

Candidate Teachers' Attitudes Concerning Human Rights Education in Turkey

Türkiye`de Öğretmen Adaylarının İnsan Hakları Eğitime Yönelik Tutumları

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate the attitudes of candidate teachers toward human rights education. A survey design was used. The Human Rights Education Attitude Scale developed by Karaman-Kepenekçi (1999) was administered to 1904 candidate teachers in the departments of education within thirteen universities from seven geographical regions in Turkey. Significant relationships were found between ratings for attitudes about human rights education and gender, department, university, and university's geographical region. Lastly and most significantly, the candidate teachers in this study also indicated that there is a need for human rights education in teacher training institutions.

Keywords: Human rights education, candidate teachers, teacher training,

Öz

Bu araştırmanın amacı, öğretmen adaylarının insan hakları eğitime yönelik tutumlarını incelemektir. Tarama modeli kullanılarak yapılan bu çalışmada, yedi coğrafi bölgeden 13 üniversitede öğrenim gören 1904 öğretmen adayının insan hakları eğitime yönelik tutumları ile cinsiyet, bölüm ve devam edilen üniversiteler ile üniversitelerin buldukları coğrafi bölgeler arasında anlamlı farklılıklar bulunmuştur. Karaman-Kepenekçi (1999) tarafından geliştirilen İnsan Hakları Eğitimi Tutum Ölçeği kullanılarak elde edilen araştırma verileri, eğitim fakültelerinde insan hakları eğitimi verilmesinin yarar sağlayacağını göstermektedir.

Anahtar Sözcükler: İnsan hakları eğitimi, öğretmen adayları, öğretmen yetiştirme.

Introduction

Education is a lifelong learning process and is vital in the development of citizenship in democratic societies. If schools are to educate pupils to become democratic citizens, they must constantly ensure that the way in which they operate does not violate the principles of human rights. According to the Council of Europe (1999), democracy and human rights education embody three crucial dimensions. The first is teaching human rights and democracy in order to inform people of their rights. The second is informing people about how to implement and defend their rights. The third is to encourage a school climate in which people can report and reflect upon their own concerns regarding the ideals and practice of democracy and human rights. With regard to these dimensions, Ray and Tarrow (cited in The Council of Europe, 1999) describe human rights education as:

the conscious effort, both through specific content as well as process, to develop in students an awareness of their rights (and responsibilities), to sensitize them to the rights of others and to encourage responsible action to secure the rights of all. (p. 18)

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Human rights have long been a key aspect in democratic societies (Teruhisa, 2000; Moghaddam and Vuksanovic, 1990). The topic also relates to moral, global, multicultural, and peace education. The Crystal Reference Encyclopedia (2001) explains that written constitutions usually contain a bill of rights, and that the first Bill of Rights was formally incorporated into the U.S. Constitution between 1789-91. The French National Assembly also adopted a Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen in 1789. According to Kuçuradi (1999), human rights and human rights education were brought into focus immediately after the Second World War with the establishment of the United Nations. Without official legal standing, the UN's General Assembly adopted a Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948. The European Convention on Human Rights introduced individual, social rights and freedoms in 1953, and the European Court of Human Rights was established within this framework.

As was suggested by CSHR (2009) and Hornberg (2002), human rights education firstly helps students to transcend national, social, cultural, economic, and other boundaries. Secondly, human rights education overlaps with intercultural education for sustainable development; this is a crucial concept mentioned in many democratic countries.

Carter and Osler (2000, p. 37) claimed that "education provides one important way forward in turning a rhetorical commitment to human rights into reality." Jones (1991) asserted that human rights education begins with the individual. Expanding on this view, Tibbits (1994) argued that human rights can be experienced by children in different dimensions within school settings. Although human rights education sometimes appears to be focused merely at individuals and their rights, any useful system must promote a public understanding of and responsibility for human rights, as is stated clearly in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Teachers in public schools are assumed to be important promoters of the democratic enculturation process in democratic societies. They certainly play an important role in implementing human rights and social justice, which are both key characteristics of those societies. In that sense, schools lie at the heart of human rights education (Niemi, 1999). Teachers are crucial to promoting good citizenship through active, learner-centered, and participatory approaches, and thus the quality of teacher training programs is essential in safeguarding human rights and democracy. The Council of Europe also recently recognized that democratic societies must now promote the training of educators in the field of human rights education (Huddleston, 2007).

Human Rights Education and Teacher Training

In order for a system of teacher education to be effective, it must be built upon the characteristics and motivations that student teachers bring with them when they enter teacher education programs. Maintaining democratic and human rights ideals during the training period is certainly a challenge, even for faculty members in teacher training institutions. Weisenbach and Steffel (1995) argued that all candidate teachers must focus on the enculturation of children into democracy. In line with this goal, Torney-Purta (1981) had said that teachers should be trained to be sensitive to human rights situations, not just in the world but also in their classrooms; they could do this by including appropriate topics in their curricula and textbooks. Training teachers to teach human rights and international understanding has also been a dominant issue for UNESCO, as has been indicated by Torney-Purta (cited in Sebaly, 1987).

Ross and Yeager (1999) also argued that teachers' understandings of democracy and human rights greatly influence how children will learn about democracy in schools. For example, results of a study indicate that teachers' own socializing has an influence on children's attainment of the values of democratic citizens. Like Ross and Yeager, Harber (1994) also maintained that many teachers describe democratic education as learning by doing, and as increasing responsibility, the positive atmosphere, free decision-making, involvement in decision-making, equality, and diversity in student lessons. According to De Moulin and Kolstad (1999), teachers should possess a solid understanding of democracy, and graduate programs in teacher training institutions should contribute more toward this goal for teachers.

All democratic countries emphasize the importance of human rights and incorporate that concept into their education systems. However, there are many developing and third world countries in which democratization and human rights awareness do not yet have a place on the agenda. For these, as Payaslıoğlu and İçduygu (1999) suggested, studies on attitudes about human rights among strategic groups such as youths and educators (who are the future of a country) may provide crucial information and paradigmatic suggestions for future decision makers.

Human rights education in Turkish higher educational institutions is not new. Although most efforts are devoted to developing courses at the secondary level, human rights education also has a long history in higher education. In the early 1960s, the Human Rights Documentation Center was established. In the early 1970s, TODAIE (the Public Administration Institute for Turkey and the Middle East) and the Ankara University Faculty of Political Science launched Democracy and Human Rights courses. In 1974, the Human Rights Center was established, also in Ankara University. In the 1980s, a human rights course was designed both for undergraduate and graduate students at Hacettepe University, in the Department of Philosophy. In 1990, The Human Rights Inquiry Committee of TBMM was the first mechanism at national level to protect human rights. The Committee acknowledges the human rights defined in the Turkish Constitution and various international treaties and declarations such as the Human Rights Universal Declaration and European Convention on Human Rights (TBMM, 2011).

In 1993, the United Nations conference on human rights in Vienna recognized a general ignorance concerning human rights and declared the need for focus on human rights education (Andreopoulos and Claude, 1997). Soon after, the United Nations reemphasized the importance of human rights by declaring the period of 1995-2004 to be the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education. This action helped to further encourage human rights education in Turkey as well as in other member countries. State Ministry of Human Rights signed a protocol with National Education Ministry in 1995. This protocol envisioned that 'Citizenship and Human Rights' course for the upper elementary grades and an elective course, 'Democracy and Human Rights' was going to be launched in high schools. These courses continued until 2007. Besides, this protocol also suggested to the universities that human rights related courses should be opened for candidate teachers and social sciences institutes may introduce new Human Rights graduate programs (Karaman-Kepenekçi, 2000). However, higher education institutions in Turkey have not heavily been a main focus of human rights education, though a few philosophy, social studies and classroom teaching departments in some universities do offer undergraduate and graduate level human rights courses.

In Turkey, the faculty working in education departments, especially for primary and secondary school teachers, are responsible for equipping future teachers with knowledge and skills in accordance with the teacher-training policies of the Board of Higher Education (BHE). Teachers are trained in 65 public educational institutions and seven foundation universities, and the BHE is responsible for developing curricula and programs for use in these institutions. (Akşit, 2007; Engin-Demir, 2009; Gürbüzürk, Duruhan, & Şad, 2009). Recently established foundation universities (such as Bilgi University, Maltepe University) and many state universities in Turkey dealt with organizing human rights national and international conferences, opening centers in human rights fields, and involving in several European Funds in developing human rights in Turkey. However, higher education institutions in Turkey in general still have not been a main focus of human rights education, though a few philosophy, social studies and classroom teaching departments in some universities do offer undergraduate and graduate level human rights courses.

Researchers have studied human rights education in numerous contexts in many countries. Many of these studies were related to the human rights curricula (Hornberg, 2002; Suarez, 2005); but some of them focused on the efficacy of human rights education in secondary schools (Bourne, et al., 1997; Inagaki, 2002; Murray, 1999, cited in Shuttleworth, 2008; Yamasaki, 2002). According to a research study (Shuttleworth, 2008) on the amount of human rights education

in the United States, there are no uniform standards of quantity or quality in human rights education. Other researchers have studied the roles of non-governmental institutions in human rights education (ElGarrai, 2000; Gündoğdu, 2007). Shuibat (2007) examined the perceptions of university students concerning human rights issues around the world, including issues in the conflict between Israel and Palestine. He found that more than half of the participants did not know about human rights issues around the world. So, he recommended comprehensive human rights education for students in higher education.

A few research studies have evaluated the efficacy of human rights courses. For example, Stellmacher and Sommer (2008) examined the efficacy of human rights education at the university level by conducting three seminars with university students. They found positive results in terms of increased knowledge about human rights and increased commitment regarding human rights, even after only very short-term human rights education in the seminars. Similar to this study, D'sa (2004) examined the attitudes of teachers-in-training about human rights. He found an increase in these students' willingness to become proactive regarding human rights. D'sa concluded that "knowledge of human-rights issues can be increased with continued exposure to human rights education" (p. 83).

Gömleksiz (1988) evaluated both instructors' and students' attitudes in relation to democratic classroom environments. The results showed that both groups enthusiastically agreed on democratic principles. In a study with undergraduate candidate teachers, Küçükahmet (1989) determined that the characteristics of a democratic teacher were to be open to criticism, tolerant, fair, moderate, respectful of human rights, and capable of freely expressing his/her ideas.

After a detailed analysis of human rights education in Iran, Khozani (2006) concluded that increasing ones' knowledge of human rights does not imply or guarantee that an individual will thereafter feel compelled to implement or defend them. Therefore, though knowledge is an important element, affective outcomes must be considered equally important for developing awareness and attitudes toward something. Sherif and Sherif (cited in Sharpe, 2006) described an attitude as:

the individual's set of categories for evaluating a stimulus domain, which he has established as he learns about that domain in interaction with other persons and which related him to various subsets within the domain with varying degrees of positive or negative effect. (p. 57)

Personal beliefs influence both the behavior and the expectations of teachers (Mason, 1999). Attitudes developed at early ages -- whether derived from life experiences within a society or from the media -- continue to be modified over time (McGurine, 1985). However, most research on pre-service teachers' attitudes reveals that altering their beliefs can be a very difficult task. Based upon Fishbein's explanation (1975, cited in Sharpe, 2006) that one's attitude toward a topic reflects his/her beliefs regarding that topic, we propose that candidate teachers' attitudes about human rights education may be both a function and an indicator of their beliefs. Thus, in this study, attitudes of candidate teachers concerning human rights education were determined by means of examining their own beliefs about human rights. It is hoped that the resulting data will be useful in the reorganization of teacher education programs in Turkey. The following questions guided this study:

1. What are the attitudes of the candidate teachers about human rights education?
2. Are there significant differences in the attitudes of candidate teachers regarding human rights education that are influenced by gender, field of study, geographical regions and universities attended?

Method

A survey design was employed in this study (Babbie, 1998; Cohen, Manion, and Morrison, 2005; Hedrick, Bickman, and Rog, 1993; Karasar, 1991).

Population and sampling

Table 1 shows the demographic profile of the candidate teachers participating in the study.

Table 1.

Demographic Profile of the Participants

Variable		f	%	
Gender	Male	881	46,3	
	Female	1023	53,7	
Field of teaching	Social sciences	1261	66,2	
	Core sciences	643	33,8	
Universities and regions	University A	222	11.7	
	University B	Eastern Anatolia	184	9.7
	University C		115	6.0
	University D	Black Sea	170	8.9
	University E	Central Anatolia	176	9.2
	University F		120	6.3
	University G	Mediterranean	122	6.4
	University H		112	5.9
	University J	Aegean	160	8.4
	University K		102	5.4
	University L	Marmara	145	7.6
	University M		118	6.2
	University N	Southeastern Anatolia	158	8.3

The subject population included the entire senior (4th year) candidate teachers enrolled in teaching departments within the universities in Turkey, in 2009-2010 academic year. The sample structure was designed to represent the diversity of the candidate teachers in Turkish universities in seven geographical regions. Therefore, a stratified random sample was generated according to region and provinces (Babbie, 1998: Yıldırım and Şimsek, 2008).

Two universities from two provinces in each region, and thirteen universities and their education faculties from each province were selected randomly (Akar and Yıldırım, 2005). However, due to the problems concerning getting permission for the study, three universities from three regions were not included in the study. Therefore, the Southeastern, Aegean, and Black Sea regions were represented by only one university. In order to fill this gap, the researcher contacted some colleagues in other universities, and then University C (close to the Southeastern region) and University L (close to Aegean region) were involved in the study. In the final count, a total of thirteen universities were included. One-thousand nine hundred and eighty-four senior candidate teachers (out of 2200) from selected universities responded. Only 1904 questionnaires were taken into consideration in the study, since 80 questionnaires included missing or inadequate information. The return rate for the research instrument was 86.5%.

As can be seen in Table 1, the sample consisted of 1904 candidate teachers in thirteen education faculties in Turkey. Of these candidate teachers, 1023 (53.7%) were females, and 881 (46.3%) were males. Of the total number of resulting participants, 1261 (66.2%) were candidate teachers in Social Sciences fields (i.e. classroom teaching/early childhood/social studies/foreign languages education), and 643 (33.8%) were candidate teachers in natural sciences fields (i.e. science/math/biology/computer/chemistry education). As can also be seen in the table, 222 (11.7%)

of the candidate teachers were from University A; 184 (9.7%) were from University B; 176 (9.2%) were from University E; 170 (8.9%) were from University D; 160 (8.4%) were from University J; 158 (8.3%) were from University N; 145 (7.6%) were from University L; 122 (6.4%) were from University G University; 120 (6.3%) were from University F; 118 (6.2%) were from University M; 115 (6.0%) were from University C; 112 (5.9%) were from University H, and 102 (5.4%) were from University K.

Instrumentation

An attitude scale was also used to ascertain attitudes and the degrees of support for these concerning human rights education in teacher training institutions within Turkish universities. The instrument used in this survey study was the Human Rights Education Attitude Scale (HREAS), originally developed by Karaman-Kepenekçi (1999b). The official permission for use of the instrument was granted personally. The HREAS consisted of 23 Likert type items, and responses ranged from strongly agree (5) to strongly disagree (1). It has two major parts. The first part is the 'education in the human rights field' represented by 18 items. Next is 'human rights in the educational environment', represented by five items. The reliability of the HREA was tested, and the alpha reliability coefficient for the first factor (education in the human rights field) was 0.90. The researcher recalculated this value as 0.93. Second and the last factor's alpha coefficient were found to be 0.73. The researcher recalculated this value as 0.88 after analyzing the data obtained from the 1904 candidate teachers.

Data analysis

The data collected from the candidate teachers was analyzed using SPSS 12.00 for Windows pack.

Table 2.

Evaluation Interval for Arithmetical Means

Grading	Mean intervals	Explanation
Certainly disagree	1.00–1.80	Completely negative
Disagree	1.81–2.60	Negative
Undecided	2.61–3.40	Undecided/Neutral
Agree	3.41–4.20	Positive
Certainly disagree	4.21–5.00	Completely positive

In the data analysis, mean values of the responses of the participants to each item were computed. In order to make clear comments on the data, arithmetical mean intervals of the items were recalculated. As the intervals are equal, the point interval coefficient for the arithmetic mean was found to be 0.80. Point interval = (Highest value – Lowest Value)/5 = 4/5 = 0.80. The obtained evaluation interval of the arithmetical means is given in Table 2.

According to the assessment table given above, for example, if the candidate teachers indicated their responses with a mean score of 4.45, this was counted as 'completely positive'. These ratings were used in the descriptive findings. In order to determine if there were significant differences between the responses of the candidate teachers with regard to certain variables 't test' and 'ANOVA' were carried out.

Results

The results of the attitude scale measuring the candidate teachers' attitudes toward human rights education in higher education are presented descriptively in Table 3.

Table 3.

The Candidate Teachers' Responses to the Items in the Human Rights Education Scale

	\bar{x}	S.D.	rank
I think teachers should be respectful to the rights of all students	4.47	.851	1
I believe that students should be listened to in the classrooms	4.45	.833	2
I believe that students should be respected even if they think in a different way	4.45	.902	3
I believe that schools and classrooms should be democratic	4.42	.868	4
I believe that students should directly participate in the university administration or through representatives	4.26	.885	5
I want to learn more about human rights	4.05	.948	6
I believe that people should be educated in the human rights field so they can realize and interpret human rights related issues	3.95	.993	7
I believe that human rights education should be offered at any level of the education system, beginning from kindergarten	3.93	1.038	8
I think human rights education has a great effect on the development of self-respect in people	3.88	.995	9
A human rights course should be a "must course" (compulsory) in the curriculum	3.87	1.030	10
I think that a human rights course is needed in order to learn what human rights are	3.78	1.095	11
Human rights is one of my favorite fields	3.47	1.026	12
I believe that human rights violations can be eliminated by having human rights education only	3.43	1.136	13
There is no need to have a human rights course for people to respect each other	2.59	1.297	14
I am not interested in human rights related books	2.40	1.115	15
There is no need for human rights courses to teach people how to protect their rights	2.33	1.116	16
There is no need for human rights courses to make people unprejudiced	2.33	1.150	17
I never strive to learn more about human rights	2.24	1.004	18
I do not think that human rights education is necessary for democratic administration to run properly	2.22	1.111	19
I do not think that human rights education contributes to making people more tolerant and understanding	2.22	1.133	20
I am bored by human rights related discussions	2.14	1.033	21
I do not suggest that my friends should take human rights as an elective course	2.13	1.034	22
I think that human rights education is a waste of time	1.92	.982	23

The "most positive" responses belonged to the factor of "learning environment in human rights education" (items 1 – 5). The candidate teachers agreed with the idea that teachers should

be respectful to the rights of all students ($\bar{x}=4.47$). They believed that students should be listened to ($\bar{x}=4.45$); that they should be respected even if they think in a different way ($\bar{x}=4.45$); that schools and classrooms should be democratic ($\bar{x}=4.42$); and that students should have a say in the university administration ($\bar{x}=4.26$). Regarding the second factor of the scale (field of human rights education), the candidate teachers positively think that they want to learn about human rights ($\bar{x}=4.05$); that people should be educated in the human rights field so they can realize and interpret human rights related issues ($\bar{x}=3.95$); that human rights education should be offered at any level of the education system, beginning from kindergarten ($\bar{x}=3.93$); and that human rights education has a great effect on the development of self-respect in people ($\bar{x}=3.88$).

Regarding the negative formed items from 14 to 22 in Table 3, the candidate teachers also responded to them negatively. For example, regarding the item "there is no need to have a human rights course for people to respect each other" ($\bar{x}=2.59$), they reacted negatively, meaning that they think there is a need to have a human rights course for people to respect each other. Regarding item 15 ($\bar{x}=2.40$) in the table, the candidate teachers stated that they are interested in human rights related books. The most negative attitude of the candidate teachers was to item 23, that human rights education is a waste of time ($\bar{x}=1.92$). Thus, the vast majority of them did not consider human rights education to be a waste of time. Other responses of the candidate teachers to the rest of the items can be seen in Table 3.

As will be seen in Table 4, the results of the t test demonstrate that there were significant differences between the male and female candidate teachers' attitudes about human rights education, in favor of the females ($t(1902) = -4.794, p=.000$).

Table 4.

Results of the t-Test Relating to the Gender Variable

	N	\bar{x}	S	sd	t	p
Male	881	88.17	15.620			
				1902	-4.794	.000
Female	1023	91.38	13.650			

Table 5 shows that, the results of the t test demonstrate that there were significant differences in the candidate teachers' attitudes about human rights education, in favor of those from the Social Sciences related departments ($t(1902) = 6.080, p=.000$).

Table 5.

Results of the t-Test Relating to the Participants' Departments

	N	\bar{x}	SS	sd	t	p
Social Sciences fields	1261	91,34	13,639			
				1902	6.080	.000
Natural Sciences fields	643	87,05	16,166			

As can be seen in Table 6, the results of the one-way ANOVA demonstrate that there were significant differences in the candidate teachers' attitudes about human rights education in relation to geographical regions [$F(6-1897)=7,821, p=.000$]. To locate the exact source of the differences, the LSD results were scrutinized. These indicated that the differences derived from the attitude mean scores of the candidate teachers from the Southeastern Anatolia region university ($\bar{x}=94,65$), the East Anatolian universities ($\bar{x}=90,16$), the Black Sea region university ($\bar{x}=90,10$), the Central Anatolian universities ($\bar{x}=88,80$), the Aegean region university ($\bar{x}=90,05$), and the

Marmara universities ($\bar{x}=86,47$). The LSD results also revealed that the differences derived from the attitude mean scores of the candidate teachers from the Mediterranean universities ($\bar{x}=92,55$), and the Eastern Anatolia, the Central Anatolia, and the Marmara region universities. This finding shows that there are differences in the attitude mean scores of the candidate teachers in terms of their geographical regions, in favor of the Southeastern and Mediterranean universities.

Table 6.

ANOVA Results Relating to Geographical Regions Where the Universities are Located

Source	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	p
Between groups	9897,667	6	1649,611	7,821	.000
Within groups	400107,7	1897	210,916		
Total	410005,4	1903			

As can be seen in Table 7, the results of the one-way ANOVA demonstrate that there were significant differences in the candidate teachers' attitudes about human rights education in relation to their universities [$F(12-1891)=5,535, p=.000$]. To locate the exact source of this difference, the LSD results were again scrutinized. They indicated that the differences in the attitude mean scores of the candidate teachers derived from University A ($\bar{x}=90,03$), University B ($\bar{x}=90,21$), University D ($\bar{x}=90,10$), University E ($\bar{x}=89,87$), and University F ($\bar{x}=87,24$), University M ($v=89,68$), University C ($\bar{x}=90,34$), University J ($\bar{x}=90,05$), and University K ($v=88,02$) with University L ($v=82,76$); University G ($\bar{x}=92,09$) with University F and University K and University L; University N ($\bar{x}=94,65$) with University A, University B, University D, University E, University F, University M, University C, University H ($\bar{x}=93,04$), University J, University K, and University L. This finding shows that there are differences in the attitude mean scores of the candidate teachers considering their universities, in favor of University N, University H, and University G against the other universities.

Table 7.

ANOVA Results Relating to the University Variable

Source	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	p
Between groups	13912,444	12	1159,370	5,535	.000
Within groups	396092,912	1891	209,462		
Total	410005,357	1903			

Discussion

As human rights education is closely linked to the realization of human rights, attitude development, creating an awareness of the importance of human rights among teachers is crucial to implementation. Andreopoulos and Claude (1997) claim that colleges and universities are critically important in initiating human rights efforts. Thus, it is important to understand how human rights education is perceived by candidate teachers, as they comprise a most strategic group in society, one which will teach new generations of young citizens in schools in the near future.

Since teacher training is of fundamental importance to the development of human rights, this study was designed to determine the attitudes of candidate teachers about human rights. The findings show that gender has a significant effect on the attitudes of candidate teachers concerning human rights education. This indicates that female candidate teachers favor human rights education more highly. This was also revealed in a study in which female students scored

higher than males on human rights and civic knowledge (Danielaian, Umroyan, and Khorozyan, 2005). It is a widely accepted fact that there is a positive relationship between developmental thinking and reading or literacy levels. Odabaş, Odabaş, and Polat (2008) found that female students in Turkish universities read more than males during their university education. These researchers commented that, due to the lack of extracurricular activities and resources available especially for female university students in geographically isolated and relatively disadvantaged provinces (i.e. Erzurum, Elazığ, Kars, Diyarbakır), they tended to read more. On the other hand, another study (Nava, Macao, Hermosisima, and Yeban, 2005, cited in Goldberg, 2008) reported no significant difference between male and female responses in terms of human rights attitudes. This may be because the participants in that study were high school students, and so their attitudes and characteristics may be different than those of university students.

The geographical locations of the universities and the university variable itself produced significant effects on the attitudes of the candidate teachers; the trend was that those from the universities located in the Southeastern and Mediterranean regions favored human rights education more. Payaslıoğlu and İçduygu (1999) also investigated the awareness and support for human rights among Turkish university students. Their findings were similar to the findings in this study in that the students from southeastern universities reported the highest percentage of support for human rights education. Although there has been a considerable increase in human rights awareness in Turkish society, there are indications that in the southeast of Turkey, as well as in the east and some other regions, the level of illiteracy, lack of women and children rights, and general social and economical development all need to be addressed for further progress to be made (MONE, 2009; UNICEF, 2009; TÜİK, 2009). In an OECD conference, Unver (2001) compared Southeastern Anatolia region to other developed parts of Turkey, and stated that the region has higher fertility rates and lower literacy rates, as well as lower school enrolment rates – especially among girls – and lower access to education, health care, and sanitation. We propose that although human rights support and awareness among the candidate teachers across all the universities in the different regions appeared high, the students in the southeastern universities seemed to show significantly higher favor than the candidate teachers in other regions, because of these factors. As Danielaian, Umroyan, and Khorozyan's (2005) study partly confirms the findings of this study that people's attitudes about human rights are more supportive in geographically or economically disadvantaged regions than in advantageous ones.

The field of study (department) variable produced a significant effect on the attitudes of candidate teachers as well, with the Social Science departments scoring higher favor. According to the findings of a study administered by Odabaş, Odabaş, and Polat (2008), university students in the Social Sciences read more books, and the ratio of females in book reading is higher than males. Taking this finding into account, Karaman-Kepenekçi (2006) and Payaslıoğlu and İçduygu (1999) found similar results in their studies: university students in the Social Sciences tended to be considerably more interested in human rights related books. Thus, the results of this study support the results of these earlier studies. As statistics related to the developmental level of regions mostly indicate, we conclude that there is a positive relationship between reading, literacy, and democratic maturity in a society. It may also be discussed that teacher training curricula in social sciences fields in Turkey have more democracy and human rights related topics or units (i.e. classroom teaching, history education, social studies education, guidance and counseling education...) than natural sciences fields. Obviously, this cannot be attributed only to the 'traditional course' variable. However, it is also right to state that contemporary education process is effective creating awareness of the students in any subjects. The results of an experimental study done by Gündoğdu (2010) clarified that that attitudes of the experimental group trained through constructivist approach were significantly higher than those in the control group in terms of attitude permanence of human rights education. As Karaman-Kepenekçi (2000) state that a single Human Rights course may be needed in creating awareness within the field. However, human rights field is very extensive field that should be incorporated into the curricula through a multi-disciplinary understanding. This field should not be seen as the only topic or

course that can bring in all necessary knowledge in students. On the contrary, human rights concept is heavily related to affective education and life skills (such as respect, responsibility, affection, belongingness, empathy, cooperation... etc.) that needs to be accumulated in the early ages. Therefore, 'how to build attitudes' should be taught to all candidate teachers in pre-service education. These activities may be taken into account of national and international understanding in order to be successful, as Karaman-Kepenekçi (1999a), advocates.

To sum up, although the results of this study indicated that there is a need for a quality Human Rights course for candidate teachers, more importantly, teachers should be trained as the democratic leaders for their classrooms under the light of democratic philosophy. Because, teachers' understanding of democracy and human rights has a great influence on how children learn democracy and human rights in schools. The responses of the candidate teachers to first five items in this study received the highest rankings and this evidently showed that 'respect, listening, differences, democratic environment and participation' are the mostly emphasized characteristics in the human rights education. The survey results also indicate that human rights education should start at early grades, preferably in kindergarten, through interdisciplinary understanding. Thus, human rights should be taught through different courses and cross-curricular activities. As Hoover and Kindsvatter (1997) state democratic philosophy consists of equality, freedom and justice that are the base for human rights ideal. This study, therefore, may cause to further investigate the nature of the education and optimal methods of implementation within instructional environments for ideal human rights understanding.

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