The impact of peace education programme at university on university students’ intercultural sensitivity

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to determine the impact of Peace Education Programme (PEP) that is applied to university students on their intercultural sensitivity. The participants of this study consist of 25 university students who took Peace Education course which was an elective course. This study is pre-experimental. Intercultural Sensitivity Scale developed by Chen and Starosta (2000) was used as data collection tool. Pre-test was applied to the students who chose this course before the programme started. Then, at the last week of the course, post test was applied. It was found out there was a significant difference between participants’ pre-test intercultural sensitivity scores and post-test intercultural sensitivity scores ($Z=-1.117; p=0.00<0.05$). Also it was found out that there was a significant difference between participants’ pre-test and post-test scores of interaction engagement ($Z=-3.162; p=0.00<0.05$) and their pre-test and post-test scores of interaction attentiveness ($Z=-1.735; p=0.00<0.05$) which are the sub-dimensions of intercultural sensitivity. However, it was found out that there was not a significant difference between participants’ pre-test and post-test scores of respect for cultural differences ($Z=-0.948; p=0.07>0.05$), their pre-test and post-test scores of interaction confidence ($Z=-1.189; p=0.137>0.05$), and their pre-test and post-test scores of interaction enjoyment ($Z=-0.85; p=0.172>0.05$) which are the sub-dimensions of intercultural sensitivity.

Keywords: peace education; peace education program; intercultural sensitivity; university students.

1. Introduction

With globalization and transition to knowledge era, borders between countries have been removed. Because of the borders between countries have been removed, cultures have interacted with each other more than ever before. Along this interaction process, individuals who are representatives of various cultures have interacted with the

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people from different race, ethnicity, religious, sect, language, accent, and culture willingly or unwillingly. Unless this interaction process is peace oriented, intercultural conflicts may rise. For individuals from different cultures to live together in peace without conflict, it is important to be sensitive to others’ cultural differences.

Intercultural sensitivity can be gained to individuals via peace education programmes. Peace education contributes to behave peace oriented, to be reconciliatory (Salomon, 2002); and develops intercultural understanding (Harris, 2002). Thus, in this study, peace education programme (PEP) was applied to the university students, and the impact of the PEP to the intercultural sensitivity scores of the university students was tested.

2. Theoretical framework

2.1. Peace education

Reardon (2002) defines peace education as developing reflective and contributing capacities for achieving and maintaining peace. Peace education which adopts an education understanding for more equitable and peaceful world and which is based on taking action in this direction (Wulf, 1999) is a process during which abilities as problem solving, cooperation, reflection, conflict solution and attitudes as love, respect, tolerance, and empathy are taught to individuals and students (Sagkal, 2011). Peace education aims to solve conflicts without violence, to build peace for mutual harmony, and to transform individuals’ mental models (Reardon, 2002).

Peace education incorporates students and teachers into a process for change, contributes them to behave peace oriented, and contributes to be reconciliatory. This contribution continues permanently after peace education. Thus, this contribution makes possible atmospheres which are solution oriented, environments which result in a functional way of conflict without damage, and environments that don’t have any violence elements. Therefore, this is seen as very important for education and instruction processes, development, and life quality (Salomon, 2002). Peace education is dealt with a peaceful pedagogy, and peaceful pedagogy consists of concepts as cooperative learning, democratic society, moral sensitivity, and critical thinking (Harris, 2002).

2.1.1. The goals of peace education

According to Johnson and Johnson (2005), the primary purpose of peace education is to establish peace between humankinds, interpersonal relationships, groups, countries, societies, and cultures. Harris (2002) lists the purposes of peace education as understanding the richness of the concept of peace, examining fears, gaining knowledge about security systems, understanding violence, developing intercultural understanding, promoting social justice with peace, encouraging respect to living, and ending violence. Moreover; Sommers (2002) lists the purposes of peace education as ensuring the students to assess disagreements with a more positive attitude; gaining cooperation oriented reflective thinking ways for problem solving; to handle in societal problems with a more universal perspective; ensuring enhancing tolerance for political, religious, and racist differences; gaining responsibility for decision making and reflective thinking; and ensuring people to find peace both in their inner world and in their society via all of these. Additionally, PEP’s primary purpose is bringing methods and strategies which are requirements of living together in peace in societal life to the university students, in this study.

2.1.2. The principals of peace education

Peace education programmes are formed based on some principals. According to Bar-Tal (2002, pp. 29-33); peace education is condition dependent and based on social agreement, serves as social platform, and it is an orientation, has to be open-minded and relevant, requires experiential learning and is instructor dependent. Danesh (2006, pp. 57-61) asserted that truly efficient peace education can only take place in the context of a unity-based worldview. Peace education can also best take place in the context of a culture of peace, peace education best takes place within the context of a culture of healing, and peace education is most efficient when it constitutes the framework for all educational activities. PEP that is applied to university students in this study was designed according to these principles.
2.1.3. Peace education models

Peace education models in the literature can be listed as integral model (Brenes, 2004), learning to abolish war framework (Reardon & Cabezudo, 2002), flower-petal model (Toh, 2004), living systems model (Burns & Aspeslagh, 1996), integrative peace education model (Clarke-Habibi, 2005).

**Integrative model** builds on person’s integration, balance, and harmony with himself, others, and nature (Brenes, 2004). Moreover, **learning to abolish war framework** (Reardon & Cabezudo, 2002) is a peace education model which focuses on the issues of the reasons of conflicts, conflict management, international law, and global disarmament. Toh’s (2004) **flower-petal model** includes dividing disagreements to parts; living with justice and compassion; building reconciliation, solidarity, and respect for cultures; supporting human rights and responsibilities; living in harmony with world; and enhancing inner peace. **Living systems model** handles in international system, peace, development, human rights, and nature in personal, societal, national, regional, structural, cultural, and global contexts (Burns & Aspeslagh, 1996). Additionally, **integrative peace education model** which was developed for Bosnia-Herzegovina and which was applied there had been developed based on the purposes and concepts of peace (Clarke-Habibi, 2005). PEP, which is the independent variable of this study focuses on the university students, and programme which is based on above models was designed with the purpose of ensuring intercultural sensitivity to the university students.

2.2. Intercultural sensitivity

Intercultural sensitivity which is conceptualized as an intercultural communication competence that prevents negative emotions as prejudice, anxiety, lack of confidence, and avoidance towards different cultural features (Fritz, Mollenberg, & Chen, 2002) can be defined as being sensitive towards cultural differences and viewpoints of the people from different cultures (Bhawuk & Brislin, 1992). Intercultural sensitivity is an ability that promotes and encourages appropriate behaviour, and develops positive emotion towards understanding and appreciating cultural differences (Chen, 1997).

Intercultural sensitivity is examined in two periods in Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity. First period is an ethnocentric period, and in the ethnocentric period individual judges all humanity with own values, unconsciously. In this period; there are denial, defence, and minimization stages. On the other hand, second period is an ethnorelative period, and in the ethnorelative period individual experiences other cultural contexts. In this period; there are acceptance, adaptation, and integration stages. Briefly, in Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity, individuals ignore others’ cultures, or defend because of perceiving differences as threats, or think their worldviews are universal in spite of accepting differences in the ethnocentric period. However, it can be said that individuals enjoy cultural differences, change their behaviour as adapting different cultural atmospheres, and assess behaviour from a large cultural framework in the ethnorelative period (Bennett, 1986).

Chen (1997) acknowledges that intercultural sensitivity is a dimension of intercultural communication competence, and lists the components of intercultural sensitivity as self-esteem, self-monitoring, open-mindedness, empathy, interaction involvement, and non-judgment. **Self-esteem** expresses positive emotion towards respect the situational differences in intercultural interactions. **Self-monitoring** is a speaking and behaving in control ability when individuals meet limitations. **Open-mindedness** refers to the wistfulness of individuals to appropriately express themselves and accept other’s explanations. Open-minded individuals recognize, accept, and value different thoughts and viewpoints, willingly. **Empathy** is an ability that is about to perceive and understand others. **Interaction involvement** is an ability of sensitivity for individuals’ interactions. **Non-judgment** consists of listen to others sincerely, avoidance of making decisions quickly and creating values about others (Chen, 1997, pp. 6-9). These components have been handled in five dimensions in Intercultural Sensitivity Scale which is developed by Chen and Starosta (2000), and these dimensions are interaction engagement, respect for cultural differences, interaction confidence, interaction enjoyment, and interaction attentiveness. According to Chen and Starosta (1996), these components and dimensions ensure the individuals to show intercultural sensitivity during intercultural interaction. Individuals’ intercultural sensitivity can be enhanced through various experiences and education programmes. And also, peace education can be handled in one of these education programmes.
3. Methodology

3.1. Model of the study

Single group pre-test post-test model which is a type of pre-experimental designs was used in this study. In the single group pre-test post-test model, independent variable is applied to participants, and measurements are carried out both before experiment (pre-test) and after experiment (post-test). If post-test scores is much more than pre-test scores, this is considered to result from independent variable (Karasar, 2008). Also in this study, with the purpose of examining the change in university students’ intercultural sensitivity scores pre-test was applied to the participants before starting programme, post-test was applied to the participants after the programme, and difference or lack of difference between pre-test and post-test scores were determined.

3.2. Participants

The participants of this study consists of 25 university students from different faculties who took and attend Peace Education course which was an elective course at Kocaeli University in Turkey in 2013-2014 academic year.

3.3. Instrumentation

While gathering data during this study, “Intercultural Sensitivity” scale developed by Chen and Starosta (2000) was used. There are strongly disagree, disagree, uncertain, agree and strongly agree options in the five-point likert scale for each item. Scale has seven items in the interaction engagement sub-dimension, has six items in the respect for cultural differences sub-dimension, has five items in the interaction confidence sub-dimension, has three items in the interaction enjoyment sub-dimension, and three items in the interaction attentiveness sub-dimension. Totally, there are five dimensions and 24 items in the scale.

3.4. Peace education programme

PEP was applied to participants within this study. PEP lasted 14 weeks and 28 hours. In this study, PEP’s primary purpose was bringing methods and strategies which are requirements of living together in peace in societal life to the university students. With this purpose, a programme was designed to develop university students’ physical, psychological, and social environments; viewpoints to individual differences; communication, empathy, anger management, problem solving, and peacemaking abilities. There were two-hour sessions for each week in the programme. The contents of the session, respectively as follows: I. The concepts related with peace education, II. The reasons that require peace education, III. Professional and characteristic features of the peace education teacher, IV. The purposes of peace education and examining curriculums via peace education lens, V. The content in peace education and examining curriculums in this respect, VI. Preparing learning environments in peace education and sample activities, VII. Communication skills and empathy for peace, VIII. Peaceful problem solving skills and sample activities, IX. Managing emotions in peace education, X. Anger and conflict management in peace education, XI. Peacemaking in peace education and sample activities, XII. Micro teaching practices based on peace education (two sessions).

4. Results

The main hypothesis of the study is “H1. There is a significant difference between participants’ pre-test and post-test scores of intercultural sensitivity.” The sub-hypotheses are;

- “H1a. There is a significant difference between participants’ pre-test and post-test scores of interaction engagement sub-dimension.”
- “H1b. There is a significant difference between participants’ pre-test and post-test scores of interaction attentiveness sub-dimension.”
- “H1c. There is a significant difference between participants’ pre-test and post-test scores of interaction confidence sub-dimension.”
- “H1d. There is a significant difference between participants’ pre-test and post-test scores of interaction enjoyment sub-dimension.”
- “H1e. There is a significant difference between participants’ pre-test and post-test scores of respect for cultural differences sub-dimension.”

With the purpose of testing the hypotheses, participants’ pre-test and post-test scores of intercultural sensitivity scale were tested via Wilcoxon signed ranks test. Analysis results were given in Table 1.

Table 1. Wilcoxon signed ranks test results for participants’ pre-test – post-test scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Posttest Scores – Pretest Scores</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean Rank</th>
<th>Sum of Ranks</th>
<th>Z*</th>
<th>P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Intercultural Sensitivity</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative Ranks</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>12,1</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>-1,11</td>
<td>.012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive Ranks</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>13,6</td>
<td>204</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ties</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

| interaction engagement         |    |           |              |     |      |
| Negative Ranks                 | 3  | 9,83      | 29,5         | -3,16 | .000 |
| Positive Ranks                 | 19 | 11,76     | 223,5        |     |      |
| Ties                           | 3  |           |              |     |      |

| interaction attentiveness       |    |           |              |     |      |
| Negative Ranks                 | 7  | 9,5       | 66,5         | -1,73 | .000 |
| Positive Ranks                 | 14 | 11,75     | 164,5        |     |      |
| Ties                           | 4  |           |              |     |      |

| interaction confidence         |    |           |              |     |      |
| Negative Ranks                 | 10 | 9         | 90           | -1,19 | .108 |
| Positive Ranks                 | 12 | 13,58     | 163          |     |      |
| Ties                           | 3  |           |              |     |      |

| interaction enjoyment          |    |           |              |     |      |
| Negative Ranks                 | 11 | 13,86     | 152,5        | -0.85 | .057 |
| Positive Ranks                 | 11 | 9,14      | 100,5        |     |      |
| Ties                           | 3  |           |              |     |      |

| respect for cultural differences|    |           |              |     |      |
| Negative Ranks                 | 16 | 11,44     | 183          | -0.94 | .288 |
| Positive Ranks                 | 8  | 14,63     | 117          |     |      |
| Ties                           | 1  |           |              |     |      |

* based on negative ranks

As a result of this study, there is a significant difference between participants’ pre-test and post-test scores of intercultural sensitivity ($z=-1.11$, $p<0.05$). Thus, $H_1$ is confirmed. When sum of ranks and mean rank are considered, it has been found out that the difference between pre-test and post-test scores is in favour of positive ranks score. According to this result it can be said that PEP helps participants’ intercultural sensitivity scores increase.

Analysis results of the hypotheses related to sub-dimensions indicates that there is a significant difference between participants’ pre-test and post-test scores of interaction engagement ($z=3.16$, $p<0.05$), and there is a significant difference between their pre-test and post-test scores of interaction attentiveness ($z=-1.73$, $p<0.05$). Based on these statistical results, $H_{1a}$ and $H_{1b}$ were confirmed. Sum of ranks and mean rank indicate that the difference between pre-test and post-test scores is in favour of positive ranks score. This result can be interpreted as participants’ interaction engagement scores and participants’ interaction attentiveness scores were increased via PEP.

Analysis results of other sub-dimensions show that there are not any significant differences between participants’ pre-test and post-test scores of interaction confidence ($z=1.19$, $p<0.05$), pre-test and post-test scores of interaction enjoyment ($z=-0.85$, $p<0.05$), and pre-test and post-test scores of respect for cultural differences ($z=0.94$, $p<0.05$). Based on these results; $H_{1c}$, $H_{1d}$ and $H_{1e}$ were rejected. This finding can be interpreted as PEP didn’t show the expected effect of increasing participants’ interaction confidence, interaction enjoyment, and respect for cultural differences scores.
5. Conclusions

According to the results of this study, it is seen that there are significant differences between university students’ pre-test and post-test scores of intercultural sensitivity, their pre-test and post-test scores of interaction engagement, and their pre-test and post-test scores of interaction attentiveness. And also these differences are in favour of post-test scores. These results can be interpreted as university students’ intercultural sensitivity, interaction engagement, and interaction attentiveness levels can be increased with PEP. This result supports Harris’s (2002) thought that intercultural understanding can be enhanced via peace education programmes. In this sense, it can be suggested that PEP achieved its goal in general, and the programme can be used as a tool for building peace and enhancing intercultural sensitivity.

PEP which was applied to the university students didn’t reveal any significant difference between pre-test and post-test scores of interaction confidence, interaction enjoyment, and respect for cultural differences. Thus, it can be said that PEP didn’t show expected impact in terms of these sub-dimensions. Danesh (2006) suggests that there must be activities which are based on experiences in the peace education programmes. The reason of not revealing expected impact for these sub-dimensions can be that PEP doesn’t have any activities which are based on experiences for these sub-dimensions. In this sense, it can be suggested that PEP must develop in terms of these ways.

PEP was applied to a group that consisted of participants who were the university students in this study, and programme achieved its goal in general. Some recommendations for future research can be conducting studies with various and larger groups, with different experimental methods which can also enable us to test the effectiveness of PEP in terms of these groups and methods.

References


