

Thinking Locally about Global Human Rights

Antonia Mandry



Introduction

Whereas recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world,

Preamble, UDHR

- UDHR (1948) explicitly enjoins states to educate for human rights (Article 26, 2).
- *The intersection of citizenship and human rights*: Shifting concepts of identity, both globally and in Turkey, range from a nationally-bound concept of citizen to a transnational concept of individual identity with attendant human rights.
- Taking a look at Turkish education as a whole, three major paradigms of education have emerged to address the role of the individual in the state, in the world and in their community
 - Citizenship Education
 - Human Rights Education: “The long term aim of such [human rights education] programmes is to establish a culture where human rights are understood, defended and respected.” (Compass, 2002, 17)
 - Civic Involvement/Social Responsibility

The Study

- **Research Questions:** How are human rights and citizenship conceptualized by educators involved in the Civic Involvement Projects at Sabanci University in Turkey? How are human rights and citizenship understood by the students and reflected in their discourse, attitudes, and practices?
- Study the students and teachers at a given university which offers creative academic approaches to teaching about human rights and citizenship and examine their perceptions of human rights and citizenship.
- Administer a *questionnaire* in which students can respond to a fictional scenario gauging perceptions of human rights and citizenship.
- Engage them in conversations (interviews) about themselves and their experiences with human rights and human rights education.
- Observe them engaging with each other about these topics.

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QUESTIONNAIRE: STUDENTS

English Version

Student Name: _____ Date: _____

University: _____ Email Address: _____

The Story

You will read an imaginary story, but pretend that it is real. Be honest in your opinions and responses to the story's questions. In this story, 1000 different people from all over the world have decided to move to a deserted island in the middle of an ocean in order to create a new community. These individuals all have different opinions, backgrounds, and experiences. In this questionnaire, you will be introduced to different problems and issues that the new island community has been discussing about how their new community would work. The most interesting thing here is what kind of solutions you would suggest to solve these problems in general, what your opinion is on the issues, and what you would suggest to solve these problems in your own community. Answer all the questions honestly. If you need clarification, ask for help!

1. Some people say that laws are necessary to make sure everyone follows the same rules. Others say that laws are unnecessary and that people should be free to do as they please. What do you think?

☐ It would be good, but it is not necessary. (check one answer)

☐ It is necessary to have laws. (check one answer)

2. Later, one person said that only some people should have to follow the laws, but not others. What is your opinion, should everyone have to follow the laws or not (check one answer)?

☐ It would be good, but depending on what law is broken, it should not be punished too severely. For example, if someone is hungry and steals food, this should not be punished too much.

☐ The laws should be only followed if they are good laws, and that depends on each person's personal opinion.

3. What do you think: is it sometimes acceptable to break the law? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Explain your opinion. _____

4. "Only those who work harder should have the right to vote." What do you think of this? _____

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Context: Education for Human Rights and Citizenship

Tertiary

- variety of courses available
- dependent on the individual university

Secondary

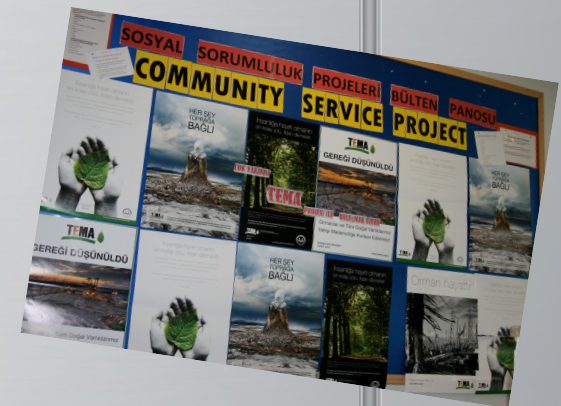
- Democracy and Human Rights; elective
- National Security Course; required

Primary

- Citizenship and Human Rights
- required course

Snapshot on Primary & Secondary

- Citizenship Education and the National Security Course (1923)
- Human Rights Education Committee (1998-2007)
- Government recommendation for civic involvement projects (2005)



Snapshot on Tertiary

Site	Ankara	Bilgi	Sabancı	Gaziantep
Course Title	Human Rights Education	Social Responsibility	Civic Involvement Project	Civic Involvement Project
Type	Elective; 1 semester	Elective; 1 semester +	Mandatory, 2 semesters	Mandatory;
Framework	HRE	HRE	Mixed	Unknown
# of Sts	50	100	900+	Unknown
Age	Undergraduates in education	Undergraduates	Undergrads; 1 st years	Undergrads; 1 st years
Institution Type	State	Private	Private	State
Transmission Type	T → Sts	T → Sts	Sts → Sts	Unknown

Findings

- Students and educators draw on, modify and sometimes abstain from engaging human rights discourse when discussing their experiences with culture, education and violence.
- They carve new paths when sharing their perceptions of human rights as they relate to their own lives.
- The global human rights framework is found to be both foundational and insufficient for how these students engage with issues of social justice locally.

Responsibilities: Knowledge and Community Service

- *Toplumsal Sorumluluk* (social responsibility) emerges as a new language by which they address issues of social justice
- CIP educators abstain from an **exclusively** human rights discourse when discussing challenges within the local academic community focusing instead on knowledge and responsibility (which manifests as raising awareness and community service)
- Existing language of human rights or citizenship was insufficient to discuss what educators were trying to do with CIP

Responsibilities: Knowledge and Community Service

- “Peace education, citizenship and social justice are ‘close ground’ [to what we do in the course]...but what we do is more” (Işıl, interview, December 10, 2010)
- “CIP connects to human rights because we work on [the idea that] everyone has rights in all countries” (Emre, interview, January 1, 2011).

Concepts : Human Rights and Culture

- Educators are sensitive to local conditions and connotations when using the language of human rights within the larger society
- Both educators and students navigate complex conceptual understandings. Educators draw on the human rights discourse when discussing dignity while students struggle with linked meanings between *dignity* - *namus* - *onur*, placing them in an oppositional relationship with HR.
- Students perceive local cultures (associated with regionalism, and gender issues) as inimical to human rights
- Local factors overwhelmingly shape how both educators and students discuss Human Rights

Concepts : Human Rights and Culture

- For CIP students, human rights was linked to:
 - Gender and Tribalism
 - The East-West divide
 - Linguistic connotations
 - Dignity-Honor-*Namus* vs. Human Rights as “freedom”
 - Titling: Civic Involvement vs. Social Responsibility

- “[human rights] is to freely live” (Neslihan, interview, December 15, 2010).
- Human rights is what a person is allowed to do, it’s a kind of freedom. That you do whatever you want. But *namus* is the opposite of this ... I don’t really know how to explain it. ... [it’s like] the social rules that restrict/limit people. (Davut, interview, December 15, 2010)



Rights: Violence

- Human rights is valued but often absent and students show disillusionment with human rights as well as commitment
- Human rights becomes linked, through pedagogy and experience, almost exclusively to violations and violence.
- Even privileged students feel highly vulnerable to violence and State institutions such as police, judiciary and schools are seen as complicit
- the State remains powerful in its prioritization of its own agenda over international concern regarding human rights

Rights: Violence

- In the 1980s, my father and mother were, like, communists ... [when the military coup happened] one of her [my mother's] friends, she was raped, and another was tortured [by the state]... human rights doesn't exist. (Sedef, interview, November 24, 2010)
- I don't feel I belong here, loyalty to my country -- which is related to justice. Why I don't feel it? I am pestered while I walk on the road, and these are all gender issues although I am at the best place in Turkey, maybe %1. Because I feel so uncomfortable, I don't feel loyal to this country because I think there is a general injustice here. (Elif, interview, December 1, 2010)

Rights: Violence

- I saw a teacher kick the child and the child did nothing. [Also] ... in my first year project, the child resisted the teacher because of physical abuse and the child was dismissed from school. I know these things so even if they know their rights, they don't know how to defend their rights. That's why I think that human rights is not just about educating people, but also about knowing how to apply it in your life. I think it is important that human rights be emphasized as well. (Esen, interview, December 1, 2010)

Conclusions

- Understandings of human rights at CIP Sabanci University have been heavily informed by local concerns resulting in a translation of a global human rights discourse to a local one. Nevertheless, educators and students are both highly aware of a human rights discourse.
- The CIP community draws on human rights discourse particularly strongly when discussing issues of violence in their lives; more on local considerations when addressing community service and low civic involvement. They also demonstrate that, overall, human rights becomes tightly linked with gender issues, tribalism, language and cultural values.

- Thank you for your kind attention.
- This powerpoint will be available online at <http://www.mandry.net/toni/> under Presentations.
- Email at adm2129@columbia.edu