Original Article

Various Perspectives in Values Education by Elementary School Teachers

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ABSTRACT

Teaching national values in schools is as essential as the emphasis on education itself in 21st century. Policy makers in every country ought to take national values into account. National values rooted deep in the history of nations are of vital importance for the future of the societies. In order to avoid interruptions of transfer of national values inclusion of national values in school curriculums is inevitable. This in turn requires teaching departments of universities to include subjects of national values to educate teachers. This is vital in preservation and transfer of national values in our globally and highly interacting world. This qualitative study includes perspectives and comments of 10 randomly selected elementary school teachers in the Province of Osmaniye, Turkey on national values education, school textbooks, methods and techniques they exploit, challenges and policies adopted by authorities. The study depends on interviews of 10 open-ended questions. The study concludes with recommendations on school textbooks and curriculums, techniques and ways of tackling challenges in values education.
Keywords: Values, values education, love, tolerance, patriotism

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INTRODUCTION

The word value, Latin *valere* meaning *to be worth* or *to be strong*, was introduced to educational literature by Znaneckiin 1918 (Rokeach, 1973).

According to Muijen (2004), the idea of value education is in a long philosophical tradition, beginning from the Greek term *paedeia* (from which the word pedagogy originates) and ending in the Enlightenment thought and "ideal of a systematic improvement of our rational faculties, leading to the moral, cognitive and technical development of the individual and of society as a whole." (Muijen, 2004, cited by Sılay, 2010: 18).Values education refers to stimulating awareness of values in individuals and thus enabling them to create and manifest such values.

Human beings, inherently social in nature, adapt to and internalize customs, traditions, attitudes andbeliefs of the society they live in. Any belief, idea and norm that constitute the social culture are defined as values (Tural, 1992).

Values encompass development of ethical, cultural, spiritual and social sensitivity and internalization of these values. Social and humanistic values are vital components of lives of human beings. Sympathy, affection, courage, friendship, cooperation, respect, honesty, courtesy, hygiene and many others are greatly esteemed social values. Individuals manifest these values in their actions in turn receive respect and approval by the society. Values are not only significant in terms of the principles and standards governing our daily actions and behaviours. Equally, they are important in how they impact and determine the direction of our lives. Their impact is existent in every aspect of life from choosing a profession to what extent an individual will become altruistic and fruitful for his nation and humanity as a whole. Values education is the sum of actions for the purpose of transferring values that comprises the building blocks of our social lives.

Fichter (1990) lists the functions of values as follows (Cited by Özensel, 2003):

(i)   Stratification is an expression of commonly shared social values and these values are means of judgment of individuals and allow individuals to determine their position in society.

(ii)   Values play a significant role in directing individuals towards actions and behaviours considered to be valuable, useful or desirable. In other words, individuals' attention is attracted to cultural objects that are believed to be of value. However, an object of this kind may not always be desirable for the individual or the group.

(iii)   Set of values, a framework for socially accepted behaviours, suggests ideal ways of notions and behaviours in society. Values organize social life by determining acceptable and unacceptable behaviours. This is for the purpose of providing individuals with the best ways to express their behaviours.

(iv)   Values are guiding references in adopting and realising social roles.

(v)   Values function asocial control mechanisms by encouraging right behaviours discouraging wrong behaviours.

(vi)   Values as a whole function as a social gravitational force, creating social solidarity.

Values, the most important of social control mechanisms, are inevitable components of social integrity. Individuals depend almost every action and their definitions of meaning of life on social values (Güven,1999:163–164).

Values harbour significant features and various vital functions. The major and most significant function of values is shaping social life. All cultural structures such as laws, religions, languages and arts are realizations and manifestations of values (Aydın,2011: 40).

Definitions of values vary. Values are standards enabling individuals to adapt to society. In this respect, values are fundamental reference points for conscious and purposeful social behaviours (Özensel,2003: 23).

Although values have been one of the most popular subjects of philosophers and individuals of various backgrounds there has not been an agreement on an absolute definition (Akbaba-Altun, 2003).According to Çelikkaya (1996:168) values are all impressions, thoughts, behaviours, rules and social assets originating from social, ideological or divine phenomena and accepted, adopted and continued in a belief system, in an ideology or among members of a society.Tezcan, (1974: 14) however, defines values as being benchmarks for all cultural and social phenomena.

Values are beliefs that help individuals distinguish the right from the wrong. They provide balance and meaning and make co-existence possible. Values contribute to the quality of individualand others. They are not innate but acquired by observation and interaction (Akbaş, 2004; quoted fromBostrom in 1991).

Classification of values is useful in understanding value structures of individuals and societies. Effective research on values requires classifications. Classifying values has dramatically contributed to enrichment of studies on values education.Most common classifications belong to Nelson, Rokeach, Spranger and Schwartz.

Values education assists individuals in contemplating on their experiences and in seeking ways to find examples of values and their meanings. Self-esteem, honesty, justice and similar common values are also gained through values education. (Can, 2008: 12).

The objective of values education is to extract and foster child's innate purity, to enable character development in all aspects, to assist in building a perfect personality, functioning as a shield against ethical corruption and to equip with right morality and to maintain this development.

Values education should not be confined to a definite period. It is of great importance that children internalise the values they acquire throughout the year. Considering the effectiveness of learning by doing and experiencing, children should be involved in proper activities to help them internalise values. Values education is supposed to address heart, intelligence and will of individuals and its objective must be introduction, promotion and encouragement of love. Values education must prioritise emotions since they are superior to reason in childhood. It should be easy to enlighten a child once his emotions are excited. Values education should also have an impact on will. Values are not innate but they are acquired through experience, observation and social interactions. This fact makes values education of vital importance. Research has shown individuals with rightly developed values are more likely to be successful. This is an obvious indication that values education is as vital as mathematics and language classes. Children who have not acquired values are more prone to be unsuccessful in professional, family and social life. Accordingly, values education is and must be a life-long process.

Values may present different characteristics in different societies. On the other hand there are universal values found in all societies. Literature shows that values such as justice, family, peace, diligence, sensitivity, solidarity, honesty, tolerance, hospitality, sympathy, respect, patriotism, benevolence are examples of highly esteemed universal values.

Council of National Education Conclusions

Council of National Education is one of the major advisory committees of Ministry of Education. Individual cannot fly with a single wing. One of the major objectives of the national education is to provide students with values education in addition to arts and sciences. A few of the conclusions of National Education Council is as follows:

1. "*Man of Art*" and "Values Education" programmes should be developed and deployed.
2. Creating awareness of national and universal values should be included in curriculums.
3. Teachers should be equipped with awareness of values education.
4. Curriculums of educational faculties should include values education and teachers in schools should receive in-service training on values education.
5. Necessary precautions should be taken to emphasise common values and foster differences in values as being wealth.

Values education is among fundamental objectives of Turkish National Education: "*The general objective of Turkish National Education is to raise all members of the Turkish Nation as citizens loyal to Atatürk's reforms and principles and Atatürk nationalism manifesting itself in the Constitution; adopting, preserving and furthering the national, moral, mortal, spiritual and cultural values of Turkish nation; loving and forever striving to uphold their family, their land and their nation; aware of their responsibilities and having rendered such awareness a form of behavior for the Republic of Turkey, a democratic, secular, and social state of rights, founded on human rights and the fundamental principles stated in the Preamble to the Constitution*" (meb.gov.tr, 2012).

In the 18th Summit of National Education one conclusion was that responsible institutions for values education are schools and accordingly teachers must be trained and provided with required materials. Additionally, in the circular issued in September 2010 necessity of fostering national values is emphasised. Values education should not be confined to certain subjects. Values education should encompass all subjects. Science subjects at elementary schools should be carefully considered in this regard (Kaymakcan and Meydan, 2011).

Objective

The objective of this study is to find out how teachers deploy and teach values covered in 2nd, 3rd general science textbooks 4th and 5th social science textbooks and answers from teachers to following questions:

1. Are the textbooks satisfying in terms of values education?
2. What are the challenges in teaching values?
3. What do teachers advice regarding values education?
4. What are the responsibilities of parents in values education?
5. What environmental factors have role in values education?
6. Are teachers qualified?
7. How do media contribute to values education?
8. What techniques do you use commonly in values education?
9. Do you receive support from administrators regarding values education?
10. How should values education be?

Significance of the study

One fundamental objective of national education is to raise generations with high morality and character, equipped with skills for future. The significance of this study is due to this subject matter, i.e. values education, and answers it seeks to find in order to assist teachers.

Limitations of the study

This study is confined to class teachers of state schools in the Province of Osmaniye, Turkey. The study is also limited due to the fact that it covers current and national values excluding universal values to an extent.

METHOD

This study exploits a phenomenological approach. In phenomenological studies the aim is generally to uncover and interpret individual perceptions or perspectives (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2005). "In phenomenological model essence of phenomena is investigated through perceptions and emotions. In other words, the subject matter of phenomenological studies is is the phenomena of which we are aware but which we cannot fully comprehend (Akbulut al. 2012,s.97). In this study social phenomena are investigated through qualitative research method in relation to their environment. The study, within the framework of qualitative research approach that aims to investigate social phenomena in relation to their environment, includes a content analysis of elementary teachers' perspectives on values education, methods and steps to be taken.

Participants

This study exploits random sampling method. Participants are composed of 6 male and 4 female teachers. All the participants are teachers at state schools. 3 teachers have 1 to 5,2 have 6 to10, 3 have 11 to 15 and 2 have 16 to 20 years of experience. All the teachers in this study hold bachelor's degrees.

Data collection

The study is based on semi-structured interviews with 10 open-ended questions, the order of which is subject to change, in order to fully elicit teachers' feelings and perspectives on the subject matter. This method is desirable since it minimizes deviations.(Patton, 2002).

Experts were consulted in designing the interview forms. Each interview is 30 to 40 minutes.

Data analysis

Teachers' responses are presented through content analysis. In order to provide researchers with freedom to interpret the responses some statements by the teachers are directly quoted.

FINDINGS AND COMMENTS

1-Viewson school textbooks and resources

Participant teachers stated that while the textbooks are satisfying activities are superficial and teachers are not qualified to deliver values education and lacked consistent behaviours. Sample response by T.4:"*Anxiety of mandatory university entrance exams presents challenges in attracting students' and parents' attention to values education. We have adequate resources and materials. For all he challenges, a willing teacher may ask for assistance from parents and school administration to deliver his best.*"

2-Views on challenges in values education

Common challenges are as follows; teachers lack adequate training on values education, some administrators do not appreciate values education prioritizing other subjects, students are challenged in understanding due to abstract nature of values, student's indifference, new generations are not encouraged to adopt and prioritize values education. Sample response by T.2:"*Social values are considered by students alien to our age of science end technology which in turn causes a dramatic indifference...*"

Some of the participant teachers stated that parents are the key role players in values education and there are conflicts between schools and parents in terms of values. Participants also noted that conflicts regarding values are also present in schools and they are hesitant about the role of schools in values education.

3- Recommendations on values education

Majority of participant teachers stated that a nationwide consensus over values education is indispensable. Students should be encouraged by rewards in order to help them internalize values. 3 to 5 minutes of every class should be reserved for direct or indirect values education through model lives.

* All subject teachers are supposed to present role models.

* Involvement of parents is vital.

*Classrooms must be equipped with visuals and materials to evoke values

* Students must be provided with activities and environments to experience values. For instance,a tour to a nursing home or an orphanage and similar activities may be introduced to teach respect.

4-Views on parents' role

Parents' role is vital in acquisition of values by children in early ages. "School starts at home" is a common saying among parents; however they are generally indifferent to their responsibilities. Values education starts with parents and continues with teachers. Undesirable behaviours acquired at early ages present many challenges for educators.

* Parents must be the role models

* Parents must encourage children by presenting stimulating examples

* Children's rooms may be decorated with visuals and other materials as reminders of values

* TV programmes must be selected carefully

*Parents must pay utmost attention to the way they use language and to all other behaviours in presence of their children.

5-Views on environment

During interviews teachers often referred to a fact with a cliché among teachers: "*A student is like water taking the shape of its container.*"T.7 stated, *"What students say is what they hear..."* All types of media, primarily WWW, newspapers, magazines and T.V channels must be conforming to national values.

6-Views on teachers' qualification

Teachers emphasised the points below regarding their qualification for values education:

*teaching departments lack a satisfying curriculum regarding values education,

*inconsistent behaviours originating from teachers,

*inconsistency in teachers' statements and actions,

*Undesirable behaviours originating from teacher's disagreement on fashion, language and privacy

7-Views on the impact of media

Media plays a critical role in values education. Visuals are imprinted in minds of individuals. "*Seeing is thousand times stronger than hearing*". Mass media presents role models. Only a few decades ago schools were the major source of knowledge. Today students acquire 80% of knowledge from peripheral resources, a powerful fact showing the impact of mass media.

8- Views on techniques

Techniques adopted by teachers are as follows:

* Visuals
* Organizing clubs and assigning student leaders
* Presentations to create awareness in staff
* Exhibition of student projects in school environment
* Bulletins
* Inviting inspiring personalities to schools
* Letters to parents
* Stories
* Questions

9-Views on the support of school administrators

All participants have stated that administrators welcome any constructive and feasible proposal and assist teachers.

10-Views on how to deliver values education in an effective manner

* Stories should be used
* Students should be advised
* Teachers must be role models
* Questions should be used to raise awareness
*Students must be introduced to exemplary moral stories
* Proper quotes, sayings and proverbs should be exploited
* Students must be advised in a timely and moderate manner. An opposite approach will cause avoidance.
*Visuals should be used
* Students should be assigned roles in plays and shows
* Bulletin boards should be used and classrooms should be equipped with posters and other visuals
* Writing tasks should be assigned to students
* Students must be encouraged to take part in social projects. Visits should be organized to orphanages, nursery homes and hospitals.
* Students should recite poems in national days.
* Parent awareness is vital to avoid conflicts of values

RECOMMENDATIONS

Values education in Turkey has not been in a planned and organized fashion. Teachers have generally followed ways of their own preferences. This condition still persists in the country.

In Ottoman educational system values were presented in designated class hours.

Within values education activities several ethical subjects were presented. Real life stories and jokes were included. Intriguing ideas on ethics and morals were introduced which persisted in students' minds and transformed into customary behaviours (Özgür, 1973: 37).

Modern teaching faculties of academies, unfortunately, do not offer a consistent and satisfying framework for values education.

In 1995 U.S. schools adopted Living Values Educational Programming order to revive values on the brink of extinction. The programme is composed of 3 parts covering 12 major values: honesty, peace, humility, freedom, cooperation, care, love, unity, respect, tolerance, courage, friendship, patience, quality and thoughtfulness (Tillman, 2000:IX). The objectives of Living Values Educational Program in the appendix (Tillman, 2000: 1–27) present characteristics that may be considered for values education in elementary schools in Turkey.(Yazıcı.2006)

The fact that school children are most active in their character development in elementary school years makes values education particularly vital. The source of healthy generations is an effective values education system. For the achievement in values education:

1- National Education is expected to act and determine the proper values for to be presented at each grade. Design and implementation of a comprehensive values programme encompassing all grades is urgent.

2- Involvement of parents is indispensable.

3- Government authorities, primarily Ministry of National Education, should cooperate with media to promote values education programmes and take pre-emptive steps to avoid any destructive broadcast.

4- Educating parents must be a priority. Media should be exploited for nationwide educational activities.

5- Values education should not be confined to individual preferences. Values education must be recognized as a special education field and teaching faculties of academies must develop and implement programmes to train teachers.

6- Agreement on universal techniques is essential.

7- Schools must have boards for execution and monitoring of values education activities.

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APPENDIX
OBJECTIVES OF LIVING VALUES EDUCATION
Values and Us
(Improving individual, social and emotional skills)

1- To involve young individuals in values activities; promoting ways of explorations of values.

2- To help students define universal values through their own ideas and creativity.

3- To assist students in reflecting upon meanings of values.

4-To enable execution of desirable values and to allow students to improve such values without dictating.

5- To raise awareness of values favoured by students.

6- To specify and promote behaviours of peace, love, honesty and cooperation.

7- To foster self-actualization and self-esteem.

8- To help students in making right decisions by specifying active emotions and defining undesirable behaviours.

9- To take precautions against potential discouragement due to individual differences.

10- To help students in expressing responsibilities and behaviours.

11- To support values education through arts and creativity.

(Improving interpersonal communication skills)

12- To build alternative positive behaviours and raise awareness to reduce the impact of undesirable social behaviours.

13- To provide students with communicational skills required to develop and improve interpersonal social behaviours.

14- To offer peaceful means in handling disputed issues.

15- To help students understand different cultures and to foster their feeling of tolerance.

Values, Society and Our World

(To contribute to building of a society based on respect, trust and common objectives)

16- To reflect upon practical applications of values.

17- To be alert against symptoms of intolerance.

18- To be able to detect causes of corruption in society and to raise awareness of social responsibility and social justice.

19- To raise ecological and environmental awareness.

20-To learn global values and values adopted by large social organisations.