Processes Influencing Democratic Ownership and Participation

Turkish focus group results

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The concept of democratic ownership and participation gained extensive attention recently.

Many studies that focused on the relevant subjects such as civic engagement, citizenship concepts, political and social participation, community involvement, social service, non-governmental organizations have been carried out up to date.

People are participating less (IEA Civic Education Study, 1999)
Introduction

- Young people, women and ethnic minorities are specified as specific groups at risk of social and political disengagement.
- Global understanding of human rights
- Gender equality,
- The ethnic and cultural diversity in countries
- Positive youth development approach
Focus group study was carried out with young people in Turkey between April and June 2010 as part of the Process Influencing Democratic Ownership and Participation (PIDOP) Project.

Includes young people from three sub-groups:

- The majority (Turks),
- Turkish resettlers from Bulgaria and
- The Roma people
Characteristics of the groups

- Same religion: Islam
- Same language: Turkish (not many or Roma people know Romani and not many Bulgarian resettles use Bulgarian in daily life)
- but;
- Common identity which characterizes the ethnic and minority status
- Cultural background
Bulgarian Turks

- They prefer to be called ‘Bulgarian Turks’
- Better educated than any other immigrants
- Higher socioeconomic level than Roma people
- Islam
- Dual citizenship
Roma People

- Apr. 500,000 to 2 million people
- Low level of education
- Low socioeconomic level
- Islam, small number of Christians
- They hold Turkish citizenship
There are 17,988,409 people between the ages of 14 and 29 in Turkey

% 24 of the national population

The vague emphasize on young people in Turkey has remained although the new Constitutional change

The state’s obligation is to take precautions to ensure the “training” and “development” of youth
Method

- 12 focus groups
- Divided among three subgroups,
  - among ages: 16-18 and 20-26
  - among gender
- In total 81 participants: 41 male, 40 female
### Distribution of the Focus Groups Participants by Age, Gender and Minority/Immigration Category

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Turkish Resettlers from Bulgaria</th>
<th>Roma</th>
<th>Majority</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female (16-18)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female (20-26)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male (16-18)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male (20-26)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Participants/Procedure

- Lower educational status in Roma participants. Except from the Roma participants, all participants in the younger category were students attending secondary education.

- No Roma participants were university students.

- Some Bulgarian Turks migrated at an early age, some migrated quite recently and some others were born in Turkey.

- Majority group participants were recruited from the personal connections of research team and focus group conducted in a high school in Ankara and Ankara University.
Findings

Participant’s understanding of citizenship

- Social inequalities and income levels in relation to citizenship
- Cultural discrimination and negative prejudice
- What is discrimination? Just a cultural shock or more than that?
- Duties to be fulfilled as a citizen such as paying taxes and doing military service.
Participants’ perceptions about young people’s participation

- Barriers/disincentives against participation and the participants’ images about young people’s participation:
  - Being labelled as a proponent of a particular ideology and/or political party (both younger and older participants)
  - Difficulties of finding jobs in the case of being labelled (younger participants)
  - Loss of job (older participants)
  - The need to pass the university exam (younger participants)
  - Early marriage (female, Roma participants)
  - Lack of efficacy (older participants)
Other barriers...

- Unemployment and poverty emerge as the most prominent issues among Roma participants.

- The early marriage and poverty constitute the main barriers among female Roma participants.

- Internet was mentioned as a way to express their views by majority and Bulgarian Turks.
More barriers...

- Parents’ prohibitive attitudes (Bulgarian Turks and majority)
- University entrance exam
- Dominance of negative images among the participants about young people’s participation.
- Participants aged between 20 and 26 are more cautious with respect to civic and political participation
Findings - Sources of Influence

- The most important sources of influence appear to be family members (especially the father) and the peer group.

- Younger participants think their family exclude them; older participants prefer to benefit from their parents views.
Personal and Group Experiences

- Creating blog on internet where people can discuss social and political issues
- Taking part in internet discussion forums
- Sharing videos and messages on social and political issues on Facebook
- Participating in the so-called ‘republican march’ which had the aim of protecting secularism
- Writing petition to a local authority concerning neighbourhood related issues
- Participating in a boycott campaign
- Participating in a commemorative ceremony (of Hrant Dink, an intellectual with Armenian origin who was murdered in 2007)
- Participating in activities concerning Bulgarian Turk music and folklore

The younger male participants (except form the Roma) appear as the most active
Recommendations to promote inclusion and participation

- **Education!** To reform the education system in line with the aim of promoting civil and political participation.

- **Employment** comes before the information about rights and obligations.

- To allocate more resources and increased financial support to the projects.

- Generation of **new mechanisms** by the authorities to learn about the feelings and opinions of the young people.

- To make the police **more tolerant** in order to promote inclusion in political participation.
For active young citizens!
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