



Turkish Trainee Teachers' Perceptions of Their Community in Terms of Sustainability

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1. Introduction

The most internationally recognised definition of sustainable development is 'meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs' [1]. This definition of sustainable development calls for interdisciplinary approach as it involves in the complex relationships between human and the nature. However, this should not only be considered as an environmental issue because we can already see the dramatic social and economic consequences of unsustainable development. In this respect, sustainable development 'is generally thought to have three components: environment, society, and economy...(and) the well-being of these three areas is intertwined, not separate [2]. Based on this, sustainable development process needs sustainable communities which not only combat environmental degradation but also combat poverty and promote social and economic development.

Sustainable communities are places where people want to live and work, now and in the future. They meet the diverse needs of existing and future residents, are sensitive to their environment, and contribute to a high quality of life. They are safe and inclusive, well planned, built and run, and offer equality of opportunity and good services for all [3].

Sustainable communities embody the principles of sustainable development. They do this by:

- balancing and integrating the social, economic and environmental components of their community
- meeting the needs of existing and future generations
- respecting the needs of other communities in the wider region or internationally to make their own communities sustainable [3].

Communities and Local Government (2011) emphasized the eight components of a 'sustainable community'. These are:

- **Active, inclusive and safe** - fair, tolerant and cohesive with a strong local culture and other shared community activities
- **Well run** - with effective and inclusive participation, representation and leadership
- **Environmentally sensitive** - providing places for people to live that are considerate of the environment
- **Well designed and built** - featuring quality built and natural environment
- **Well connected** - with good transport services and communication linking people to jobs, schools, health and other services
- **Thriving** - with a flourishing and diverse local economy
- **Well served** - with public, community and voluntary services that are appropriate to people's needs and accessible to all
- **Fair for everyone** - including those in other communities, now and in the future [3].

Based on these, the present study aims to determine trainee teachers' perceptions of their own community in terms of sustainability. Naturally, perceptions of community in terms of sustainability related to where to live. In this study, research group live in Bursa in Turkey.

2. Methods

The answers for present study question are sought through a questionnaire conducted with Turkish trainee teachers in December 2011. The sample of the research is composed of 224 trainee teachers at Uludag University, Faculty of Education in Turkey. Within the targeted group 75,9 % (f=170) of respondents were female and 24,1 % (f=54) were male. When designing the questionnaire, Communities and Local Government's eight components of a 'sustainable community' and items of each components had been used. The purpose of the questionnaire was to raise an understanding about trainee teachers' perceptions of their community in terms of sustainability. Trainee teachers asked to choose "agree, partially agree, disagree or no idea" with each of 40 statements in questionnaire. The questionnaire was composed of eight sections, each section assessing a particular aspect of the research as will be stated below. In order to evaluate the data SPSS programme was used.

3. Results

Independent samples T test scores indicate that there was not a significant difference between males and females (P) 0.05) related to trainees' perceptions of their community in terms of sustainability.

Category 1: Active, inclusive and safe

In this part trainee teachers asked to choose "agree, partially agree, disagree or no idea" with each statements related to active, inclusive and safe category. It is seen related to active, inclusive and safe category that almost all of the trainees (97 %) believe that their community offer a sense of community identity and belonging. Big



major of them (90 %) believe that their community offer friendly, co-operative and helpful behaviour in neighborhoods. Nevertheless, half of the trainees disagree with the statements that their community offer “social inclusion and good life chances for all” and “low levels of crime, drugs and antisocial behaviour with visible, effective and community-friendly policing”

Category 2: Well run

In this part trainee teachers asked to choose “agree, partially agree, disagree or no idea” with each statements related to well run category. It is seen related to well run category that most of the trainees (86 %) believe that their community enjoy “sense of civic values, responsibility and pride” Each of other three statements related to this category supported by around 60 % of trainees.

Category 3: Environmentally sensitive

In this part trainee teachers asked to choose “agree, partially agree, disagree or no idea” with each statements related to environmentally sensitive category. It is seen related to environmentally sensitive category that most of the trainees (71 %) believe that their community “create cleaner, safer and greener neighborhoods”. Other statements in this category supported by around 50 % of trainees but most of the responses in “partly agree” category. Nevertheless, around half of them do not believe that their community “protect the environment, by minimising pollution on land, in water and in the air”, “enable a lifestyle that minimises negative environmental impact and enhances positive impacts” and “minimise waste and dispose of it in accordance with current good practice”.

Category 4: Well designed and built

In this part trainee teachers asked to choose “agree, partially agree, disagree or no idea” with each statements related to well designed and built category. It is seen related to well designed and built category that big majority of trainees (around 80 %) believe that their community offer “user-friendly public and green spaces with facilities for everyone including children and older people” and “sense of place - a place with a positive 'feeling' for people and local distinctiveness”. Nevertheless, around 60 % of them disagree with the statement that their community offer “appropriate size, scale, density, design and layout, including mixed-use development that complement the distinctive local character of the community”. In addition to this, nearly half of them do not believe that their community offer “accessibility of jobs, key services and facilities by public transport, walking and cycling” and “buildings and public spaces which promote health and are designed to reduce crime and make people feel safe”.

Category 5: Well connected

In this part trainee teachers asked to choose “agree, partially agree, disagree or no idea” with each statements related to well connected category. It is seen related to well connected category that most of the trainees (nearly 80 %) believe that their community offer “widely available and effective telecommunications and Internet access” and “good access to regional, national and international communications networks”. Nevertheless, half of the trainees believe that their community do not offer “transport facilities, including public transport, that help people travel within and between communities and reduce dependence on cars”. In addition, trainees believe that their community do not offer “facilities to encourage safe local walking and cycling” and “an appropriate level of local parking facilities in line with local plans to manage road traffic demand”, 49 % and 42 % respectively.

Category 6: Thriving

In this part trainee teachers asked to choose “agree, partially agree, disagree or no idea” with each statements related to thriving category. It is seen related to thriving category that the majority of trainees (87 %) believe that their community feature “economically viable and attractive town centres”. Also, most of the trainees (77 %) believe that their community feature “a wide range of jobs and training opportunities”. Other statements in this category supported by 60 % of trainees.

Category 7: Well served

In this part trainee teachers asked to choose “agree, partially agree, disagree or no idea” with each statements related to well served category. It is seen related to well served category that most of the trainees (74 %) believe that their community have “well-performing local schools, further and higher education institutions, and other opportunities for lifelong learning”. Other statements in this category supported by around 60 % of trainees. Nevertheless, around 30 % of the trainees believe that their community have not “high quality services for families and children” and “high quality local health care and social services, integrated where possible with other services”.

Category 8: Fair for everyone

In this part trainee teachers asked to choose “agree, partially agree, disagree or no idea” with each statements related to fair for everyone category. It is seen related to fair for everyone category that most of the trainees (67 %) believe that their community “respect the rights and aspirations of others (both neighboring communities, and across the wider world) also to be sustainable” and “recognise individuals' rights and responsibilities”. Nevertheless, 30 % of trainees disagree with these both statements. In addition, 40 % of trainees believe that their community have not due regard for the needs of future generations in current decisions and actions.

4. Conclusion

The general results related to trainee teachers' perceptions of their own community in terms of sustainability indicated below: Related to “active, inclusive and safe” category that almost all of the trainees believe that their community offer a sense of community identity and belonging. Big major of them believe that their community



offer friendly, co-operative and helpful behaviour in neighborhoods. Nevertheless, half of the trainees disagree with the statements that their community offer “social inclusion and good life chances for all” and “low levels of crime, drugs and antisocial behaviour with visible, effective and community-friendly policing”. Related to “fair for everyone” category results show that 30 % of trainees believe that their community do not “respect the rights and aspirations of others also to be sustainable” and do not “recognise individuals' rights and responsibilities. In addition, 40 % of trainees believe that their community have not due regard for the needs of future generations in current decisions and actions. A key value central to sustainable development is that of ‘Universal Responsibility’, or the sense of responsibility for the role you play and the impact you can have not just on a local scale, but a global one too. This links closely with another key theme in sustainable development, ‘Interconnectedness’ [1]. Society can only work to the benefit of everybody if all its members act with consideration towards others [4]. For this reason, it is foreseen that drawing more attention to these points may bring beneficial results.

Institutions of teacher education fulfill vital roles in the global education community; they have the potential to bring changes within educational systems that will shape the knowledge and skills of future generations. Often, education is described as the great hope for creating a more sustainable future; teacher-education institutions serve as key change agents in transforming education and society, so such a future is possible [5].

References

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