

The Democracy Education at Schools and Pre-service Teachers' Observations to the Democratic Attitudes and Behaviors in School

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Abstract: In this research, the evaluation of approaches and implementations of democratic attitudes and behaviors in schools has been aimed. To achieve this purpose, the pre-service teachers', who has gone to primary and high school for teaching practice in Çanakkale (Turkey) in 2005-2006, observation reports have been used. Schools are the laboratories where the democracy culture and conscious are composed. In democratic systems, schools are the important organizations for teaching democracy. Democracy education should be taught as theoretical and practical. Democracy is a life philosophy. So, the knowledge of democratic values and attitudes is not enough, it has to be transferred to life. Education has importance on democracy than training. The approaches and implementations that related with democratic attitudes and behaviors can be differentiated in many times. When democratic values are accepted in generally, there is been up against lacks of implementations. This study's importance is the comparing and describing of similarities and differences between democratic approach and implementation in schools through pre-service teachers' observations and discussing on methods about democracy education. The universe of research is composed of primary and high schools in the Çanakkale City Center. The sample is defined randomly from schools that pre-service teachers have gone for practicing. The reports, that pre-service teachers wrote as composition, has been analyzed using content analyze. According to pre-service teachers, there are significant differences between democratic attitudes/behaviors and practicing in schools.

Keywords: Turkey, democratic school, democracy education, pre-service teachers.

Introduction

Democracy education is needed for democracy development in schools of countries where the democracy is accepted. The schools shouldn't be the places where the democracy education is only taught, but it should be also a place where the democracy education is put into practice. Because the democracy is a way of life (Kıncal ve Uygun 2006).

John Dewey who plays a great role in constructing the Turkish education system, suggested a democratic education and teaching system in schools in Turkey in the first years of the Turkish Republic when democracy is accepted (Uygun 2008). It is impossible to educate individuals who will live a democratic life without undemocratic education system. The democracy education at schools in Turkey has developed like as a change a practice phase from the cognitive and sensational teaching of the democracy (Kıncal and Uygun 2006; Kepenekçi 2003).

The attitudes and behaviors in schools are the indicators of the democratic life. The schools are not only the place where the students are equipped for a democratic life but also they are the places where democratic life is put into practice. For that reason the schools where the democracy is put into practice are important environments (Kaygun 2008). By order the attitudes and the behaviors of the directors, teachers, students and other staff are the determining factors for creating a democratic atmosphere in schools.

The schools where democratic attitudes and behaviors are dominant called as a democratic school. Here are the two musts to be provided for being a democratic school (Kepenekçi 2003):

1. A correlative dialogue including love, respect, tolerance should be provided among people in schools and classrooms' environment.
2. All of the members including directors, teachers, students, parents and others should be given the rights on taking decisions related to them.

On evaluation democratic relation network in schools, the observations of the pre-service teachers who must be conscious about the democracy but not take part in the system yet, are important. The things what the pre-service

teachers understand from democratic values and their perception about these values in school atmosphere will make contribution on developing democracy education practices.

Aim of Research

The aim of this study is to evaluate approaches and implementations of democratic attitudes and behaviors in schools according to pre-service teachers' observation reports.

According to this general aim here are the sub-aims;

1. What are the notions related to democratic attitudes in pre-service teachers' observation reports?
2. What are the evaluations of the pre-service teachers for the democracy education?
3. What are the observations of the pre-service teachers for democratic attitudes and behaviors of students, teachers and directors in schools?
4. According pre-service teachers; is there a consistency or not between the democracy implementations and the democratic attitudes and behaviors of students, teachers and directors?

Method

Between the years of 2005-2009 in each teaching term, the pre-service teachers who are taking their teaching training as a group of people each includes six people are asked to write observation reports about democratic attitudes and behaviors in schools. The 44 pre-service teachers' observations reports training in 5 primary schools and 3 high schools, are put through a content analysis. It is assumed that the data gathered in 4 years are adequate for a qualitative research.

The democratic values in observations reports written by the pre-service teachers without any interference are evaluated by frequency and categorical analysis. In analysis phase, firstly the possible notions about the democratic values are found out by making good use of literature (Matusova 1997; Kıncal and Işık 2003; Şahin 2004; Çankaya and Seçkin 2004). The number of the specified notions that are mentioned in pre-service teachers' reports are counted and the meanings what they refer are encoded by categorizing. The significant ideas in encoded content, are interpreted and quoted to research paper by giving code names to pre-service teachers.

Findings

In this part the findings of the research are listed as sub-titles and interpreted.

- Democratic Values

The democratic attitudes and behaviors in schools are important for developing democracy culture. The teachers play a great role on developing democratic attitudes and behaviors in schools. Firstly the teachers should be aware of what are the democratic values. The teachers, directors or somebody else lacking this conscious about democratic values can not make any contribution for developing and practicing of democracy (Aydoğan and Kukul 2003).

The pre-service teachers' perception on democracy values noted in reports is given at Table 1.

| Order | Democratic Value | f | % |
|--------------|------------------|------------|------------|
| 1 | Respect | 124 | 12.6 |
| 2 | Justice | 115 | 11.7 |
| 3 | Tolerance | 103 | 10.4 |
| 4 | Cooperation | 102 | 10.3 |
| 5 | Responsibility | 96 | 9.7 |
| 6 | Trust | 95 | 9.6 |
| 7 | Dialogue | 80 | 8.1 |
| 8 | Equality | 67 | 6.8 |
| 9 | Honesty | 62 | 6.3 |
| 10 | Sensitivity | 58 | 5.9 |
| 11 | Self-confidence | 34 | 3.4 |
| 12 | Freedom | 20 | 2.0 |
| 13 | Individual | 13 | 1.3 |
| 14 | Vote | 10 | 1.0 |
| 15 | Critic | 2 | 0.2 |
| Total | | 981 | 100 |

Table 1. The Frequency of Pre-Service Teachers' Using the Terms of Democratic Values

According to Table1, the pre-service teachers emphasize on these democratic values by 'order', 'respect', 'justice', 'tolerance', 'cooperation', 'responsibility' and 'trust'. The frequently usage of these terms about democratic values by pre-service teachers, show us that they have knowledge about democracy education. And also 'the democratic value' written 981 times in reports by 44 pre-service teachers, is noteworthy. But these findings are not enough to say that they are in positive attitudes and behaviors on democratic values. Because the attitudes and behaviors towards the values can show differentiation. However individuals are in positive attitudes towards the democratic values, they ca not reflect their beliefs in real life. For instance; according to a research done by Kınca (2000), it is seen that, the primary school teachers do not show enough effort to gain democratic values to the students.

- *Democracy Education in Schools*

Democracy is a rising value in Turkey same as it is in the world. Firstly the cognitive knowledge is taught in schools for developing democracy and making it as a life style. Especially in primary schools, the citizenship, human rights and democracy education are widely mentioned in the curriculum of the social sciences subject (Türkan 2009). In recent years these subjects are supported by activities helping the having democratic life style with the constructivist program and new projects are supported aiming at providing democratic benefits. These projects are, like educational social activities, honor committees, students committees, school councils, democratic citizenship education which all of these include practical democratic activities (Kepenekçi 2003; Kınca and Uygun 2006; Altınova 2009).

Here are some of the examples of evaluations about the democracy education in schools frequently emphasized in pre-service teachers' reports:

İA: "The teacher often uses question and answer method and helps the students to find the answers by themselves in teaching process. He tries to give voice to each student in classes."

HE: "The student who freely says her/ his ideas and sees that they are valid is a free one".

DK: "The pluralistic democracy should take its place in schools by some of activities. One of these activities is educational activity work the students learn cooperative working in these activities, which is a need in democracy".

TS: "In classes the teachers try to create a democratic teaching process by supporting the participations of the students and making students listen to others while they are speaking, and they follow the same philosophy inside the school too. Both the teachers and the directors try to earn the students the values of the universal, national and cultural in national feast by harmonizing this with the democracy. Especially the choice of representative students to the Student Council hold in April, is a good example of this."

- *The Democratic Attitudes and Behaviors in Schools*

In school environment, the dialogue of all the members and behaving each others in a way including democratic values such as respectful, tolerant, equal, sharing, responsible, trustful can be defined as democratic attitudes and behaviors.

In a research named as 'Democratic attitudes of Teachers' done by Gözütok (1995), he reached a finding that the pre-service teachers show more democratic attitudes than the teachers working at schools. Based on the finding in Gözütok's research, the evaluation of democratic attitudes and behaviors in schools are meaningful according to the pre-service teachers.

One of the most important tasks of the school is to make students gain the democratic attitudes and behaviors. The students are not expected to have democratic life style, if they are not educated in a democratic way. The schools are the social life laboratories for students. And the directors and the teachers are the models for students (Kaygun 2008). So the school should be a model for society.

Here are some of the quoted passages frequently emphasized in pre-service teachers' observations on democratic attitudes and behaviors in schools.

In Turkey in order to develop democracy and democracy education a protocol signed on 13th of January in 2004 between the Ministry of Education and the Grand National Assembly of Turkey. According to this protocol a lesson named as 'Democracy Education and The Project of School Councils' are put into curriculum at schools. In this Project, school councils are created at schools and the participant of the students for school management are tried to be supported (for more information look: Kincal and Uygun 2006).

AT: "Firstly the thing to be done is to show respect to students' personal rights and make feel them that they are individual too. (respect, individual)

GY: "The students sometimes exceed the respect border cause of feeling close, cozy friends they are". (respect)

HS: "Because of the egocentric emotion, the justice thoughts of students are not enough grown". (justice)

IA: "Generally there is a democratic attitude in school. There is no someone's priority to anyone". (equality)

NK: "The teacher behaves each student equally without considering the different level and environment of them". (equality)

NK: "The students show us that the democracy is in actual life by showing great tolerant to disabled students same as the way of behaving the others". (tolerance)

İÖ: "The teachers are more tolerant than the students deserve". (tolerance)

YA: "Most of the students have the ability of responsibility because of being in a boarding school. They know their rights enough and defend themselves well. They believe that they can behave same as the teachers behave. (rights and responsibility)

EY: "The students are not honest while solving problems." (honesty)

ÜS: "I observe that some of the students are honest and forthright while solving problems." (honesty)

İÖ: "The teachers do not trust the students completely." (trust)

İÖ: "It can be said that the students have enough self-confident." (self-confident)

SK: "The school administrations are sensitive to universal, national and cultural values".

DK: "A good dialogue is very important for democratization in school but it is not enough by itself." (Dialogue)

As far as can be seen both in important evaluations of pre-service teachers, the democratic attitudes and behaviors can show differences according to democratic values. In a research named as 'The Evaluation of the Primary School Teachers' Efficiency on Gaining Democratic Earnings' done by Genç (2006) the levels of the teachers' on making students gain democratic earnings show dissimilarity. This dissimilarity is obvious in pre-service teachers' reports, too. Pre-service teachers think that some of the attitudes in schools are suitable for democratic values but some of them are not.

- *The Consistency of the Democratic Attitudes and Behaviors in Schools*

The role of the schools is not only to teach students “what is democracy?”, but also adapt democracy to the life so that the students have the ability to put democracy into their life (Miser 1991). A well balanced harmonic consistency is needed in all members in school atmosphere to provide democracy as a life style. To achieve those schools should be democracy laboratories. All the elements in these laboratories should serve democratic earnings. The structure of school system, the philosophy of administration, the content of the programs, teaching strategies, the role of teacher, the degree of participation and the features like that, are effective factors to determine how many democratic attitudes and behaviors are in it (Gürşimşek and Görengeli 2004).

Here are some the examples of mostly emphasized narratives chosen from observations of pre-service teachers about the consistency of the democratic attitudes and behaviors in schools:

HE: ‘Suddenly the classroom door was knocked. The codirector and the Turkish teacher of the school have entered the room. He said that; I am sorry for disturbing you; but we will choose students as a school representative, we don’ t want to choose by ourselves so we think that the volunteer ones should be voted by the other students.’ This is a good example of teaching democracy conscious by using it in real life.

DK: The students who participate in lessons are certain in each class. This situation is controversy to democracy. However a talented teacher should make students actively take part in classes.

YŞ: The students are respectful to their teachers. But they don’ t show the same respect to their friends.

SE: In democratic classes the teacher-student relationship should be in a way sharing the freedom and knowledge. Unfortunately this democratic attitude is not transferred to students in classroom consciously. The students try to obey the classroom rules. But they don’ t know why they obey these rules and also they are unconscious about the real aims of these rules. On that situation the teachers show an authoritarian attitude. And the students just obey the rules, without any critical way of thinking and inquisitorial point of view.

SK: It can not be said that the teachers have a good dialogue with the students. They are in an attitude snubbing and seeing them as worthless.

ÜS: There is a tolerance towards to students. But the students sometimes misuse this tolerance.

MS: most of the students have extreme freedom because, maybe they are young. They accept the democracy and justice only when they profit from them. Their respect is not in great amount towards to both their teachers and friends.

BÖ: The students knew their rights and responsibilities but they didn’ t put them into practice completely.

EY: The teachers trust their students, but they give too much responsibility to them.

SY: The students’ self-confidence is exceedingly grown, so that sometimes they behave in a selfish way.

SN: I can say that there is a hierarchic order in school.

EM: I think that there is a healthy and democratic relationship between the school administration and the students.

MS: In my opinion, the democracy attitude in our schools has developed recently. In contrast the authoritarian attitude in former times, changed its place with a dialogue in a way of respectful and correlative tolerance by and by. Sometimes it can be misused both by the teachers and the students. A student can show a wrong behavior by defending that they are living in a democratic world.

Democracy is a value to be gained only when all the elements that surround human life become democratic. According to pre-service teachers, there is some sensitivity to gain this value but, it is not possible to talk about exact consistency. Yet the school environment must be a model in which democracy is active in order to make students gain democratic earnings. According to Bandura’s social learning theory, individuals acquire most of the behaviors by observing others (Yazıcı 2008). It is hard to gain consistent democratic attitudes and behaviors in schools where some of the values of democracy are used while some are not, and it is also hard to gain if there is no equality on democratic values practices. According to Sönmez’s research, when the students have rights to say something while taking decisions at school and when these decisions are the same both for the directors and teachers, a democratic atmosphere is acquired and in this atmosphere the students’ consistency in democratic attitudes and behaviors naturally improve.

Conclusion

The findings of the 44 pre-service teachers involving 5 of them for primary school and 3 of them for high school on observation reports of democratic attitudes and behaviors in school.

Some results are found by analyzing and evaluating the observation reports of pre-service teachers on democratic attitudes and behaviors in schools. These findings are listed below.

- The pre-service teachers frequently used the terms about democratic values. The most frequently used terms are by order; 'respect', 'justice', 'tolerance', 'cooperation', 'responsibility' and 'trust'.
- The pre-service teachers shaped their reports on their own beliefs about democratic attitudes and behaviors rather than democracy education practices in schools.
- Both the positive and the negative features of democratic values' are together in evaluations of pre-service teachers on democratic attitudes and behaviors. They said and emphasized that some of the values are used in schools while some of them are not used or misused. For instance; the teachers show tolerance to students. But this tolerance is misused by the students and caused a discipline problem in school.
- According to pre-service teachers there is no exact consistency between the acceptance of democratic values and practices. However the schools assume a duty for teaching democratic values, there is not enough democratic atmospheres to make these values as a part of life.
- It must be provided that all the school system members need to have belief, idea and practice consistency on democratic values.

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