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Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences 197 (2015) 1866 – 1873

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**Procedia**  
Social and Behavioral Sciences

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7th World Conference on Educational Sciences, (WCES-2015), 05-07 February 2015, Novotel  
Athens Convention Center, Athens, Greece

## Analyzing The Awareness Of Pre-Service Teachers' Towards Democracy Inclusion In Education

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### Abstract

Democracy has a significant place in education as known and there are two approaches towards the way of involving democracy in education; *democracy education* and *democratic education*. The general aim of this study is to analyze the views of pre-service teachers in the faculty of education towards democracy and also their awareness regarding the difference between “*democracy education*” and “*democratic education*” as well as the real content of these two concepts. Through the study, 100 pre-service teachers from Cukurova University were asked open-ended questions in written format. For data analysis, content analysis was used. According to the answers, it was revealed that the pre-service teachers were aware of the democracy and its requirements in education and knew the distinction between two ways of inclusion.

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Peer-review under responsibility of Academic World Education and Research Center.

*Keywords:* democracy education, democratic education

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### 1. Introduction

Democracy is one of the rising and progressing values of today's world. The world is getting more democratic (Starkey, 2005, p.299). The reason for this can be accepted as globalization's putting individualism forward and by this the democratic governments' getting importance in terms of allowing people get their rights necessary for having a place in the society (Dagan, 2004). Democracy is also used as a standard to measure the politic improvements of the other countries and this makes it a very popular concept (Apple & Beane, 2011).

Democracy consists of two words, “*demos*” means “public” and “*kratos*” is “power or sovereignty”, and it means “self-government” by lexical meaning. In fact, democracy is the way of living giving importance to person's

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existence as a respected being and accepting the people's feeling responsibility for all the society not only themselves and giving each other freedom as the fundamental element of the life (Akarsu, 1998, p.93). According to Dewey, democracy is not only a form of government but it is a mode of associated living and he also describes "democracy" as the name of an equal, free and enriching unity of life (Bakir, 2012). Democracy has developed through years and with this development has got some indispensable elements which are popular sovereignty, majority ruling, equality under the law, minority rights, etc. (1991, USIA). The main aims of the democracy are freedom and equality, political representation, political participation and rights (Demir, 2010, p. 601). Democracy is the modern life and it is to free the intelligence to be independently effective (Dewey, 1903, p. 193).

Through the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, many societies searched for the ways of being liberal, democratic and societies of knowledge and used education for it (Bakir, 2012). "The development of democratic culture requires education" as Starkey (2005, p.300) mentioned. "If people want to protect the democratic life they need to learn what it means and how they can follow it (Dewey, 1916)" (Apple & Beane, 2011). Gutmann and Thompson (as cited in England, 2000) mentioned that in order to make the democracy more deliberative, one of the most important institutions apart from government is the educational system and schools should do whatever possible to prepare their students as citizens. They should help them to understand different perspectives, engage in moral judgments, and so on. As today's societies perceive democracy as a way of living, it is necessary to raise individuals can adapt this way. The progress of the democracy is only possible with the individuals can understand and internalize it. The responsibility of raising these individuals belongs to parents, education institutions and neighborhood (Demirtas, 2008). Here the parents and the society take a great responsibility for teaching democracy. However, generally the education and specifically schools have important role in making individuals internalize the necessities of democratic culture.

With regard to democracy, the main goal of the education is to educate citizens in order to understand and internalize the knowledge, skills and values concerning democracy (Sari & Sadik, 2011, p. 68). The relationship between democracy and education could be analyzed in two dimensions. One of them is teaching democracy by education (democracy education), the other is applying the democratic principles through education that is education's being democratic (democratic education) (Bakir, 2012). Democracy education is thought to be informing about democracy. However, democratic education emphasizes putting democracy into practice and it is more functional in terms of gaining as a value and turning into behavior (Kincal & Isik, 2003). The distinction between them is mostly neglected and they are both understood as giving information about democracy and putting it into practice.

No matter how it is included in education, school and teachers compose the most important part of democracy and education relationship. Especially, teachers are at the heart of this issue. The teachers are the ones who will gain the students democratic values and democratic awareness at school (Sisman, Gunes & Donmez, 2010). With regard to this, it is important that the teachers should be aware of democratic principles and put them into practice. Teacher should believe the human rights, tolerance, diversity and the beauty of democratic life at first place (Demirbolat, 1999). To achieve these, the teacher education process gain importance. It is the key of the inclusion of democracy in education and as Giroux and McLaren (1986) stated (as cited in Sisman, Gunes & Donmez, 2010) teacher education institutions and schools should have an active role in the development of democratic culture. Pre-service teachers should be knowledgeable about the basics of democracy and its place in education. According to Bulut (2006), educating the pre-service teachers to have the democratic values is crucial in terms of raising individuals behave democratically for the future (p.39). It is also important to know their understanding of democracy and their democratic values beforehand to have the chance to think about what can be done to improve their insight for democracy (Akin & Ozdemir, 2009, p.189). There are some studies conducted to analyze the pre-service teachers' democratic values, understanding of democracy. One of them was the study of Yilmaz (2011) and he found that the pre-service teachers mostly showed engagement in democratic values and the sub-dimensions of them at a high level. In another study comparing the democratic attitudes of teachers and teacher candidates', it was revealed that the teacher candidates had more positive democratic attitudes than the teachers but the researchers suggested that it is still needed to improve their understanding of democracy (Saracalioglu, Evin & Varol, 2004). From this point of view, the purpose of this study is to analyze the views of pre-service teachers in the faculty of education towards democracy and also their awareness regarding the difference between "democracy education" and "democratic education" as well as the real content of these two concepts. In the context of this purpose, these questions will be answered:

1. What are the views of the pre-service teachers' towards the concept of democracy?
2. What are the views of the pre-service teachers' on the indispensable elements of democracy?
3. How do the pre-service teachers define democracy education?
4. How do the pre-service teachers define democratic education?
5. Are the pre-service teachers aware of the distinction between democracy education and democratic education?
6. What are the pre-service teachers' suggestions regarding inclusion of democracy in education and the possible applications could be beneficial?

## 2. Method

This part includes the design, participants, data collection and data analysis processes of the study.

### 2.1. Research design

This study is carried out with phenomenological design one of the qualitative research designs. Yildirim and Simsek (2008) expresses that phenomenological design mostly focus on facts we actually know but not have any deep understanding of them. As this study had the aim of revealing the awareness of the pre-service teachers towards democracy inclusion in education and also their understanding of democracy, phenomenological design was found appropriate.

### 2.2. Participants

The participants of the study were seniors (pre-service teachers) at Primary School Teaching Department and Social Sciences Education Department in Faculty of Education at Cukurova University during 2014-2015 Education Year. The reason for choosing these departments was that they had the biggest number of students within Faculty of Education. The primary school teachers are also more engaged in development of an individual and so this issue is important for them by nature. As for social sciences teachers, they already have democracy courses so it could be valuable to see what the situation was with them. As there was more than one group of seniors, one group from each department-two groups in total- was chosen randomly. The participants were the volunteer ones in these two groups and the number was 100. This is a good number for a qualitative research as these type research mostly carried out with a smaller number of participants. The age average of the participants was 22.03. 55 of them were women and 49 men and for two departments there were 35 primary school pre-service teachers and 65 social sciences pre-service teachers.

### 2.3. Data collection

"Views on Democracy in Education Form" was used to collect data through this study. The form was prepared by the researcher and it included five open-ended questions. In the first part, the participants were asked about personal information and the second part consisted of five open ended questions related to the democracy and its place in education. After the questions and the structure in the form prepared it was presented for the expert opinion. Then, in accordance with the advices by experts the form reviewed and reformed. At first, a small pilot study was conducted with ten senior students and with the analysis of this study the form got its last shape. It was conducted to the pre-service teachers in a class hour by the researcher herself.

### 2.4. Data analysis

To analyze the data, content analysis was used. The forms were coded by two separate researchers and coming together they checked the matching between the codes. Most of the codes determined by the researchers were matching and for the ones different they went for consensus. While forming the themes the research questions and the literature review were taken into consideration. PT abbreviation was used for each pre-service teacher with a number through presentation of findings.

### 3. Findings

#### 3.1. Findings regarding the democracy definitions of pre-service teachers

It was observed that the pre-service teachers defined democracy under the themes “Fundamental rights and freedoms”, “Prerequisites of democracy”, “The effect of public in ruling”, and “The tendency towards diversity”, “Life-democracy relationship”, “Conceptual democracy and Economic dimension”. The themes mostly repeated the most frequent codes under these themes and their frequencies are shown on the Table 1.

Table 1. The themes, codes and frequencies regarding the views of pre-service teachers on definition of democracy

Themes	Codes	f
Fundamental rights and freedoms		Total: 88
	Freedom	23
	Freedom of expression	12
	Exercising rights without restrictions	10
Prerequisites of democracy		Total: 48
	Justice	11
	Majoritarianism	6
The effect of public in ruling		Total: 33
	Freely vote for the rulers	19
	Public's being dominant at ruling	11

As it is seen on the Table 1 most of the pre-service teachers defined the democracy associated with *fundamental rights and freedoms* (f:88). While the participants used codes *freedom, awareness for people's own rights* under this theme, for the others some described democracy with *justice* (f:11) or *freely voting for rulers* (f:19). One of the pre-service teachers defined democracy as: “*Democracy is people's freely using their rights without violating the others' and determining the rulers....*” (PT6). Another one emphasizing valuing the people as one and whole explains democracy as: “right, freedom, respect for diversity, empathy, supremacy of law, justice and separation of powers..” (PT1).

The most frequent codes within the rest of the themes that the participants explained the democracy with are *no discrimination of gender, religion or language* (f:8), *the key for a peaceful life* (f:3), *a concept without meaning* (f:3) and *not having financial difficulties* (f:2). One participant puts many of them together and states: “..... . *Democracy shows the ways people should follow to live in peace. ...., it is freely choosing the ones will rule them. Without making discrimination between genders, religions, races or ideas, ..... their freedom should not be intervened.....*” (PT3).

#### 3.2. Findings regarding the pre-service teacher' views on the indispensable elements of democracy

The second research question was “what are the views of the pre-service teachers regarding the indispensable elements of democracy?” The most repeated themes and codes are shown on the Table 2.

Table 2. The themes, codes and frequencies regarding the views of pre-service teachers on indispensable elements of democracy

Themes	Codes	f
Social equality and freedom		Total: 117
	Equality	56
	Freedom	44
	Freedom of expression	13
Sense of right, law and justice		Total: 103
	Justice	37
	Rights and responsibilities	26
Administrative factors and needs		Total: 72
	Individual and society	11
	Elections	9
	Majoritarianism	7

The findings were gathered around five themes which are “Social equality and freedom”, “Sense of right, law and justice”, “Administrative factors and necessities”, “Thinking skills and values” and “Views on diversity”. When the themes were analyzed, it was seen that the pre-service teachers mostly related the democracy with social equality and freedom and they saw the fundamental elements as *equality, freedom, justice and rights and responsibilities*. Some examples of the participants' expressions are: “*Respect for human rights and keep these rights alive, freedom, justice, equality and to guarantee them by law.*” (PT40). “*Equality and freedom.*” (PT53). In addition to the themes

shown on the table pre-service teachers also put forward codes such as *respect* (f:13), *tolerance* (f:7), *respect for diversity* (f:10) under the themes “Thinking skills and values” and “Views on diversity”. In related with these one of the pre-service teachers said: “ ..... *If each person is a flower; then the smell of them are the smell of democracy*” (PT35). The participants also focused on the administrative needs such as *elections*, *separation of forces* and *direct suffrage*.

### 3.3. Findings regarding the understanding of pre-service teachers in terms of democracy education

With regard to the concept of democracy education which was the core of the third research question, the pre-service teachers answered in different ways. The findings related to democracy education are as on the Table 3.

Table 3. The themes, codes and frequencies regarding the views of pre-service teachers on democracy education

Themes	Codes	f
The attainments related to democracy		Total: 76
	Democratic awareness	12
	Equality	10
	Awareness of democratic rights	10
The way of application		Total: 54
	Programmed instruction of democracy	11
	The balance of theory and practice	9
	The instruction of democracy at knowledge level	8
Developing the understanding of right and freedom		Total: 28
	To know social responsibilities and rights	13
	Respect for rights and freedoms	5

On the table 3 it can be seen that the most repeated themes were “The attainments related to democracy”, “The way of application” and “Developing the understanding of right and freedom”. In parallel with these themes and the codes concerning them the pre-service teachers used such statements: “*Democracy education is an education for teaching individual how to express himself, use his rights and freedoms and gaining him democratic awareness. The education for equality and justice is also included*” (PT44). “*It is the education carried out in order to make individuals internalize democratic awareness and democratic life*” (PT72).

Although the pre-service teachers mostly referred to codes such as *democratic awareness*, *equality*, *to know social responsibilities and rights* through the themes above, some of them mentioned *the qualities of the education and effects on life* (f:20) as well. The most frequent code under this theme was *education in equal conditions* (f:5). Participants explained the democracy education in different ways related to this theme. Some examples: “... *that the children of different races or religion having the equal rights and being taught in the same conditions. ....*” (PT86). “*Democracy education is the education that everyone gets how much they want. ....*” (PT31).

### 3.4. Findings regarding the understanding of pre-service teachers in terms of democratic education

As for the fourth research question about the descriptions of the pre-service teachers regarding democratic education, there shown up five themes. “The sense of equality in education”, “The qualities of education” and “The needs and expectations towards democracy” were the most frequent ones and were shown with the most frequent codes under them on the Table 4.

Table 4 The themes, codes and frequencies regarding the views of pre-service teachers on democratic education

Themes	Codes	f
The sense of equality in education		Total: 62
	Equal right of education	37
	Respect for diversity	10
The qualities of education		Total: 61
	Education appropriate for democracy	10
	Free education	8
	Fair education	8
	Education towards requests and rights	8
The needs and expectations towards democracy		Total: 32
	Democratic environment	9

## Teachers' being fair

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As shown on the table 4, the pre-service teachers frequently defined democratic education with *the equal right of education* (f:37). Some participants state: "... is to be equal in terms of educational rights" (PT64). "... is the education which is equal. It is the education provided equally" (PT97). *Respect for diversity, education appropriate for democracy, democratic environment* were the other frequent codes among the ones participants used. The other less frequent themes were *education in the context of rights and freedoms* (f:18) and *individual effects and attainments* (f:13). *Freedom of expression* (f:7) and *respect for individual and thought* (f:4) were the most repeated codes under these themes accordingly. Regarding these codes and themes, one of the participants explained the democratic education under the theme of *education in the context of rights and freedoms* and said: "It is the education through which we can freely express our thoughts and choices" (PT85).

### 3.5. The views of pre-service teachers concerning democracy inclusion in education

The last part was related to the application of democracy in education. Concerning this, the participants came up with some advices regarding the way of teaching democracy and mentioned attainments that the individuals would gain as well. There are the most frequent two themes on the table along with the frequent codes under them.

Table 5 The themes, codes and frequencies regarding the views of pre-service teachers on implementation of democracy in education

Themes	Codes	f
The needs for democracy education		Total: 134
	Practical teaching activities	25
	Providing experiences and opportunities	11
Attainments		Total: 32
	Democratic awareness	8
	Practice through real life	6
	Empathy	5

It is apparent on the table 5, that 25 participants mentioned about the practical teaching activities and it was the most frequent statement used within this part. PT64 emphasizing the teachers' importance and practicing said: "Democracy should be handled practically instead of theoretical knowledge. The teacher talking about being democratic should be a model for his students as well" (PT64). Another PT explained how democracy should be taught: "Democracy should be taught to students via experience. A primary school student may not understand this concept but if he is taught by practicing then he can understand better. ..." (PT5). The pre-service teachers also stated the importance of providing experience and opportunities and democratic awareness. They mentioned the practices and activities could be used through democracy teaching and the view on diversity as well. Regarding the practices and activities theme pre-service teachers brought different advices such as *activities requiring exchange of views* (f:3) or *democratic discussions* (f:2), *creative drama* (f:2), etc. One of the pre-service teachers expressed his advices: "Lessons should include activities through which students can have democratic discussions. Panels and conferences should be carried out. ...." (PT1). In terms of insight of diversity, the most repeated code was *respect for diversity*.

When the participants' answers were analyzed, it was seen that 87 of the pre-service teachers gave answers to the third and the fourth question explaining what *democracy education* and *democratic education* means separately while the other 13 pre-service teachers only answered one of them stating that the two questions had the same answer. This indicated that some of the participants did not distinguish between *democracy education* and *democratic education*.

## 4. Discussion and conclusion

Within this study, there were many precious findings concerning the democratic understanding of pre-service teachers. The findings of the question asking for the definition of democracy by pre-service teachers indicated that they explained democracy with freedom as the core element and emphasized freedom of expression, freely choosing the rulers, justice. Democracy emphasizes the freedom since people can determine their individual characteristics and differences when they feel free (Bektas & Kilic, 2011). According to Uygun's (2009) study, pre-service teachers frequently stated the democratic values and the most frequent ones were "respect", "justice" and "tolerance". Similarly, in this study justice was a stressed term by pre-service teachers. While freedom was a core term within this study's findings, in the study Uygun conducted it was one of the least mentioned. Yagan and Yildirim (2014), in their study with early childhood education teacher candidates reached the metaphors of the

participants regarding democracy and these metaphors were pointing freedom, equality, differences' being together, justice, etc. This also supports the findings regarding the participants' definition of democracy. Some other pre-service teachers also pointed out the respect for diversity, democracy's being the key of a peaceful life and it's standing for equal income. This shows that in addition to focusing on administrative elements the pre-service teachers are aware of the fundamental units which compose democracy and they define it through these units.

The second research question was about the indispensable elements of democracy. For a society, to implement the democracy, some requirements should be fulfilled. These are the public's participating in ruling on a large scale, allowing different views to be expressed, public's obeying the majorities' decisions and also protecting the opinions of minority and keeping the fundamental rights and freedoms safe (Savas, 2003). In parallel with these pre-service teachers frequently mentioned equality, freedom and justice as the most important requirements of democracy. They also focused on rights and responsibilities and administrative factors such as elections, majoritarianism. Some of them mentioned many different elements together. For example PT12' answer was: "Social participation, right to live, equality, justice, freedom of thought and faith, civic duties, real popular sovereignty, right to criticize, neutrality, legality and humanism".

One of the most crucial parts of the study was the distinction between democracy education and democratic education. As it was mentioned 13 of the pre-service teachers did not mention any distinction between them. When the answers were analyzed, it was found that most of the pre-service teachers pointed out the difference between them in a right course. Democracy education is mostly identified as teaching democracy via education (Bakir, 2012). The concept of democracy education is mostly understood as informing individuals about democracy (Kincal & Isik, 2003). The pre-service teachers explained the democracy education with the programmed instruction of democracy, gaining the democratic awareness and democratic values such as equality and justice, making the individuals aware of their rights and responsibilities, carrying out the education providing equal conditions and raising democratic individuals which was a right explanation in accordance with the literature. For the democratic education, their focus was on equal education right and the other frequent terms used were respect for diversity, equal opportunity, respect for individual, democratic environment, freedom of expression. They also stressed the necessity of the teachers' being just and a right model for the students. Karaman-Kepeneci (2003) expresses democratic education as the education through which the principles and rules of democracy and human rights are learned by experience. She also emphasizes that the democratic education provides equal rights and opportunities for everyone and refuses discrimination. In parallel with the literature, it can be asserted that the most of the pre-service teachers are knowledgeable about the two concepts and they are aware of the distinction.

The last part of the study was about the suggestions of pre-service teachers for inclusion of democracy in education and asking for examples of applications, activities they could think of. Putting emphasis on practical activities and providing experiences, they suggested improving individuals' democratic awareness and providing equality through education. It is very important to provide democratic environment for a democratic education. Karaman-Kepeneci (2003) states the two prerequisites of a democratic school which are communication based on love, respect, understanding and tolerance and making decisions altogether with each person at school. The pre-service teachers also mentioned the importance of making decisions together with the members of the school (especially asking for students' opinions as well). Democratic education should be understood as providing education right for everyone, democratizing the curriculum and every element of education, not allowing discrimination and the importance of involvement meaning everyone's having the right to speak out about anything at school should not be neglected (Tanilli, 1989; Bakir, 2012; Karaman-Kepeneci, 2003).

In conclusion, as the teachers of future, it is very crucial to analyze what pre-service teachers know about the democracy and their points of view towards its inclusion in education. The study conducted indicates that they are aware of the concept and its consistence; however they do not believe in educational system in terms of integrating the democracy in education in real terms. Their position towards democracy is promising in terms that they believe in democracy's requirement for a better society and could come up with some ways to democratize the education. In parallel with this study, other research could be done with other pre-service teachers from different universities and departments to see the whole picture and it could be beneficial to utilize from other data collection methods as well.

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