



Reconsidering the citizenship education in Turkey: Is citizenship education possible in preschools?

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Abstract

This study aimed to examine the applicability of citizenship education - one of the main objectives of social studies education- in early childhood, considering the opinions of preschool teachers. The study used a case study design, involving a sample group of twenty-four preschool teachers. The data were gathered using semi structured interview forms and analyzed with content analysis using MAXQDA 2020. As a result, it appeared that the characteristics of traditional citizenship based on duties and responsibilities were dominant in preschool teachers' perceptions of citizenship though the characteristics of modern citizenship that prioritize rights and freedoms were observed as well. Also, the participants ascribed similar meanings to the concepts of good and efficient citizenship, and further asserted that developing an infrastructure for citizenship education in preschool would make significant contributions to subsequent learning processes. Emphasizing that preschool is a critical period, the teachers drew attention to the fact that this particular period can be a great opportunity for citizenship education. Additionally, they pointed out that teaching the issues related to citizenship during preschool could be conducted through such techniques as game-based teaching, narration through storytelling, and using animations or cartoons based on the theme of citizenship education.

Keywords: Preschool, teaching social studies, citizenship, citizenship education

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1. Introduction

Montessori's saying 'the most important period of life is not the age of university studies, but the first one, the period from birth to the age of six. For that is the time when man's intelligence itself, his greatest implement is being formed' clearly points out the role of education that children are provided with at an early age, when it comes to the future of countries. The investments of countries in childhood make significant contributions to their socio-cultural and economic development. Approaching that contribution from an economic perspective, Nobel Prize winner Heckman stated that

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‘every dollar invested in high quality early childhood education yields a return of seven to eight dollars to the society’ (Heckman, as cited in Suskind, 2018). That economic return was demonstrated in a national report to be around \$5 in Turkey (Turkish Industry and Business Association [TUSIAD], 2005). For Heckman, the knowledge accumulation gained in childhood is not only an economic input to the individual and the society, but also an important contributing factor that exceeds an individual’s limits to influence the society as a whole in the context of the externality principle of education. The most important contributions of the externality of education to social life include the development of the idea of democratic thought through education as well as the establishment of the culture of democracy and cultural elements (Şimşek, 2001). In this regard, *citizenship education* given from an early age is crucial in order to instil in children the culture of democracy, to ensure social development, and to improve and establish the rights and freedoms.

Citizenship education, which includes the knowledge, skills and values required for an individual to be an efficient citizen (Gürkan & Doğanay, 2020), consists of such elements as a status, a feeling, and a practice (Osler & Starkey, 2005). Citizenship education, which should be cognitive as well as emotional and social (Brooks and Holfard, as cited in Gürkan & Doğanay, 2020), is a lifelong dynamic process (Osborne, 1991). Nevertheless, citizenship education for very young citizens faces two potential challenges. One of them is the fact that existing studies have analysed citizenship education through older students, while the second is that predetermined adult ideas (ideals) of what it means to act as a civilian are likely to dominate citizenship education for children (Payne, 2018). Although these problems represent the international perspective, the way the citizenship education is implemented in Turkey, the grade level at which it is conducted, or its curriculum have undergone a constant change (Gezer, 2020). The process of the change has naturally created some problems related to citizenship education. Consequently, it is necessary to reflect on citizenship and contribute to the solution of such concerns regarding whether concepts related to citizenship education are taught adequately (Kartal & Turan, 2015), whether it should be taught as a separate course or as an intermediary discipline (Erol, 2018), as well as the presence of misconceptions (Pala, 2018; Polat & Çalış, 2019), the appropriate grade level at which citizenship education should be provided (Er, Ünal & Özmen, 2013; Hastürk, 2019), the fact that subjects are abstract and not suitable for the student level (Akdeniz, 2018; Durdi & Erdamar, 2020; Şahin & Ekici 2019), that it is limited in terms of transferring the relevant knowledge into real life (Durmuş, 2020), that teachers consider themselves inadequate in teaching the subjects (Şimşek et al., 2017), that it is knowledge-intensive, without focusing on the necessary skills (Merey, Karatekin & Kuş, 2012), and the kind of citizenship that is adopted or should be adopted (Kara, Topkaya & Şimşek, 2012; Şen, 2019).

In the present study, a general framework was developed in the first place for the applicability of a citizenship education in preschool. Then, depending on this general framework, the content and teaching methods of citizenship education appropriate to be provided during preschool in Turkey, in particular, were examined by analysing the opinions of preschool teachers.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1. Social Studies / Citizenship Education in Preschool

Every definition of social studies from past to present has included citizenship education in its content (Kayaalp & Karameşe, 2020). Drawing attention to this, Safran (2015) stated that the most comprehensive aim of social studies course is to raise efficient citizens. Further, the dominant presence of citizenship education in social studies education has led to a social studies approach enabling the acquisition of citizenship knowledge (Barr, Barth, & Shermis, 1978). Thus, citizenship (education) has become part of the social studies curriculum and one of its most important and indispensable components over time. It is quite difficult to distinguish this intertwined structure between social studies and citizenship education.

The preschool education process, which is an important milestone in children's lives (Cole & Mcguire, 2011), is an ideal period for the development of reasonable citizenship characteristics (Erickson & Thompson, 2019). This period stands as an important opportunity for young children to consider themselves as citizens and learn about communities (Mindes, 2005). Early childhood classes in this period represent the first example of democratic participation for many children (Kemple, 2017). The knowledge, skills and values acquired in such classes regarding citizenship are significant components in the lives of children. Although the social studies course is an older field of study compared to the early childhood curriculum, it provides new learning opportunities to very young students (Epstein, 2014). Social studies is a vital part of the early childhood curriculum because the experiences children gain shape their attitudes as they become 'the citizens of their class, school, and wider society' (Mardell, as cited in Vilotti & Berson, 2019). In this sense, social studies education for young children is a process of growing and learning to become a citizen (Harris, 2015). The most important aim of social studies teaching in early childhood is to raise awareness of citizenship (Mindes, 2005). However, it is actually a challenging task to provide early citizenship education to young children despite the attempt to raise this awareness (Wargo & Alvarado, 2020). Numerous studies, which have been conducted directly within the scope of citizenship education or social studies education (Ardalan, 2017; Brillante & Mankiw, 2015; Casey, Dicarolo & Sheldon, 2019; Cole & Mcguire, 2011; Curcio, 2016; Epstein, 2014; Fromboluti & Seefeldt, 1999; Harris, 2015; Harvard Project Zero, 2015; Hubbard, 2015; Kemple, 2017; Koralek, 2015; Lake & Adinolfi, 2017; Lister, 2007; Marsh, Kenyon, Cardy & West, 2020; Martin, 1990; Maple, 2005; Melendez, 2015; Mindes, 2005; Mindes, 2015; Neill, 2015; Nutbrown & Clough, 2009; Payne, 2018; Phillips, Ritchie & Adair, 2020; Serriere, 2019; Swalwell & Payne, 2019; Vilotti & Berson, 2019; Walczak, 2018; Wargo & Alvarado, 2020) in order to overcome this difficulty, have made significant contributions to the purpose, content and way of providing such an education offered in early childhood.

In the literature, Ardalan (2017), who studied children's understanding of citizenship in the preschool period through a directly applied study, stated that, instead of waiting until the age of eighteen, preschool could be the starting point to achieve social participation or active citizenship since children have the ability to interact with society

and understand their responsibilities in this period. Considering the first-hand exploration of children's potential in the preschool period, Krechevsky, Mardell and Romans (2014) emphasized the importance of preschool teachers in building bridges between the society and the youngest citizens, and in transferring what is learned into real life, suggesting that the concepts of preschool education should be expanded to include the perception of young children as citizens. Based on the fact that children are part of their own learning processes in the preschool period, Cole and Mcguire (2011) stated that it is very important for children to have the opportunity to apply their citizenship competencies in a safe environment from an early age while getting prepared for active citizenship. Epstein (2014), who views preschool classrooms as a small-scale example of the larger society, stated that young children usually learn to become responsible citizens in early childhood settings. Considering the importance of this period, the author demonstrated in practice how social rules and roles can be taught to children as junior members of a democratic society during early childhood. Likewise, focusing on the importance of social studies due to its contribution to citizenship and democratic thought, Harris (2015) stated that as young children are the future of society, the development of their citizenship characteristics should be encouraged so that children's hearts and minds will be enlightened, and that future citizens will be honest, serve to their society, try new things, and dream big. In an attempt to explain the status of social studies teaching from an early age through relevant studies for the last two decades, Serriere (2019) highlighted the empowering and integrative role of citizenship education, which has become the focus of social studies education in early childhood in relation to children, and suggested that lessons on citizenship should start at an early age. With the slogan 'children are citizens', Harvard Project Zero (2015) tried to draw attention to the belief that children are members of society as active citizens. They demonstrated the importance of seeing children as citizens who can make significant contributions to their own society rather than as small models of future citizens. Emphasizing the importance of efficient citizenship education in early childhood, Maple (2005) stated that when a child is given the opportunity to be an active and participatory member of a community, s/he can become an active citizen. The approach of that project, which allows experiencing the knowledge learned in early childhood, is an important way to achieve the goal. Examining citizenship education in terms of early childhood curriculum, Phillips, Ritchie and Adair (2020) defined citizenship education as a lifelong process by comparing the early childhood curricula of Australia, New Zealand and the USA. Questioning the traditional citizenship education, Swalwell and Payne (2019) opposed the perception of children as future citizens, and put forward an approach that prioritizes participation through a critical understanding of citizenship.

When social studies or citizenship education is considered in relation to preschool, no learning area seems to exist with a social studies content clearly expressed in the Preschool Education Program in Turkey (Çetingöz, 2017). However, in the subsequent education processes, some of the acquisitions and subjects within the scope of social studies teaching seem to be implicitly included in the Preschool Education Program. Some of the gains associated with citizenship education in the social and emotional development domain of the Preschool Curriculum and examples of indicators related to the gains are given in Figure 1.

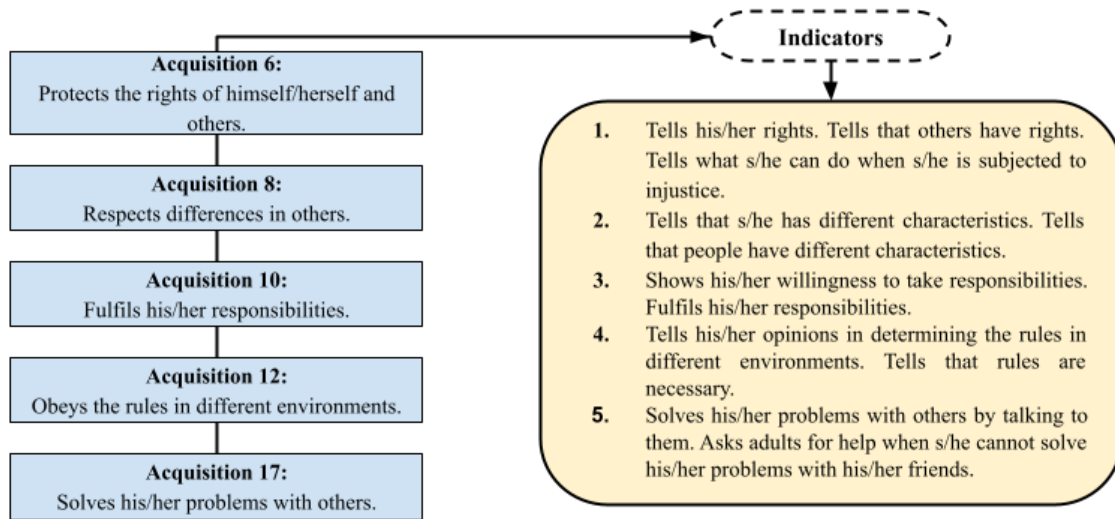


Figure 1. Examples of citizenship acquisition and its indicators in preschool curriculum

(MEB [Ministry of National Education], 2013)

No apparent practices exist for citizenship education in preschools in Turkey, while it is known that geography, economy, and *citizenship* themes are included and applied in detail, especially in the social studies programs of many states in the USA (*Michigan, California, Massachusetts, New York, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Utah, etc.*). Likewise, it appears that studies on social studies teaching, including citizenship education, are mostly concentrated in the USA (Uçuş Güldalı & Demirbaş, 2017). However, academic knowledge for the social studies education in early childhood is not yet developed in Turkey (Akhan & Şimşek Çetin, 2015; Uçuş Güldalı & Demirbaş, 2017). It is of great importance to conduct studies referring to social studies education in preschool for the formation of academic knowledge (Atkın, 2017; Atkın & Dilek, 2014). The analysis of the academic infrastructure on social studies education in preschools in Turkey shows that even though the existence of direct or indirect teaching of *social studies* (Atkın, 2014; Atkın, 2017; Atkın, 2019; Atkın & Dilek, 2014; Atkın, Karakaya, Türk & Aslan, 2015; Atkın & Dilek, 2016; Akhan & Şimşek Çetin, 2015; Ceylan, 2014; Coskun Keskin & Daysal Ersoy, 2012; Coşkun Keskin & Kırtel, 2016; Çulha Öztaş & Doğan, 2012; Daysal Ersoy, 2011; Keskin, Keskin & Kırtel, 2019; Kırtel & Yüceer, 2019; Öner, 2018; Yiğit & Sezer, 2007; Yiğit & Sezer, 2009), or direct *teaching of geography* (Baysan & Aydoğan, 2016; Can Yaşar, İnal, Uyanık & Yazıcı, 2012; Özbek Ayaz, Güleç & Arcagök, 2018; Öztürk, Giren, Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2014; Soydan, 2014; Ünlü, 2001; Ünlü & Alkış, 2006; Yaşar & Pamuk, 2020; Yüksel Usta & Tezel Şahin, 2019) in preschools is considered as a positive development, the studies were mostly conducted by the same researchers.

National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS, 2019), which points out the importance of teaching social studies in preschool, stated that the researchers of social studies need to do research on early childhood curriculum and teaching it. Similarly, Vilotti and Berson (2019) also emphasized that the activities of social studies in early childhood and the ways in which citizenship can be implemented in practice with young children are the subjects of science that have not been adequately explored. Despite the existence of a

wide perspective on citizenship education in Turkey, there is still an uncertainty and confusion about what this education will be like, how it will be taught, and where to start. In other words, it is not yet clear what the first step of a qualified citizenship education will exactly be like with an instructional understanding, and more importantly how it should be conducted. The strength of this study is that it searches for a solution to this problem and bases this search on the process-based experiences of the teachers involved in the implementation phase. Also, the absence of directly-related studies conducted on citizenship education in preschool, apart from the indirectly-related studies in Turkey, is further increasing the importance of this study. Due to national and international reasons, the aim of this study is to examine the views of preschool teachers in terms of citizenship education in preschool. In line with this general purpose, answers were sought to the following research questions:

- ❖ How competent are preschool teachers in terms of citizenship education?
- ❖ What are the opinions of preschool teachers on citizenship education?
- ❖ What are the opinions of preschool teachers on citizenship education in preschool?
- ❖ What are the opinions of preschool teachers about the content of citizenship education that can be applied in preschool and how it can be taught?
- ❖ What are the opinions of preschool teachers on the concept of ‘good citizenship’? What are their thoughts on the teaching methods that should be applied for a good citizen education in preschool?
- ❖ What are the opinions of preschool teachers on the concept of ‘efficient (active, efficient) citizenship’? What are their opinions on the necessary teaching methods to be applied to raise efficient citizens in preschools?

3. Method

This study was conducted with the case study design. Relying on the questions of why and what for, a researcher (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2011) analyses a situation, a phenomenon, a process, or mostly a program in a case study (Yin, 2014), which is a detailed description or examination of a limited system (Merriam, 2015, p. 40). The purpose of this in-depth study is to explore a person or a phenomenon in their original environment, describe in detail, and then comment on the person or phenomenon, rather than coming to a general conclusion (Paker, 2015). In line with the current structure and purpose of the case study, the *case* addressed in this study is to examine deeply whether or not citizenship education is applicable in preschools, what can be included in the content of citizenship education to be implemented in this period, and what route should be followed in teaching the content, considering the preschool teachers’ views on citizenship and citizenship education.

3.1. Study Group

The study group consists of 24 preschool teachers working in Zonguldak, Turkey in the 2019-2020 academic year. Maximum diversity sampling technique was used to determine the preschool teachers for the study group. This sampling is based on the principle of reflecting the diversity of the individuals involved in the research question to the sample

and revealing the different aspects of the problem over the diversity (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2011). Considering this principle, researchers should take two issues into account in maximum diversity sampling (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2011, p. 109). First one is to present clearly what the purpose of the researcher is. The purpose of this sampling method is not to make a generalization to the population through diversity, but to reveal what kind of similarities and differences exist between varying situations (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2011), thus presenting the existing problem in a wider framework (Büyüköztürk, Kılıç-Çakmak, Akgün, Karadeniz & Demirel, 2018). Bearing the main principle in mind, the aim of the maximum variety in this study is, therefore, *to focus on the citizenship education that can be applied in preschool from a wide spectrum, and examine the relevant situation in depth rather than to reach a generalization about citizenship education in preschool*. Another point to consider is to reveal the sources of diversity related to the existing situation in detail and to decide which areas of diversity will be included (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2011). In line with the purpose of the research, attention was paid to the diversity of the participants in terms of gender, educational background, department of graduation, and professional seniority. Another issue to consider was the fact that in case studies, it is recommended that the sampling size should be small in order to examine the subject in depth and explore it in detail (Kaleli Yılmaz, 2019). According to this principle, utmost care was taken to ensure diversity of the participants in order to examine the citizenship education in preschool profoundly, and to reveal the different, existing situations. Figure 2 provides descriptive information of preschool teachers interviewed.

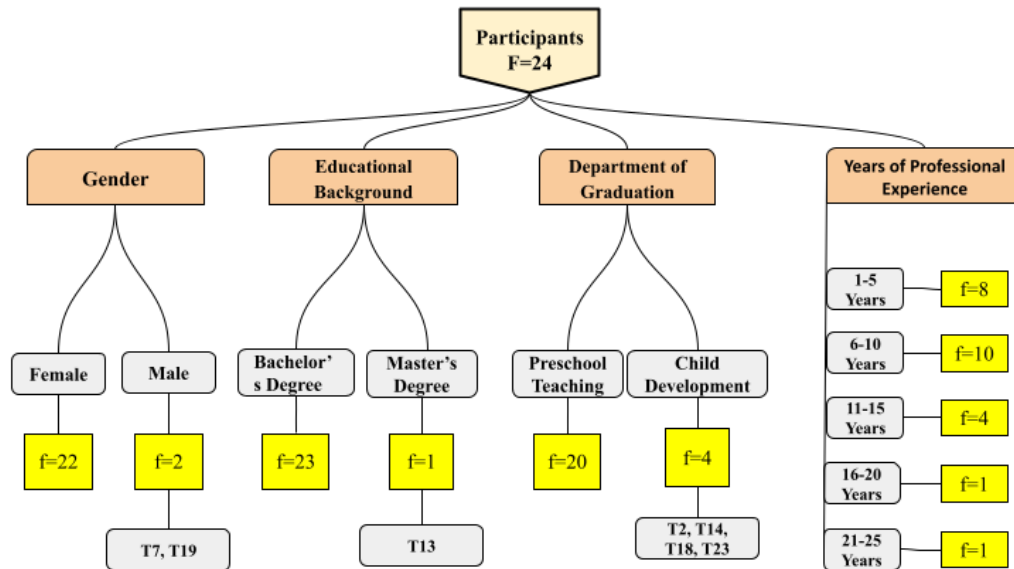


Figure 2. Descriptive information of the sample group

3.2. Data Collection and Data Collection Tool

A semi-structured interview form was used to gather the preschool teachers' views on citizenship education in preschool. Before preparing the semi-structured interview form, the preschool curricula in the world and, in particular, in Turkey was examined. Then,

the theoretical framework of the study was formed with the contribution of various academic studies on citizenship education in preschool. Next, the limits of the research were defined by considering the theoretical structure, upon which 4 interview questions (first four research questions) were prepared to reveal the opinions of preschool teachers. Expert opinion was obtained about the suitability of the questions prepared for the research purpose. One of the experts is a faculty member in preschool education and the other is a faculty member in social studies education. Citizenship education is one of the specialties of the faculty member who works in social studies education. Two interview questions (research question 5 and research question 6) were included in the study in line with the recommendations of the faculty member who is an expert in citizenship education. Each of these interview questions are involved in the study as a separate research question. Following the stage at which the interview questions were prepared, the data collection started in line with the purpose of the study. In order to prevent data loss during the interview process and to ensure the reliability of the study, the interviews were recorded with a voice recording device with the permission of the participants. The teachers were informed that their identity information would be kept confidential and that their names would be coded. The interviews with the teachers, each of which lasted 30-50 minutes, were carried out in the educational institution where the teachers worked in the 2019-2020 academic year between the dates of 04.11.2019 and 13.01.2020.

3.3. Data Analysis

The data of this study were obtained from 24 preschool teachers who presented their opinions about citizenship education in preschool. After the interviews were completed, all of them were listened from the tape recorder one by one, transcribed, and then made into written texts. The data were subjected to content analysis using the MAXQDA 2020 qualitative data analysis software. The main purpose in content analysis is to find out the concepts and relationships that can explain the collected data. For this reason, gathering similar data within the framework of certain concepts and themes as well as organizing and interpreting them in a way that the reader can understand constitutes the basis of the content analysis (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2011). While analyzing the preschool teachers' views on citizenship education in preschool, firstly, the data were carefully examined to create codes, which were then checked, and similar codes were collected under appropriate categories. In order to ensure the reliability of the code and category formation process, two academic members who are experts in their fields were provided with the data and asked to encode the data independently and organize them under appropriate categories. Afterwards, the reliability was calculated using Miles and Huberman's formula [(Reliability = number of agreements / (total number of agreements + disagreements)] regarding the agreements and disagreements between researchers and experts. In general, it is desirable that the calculated reliability coefficient be 90% (Miles & Huberman, 2016). In the present study, a 95% agreement (reliability) was achieved upon the reliability study. It was attempted to make a joint decision by reviewing the codes and categories in which there was a disagreement. Then, the tables were explained, taking into account the themes, relevant codes, frequencies, and participants. While indicating the statements of the teachers, such coding as T/1, T/2,...T/24 was followed by considering the ethical rules of the research. At the end of the analysis process, the

expressions of the preschool teachers were presented through direct quotations in order to explain the tables and make the codes and themes clear.

4. Results

The results of the study regarding the opinions of preschool teachers for citizenship education in preschool were presented under separate headings. The themes and code structures of the research data were presented visually in the MAXQDA 2020. Then, the codes formed according to the themes were explained in appropriate tables. While creating the tables, a sequence was followed from the highest frequency value of the codes to the lowest. Preschool teachers' ideas shown in the tables were also supported by direct quotations from their given opinions.

Results of the Research Question 1: In order to determine what kind of infrastructure they had for citizenship education before revealing their opinions about citizenship education, preschool teachers were posed the question: *'Did you take a course similar to citizenship education during undergraduate education?'* The findings are presented in Figure 3.

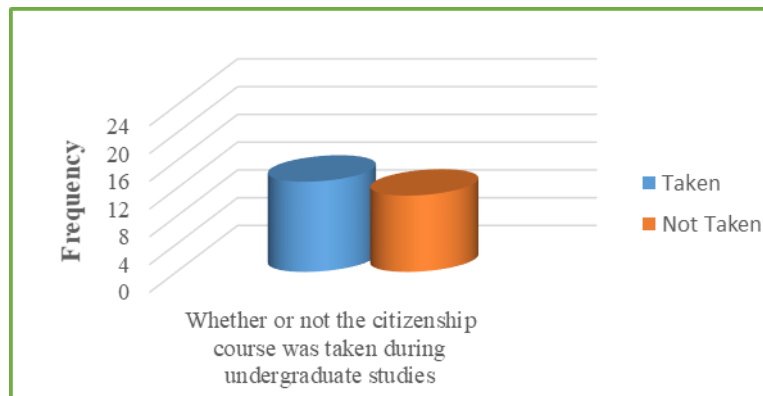


Figure 3. Whether or not the preschool teachers took citizenship knowledge course during their undergraduate studies

As can be seen in Figure 3, while more than half of the preschool teachers ($f=13$) did not take a citizenship course or a related course during their undergraduate education, nearly half of them ($f=11$) took such a course in undergraduate education. Figure 4 shows the MAX Maps Code Co-Occurrence Model of the findings regarding which courses directly involve the content of citizenship or citizenship education.

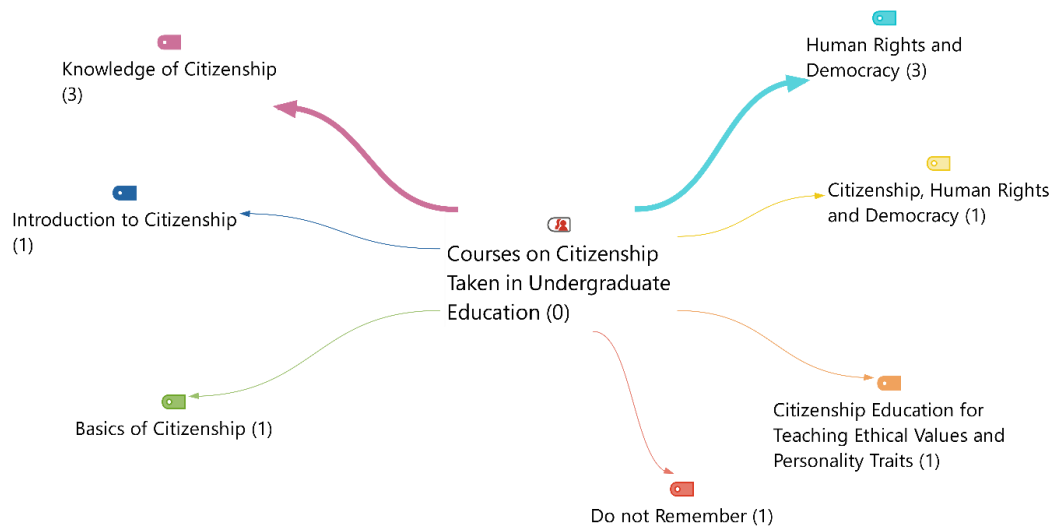


Figure 4. MAX Maps code co-occurrence model regarding the courses that teachers take in relation to citizenship education

As is shown in Figure 4, the preschool teachers took human rights and democracy course, and citizenship knowledge course ($f=6$) more during their undergraduate studies. In the same preschool teaching undergraduate program, courses such as Introduction to Citizenship or Basic Citizenship Skills were included under different names.

The teachers who took citizenship education under different courses during their undergraduate studies ended up benefiting from such knowledge in their professional life. However, those who never took a course to contribute to citizenship education during their undergraduate studies turned out to have some information sources as a reference for teaching citizenship, as presented in the MAX Maps Code Co-Occurrence Model in Figure 5.

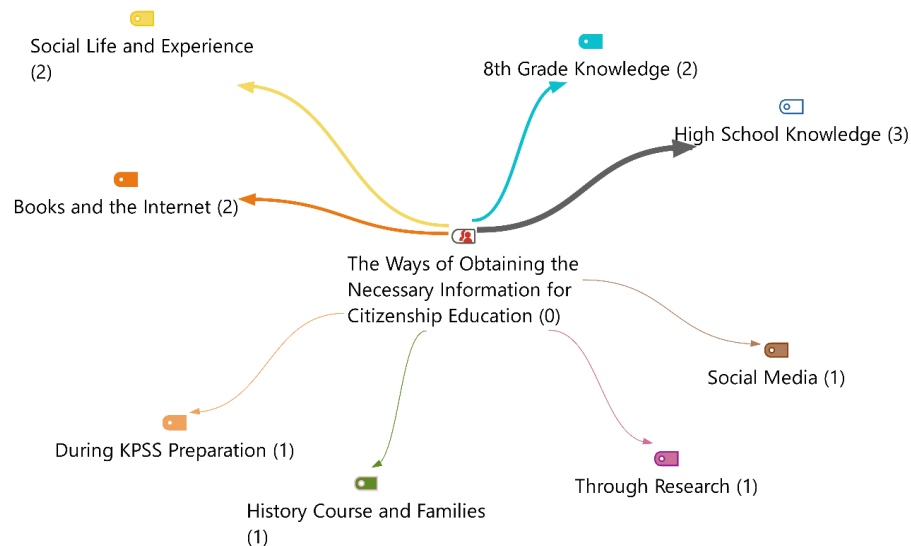


Figure 5. MAX Maps code co-occurrence model in relation to the sources of information of teachers with no citizenship education course

Figure 5 shows that the source of information for preschool teachers with no citizenship education during undergraduate studies relies on their educational background prior to the undergraduate studies. The high school period ($f=3$) constitutes the first place among the information sources that preschool teachers consider as a reference for teaching citizenship, while the secondary school period, social life, books and the Internet ($f=2$) constitute the second. Moreover, the third and last reference source is the preparation process for the KPSS (Public Personnel Selection Examination) exam in addition to doing research and using social media.

Figure 6 presents the findings regarding the opinions of preschool teachers with certain experience in citizenship education during undergraduate studies and of those without such experience as to whether they consider themselves competent to teach citizenship.

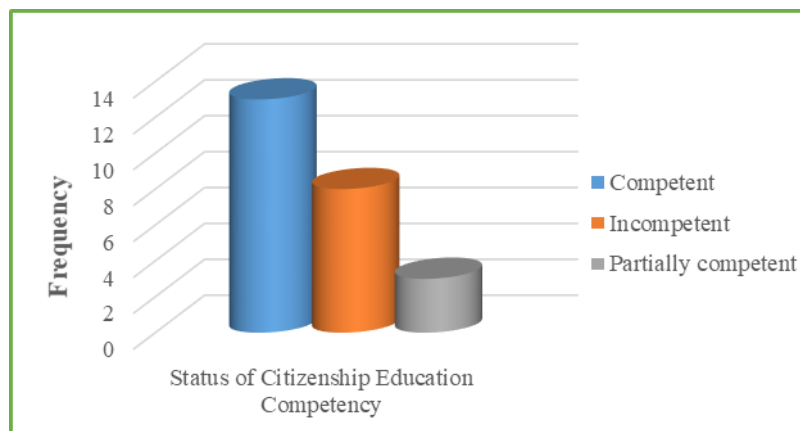


Figure 6. Preschool teachers' views about their competency to teach citizenship

As seen in Figure 6, when preschool teachers implemented the activities for teaching citizenship, thirteen ($f=13$) teachers considered themselves competent in practices, while eight ($f=8$) of them did not, and three ($f=3$) preschool teachers considered themselves partially competent in their teaching processes.

Results of the Research Question 2: The background knowledge of preschool teachers participating in the study regarding citizenship and citizenship education was identified, upon which the teachers were asked: ‘*What are your opinions on citizenship education?*’ Figure 7 presents the MAX Maps Code Co-Occurrence Model of the findings obtained from the opinions of preschool teachers on citizenship education.

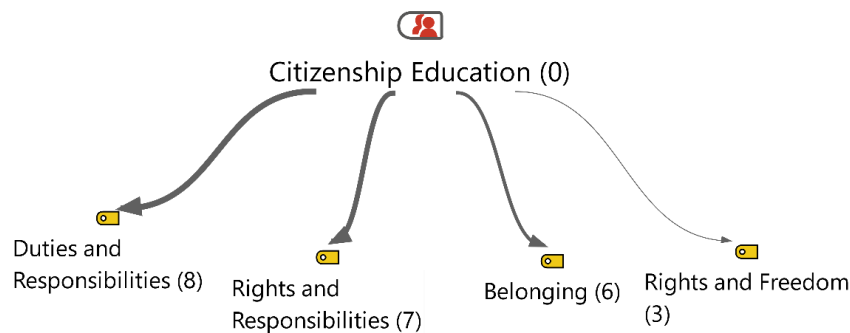


Figure 7. MAX Maps code co-occurrence model in relation to teachers' perception of citizenship education

As shown in Figure 7, four (4) codes including duties and responsibilities, rights and freedoms, the sense of belonging, and rights and freedoms were prevailing within the theme of '*Citizenship Education*' for preschool teachers. The findings obtained from the opinions of preschool teachers on the theme of citizenship education are given in Table 1.

Table 1. Preschool teachers' opinions on citizenship education

Codes	Participants	Sample Expressions	<i>f</i>
Citizenship Education for Duties and Responsibilities	T8,T9,T11,T14 T16,T20,T21, T24	'Though I do not know much of its content exactly, I think it is a training that covers both my rights and responsibilities as well as my responsibilities and duties towards the country I live in, as an individual living in this country.' (T.16).	8
Citizenship Education for Rights and Responsibilities	T4,T5,T6,T10, T12,T19,T22	'Citizenship education is a kind of education that teaches people their rights and responsibilities, and creates a more conscious society.' (T.4).	7
Citizenship Education for the Sense of Belonging	T1,T13 T3,T7,T15,T17	'Citizenship education teaches individuals about the love of homeland and nation as well as rights owned, etc.' (T.1).	6
Citizenship Education for Rights and Freedoms	T2,T18,T23	'It is a necessary training given on how individuals in the society should use their rights and freedoms so that they can adapt to the society more easily.' (T.18).	3
Total (Valid)			24

As seen in Table 1, eight ($f=8$) of the preschool teachers participating in the study considered citizenship education as raising individuals with duties and responsibilities, while seven ($f=7$) of them prioritized rights and responsibilities in citizenship education. Again, six ($f=6$) preschool teachers attributed to citizenship education as gaining a sense of belonging through the social concepts such as homeland and nation. Three ($f=3$) preschool teachers, on the other hand, stated that citizenship education is the process of acquiring rights and freedoms.

Results of the Research Question 3: After relevant opinions were collected about citizenship education, in general, the participants were asked the following question: '*What do you think about giving citizenship education in preschool?*' with the purpose of determining their opinions on citizenship education in preschool, in particular. Figure 8 presents the MAX Maps Code Co-Occurrence Model of the findings obtained from the opinions of preschool teachers.

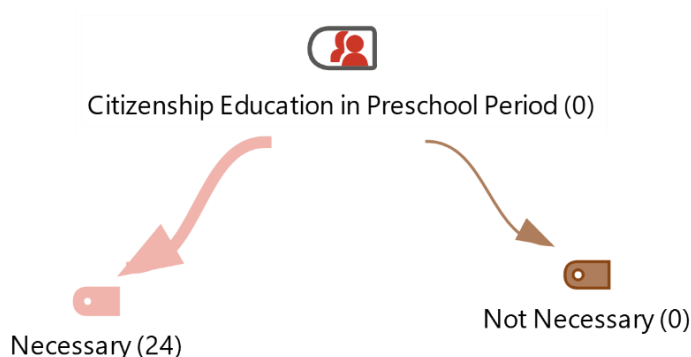


Figure 8. MAX Maps code co-occurrence model in relation to teachers’ perception about the necessity of citizenship education

Figure 8 shows that there are two (2) codes specified as necessary and unnecessary in relation to the perceptions of preschool teachers under the theme of ‘*Citizenship Education in Preschool*’. The findings are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Teachers’ perceptions about the necessity of citizenship education in preschool

Code	Participants	Sample Expressions	f
Necessary	T1, T2, T3, T4, T5, T6, T7, T8, T9, T10, T11, T12, T13, T14, T15, T16, T17, T18, T19, T20, T21, T22, T23, T24	‘As the twig is bent, so is the tree inclined. Citizenship education should be given at an early age so that responsibilities can be fulfilled at later ages.’ (T.5).	24
		‘It is necessary to teach our children Turkish customs and traditions, responsibilities and rights in order to raise children who respect the rights of their friends.’ (T.23).	
		‘Citizenship education should start in preschool. It is necessary as it is a period in which children learn fast and permanent behaviours occur.’ (T. 15).	
		‘A child’s personality and character begin to develop in the preschool period; that’s why, citizenship education is necessary at these ages.’ (T.14).	
		‘Some activities have not been clearly indicated for citizenship education in preschool. They could be elaborated more in detail in the curriculum. It is a must-have practice in pre-school period, which is the basic step of education.’ (T.12).	
		‘Citizenship education should start in preschool. Since preschool is the most important period for the emotional and mental development of children, citizenship education should be provided according to the grade level of students’ (T.6).	
Total (Valid)			24

As can be seen in Table 2, all of the preschool teachers ($f=24$) participating in the study considered citizenship education necessary in preschool, and had their specific reasons for justifying the necessity of providing citizenship education in preschool.

The Results of the Research Question 4: As a result of taking the opinions of preschool teachers about whether citizenship education should be included in preschool, some questions emerged about what subjects can be taught to children in this period for the sake of citizenship education and what strategy will be followed for teaching relevant

issues. In order to answer this question, the participants were asked ‘*What kind of a path should be followed for citizenship education in preschool?*’. Figure 9 presents the MAX Maps Code Co-Occurrence Model based on the findings obtained from the opinions of preschool teachers regarding which subjects are to be included in the citizenship education in preschool and which teaching method is to be adopted.

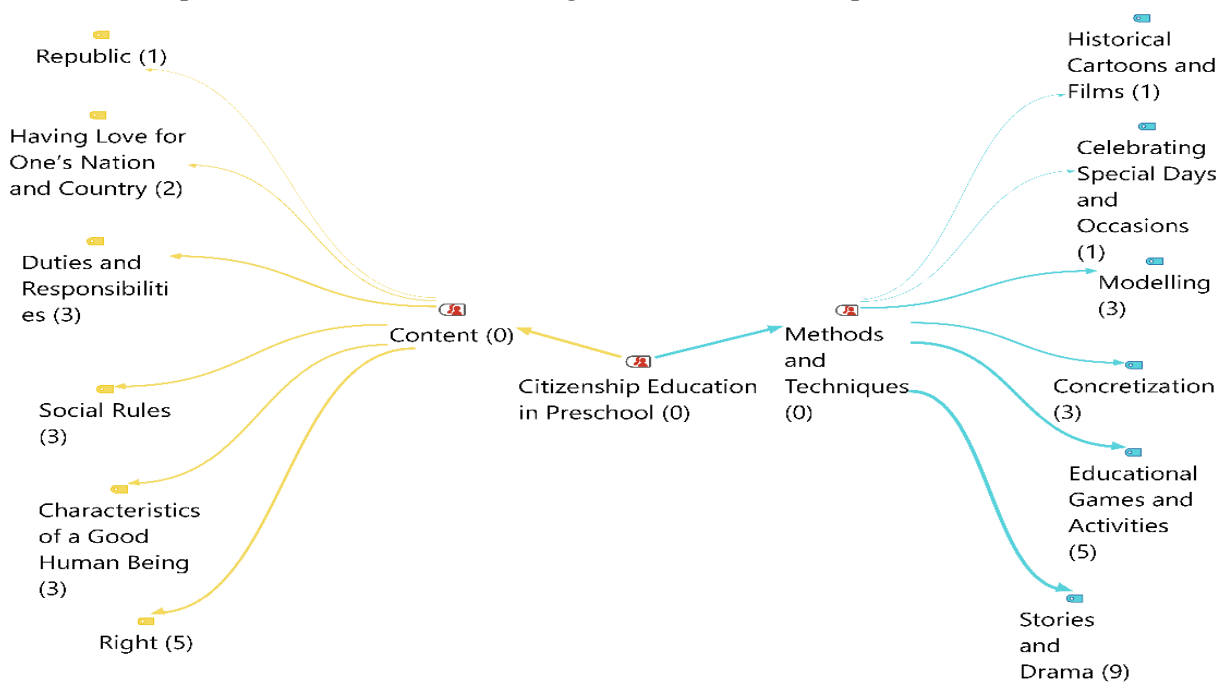


Figure 9. MAX maps code co-occurrence model in relation to teachers’ perceptions towards citizenship education in preschool

Figure 9 shows that the participants came up with two (2) codes and their related sub-categories under the theme of ‘*Citizenship Education in Preschool*’, namely, *content*, and *method and technique*. The findings are given in Table 3.

Table 3. Preschool teachers' opinions on what citizenship education in preschool should include

Codes	Participants	Sample Expressions	f
Rights	T5, T9, T12, T15, T16, T17,	‘I think that these age groups should be taught subjects such as rights and responsibilities, awareness of equality, respect and tolerance.’ (T.12).	6
Duties and Responsibilities	T2, T4, T8, T13, T19	‘It could be beneficial to teach attitudes such as not harming others, not using others’ belongings without permission, keeping the environment clean, being respectful, as well as the existence of rules that must be followed in places where people live collectively.’ (T.19).	5
Social Rules	T1, T3, T11, T22	‘Children can be taught the rules of a society through play and drama.’ (T.3).	4
Characteristics of a Good Human	T7, T14, T21, T23	‘An answer must be sought to the question ‘What should a good person be like?’ and children should be raised	4

		accordingly in preschool' (T.14).	
Love for One's Nation and Country	T10, T20, T24	'Children should be taught the love for their country and nation.' (T.10)	3
Republic	T6, T18	Topics such as the republic, responsibilities and rights etc. can be taught.' (T.18).	2
Total (Valid)			24

As can be seen in Table 3, the preschool teachers considered that teaching children their rights ($f=6$) is a priority in preschool. In addition to rights, issues such as awareness of duties and responsibilities ($f=5$), social rules ($f=4$), good human characteristics ($f=4$), love of the country and nation ($f=3$), and the concept of republic ($f=2$) were also mentioned by preschool teachers as target subjects to be taught in preschool.

Upon stating the topics that they believed should be included in the citizenship education in preschool, teachers made comprehensive evaluations on how to instil in preschool children such topics. Table 4 presents the findings regarding the opinions of preschool teachers about how to teach citizenship education-related issues in preschool.

Table 4. Preschool teachers' opinions on how to conduct citizenship education in preschool

Codes	Participants	Sample Expressions	<i>f</i>
Stories and Drama	T1, T3, T6, T7, T8, T10, T15, T18, T22	'Since students are young, citizenship should be taught through stories and drama in a more concrete manner.' (T.1).	9
Educational Games and Activities	T2, T4, T19, T23, T24	'It is very important that children can perceive what is desired to be taught while providing citizenship education in preschool. I think that an effective education will be given through educational games and activities.' (T.19).	5
Concretization	T11, T14, T20, T21	'Since it is an abstract subject, it should be taught in a more concrete manner. For example, the right to vote and be elected can be taught through a voting activity.' (T.20).	4
Role Models	T5, T9, T12, T13	'I believe that the most effective methods are drama, educational games, and role models when it comes to teaching these age groups.' (T.12).	4
Watching Historical Cartoons	T16	'Children should be explained what the homeland and nation are, and they can watch cartoons for this purpose.' (T.16).	1
Celebration of Special Days and Weeks	T17	'Special days and weeks can be celebrated. A classroom president can be elected and the Declaration of the Rights of the Child can be read out loud.' (T.17).	1
Total (Valid)			24

Table 4 shows that the most emphasized method in teaching the topics related to citizenship in preschool appeared to be teaching through stories and drama ($f=9$), while

the least mentioned method was using the activity of celebrating special days and weeks ($f=1$). Apart from these two methods, preschool teachers further expressed some other different methods and techniques such as educational games and activities ($f=5$), concretization (demonstration) ($f=4$), modelling (social learning) ($f=4$), and making use of cartoons ($f=1$).

The Results of the Research Question 5: The general framework of preschool teachers' views on which subjects should be taught in the context of citizenship education, in general, and preschool citizenship education, in particular, made it necessary to find an answer to another question: *Which citizenship model should be taught in preschool?* In order to find an answer to this question, preschool teachers were asked: *'What do you think a 'good citizen' is like, and what should be done for a good citizenship education in preschool?'* The MAX Maps Code Co-Occurrence Model of the findings obtained from the opinions of preschool teachers is presented in Figure 10.

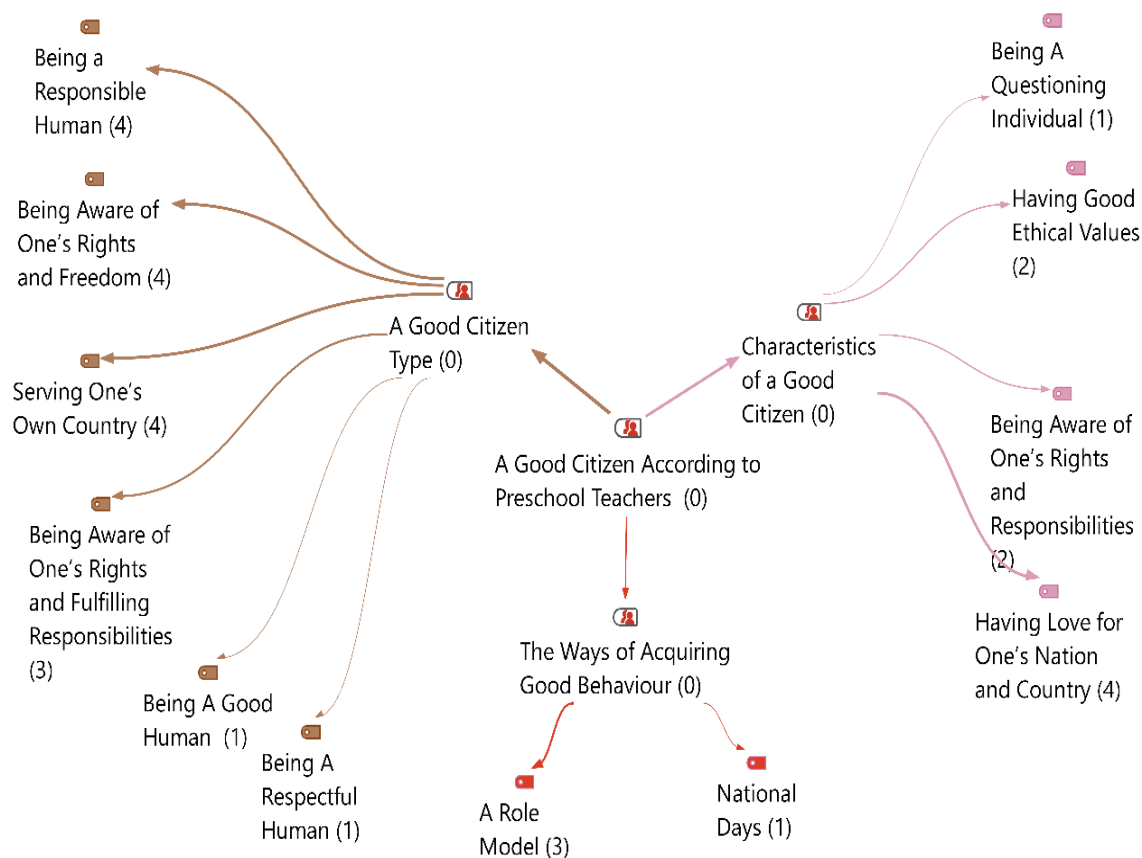


Figure 10. MAX Maps code co-occurrence model in relation to teachers' perceptions of a good citizen

As demonstrated in Figure 10, the participants came up with three (3) codes and their related sub-categories under the theme of a 'Good Citizen', namely, a good citizen type, the characteristics of a good citizen, and how to acquire them. Table 5 presents the findings obtained from the opinions of preschool teachers regarding what a good citizen is like.

Table 5. Preschool teachers’ opinions about a good citizen

Codes	Participants	Sample Expressions	<i>f</i>
Serving One’s Own Country	T6, T7, T9, T15, T16, T17	‘A good citizen is the person who works, earns, and acts properly for his/her country.’ (T.17).	6
Being Aware of One’s Rights and Freedoms	T22, T20, T14, T3	‘A good citizen is a person who is aware of and defends his/her rights and freedoms.’ (T.22).	4
Being a Responsible Human	T5, T21, T19, T13	‘A good citizen is a someone who is loyal to his/her state, knows his/her responsibilities and acts accordingly.’ (T.13).	4
Being Aware of One’s Rights and Fulfilling Responsibilities	T18, T12, T4	‘A good citizen is the one who fulfils his/her responsibilities for social order and can claim his/her rights in personal life.’ (T.4).	3
Being a Respectful Human	T23	‘A good citizen is a person who respects himself/herself first, and then the society and environment in which s/he lives.’ (T.23)	1
Being a Good Human	T2	‘A good citizen is a good person.’ (T.2).	1
Total (Valid)			24

As is seen in Table 5, preschool teachers mostly used the definition of a person who serves one’s own country (*f*=6) to define a good citizen. Still, other definitions exist, including people who know their rights and freedoms (*f*=4), who are responsible (*f*=4), who are aware of their rights and fulfilling them (*f*=3), who are good (*f*=1), and who are respectful (*f*=1).

Along with the definitions of a good citizens by preschool teachers, it is important to explore what characteristics of this good citizen should be taught as well as how to instil in preschool children such characteristics. Table 6 shows the findings obtained from the opinions of preschool teachers on how to teach children in preschool good citizenship characteristics.

Table 6. Preschool teachers’ opinions about the characteristics of a good citizen and the appropriate teaching method

	Codes	Participants	Sample Expressions	<i>f</i>
Characteristics of Good Citizen	Having Love for One’s Nation and Country	T6, T11, T15, T16	‘Preschool children should be taught a sense of homeland. Children’s rights should be taught. National days should be celebrated.’ (T.11).	4
	Fine and Proper Moral Values	T9, T17	‘In order for children to grow into good citizens, they should be taught good behaviours in preschool such as being truthful, ethical, principled, hardworking, and determined.’ (T.17).	2
	Awareness of Rights and Responsibilities	T12, T21	‘Preschool children can be given responsibilities by introducing the requirements of good citizens, and teachers can stand out as role models.’ (T.21).	2

	Being a Questioning Individual	T8	‘Children should be raised in preschool period in such a way that they become active, can ask questions, and do not hesitate to express their opinions.’ (T.8).	1
Total (Valid)				9
Teaching Method	Role Model	T5, T10, T13	‘Preschool children can be given responsibilities by introducing the requirements of good citizens, and teachers can stand out as role models.’ (T.13).	3
	National Holidays	T1	‘Children's rights should be taught. National days should be celebrated’ (T.1).	1
Total (Valid)				4

Table 6 shows that while four of the preschool teachers ($f=4$) expressed the necessity to teach the love for one’s nation and country as a feature of good citizenship to children in preschool, two ($f=2$) teachers gave priority to fine and proper moral values. Moreover, two other ($f=2$) teachers emphasized the awareness of rights and responsibilities for good citizenship, whereas one ($f=1$) teacher drew attention to the questioning individual characteristic.

Three ($f=3$) of the preschool teachers stressed the importance of being a role model while teaching preschool children good citizenship characteristics, while one ($f=1$) preschool teacher emphasized that national holidays could be an opportunity to raise good citizens.

The Results of the Research Question 6: After the opinions of preschool teachers about good citizenship were determined, they were asked: ‘Who do you think is an ‘efficient citizen’ and how can preschool be used efficiently in raising efficient citizens?’ The MAX Maps Code Co-Occurrence Model of the findings obtained from the opinions expressed by preschool teachers for efficient citizenship is presented in Figure 11.

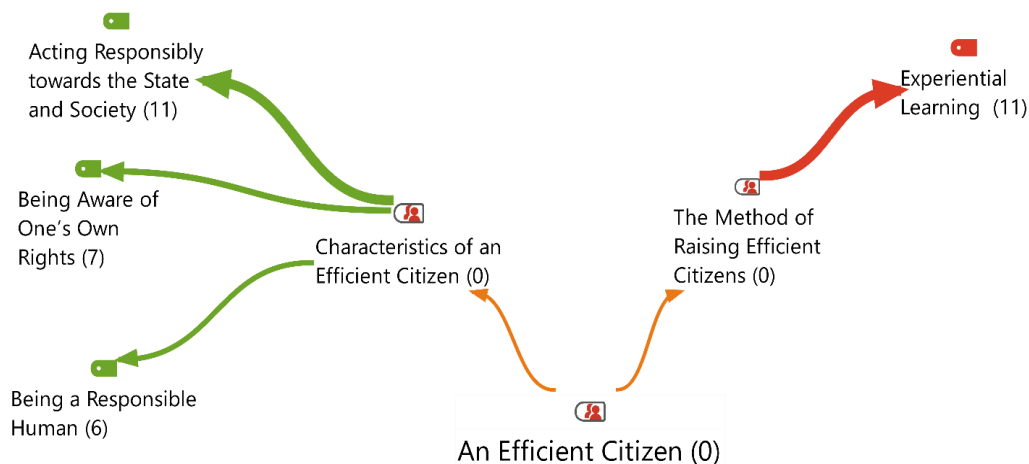


Figure 11. MAX Maps code co-occurrence model in relation to teachers’ perceptions of an efficient citizen

As shown in Figure 11, there are two (2) sub-categories based on the perceptions of preschool teachers regarding the characteristics of an efficient citizen and efficient

citizen-raising under the theme of being an ‘*Efficient Citizen*’. Table 7 presents the findings obtained from the opinions of preschool teachers regarding what an efficient citizen is like.

Table 7. Preschool teachers’ opinions about ‘what an efficient citizen is like?’

Codes	Participants	Sample Expressions	f
Acting Responsibly towards the State and Society	T3, T4, T5, T7, T10, T11, T13, T16, T17, T18, T19	‘An efficient citizen is an individual who socializes by taking into account the rules of society.’ (T.3). ‘An efficient citizen is a person who strives for the welfare of the nation, as well as protecting and watching over the rights of others.’ (T.18).	11
Being Aware of One’s Own Rights	T1, T6, T9, T14, T15, T20, T24	‘An efficient citizen is someone who is aware of his/her rights and acts accordingly.’ (T. 15). ‘An efficient citizen is a conscious citizen who is aware of his/her rights and lives accordingly.’ (T.6).	7
Being a Responsible Human	T2, T8, T12, T21, T22, T23	‘An efficient citizen is a person who is aware of his/her responsibilities and acts accordingly.’ (T.12).	6
Total (Valid)			24

As shown in Table 7, eleven ($f=11$) preschool teachers explained efficient citizenship as acting responsibly towards the state and society, while seven ($f=7$) of them expressed it as individuals who are aware of their rights. Furthermore, six of these teachers ($f=6$) defined being an active citizen as a person with a sense of responsibility.

Drawing attention to the importance of the preschool period in raising efficient citizens, preschool teachers expressed their opinions on which subjects can be included for an efficient citizenship education and how these subjects should be taught in this period. The relevant statements of preschool teachers are presented in Table 8.

Table 8. Preschool teachers' opinions on how preschool can be used efficiently in raising efficient citizens.

Code	Participants	Sample Expressions	f
Experiential Learning	T1,T6,T8,T9, T12,T14,T15,T16,T17, T18,T19	‘Children should be given in preschool the acquisitions to share classroom materials, to be respectful, and to protect the rights of friends.’ (T.18).	11
		‘Issues such as justice, equality, love for the nation and country, and children's rights should be taught to children in lessons.’ (T.15).	
		‘It is the main period for character formation in children aged 0-6. In this period, children should be taught concepts such as righteousness, right-injustice and freedom, so the first step is taken to become efficient citizens.’ (T.16).	
		‘Small activities can be held such as choosing a classroom president as part of being an efficient citizen.’ (T.9).	
		‘Since the preschool period is the most productive period for an individual in education and gaining behaviour, issues such as human rights, democracy and the history of the country should be concretized so that children can internalize these concepts in this period.’ (T.17).	

‘The sense of responsibility of children should be developed by giving them various responsibilities in order to raise efficient citizens in preschool.’ (T.19).

Total (Valid)

11

As seen in Table 8, preschool teachers have embedded basic moral values, children's rights, democratic values, and social rules into the content of the concept of efficient citizenship. In this sense, eleven ($f=11$) preschool teachers emphasized the importance of experiential learning with respect to teaching this content.

5. Discussion

This study aimed to examine whether it is possible to achieve citizenship education in preschool by taking into account the connotations that preschool teachers attributed to citizenship education, their perspective on different types of citizenship, what could be included in the content of citizenship education in preschool, and what way should be followed in teaching this content. The first result obtained in the study is that the source of information that preschool teachers tend to draw on for teaching citizenship is either a citizenship course or similar courses they have taken during their undergraduate studies, or their pre-undergraduate education processes. Considering as a whole the courses taken by preschool teachers in pre-undergraduate and undergraduate studies for teaching citizenship, it seems that the courses taken are qualified enough to serve the purpose of teaching citizenship in preschool. On the other hand, for those who never took a course about citizenship education, social media and research methods also play a guiding role in this process in addition to their previous experiences being a source of reference for them. The knowledge gained at the end of that process made some teachers feel competent for citizenship education, some incompetent, and some indecisive. Moreover, the problem of teachers' sense of incompetency in terms of citizenship education was observed in many studies in which social studies teachers, who are direct representatives of citizenship education, expressed their opinions in the same way as preschool teachers did (Ersoy, 2016). The evaluation of the possible reasons of such a situation by taking into account the relevant literature revealed the fact that subjects to be taught in social studies and history courses, which are supposed to serve as the source to citizenship education, are included in the preschool teaching curricula in many countries, whereas such courses are very few in the preschool teaching curricula in Turkey (Atkın & Dilek, 2014), or that preschool educators do not take a course for social studies teaching, one of the most important purposes of which is supposed to provide citizenship education (Daysal Ersoy, 2011). Emphasizing such a deficiency, Akhan and Şimşek Çetin (2015) stated that social studies education, which aims to raise efficient citizens, must be included in the undergraduate curricula of preschool teaching. Recognizing this necessity, many US universities have been conducting social studies education in such a way to include citizenship education in their undergraduate and graduate curricula for preschool teaching (early childhood education).

The second result obtained from the study revealed that the preschool teachers were caught in the dilemma of rights and freedoms, and duties and responsibilities inherent in citizenship education in their attempt to define citizenship education. In other words, the

participants seemed to have the dilemma of choosing between traditional citizenship, which prioritizes the sense of social belonging and solidarity and adopts a conformist understanding (Heater, 2004), and a modern understanding of citizenship, which is mentioned as a more active and participatory way of citizenship with an emphasis on the pluralist approach in social life (Şen, 2019). As presented by Westheimer and Kahne (2004), who focused on citizenship (education) from a broader perspective and opened a notable space to citizenship education, when this dilemma faced by preschool teachers is addressed in terms of the types of citizenship that are personally responsible, participatory and centred around social justice, it could be assumed that preschool teachers' understanding of citizenship appeared to gather around the concept of responsible citizens in general and sometimes demonstrated participatory citizenship characteristics. Likewise, when the meaning preschool teachers attributed to citizenship education is evaluated over the traditional, progressive and developed citizenship types set forth by Parker (1996), it is apparent that preschool teachers' understanding of citizenship indicated traditional citizenship values with a priority to getting the knowledge and learning the principles of democratic governments, in addition to progressive citizenship values that consist of the awareness of strong democratic governments, believing in the importance of participation. The dilemma experienced by preschool teachers and their understanding of citizenship is similar to the results of many studies (Kayaaalp, Karameşe & Karadeniz, 2018, Kuş & Aksu, 2017; Martin, 2008; Şimşek et al., 2017; Yiğit, 2017). Among these studies, Kayaalp, Karameşe and Karadeniz (2018) revealed that the prospective social studies teachers' understanding of citizenship is stuck between the one weighing attention to duties and responsibilities and the one emphasizing rights and freedoms, being similar to the results reported in this study. Likewise, in a study with preservice social studies teachers, Yiğit (2017) stated that the meaning ascribed to citizenship education by preservice teachers is shaped on the basis of duties and responsibilities rather than rights and freedoms. The result indicated a traditional citizenship-oriented view, as in this study. Considering the study of Şimşek et al. (2017) with preservice social studies and classroom teachers, it was observed that the preservice teachers perceived citizenship education in the view of traditional citizenship based on the sense of belonging, duties and responsibilities, as in this study. In parallel with the results of the present study, a study by Martin (2008), focusing on citizenship from the perspective of preservice teachers, reported that preservice teachers evaluated the concept of citizenship in the context of classical citizenship including social participation, unity and solidarity, rather than political participation. When the meanings ascribed to citizenship (education) are handled with a holistic approach, it is seen that both preschool teachers and people in different working groups do not have a clear view in terms of citizenship (education) and are ambivalent between traditional and modern citizenship types. Despite all these ambiguities in citizenship (education), preschool teachers' attempt to come up with a framework for the concept of citizenship (education) and their efforts to understand and make sense of citizenship (education) can be regarded as a positive development for citizenship education in preschool.

As the third finding, it appeared that preschool teachers consider citizenship education necessary in preschool. For instance, T.5 said, "*As the twig is bent, so is the tree*

inclined. Citizenship education should be given at an early age so that responsibilities will be fulfilled at later ages". In like manner, T.15 said, "*Citizenship education should start in preschool. It is necessary as it is a period in which children learn fast and permanent behaviours occur*", which is a statement justifying the necessity of citizenship education in preschool due to a different reason. Exemplifying this requirement through the USA, Atkin and Dilek (2014) pointed out that social studies education, which is regarded as an integral part of citizenship education in the USA, has an important place in the preschool curriculum, and that it is considered impossible to achieve success in preparing for national citizenship in the USA without such education. In addition, Atkin (2014) asserted that the first grade was a late stage in the acquisition of basic citizenship values by stating that the children's perception of citizenship is mostly acquired informally until they start primary school, and that social studies, in general, and citizenship education, in particular, should be given consciously in preschool without being left to chance. Moreover, Akhan and Şimşek Çetin (2015) claimed that the learning environment provided in preschool is a small-scale example of establishing a democratic society, and that the gains of an early age are the basis for future life and on this basis, social studies teaching in the preschool period for citizens who have absorbed the understanding of a democratic society is not an option but an obligation. The teachers who participated in the study of Öner (2018), who built a study on the opinions of preschool teachers on social studies teaching in preschool, and those involved in this study emphasized that such a course is necessary in preschool. This national requirement is reflected in the recommendations in international documents for the inclusion of citizenship education in the relevant curricula (Council of Europe, 2010). Discussing the situation in the context of world citizenship, Ceylan (2014) drew attention to the necessity of such an education in preschool. Yiğit and Sezer (2007), who questioned citizenship education especially in relation to the concept of learning active citizenship during the preschool period, stated that active citizenship characteristics, which they defined as the capability of contemplating as well as being sensible and competent, cannot be attained suddenly, and that acquiring knowledge, skills and attitudes for citizenship at an early age, especially in preschool, can be a good basis for future ages. Focusing on the idea that children are also citizens, Phillips, Ritchie, and Adair (2020) stated that citizenship education and being a citizen is a life-long process rather than being squeezed into a certain period, and shed light on that early childhood is part of this process. Evaluating citizenship education through classroom teachers, Akdeniz (2018) emphasized the necessity of citizenship lessons for raising democratic citizens, indicating that citizenship lessons should be provided from an early age in accordance with the students' levels, and hence, reporting results in common with those obtained from the teachers who participated in this study.

According to the fourth finding obtained from the study, the participants focused on a variety of topics to be taught in the scope of citizenship education in preschool (*rights, duties and responsibilities, social rules, good human characteristics, love of the country and nation, and republic*) in addition to the possible teaching methods (*storytelling and drama, educational games, and concretization*). It can be assumed that the cognitive and affective images that preschool teachers attribute to citizenship education are determinant in their choice of subject, and that children of this age being in the concrete

operational period seems to have influenced their preference for a method. In the applied study of Daysal Ersoy (2011), students were reported to have made significant improvements through stories and it was emphasized that stories and tales are important as children of this period receive information by listening and watching. Also, Atkın and Dilek (2014), who examined preschool periods in the USA, stated that using stories and games would be a functional tool in gaining citizenship values in preschool. Dealing with concretization in the preschool period over the theme of special days and weeks, Öner (2018) drew attention to the importance of such special weeks in preschool students' gaining permanent learning, and the same causality was also included in the findings of this study. In a similar sense, Seefeldt (2015), evaluating the process over national holidays, shed light on the importance of national holidays in the learning processes of preschool children. Epstein (2014), who built the content of citizenship education to be provided through social studies education in preschool on social roles and rules and the values of democratic life, stated that the content produced can be gained directly through in-class or out-of-school practices. Serriere (2019) emphasized that citizenship taught in early childhood should be a structure focusing on living together, problem solving, and decision-making rather than knowledge based on memorization, (2019), and that the content in such a structure should be specifically taught via service learning and class meetings. Similarly, Melendez (2015) suggested a social studies curriculum that develops individual and group identities in preschool children and fosters a sense of solidarity and harmony, and asserted that only such a curriculum would transform children into adults who could respond to changing social realities. The author also stated that children's books used in preschool period can be an important material to achieve the acquisition, and that children's books open an important gate for children in recognizing real life problems, learning different cultures and gaining important values. Furthermore, Lake and Adinolfi (2017) clarified the importance of service learning in the development of responsible citizenship characteristics in the preschool period, and revealed that this method allows children to experience real life problems and provides multi-faceted contributions for children and society. Focusing on citizenship education through the eyes of social studies and classroom teachers, Şimşek et al. (2017) included the drama, concretization, and relevant videos that are also included in this study in conducting citizenship education. As a whole, it has become evident that the results of the studies in the literature conducted on citizenship education in preschool and those of the present study overlap in many aspects.

The fifth and sixth findings indicated that the preschool teachers ascribed similar meanings to the concepts of a good citizen and an effective citizen. Similar attributions to the same concepts have also been included in different studies conducted with social studies teachers (Kuş & Aksu, 2017; Memişoğlu, 2014). Additionally, Dere, Kızılay and Alkaya (2017), who evaluated good citizenship education from the perspective of families, found that the concept of good citizenship is often evaluated in relation to duties and responsibilities, as in this study. Often, there is an emphasis on good citizenship

education (Faiz & Dönmez, 2017) in order to create an efficient society, and from time to time, it is a matter of defining active citizenship by being aware of one's rights and responsibilities towards the society and the state (Karabulut & Çelik, 2017). This similarity is also reflected in preschool teachers' preferred teaching methods that can be followed in raising good and efficient citizens. The participants stated that it is important to provide children with experiential learning environments by doing and living and to be a role model for them in raising good and efficient citizens, by taking into account the cognitive and affective characteristics of preschool children. Similar to this study, Öner (2018), who examined the opinions of preschool teachers, categorized the concept of efficient citizenship as rights and responsibilities, being sensitive to one's country and environment, and being respectful to others, eventually reaching a result similar to that of this study. However, while many different teaching methods are mentioned in this study for the purpose of raising good and efficient citizens, Öner (2018) clearly emphasized the importance of being a role model and teaching necessary values. Considering the same process as an opportunity to raise active citizens in preschool, Yiğit and Sezer (2007) stressed the importance of citizens' having the opportunity to participate in identifying the country's problems and tackling these problems in raising active citizens, and expressed the value of active participation in the process, as noted in this study. Can-Yaşar et al. (2012), dealing with geography education, which is one of the main areas of social studies course in preschool, emphasized the importance of offering children the opportunity to learn by doing and living in preschool. Moreover, addressing the concept of world citizenship to be taught in preschool through the views of preschool teachers, Ceylan (2014) emphasized that the education in this period should allow students to learn by doing (active learning). This situation combined the two studies in a common teaching method for citizenship education in preschool. Focusing on the question of how to develop preschool children's understanding of citizenship, Ardalan (2017) emphasized that children in this period have the capacity to understand their responsibilities to interact with the society, and drew attention to the fact that children should be taught that they are part of social life and should be made familiar with learning environments which will enable active participation. According to Harris (2015), who dealt with active citizenship in line with qualified participation in society, children wonder about their surroundings from very early periods, ask questions, research, and then become active citizens by expanding their knowledge about the growing society. Pointing out to this developmental process, Harris (2015) emphasized the importance of cooperation and participation in the learning process to develop citizenship competencies of young children, and asserted that preschool teachers should do their best to apply this method. Further, in search of a curriculum for the preschool period to raise citizens who reflect on national and global problems, solve them, and have good citizen characteristics, Walczak (2018) added real-life problems to the preschool learning environments through IDM (Inquiry Design Model), and underlined that children would be able to gain good citizenship skills by understanding themselves and the environment through inquiry, and supported the processes of learning by doing and living, as emphasized in this study. In a similar sense, Harvard Project Zero (2015) considered children as active citizens and regarded them as the citizens of the present, not the future, explaining citizenship for now, here and today rather than being an acquired condition in the future, and treated children as stakeholders of participation. It seems obvious that preschool children can

put forward ideas for a more just, safe and liveable society in the environments where they learn by doing and living. In search of a method for achieving to instil in children active citizenship in preschool, Maple (2005) emphasized that rather than a knowledge-based approach, what needs to be done should be an application where children can express themselves, respect their friends with different abilities and characteristics, and prioritize collaborative group work. For such purposes, the author drew attention to the project approach as a unique way as it directly involves children in the learning process. Considering this project approach from a different perspective, Marsh, et al. (2020) pointed out that community service projects that enable children to be in social participation are important in the development of active citizenship characteristics by including children in democratic processes. Print and Smith (2000), who also conducted research on citizenship education for a democratic society, pointed out that students who learn citizenship in schools as active participants are more likely to become active citizens for a democratic society. Addressing citizenship education with a general perspective, Ersoy (2016) pointed out the necessity of providing citizenship education in a more qualified learning environment and the opportunity to apply student-centred teaching techniques, and that the methods to be applied in teaching the content are as important as the content itself for citizenship education.

6. Conclusion and Suggestions

The economic development, socio-cultural progress and social transformation of a country can be achieved to the extent of that country's investment in education. The preschool period, in particular, is a teaching process that countries with the future envision should invest the most and never give up doing so. On the basis of the efficient role of preschool, the present study analysed the applicability of citizenship education, which is the ground for social transformation, in preschools in Turkey from the perspective of preschool teachers. The results of the research showed that the preschool teachers in the study were all interested in citizenship education and all of them regarded the preschool period as a very important opportunity for citizenship education. Furthermore, they dealt with the concept of citizenship in the equation of duties and responsibilities and rights and freedom, and explained the concepts of active and good citizenship within the same context. The content of citizenship education in preschool was shaped by the meanings that teachers attributed to the concept of citizenship. Although the preschool teachers emphasized different teaching practices such as movies, animations, children's books and drama for citizenship education in preschool, it is also remarkable that they emphasized the importance of practice for citizenship education and of experiential learning.

Based on the opinions of the preschool teachers about the applicability of citizenship education in preschool, the following suggestions could be made:

- ❖ This study was conducted with 24 preschool teachers. Similar studies can be conducted with different sample groups.
- ❖ This study focused on *citizenship education* in preschool. Similar studies could be conducted on different subjects related to social studies.

- ❖ This study revealed that citizenship education can be involved in preschool curricula. Applied studies could be conducted on the applicability of citizenship education in preschool.
- ❖ This study identified a very intense emphasis by the teachers on service learning and project-based learning for citizenship education. Further studies could be conducted regarding such approaches.
- ❖ This study observed that the programs for teaching social studies in preschool were quite comprehensive and developed in other countries. Further studies could be conducted on alternative models to prepare similar curricula in Turkey.

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