

Parents' Views Regarding the Values Aimed to be Taught in Social Studies Lessons

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Abstract

This study aimed at learning parents' ideas about the values aimed to be taught in Social Studies lessons in the 4th and 5th grades of the primary education and about values education. Study data were collected by administering "the Values Education I" and "Values Education II" questionnaire forms developed by the researchers. The views of 378 and 387 parents who filled "the Values Education I" and "Values Education II" questionnaires respectively were collected. The results obtained in the light of the collected data are as follows: parents of the students attending at the 4th and 5th grades of primary education used 19 different values to define the values that have to be taught; they listed the reasons of value education as "success, socialization, democratization, self-improvement of the children", "peace" and "necessity to teach these values." Parents deemed both themselves and the school sufficient in terms of values education and they thought that the main responsibility of giving values education belongs first to parents and second to school. Parents gave priority to the values such as "patriotism," "honesty," "attaching importance to family unity," "responsibility," and "hardworking."

Key Words

Education, Social Studies Program, Program Development, Values Education, Parents' Views.

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Values are the basic criteria that make sense of the socio-cultural elements of the society. For the current social structure analyses, the importance of understanding the cultural framework that comprises concept, and embodies beliefs, values, norms, and attitudes within this framework is indisputable. In this respect, the role of “values” of a society is crucial in understanding that society (Özensel, 2003).

In terms of the characteristics agreed upon by many theoreticians, Schwartz and Bilsky (1987 cited in Kağıtçıbaşı & Kuşdil, 2000) described the values as follows:

1. Values are beliefs.
2. Values are related to individual objectives and behavioral patterns effective in achieving them.
3. Values are above specific acts and situations.
4. Values function as standards that direct choices or change behaviors, beliefs and events.
5. Values vary according to their respective importance.

Education in general, and specifically, social studies education help individuals develop democratic values, attitudes, and beliefs; become aware of their existing values and comprehend how they affect their interaction with other people and their environment (Doğanay, 2006). However; the personality development starts at a young age, which gains more significance. Furthermore, since the responsibility of children mainly belongs to the family during pre-school years, family role naturally increases in the acquisition of values. Families are capable of transferring both traditional and modern values to the next generation through socialization (Akbaş, 2004; Dilmaç, Kulaksızoğlu, & Ekşi, 2007; Francis, & Archer, 2005; Önur, 2004).

Transfer of values to the new generations is possible via both formal and informal education. Education, with its intentional acculturation means, indicates the presence of its value-oriented aspect. Therefore, in determining targets, which is the first important step in the development process of educational programs, individual, society, subject field, and nature should be taken into consideration. The potential objectives obtained in this way go through filters such as educational economy, educational sociology, educational psychology, and the philosophy of education (Sönmez, 2008). Philosophy of education is affected by the deve-

lopments in other fields of philosophy, which needs to pay attention to the data achieved from these sources. In this context, axiology, among the basic fields of philosophy, is of particular concern to the philosophy of education. Axiology is also called worth philosophy, which refers to the manner concerning the emergence of values, as well as, their sources, qualities, and classifications; and to whether they change from society to society. The necessity of considering the information obtained through axiology in philosophy of education requires the consideration of social expectations during the preparation of educational programs. Moreover, the expression “education which adopts, protects, and develops national, moral, humanistic, spiritual, and cultural values of Turkish nation” (Akyüz, 2005) within the general aims of the Turkish National Education also emphasizes the importance of the values in educational programs. When the programs developed in Turkey are analyzed, it can be seen that these values are striven to transfer through the courses of particularly Science of Life and Social Sciences since the main aim of both course is to help individuals adapt to natural and social environment they live in. In particular, Social Sciences courses help individuals realize their social presence. In order to achieve this, they need to know the values of the society they live in. When the curriculums in the Turkish Educational System are analyzed, it is seen that these values were clearly involved in the 2005 programs for the first time. In previous programs, values education was rather left to an implicit program. One of the programs developed in 2005, the Social Sciences Program involves the values and values education as a specific subject area (Yazıcı, & Koca, 2008). The inclusion of values in Social Sciences program is an indicator of the fact that social needs are taken into consideration. Given the studies exerted towards the development of the programs in 2005 to determine these needs, it can be said that the opinions of the individuals were not entirely taken into account. The literature concerning the values education indicates that the subjects such as the description and classification (clarification) of the values of research topics and these values are taught how and by who are attached priority (Halstead, & Taylor, 1996; Haydon, 1998; Dilmaç, & Ekşi, 2007; Doğanay, & Sarı, 2004; Silcock, & Duncan, 2001; Wilson, 2000). It is obvious that the opinions and experiences of those who taught or would teach were not studied upon in detail (Tay, 2009; Yıldırım, 2009). Therefore, it is of importance that individuals (parents) that teach the values and request them to be taught want which values to be taught.

In personality development of children, people are more influential than objects. Particularly, close and continuous relationship between children and family members, parents, or siblings plays an important role in formation of the values (Aydın, 2006). As Arcus (1980) expressed, young children are not capable of perceiving values on their own in the early childhood years properly, during which families have an influential place in the appropriate acquisition of the values.

Aim of the Study

This research aimed to find the views of the parents of 4th and 5th grade students studying at an elementary school with regard to the values education in Social Studies course. For this purpose, answers to the following questions were sought:

1. What are the values that should be taught in social sciences lessons and what are the reasons according to the parents' views?
2. To what extent do parents regard themselves as competent to teach values?
3. To what extent do parents regard school as competent to teach values?
4. What do parents think about the person who is responsible for teaching values?
5. How important are the values that should be taught in social sciences lessons according to the parents' views?

Method

Population and Sample

A restricted population was used in the research. It is also called study population (Karasar, 2005). The study population is limited to the parents of the 4th and 5th grade students in the centre of Kırşehir province. In order to ensure that the study population consisted of the fourth and fifth grade students and that their parents had an equal distribution, in other words; in order to create homogenous groups (Balci, 2005), a study sample was prepared via stratified sampling method, which is one of the possibility-based sampling methods. In order to improve the representation of the population through the sample, 48.4% of the population constituted the study sample and parents of 765 students (378 of whom were included in Values Education I and 387 of whom in Values Education II) were involved in the study.

Data Collection Means

This research utilized two data collection tools, which were the Values Education-I and Values Education-II questionnaires. Features of these tools are described below.

The Values Education-I: This questionnaire was developed to identify the views of parents of elementary school 4th and 5th grade students on teaching of values and consisted of two main sections. In section one, there were questions aiming at defining demographical features of parents. The second section consisted of five items including three open-ended questions as well as two five-item like type questions.

The Values Education-II: Values Education-II questionnaire was developed after 42% of participants were unable to answer question one and the linked question two in the second section of the **Values Education-I** questionnaire, which was developed in order to identify the views of parents on teaching of values in social sciences lessons. In this second questionnaire, 20 values from social sciences lessons were given to the parents who were asked to put five of these in the order of importance.

Analyzing the Data

Quantitative data collected by means of data collection tools was processed on the computer. The data collected regarding sub-items were transferred to the computer and SPSS (Statistical for Social Sciences) was used for statistical analysis of these data. Frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation of the scores obtained through the test related to the sub-items of the research were calculated.

Descriptive analysis was used in analyzing the data obtained from the open-ended questions asked the parents in the questionnaire. This approach indicates that the obtained data are summarized and interpreted according to the pre-determined themes (Yıldırım, & Şimşek, 2005). In the present study, the data obtained from the semi-structured and open-ended questions asked the students' parents were transferred to computer environment. These data in computer environment were continuously read and presented together along with the striking quotations from the views of the participants under the pre-created headlines in comply with the research questions.

When qualitative interview data are quoted (referred to) in findings and comments, it is expressed as "parent of the student with code num-

ber 86-A-5 (5)" or in short "57-B-4 (2)". The first numeric part of the code stands for the order of the relevant person, letter A=mother, letter B=father, second numeric part indicates class grade of the participant's child and the last digit in parenthesis indicates the importance order of the value that is subject matter of the view. These views were quoted without any additions or amendment.

Conclusion, Discussion and Recommendations

Conclusions derived based on the research findings can be summarized as follows:

1. Parents of the elementary 4th and 5th grade students expressed 19 different values that should be taught. It is seen that 18 out of 20 values included in the 2005 social sciences curriculum were expressed by parents. Values of independence and peace from the curriculum were not expressed, and the value of being moral (having faith) which is not included in the curriculum was expressed as an additional value.

The answer to the question "Which values should students be taught?" is not clear. The values that need to be taught in schools may vary. For example, Lickona (1991) suggested responsibility, respect, tolerance, common sense, self-control, helpfulness, compassion, courageousness, honesty, justice, and democratic values. Bennet (1993) suggested mercifulness, self-control, responsibility, friendship, diligence, braveness, courageousness, determination, honesty, sincerity, and trust values (cited in Akbaş, 2004). In a study on the Turkish National Education System, the values of primary schools were determined. This study brought forward traditional values such as national awareness, giving importance to family and being trustworthy; democratic values such as respect and tolerance; professional values such as diligence and responsibility; scientific values such as being investigative and creative; and basic values such as being clean, and protecting one's health (Akbaş, 2004). In democratic societies, individuals are provided with democracy-related values and norms, which are love, respect, equality, participation, decision-making by free discussion and voting, compromise tradition, abstaining from violence, appreciating all individuals, creating a liberal environment, tolerance, freedom of thought and expression, political pluralism, state of law, and solidarity (Elkatmış, 2007).

The values are expressed in the new social sciences program are as fol-

lows: being fair, giving importance to family unity, freedom, peace, being scientific, being hardworking, solidarity, consciousness, honesty, aesthetics, tolerance, hospitality, freedom, giving importance to being healthy, love, respect, responsibility, cleanliness, patriotism, and helpfulness (Millî Eğitim Bakanlığı [MEB], 2005). Studies carried out by Yıldırım (2009) and Tay (2009) indicated that “patriotism” is the most emphasized value among the ones that needed to be taught by classroom teachers and prospective teachers since the Turkish history is full of heroic deeds. The geographical conditions of the Republic of Turkey can be considered as another reason. As a natural outcome, it can be said that these factors also caused parents to consider “patriotism” as the primary value that children should be taught.

2. Views of the parents on the reasons why the values were regarded to be necessary to be taught can be summarized under six elements, which are, namely, success, socialization, democratization, self-development, peace, and necessity.

Neglecting an emotional dimension in education, which is indispensable in terms of both individual and social life, will result in not using a significant potential that individuals possess. Therefore, it can be stated that this process is crucial in the success of individuals (Bacanlı, 2005).

Another process of teaching the Values Education is supporting and contributing to the process of gaining the ability to introspect regarding human aims and values. The Values Education comes to the fore in terms of not only producing information but also using the information produced for the sake of humanity (Dilmaç, & Ekşi, 2007). Bloom (1998) stated that affective characteristics have undeniable effects on success. Beyond all these reasons, Eyre and Eyre (Doğanay, 2006) expressed the necessity of having a sound alliance of values as one of the resources of happiness. We can say that these expressions correspond to the elements such as socialization, success, democratization, and improvement as the parents emphasized in the justification for values. Dilmaç and Ekşi (2007) and Bacanlı (2005) indicated that the abovementioned elements are associated with the expressions like the success of individuals, social life, information production, and its use for the sake of humanity, as dictated for the functionality of values.

3. Parents consider themselves to be adequately competent for teaching of values ($\bar{X} = 3.70$ and $\bar{X} = 3.81$), but not highly capable. Based on the

fact that the teaching of values starts within the family, parents must possess the necessary characteristics like providing a democratic family environment, providing good examples of values that are expected to be acquired, being a good model, and being an individual who has adopted basic values (Balat, 2007, p. 36).

Studies showed that disruptions may occur in the educational process of a child as a result of various factors concerning family, school, or environment, and that these problems can be solved through cooperation between family and school. Children are expected to display better behaviors when families collaborate with school, and therefore, the performance of the students at school is supposed to increase. Many educational institutions prepare package education programs with the aim of enabling parents to consciously participate in the educational process in order to improve cooperation between family and teacher, which helps children become good citizens (Izzo, Weissberg, Kaspro, & Fendrich, 1999).

4. Parents consider the school to be competent in terms of teaching values ($\bar{x}=3.68$ and $\bar{x}=3.52$). In other terms, they do not consider the school to be highly capable of teaching values. In schools, where it is aimed to develop individual behaviors in a structured and systematic manner, the necessity of attaching due importance to the teaching of values is undeniable (Doğanay, 2007). Besides, it is necessary that the objectives specified in open and covert school curriculum are parallel with each other. For example, while course books address active participation for democratic citizenship, rules are imposed by the administrators in schools, which demonstrate that the official curriculum is not compliant with the informal program. Therefore, schools cannot be expected to help the acquisition of the required values (Dilmaç, & Ekşi, 2007; Doğanay, 2006; Doğanay, & Sarı, 2004).

On the other hand; critical responsibility falls on teachers in teaching values. Teachers may choose different ways such as providing examples, reflecting on students' behaviors, and explaining the reasons in fulfilling their tasks (Akbaş, 2004). Likewise; studies documented in the related literature demonstrate that teachers play an active role in teaching values. For instance, teachers must set a good example that properly reflects values both inside and outside of the school, struggle for creating an ethical class atmosphere, and provide conditions for informal practices with students out of classroom by applying various strategies (Milson, 2000; Ryan, 1986).

There are at least three compulsory reasons that require schools to play an important role in the values education. The first is to raise people who have certain characteristics such as having sound personality and strong mind, discipline, morality, hardworking and who can make proper decisions and develop empathy. Schools are among the most suitable places for education and learning. Second, schools get students to be equipped with the necessary problem-solving skills for both social and their own problems. Third and finally, schools have a leading role in the formation of moral societies. When the social events throughout the world are assessed, it is seen that people suffer from serious social and moral problems. In particular, the reasons such as break-up of families, child physical and sexual abuse, rising violence, materialist tendencies, increase in the number of dishonest people, social corruption in daily life, alcohol and drug addiction, increase in falsified news in media are demoralizing sexual ethics day by day and diminishing the respect toward human life throughout the world. Naturally, schools have important roles in dealing with and minimizing these problems (Ekşi, 2003; Lickona, 1991, 1996).

The studies with small samples carried out by Kutnick (1995) concluded that schools, especially, played important roles thanks to the educational programs in equipping the students with values such as cooperation, respect to the differences, improvement of communication and interaction between individuals.

5. It was expressed by 68 % of the parents that families must undertake teaching of values, 24.3% said that the related responsibility must belong to schools and that 7.7% stated that both family and school must carry out the task. Accordingly, parents think that the teaching of values is mainly under the responsibility of families and secondly, of schools.

It is evident that the teaching of values starts within the family. Family members, mainly the mother and father, are the ones who are regarded to be the first models and taken after by children. Family is the essential body responsible for caring and education of children in the early years of life. Though schools and other social environments help family fulfill its responsibility during following years, they do not mitigate the importance and value of the family factor (Balat, 2004, 2007).

Little children (until five years old) spend most of their time with their families as they do not generally go to school. All kinds of educati-

onal processes within the family play an important role in the restructuring of one's character. Moreover, family can be considered as the place where individuals start to acquire a system of values education. The values education received by children in these years helps them acquire the awareness of being good citizens in the future. After children start schooling, teachers and schools undertake the role of being an educator of values (Dilmaç & Ekşi, 2007). Studies in the literature support the views of the parents on the person to teach values. Study by Yıldırım (2009) aimed to describe the views of the classroom teachers on the values education. In the same study, most of the classroom teachers expressed that values should be taught first by families, the responsibility of which should be taken over by teachers after children start school. Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997) suggested that the desire of the families to raise their children according to their own world views and beliefs that their children can be more successful at school with their help direct families to play an effective role in their children's education. In the present study, the desire of the families to raise their children according to their standards of living may have caused parents to show themselves up in the values education.

Children start to learn values from their families, media, peers, game groups, babysitters, environments, and other organizations at early ages. There is a strong evidence that children acquire conscience during the initial two years of their lives (Buzelli, 1992; Halstead, & Taylor, 2000), which is closely related to the social and emotional development of children. In the following process when children start school, schools take over this role. Schools have two important missions in the values education: The first is to teach the current values in the society (equal opportunities, respect for differences) and to help children associate themselves with their past learning. The second is to create opportunities for students to discuss and contemplate about these values and to help them develop their own values (Halstead, & Taylor, 2000).

6. Parents ranked the values of "patriotism" (13.2%), "honesty" (12.1%), "caring for family unity" (8.3%), "responsibility" (7.6%), and "hard work" (7.2%) as the most important values, respectively.

Values are one of the most important problems of philosophy. It is seen that the values subject is dealt in two aspects in philosophy, namely, values problem and assessment problem. While values problem is articulated with the concepts such as "good", "beautiful", "useful", and "cor-

rect”, assessment problem discusses questions and problems related to the meaning underlying the relationships between individuals (Kuçuradi, 1998). In addition, the values-related principals apply to the field of philosophical ethics. In terms of philosophy of education, values are discussed within their different dimensions by idealists, realists, pragmatists, and existentialists. For example, while idealists consider values as unvarying principles that can be applied to all people, realists argue that values should be based on natural laws as they are universal and infinite. Existentialists, putting emphasis on individuals and their preferences, suggest that people should create values with their free choices (Orstein, & Levin 1997 cited in Altunya, 2003). Pragmatists argue that values depend on time, place, and conditions; and therefore, they are relative. In modern realism, the role of education and school is to transform life into information. The source of values exists in the relations between objects and human nature (Guttek, 2001). Although values express different conceptions in different trends in terms of philosophy of education, it cannot be denied that they are the indispensable elements of education. Values mean “good, beautiful, useful, respect, justice, or honesty” in philosophy. The reference of values as being nice, pleasant, useful, respectful, just, or honesty in philosophy and the values of patriotism, honesty, giving importance to the family unity, responsibility, and diligence as prioritized by parents among the first five places and the expressions of the reasons for attributing values as “being successful”, “socialization”, “democratization”, “developing oneself”, “necessity to teach” and “peace” are consistent with each other.

The study carried out by Hoge (2002) indicated that the values such as being respectful toward people, honesty, taking responsibility, and respecting oneself and other people come to the forefront when the values that needed to be emphasized primarily within the scope of the social sciences program are analyzed. In the present study, it is possible to state that views of the parents on the values that needed to be taught primarily in the social sciences program are compatible with the values expressed by Hoge.

Social studies focus on the interaction of individuals with each other and the environment. Such an interaction has also emotional dimensions. Their beliefs, attitudes and values about themselves, others and their environment influence this interaction. Therefore, education in general and social studies teaching specifically, help individuals develop de-

mocratic values, attitudes and beliefs, become aware of their own existing values and realize how these affect their interaction with other people and their environment (Doğanay, 2006; Hoge, 2002). At the same time, social studies considerably contribute to the positive development of the individuals in terms of character (Sanchez, 2006).

Besides, while learning-teaching activities are prepared for the acquisition of values in social studies lesson, the first emphasis must be placed on the questions such as why, what, when, where, who, and how concerning teaching of values. Teachers and prospective teachers should first appreciate the importance of values for human beings and the society and then, put suitable methods and techniques into practice. Though it is still controversial which values should be addressed as a priority, it is seen that there is a consensus on the fundamental democratic values. It is seen that these core values specified in social studies teaching curriculum for elementary schools are also included in the curriculums of many other countries (Akbaş, 2004; Dilmaç, & Ekşi, 2007; Doğanay, 2006; MEB, 2005).

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