Comparison of Elementary Social Studies Curricula of Turkey and the United States on Values Education[*]

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to compare the social studies teaching curricula of Turkey and the United States in terms of values education. The study is a model case study that relies upon one of the qualitative research methods. The data come from the elementary social studies curricula of both countries through the documents analysis method. The results of the study demonstrate that the social studies' curriculum of Turkey has more emphasis on individual and social values such as sensitivity, responsibility, solidarity, science, philanthropy, and patriotism, etc. On the other hand, the social studies curricula of the United States lays more emphasis on individual and social values such as sensitivity, science, responsibility, solidarity, and respect for individual rights, as well as democratic values such as diversity (difference), public good, and prevention of conflict.

Key Words

Values, Social Studies, Social Studies Curricula, Turkey, the United States.

A value is a belief about whether or not something is desirable (Güngör, 1978). Values are the standards we use to judge human behavior (Chapin, 2009; NCSS Task Force, 1989; Van Cleaf, 1991; Zarrillo, 2004). It is required that some values should be gained by each individual to enter into educational system in order to maintain harmony in the society and to get the society focused on the same target by gathering the society around the same goal. Values education plays an important role in transmitting values and culture to future generations (Tezcan, 1991).

Based on these ideas, it is a fact that in our country, Turkey, special importance is given to values education, similar to many other countries. In social studies courses for first and second level (grades 4-5 and 6-7 respectively), in which an instructional curriculum has been implemented since 2005, values and values education have been discussed and values which must be instilled in students have been identified (Keskin, 2008; Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı [MEB], 2011a, 2011b; Yel & Aladağ, 2009).

There is a very important place for values education in the United States, with the Center for Civic Education having established certain standards for values education. Several values have been treated as basic values in social studies teaching, and they have been recommended to be taught at the elementary level as basic values. These values are an individual's fundamental rights and freedoms (right to life, liberty ... etc.), including the pursuit of happiness, justice, equal opportunity, diversity, integrity, patriotism and responsibility (Chapin, 2009; Chapin & Messick, 2002; Hoge, Field, Foster, & Nickell, 2004; Parker, 2009; Seefeldt, 1997; Van Cleaf, 1991; Zarrillo, 2004). It is commonly believed that there is a consensus among Americans that these values should be con-

sidered important. The philosophical foundations of democratic values depend on the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution of the United States, the Bill of Rights, the Seneca Falls Resolution, the speeches of Martin Luther King Jr., and Abraham Lincoln's statements (Parker).

In addition to the democratic values expressed above, in the United states some values and concepts related to the values education such as open-mindedness, fairness, justice, constitutionality, point of view, internationality, unity, freedom, pluralism, democracy, order, equity, effectiveness, privacy, faith, the government, co-operation, nationhood, participation in decisions, self-discipline (self-control, self-confidence) , authority, freedom, self-esteem, loyalty, respect, security, prevention of conflict, strength, tolerance, honor, leadership, civil society, reconciliation, and becoming a citizen are recommended as topics for teaching at different levels of education (Ellis, 2002; Sunal & Haas, 2005). Also, the National Curriculum Standards for Social Studies: A framework for Teaching, Learning, and Assessment prepared by the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) recommends that all states teach four categories of values (NCSS, 1994, 2010). These are Individual rights (right to dignity, right to liberty, right to security, right to equality of opportunity, right to justice, right to privacy, right to privacy, and right to private ownership of property), Individual freedoms (freedom to participate in political process, freedom of worship, freedom of thought, freedom of conscience, freedom of assembly, freedom of inquiry, and freedom of expression), Individual responsibilities,(to respect human life, to respect the rights of others, to be tolerance of different points of view, to be honest, to be compassionate, to demonstrate self-control, to participate in the democratic process, to respect the property of others, and to work for the public interest), and Values related to social conditions, religious views (or beliefs) and government (or governmental issues) (the need for accepted laws by the society, protection of minority groups, legitimacy of the government, respect and protection shown by the government to the individual's rights and freedoms, and the government working for the common good.)

As can be seen from the above, it is a fact that values education has a significant place in the social studies curriculums of both countries. When the literature is examined, it is clear that many research studies related to values education have been conducted in recent years (Akengin, Tuncel, Şirin, &

Sargin, 2009; Baydar, 2009; Bennett, 2006; Brady, 2011; Demircioğlu & Tokdemir, 2008; Demirhan Işcan, 2011; Dilmaç, 2007; Dilmaç & Ekşi, 2007; Doğanay, 2006 ; Ekşi, 2003; Kale, 2007; Kan, 2010; Katılmış, Ekşi, & Öztürk,. 2010; Kenan, 2009; Kıncal & Işık, 2005; Koç, 2007; Lapega et al., 2011; Sarı, 2005; Tezgel, 2006; Topkaya & Yavuz, 2011; Tozlu & Topsakal, 2007; Yiğittir & Öcal, 2011; Wasburn, 1997; Xiaoman, 2006). In Turkey, the number of studies focusing on values education has increased in the last decade. Research associated with values education in the United States dates back beyond ten years. However, comparative research related to values education at the elementary school level is very limited. In this respect, it is believed that determining the extent to which values education is emphasized in these countries' curriculums and which values are given more importance in their curriculums will contribute to the expansion of knowledge in this field. In addition, this research was conducted based on the belief that knowing the extent to which values appear in the curriculum of social studies courses in elementary school will be beneficial for further research in this field.

Method

Research Model

This study adopts the *case study model*, a qualitative research methodology. A case study model is a research study strategy that seeks social facts of a small group of individuals in their natural environment. This model aims to describe the sample in significant detail (Bloor & Wood, 2006). The most fundamental feature of the qualitative case study lies in the detailed investigation of a case. From this perspective, this study considers the social studies education curricula in Turkey and the United States as a social fact and strives to use these facts to reach relative conclusions.

Study Sample

In this study, the latest editions of social studies education curricula for first level (4th and 5th grade), and second level (6th and 7th grade) in Turkey and the United States were examined. The Turkish Social Sciences Education Curriculum examined in this study was revised by the Ministry of Education's Department of Publications in 2011 and has been significantly updated accordingly. As for the United States' Social Studies Education curriculum, a

lack of certain standards at the federal level gives way to different implementations for curriculum in different states. Thus, in this study the *National Curriculum Standards for Social Studies (Expectations of Excellence) National Council for the Social studies and National Curriculum Standards for Social Studies: A Framework for Teaching, Learning and Assessment* social studies education curriculum, a guide prepared by the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) in 1994 (last revised in 2010) was adopted. It should be noted, though, that these standards only serve as a recommendation to the states. Often, in case studies, examination of a constricted system is described (Bloor & Wood, 2006). From the understanding content analysis; social studies education curricula for First Level (4th and 5th grade), and second level (6th and 7th grade) in Turkey, and the *National Curriculum Standards for Social Studies: A Framework for Teaching, Learning and Assessment* in the United States were considered as constricted systems, and a sample group was formed. Since first level (4th and 5th grade), and second level (6th and 7th grade) are the levels at which social Studies Education is presented in Turkey, these levels were selected for our study. Accordingly, a second a sample group was formed comprising social studies curricula in the United States that are taught to students of the same age group. Based upon this, in the study 328 objectives were examined in the constricted systems aforementioned.

Data Collection and Analysis

In this study, document analysis was utilized in order to cross examine the inclusion of *values education* in Turkish and United States' elementary level Social Studies Instruction Curricula. Document analysis comprises examination of written materials that include information about social fact(s) which is (are) subject to examination. In the analysis of the documents, the primary analytical method was induction analysis. The main purpose in an induction analysis is to be able to understand concepts and relationships that may explain the collected data. The following processes (following the stages of coding of data, finding themes, adjusting and explaining data according to codes and themes, and interpretation of the findings of the analysis) were implemented in terms of induction analysis.

A form was created in order to study the values in both countries' social sciences curricula. This form is based on 19 (nineteen) values targeted at the 1st level elementary social sciences and 14 (fourteen) values targeted at the 2nd level elementary social sciences curricula in Turkey. On the other hand, the form is based on 16 (sixteen) values targeted at the 1st level elementary and 15 (fifteen) values targeted at the 2nd level elementary social sciences curricula in the United States For qualitative studies, in order to increase internal validity and prevent observer bias from affecting the study, it is recommended to have more than one person observe and interview (Büyüköztürk, Çakmak, Akgün, Karadeniz, & Demirel, 2008). Therefore, all the gains in the program were read and coded in the relevant open, blind, and near values boxes. Two separate groups of analyses results done by researchers were compared and checked for compliance. Upon defining number of agreements and disagreements, the reliability of the study was calculated using Miles and Huberman's (1994) formula (Reliability=agreements/agreements + disagreements). This calculation gives the result as 0.87 for inter-expert compliance, suggesting strong agreement. When there was no compliance between two experts, a third expert was consulted with and the result was recorded in the relevant box. Upon aggregating the coding, subthemes were created under the 19 values on the first level and the 14 values on the second level of Turkish social sciences curricula. For the United States' curricula, findings were presented under 16 first level and 15 second level values. On the presentation, objectives in the curricula were quoted directly. Since the unprinted, revised, and updated social sciences curriculum was used in this study, page numbers for related objectives in the 2nd level (6th-7th grades) were not cited.

Discussion

Most frequently emphasized values in 1st level Turkish elementary social sciences curriculum are sensibility, solidarity, helpfulness, being scientific, patriotism, individual rights, love, independence, unity of the family, respect, and being healthy. These results, obtained on the 1st level curriculum, are in parallel with Keskin's (2008) study. Keskin defined sensibility and responsibility as the most frequently emphasized values in 1st level elementary social sciences curriculum. This study also parallels the study of Kuş, Merey, and Karatekin (2011) who defined responsibility, sensibility, solidarity, helpfulness, and being scientific as most frequently emphasized values in elementary social sciences textbooks (4th – 5th grades). This result is in compliance with the values stated in the principal objectives of the National Education Law numbered 1739 and

in the overall goals of elementary social sciences instruction (MEB, 2011a). Least frequently stated values in Turkish first level elementary curricula are justice, being a hard worker, peace, hospitality, being aesthetic, paying attention to cleanliness, and honesty. This result also parallels the study of Kuş et al. (2011). They also defined tolerance, aesthetics, and honesty as the least frequently stated values in 4th and 5th grade social sciences textbooks.

Individual rights, public good, diversity (variety), sensibility, being scientific, responsibility, conflict prevention, democracy, and tolerance are the most frequently stated values in the United States social sciences first level curriculum. This result is in compliance with values in the draft curriculum recommended by NCSS as social sciences curriculum (NCSS, 1994, 2010). Helpfulness, self-discipline, solidarity, honesty, respect, love, and justice are the least frequently stated values in the United States social sciences first level curriculum.

Sensibility, responsibility, solidarity, individual rights, being scientific, and tolerance are the most frequently stated values in Turkish social sciences second level curriculum. This result in the second level curriculum parallels Keskin's (2008) studies. Keskin defined sensibility, responsibility, and being scientific as the most frequently stated values in second level social sciences curriculum. Helpfulness, being a hard worker, justice, peace, honesty, being aesthetic, and respect are the least stated values in Turkish second level social sciences curriculum. No gains were stated for values of paying attention to being healthy, paying attention to family unity, love, paying attention to cleanliness, and hospitality in Turkish social sciences second level curriculum. This result matches with the values recommended to be directly taught in social sciences classes, by MEB (2011a, 2011b).

In the United States second level social sciences curriculum, public good, diversity (variety), individual rights, helpfulness, tolerance, being scientific, solidarity, and conflict prevention are the most frequently stated values. This result corresponds to NCSS objectives (NCSS, 2010). Gaining diversity (variety) value provides students with new perspectives, new ideas, and ways of coexistence. In addition, gaining this value, students learn how to deal with social conflicts caused by estrangement and polarization (Chapin, 2009; NCSS, 2010; Zarrillo, 2004). The sensibility value is emphasized with gains within the sub-theme of being sensible towards natural environment. As such, the tolerance value is emphasized with gains of tolerating diversity; the

being scientific value is emphasized with gains of paying attention to thinking scientifically; the conflict prevention value is emphasized with gains of reconciliation and problem solving; and the solidarity value is emphasized with gains of cooperation. This result corresponds to NCSS (2010) objectives. Justice, responsibility, self-discipline, respect, democracy, and aesthetics are the least frequently stated values in the United States second level curricula.

No gains for patriotism, independence, being aesthetic, , cleanliness, or peace values at the first level and no gains for patriotism, independence, being a hard worker, honesty, and peace values were recorded at the second level of United States' social sciences curricula recommended by NCSS. Even if it looks like a contradiction for values of patriotism, independence, and peace not to be found among gains in the United States social sciences curricula despite being recommended, today topics related to these values are often included in elementary social sciences textbooks. For instance, topics such as "real American heroes", "American heritage", etc. in fourth grade social sciences textbooks indicate that the patriotism value is included in the curriculum (Bacon et al., 2005). On the other hand, gains in values of self-discipline, public good, diversity (variety), conflict prevention, and democracy were not recorded in Turkish first and second level elementary social sciences curricula. However, diversity (variety) takes place under the subtheme of respect towards diversity in social sciences curriculum (MEB, 2011a, 2011b).

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