Using Heroes as Role Models in Values Education: A Comparison between Social Studies Textbooks and Prospective Teachers' Choice of Hero or Heroines*

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Abstract

This study explores the relationships between the frequency and identities of heroes as role models used in the social studies textbooks in teaching 20 core values and prospective teachers' preferences of heroes. The findings indicated that there are striking similarities and differences between these two variables. For gender variable, 97,4 % of heroes found in the textbooks were male and % 2,6 was female, whereas all the heroes preferred by prospective teachers were male. Moreover, 73,6 % of heroes in the textbooks were national and 26,4 % was universal; 75 % of prospective students' preferences were national and 25 % was international. However, the study indicated that there is a low level of congruence between the two variables in terms of the identities of the heroes. While Atatürk was the most frequently used role model in the textbooks, prospective teachers' preferences of role models for the basic values constituted of Atatürk and religious heroes.

Key Words

Social Studies, Heroes, Value Education, Textbooks, Teacher Candidates.

The sources of civic virtues and values are different: family, peer groups, civil society, mass media, and schools. Because of some deficiencies and inadequacies of the formers, schools are the least objectionable institutions in teaching civic virtues and values (Kymlicka, 2004). With the increasing interest in value education, therefore, theorists and researchers alike have tried to develop efficient teaching methods and strategies. Among others, teaching values by observation in which role models constitute the essential part has long been ac-

cepted an important method in values education. Many studies indicated that cognitive efficiency and didactic or narrative methods alone are insufficient in teaching values. As Titus stated (1994), the method of "Do as I say, not as I do and that I so" is not a proper way of teaching values. Students need proper models whose words, actions and deeds are both consistent and good personal example. Although heroes are particularly related to the traditional methods of values education such as direct teaching of values (Doğanay, 2006), student-centered approaches would also use heroes as role models in teaching values.

We think that there are at least two main reasons of using heroes in values education. First, since there is a strong emotional and affective aspect of values, using role models and heroes can be very effective. According to Albert Bandura (1977), individuals learn behaviors observationally by emulating models. He claims that the high-statue people are one of the most being emulated models in a society, some of whom are recognized as heroes or heroines in their field. Social learning theory is very relevant

to the explanation of the positive and negative effects of heroes. Unfortunately, much of human behaviors such as smoke addiction and aggressiveness are also results of social learning (Dökmen, 1984; Herken & Özkan, 1998). The negative effects of television on children were documented by several national and international studies (Ryan & Linkona, 1992). In a study by McCrary (1999), kindergarten students were asked to draw a picture of their heroes and heroines. Of the seventeen participated students, whereas three of them drew the pictures of positive characters, fourteen drew the pictures of negative characters, that is, characters who were conducted violent behaviors.

Second, there is a conceptual connection between the concepts of "value" and "hero or heroine" because the latter is a value-laden concept. Very broadly, heroes are different from the ordinary people in the sense that they perform great tasks and actions, they do right things for the right reasons, and possess important virtues such as open-mindedness, patriotism, courage, leadership, perseverance etc., all of which include ethical aspects. While the moral characters of heroes are universal, they also reflect the values and emotions of their society (Brodbelt & Wall, 1985; Sanchez, 1998a).

Who is a hero or heroine? In the existing literature, a hero or heroine is defined as one who is distinct from ordinary people (Gibbon & Gomes, 2003), an idealist person (Edward, 1979), who has successfully overcame the problems and great difficulties confronted in the past (Brodbelt & Wall, 1985), reflecting the emotions and values of his/her society (Brodbelt & Wall 1985; Sanchez, 1998a) embodiment of charisma (Weber, 2002). There is a criticism, however, that the concept of hero represents an elitist idea (Dağistanlı, 2007; Gibbon & Gomes, 2003).

Brodbelt and Wall (2005) suggest that historical conditions play a primary role in the occurrence of heroes. In this sense, the actions of heroes result from a complex and dynamic relationships between certain historical situations and the individual characters of heroes (Staats, Hupp, & Hagley, 2008). The public perception of hero might change from time to time and from society to society. In a study conducted by Resnick (2002) on American and Israeli Jewish educators, the author has shown that there is a clash between the separatists and modernists perspectives. For the separatists, heroes are so idealized persons and purified of any personal desire that no ordinary people are able to achieve. For the modernists, on the other hand, heroes are not flawless, but rather they identify characters who overcome flaws.

Most of the historical heroes are warriors (Gibbon 2002). Today, the concept of hero is more inclusive and includes people from science, technology, politics, administration, arts, literature and sports. However, studies indicated that both male and female adolescents are more likely to choice male heroes rather than females, and that sex and race are not affecting factor in the choice of heroes or heroines (Balswick, 1982). Sheridan (1968) studied the influence of the ideology and ideas of Mao as hero in everyday life behaviors of Chinese people.

Brodbelt and Wall (1985) indicated that the use of heroes and heroines in the American social studies textbooks is narrow. Teachers should use heroes with care (Hall, 2003). Singh and Lu (2003) suggest that "it is necessary to analyze them in a holistic manner by paying special attention to the interplay of both positive and negative traits." It is also important to evaluate the actions of the hero within the context of the hero's culture, time and society (Sanchez, 1998b). Although there are some limitations to the utilization of heroes as role models, this method can be very affective with well-prepared programs in values education.

Needless to say, each educational system has its own value basis. Teaching values within the school programs has long been recognized an important educational objective worldwide. In fact, the concept of education itself is a value-laden concept (Peters, 1966). Educational programs, methods and techniques, program contents, teachers' actions and words, class discussions and activities include certain value choices (Fraenkel, 1968; Yazıcı, 2007). Value education is particularly related to social studies. There is a conceptual connections between the objectives of social studies lessons and the General Objectives of Turkish National Educational (Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı [MEB] 1973, 2006). Moreover, the NCSS (National Council for the Social Studies) (2003) stated that the social studies is affective when it is value-laden.

The Basic Principles of the Turkish Education System include very strong value-oriented objectives, some of which are quite national in character. Teaching core values in schools is important part of current educational programs in Turkey, most notably in Social Studies and Turkish lessons. These programs include 20 core values that are placed within units: justice, valuing the dignity of family, independence, peace, scientificity, hard-working, solidarity, sensitivity, honesty, aesthetics, tolerance,

hospitality, freedom, valuing health, respect, love, responsibility, cleanliness, patriotism, and benevolence. By using textbooks, student study books and related teaching methods and techniques teachers are required to teach these values. Teaching of national and international heroes and characters is also included among the objectives of educational programs in Turkey (MEB, 1998).

This study explores the relationships between the frequency and identities of heroes as role models used in the social studies textbooks in teaching values and prospective teachers' preferences of heroes in Turkey. The heroes and the heroines were grouped and analyzed heroes and heroines in terms of their identity and character, sex, occupation or professional, nationality, and internationality. Such a study can help our understanding of the value preferences of Turkish educational system both official and unofficial ones.

Method

Sample

This paper describes findings based on two studies. The sample of the first one includes 4th, 5th, 6th, and 7th grades social studies textbooks and student study books*. The second one consists of 162 college students attending social studies and elementary education departments of a state university in Turkey.

Measures and Procedures

For the study 1 and study 2, the heroes and heroines found in the textbooks and the choice of students were classified according to their professionals or occupations, sex, and nationality or internationality character. In order to find out the frequency and identity of heroes and heroines, the social studies textbooks and student study books were studied. To be able to do so, all the characters found in the books were not included, but only the heroes and heroines used for the purpose of teaching a value were covered. The second study was conducted in classroom setting. The questionnaire sheet included 20 values. The participants were asked about their choice of heroes and heroines best identified with these values reporting their first, second, and third choice for each value. This study was carried out during the 2008-2009 educational year.

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*   The textbooks and study books examined in this study are listed in the references

Results

Study 1

The heroes and heroines identified by students and textbooks were categorized according to their professionals and occupations. It was found that there were 38 heroes as role models in the textbooks to teach 20 values in current Social Studies Curricula. In terms of their occupation category, the highest ranked hero in the textbooks was in administration or governmental occupation (15 heroes), followed by science (7), literature (6), war (4), arts (3), religion (2), music (1). No hero was cited in economics, media, and sport.

38 heroes in a total 73 times were used in the textbooks. Atatürk was the most cited person in the textbooks. The founder of modern Turkey was used 29 times as role model for 12 values, followed by Fatih Sultan Mehmet, (4 times), Gazneli Mahmut (2 times), Ali Kuşçu (2 times), Biruni (2 times), Yunus Emre (2 times), and the other (each 1 time). The highest frequency was obtained in the value of scientificity (12 heroes), followed by hard-working (6 heroes), sensitivity (6 heroes), aesthetics (5 heroes), patriotism (5 heroes), peace (3 heroes), respect (3 heroes), benevolence (3 heroes), justice (2 heroes), tolerance (2 heroes), love (2 heroes), and the other values (1 time for each).

Study 2

The choice of teacher candidates attending at Tokat Gaziosmanpaşa University in 2008-2009 academic year, Faculty of Education, with respect to hero or heroines associated with 20 core values was also studied. Of the total 614 persons chosen, 494 were male and 94 were female; 441 were universal and 173 were local or national. These heroes and heroines were best known in science (80), religion (33), literature (74), economics (7), arts (7), media (132), music (58), war (21), government (132), and the other (12).

Since a great number of the total 614 heroes were chosen only one time, in the first three options for each value the highest ranked heroes were analyzed. 30 heroes were cohosen, 24 of whom were male and 6 of whom were female. They were best known in science (5), religion (5), literature (74), economics (0), arts (1), media (5), music (3), war (0), sport (0), government (6) and the other (2). in term of the identity of the heroes 8 different persons were chosen for 20 values, 6 were national (% 75) and 2 universal (% 25); 3 in religion, 3 in science, 1 in art and 1 in government.

The relationship between prospective teachers' choice and textbooks with respect to heroes and heroines was also investigated. There was only 1 hero common to both sources. In the textbooks, the most widely used hero as role model was Atatürk, whereas the highest responses of teacher candidates were Atatürk and religious heroes. Findings showed that the overlapping frequency of heroes in textbooks and heroes of teacher candidates is very low. Of the total 38 persons identified in the textbooks, 97, 4 % was male and 2, 6 % was female. Teacher candidates' heroes were all male. In the textbooks there were 28 national heroes (% 73, 6) and 10 universal heroes (% 26, 4).

Discussion

Given the findings of this study, it can be said in general that social studies textbooks are sufficient in using heroes as role models in teaching values. Comparing the textbooks and students study books, it is seen that only one hero, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the founder of modern Turkey, was identified in both sources. In the textbooks, Atatürk was used as hero in teaching 12 values and in the students replies he was chosen for 7 values. In this regard, the findings of the study 1 and the study 2 seem coherent. This result is foreseeable because as Gibbon (2002) suggests, the founders of states are widely considered as heroes in every society. In another sense, this finding can also be considered as indicating the ideological and value basis of the Turkish education system. However, it is an interesting finding that the textbook did not use some widely known heroes in Turkish society, for example Mevlana, Mimar Sinan, Itri, and religious leaders such as Prophet Mohammed and Hz Omer, who were chosen for students for 8 values. On the other hand, of the 20 heroes mentioned by students, Atatürk was chosen for 8 values, and prophet Mohammed was chosen for 7 values in students' replies. Since religiosity level in Turkey is higher than most countries (Çarkoğlu & Kalaycıoğlu, 2009; Çarkoğlu & Toprak, 2000), a high rank identification of religious heroes by students is understandable. It is also an expected result why Atatürk was so frequently identified by student for core values. It is very interesting however that none of the heroes identified by students, other than Atatürk, was used in the textbooks. This finding can shed some light on the gap between the official and unofficial aspect of values education in the Turkish education system.

Considering the gender variable, our findings indicate that there is an uneven utilization of heroes and heroines in the textbooks. This result is similar to findings obtained in some other works conducted on gender discrimination in textbooks in Turkey (Tanrıöver, 2004). It is evident that a great majority of historical heroes are male. But there are many living heroines in modern societies widely known particularly in music, sport and arts etc. One way of motivating female students is to eliminate passive female models from the textbook, giving more spaces to successful female heroes (Bağlı & Esen, 2003). The textbooks studied by the researchers could do more justice by citing more female heroes and make contribution in the development of public perceptions toward women. Recently, having seen this problem, the ministry of education has made some changes in the textbooks by including more female heroes ("ders kitaplarında kadın", 2011).

Needless to say, there are some limitation to findings obtained here and our comments. Our study covers the social study textbooks. It is very likely that some other heroes are used in different textbooks. Yet, it is still an interesting difference that we have found between these two sources. This result can be considered as evidence of the official and unofficial aspect of value basis of the Turkish education system. Further research on different textbooks and teachers actively working in public and private schools is needed. A striking observation we have made during the research is that prospective teachers have found it very difficult to identify a hero or heroine in many areas. The ministry of education and school administrators at every level can develop and distribute educational materials in order to obtain an effective use of heroes and heroines known in different areas.

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