

WCES-2010

# The utilization of comics in the teaching of the “human rights” concept

Gül Tuncel<sup>a\*</sup>, Özge Ayva<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Atatürk Eğitim Fakültesi, Marmara Üniversitesi, Turkey

<sup>b</sup> İstanbul Erkek Liseliler Vakfı, Social Studies Teacher, Turkey

Received November 15, 2009; revised December 3, 2009; accepted January 25, 2010

---

## Abstract

The comics catch attention of the children with the humorous side. On the other hand, according to the learning theories, creative activities make the learning more effective. Again, the creation requires one's making synthesis. The creativity in learning depends on working with various instruments and thinking according to the problem solving methods. That is why, it is useful to benefit from comics to make it gained especially the abstract concepts as “human rights” concept in Social Studies lesson. In this context, the problem of the research is to determine the effect of the comics in teaching the “human rights” concept.

© 2010 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

*Keywords:* Social studies teaching; comics; human rights.

---

## 1. Introduction

THA United Nations, with a decision made in 1993, overemphasize on the acceleration of the work in the education of human rights in all countries and suggest that the people who are supposed to be educated are the teachers and the students primarily (Kepenekçi, 1999: 213).

The target, which the modern communities aim to reach in relationships among people, is to educate people to be respectful for the basic human rights as members of the community. One of the prerequisites for reaching this aim is for the learners to have a positive attitude for this education. Because being aware of the human rights, adopting and defending these rights are closely related to the attitudes that are thought to be main components of personality (Kuzgun, 1981: 102).

It is thought that using the alternative methods of teaching will be useful to develop these attitudes. According to Kepenekçi (1998: 181) it is necessary to educate people by not just being limited to the schoolbooks, but preparing extracurricular activities with students aimed at human rights, which will provide the students' participation. In this context, the action is shaped by the idea that using comics as visual aid will provide a stimulation for the students and make them focus on the topic in reaching the planned targets.

The comics have an influential visual aspect and they are impressive and easily-remembered as well. Together with its charm, sweetness and psychological effect such as relaxing in laughing, the comics is an art which is based

---

\* Gül Tuncel.

E-mail address: [glgtuncel@yahoo.com](mailto:glgtuncel@yahoo.com)

on criticism. Criticism is forming a discussion platform which provides thinking, questioning, identifying the negations, finding alternative point of views to the problems. So, the students get the opportunity to discuss their views in social platforms, and make an evaluation by questioning their knowledge according to the views and discussed knowledge (İnel, Balım ve Evrekli, 2009: 3; Uğurel ve Moralı, 2006 ; Kete, Avcu ve Aydın, 2009: 532). In addition, having the students do a search about comics, and comment on the comics in a criticizing view helps them keep abreast of current events and be interested in the external world (Gökkaya, 2006: 61).

In the light of such information, the aim of the search is to determine the effect of comics in identifying the abstract concepts such as “human rights” in Social Studies.

## 2. Method

### 2.1. The method of search

The method of search is designed as a case study. This case study is a searching method in which the searched current fact is analysed in its living space, in which the boundaries between the fact and the environment are not strongly marked and in which the proof or the data source is used as much as possible (Yıldırım ve Şimşek, 2005: 277).

### 2.2. Sampling and generalization

The search area consists of 7<sup>th</sup> grade students in Besiktas, İstanbul in 2008-2009. Sampling is formed by the 7A classroom students at İstek Private Atanur Oguz Primary School. Both school and the class were randomly selected. But, since the application was done in one class only it is not possible to generalize the results of this search to the area. However, it can still be considered an exemplary sample.

Thirty 7<sup>th</sup> grade students took part in the search. In this search, the students were asked to do a search on the comics about the notion of “ human rights” and then it was expected from them to draw a comics of this notion in their own originality. In addition, it was said to those, who did not have any talent for drawing, to collect the comics drawn before about this notion and comment on them. The data of the search was collected by the studies of the students. This data was analyzed by means of content analysis. Moreover, semi-structured interview was made to decide whether studying with comics made any changes in the approach of students for lesson or not. The data collected by the interview had been subject to descriptive analysis.

## 3. Findings and Comments

The findings gained by the search were classified as the findings gained by analyzing the comics drawn by the students and the findings gained by the interview.

### 3.1. The findings gained by analyzing the comics

The findings gained by the comics drawn by the students were analyzed by organising in definite categories, and applying content analysis. It is presented below.

Table 1. The findings gained by analyzing the comics

Categories	F		%	
	Positive	Negative	Positive	Negative
Correctness of information	25	5	83,3	16,7
Coherence to the aim	25	5	83,3	16,7
Creativity	17	13	56,6	43,4
Comment	30	-	100	100
Reflected rights	Women Rights	14		12,28
	Children Rights	19		16,66
	Human Rights	25		21,92
	Equality	19		16,66
	Justice	22		19,29
	Right to Education	15		13,15

In table 1, it is seen that 83.3% of the students' reflected information is correct and relevant to the aim of the lesson. This shows that the comics are influential tools in learning the notion of human rights. As Erdem ( 2005 ) has mentioned by using the humour and comics in lessons, not only livens up the lessons but also encourage the students in the training process to create the information and the comment by themselves.

In the sense of creativity it is seen that 56.6 % of the students have produced new point of views with their own drawings, it has been stated that 43.4% of them have commented on the collected drawings in a critical point of view. So, it has been realized that the untalented students for drawing have reached some comics by doing searches, they have made correct comments on this notion by thinking about the comics and they have learned an abstract concept such as human rights by concretizing it through comics.

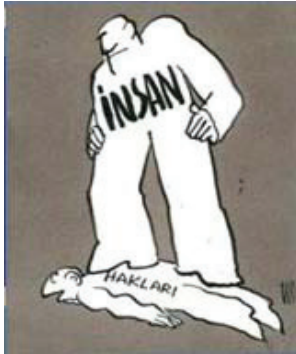


Figure 1. Sample comics and the comment on it

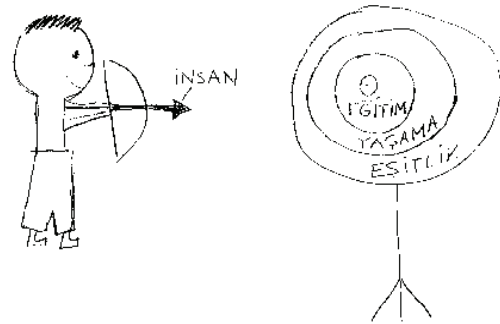


Figure 2. Sample comics of themselves and the comment on it

In the figure 1, one of the comics which the students have done searches and commented on is seen. The comment of the student : “ In this comics we see that the human's himself is crushing his own rights which were given to him. In other words, the person who deranges the rights is again the person's himself. Here it is said that the worst enemy of a person is again himself. The notion of right was created by people but overridden by people as well. So, when it comes to a person's right we should always keep in mind that we are also a humanbeing. If we keep this fact in mind we're automatically respecting others' rights as much as we're respecting our own. Thus, human rights continue its existence not as a thing to be defended but as a thing to be lived.”

A sample of comics which was drawn by a student is seen in figure 2. The student has written his comment under the comics : “ We have learned all our rights as a humanbeing. But we are supposed to have a problem with these rights in order to discuss, defend and claim them. On which right the arrow, which has already left the bow, thrusts on the dartboard, in other words whichever right we are having problem with then we comprehend it. Therefore, whether we are having a problem or not, we are supposed to be conscious of it and we are supposed to raise the awareness of the people around us.”

There are mostly human rights and the notion of justice out of 114 comics collected and created by the students. Women rights and right to education is slightly mentioned in the comics drawn or collected by the students. This search's being carried out in a metropolis city like Istanbul and at a school in which socio-economic status of the families' are at high level can be shown as a reason for this fact. Nonetheless, it is seen that the students have got the knowledge of notion about the human rights.

### 3.2. *The findings gained by the interview*

Semi-structured interview has been made to decide whether studying with comics has made any changes in the approach of students for lesson or not. The findings gained by the interview were themed according to the questions and subjected to descriptive analysis. It is summarized at the table.

Table 2. The Findings Gained By The Interview

Themes	Students' statements
The effect of comics in learning	..I think i have learned better..it creates an eagerness to learn..it motivates..we have learned the real meaning of the notions which we only memorized before.
The effect of comics in creativity	..I have discovered one of my sides which i did not even know existed before..all of my friends have drawn different things from each other, i was surprised by being able to explain lots of different things..we have both developed our own creativity and produced a creative lesson..
The effect of comics in critical way of thinking	..i realized that comics are not just for laughing, but for looking at the ongoing in a questioning way..it is easier to criticize the positive and negative sides of life by using comics..
The approach to the lesson	..it was really funny to deal with the comics, i would not have comprehended the lesson in that way if the teacher had just taught the lesson. i have always thought that the notion of human rights is a boring subject but my idea changed after i did a search about comics..i wish every lesson was taught in this way..

As summarized in table 2, the students' response to the question of how comics affected your way of learning is that they were both delighted and learned the lesson. The students have mentioned that they have been easily motivated, studied eagerly, and learned better through comics.

The students' response to the question of how studying with comics affected your creativity is that they have discovered their talent of drawing thanks to this lesson, and that explaining so much through comics has surprised them. The students have mentioned that they have not only developed their own creativity but also studied in an extraordinary way by making a creative lesson. The students have claimed that they studied some subjects about human rights beforehand, but these teachings just made them memorize some notions, and through comics they have realized how many idea they can have about a subject.

The students' response to the question of how studying with comics affected your critical way of thinking is that they have realized the comics are not drawn just for laughing, they are a way of questioning the ongoing all around the world, they criticize the positive and negative, but mostly the negative, sides of life and make the people pay attention on these sides.

The students' response to the question of whether studying with comics has made any changes in your approach to the lesson is that each lesson is supposed to be taught in such a funny way, through this way the subject is learned easier, even the boring subjects have become interesting.

Briefly, the students have discovered their different sides, developed their critical way of thinking by commenting on comics, and the most important thing they have emphasized is that they have learned the subject of human rights better through comics. A quiz about the human rights, which was made by the teacher, has shown that the students have learned the fundamental conception of the subject.

#### 4. Discussion

When the other studyings about this subject are viewed, it is seen that these studies were made using quantitative methods. Anyway, it is thought that it would be better to view the other searches as well in order to compare it with this search's results.

In his study of "Using Comics in Teaching of Social Sciences at Primary School" Durualp (2006) has come to the conclusion that the success in learning has increased by using comics while studying the unit of "Democratic Life". In his study of "The Effect of Using The Material of Comics on Success of Students in Teaching History" Kılınc (2006) taught the unit of "World War I" in the method of traditional teaching method for the control group, and by using the comics for experimental group, he has come to the conclusion that the teaching based on comics is more successful than traditional teaching method. In his study to determine the effect of comics on the teaching of written expression in Turkish Language and Literature, Üstün (2007) has stated that teaching by using comics has increased the success in learning. In another search made by Durmaz (2007), it was aimed to analyse the effect of notion of comics on students' success on the unit of "Mitosis-Meiosis Cell Division" in constructivist science

teaching. In conclusion, it was found out that teaching methods using the notion of comics is more effective than traditional teaching method.

The result of this search is in parallel with the results of the searches mentioned above. As Keogh and Naylor (1999) have mentioned the comics increase the students' concentration on the lesson who have learning disabilities, increase the participation in discussions during the lesson, and put the students in action to research the correctness of the way of thinking presented in comics.

Besides, in his study of "A Search on the Usability of Comics Technics in the Training of Science and Environment" Özalp (2006) has come to the conclusion that using comics in the training method has both increased the student's success and improved the student's approach to the lesson in a positive way. The same result has been gained in this search as well, and in the interview made with the students it is seen that students' attitude is positive for the lesson.

## 5. Conclusion and Suggestions

In conclusion, at this search it has been determined that using comics in the teaching of human rights in the curriculum of Social Sciences has increased the success in learning. It has important contributions for the improvement of the demanded talent of creativity and critical way of thinking as well. It has been also stated that studying with comics has created a positive change in the approach of students to the lesson.

Taking the results into consideration following suggestions can be made above:

- It is thought that the constructive training approach of comics, which are funny and questioning at the same time, educational as well, being used as a basic will affect students academic achievement in a positive way.
- Students' evaluating the acquired information in a critical point of view will make the results be more easily-remembered. That's why the activities, which provide critical way of thinking, should be placed more than usual during the lessons.
- The teacher candidates need to be informed about the teaching based on comics. Also, during in-service training seminar, the teachers' deficiency in how various alternative teaching methods can be used should be determined and solved.

## Bibliography

- Durmaz, B. 2007. Yapılandırıcı Fen Öğretiminde Kavram Karikatürlerinin Öğrencilerin Başarısı Ve Duyuşsal Özelliklerine Etkisi (Muğla İli Merkez İlçe Örneği). Muğla Üniversitesi Fen Bilimleri Enstitüsü İlköğretim Eğitimi Anabilim Dalı (Fen Bilgisi Öğretmenliği). Muğla.
- Duruoalp, E. 2006. İlköğretimde Sosyal Bilgiler Öğretiminde Karikatür Kullanımı. Gazi Üniversitesi Eğitim Bilimleri Enstitüsü Sosyal Bilgiler Öğretmenliği Bilim Dalı Yüksek Lisans Tezi. Ankara.
- Erdem, Murat. 2005. Dokuz Eylül Üniversitesi Buca Eğitim Fakültesi Dergisi. 18:131-140 (2005).
- İnel, Balım ve Evrekli, 2009. Fen Öğretiminde Kavram Karikatürü Kullanımına İlişkin Öğrenci Görüşleri. Necatibey Eğitim Fakültesi Elektronik Fen Ve Matematik Eğitimi Dergisi. C: 3. S: 1. Haziran 2009.
- Kepenekçi, Y. 1999. İlköğretimde İnsan Hakları. Ankara Üniversitesi Eğitim Fakültesi Dergisi. c: 32. s: 1.
- Kete, Avcu ve Aydın, 2009. Öğretmen Adaylarının Çalışma Yapraklarında Karikatür Kullanımına Ait Tutumları. Kastamonu Eğitim Dergisi. c:17. n: 2.
- Kılınc, K. 2006. Tarih Öğretiminde Karikatür Materyali Kullanımının Öğrenci Başarısına Etkisi. Gazi Üniversitesi Eğitim Bilimleri Enstitüsü Ortaöğretim Sosyal Alanlar Eğitimi Anabilim Dalı Tarih Öğretmenliği Bilim Dalı. Ankara.
- Keogh, B.& Naylor, S. 1999. Concept Cartoons, teaching and learning in science: an evaluation, *International Journal of Science Education*, 21, 4, 431–446.
- Kuzgun, Y. 1981. İnsan Hakları ve Eğitim. Ankara Üniversitesi Eğitim Fakültesi Dergisi. c: 14. s: 1.
- Özalp, I. 2006. Karikatür Tekniğinin Fen Ve Çevre Eğitiminde Kullanılabilirliği Üzerine Bir Araştırma. Celal Bayar Üniversitesi Fen Bilimleri Enstitüsü Yüksek Lisans Tezi. Manisa.
- Uğurel ve Morali. 2006. Karikatürler ve Matematik Öğretiminde Kullanımı. *Milli Eğitim Dergisi*. 170.
- Üstün, Ö. 2007. Orta öğretim III.Sınıfta Türk Dili ve Edebiyatı Dersinde Karikatür Kullanımının Yazılı Anlatım Öğretimine Etkisi. Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü. Türk Dili ve Edebiyatı Anabilim Dalı. Yüksek Lisans Tezi. Çanakkale.
- Yıldırım, A. ve Şimşek, H. 2004. Sosyal Bilimlerde Nitel Araştırma Yöntemleri. Ankara: Seçkin.