Attitudes of Social Studies Teachers toward Value and Values Education[*]

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Abstract

This research was conducted to determine how social studies teachers define value and "values education" as well as reveal the problems they encountered during the implementation. The participants in this study consisted of 17 social studies teachers from 12 primary schools (selected out of 39 primary schools in the city of Kırşehir through simple random sampling) in the 2011-2012 academic year. Phenomenology, one of the qualitative research methods, was used to collect the data. In addition, a semi-structured interview was conducted that consisted of seven open-ended questions. Inductive analysis, one of the content analysis types, was employed to analyze the data obtained in the research. The findings show that the social studies teachers defined value by terms such as "esteem," "human beings," "social norms," "social citizens," and "national and moral elements," all of which are closely related to their dictionary meaning. Such responses reveal that the teachers were not completely aware of the definition of value and values education. In addition, the teachers preferred that the students learn about values, such as "respect," "sensitivity," and "responsibility," and that family and teachers are the most effective factors in values education. These are followed by the environment in which the students grow, the school itself, and other related factors. Finally, although the teachers aimed to become role models in values education, one of the most significant issues was that families were inadequately prepared for such education.

Keywords
Social Studies Teachers, Teachers, Value, Values Education.

Values are the uniting phenomena adopted by the society or individuals, criteria which are believed to meet the needs of the society and be good for the individual's benefit, judgments related to conscious, emotions, and excitement and motives which are imprinted in the individual's conscious and shapes the behaviours (Özgüven, 1994). Erdem (2007) defines value as a tendency to prefer a state to another one. Katılmış and Ekşi (2011) suggest that value which is defined as a high or

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a beneficial quality which an entity is believed to have socially, morally or aesthetically is a basic criteria determining the individual's attitudes and behaviours.

In today's world, there are numerous developments in science and technology. While these advances have improved society, they sometimes have adverse effects on its overall development. Therefore, specific areas must be the subject of focus to minimize the damage on society. One of the important fields is the study of "values education." Such importance is because of the fact that individuals feel the need to effectively and efficiently communicate as well as provide solutions to certain current issues generated from political, social, and cultural developments in our world (Kale, 2007).

The purpose of including values education in a curriculum is to have students systematically gain explicit values education within the coursework through various teaching methods and techniques (Akbaş, 2009). Discussion-based approaches and student-centered, active-learning strategies are the most common methods. Other methods used in values education consist of drama, project work, hands-on training activities, cooperative learning, group work, research, games and other related activities (Halstead, 1996).

Developing judgment for social responsibility and the individual's evaluation of his decisions and actions are formed as a result of the values education given to the individual (Stephenson, Ling, Burman, & Cooper, 1998).

Social Studies Course is one of the effective courses for values education. The course is important for teaching values due to the historical quality of its content, giving information about different cultures and life stories, and having a multi-disciplined structure (Kan, 2010). When the social studies curriculum is examined, it is regarded that the students are required to gain 20 values (Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı [MEB], 2008, 2010b).

Although the values taught to the students are specified in the curriculum, the teacher's knowledge, skills, and values are ultimately applied to make the final decision. When considered from this perspective, identifying the activities that social studies teachers conduct within the framework of values education is important in order to reveal the problems that occur during such implementation. Besides, if a teacher understands the teaching techniques and the subject extremely well, but

does not share his/her views and experiences about social life with the students, then the overall process cannot be deemed successful (Gleen, 1998). Thus, the values that the teacher possesses and his/her views regarding values education can directly affect the values that the students acquire.

Purpose

Although there are numerous studies in literature regarding pre-service teachers' perceptions of values, value preferences, and attitudes towards values (Akın & Özdemir, 2009; Altunay & Yalçınkaya, 2011; Basçiftçi, Akdoğan, & Koç, 2011; Coşkun & Yıldırım, 2009; Dilmaç, Bozgeyikli, & Çıkılı, 2008; Fidan, 2009; Koca, 2009; Sarı, 2005; Tay, 2009; Yapıcı & Zengin, 2003) teachers' and students' (Aktepe & Yel, 2009; Aslan, 2007; Balcı & Yanpar, 2010; Baydar, 2009; Can, 2008; Deveci & Ay, 2009; Deveci & Dal, 2008; Katılmış, 2010; Prencipe, 2001; Sezer, 2008; Samancı, 2009; Turan & Aktan, 2008), research results based on social studies teachers' views of values education were not the subject of focus. Therefore, this study examined the activities of social studies teachers carried out within the framework of values education in order to reveal any problems encountered during the implementation and their opinions based on the following questions:

- ✓ According to social studies teachers, what is value?

- ✓ According to social studies teachers, what are the values included in a social studies curriculum?

- ✓ According to social studies teachers, which values in a curriculum should students gain initially?

- ✓ According to social studies teachers, what are the factors affecting values education?

- ✓ What type of activities do social studies teachers conduct in order to have the students obtain values?

- ✓ What problems do social studies teachers encounter during values education implementation?

- ✓ What suggestions can social studies teachers provide to make the practice of values education completely successful?

Method

Research Design

Phenomenology, one of the qualitative research designs, was used to collect data in this research.

Universe and Sampling

The participants in the study consisted of 17 social studies teachers from 12 primary schools (selected out of the 39 primary schools in the city of Kırşehir through simple random sampling) in the 2011-2012 academic year. Out of the 17 social studies teachers, 10 of them were males and seven were females. The teachers' experience ranged from six to 20 years**.** The reason why social studies teachers working in the city of Kırsehir were included in this research is that accessibility to the sampling group was relatively easy and a project by The Provincial Directorate of National Education (within the context of Education Project on Values of the Ahi order) was carried out on all primary schools during the 2011-2012 academic year. Within the context of values education, the teachers taught specific values every month until the project's completion.

Data Analysis

Quantitative Dimension: The data in the research was collected through semi-structured interviews. While preparing the interview, pre-interviews were conducted with five social studies teachers who were not involved in the study. The final interview format was prepared in light of the obtained data and after it was examined by two faculty members (in education curriculum and teaching, and education management and social science teaching, respectively) who carried out studies on values education. The final version was created according to their views and suggestions. In this context, the experts were asked to evaluate the format based on the rating scale of "appropriate," "inappropriate," and "needs developing." Moreover, they were asked to provide written feedback on the design of the format. The semi-structured interview consisted of seven questions and two parts. The first part includes questions regarding gender and work experience while the second part consists of the seven interview questions. The interviews were carried out individually in a location and time set by the teachers and each interview lasted for approximately 30 minutes. The interviews were recorded and the audio recordings were subsequently transcribed and provided to the interviewees for approval.

Qualitative Method: Inductive analysis, one of the content analysis types, was employed to analyze the data obtained in the research. The two researchers coded the data obtained from the semi-structured interviews separately as follows: Reliability=Agreement in opinion/Agreement in opinion + Difference in opinion **x** 100 formula. The percentage agreement between the two coders was computed as 87%. In terms of data analysis, reliability was obtained since 70% or above for percentage agreement is considered adequate. The matching codes in the coding scheme by the researcher and the experts were applied as the basis for the themes. In the content analysis, the themes were identified in a broad scope (to include the related themes) and a narrow scope (to remove any irrelevant themes). Unity was achieved by examining the relationship between these themes and the sub-themes, which are composed of the themes and the relationship of each theme with the others.

Results, Discussion, and Suggestions

In addition to the definition of values, their features are mentioned in the curriculum (MEB, 2005) and defined as "uniting features by the society or individuals; motives which exist in the individual's conscious; criterions which are believed to meet the needs of the society and for the individual's benefit." In the dictionary of the Turkish Language Association (Türk Dil Kurumu [TDK], 2011), values are defined as "an abstract criteria to determine importance of a thing, price of something, worth, the entire moral and material elements which include a nation's social, cultural, economic and scientific values." In this study, the social studies teachers defined values as "worth," "human beings," "social norms," "social citizens" and "national and moral elements," all of which are closely related to its definition in the dictionary. In the study conducted by Balcı and Yanpar (2010), teachers defined values with expressions, such as "price, importance, benefit, criteria, worth, reward, size and cost," which reveal that they referred to its usage in daily language to a great extent.

In order to detect at what level social studies teachers were aware of values in the 6th and 7th grade curriculums, they were asked which values they had to teach. Three teachers (E1, E4, and K5) could not answer this question, but all of the other teachers expressed the value of "patriotism." However, nearly all of the teachers did not state being "scientific" and "hardworking" as values

even though they were included in the program. While the teachers were describing the values, they not only mentioned values in the 4th and 5th grades, but also mentioned criticism and empathy expressions, which were considered as "skills" in the program. When the values in the curriculum were considered, the teachers did not know whether they were actually part of the curriculum. However, they did want to teach values such as "patriotism," "respect," "benevolence," "responsibility," and "being fair." In fact, the responses regarding the values in the curriculum reveal that the teachers were not quite aware of such values in the program. The reason being that the teachers might not have benefited from a so-called teacher's book. However, the teacher's book presents the target values to be taught during the introduction of each unit in the program (MEB, 2008, 2010a). Moreover, criticism and empathy expressions, which were defined as values by the teachers, were introduced as skills to be taught in the curriculum (MEB, 2005).

When the teachers were asked which values the students must primarily obtain after they were shown the values in the 6th and 7th grade social science courses, the teachers not only explained the value, but expressed why this value must be acquired. In addition, there were differences between the values the teachers understood and the values that they wanted to teach. For example, while most of the teachers in the study believed that "patriotism" was the value in the program, the value that they wanted to teach the most was "respect." The teachers approached this particular value within the framework of rights, freedom, families, and elders. "Responsibility" was third among the values that the teachers wanted their students to acquire. In a study conducted by Whitney (1986), teachers stated that "honesty," "respect," and "responsibility" were the three most important values needed in a values education program. In a study carried out by Tepecik (2008), teachers stated that "responsibility" should be taught directly in social studies courses.

The members of the society begin to acquire value judgment in the family and some values are tried to be transferred, consciously or unconsciously (Şen, 2007; Yel & Aladağ, 2009). Teachers, the practitioners of curriculums, play an extremely important and active role in transferring certain values (Halstead & Taylor, 2000; Yazıcı, 2006). While the teachers in the present study stated that family and teachers are effective factors in values education, these factors are followed by the environment in which an individual grows, the

school itself, and other related factors. Furthermore, while male teachers stated the importance of the teacher as a role model in values education through his/her democratic manner, female teachers stated that a teacher's influence in terms of sensitivity, listening to a student, and learning from them was important. It was reported in numerous studies (Akbaş, 2008; Baydar, 2009; Doğanay, 2009; Yel & Aladağ, 2009) that, in addition to schools, families, peers, environment, religious organizations, and other cultural foundations (such as mass media) are effective during the process of values education.

The teachers also stated that they spent more time for activities such as mentioning the values in the lesson, being a role model, associating the values with current issues, assigning performance homework, and using materials in order to have the students acquire the presented values. Male teachers were the only teachers who mentioned the use of materials in values education. In this case, the materials included newspapers, slides, and videos. In a study conducted by Tepecik (2008), the majority of the teachers stated that they benefited from visual materials while a study by Can (2008) revealed that teachers used such methods for developing empathy towards values.

Furthermore, the teachers stated that they encountered problems in values education that included: A family's lack of knowledge regarding values education; giving particular importance to curriculum teaching in schools; the Level Determination Exam (SBS); inadequate values education programs; students' being unable to transfer what they had learned; lack of student interest and reluctance in learning; and the lack of weekly course hours. In a study conducted by Tepecik (2008), the problems that teachers encountered were listed as: families' being unable to educate their children at a sufficient level; students' not exhibiting the behaviors acquired in schools in their family and environment; and the lack of weekly course hours.

Finally, children in today's world are increasingly affected by social problems, violence, and intolerance. Therefore, families and educators must assert the importance of effective values education as the only way to prevent such problems from threatening the social order (Tillman, 2000). In the present study, the most important suggestion made by the teachers in regard to successful values education is that the awareness of families must be raised. Even though families were considered to be the problem, only two teachers participating

in the study stated that the teachers required in-service training. The other suggestions involved providing cooperation between teachers, schools, and families as well as offering in-service training to teachers and being a role model. In a study conducted by Tepecik (2008), since knowing a family's views on education is extremely important in values education, suggestions included: increasing communication with the families; increasing the number of activities that can be used for values education in social studies courses; and reconsidering the number of course hours and increasing them if necessary.

Based on the findings obtained in this research, the following suggestions can be made:

- ✓ Teachers must be enlightened about the content and scope of the values taught directly in social studies courses. Thus, in-service training seminars should be organized for the teachers. In addition, how to apply activities that actively engage students in the learning process should be taught in order for them to internalize the presented values.

- ✓ It is not only the teacher's duty to have the students acquire values. Hence cooperation between mass media, media, and educational institutions can be established to raise awareness in society.

- ✓ Activities that prepare students for life can be conducted in order to provide consistency between what is taught in the lessons and how they can be applied in life.

- ✓ Family support should be provided to increase the functionality of social studies courses, especially in regard to values education. Therefore, families should be educated and involved in the process.

- ✓ Studies regarding the views of students or students' parents on values education should be conducted.

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