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Elementary School Teachers' Views on Values Education

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to understand how to actualize values education in elementary education and have teachers' views on it. Participants of the study consisted of six teachers giving values education. The data, collected with semi-structured interviews, were content-analyzed. The results revealed that participants have difficulties in planning, implementing and evaluating values education lessons in respect to learning outcomes, content, instructional materials, activities and methods, and they offered some solutions to them.

1. Introduction

Advancing technology and globalization have speeded up the transition process of information society. In this regard, every state and its government have made an effort to transform their community into information society. Therefore, the role of schools has been crucial in this process. While information society has been gradually developed, values of the society are being ignored in today's world. Therefore, it is undeniable that there is an urgent need for an effective values education. In this sense, the role of schools in making students acquire national and universal values and in ensuring continuity of society has become more important (Çelikpazu & Aktaş, 2011). Ministry of National Education (MONE) specified a purpose as "growing up citizens who contribute to themselves, their families, society, and surroundings and who are at peace with themselves, their families, and surroundings and are easygoing, cooperative, honest, virtuous, tolerant, generous, good and happy" (MONE, 2003). Since the year 2010, in order to accomplish this purpose, a "Values Education Directive" has been issued by MONE. These values were intended to be gained in Life Science, Religion Culture and Moral Knowledge, Social Studies and Counseling courses within the hidden curriculum of primary education.

Despite the fact that values education has been integrated in the schools of our country, immoral events have occurred frequently in recent years and have spread in many parts of the society, which has increased the need for acquiring effective values education (Kılınç and Akyol, 2009; Belet and Deveci, 2008; Akkirpik, 2007). This situation raises the following question, "How should values education be given in schools?"

Lickona (1999) states that the role of teachers has the greatest importance in the acquisition of values. In this context, teachers should give the content of national and universal values, not just their own values. In addition, while teachers teach values to students, they should use appropriate instructional strategies, methods and techniques (Gelen, 2005; Gültekin, 2007; Bazarkulov, 2008). Therefore, teacher resources such as guide books should guide

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teachers in terms of appropriate teaching methods and techniques for values education. However, the previous studies indicated that changing values education from one school to another causes insufficient values education curriculum; an attempt to gain teachers' own values rather than the content of universal values to students; and deficiency in teachers' pedagogical content knowledge about how to teach values (Arthur and Revell, 2006; Yalar, 2010; Baydar, 2009).

In this context, it is required to determine the problems in values education and have an understanding of how it is realized for more qualified values education. This study focused on how existing values education was realized, the problems faced and solutions brought to these problems.

2. Methodology

In this study, a qualitative research approach and purposive sampling method was preferred. In this framework, participants of the study were six teachers (two classroom teachers, one social studies teacher, one Turkish language teacher, one religious culture and moral knowledge teacher, and one guidance counselor) giving values education to first and second cycle of elementary schools.

The process of developing semi-structured interview guide follows as reviewing the related literature, specifying research question, and forming the last draft of the interview guide. After the draft was examined by a Turkish language expert and a specialist in the area of qualitative research, the final form was achieved through necessary corrections. In the spring term of the academic year 2011-2012, the data were collected from interviews lasted about 40-90 minutes. Collected data were content-analyzed by using both inductive and deductive approaches. In order to collect more qualified data, interviews were recorded. Later on, Interview recordings transcribed with the help of a text editor. Transcribed interviews were made more manageable (who, what, where, frequency-occurrence) by reading them a few times. First level of coding was performed by focusing on the responses given to the common questions and omitting those unrelated with the subject. In the second-level of coding, the conceptualization of the first level of data analysis was made. Finally, the coding system was obtained through forming themes and sub-themes. To ensure validity and reliability of the generated coding system, it was examined by a specialist in the area of qualitative research. Thus, coding system was terminated by making necessary corrections on the codes and themes.

3. Findings

3.1. *Learning Objectives:* All participants stated that learning objectives for values education do not exist in teachers' guide book and most of the participants considered other related objectives as insufficient in terms of quality and quantity. One participant commented on this issue as, *"Unfortunately, there are not objectives about values education in the curriculum designed by Authority of the Turkish Education Board (Talim ve Terbiye Kurulu) Instead of this, there are objectives related to the lesson subject. And, values are given in that subject. For this reason, every teacher makes students acquire the objectives in his/her own way. This causes a great disadvantage."* Half of the participants stated that existing objectives are very general and closed. Some participants emphasized that objectives are in the cognitive domain, not in the affective domain and they are not in quality of being felt by students. These participants reported that one of the reasons *why* objectives remain in the cognitive domain is that it becomes difficult to make students acquire values as they grow. In addition, most participants stated that objectives are not appropriate for the target audience.

3.2. *Content:* Most of the participants stated that they did not like the content pertaining to values education and therefore, half of them expressed that they changed the content of related course book upon students' cognitive levels and interpretations. In this context, some of the participants pointed out that they concretized the content of the course book by considering students' needs and levels and thereby optimizing it for student environment and school context. Giving unwritten, unstructured and hidden curriculum of values education through direct activities and giving the content under general topics of the related courses were shown by most participants as the reasons for disapproval. Especially, participants frequently pointed out that the content was not connected to each other and not complied with the following instructional principles: from near to far, specific to general, concrete to abstract, and