

Efficiency of Social Studies Integrated Character Education Program

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Abstract

In this research, it is aimed to find out (i) the efficiency of a character education program based on overt values of Turkish 7th grade social studies lesson, and (ii) its hidden effects on the academic success. This research employed a semi-experimental design with pre-test, post-test and control group. For this research primarily character education program and quantification tools were developed and then the practice process of the research was carried out. The practice of the research was made in a state primary school in Umraniye, İstanbul. Before the practice one of the classes is assigned as experiment and the other is as control group, equality of the groups has been determined through statistical progress. While character education program is being applied to the experiment group, normal course program has been applied to control group. The practice was continued totally 39 course hours being 3 course hours in a week.

Key Words

Character Education, Social Studies, Values Education.

Decline of human rights and the idea towards their deficient consideration were issued frequently both in academic and popular publications in last two decades and, it was stated that the societal structure and individual characters which were necessary to derive benefit from main human rights began to get lost (Lickona, 1991; Ryan & Bohlin, 1999). Studies towards removing this concern are in workspace of different disciplines and one of them is education because, in its' general meaning, education is a process that aims to change individual's behaviour for societal life (Akbaş, 2004). In this process, societal values and cultural elements are purposely transferred to individuals for the purpose of maintaining societal structure (Demirel, 2007; Etürk, 1997). In other words, societal values and attitudes are transferred to young generations in school environment (Nucci, 2001). Besides, it is

among educational aims to ensure individuals embrace universal values and the society also expects this from schools (Ekşi, 2003b).

In Turkey, National Education Act with number1739 which organizes governments' tasks and responsibilities in educational area highlights training people who are academically successful and have rational character properties, when it defines the general aims of Turkish national education (Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı [MEB], 1997). According to this, we can say that the governmental demand is towards young generations' character development and, research about this issue includes practices in the context of character education (Lickona, 1991).

The origins of character education start from antiquity and, it was defined as intentional implementations which were done with the aim of providing students to know good, to desire it and to do good (Healea, 2006; Lickona, 1991). As we can understand from this definition, good character is a concept which contains knowing good, embracing good and doing well. Therefore, intentional implementations towards knowing good, embracing good and doing good are remembered when we ad-

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dress activities related with character development (Ryan & Bohlin, 1999; Lickona, 1993). The rationale of these implementation is formed parallel to the considerations that positive character traits cannot be spontaneously existed, and intentional implementations are necessary (Arthur, 2008; Lickona, 1991). Besides, character education is supported by its' advocates because of the thinking that the individual whose moral development has reached a relatively mature level might gain responsibility sense and s/he might be academically successful at the same time (Arthur, 2008; Lickona, 1991; Nucci, 1989). In this context, we can define the character education as intentional implementations that organize behaviors according to main human values and are provided with the aim of training academically successful individuals.

Social studies researchers have stated that there is an interaction between character education and citizenship education (Johnson, 2005, p. 3). Thus, social studies teachers must use character education activities during their lessons in classroom environment in order to train students as righteous citizens and implement character education activities which are among their missions and responsibilities (Hoge, 2002). In Turkey, social studies have a place in primary school curriculum because the aim of training individuals as citizens who are equipped with main knowledge, skills and values that are necessary in modern age (Öztürk, 2007). All curricula and especially social studies curricula are periodically revised because needed criteria in a period are shaped, considering with characteristics of that age. In the light of this idea, the content of the social studies was reconstructed in Turkey. This new curriculum was built on knowledge, skill, value and concept elements and, democratic attitudes and values were highlighted especially (Ata, 2009). In this framework, character features like respect, patriotism, ethic, tolerance, peace, honesty, being scientific and equity are included in this curriculum as direct values (MEB, 2005). Placement of these character features in curriculum force researchers to do studies about character education. On the other hand, in studies which examined the effect of character education programs, it was found that character education programs had positive effects both on character development and academic achievement (Allard, 2001; Brand, 1999; Costanzo, 2005; Davis, 2006; Germaine, 2001; Grimbilas, 2009; Prencipe, 2001; Rivers, 2004; Witherspoon, 2007). Therefore, in this study it was aimed to find out the effect of the social studies integrated character education program on value development and academic achievement of students.

Method

Research Design

In this study, quasi experimental design with pre-test and post-test control group was used which was among experimentation designs. This model was preferred because, this study tries to do comparisons in terms of value development and academic achievement levels between students who were in the experiment group in which being scientific, equality and peace values were intended to provide in social studies integrated character education program was used and the control group in which this program wasn't used. Experimental design provides opportunities to do comparisons like this (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2000).

Quasi-experimental design was used in this study because education is central in Turkey and students are branched in classrooms by school authorities. Thus, existing classrooms in same levels and which were formed by school authority were determined as research and control groups and the program was implemented. Pre-test was performed before the implementation process, post-test was conducted after the implementation and control test was done after 10 weeks. Character education program was implemented to research group in research process and the researcher didn't attract control group's attention to the research to fulfill all principles of quasi-experimental design.

Population and Sample

The universe of this study was consisted of 7th grade students who were attending to Cakmak Primary School in Umraniye province of Istanbul during 2007-2008 education year. The universe of the study was determined according to purposive sampling which was among non-probability sampling methods. In the light of these principles, students in 7/E classroom of the aforementioned school was determined as the research group and students in 7/C classroom was selected as the control group. In the context of independent variables, some properties of the sample group were like this: 53,4% of the students were female and 46,6% of them were male. 4,1% of students had one, 37% of them had two, 39,7% of them had three, 12,3% of them had four and 6,8% of them had at least five siblings. The ratio of students whose mothers' educational background was in primary school level was 56,2% and, this ratio differed as 28,8% in middle school level and 15,1% in high school level. The ratio of students whose fathers' educational background was

Table 1i
Values That Obtained After Factor Analyses

Scale	Dimension	Eigenvalues	% of Variance	Total %	Item Number	Factor Values
Being Scientific	1	6,653	31,681	31,681	10	from .839 to .605
	2	4,410	21,000	52,681	7	from .817 to .604
	3	2,793	13,300	65,981	4	from .805 to .577
Equality	1	9,394	40,845	40,845	14	from .877 to .567
	2	3,425	14,891	55,736	4	from .805 to .736
	3	3,289	14,298	70,034	5	from .793 to .444
Peace	1	5,563	29,279	29,279	8	from .867 to .725
	2	3,671	19,323	48,601	6	from .849 to .546
	3	2,573	13,544	62,145	5	from .830 to .489

in primary school level was 37% and, this ratio differed as 32,9% in middle school level, 26% in high school level and 4,1% in university level. 17,8% of the students were from families with a low socio-economic status, 68,5% of them had middle class parents and 13,7% of them were from families with high socio-economic status. 20,5% of the students in sample group were living in large families while 79,5% of them were living in small families.

Data Collection Tools

Being scientific, equality and peace scales and a semi-structured interview form were used in this study. Development process of those scales was explained in Katılmış (2010) in detail. This process was substantially presented at below.

After literature analysis, forms which consisted of 33 items for Being Scientific Scale, 38 items for Equality Scale and 33 items for Peace Scale were created. Those forms were submitted to 14 lecturers from Social Studies Education, Turkish Language Education, Psychological Consultancy and Guidance, Measurement and Assessment, Curriculum Development and History Education departments and to 7 social studies teachers to get the opinions of experts. Items that experts have stated positive views were kept in scales.

Factor analysis was done in the context of structure validity, and item discriminative analysis was done for the validity of criteria. At the beginning of the factor analysis process any limitation was qualified. Thus, eigenvalue was 1 in this study and .40 was accepted as minimum value for factors. Results of this process are presented in Table 1 as following.

Independent sample t-test was done for every item to look for whether there was a difference between top and bottom 27% of students in groups and, it was found that all items have differentiated top and bottom groups ($p < 0.01$).

Cronbach Alfa value was computed to get consistency coefficient and test-retest correlation was done for reliability coefficient. In this context, Alpha value was found out as .95 for being scientific and equality scales and .84 for peace scale. Test-retest reliability of scales was tested on 33 students for two times and second implementation was done after 4 weeks. After this process, a higher test-retest reliability was found out for all scales ($p < .01$). Values which were found during scale development process had met the requisites highlighted in literature and it was adjudged to use them in the research as data collection tools (Altunışık, Coşkun, Bayraktaroğlu, & Yıldırım, 2007; Balcı, 2004; Büyüköztürk, 2004; Büyüköztürk, Kılıç Çakmak, Akgün, Karadeni, & Demirel, 2008; Kalaycı, 2005; Neuman, 2008).

Semi-Structured Interview Form: In this study, the researcher interviewed with students in the experimental group with the aim of determining the opinions of the students in terms of being scientific, equality and peace values. Experts opinions were taken in preparing process of this semi-structured interview form. Items in interview form were explained the reasons of the points taken from both scales and their dimensions.

Achievement Test: The multiple choice achievement test which consisted of 25 items that measured the fulfillment level of course aims was prepared for the purpose of determining the effect of character education program on students' academic achievements. Experts views were also taken in development process of this tool.

Implementation

The implementation phase of this research was continued during 39 course hours as 3 hours in a week. Before the implementation, social studies integrated character education program was pre-

pared. This program consisted of being scientific, equality, and peace values supported activities. In this framework, being scientific based activities were used in unit in which being scientific value was distinguished, equality based activities were used in unit in which equality value was distinguished and peace based activities were used in unit in which being peace value was distinguished. This process was designed in a student-centered character and problem solving, cooperative learning, case-studies and discussion techniques, and methods were used to fulfill the aims towards cognitive and emotional areas. The implementation of the study was done by researcher.

Collection of Quantitative Data and Their Analyses

Quantitative data of this study were collected through Being Scientific Scale, Equality Scale, Peace Scale, and Achievement Test. Pre-test was carried out before the implementation, post-test was done after the implementation and control test was performed nearly after 10 weeks. The data regarding value development levels were analyzed through Covariance Analysis (ANCOVA) and, the data concerning academic achievement were analyzed through independent group t-test. .05 significance level was predicated in these analyses.

Collection of Qualitative Data and Their Analyses

Quantitative data were collected through three semi-structured interview forms which were prepared pertaining to being scientific, equality and peace values. These forms were implemented to 12 students and a descriptive analysis was conducted.

Results and Discussion

The results of the data are as the following:

1. Character education program affects the students positively and considerably in a statistical way to gain scientific value.
2. Character education program affects the students positively and significantly in a statistical way to gain the value for being justness.
3. Character education program affects the students positively and considerably in a statistical way to gain the peace value.
4. Character education program affects the students' academic success positively and significantly in a statistical way.

In conclusion, it was found out that character education program affected students' knowledge, skills, and behaviors towards being scientific value positively. This result was consisted with the results of study which was done by Balcı (2008). Besides, this result was consisted with other literature and research that highlighted the positive effects of character education programs on specific values and academic achievement (England, 2009; King, 2009; Lickona, 1991; Ryan & Bohlin, 1999).

Character education program developed the equality sense of students and it served them to make rational decisions both for themselves and others. This result was consisted with the aims of character education program because equipping students with characteristics that help them in making equitable decisions is included among aims of character education program (Arthur, 2003; Lapsley, 2008; Nucci, 2001). Besides, this result was supported with the results of studies which were done by Allard (2001), Brand, (1999), Costanzo (2005), Germaine (2001), Grimbilas (2009), Kropp (2006), Prencipe (2001) and Thompson (2002). In the study which was done by Brand (1999), it was found out that character education program equipped students with positive characteristics. Allard (2001) determined that character development program increased students' respect and clemency levels. The results of the study which was done by Kropp (2006) supported this finding. In Germaine (2001)'s study, it was determined that value education program had a positive effect on students value gaining and the same result was found also in Thompson (2002)'s study. Costanzo (2005) reached to results that supported the results of Germaine (2001) and Thompson (2002)'s studies. In a study which was done by Grimbilas (2009), it was found that the character education program increased the responsibility sense and students behaved more responsible in decision making processes. The result of this study about equality value was supported with studies which were done by Aydın (2008), Balcı (2008), Demir (2008) and Dilmaç (2007) because in these studies the same results were found.

Character education program contributes to students in gaining a character that shows sensitive and tolerant and, against to violence behaviors. This finding was consisted with the results of the studies which were done by Allard (2001), Akbaş (2007), Aydın (2008), Demir (2008), Dilmaç (2007), Doak, (2009), Germaine (2001), Prencipe (2001) and Thompson (2002) because in these studies the same results were found.

In this study, it was seen that character education program affected students' academic achievements in attainment and permanence levels positively and in statistically meaningful levels. This result about the positive effect of character education program on academic achievement was consisted with results of the studies which were done by England (2009) and King (2009). These results were also consisted with emphasis on character education in literature. The view that individuals who adopt main values are aware of their responsibilities and they are successful academically is highlighted in related literature (Arthur, 2003; Ekşi, 2003a, 2003b; Lickona, 1991; Ryan & Bohlin, 1999).

In brief, character education program had a positive effect both on values and academic achievement. This general result was consisted with the results of other studies which were done for the same purpose with same methods.

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