachers with conservative political views do not support active citizenship understanding. Teachers did not receive active citizenship education in their previous educational life.
Students	Younger students had difficulty understanding related to citizenship concepts. Female students demonstrate more passive citizenship behavior. Families with low socioeconomic status, social environment and government policies do not support active citizenship.
Schools and educational system	The SSC is traditionally practiced with a teacher-centered approach. Active citizenship is not applied in Social Studies education. Test-based education and exams cause active citizenship education to remain a theoretical practice. The structure and culture of schools fail to support the development of students' active citizenship. Laws and regulations restrict teachers in active citizenship education.

*Citizenship perceptions.* Although most of the teachers perceived citizenship as communitarian, only one teacher perceived it as an individual issue. The teachers, who presented citizenship from a communitarian perspective, defined citizenship as "people living in a state together" and "people who have responsibilities toward the community and state." These teachers described the purpose of citizenship education as "to teach our civic duties as citizens." Most of the teachers associated citizenship education in Social Studies with civic duties such as obeying and respecting the law, serving in the military, participating in elections and paying taxes, whereas a few teachers related citizenship education with being nice to people and maintaining social responsibilities by participating in non-governmental organizations. For instance, Derya, stated that she informed her students about paying taxes while teaching issues on conscious consumption and about participating in elections while teaching issues on civic duties. Similarly, Hacer, usually expressed in her lessons that being good citizens meant being a good person; she tried to teach some civic values by telling her students stories about not telling lies, being honest and being helpful. In her lesson, Gaye considered the non-governmental organizations as charity organizations rather than organizations working for protection of civil rights. Moreover, she highlighted the supportive role of non-governmental organizations during earthquakes or natural disasters. In the same lesson, she associated an issue - earthquakes - with citizenship, particularly with the honesty and social responsibilities of people in the community by stating that a lot of people died in

earthquakes because of negligent and dishonest building contractors who did not build strong buildings. Hande, who perceived citizenship as an individual issue, defined citizens as “people who have fundamental rights and freedom.” She presented citizenship topics in her classes by associating the issue with human rights and emphasizing that participating in elections was a matter of democracy and human rights rather than being a matter of people’s duties and responsibilities toward the state. She typically provided opportunities for her students to express their thoughts freely. She also established a classroom rule with her students on respecting the thoughts of other students. She said, “I try to teach them their rights. Instead of just saying that it must be done in this way, I try to teach them that everyone has personal rights and liberties though rights and liberties have some limitations.”

*Political views.* One of the teachers, who described herself as liberal, generally emphasized human rights and freedom in her lessons. For instance, Hande, who actively took part in one of the teacher unions, emphasized the importance of freedom of expression and respecting the thoughts of others; she provided opportunities for her students to express their thoughts freely. In addition, she typically emphasized the role of non-governmental organizations as upholders of personal rights, in addition to their social responsibilities in the community. On the other hand, conventionalist and conservative teachers handled citizenship issues as supportive of governmental agencies and from the viewpoint of nationalist perspectives and spirituality. For example, Hacer, taught citizenship issues by associating them with (the Islamic) religion. She regarded a person’s death in the War of Independence as martyrdom, which is a religious value, and emphasized the sanctity of military service. Similarly, on the issue of environmental responsibilities, Hacer, associated the issue with religion and stated, “You have responsibilities to protect your environment as a citizen because the environment is the property of the community, not of the individuals. I can associate it with the religion. This is because ethics is the sustenance of societies.”

*Educational background.* Teachers acknowledged that throughout their previous education, they learned citizenship as fulfilling official duties and responsibilities toward the state. Leyla, explained this fact by saying, “In fact, we were taught about citizenship in this way and I always associated citizenship with elections, military service and taxes... this was the way our courses at school presented this subject. This was what the school courses emphasized then. Now, in retrospect, I see that they lacked some points. People are responsible for the world around them and we have rights that we cannot use.” In addition, most of the teachers stated that they had not taken courses related to citizenship education during their pre-service education or in-service training during their teaching profession. Both the classroom teachers and the Social Studies teachers said that the last time they were taught about citizenship was in a Citizenship and Human Rights course in high school; they did not take any course on citizenship and citizenship education in higher education. Nevertheless, all of the teachers agreed that they needed professional training related to issues of active citizenship education, including how to keep up with the changes



as well as how to teach citizenship issues. The teachers' lack of knowledge on citizenship and citizenship education challenged active and democratic citizenship education.

*The Reflections of Students' Characteristics on Active and Democratic Citizenship Education*

*Age and gender.* The age of the students was a challenge to the interpretation of issues related to citizenship. The 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade students had difficulties interpreting some citizenship concepts such as types of regime, legislation, executive and judicial powers, as well as the relationships among these concepts. For instance, when the 5<sup>th</sup> graders did not understand the notion of 'state,' Gaye exhibited its similarity to the classroom environment and tried to illustrate the concept by drawing a state diagram on the classroom board. She explained that students could not understand some concepts unless they were explained using examples. She added, "The students who did not understand who the district governor was were able to understand it when they saw a district governor in a local tree planting organization." The younger students in the study said that they did not understand speeches of politicians and the subjects they talked about. For example, Emine, a 4<sup>th</sup> grade state school student, said that she could not understand political subjects:

Sometimes I find these things interesting, but I cannot always figure out what they say. For example, when they discuss something, they just use words that I don't know, so I lose my interest because I cannot understand anything at all.

The gender of the students, on the other hand, had an effect on their interests on political issues. For instance, when political issues were discussed, girls in the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> grades typically expressed their discomfort by saying, "Puff, let's get them over." A 7<sup>th</sup> grade female student discussed the political positions of women by saying, "If I tell my mom that I want to become a member of the parliament, she will get angry with me and advise me to become a teacher or a doctor." Derya, explained why she thought female students demonstrated an indifferent attitude even toward relevant issues:

We discuss political issues with male students more often. For example, even when we were talking about the scarcity of women in the parliament, it was male students that expressed their opinions. They [female students] feel irrelevant about these subjects... I think women and politics do not stand close to each other in our society. They [female students] do not have role models.

*Socioeconomic and cultural environments.* The socioeconomic level of the students was another challenge in citizenship education. The students from low socioeconomic backgrounds showed more passive citizenship characteristics than students from higher socioeconomic backgrounds. The students from low socioeconomic backgrounds that attended the state school tended to mention responsibilities to the state more often than students from higher socioeconomic levels attending the private school. Some of the students from higher socioeconomic backgrounds addressed citizens' rights, as well their duties. Furthermore, these

students discussed being respectful to the state and other people, protecting the state, working, contributing to the country's economy, and finding solutions to the country's problems. On the other hand, the state school students showed more interest in subjects that dealt with the cultural structure of society and historical events such as the individual and society and culture and heritage; the students from higher socioeconomic backgrounds stated that they liked better the units about "production-distribution and consumption" and economic issues in the Social Studies course. Some of the students from higher socioeconomic backgrounds cared more about material values than citizenship values. For example, during the lessons, some of them said, "I pay money and can win any lawsuit." Likewise, the students from low socioeconomic backgrounds generally hesitated to express their thoughts and rarely participated in the discussions in the lessons; this effect was reported by the teachers as well. Moreover, the parents of the students from low socioeconomic backgrounds were generally conventionalist and conservative. Therefore, the parents' low-level socioeconomic and cultural status did not support the active citizenship concepts that the students learned in their school environment. Additionally, parental ignorance about the current issues in the family, the lower fraction of newspaper readers among the parents, and the fact that the current issues were followed via television had a negative effect on the political literacy of the students. Gaye, expressed that some of the parents reacted somewhat negatively when she taught children's rights to her students. She said, "Parents started to complain when we taught children's rights. They complained that their children wanted to go out and they saw it as their rights." Similarly, Derya, expressed that her students did not pay attention to their rights since they believed that they could not use their rights in the society. She said, "I always tell them to write a petition when they have any problem on any subject. However, whenever I recommend them to write petition they usually respond with:"

You must be kidding, we are still children or even if we write a petition, our headmaster does not weigh our words. They generally thought that they would get a negative reaction when they attempted to use their rights. Therefore, they preferred not to talk on these issues...

The students from higher socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds thought and acted in quite an individualistic manner. The teachers in the private school typically considered their students to be prospective businessmen. For instance, Nuray, sometimes said to her class, "You are going to be the businessmen of the future." She dealt with economic issues in detail and highlighted the importance of paying taxes in her Social Studies classes. Also, the teachers mostly dealt with the economic crisis as a current issue in their lessons. On the other hand, Leyla believed that the students from higher socioeconomic backgrounds were more self-centered, individualist and less responsive to social issues. Leyla and Hande, frequently mentioned the importance of being a charitable person in society and the conditions of poor people in their lessons. The teachers in the private school presented current issues more often, particularly issues related to current politics. The calm demeanor of the teachers in the private school when discussed political issues in their lessons can be attributed to the attitudes of the parents from higher socioeconomic backgrounds

since they do not get annoyed with the discussion of such issues in the lessons. Moreover, while dealing with current issues in their lessons, the teachers in the state schools attempted to raise the awareness of students to issues of children's rights. On the other hand, the teachers in private schools attempted to develop social justice and equity concepts among their students. In addition, in general, passive citizenship perception in society, political actions and the media affect students' perception of active citizenship negatively. One of the teachers, Derya, stated that the contradiction between what students are taught and real life had a negative impact on citizenship education:

We provide them with knowledge about ideal situations, but the real life is different from that... As I said earlier, what we teach cannot go beyond knowledge level... We tell them not to accept bribe because good people do not accept bribe, but when they go outside the classroom, children witness bribery perhaps not among their friends or family but by means of television, the Internet and computers, newspapers... And we shouldn't underestimate these students just because they are children because children tend to do what they see not what they are told to do.

While Gaye was explaining that citizens should join non-governmental organizations during the lesson, a student asked, "You taught us about the Association for Supporting Contemporary Life, but its president was arrested, wasn't she?" During the interview, Gaye explained: "One day, one of the students announced that the president of the Association for Supporting Contemporary Life was arrested, and we had discussed this subject in the previous lesson. I had told them to join to this kind of organizations as citizens. That student asked me about that and I felt he was questioning whether I had taught them wrong. He was expressing his confusion. I was not able to explain to him the situation."

#### *Reflections of the Educational System on Active and Democratic Citizenship Education*

*Curriculum.* The students' perceptions of citizenship did not change at the beginning and end of the Social Studies course. In the interviews conducted before and after the course, the students defined citizenship as fulfilling one's duties to the state such as loving the state, obeying the law, serving military service, voting in elections and paying taxes; students stated that a good citizen should be charitable, honest and religious (Muslim). The students thought bad citizens betrayed their country and broke the law. Only few students listed joining non-governmental organizations among citizenship competencies at the end of the Social Studies course. For instance, when asked about the meaning of citizenship, Cemal, a 4<sup>th</sup> grade state school student, said "Well, it makes me remember our citizenship duties... such as serving military service, working, paying taxes, voting in elections, and respecting the law." Perceiving citizenship as only duties and responsibilities to the state, the students told they would be citizens when they got older because they did not yet pay taxes or serve in military service. Mehtap, a 5<sup>th</sup> grade private school student said, "Now, I do not know what to do as a citizen, but I want to learn it."

Although the SSC offers a constructivist and learner-centered instruction, most of the teachers practiced teacher-centered instruction in their lessons. This discrepancy shows that the teachers did not grasp the notion of the constructivist SSC. The citizenship issues in the SSC are presented with the help of the textbook and teacher's book through question-and-answer and narration techniques. Only two of the teachers made use of dramatization, discussions, exploratory research, field trips, Internet searches, newspapers, etc. while teaching citizenship issues in their lessons. Therefore, according to the findings, effective and permanent learning could not be achieved in citizenship education in the Social Studies course. When the students were asked what they learned about citizenship at the end of the Social Studies course, some of the students were unable to answer the question. Those students who were able to answer the question said they learned about the principles of democracy, foundation of the Republic, human rights, the constitution and form of governments. One of the teachers, Derya, stated that citizenship education remains theoretical in the Social Studies course by saying, "I mean it exists as knowledge but not as practice. Students are taught that a good citizen pays taxes, serves military service and performs their duties." Moreover, the teachers expressed that the curriculum and the textbooks include thorough descriptions of several citizenship issues such as the duties of governors. Since the curriculum does not adequately deal with current issues, most of the teachers did not present such issues in relation to their lessons; the teachers believed that they had to follow the prescribed syllabus. In the interviews, the students also said that they typically learned about developments in political events by means of television and newscasts. Therefore, these findings suggest that citizenship education in the Social Studies course cannot adequately produce students who are politically literate and possess social participation skills.

*Test-centered education.* The test-centered educational system also has negative effects on active citizenship education. Teachers devote one class hour of the Social Studies class for testing. Since students start to prepare for the high school entrance examination when they are 4<sup>th</sup> graders, both teachers and students have to possess theoretical knowledge in citizenship issues. As a result, citizenship education becomes a theoretical instruction instead of learning by experience. The negative effects of this test-centered education are particularly seen in the 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades because both teachers and students in these classes focus on the issues that might occur in the exams. One of the teachers, Nuray, for example, said, "Children's lives are shaped by exams and we do everything according to exams and so do children. They behave as if they did not care about anything that is not included in the exam and as if there was nothing else in their lives apart from exams."

*School culture.* In this study, the school facilities and school culture did not provide the students with opportunities to practice their citizenship knowledge and skills that they learned and gained in their Social Studies classroom. This lack of opportunity to practice was more evident in the state school, where the school rules were stricter. For instance, the elections of school council and school council sessions did not function efficiently. During the interviews, the teachers stated that although the students in the private school were given more freedom in such issues, they

could not use their rights in the desired manner and the students furthermore did not have any good models of citizenship in their environments. In this respect, Derya said:

Students hesitate to use their rights to write a petition to declare their problems and wishes at the school. All in all, if they do not learn how to write a petition here, how will they do that in real life? ... Things will just remain in theory unless they are practiced....

*Legislations and codes of conduct (Ethics).* In this study, the teachers hesitated to deal with current political issues related to citizenship education in their lessons. This hesitation stemmed from a belief that dealing with political issues in the lessons contradicted current laws and legislations. On the other hand, the teachers in the private schools felt more comfortable in this respect since they believed that the current laws and legislations about the civil service did not limit their actions in their schools. When her students started to talk about a political party in her class, Gaye tried to skip the subject either by saying, "Let's say Party A" instead of telling the real name of the political party or saying, "This issue is out of our concern now." Most of the teachers believed that political issues should not be presented in educational environments, particularly with young learners. This belief often arises because teachers think that imposing their political views on their students is unethical. Gaye said, "Personally, I think discussing political subjects in class with students is wrong. If I do that, another teacher will do the same and it can just confuse children. This can cause a chaos, which we experienced before..." Hande, mentioned her concern for the reactions of families and administration in saying that:

In fact, I'm always worried about it; discussing these subjects, political issues, is difficult. Students may talk about it at home and their parents may react and so may the school administration and even the state. Presenting these subjects is a challenging task... and we are just not ready for this yet...

### Discussion and Conclusions

This study revealed that active and democratic citizenship education in the Social Studies classrooms of the schools that were analyzed failed to satisfy expectations. The fact that the students' task-based and passive perceptions of citizenship did not demonstrate any changes at the beginning and end of the Social Studies course could be an indication of this situation. The findings from this study suggest that, in general, citizenship education in Social Studies courses tend to offer, in part, a set of social moral values that focuses more on theory and exams and lacks practical applications. At the end of this course, students become apolitical citizens with a low political literacy. Furthermore, students lack effective thinking and participation skills. This finding of the present study shows similarities with related studies that were conducted in other countries (Davies & Evans, 2002; Morris & Cogan, 2001; Sim, 2008).

Also, several challenges that originate from teachers, students and the educational system affected the process in a negative way. The citizenship perceptions, political views and educational background of the teachers were outstanding factors that had an effect on active and democratic citizenship education. Most of the teachers did not have a perception of active citizenship. As a result, they followed task-based and passive citizenship education practices in their Social Studies classrooms. The reasons for such a citizenship notion among the teachers might be attributed to their educational backgrounds, which emphasized citizenship as an individual's responsibility toward the government, as well as the dominant ideology that emphasized republican, nationalist and task-based citizenship in society. One of the teachers said, "We always make a ceremony for the people who join the army, since we believe that they are going to perform their military service for the nation, however we scarcely witnessed applauds when a person claim his/her rights." The notion of task-oriented citizenship is clearly the prevailing perception among people in Turkey. Therefore, it is rather difficult to produce individuals who are conscious citizens who use their rights and liberties. Furthermore, it is challenging to foster participative citizens who share their political and personal thoughts in society. Although the teachers generally had positive attitudes toward the SSC, which has the goal of raising active and democratic citizens, the teachers fell behind in practice, which indicates that they were not fully competent in active citizenship education. Therefore, the teachers should be trained in current citizenship concepts and active citizenship education through in-service or pre-service training. Also, the students' ages, genders, and socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds limited active and democratic citizenship education. In this respect, while the students from low socioeconomic backgrounds had more passive, nationalist, obedient, religious and ethical citizenship notions, the students from higher socioeconomic backgrounds had more active, democratic and critical thinking citizenship notions.

The female students in the study were unenthusiastic in talking about political issues. Their lack of enthusiasm to express their thoughts on current issues might be associated with the role of women in Turkish society. Within this framework, some previous studies (Doğanay, Çuhadar & Sarı, 2007; Ersoy, 2010) also revealed that female students in Turkey are more depoliticized in comparison with male students. This fact confirms that women are strongly exposed to societal regulations and norms. In this respect, teachers should be aware of gender discrimination in society and some precautions should be taken to raise the political and social awareness of female students and encourage them to be active and participative citizens in society. The notion of passive citizenship was prevalent among the students from low socioeconomic backgrounds. Ignorance of rights and liberties in social environments hindered functional applications of active citizenship that the students had gained at their schools. Furthermore, the traditional school organizations and cultures of the schools in the study did not promote practicing the active citizenship that the students had learned in their Social Studies classrooms. In connection with this finding, it can be suggested that a fundamental renovation in the traditional school organization and traditional school culture concepts should be implemented

concerning active citizenship education practices. Moreover, the legislations that restricted teachers to deal with political issues in their lessons had a negative effect on the development of political literacy and political participation skills of the students. Therefore, the relevant legislations should be readjusted to provide more democratic school organizations and cultures where the teachers feel freer in their academic concerns along with active citizenship education.

To sum up, an active and democratic citizenship education cannot be achieved in Social Studies courses because teachers do not have a perception of active citizenship. In particular, individuals from low socioeconomic backgrounds tend to perceive citizenship as being based on obeying and fulfilling duties, practices at schools fail to supplement the activities within the Social Studies course, the national educational system adopts an exam-oriented approach and the current legal framework restricts teachers' academic freedoms. In order for the Turkish national education to achieve active and democratic citizenship education, it is essential that the state and society accept and care about active citizens who participate in political and social life, are aware of their rights and duties, and respect individual differences. Also, the school organization and culture in Turkey is in need of restructuring in way that promotes active citizenship education. In addition, teachers and pre-service teachers need to be trained about active and democratic citizenship education through in-service and pre-service training programs so that their professional competencies can be improved.

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## Sosyal Bilgiler Dersinde Etkin ve Demokratik Vatandaşlık Eğitimi ve Sorunlar

### Atıf:

Ersoy, A. F. (2014). Active and democratic citizenship education and its challenges in social studies classroom. *Eurasian Journal of Educational Research*, 55, 1-20. <http://dx.doi.org/10.14689/ejer.2014.55.1>

### Özet

*Problem Durumu:* Türkiye’de vatandaşlık eğitimi, Osmanlı İmparatorluğu’ndan 2000’li yıllara kadar edilgen ve görev odaklı bir özellik gösterirken Avrupa Birliği üyelik süreciyle birlikte etkin ve demokratik vatandaşlık eğitimine doğru evrilmiştir. Bu bağlamda 2004 yılında Sosyal Bilgiler Öğretim Programı yapılandırıcı yaklaşımı da benimseyerek etkin vatandaşlık eğitimine yönelik olarak yenilenmiştir. Bu araştırmada, Sosyal Bilgiler dersinde etkin ve demokratik vatandaşlık eğitimi uygulamaları ve karşılaşılan sorunlar incelenmiştir. Böylece, etkin ve demokratik vatandaşlık eğitimini uygulamaya başlayan Türkiye ve benzer ülkelerde ilköğretimde etkin vatandaşlık eğitiminin geliştirilmesine katkı sağlanacağı beklenmektedir. Ayrıca, bu araştırma sonuçlarından, etkin ve demokratik vatandaşlık eğitimi konusunda öğretmen eğitim programlarının geliştirilmesi ve öğretmenlere hizmet içi eğitim etkinliklerinin düzenlenmesinde yararlanılabilecektir.

*Araştırmanın Amacı:* Bu araştırmanın amacı, Sosyal Bilgiler dersinde etkin ve demokratik vatandaşlık eğitimin sürecini ve bu süreçte yaşanan sorunları anlamaktır.

*Yöntem:* Bu araştırmada bütüncül çoklu durum deseni kullanılmıştır. Araştırmada katılımcıların seçiminde aşırı ve aykırı durum örnekleme yapılmıştır. Bu kapsamda, araştırma bir alt ve orta sosyo-ekonomik düzeydeki öğrencilerin devam ettiği bir devlet okulu ile üst sosyo-ekonomik düzeyden gelen öğrencilerin devam ettiği bir özel ilköğretim okulunda gerçekleştirilmiştir. Araştırmaya bu okullarda görev yapan altı öğretmen ve bu öğretmenlerin sınıflarından 30 öğrenci katılmıştır. Araştırma verileri yarı-yapılandırılmış görüşme, katılımcı gözlem ve dokümanların incelenmesi ile toplanmıştır. Araştırmacı, Sosyal Bilgiler dersinde gözlemci olarak katılımcı biçiminde ders sürecini izlemiştir. Gözlem öncesi ve sonrasında öğretmen ve öğrencilerle yarı-yapılandırılmış görüşmeler gerçekleştirilmiştir. Ek olarak, öğretmenlerin ders planları ve derste kullandıkları materyaller incelenmiştir. Araştırma verilerinin analizinde tematik analiz yöntemi kullanılmıştır. Analizde gözlem ve görüşme verileri, alt ve üst sosyo-ekonomik düzey karşılaştırılarak yapılmıştır. Araştırmanın inanırlığını artırmak için birçok veri kaynağından yararlanılmış, veri analizinde bir başka uzmanla çalışılmış ve katılımcılarla veriler paylaşılmıştır.

*Bulgular:* Araştırma sonuçlarına göre, öğretmenlerin vatandaşlık algısı, siyasal görüşü ve eğitim geçmişi vatandaşlık eğitimine yansımaktadır. Bireysel vatandaşlık algısına sahip öğretmenler hak ve özgürlükleri vurgularken; toplumcu vatandaşlık algısına sahip öğretmenler daha çok devlete karşı olan sorumlulukları vurgulamaktadır. Öğretmenlerin çoğunun toplumcu, edilgen ve görev odaklı vatandaşlık algısına sahip olması etkin vatandaşlık eğitimini olumsuz etkilemektedir. Aynı zamanda öğretmenler, hizmet öncesi ve hizmet içi eğitim sürecinde vatandaşlık eğitimine ilişkin yeterli bilgi ve deneyim elde etmemişlerdir. Öğretmenlerin etkin ve demokratik vatandaşlık eğitimi konusunda yeterli bilgi ve deneyime sahip olmaması vatandaşlık eğitimi uygulamalarına olumsuz yansımaktadır.

Öğrencilerin yaşı, cinsiyeti ve sosyal çevresi de etkin vatandaşlık eğitimini etkilemektedir. Yaşı küçük olan öğrenciler devlet, anayasa gibi temel vatandaşlık kavramlarını anlamada zorlanmaktadır. Kız öğrenciler ise, siyasal konulara ilgi göstermemektedir. Sosyo-ekonomik düzeyi düşük öğrenciler sosyo-ekonomik düzeyi yüksek öğrencilere göre daha edilgen ve görev odaklı bir vatandaşlık tutumu göstermektedir. Üst sosyo-ekonomik düzeyden gelen öğrenciler ise, daha çok haklarını bilmekte, kullanmakta ve eleştirel düşünmektedir.

Eğitim sisteminin yapısı ve işleyişi de etkin vatandaşlık eğitimini etkilemektedir. Sınav merkezli eğitim sistemi, geleneksel okul sistemi ve kültürü, yasalar ve yönetmelikler vatandaşlık eğitimi üzerinde olumsuz etki yaratmaktadır. Sınav merkezli eğitim sistemi, vatandaşlık eğitiminin uygulama yapılmadan kuramsal kalmasına neden olmaktadır. Geleneksel okul yapısı ve kültürü, öğrencilerin Sosyal Bilgiler dersinde edindiği vatandaşlık bilgilerinin uygulanmasına olanak vermemekte ve vatandaşlık eğitimini desteklememektedir. Ayrıca, yasa ve yönetmelikler, Sosyal Bilgiler dersinde öğretmenleri sınırlandırmakta ve onların vatandaşlıkla ilgili birçok konuyu ele almalarını zorlaştırmaktadır.

*Tartışma ve Öneriler:* Bu araştırma sonuçları, öğrencilerin edilgen ve görev odaklı vatandaşlık algısının Sosyal Bilgiler dersinin başında ve sonunda değişmediğini göstermektedir. Bu sonuç, Sosyal Bilgiler dersinde etkin vatandaşlık eğitiminin beklenen düzeyde gerçekleşmediğini göstermektedir. Sosyal Bilgiler dersinde etkin vatandaşlık eğitimi, değer ağırlıklı, daha çok kuramsal bilgi ve sınav odaklı, siyasal konulardan uzak ve geleneksel öğretimle gerçekleşmektedir. Bu ders sonucunda, öğrencilerin siyasal okuryazarlık, etkili düşünme ve katılım becerileri yeterli düzeyde gelişmemektedir. Sosyal Bilgiler dersinde etkin vatandaşlık eğitimini, öğretmen, öğrenci ve eğitim sisteminden kaynaklanan kimi etmenler etkilemektedir. Bu etmenler arasında öğretmenin vatandaşlık algısı, siyasal görüşü ve eğitim geçmişi önem taşımaktadır. Öğretmenlerin çoğunun, etkin vatandaşlık algısına sahip olmaması Sosyal Bilgiler dersinde edilgen ve görev odaklı vatandaşlık eğitimini güçlendirmektedir. Öğretmenlerin daha önceki eğitim yaşamında vatandaşlığı devlete karşı sorumluluklar olarak öğrenmesi ve etkin vatandaşlık eğitimine ilişkin bilgi ve deneyim eksikliği uygulamalarına olumsuz yansımaktadır. Bu nedenle, öğretmenlerin etkin vatandaşlık eğitimi konusunda hizmet öncesinde ve hizmet içi etkinliklerle bilgilendirilmeleri uygulamalarının güçlenmesinde etkili olacaktır.

Öğrencilerin, yaşı, cinsiyeti ve sosyo-ekonomik ve kültürel yapısı etkin vatandaşlık eğitimini etkilemektedir. Özellikle kız öğrencilerin siyasal konularda ilgisiz tutumları ve düşüncelerini açıklama konusunda daha az katılım göstermesi toplumsal yaşamda kadının rolüyle ilişkilendirilebilir. Öğretmenler, etkin vatandaşlık eğitimi amacıyla Sosyal Bilgiler dersinde kız öğrencilerin sosyal ve siyasal katılımlarını artıracak önlemler almalıdır. Ayrıca, edilgen vatandaş algısının alt sosyo-ekonomik kültürde daha güçlü olması ve hak ve özgürlüklerin göz ardı edilmesi, öğrencilerin okulda elde ettiği etkin vatandaşlık kazanımlarını sosyal çevrenin desteklememesine neden olmaktadır. Böylece, öğrenciler etkin vatandaşlık kazanımlarını çevrelerinde ve toplumda uygulamayacağını düşündükleri için yeterli önemi vermemekte ve benimsememektedir.

Eğitim sistemi yapısından ve işleyişinden kaynaklanan kimi nedenler etkin vatandaşlık eğitimini olumsuz etkilemektedir. Bunlardan biri sınav merkezli eğitim sistemidir. Sınav merkezli eğitim sistemi öğretmenlerin ve öğrencilerin vatandaşlık eğitiminde kuramsal bilgilere yönelmelerine neden olmaktadır. Böylece, vatandaşlık eğitimi uygulamalı bir eğitim olmaktan uzaklaşarak kuramsal bilgilere dayalı bir eğitime dönüşmektedir. Bunun yanı sıra öğrenciler, Sosyal Bilgiler dersinde elde ettiği etkin vatandaşlık kazanımlarını okulda uygulayamamaktadır. Etkin vatandaşlık eğitiminin gerçekleştirilebilmesi için demokratik okul yapısı ve kültürünün oluşturulması gerekmektedir. Ayrıca, öğretmenlerin siyasal konulara ele almasını sınırlayan yasaların olması, öğrencilerin siyasal okuryazarlık ve siyasal katılım yeterliklerini geliştirmelerini olumsuz etkilemektedir. Bu nedenle, öğretmenlerin akademik özgürlüğünü sağlayacak yasalar yeniden düzenlenmelidir.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Vatandaşlık eğitimi, etkin vatandaşlık, demokrasi, insan hakları, Sosyal Bilgiler