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University as a Place for Personal Renaissance: Future-teachers' University Experiences as Agents for Learning and Teaching Peace

Özlem ERDEN-BAŞARAN [a*], ***Gülistan GÜRSEL-BİLGİN*** [b]

a https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0374-1942 *ozlemrdn@gmail.com
b https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9987-7982

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ABSTRACT

This phenomenological study aims to understand how future-teachers' university setting has become a personal awakening place to reflect on their past schooling experiences and build plans as peace agents. In other words, this study argues that university experience, if meaningfully constructed to promote peace, equips future-teachers with the necessary skills to teach peace, and it could help future teachers about critically reflecting their past learnings upon the negative peace and violence. It transforms these learnings into positive peace in the end. Drawing from Freire's (1970) critical consciousness and Giroux's (1981,1988, 2010) conceptualization of teachers as transformative intellectuals, the findings suggest that universities by building inclusive, peaceful, democratic, and diverse communities, can help their students to gain the awareness of systematic oppression and structural violence (re)produced by patriarchal, political and social discourses, and it develops motivation to incorporate peace (education) in their professional practices.

Keywords: Peace education, transformative intellectuals, critical theory, critical consciousness, schooling experience

Kişisel Rönesans Mekanı Olarak Üniversite: Öğretmen Adaylarının Barışı Öğrenme ve Öğretme Aracı Olarak Üniversite Yaşantıları

ÖZ

Bu fenomenoloji çalışması, üniversite ortamının, öğretmen adaylarının geçmiş eğitim deneyimleri üzerine düşünmek ve gelecek planlarını inşa etmede nasıl kişisel bir uyanış yeri haline geldiğini açıklamayı amaçlamaktadır. Başka bir deyişle, bu çalışma, üniversite deneyiminin, eğer barışı teşvik etmek için anlamlı bir şekilde inşa edilirse, öğretmen adaylarının barış eğitimi uygulamaları için gerekli becerilerle donatılabileceğini, onların barış ve şiddet hakkında geçmişte öğrendikleri olumsuz bilgileri eleştirel olarak gözden geçirmelerine ve bu öğrendiklerini anlamlı ve olumlu bir biçimde dönüştürmelerine yardımcı olabileceğini savunuyor. Freire'nin (1970) eleştirel kuram kapsamında bahsettiği eleştirel bilinç kavramı ve Giroux'nun (1981, 1988, 2010) öğretmenleri dönüştürücü entelektüeller olarak kavramsallaştıran açıklamaları kullanılarak yürütülen bu çalışmanın bulguları, üniversitelerin kapsayıcı, barışçıl, demokratik ve çeşitli topluluklar inşa ettiğinde, öğrencilerinin ataerkil, politik ve sosyal söylemler tarafından (yeniden) üretilen sistematik baskı ve yapısallaştırılmış şiddet konusunda farkındalık kazanmalarına yardımcı olabileceğini ve profesyonel hayatlarına barışı (eğitimini uygulamalarını) dâhil etme motivasyonu geliştirmelerine katkı sağlayacağını göstermektedir.

Anahtar kelimeler: Barış eğitimi, dönüştürücü aydın, eleştirel teori, eleştirel bilinç, okul yaşantısı

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INTRODUCTION

Getting out of the comfort zone or experiencing a new situation that is different from what is experienced regularly in daily life can be a challenging and sometimes rewarding experience for people. Many people start discovering their new self when they leave their long-lived environments such as neighborhood, hometown, and country for attending universities. One of the earlier research studies (Holdaway & Kelloway, 1987) highlights the positive influence of university on students' lifestyles and expectations. Although many felt challenged by their new environment and responsibilities, they found their university experience rewarding and felt "at ease" (Holdaway & Kelloway, 1987, p.59).

A study conducted with undergraduate students at Oxford University points out that the learning environment is a stimulating factor because students' opportunity to observe a group of intellectual students and scholars motivated them to learn more and be part of the university climate (Trigwell & Ashwin, 2003). Another example from an Australian university acknowledges the importance of the learning environment, students' relationship with their instructors and cohorts, and other social activities on students' personal development and self-discovery. Still, its major finding indicates that "universities should include a focus on what students have to say in their own words and incorporate such feedback into their priorities" (Grebennikov & Shah, p. 607). Wilcox et al. (2005) also mention that friendship that provides direct emotional support is important in overcoming negative university experiences for undergraduate students in higher education institutions in the UK. They also add that their courses, friendship with other university students, and relationship with the course instructor, even less significant, are important sources of the support.

A glance at studies on students' university experiences shows that universities, with their learning facilities and climate and a diverse group of people gathering with different academic purposes, help them to build meaningful university experiences and develop realistic and better versions of themselves. This study specifically focuses on how university students' learning experiences help them to change their perspectives of peace and peace education. The limited literature on university students' perceptions of peace and peace practices shows that both students in teacher training programs and teacher-educators are aware of the lack of peace practices at schools and higher education institutions and intend to improve existing peace practices within their capabilities (Burnley, 2003; Cook, 2014; Wang, 2018). However, when compared to students' learning at public schools (Flinders, 2005; 2006; Noddings, 2012), the university offers many opportunities for personal development and self-awakening about their abilities and skills for promoting peace.

This study examines how Turkish future teachers' university experiences help them to become agents for learning and teaching peace. This study originated for two reasons: 1) limited studies on how higher education practices and institutions can affect university students' perception of peace; and 2) our recent study's findings on Turkish future-teachers' perceptions of peace education shows that future-teachers want to become agents of change in improving the quality and quantity of peace education activities during their professional life (Gursel-Bilgin et al., 2023). In our recent study, when future-teachers were asked to reflect on how they wanted to teach peace in the classroom, they provided answers comparing what they experienced in their school life and how they wanted to be pioneers to change the peace education practices at schools. The participants believe that they learned the significance of teaching peace in their programs at the university was important by meaning-making their lived experiences at the university. Therefore, this study aims to understand the nature of this motivation and how their university has become a personal awakening place to reflect on their past schooling experiences and build plans as peace agents. In other words, this study argues that university experience, if meaningfully constructed to promote peace and equipped future-teachers with the necessary skills to teach peace, could help future teachers critically reflect on their past learnings about negative peace and violence, and transform these learnings into positive peace.

Research Questions

Guided by the following research questions, this study analyzes the development of participants' experientially grounded peace education perspectives. In addition, it investigates what caused them to develop such perspectives in their teacher education program.

What is the role of university experiences in shaping future-teachers' ideas of peace (in education)?

What is the relationship between future-teachers' past experiences at schools and present experiences at the university in conceptualizing peace?

Literature Review and the Context

The concept of peace is elusive. Still, peace education scholars agree that although the absence of direct and physical violence is important, it is not enough for comprehensive peace (Galtung, 1973). Hence, peace education takes positive peace (i.e., collaboration, integration, and cooperation) as its departure point to address and transform direct and structural forms of violence (Danesh, 2008). Although seminal educational scholars (e.g., Maria Montessori and John Dewey) emphasized the superiority of a comprehensive peace in transforming systematic inequalities and injustices decades ago, traditional schooling has most frequently promoted war and hatred through school books glorifying war (Feld, 1982), the implicit curriculum of violence (Darder, 2012), the hidden culture of war and violence at schools (Mcmanimon et al., 2012; Leahey, 2012; Elmore, 2012). Furthermore, the related literature demonstrates that peace education mostly remains a null curriculum in traditional schooling, leaving students and teachers with other sources (e.g., the media, culture, and society in general) to learn about war and peace (Flinders, 2005; 2006; Noddings, 2012). Flinders (2005; 2006) and Noddings (2012) suggest that despite the invaluable potential of schooling to scrutinize the social, psychological, and cultural factors supporting war, warrior and violence as well as identifying and creating alternative peaceful ways of being and doing, leaving comprehensive peace education out of the curriculum, schools miss a unique opportunity for students and teachers to explore the horrors of war and empower themselves with essential skills and insights to live peacefully. Towards fulfilling this invaluable opportunity of formal schooling (Bickmore, 2011; Flinders, 2005), peace education theory and practice should be supported with empirical research findings cultivated in ways relevant to various contexts (Elmore, 2012; Gursel-Bilgin, 2022; Leahey, 2012; Mcmanimon et al., 2012).

The related literature proposes that peace education should be integrated into all levels of education, from kindergarten to higher education programs as well as non-formal educational settings (Harris, 2004; Reardon, 1988; Bajaj, 2008). However, although empirical peace education research has focused on formal schooling at various grade levels (Bickmore, 2011; Cann, 2012; Flinders, 2005; 2006; Hantzopoulos, 2011; Shirazi, 2011), fewer studies have examined the complexities and offerings of peace education employed at higher education institutions. This limited literature on peace education practice in higher education concentrates on the complexities of integrating peace education into teacher education programs. Most of the studies examining preservice teachers' ideas and experiences related to peace education integrated into their program underlining preservice teachers' hesitance, even negative associations of peace-related concepts (Burnley, 2003; Cook, 2014; Wang, 2018). For example, a study examined a decade-old peace education program with pre-service teacher candidates and the program's effects on the preservice teachers' understanding of peace education. Over these ten years, the program has gone through changes in its form and content and had to face various challenges. With the analyses of the curriculum units the teacher candidates developed as part of this program revealed teacher candidates' lack of confidence regarding their understanding and knowledge of peace education and what it takes to integrate peace education into their lesson plans and curriculum (Cook, 2014). Other studies of teacher education programs integrating peace education found that teacher candidates were hesitant to practice peace education in their professional life because they found it challenging and stressful (Burnley, 2003; Wang, 2018). As the researchers explained, those future teachers tend to have little knowledge of peace education and prefer to integrate multiculturalism, environmentalism, and citizenship rather than peace education into their teaching practice. Burnley (2003) also discusses similar findings and suggestions that this hesitance towards peace education can be due to the perceived association between peace education and communist sympathizers during the 1980s and ethnic movements.

Various structural and content challenges teacher educators face in their efforts to integrate peace education in teacher education programs (Burnley, 2003; Cook, 2014; McLean et al., 2008; Wang, 2018) and teacher training programs (Bekerman & Zembylas, 2014; Brantmeier, 2010; Flinders, 2005; 2006; Zembylas & Loukaidis, 2021). It has been emphasized in the related literature. Whereas, seminal figures in education (e.g., Dewey, Montessori & Noddings) and theoretical and empirical literature in the field (Bajaj, 2008; Danesh, 2007; Darder, 2012; Hantzopoulos, 2011; Harris, 2004; Harris & Morrison, 2003; Noddings, 2012; Reardon, 2000; Salomon, 2002; Salomon & Cairns, 2010; Trifonas & Wright, 2011; Zembylas & Loukaidis, 2021) have underlined for decades that peace and education are inherently interconnected. Therefore, it goes without saying that teacher education

programs should equip future teachers with effective skills, experiences, and tools so that they can practice peace education in their classrooms. Furthermore, McLean et al. (2008) emphasize the need to equip future teachers with essential skills and tools to critically address the complexities and challenges surrounding peace education, but they also underline the importance of collaborating with other partners such as NGOs because relying on the faculties of education alone will not be sufficient. At that point, both teacher education (Tucker, 1982) and teacher training (Gursel-Bilgin & Flinders, 2020) that intend to integrate peace education should encourage networks and collaborations with the community.

Conceptual Framework

The meaning and the desired outcomes of peace education might differ according to the practitioners' and scholars' theoretical, political, and methodological orientations (Bajaj, 2008; Galtung, 1973; Salomon & Nevo, 2005). In the most basic sense, peace education aims to create cultures of peace by empowering individuals with effective skills, values, and insights. The practitioners in the field aim to achieve it by transforming educational planning, practice, pedagogy, and policy (Bajaj, 2008; Harris, 2004; Reardon, 1988; Salomon, 2002; Salomon & Cairns, 2010). This motivation most frequently necessitates confronting directly and indirectly that is different forms of violence (re)generated through patterns of thought and sociocultural structures (Harris & Morrison, 2003; Reardon, 1988).

Paulo Freire is one of the eminent scholars whose work has contributed to peace education theory and practices tremendously (Bajaj, 2008; Bartlett, 2008; Soto, 2005). As Freire (1970) emphasized, education can never be neutral. It either promotes conformity to the existing oppressive structures and realities of the society, or it emancipates individuals by empowering them with creative and critical skills and insights to transform the existing social, cultural, and political structures. Freire (1970) calls the former type of education banking education, and he strictly opposes it. He calls the latter type of education as a problem-posing education that makes conscientization "conscientização" (Freire, 1970, p. 74), or critical consciousness because this function of education as an instrument to transform the society aims to empower individuals, especially the oppressed, with creative and critical skills and tools to re-create their reality. This can be achieved through dialogue "the encounter between men, mediated by the world, in order to name the world" (Freire, 1970, p. 69). Freire's exceptional understanding of dialogue can be established with learners as a basis for social transformation by focusing on "here" and "now" of the students (Freire, 1994, p. 58). By aligning educational form, content, and organizational structure, peace education can promote a rigorous link between practice and research and ultimately cultivate transformative agency rooted in Freirean critical consciousness and praxis (Bajaj, 2008). Unfortunately, although this second type points to the immense potential of education to create a peaceful society by transforming reality and society, it rarely finds its way through the actual practice of formal schooling (Gursel-Bilgin, 2016).

Despite the remarkable literature emphasizing curriculum as "a privileged discourse" (Apple, 1982, 1999), the hidden curriculum of violence within schools (Darder, 2012), and educational practices legitimating and reproducing overt and/or structural violence (Bush & Saltarelli, 2000; Davies, 2004; Weinstein et al., 2007), transformative pedagogy can be cultivated by peace education scholars and practitioners in ways relevant to various contexts (Gursel-Bilgin, 2016; 2020; Gursel-Bilgin & Flinders, 2020).

Giroux's (1981, 1988, 2010) conceptualization of teachers as transformative intellectuals offers a lot to peace education practice, even in the hidden curriculum of violence at schools. As the key agents of educational systems, teachers have a unique potential in empowering individuals with knowledge, skills, and insights to question and transform structural and social inequalities (Page, 2008). Regarding schools' role in (re)producing social mechanisms, Giroux (2010) proposes his culture of positivism and emphasizes the vital relationships among schooling, ideology, and power. Although schooling often tends to emerge as a form of social regulation, teachers as transformative intellectuals can and should work for the emancipation of the individuals and ultimately create a just and peaceful society, which is particularly relevant to the goals of peace education (Kincheloe, 2004; Page, 2008). Instead of cultivating hope alone, teachers paying attention to the social and political structures and practicing critical peace education against inequalities would do well to employ "transformative optimism," as Rossatto (2005) proposed. Transformative optimists consider themselves be able to actively participate in the collective process of social transformation and use their agency to promote their students' conscientization or critical consciousness through their classroom practices (Bajaj, 2008).

METHOD

This phenomenological qualitative research examines how future-teachers explain that their university experience enables them to reconstruct and criticize their previous learnings of peace, war, and violence. The phenomenological focus of this study is the key virtues, values, and norms related to peace, war, and violence taught directly and indirectly at schools, in their lives, and other social institutions. The process of bringing out the participants' changing descriptions, experiences in their new social environment, and deconstruction of their earlier learning is necessary because phenomenological studies suggest collecting descriptions and narrations of the particular phenomenon to reach internalized and consciously and unconsciously constructed realities (Carspecken, 1996: Groenewald, 2004).

The participants' experiences are collected by using a semi-structured interview protocol on the role of learning environments such as school, family, and university in learning about peace, war, and violence. For this study, all of the questions were designed to get a better sense of how the participants viewed themselves concerning the peace, war, and violence discourse in the context of their own lives as well as the lives of those they care about including their families.

Participants and Recruitment Process

The people who took part in this study were from one of the leading state universities in Türkiye. They are recruited using call-for-recruitment posters on the notice boards of all teacher education programs in the school of education building. We have set some criteria for how we choose participants among volunteers. Participation in this study was voluntary, yet many students showed the interest. First, participants had to be enrolled in a teacher training program at the undergraduate or graduate level. Second, we set an age limit of 35 to ensure that everyone goes through a similar educational process before college. Third, 44 people expressed their interest in participating, but only 43 were chosen to be interviewed because one individual's age was above 35. Finally, being interested in peace advocacy or peace education was not a criterion for this study. Still, a few people expressed that they had signed up as the study was related to peace.

Among the volunteers, we had 33 undergraduates and ten graduate students. The graduates were working as teachers at the local public and private schools in addition to being a student in a master's program in education. Undergraduate students were from various teacher training programs, including guidance and psychological counseling, foreign language education, computer education and educational technology, and primary and secondary school science and math education.

Data collection

The original data collection plan was to interview each participant through face-to-face interviews in Turkish. However, we interviewed participants via using online platforms such as Skype or Zoom due to the unprecedented influence of the Covid-19 pandemic. Interviews took approximately 45 minutes, but a few of them were longer than 45 minutes.

Data analysis

All the interviews were taped and then typed out verbatim. We used MAXQDA Plus 2020 for data analysis. First, the participants' demographic data were entered into the software to categorize each transcript. Then, the researchers coded the transcripts at the same time. At first, we sketch-coded the interviews to familiarize ourselves with the construction of narratives as peace agents in participants' various stages of educational life. Later, we used keywords repeatedly mentioned in our participant's interviews, such as curriculum, hidden and implicit messages, critical thinking, social norms and realities, dialogues, social and self-transformation, discourse, and dialogue to find the patterns among participants as peace agents. In doing so, we noticed that our participants also used the key premises of our conceptual framework of teachers as transformative agents and intellectuals (Bajaj, 2008; Giroux, 1981, 1988, 2010; Freire, 1994). After completing each individual coding procedure, we debriefed on the codes and emerging themes.

Limitations

There were three key drawbacks to the study. First, as a result, the number of persons who saw our research posters were quite small before the Covid-19 pandemic. As a result of the shift from onsite to online schooling, we adapted our data gathering methods and conducted the interviews using online communication software. Participants also revealed their gender identity and explained how their claims influenced their responses to our questions, even though we did not intend to collect demographic data on the genders of our participants. The participants' criticisms of peace, conflict, and violent attitudes were addressed in this way.

Research Ethics

The Social and Human Sciences Human Study Ethics Committee at Bogazici University approved this research project on April 4, 2019. This article is based on research supported by Boğaziçi University BAP Start-Up Project with the code number 20D05SUP1 15941.

FINDINGS

The findings of this study were grouped under three major themes: 1) a safe and peaceful environment for diversity, 2) new gates for self-discovery and peace with self, and 3) the critique of past and present course contents and instructors. We also noticed that all these themes had an overarching argument indicating that "a university is a place for personal awakening." The future-teachers' responses to our interview questions were guided by this discourse of how their university was *the* place of their personal transformation and for creating professional development plans to teach peace at schools.

A Safe and Peaceful Environment for Diversity

Our participants complained that peace is not a commonly used concept compared to violence and war in their daily lives. Yet, they also complained that they rarely discussed peace-related concepts in their educational life. One of our participants, Mustafa, said: "War is more concrete in our lives, whereas peace exists as an abstract concept." Those who mentioned that they experienced peace in different stages of their life mostly referred to inner peace that they experienced in their small communities such as family and friendship environments. However, their positive approach in defining peace slowly evolved into a negative discourse when peace was perceived as a broader concept that encapsulated their overall life experiences. Remziye, for example, summarized the situation as such: "Peace is what my family taught me. It is living in serenity. I am not sure if it is like that for everyone… I can tell it exists in my life… I think we do not live in peace in general but we do in our small communities."

After arguing how their lives did not include peace in general, participants mentioned that they perceive university as a place of the personal renaissance because it allowed them to question why their earlier learnings caused them to develop discriminatory attitudes towards others and suppressed their liberal thoughts about peace. Their university education played a significant role in terms of how they could change their perceptions of war, peace, and violence. Nagehan explained the university's positive impact as in the following: "My university helped me to learn, question and see people's differences. The things that I heard about peace here transformed them (her abstract learnings about peace) into things that I understood and applied."

Some participants mentioned that the university offered them a safe and peaceful environment to further their ideas about peace because they had the opportunity to observe and interact with different people. Many participants mentioned that they deconstructed their previous ideas about peace, war and violence and reconstructed positive and liberal ideas using the safe and peaceful environment at the university. Mustafa mentioned: "When I came here, I redeveloped my perspective (of peace) by analyzing and synthesizing others' ideas."

New Gates for Self-Discovery and Peace with Self

Many participants mentioned that their awareness of peace, war, and violence changed because of their university courses and club activities. Through these academic and social activities, they learned about different

types of violence. For example, Busra mentioned, "I learned about what psychological violence and stalking mean first at the university in CITOK (Coordinatorship for Preventing Sexual Abuse)." Halime also said that gender studies in education class furthered "her understanding of gender issues and violence" and allowed her to "examine gender issues more specifically with her class project." In addition, many future-teachers mentioned that the university, directly and indirectly, provided pedagogical strategies to teach peace and incorporate peace-related topics in their subject area. In other words, they became aware that peace education could be included in any subject with the right pedagogical tools.

In addition to developing positive perspectives, some future-teachers mentioned that they eventually started to feel peaceful and experienced serenity when they learned more about peace, respect, and nonviolence. For example, Banu mentioned that "I have become a sympathetic person, and I started to discover myself when I changed my perspectives at the university." Rahime said, "Even though the wars in the world continued, and people were killing each other while I was studying, my university life was the part of my life where I felt so close to peace."

Their self-discovery and personal development at the university and negative experiences in the past also reformed our participants' ideas about teaching peace at schools during their professional life. Most of our participants expressed their intention to teach peace-related topics in their subject area because, as Ozan mentioned, "they need to implement something new to help new generation experience peace." Ziynet also highlighted the importance of changing the current practices by replacing negative aspects of the curriculum with positive discourse they learned in their programs: "... these concepts should be taught starting at young ages. New studies should be introduced to help the new generation invigorate peace in their lives. These studies should replace the negative things in the curriculum with positive things like peace." Although future-teachers were motivated to teach peace at schools, teaching peace seemed possible in subject areas such as social science, life sciences, Turkish language, and history. Our participants, who teach math, physics, and chemistry, particularly found teaching peace impossible in these subject areas. Only Ilayda mentioned: "Peace can be taught in all social science classes. I am a science teacher. . . Even if it is challenging, we can teach peace in any subject." Overall, future-teachers appreciated their education at the university and were grateful to have the opportunity to live in a peaceful environment. Although many mentioned that they still had some confusion about properly defining peace, war, and violence, their experiences at the university motivated them to teach peace when they started their professional teaching. Yet, their self-discovery as future-teachers did not help them equip themselves with ideas about incorporating peace in their practices in meaningful ways.

Critique of Past and Present Course Contents and Instructors

Participants were aware of how their past school experiences were influential in their perceptions of war, violence, and peace. Therefore, they hoped to change the impact of their past by finding new perspectives in their experiences at the university. Many of them shared negative experiences regarding learning violent, oppressive, and war-related narratives at their schools. Many participants often provided examples from their past school experiences to show the differences in their university and at schools. According to them, the school curricula at a different level of schooling were designed to celebrate war-related events, heroes and sometimes heroines, and conflict. Ahmet indicated: "We did not learn peace. We learned nothing about peace." Another participant, Dilsah, underlined that war and war-related discussions were normalized: "I learned war as a normal concept at school. I was not taught to question events in history."

In addition to the curriculum content, most participants criticized that their school culture indirectly supported a culture of violence compared to their university culture. They shared several narratives of how their teachers and school principal promoted a culture of violence by either using or overlooking the use of violence at the school. For example, Zeliha shared that she received a form of psychological violence from her teacher and classmates due to her teacher's reaction when she explained her political view:

I did not share the same political opinion with my teachers. When I said my political opinion, I received a negative reaction from them… I was the student representative and there was a meeting. When I went there, they delivered some political brochures… We (some of the student representatives) said that this was wrong. I was stigmatized as a member of FETO (Fethullah Gülen Terror Organization) even though I had nothing to do with it.

Many participants mentioned that they were afraid of sharing their opinions about peace-related topics and politics at schools. According to them, schools were not supporting the idea of having different opinions on mainstream beliefs. Therefore, participants mentioned that they began normalizing the vulture of violence over time. As Hatice explained: "Some students believe that violence from their teachers is normal." Participants also mentioned that there was no room left to criticize the violence because these forms of violent practices were justified by using patriotism, discipline, and political propaganda. Therefore, like Osman, many participants' reaction to the use of violence did not go further than "smiling insincerely and sarcastically," or "making small but not provocative comments."

Participants mentioned that their university experiences slowly changed their perceptions of peace and motivation to share their personal opinions. Naime mentioned: "It (university) definitely affects people. Well, I know that many of my friends got out of their families and school's ideology, and developed their own identity after attending university." Many of them mentioned that they wanted to represent positive values in their lives and when they had the opportunity to teach peace in their professional life.

Participants also mentioned that university allowed them to question their schooling experiences and their family's teachings concerning the understandings of others. They noted that they continued to behave as their family taught them before attending the university. Demir said, "I was raised in a patriotic family, but after learning that patriotism is harmful, I changed my ideas like other people around me." Simay shared that she "changed the gender messages taught in her family." Although she could not remember which class at her university caused her to change her mind, she highlighted that she had experienced a positive personal development towards being inclusive with the help of her classes, people around them, and extracurricular activities at the university.

Although future-teachers mentioned that their perspectives changed positively, they also criticized the content of the classes offered at the university. For example, they demanded learning more country-specific information to gain multicultural perspectives and thought that their classes should be more practice-based. Naz's response summarized other future-teachers' criticism about how these courses did not include adequate information to cross-examine peace-related issues with other countries:

We did learn enough about the sociology of Türkiye, but we did not get enough information about how to compare and discuss issues with other countries in Türkiye. I wish country-specific information were offered… This way, we could learn to talk about peace and peaceful relationships between communities… World citizenship should definitely be included.

Participants also stated that their professors' attitudes in applying equality and equity at the university and during courses were the reasons for changing their negative perceptions of war, peace, and violence and creating a safe environment for themselves. Mustafa said: "These people studied abroad... and benefitted from those countries… They internalized peaceful values. Therefore, they could evaluate and teach those values." University professors were keys to reshaping future-teachers' negative perceptions of peace, war, and violence that they learned in schools and their families.

DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

Regarding future-teachers' projections of peace education practice within Turkish classrooms, the findings discussed above suggested the university as a democratic setting where the participants get to know and experience multiculturalism, tolerance, and harmony of different political, cultural, and religious ways of being and doing. The university constituted *the* place for them to experience a personal awakening and a personal renaissance to learn and experience peace. However, this awakening was mostly related to the diversity at the university community because only a few participants mentioned taking peace and peace-related courses in their teacher training programs. Their learning was prompted by their own initiative and interest to further their understanding of peace. The university, as the place of personal awakening, catered to their need for self-development, but still, several participants could not imagine having separate peace education courses to be taught at schools, nor could they think about a school curriculum integrating peace education as their schooling experiences did not allow them to conceptualize aspects of peace education in the school curricula and culture. Like the findings of the studies in literature (Deveci et al., 2008; Gurdogan-Bayir & Bozkurt, 2018; Gursel-Bilgin, 2022), our participants also supported the idea of integrating peace-related topics in other subjects such as life sciences, social studies, history,

and language courses. Different from the results of other studies, our participants mentioned that peace could easily be taught in courses focusing on social sciences, but any course in the school curricula could be related to peace Education. our participants mentioned that peace topics should be incorporated into social subjects and other courses, they connected this thought with teachers' motivations. The overarching point that our participants repetitions were related to how peace was associated with anarchy and anti-democratic values in Türkiye. The participants' projections of peace education practice as challenging in the present education system might also be influenced by the negative baggage that the word peace carries. As a result of the negative baggage that peace carries, the existing political climate, and personal experiences, they were hesitant to pioneer the implementation of peace education in their practices due to the fear of being misunderstood, bullied, and/or experiencing mobbing and oppression. This fear was imprinted in multiple layers of their understanding during their school life and due to the impact of the culture of violence dominant in the society. Thus, it is vital that teacher training programs in Türkiye not only teach peace education values but also equip future-teachers with social skills to practice peace education effectively in their lives.

The participants mostly reported positive and eye-opening examples of peace, unity, freedom, and democracy at the university, but this attempt also highlighted the negative dimension of their past experiences. All future-teachers directly experienced or witnessed different forms of violence in their past lives due to interpersonal relationships with their peers, teachers, and family members. Many of them had the opportunity to meaningfully question the structural and systematic violence embedded in their life because of the experiences offered at their university. However, they still need support in overcoming the negativity of their past experiences.

In conclusion, our study shows that universities can help their students gain awareness of systematic oppression and structural violence (re)produced by patriarchal, political, and social discourses by building friendly, peaceful, democratic, and diverse communities. However, there is still a long way to transform students as peace agents and transformative intellectuals because of the urgent need to revise course contents or offer alternative classes based on peace practices, conflict resolution, and peace values.

Statements of Publication Ethics

We declare that we obey the principles of publication ethics. The Social and Human Sciences Human Study Ethics Committee at Bogazici University approved this research project on April 4, 2019.

Researchers' Contribution Rate

The authors' collaboratively worked on each part of this study.

Researchers' Contribution Rate (You may modify this table according to your article)

Authors	Literature review	Method	Data Collection	Data Analysis	Results	Conclusion	(Other)
Ozlem Erden-Basaran	☒	☒	☐	☒	☒	☒	☒
Gulistan Gursel-Bilgin	☒	☒	☒	☒	☒	☒	☒

Conflict of Interest

The authors state that they have no conflicts of interest. All co-authors have reviewed and approved the manuscript's contents, and there are no conflicting financial interests to disclose. We confirm that the submission is original and is not currently under consideration by another publisher.

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