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Turkey's New Citizenship and Democracy Education Course: Search for Democratic Citizenship in a Difference-Blind Polity?

The paper introduces and critically evaluates the new Citizenship and Democracy Education course in the Turkish curriculum. This course has been introduced as a mandatory subject in grade 8 per one hour a week in the 2011-2012 academic year. Following the comprehensive 2005 curriculum reform, Citizenship and Human Rights Education courses had been abolished and these themes had been distributed to the curriculum of different courses. However, recommendations of academics and international bodies such as the Council of Europe on the advantages of having a distinct course on citizenship and human rights have led the Ministry of National Education to reintroduce a compulsory course covering these themes. The new course seems to be a human rights education course with its emphasis on rights and responsibilities. It could be considered a progressive step in this regard. However, the implication that educating people about their rights could be a basis of democratic citizenship might not be realized in present Turkey where internal conflicts based on religious, ethnic and language-based differences are becoming salient. The paper argues that democratization of citizenship in Turkey requires not only an education about rights but also the questioning of the current difference-blind civic republican notion of citizenship. It draws attention to the necessity of the development of a new political framework and a related citizenship course that would allow for peaceful coexistence of cultural differences.

Keywords:
Turkey, citizenship, human rights education, democracy education, multicultural education

1. Introduction

Citizenship and human rights are becoming explicit themes in formal education in many countries. They have been made an integral part of the curriculum of several countries ranging from Europe to Eastern Europe and Latin America in an effort to counter the increasing disinterest in politics and to promote the culture of democracy and human rights (Osler, Starkey 2005; Tibbitts 1994). Turkey became a part of this international development during the mid-1990s: it formed its National Committee on the Decade for Human Rights Education in 1998 in response to the appeal by the United Nations for the implementation of human rights education at the national level. Alongside several other reforms intended to bring Turkey's legal and educational structure in conformity with international standards, human rights themes were incorporated into citizenship education. In 1998, a course hitherto called Civics was renamed as Citizenship and Human Rights Education and started to be taught in grades 7 and 8 for one hour a week (Çayır, Gürkaynak 2008).

Civics has traditionally been at the very center of national education in Turkey, mainly serving the purpose of creating a nation of unity (Üstel 2005). In all textbooks, Turkish citizenship was defined as a membership in the State on the basis of a single religion (State-monitored version of a Sunni Islam) and a single language (Turkish). Textbooks promoted an organic vision of society and duty-based citizenship along with a denial of the recognition of ethnic, religious and language-based minorities. The incorporation of human rights into citizenship education, in this re-

gard, was an important step in transforming the dominant notion of citizenship in Turkey towards a more pluralistic and inclusive form. In other words, these Citizenship and Human Rights Education courses could have served to expand citizenship to include cultural rights, identity rights and human rights. However, as research on the textbooks of these courses demonstrated, their eclectic content blended human rights themes with a nationalistic and militaristic perspective. Some chapters involved extensive references to human rights such as "the development of the notion of human rights," "basic rights and freedoms" or "the protection of human rights at national and international level." Other chapters of the same book mentioned "our internal and external enemies" and promoted a militaristic conception of citizenship (Çayır, Gürkaynak 2008). These Citizenship and Human Rights Education courses also suffered from other shortcomings including lack of teacher training, and teaching the course being taught for only one hour per week.

These courses have been abolished as a result of the 2005 curriculum reform. This reform is one the most comprehensive reforms in the Turkish education history that aimed to redesign the whole curriculum on the basis of constructivism and student-centered learning. New programmes have been developed at all grades, and new textbooks (and, for the first time, teacher's guides and students' workbooks) have been introduced in primary and secondary levels. As part of this reform, the Ministry of National Education (MoNE) decided to teach citizenship and human rights not as a distinct subject but distribute these themes over the curriculum of other courses in different grades.

Recently, however, the MoNE has announced the reintroduction of a distinct Citizenship education

course as part of a new project. This project, titled "Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education" (DC/HRE), has been launched in 2009 to be conducted in collaboration with the Council of Europe. This 3-year project aims at revising educational regulations and developing new materials for DC/HRE principles. The project also involved development of a new, distinct course covering citizenship and human rights themes. The programme of the new course, named "Citizenship and Democracy Education," has been developed and piloted during the 2010-2011 academic year. A new textbook (Özpolat 2011), student's workbook and teacher's guide have been developed to be taught as mandatory in grade 8 (13-14 years old pupils) in the 2011-2012 academic year.

This paper critically evaluates the program and textbook of this course by mainly problematizing its difference-blind content in the context of Turkey's contemporary political and social scene. I analyze the textbook with a qualitative methodology, specifically with a discourse analysis to identify the content, groups, information underlined or omitted by the author(s) (Pingel 1999). I deconstruct the textbook, first, to problematize the relationship between human rights and citizenship education. The new Citizenship and Democracy Education course assumes that educating students in human rights will lead to the development of democratic citizenship. I argue that this might not be realized unless students are made to acquire skills that enable them to critically reflect upon the current social, cultural and political problems of Turkey. Thus, second, I explore the notion of civic culture that the textbook promotes. I then relate this discussion to problems concerning citizenship which are becoming much more salient in contemporary Turkey with increasing voices of non-Turkish and non-Muslim minorities about formal and informal barriers in front of their full citizenship. I argue that the new course, mainly due to the present legal structure and dominant nationalist political culture, is still based on a single social imaginary, which does not allow for the representation of different identities and interests. However, this course provides us with a ground to discuss several crucial points such as the need to develop a new notion of citizenship in order to equally include differences and the need to revise the link between citizens and the nation-state. This is crucial in Turkey given its lively debate about the forming of a new civil constitution after the general elections of June 2011, a constitution that could lay the foundations for the denationalization and the democratization of the citizenship regime.

2. The content of the Citizenship and Democracy Education Course

The rationale behind introducing a distinct subject covering citizenship and human rights is presented by the MoNE as follows: The age we are living in, as the MoNE states, is "the age of human rights" (MEB 2010). The MoNE takes this to mean that "adopting, protecting, and enjoying human rights have been a necessity for people. Human rights have been an important measure of a country's level of development" (MEB 2010). Therefore, raising citizens who respect and protect human rights requires the inclusion of human rights in the educational processes. This course is the result of an attempt to revise and renew the educational programmes in order to raise "conscious citizens who make sense of the changing world" (MEB 2010).

Another reason for introducing a distinct course, according to the MoNE, was the criticisms it has taken from teachers, principals and several NGOs for making citizenship and human rights themes cross-curricular after the 2005 curricular reform and on the importance of having a separate mandatory course on citizenship. Title of the former course in pre-2005 period was Citizenship and Human Rights Education. The MoNE, this time, named the course as 'Citizenship and Democracy Education' by underlining the importance of "democratic citizenship" and pointing out that "democracy education includes human rights education" (MEB 2010).

In Turkey's highly centralized education system, the Board of Education prepares the curricula for all subjects and its approval is required for the adoption of a textbook in formal education. The MoNE itself develops a textbook for all subjects and allows private publishing houses to prepare textbooks to be used after the Board of Education's approval. For the Citizenship and Democracy Education course, there is yet one textbook published by the MoNE (Özpolat 2011).

The content of the course is composed of four main chapters. Their titles are as follows:
I. Every human being is valuable
II. The culture of democracy
III. Our rights and freedoms
IV. Our duties and responsibilities

Under each title there are subtitles with one-page readings about specific themes. The first chapter involves themes underlining the importance of concepts such as "human dignity," "humanitarian values" in relation to human rights agreements. The second chapter presents a "definition of democracy," "characteristics of a democratic citizen" and the importance of "tolerating different views" in a democratic society." The third chapter focuses on human rights along with subtitles on "the universality of human rights," "non-governmental organizations" and "democratic solutions to problems." The last chapter informs students about responsibilities. These involve citizenship responsibilities of paying taxes, voting, and performing duties to protect "national unity and indivisibility."

3. Evaluation: Can Human Rights Education Be a Basis for Democratic Citizenship?

Citizenship and Democracy Education course has some progressive elements as well as some major shortcomings. Compared to the former Citizenship and Human Rights Education course of the 8th grade, one positive step is the removal of chapters such as "the elements of national security and national power" which handled internal and external politics with a militaristic perspective and language. Another progressive element is the inclusion of several new objectives such as "acquiring skills to identify discrimination and not to discriminate against anyone," "developing skills to take responsibility for gender equality" or "developing awareness on the importance of dialogue and communication for living together" (MEB 2010).

The textbook starts with a liberal abstract notion of the dignity of the human and continues with several references to the concept of human rights and international human rights agreements. There are, on the other hand, very few references to the concept of citizenship. Of 32 learning objectives, only three specifically mention the concept of citizenship. Therefore, although the course has been named Citizenship and Democracy Education, it seems to provide basic human rights education rather than a 'classical' citizenship education. To put it differently, the new course makes very few references to the political institutions, constitutional principles and country specific norms and regulations of Turkey. Rather, it aims at strengthening skills for human rights. In this sense, the new programme reflects the approach of the Council of Europe which, as Audrey Osler notes, does not distinguish between education for democratic citizenship and human rights education. These two fields, according to the Council of Europe cover the same core ground and aim at strengthening democracy and human rights (2009, 61). Similarly the programme of Citizenship and Democracy Education is based on an assumption that many concepts around human rights inherently relate to citizenship and that human rights education can be a basis of democratic citizenship.

It is true that the concept of citizenship in a democratic polity requires understanding and acceptance of human rights which provide the framework for equal participation of all citizens in public life (Osler, Starkey 2000). One could also argue that citizenship education, when taught on the grounds of human rights can prepare students to be active participants in the civil and political life of their local, national and international community. This line of thought requires us to formulate and explore the question, "can the emphasis put on human rights themes in the new course provide a basis for the notion of democratic citizenship in Turkey?" My response would be both

"yes" and "no" depending on the way human rights themes are related to problems about citizenship in textbooks and classrooms.

I would argue that studying human rights does not necessarily provide a framework for the development of skills regarding democratic citizenship. I draw my argument on a recent study in which a colleague and I interviewed 7th and 8th grade students (13 and 14 years old) taking the former Citizenship and Human Rights Education course, to understand their views on the course and their perceptions of human rights (Çayır, Bağlı 2011). As mentioned above, these courses were mandatory before 2005 and involved, as their title says, many topics related to human rights. Particularly the 7th grade curriculum included several progressive elements regarding human rights education. Nevertheless, for the students, the courses were "boring, unnecessary, unimportant and easy." One reason for this, according to the students, was textbooks, which did not touch upon "real problems." Another factor was inappropriate teaching methods. Despite the negative attitudes of the students, the findings show that they acquired some human rights knowledge, particularly those directly attracting their interests (such as "nobody can enter into my house without permission.") However, the knowledge of human rights they acquired in school did not empower them in their daily lives. They repeatedly noted that "the real life was outside [not in textbooks]." And what they saw in real life, mainly through the media, was a world where nobody "respects human rights." Students were well aware of internal problems such as the Kurdish issue ("Eastern issue" in their language) and international problems like "the invasion of Iraq by the United States." The study demonstrated that "being educated" on human rights did not make them feel empowered. Rather what the children told us was that they felt weak, powerless and vulnerable: "Many people around us are not observing human rights. Since there are such people, our compliance with [human rights] might cause us to be oppressed" (Çayır, Bağlı 2011, 11). Knowing their rights, in this context, was important in so far as that helped them "not to be crushed" (ibid., 11) rather than helping them to develop democratic citizenship skills.

This experience should be reexamined while reviewing the programme of the new Citizenship and Democracy Education course, the core of which is, once again, constituted by human rights topics. The main problem of the former programme was that human rights were handled in a very "sterile" way in both textbooks and classrooms. This means that human rights were taught without recognizing their relevance to past, present and future local and global problems. Taken this way, human rights could easily be incorporated into the curricula of any country, no

matter how undemocratic it is. However, unless human rights are addressed in the context of national and international politics and, in terms of the rights and the responsibilities of the citizen, human rights education courses might improve a country's image, but they would not necessarily provide the basis for democratic citizenship.

Related to such a frame, another key requisite for human rights education to be the basis for democratic citizenship is the recognition of the tension between the particularity of the concept of citizenship and the universality of human rights. Citizenship today is bounded with a particular community, nation-state and culture. Human rights, on the other hand, derive from universal principles that precede the citizenship of any nation-state. The Council of Europe's approach and the programme of Turkey's new course that consider human rights education and citizenship education on the same ground disregard this tension. I do not mean that an ideal citizenship and human rights education course should resolve this tension. The tension between universal human rights claims and particularistic national identities, as political philosopher Seyla Benhabib points out, is "constitutive of democratic legitimacy. Modern democracies act in the name of universal principles which are then circumscribed within a particular civic community" (2004, 44). The tension between citizenship and human rights, therefore, is an inescapable face of the modern nation-state. This tension, then, requires the problematization of the relation between citizenship and human rights education. Rather than assuming that democratic citizenship could be developed on the basis of human rights education, one should be aware of the limits and challenges of citizenship education and ask "what kind of civic culture does the textbook promote?" Does it strengthen particularistic ties of the citizen or empower students to turn into active national and global citizens? These questions around civic culture and citizenship also provide us a ground to explore the programme and the textbook of the new Citizenship and Democracy Education course.

4. Problematizing the Notion of Civic Culture to Make Sense of Citizenship Education

A viable and stable democratic society requires not only respect for human rights but also its citizens' skillful and active involvement in politics to contribute to the solution of problems on the basis of human rights and democracy. In order for children to be transformed into democratic citizens, it is crucial that they are enculturated into a civil identity and civic engagement. Civil culture, according to Baumann, combines three elements: "Competence in relation to the workings of a country's civil society;

competence with regard to its nationally specific conventions of civic culture and norms of civility; some familiarity, conformist or hopefully critical, with its dominant national self-representation" (Baumann 2004, 4). Competence, for Baumann, does not mean compliance with something; it is rather "a capacity to conform to or reject, play along with or undermine dominant representations, all in a socially sharable way" (2004, 4). Citizenship and human rights education programmes can be thought of as a means of acquiring a capacity to unpack and critically evaluate the dominant national codes in a democratic way.

Citizenship and Democracy Education coursebook, in this regard, includes several progressive elements. In a separate subtitle, it summarizes legal ways to defend one's rights in courts of Turkey (Özpolat 2011, 38). The textbook also provides students few cases of discriminations experienced by women, disabled people or migrants. However, these cases have not been contextualized. For instance, women are said to be stereotyped and discriminated against. Yet, the textbook does not present any facts and figures about women's problems in Turkey. Likewise, the textbook involves some exemplary cases of discrimination towards disabled people, yet it gives no reference to facts and figures regarding Turkish context. Such an approach might make students discuss some hypothetical cases, but might not empower them to critically evaluate the Turkish context.

Lack of a sociological and political context in the textbook might lead students to perceive human rights knowledge as snapshots. For instance, students might acquire the knowledge that "women's right to vote was recognized in 1934 in Turkey" (Özpolat 2011, 26). However, students do not learn about historical conflicts and processes leading to the development of women's rights in both Turkish and the world context. Therefore, the current textbook seems to make students acquire a competence in learning about their rights, but this "competence" remains at an abstract level when human rights themes are presented as if they occur in a political vacuum. As our study (Çayır, Bağlı 2011) demonstrated, students, after studying a human rights education course might feel vulnerable in the face of problems surrounding them.

Among course activities proposed by the MoNE, few suggest teachers to use short films to bring human rights violations into the classroom. For instance, one activity includes a worksheet that asks students "which right is violated in the film?," "what could be the reasons for this violation?," "what do you suggest to prevent this human rights violation?" One could argue that such an activity might serve to make students become aware of human rights problems in Turkey. However, those who are familiar to the dominant national codes already know that it is still difficult for teachers to make use of materials to draw

students' attention to the need to hold governments to be accountable for their actions. I do not here imagine an idealized context where students are freely encouraged to be critical of the state. It is a fact that citizenship education programmes in many national contexts aim at strengthening the allegiance to nation and state. However, a comparison of civics courses in France might help us to make sense of the Turkish case. In France, civics involves a critical assessment of certain aspects of national policy; for example, civics textbooks point out the rights of workers to strike (Osler 2009). Inclusion of a strike from Turkish history in a textbook or discussing, with a film, the right to strike, for instance, are still problematic in the Turkish context.

The last chapter of the Citizenship and Democracy Education textbook which reminds students about their "duties and responsibilities" makes the dominant national civic codes explicit. This chapter includes passages about "our culture," "cultural values" or "social rules and social order." The term culture is always referred to as a singular in the Turkish context. There are no references to non-Turkish and non-Muslim groups living in Turkey. The textbook refers to prophet Mohammad as "our prophet" (Özpolat 2011, 52) implying that it promotes a notion of culture disregarding non-believers and non-Muslims. If citizenship education is not simply a matter of knowledge of human rights but also a matter of "how we think about and behave towards others, particularly those who differ from us in their race, religion, class etc." (Kymlicka 2001, 304), the current citizenship course is far from providing such a perspective to pupils. Given the strong state tradition, difference-blind civic republicanism and many ethno-nationalist practices in Turkey's history, the last chapter of the textbook endorses a civic culture which asks for a complete compliance with the dominant national representations. Therefore, the new course, if I employ Baumann's terminology, does not lead students to develop a capacity to take a critical stance either to reject or to conform to dominant representations, but rather asks for an "unreflective patriotism" (Kymlicka 2001, 310) based on a one-dimensional reading of national history. This is not, however, possible in Turkey any longer in the face of increasing demands of non-Turkish and non-Muslim groups for their rights to equal citizenship. Recent developments in Turkey demonstrate that there is a huge discrepancy between the current social/political developments and the programme of the new Citizenship course.

5. Tension between New Identity-Claims and Democratic Citizenship

The new Citizenship and Democracy Education course, with its focus on human rights, implies that educating people about their rights could be a basis of democratic citizenship. I have been arguing that without problematizing the link between human rights, the notion of citizenship and the state, educating people about their rights might remain at an abstract level and does not empower students in increasingly diversifying societies. A democratic society's functioning requires the citizens to have not only theoretical knowledge of rights but also a capacity to critically address current problems regarding nation-state, democracy and citizenship. Any progressive course today should situate the notion of citizenship on local and international developments and make students aware of opportunities of and challenges to classical nation-state structures and institutions.

The Turkish case constitutes a good example for discussing the limits and the future of citizenship as an allegiance to the civic republican nation-state. The social scientific literature on the notion of citizenship in Turkey bears a controversy over whether it is based on a political or ethnicist logic. Some scholars argue that Turkish citizenship involves both of them, and it is possible to observe this double character of Turkish citizenship in textbooks which include many references emphasizing sometimes territoriality, sometimes ethnicity (Keyman, Kancı 2011). Some experts argue that constitutional texts design Turkishness in terms of political and legal status. Following the French model, "Turkishness designed by Turkish citizenship is assumed to have nothing to do with being from a real or an assumed ethnic origin" (Yeğen 2004, 55). Mesut Yeğen, on the other hand, contends that the constitutional article noting: "Everyone who is tied to the Turkish State through citizenship ties is Turkish" could also be read as an ethnic reference promoting exclusionary historical practices in the name of Turkishness (2004). A close analysis of the Republican history indeed shows that practices do not accord with the abstract and political definition of citizenship (Aktar 2000; Yıldız 2001). The process of creating a nation-state and national citizenship in Turkey involved several exclusionary and assimilatory practices towards Greeks, Armenians, Jews, Kurds, Alevis, Arabs, Circassians, Lazes etc. The history reveals that Turkish citizenship emerged as a membership to a Turkish state defined on the basis of a single state-controlled (Sunni) Islam and a single (Turkish) language (Kadıoğlu 2007).

Not surprisingly, formal schooling was and still is the key mechanism to produce citizens out of students coming from diverse ethnic, language-based and religious differences. Recent developments in Turkey, however, indicate that schooling processes have not totally succeeded in erasing cultural differences and different memories. Although the present curriculum and the new course on Citizenship are still based on a monocultural vision, ethnic and religious

minorities today are gaining public visibility and demanding their rights to full citizenship in Turkey. As a result of global developments and Turkey's accession process to the European Union, non-Turkish and non-Muslim citizens raise their voices for their equal inclusion into public life. Kurdish groups, for instance, are demanding their right to education in their mother-tongue; Alevi groups (non-Orthodox Islamic groups) object to compulsory Religious Education courses on the basis that it disregards their faith and aims at assimilating them into the Sunni sect; non-Muslim minorities raise their demands regarding their freedom of religion; recently Circassians have also claimed their right to education and broadcasting in their mother-tongue.

These differences, the existence of which has long been denied at the official level, have for the first time begun to be discussed in political life with the current Justice and Development Party government's recent initiatives titled as "Kurdish expansion," "Alevi expansion" or "Roma expansion." The government convenes various workshops with the participation of minorities in order to set a reform agenda for the recognition of rights of these minorities. Although some groups are suspicious about the intent of the government, transcending the "denial policy" towards cultural differences at political level can be considered a progressive step in Turkey. It should also be noted that liberal Turkish intellectuals also challenge the official history, and they publicly campaign to recognize that Armenian and Kurdish massacres occurred before and during the Republican era. They, in other words, have brought the unrecognized memory of non-Turkish and non-Muslim minorities into the public agenda.

The increasing visibility of minorities and the public debate on identities and differences involve two counter tendencies in tension with each other. It can, on the one hand, help solve Turkey's historical problems and thus deepen democracy, and the notion of democratic citizenship. This is because Turkey, for the first time, names its problems in explicit terms that refer to minorities ('the Kurdish issue,') after a long history of denial of their existence. It was a fact that until 1990s using the word 'Kurd' publicly to denote an ethnic group was a taboo (Dixon and Ergin 2010). However, at the same time, the tension between the majority and minority groups is increasing. The demands of Kurds or the debates concerning controversial segments of Turkey's history lead some dominant Turkish groups to take an aggressive stance towards minorities. In the summer of 2010, there were lynching attempts towards Kurdish groups in some Anatolian cities. These are examples of the danger of ethnic conflict in Turkey. A recent study on the hate speech in the Turkish media has shown that the hate speech against Armenians increases before every

April 24 (the date representing the genocide), and the hate speech has also amplified towards Kurds after "the Kurdish expansion" (Alğan, Şensever 2010).

Another recent study demonstrates that these debates on identity claims also show up in the classroom (Fırat 2010). In this study, students and teachers were interviewed about their experiences and perceptions on identity, peace, and conflict, especially regarding the Kurdish issue. It reveals that a great majority of Kurds argue that they have been and are being subjected to unpleasant and discriminatory practices in their schooling period. They point out that they are stigmatized as "terrorists," and that, just after the PKK (the Kurdistan Worker's Party) attacks teachers and classmates treated them as if "[they] killed Turkish soldiers" (Fırat 2010, 25) . Kurdish informants argue that they start life and school some steps behind Turks, since many of them speak Kurdish at home and are introduced into Turkish for the first time in school. And what bothers many Kurdish citizens most is their non-recognition in textbooks. They note that Kurds have no presence in the textbooks although they have fought together with Turks in the War of Independence and contributed to the formation of the Turkish Republic. The study also demonstrates that teachers find themselves incompetent to respond to students' queries about differences or to handle their discriminatory utterances towards minority groups.

All these findings indicate that it is no longer possible to inculcate in students a supposedly monolithic national culture. Nevertheless, the new Citizenship and Democracy Education course is still based on Turkishness with a single language and a single culture. Ethnic and cultural differences still receive no mention in the new course. There is an apparent reference to the "differences" in the programme. Among the values the course aims to instill in students are "respect for differences" or "awareness of discrimination." However, the textbook, under the subtitle "What is the use of our individual differences for our society?" presents only physical differences between people or occupational differences leading to the functioning of society (Özpolat 2011, 13). An activity proposed by the MoNE suggests students to imagine themselves in an island and think of their "individual differences" to contribute to collective life (MEB 2010). The term "difference" throughout the textbook is used to refer to different individual skills or capabilities. As these passages and activities suggest, within the current curriculum, it is still unimaginable for the textbooks to refer to ethnic differences or other social cleavages in Turkey.

Arguably, it is not easy in Turkey to refer to ethnic or religious differences in formal education because of the current legal structure and the dominant political culture. It is true that the Constitution and the Basic Law on Education are very restrictive regarding the re-

presentation of cultural differences. The Basic Law promotes that education should be based on "the Atatürk nationalism" in order to protect "the spiritual and moral values of the Turkish nation."[1] However, the rising politics of recognition of non-Turkish and non-Muslim minorities indicate the need of a new political framework and a new notion of citizenship that Turkey should develop in order to equally include different groups and interests. Clearly, the current model which puts an emphasis on the unity and indivisibility of the nation along with the non-recognition of ethnic differences is no longer effective in Turkey.

There are several studies demonstrating that difference-blind and liberal assimilationist notion of citizenship does not provide a framework in many national contexts. As Banks notes global immigration and the increasing diversity in nation-states challenge liberal assimilationist model of citizenship which asks people to give up their languages and home cultures to fully participate into public life (Banks 2008, 129-130). It is a fact that European states and schools of major cities today have become multi-ethnic as a result of international migration. Therefore it is now impossible to teach these pupils "to feel German" or "to be proud of being Dutch" (Baumann 2004, 3). Similarly, Turkey can no longer maintain an assimilationist, difference-blind and nationalist education.

There are, on the other hand, some suggestions for a notion of multicultural citizenship that involves the recognition of group rights and cultural rights within a democratic platform (Kymlicka 2001; Banks 2008). It should be noted that the recognition of group rights and identities is not an entirely unproblematic process. Experiences of countries where educational processes are based on a multiculturalist understanding show that free expression of identities might also involve several problems. Research shows that without an equal status and equal perception of identities, ethnic minorities who are always reminded of their ethnic identities may feel that there is a distance between themselves and dominant identities. A Turkish boy in an English school, for instance, points out that "you can not overcome ethnic descriptions and ethnic belonging" (Mannitz 2004, 277). Thus, identities might turn into iron cages for minority groups.

There are also other suggestions to develop new notions of citizenship. Some scholars today draw attention to the necessity to dissociating civic engagement

from national status. They point out to the necessity of transcending (not necessarily removing) the nation-state citizenship. Soysal, for instance, proposes a post-national citizenship since "nation" is not anymore "a meaningful definer of the contemporary state, given the intensification and interconnectedness of the global system and the penetration of national dominions by supranational discourses" (1994, 165) Osler and Starkey, on the other hand, contend that education should promote a "cosmopolitan citizenship that helps young citizens to recognize their common humanity, make connections between their own lives and those of others and operate effectively in contexts of cultural diversity and change" (2005, 78).

Debate on different notions of citizenship provides a ground to reflect upon the Turkish case. Yet, it needs to be acknowledged that the picture is not clear for Turkey. This is because identifying the overarching values and concepts that might hold Turkish society together while incorporating the diversity of its citizens require further information from the field. In other words, we need further field research in order to be able to build up a democratic framework and an education for democratic citizenship. This research needs to be conducted in an interdisciplinary way that links the field of education to wider social science literature. The current heated debates over the development of a civil constitution[2] in Turkey might open up opportunity space for the development of a new notion of citizenship and citizenship education.

6. Conclusion

Contemporary Turkey has been undergoing a major social and political transformation regarding its political, social and educational structure. It is questioning the boundaries of democracy and difference-blind citizenship regime as a result of rising demands of its non-Turkish and non-Muslim minorities for equal citizenship. In order to remove formal and informal barriers to full citizenship for different groups, Turkey needs to develop a new legal constitutional framework and a new pluralist imaginary. This is not an easy process since it requires questioning established identities and the official history. Education can play a crucial role in developing a new imaginary that would allow peaceful coexistence of different identities and interests.

The introduction of the new Citizenship and Democracy Education course could be an important intervention to promote democracy and democratic citizenship. A distinct course can draw teachers' and students' attention to the necessity of educating

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1   Article 1 of the Basic Law on Education defines the general goal of the national education system as follows: To raise all individuals as citizens who are committed to the principles and reforms of Atatürk and to the nationalism of Atatürk as expressed in the Constitution, who adopt, protect and promote the national, moral, human, spiritual and cultural values of the Turkish Nation, who love and always seek to exalt their family, country and nation, who know their duties and responsibilities towards the Republic of Turkey (MEB 2001).

2   It is called 'civil' because, so far, constitutions in Turkey have been introduced after military coups.

youth on both the practice and the underlying values of democracy and human rights in a rapidly changing world. This course has several new progressive objectives compared to the former programmes. Regarding its content, this course focuses on human rights themes and seems to be based on the assumption that human rights education all by itself and necessarily promotes civic engagement and democratic citizenship. However, this may not be achieved since the course includes various human rights themes without making any connections to the problems of the notion of citizenship in Turkey. Human rights, in other words, are inevitably contextualized into a difference-blind Turkish nation-state citizenship. Its programme has not been developed on a new ground and a rationale addressing the necessities of present Turkey. It may not, then, empower students who are aware of conflicts around politics of recognition. For such an empowerment, the notion of citizenship needs to be problematized in relation to relevant national and international contexts and a universal human rights perspective is to be employed to expand the scope of nation-state citizenship.

There are, of course, many theoretical and practical problems in terms of transforming the dominant national representations, and achieving equal inclusion of cultural differences. However, Turkey needs to look for ways to denationalize citizenship, recognize differences and devise an educational structure to promote the culture of democracy and human rights. The new Citizenship and Democracy Education course begs the question of "how can we teach students to respect the rights of others when those 'others' do not exist in textbooks?"

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