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Creating cosmopolitan citizenship communities through Model United Nations simulations

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Abstract

Cosmopolitan citizenship education intends to educate students about their rights and responsibilities at local, national and global levels, encouraging responses to a wide variety of issues that other citizens, societies and cultures across the world encounter. The Model United Nations (MUN) simulations provide a platform for high school and university students to be better global citizens through discussion of world issues, and the resolution of conflicts at an international level. The purpose of this paper is to report on the initial outcomes of a multiple-phase study. The first phase intends to explore the challenges and benefits of MUN simulations, and to discuss how the concept and practice of MUN in high school and higher education contexts in Turkey may cultivate cosmopolitan citizenship and cosmopolitan communities. This paper includes only the results of the first phase of the study, which uses narrative inquiry to capture and collect perspectives and stories about MUN experiences from an information rich key informant.

Keywords: cosmopolitanism, cosmopolitan citizenship, international education, model United Nations

Cosmopolitanism

There are various definitions of cosmopolitanism, from political to legal, economic to cultural and moral to universal. Some are considered to be extreme, and some are moderate. The Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy states that 'the nebulous core shared by all cosmopolitan views is the idea that all human beings, regardless of their political affiliation, do (or at least can) belong to a single community [having different ways], and that this community should be cultivated' (Kleingeld and Brown, 2006).

For Pogge (2008, p. 523), all cosmopolitan positions share three elements:

- individualism (ultimate unit of concern: human beings)
- universality (ultimate unit of concerns: attachment to every human being equally)
- generality (persons are ultimate unit of concern for everyone)

Pogge (2008) separates these approaches first through the distinction between legal and moral cosmopolitanism, and then the distinction between institutional and interactional conceptions within the framework of moral cosmopolitanism. As regards the first distinction, while legal cosmopolitanism is concerned with commitment to 'a concrete political ideal of a global order under which all persons have equivalent legal rights and

duties', moral cosmopolitanism considers 'all persons …are required to respect one another's status as ultimate units of concern'.

As for the second distinction, institutional conception is concerned with 'standards for assessing the ground rules and practices that regulate human interactions', assigning '…direct responsibility to other (individual and collective) agents', whereas interactional conception is concerned with 'fundamental principles of ethics', '…assigning such responsibility [indirectly] to institutional schemes' (pp. 513-514).

Concerned with 'universality', Appiah states in his interview that 'every human being is responsible for the whole human community' but at same time must be willing 'to accept there are many legitimate ways of living' (Yates, 2009, pp. 1-2), emphasizing that people are different and everybody can learn from differences. Appiah (2007, p.222) also asserts that 'the discourse of cosmopolitanism will add to our understanding only when it informed by these ideals':

> If we care about others who are not part of our political order-others who may have commitments and beliefs that are unlike our own-we must have a way to talk to them. A form of cosmopolitanism worth pursuing need not reflexively celebrate human difference; but it cannot be indifferent to the challenge of engaging with it… A tenable cosmopolitanism, in the first instance, must take seriously the value of human live, and the value of particular human lives, the lives people have made for themselves, within the communities that help lend significance to those lives.

International education

The world is becoming more and more interconnected and interdependent, and educational institutions are expected to address more complex needs (Wylie, 2008). There are international measures used as benchmarks to compare countries in educational terms. The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMMS), and the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) are among these benchmarking tools.

Marshall (as cited in Bates 2011, p.184) argues that 'schools have to develop pedagogical and curricular responses to … global citizenships, global agendas, and identify ways in which individuals can choose to respond or relate to the global'. Wagner (as cited in Weenink, 2007, p. 493) points out that there are more than 5000 international schools offering international education, and they provide international education, contributing to the transmission and formation of a transnational culture.

International curricula in Turkey

Although Turkey has a highly centralized educational system, the Ministry of National Education has been allowing schools, predominantly private, to follow both national and international curriculum in tandem.

More and more private schools in Turkey incorporate international programmes into their curriculum every year, and there are mainly three programmes that schools favour:

- the International Baccalaureate Programmes (implemented by 33 schools),
- the International General Certificate of Secondary Education (by four schools)
- the Advancement Placement (AP) courses followed (by three schools)

International Baccalaureate (IB)

The International Baccalaureate offers three international programmes to a worldwide community of schools from early childhood to pre-university age (IBO, 2012):

- the Primary Years Programme (PYP): ages three to twelve (nine schools in Turkey)
- the Middle Years Programme (MYP): ages eleven to 16 (six schools in Turkey)
- the Diploma Program (DP): ages 16 to 18 (26 schools in Turkey).

There are about 3,379 schools in 141 countries offering IB programmes to approximately 1 million students.

> The International Baccalaureate aims to develop inquiring, knowledgeable and caring young people who help to create a better and more peaceful world through intercultural understanding and respect…

> These programmes encourage students across the world to become active, compassionate and lifelong learners who understand that other people, with their differences, can also be right. (IBO, 2012)

International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE)

IGCSE is designed for 14-16 year olds, and it is recognised and valued worldwide. It prepares students for further study. It is taken in more than a hundred countries, and in Turkey, it's mainly used as a preparation for IB Diploma programme. There are eight subject areas (English, Humanities, Languages, Mathematics, Science, Social Science, Technology, and the Arts), and in each subject area, a number of syllabi are offered.

Advanced Placement (AP)

The College Board is 'a global not-for-profit membership organization committed to excellence and equity in education', and is in charge of offering AP courses (College Board, 2012).

AP places emphasis on one's ability to master university-level course content, while developing 'a global perspective, as well as such skills as critical thinking and problem solving' (College Board, 2012). A total of thirty-four AP courses are available, and one of the AP schools in Turkey is already offering nineteen courses to choose from. The schools following national and international programmes prepare youth as citizens of their nations, and as global citizens.

Laboratory schools in Turkey

A private non-profit university in Turkey initiated a project five years ago with a view to establishing four K-12 schools, called laboratory schools, in four cities in the eastern region of Turkey, following a combined international and national curriculum. The first high school was opened in 2007 in Erzurum. The project is unique in that it is implemented within the framework of a centralised education system, and it offers bilingual national and international curricula: IGCSE and IB (O'Dwyer, Aksit and Sands, 2010).

> One of the main aims of the new school in Erzurum is to establish access in the area to high quality education which emphasises the development of higher order skills, with a view to preparing students for higher education, as well as providing needed skills for the market....A second aim of the school is to contribute to the development of the community in which it is situated. ...A third aim is to provide an education on a par with that available in the richer parts of Turkey to help to reduce inequalities of opportunity...A fourth aim is to include a mixture of students from different social backgrounds in one establishment...A fifth aim of the project is to teach English language skills so as to provide students with access to the international qualifications targeted by the school. (O'Dwyer, Aksit and Sands, 2010, p. 196)

Model United Nations

Model United Nations (MUN) is an authentic simulation of the U.N. General Assembly and other multilateral bodies (MUN, 2012). Simulating international organizations began before the establishment of the United Nations, and it was called *Model League of Nations*. Today there are more than 400,000 middle school, high school and university students worldwide participating in simulations at regional, national and international level. Today there are more than 400 conferences that take place in 35 countries. Depending on the location, the average conference can have as few as 30 students or as many as 2000 (UN, 2012). Some conferences hold as many as twelve hundred students (Turner, 1997).

In a typical MUN conference, the following organs are formed (UN, 2012):

- General Assembly Committees:
  - 1st Committee: Disarmament and International Security (DISEC)
  - 2nd Committee: Economic and Financial (ECOFIN)
  - 3rd Committee: Social, Humanitarian and Cultural (SOCHUM)
  - 4th Committee: Special Political and Decolonization (SPECPOL)
  - 5th Committee: Administrative and Budgetary
  - 6th Committee: Legal Committee

- Functional Commissions/Councils:
  - United Nations Peace-building Commission
  - United Nations Commission on International Trade Law
  - United Nations Security Council
  - United Nations Human Rights Council
  - United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)
  - International Court of Justice (ICJ)

- Specialized Agencies:
  - World Health Organization (WHO)
  - Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)
  - United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)
  - International Monetary Fund (IMF)
  - World Bank
  - International Labour Organization (ILO)
  - International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)

Each MUN participant is given a real current pressing issue, and is asked to assume one of the roles: a country delegate (not own country) attending one of the general assembly committees, a functional commission delegate, a specialized agency delegate, a committee director, or a press member. There is also an organization team, composed of two bodies: academic and operations. Secretary General, and Under Secretary Generals are the members of the former body, and the latter is responsible for finance, logistics, public relations, and day to day chores.

Each general assembly and each functional committee first discuss and debate an assigned issue, with a view to writing a resolution. This process usually takes about a couple of days. Only the resolutions accepted in the committees are taken to the General Assembly, a platform for all committees to convene, for further discussion and decision.

Method

This is an exploratory mixed-methods study. A mixed methods research design is a procedure for collecting, analysing, and 'mixing' both quantitative and qualitative research and methods in a single study to understand a research problem (Creswell,

2008). In an exploratory mixed-methods study, data are collected sequentially, first qualitative and then quantitative.

This study is composed of the following three phases, and it reports on the first phase only.

First phase: Narrative inquiry and content analysis

Narrative inquiry studies lives of an individual or individuals as expressed through the stories of their experience in a particular context, and it includes a discussion on any meaning attached to those experiences (Gay, Mills, and Airasian, 2009).

Content analysis is used to sift and sort qualitative responses to make meaning out of them. To this end, coding categories are derived from written responses first, and then any meaningful units are discussed afterwards.

Second phase: Focus group meetings

The purpose the second phase, yet to be conducted, is to further develop the initial challenges and benefits framework by contacting a group of experienced MUN participants.

Third phase: Case study

This last phase of the study, yet to be conducted based on the outcomes of the second phase, intends to collect data in multiple MUN conference sites to further explore challenges and benefits, and discuss how MUN simulations in a high school and/or higher education context may build cosmopolitan citizenship communities.

Data collection and analysis

To complete the first phase, the researcher identified an experienced information rich MUN participant, - the key informant who is 18-years old, and who has participated in the following eleven conferences (Table 1), taking part in various commissions/committees and receiving two awards. He has recently been selected as *MUN Turkey - Under Secretary General*.

Table 1. Conferences and responsibilities

Conference	Country	Committee/ Commission
Turkish International MUN (TIMUN) – Istanbul - 2007	Eritrea	Disarmament Committee
Belarus MUN (BelaMUN) – Minsk - 2008	Belarus	Human Rights Committee

MUNESCO - Ankara - 2008	UK	Natural Social and Human Sciences Committee
Turkish International MUN (TIMUN) –Istanbul - 2008	Iran	Territorial Disputes Committee
MUNESCO – Ankara- 2009	Turkey Ambassador	General Question and Program Support Committee
HMUN - Haarlem - 2009	Canada Ambassador	Peace-building Commission
EuroAsia MUN –Ankara- 2009	Iraq	Legal Committee (Best Delegate Award)
MUNTR – Antalya - 2010	Mexico	Security Council
Rome International MUN (RIMUN) – Rome - 2010	Mexico	Security Council
MUNESO – Ankara - 2010	President Chair	General Question and Program Support Committee
EuroAsia MUN – Ankara - 2010	Russian Federation	Disarmament and International Security (Outstanding Delegate

Conversations and discussions with the key informant before and after a number of conferences provided rich stories, and helped develop an initial challenges-and-benefits framework. Qualitative analysis of the data yielded the following categories:

- preparation
- oral language skills development
- written language skills development
- cognitive skills development
- affective skills development
- understanding parliamentary procedures

The following sub-categories emerged through subsequent inductive coding of each category (Table 2):

Table 2. Challenges and benefits

Main categories	Sub-categories

Preparation	▪ Training
	   ○ Role allocation (i.e. a country, a current issue, a committee or commission)
	   ○ Research into current issue to gain knowledge
	   ○ Writing a resolution
	▪ Inviting guest speakers
	▪ Mock debates

Oral language skills development	▪ Public speaking skills ▪ Impromptu speech ▪ Reacting to emerging issues ▪ Debating ▪ Negotiating ▪ Convincing
Written language	▪ How to write a resolution

skills development	○ Writing preambulatory clauses ○ Writing operative clauses ▪ Writing a speech	
Cognitive skills development	▪ Higher order thinking skills (analysis, synthesis, and evaluation in particular) ▪ Creativity: finding creative solutions to problems ▪ Inquiry skills ▪ Research skills	
Affective skills development	▪ Listening to others with respect ▪ Empathy ▪ Teamwork-Collaboration ▪ Commitment to ethical principles ▪ Valuing people and diversity ▪ Belief in the democratic process ▪ Being open-minded	
Understanding parliamentary procedures	▪ Roll Call ▪ Quorum ▪ Voting ▪ Opening debate ▪ Question of competence ▪ Yields ▪ Points and motion ▪ Moderated caucus	▪ Attire ▪ Professional conduct ▪ Chairing a meeting ▪ Language ▪ Lobbying ▪ Resolutions ▪ Amendments ▪ Voting

Reflection on initial outcomes

Model United Nations simulations are truly student-initiated endeavours, offering many challenges and benefits. They provide a contextualised meaningful platform by exposing participants to current world issues. Participants are given roles, and they are required to get prepared before each conference, researching into current global issues. They find and synthesize sources to understand matters, develop formal documents, and construct ideas and meaning to fulfil committee or commission responsibilities. They are expected to learn how to communicate with people who may have totally different beliefs and interests. Preparation beforehand and committee/commission work during each conference encourage both independence and interdependence. Also, established procedures reinforce respecting one's status and valuing each other. Discussion issues provide ample opportunities for creative and critical thought and expression. In any given MUN context, there are multiple identities at play: one's own, country being represented, UN body being represented (i.e. committee or commission), and UN Assembly member. Interaction clearly enhances cross-cultural awareness, and is believed to foster global mindedness.

There are more than 400,000 people participating in MUN simulations every year in 35 countries. MUN simulations provide an avenue to develop and nurture friendships, and they establish a global community, beyond national borders, who speak the same language, follow the same conventions, develop higher levels of cognitive and affective skills, and explore and discuss current global issues.

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258

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