

Teachers' Opinions on the Effectiveness of Life Science Curriculum in Values Education

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ABSTRACT This research aims to investigate the opinions of classroom teachers on the significance level of values in Life Sciences Course Curriculum (LSCC) and the effect level of LSSC in acquisition of these values. Survey model was used with 305 classroom teachers who work in Bingol province, Turkey. To collect data, an instrument consisting of two chapters, which was developed by the researcher, was used. The first chapter includes personal information about participants and the second one includes items towards determining the significance of values and the efficiency of LSSC in values education. Descriptive statistics were used for data analysis. It was found that teachers believe that values are "extremely significant" and the "love" is the most significant value; LSSC is "very effective" in the acquisition of values. It is hoped that this paper will be useful for teachers, curriculum development specialists and decision makers in education system.

INTRODUCTION

Life Science course is taught in 1st, 2nd, and 3rd grades of primary schools in Turkey. It is created on the basis of collective teaching and designed for children to recognize themselves, the society, and the world they live in. It is compounded of natural and artistic sciences, contemporary ideas and values. This course has been involved in the curriculum of 1926, 1936, 1948, 1968, 1998 and 2005 with the same name (Sonmez 1999; Ministry of National Education (MNE) 2009). The main objective of Life Science Course Curriculum (LSCC) 2005 is helping students to acquire fundamental life skills and develop positive personality traits (MNE 2009). In LSCC, it can be seen that there is no particular chapter for values; yet values place under several titles. It is observable that values place in "Vision of the Curriculum", "Basic Approach and Structure of the Curriculum" and "Acquisitions" (MNE 2009; Yasaroglu 2013). The values take place in the survey was obtained from the values in LSCC, under the following subtitles: "Personal Qualities" and "Basic Approach and Structure of the Curriculum". Thirteen values situated in LSCC. These are "love, rightness, helpfulness, honesty, respect, tolerance,

justice, self-confidence, self-respect, openness to change, cultural values protection, patient and patriotism".

Despite of the different definitions, value is considered generally as "criteria used by people to evaluate events, actions and other people" (Schwartz n.d.). According to Gungor (1993: 19), value is "the belief on whether something is desirable or not". Investigating value definitions in the literature, Bilsky and Schwartz (1994), reported that values are related to desirable situations or behaviors in concept or belief. Values have features such as selecting events or behaviors and guiding for the evaluation. In addition, they are used to define adaptation of cultural groups, societies and people to changes in time and to explain motivation factors for behaviors and attitudes (Schwartz 2012).

It is primarily a conception of values education as pedagogy, with effective teaching and learning being enhanced by the positive human relationship and explicit values-oriented transactions that are forged within quality values-laden programs. These programs both help to establish the ambience within which the interactions of teachers, students and knowledge are negotiated as well as the vehicle for the interaction. Good value-laden programs could help inject into schools calmness, confidence, mutual respect, empathy, self-management skills and other positive effect, all of which contributed significantly to the quality of teaching and learning (Lovat et al. 2011).

According to the history of values education, its efficiency depends on the curriculum

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compatibility, the quality of education processes, teacher-student compatibility, and modeling of values to be taught (Lovat and Clement 2008). It is very important to choose information, skills, and value-appreciation feelings in accordance with ages, interests, and abilities of students at test point in curricula (Buyukkaragoz 1997). Therefore, including personal qualities in the curriculum will mean that all students will consider them during learning-teaching process. Thus, potential complicity will be removed and learning equality will be established in education.

In literature review, researches on teachers' opinions on the efficacy of various curricula (Fraenkel 1969; Wansheng and Wujie 2004; Simsek 2007; Tamuri 2007; Mayhew and King 2008; Soriano et al. 2011; Ozen, et al. 2012; Williemset al. 2012; Yilmaz 2013; Anzai, 2014; M. Zaim and Darmansyah 2014; Yasaroglu 2014; Rafiei and Banisi 2015) were found. However, there is no paper on the efficacy of LSCC curriculum and significance of values stipulated in LSCC. There is an urgent need for a further research on this matter.

Objectives

The current paper examines classroom teachers' opinions on significance level of values stipulated in LSCC. On the other hand, it also aims to determine the effect level of LSCC in acquisition of these values.

Research Questions

The following questions were asked to the teachers;

- To what extent are the values stipulated in LSCC significant?
- How is LSCC effective in the acquisition of the each value?

It is hoped that obtained data from this paper will be useful for shareholders in values education. Furthermore, it is believed that the findings of this research, which is an evaluation for life science curriculum, will contribute to the update processes of LSCC.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

Survey model, which is a quantitative research method, was used for this research. It is aimed with this method to determine and describe class-

room teachers' perceptions about values specified in LSCC. Karasar (2005) pointed out survey models as "research approaches which aim to describe the past or existing situation as it was/is. In such models, the research event, individual or object is described as it is under its own conditions."

Sampling

The research population consisted of 305 classroom teachers who work in primary schools at the city center of Bingol province in 2014. The whole population was accessed on voluntariness basis and the instrument was applied through 162 teachers.

Data Collection Instrument

A survey form was used in the research. The form, developed by the researcher, consists of close-ended questions about the importance of the values in LSCC, and the efficiency of LSCC in values education. In developing instrument, firstly, LSCC was analyzed and values to be examined were selected. Afterwards, values were written and teachers were asked to evaluate them on a scale of 1 to 5 according to the importance level. And in the second item, the efficiency of LSCC in values education was questioned on scale of 1 to 5. For the reliability of the form, Cronbach's alpha was measured and found 0.95.

Data Analyses

Descriptive statistics were used in the data analyses. The mean and standard deviation were used as descriptive analyses. Means were evaluated as; 1-1.80: "Absolutely Not Significant"; 1.81-2.60: "Not Significant"; 2.61-3.40: "Medium-Level Significant"; 3.41-4.20: "Very Significant"; 4.21-5.00: "Extremely Significant". The same process was conducted for the efficiency of LSCC in acquisition of values. The assessment ranges of the means were measured as follows: 1-1.80: "Absolutely Not Effective"; 1.81-2.60: "Not Effective"; 2.61-3.40: "Medium-Level Effective"; 3.41-4.20: "Very Effective"; 4.21-5.00: "Extremely Effective".

RESULTS

Teachers' answers were analyzed for the first research question "To what extent are the values stipulated in LSCC significant?" The answers

were sorted according to the importance of values and showed in Table 1.

Table 1: Teachers' opinions on the level of significance of values

Level of significance	Value	Mean $\bar{x}$	Sd
1.	Love	4.679	.65
2.	Rightness	4.675	.72
3.	Helpfulness	4.668	.66
4.	Honesty	4.662	.70
5.	Respect	4.616	.76
6.	Tolerance	4.591	.80
7.	Justice	4.578	.81
8.	Self-confidence	4.575	.75
9.	Self-respect	4.518	.82
10.	Openness to change	4.393	.86
11.	Protection of cultural values	4.354	.89
12.	Patience	4.348	.88
13.	Patriotism	4.269	1.04

Teachers see all values as "Extremely Significant" ($\bar{x}$ = 4.26 to 4.67) in acquiring by students. In ranking of values by significance, the "love" ($\bar{x}$ = 4.67) is considered as the most significant value. The table indicates that the means of all values are close to each other. Additionally, it can be seen that teachers perceive the importance of the "rightness" ($\bar{x}$ = 4.67) equal to the importance of the "love". The "helpfulness" ($\bar{x}$ = 4.66) and the "honesty" ($\bar{x}$ = 4.66) are the top important values in LSCC, as well.

Teachers think that the "patriotism" is the least significant ($\bar{x}$ = 4.26) comparing to the other values. Also the "patience" ($\bar{x}$ = 4.34) and the "protection of cultural values" ($\bar{x}$ = 4.35) were perceived as the least important values.

The second question was about the effectiveness of LSCC in the value education. Answers to "How is LSCC effective in the acquisition of the each value?" were analyzed and displayed in Table 2.

The distribution of the teachers' opinions on the effect of LSCC in the acquisition of each value can be seen in Table 2. Teachers consider LSCC as "Very Effective" in acquisition of all the values accept the "patience" ($\bar{x}$ = 3.26). It can be seen in the analysis of each value that LSCC is very effective in the acquisition of the "helpfulness" ($\bar{x}$ = 3.82). In the top, LSCC perceived very effective in teaching the "love" ($\bar{x}$ = 3.78), the "tolerance" ($\bar{x}$ = 3.75), and the "honesty" ($\bar{x}$ = 3.75). Compared to the other values, teachers see LSCC

Table 2: Teachers' opinions on the effect of LSCC on the acquisition of values

Level of effectiveness of LSCC	Value	Mean $\bar{x}$	Sd
1	Helpfulness	3.829	1.07
2	Love	3.782	1.03
3	Tolerance	3.754	1.07
4	Honesty	3.734	1.12
5	Rightness	3.705	1.13
6	Respect	3.656	1.10
7	Patriotism	3.625	1.13
8	Protection of cultural values	3.585	1.14
9	Justice	3.490	1.16
10	Self-confidence	3.474	1.14
11	Self-respect	3.443	1.11
12	Openness to change	3.439	1.19
13	Patience	3.267	1.16

medium-level effective in acquisition of the "patience" ($\bar{x}$ = 3.26). It is understandable from this finding that LSCC is perceived as medium level effective in the acquiring of the "patience". The "openness to change" ($\bar{x}$ = 3.43), the "self-respect" ($\bar{x}$ = 3.44), and the "self-confidence" ($\bar{x}$ = 3.47) are individual values. It can be seen that teachers think LSCC is very effective in acquiring individual values. However, means of these values are low compared to the means of other values.

DISCUSSION

According to the findings of this research, classroom teachers consider the values as "extremely significant". In addition, some values such as the "love", the "righteousness", the "helpfulness", the "honesty", and the "respect" are considered utterly important. Based on this finding, it can be seen that teachers consider the acquisition of the social values more important than other values. Zaim and Darmansyah (2014) in their study found out that teachers perceive character education curriculum was in a good condition, with the percentage of 80.66. However, from this study, the character education has less effective and has not been quite able to construct positive character for students. In this point, it can be said that LSCC is more effective in values education according to the character education curriculum in Indonesia.

The "patriotism" was perceived as the least significant value. The reason of the fact that the "patriotism" is considered less important com-

pared to the other values can be explained within the scope of the regional differences. Different nationalities live in Turkey and it can be said that the east of Turkey are bemusement about patriotism. The meaning of patriotism in the west considered as the "love of Turkey" but east considers as the "love of local".

On the other hand, Yilmaz (2013) found that "patriotism" was considered as the most significant value in the ranking of the values in social sciences course (taught at the middle schools). In the same study the "love" was considered as the least significant value. Accordingly, it is evident that these two studies are incompatible with results. Yasaroglu (2014) found in another research that "patriotism" is the most repeated value in LSCC. The analysis of elementary school moral readers by Anzai (2014) revealed that they do not emphasize patriotism. These readers strive to prepare students to become wellrounded individuals who are pro-social, self-organized, and sensitive toward life with such moral values as respect for life, cherishing human relations, and assuming responsibility for a well-organized life. It can be inferred from these findings that "patriotism" is perceived differently in various researches.

The "rightness" is seen as one of the most important value according to the teachers' opinions. But Yasaroglu (2014) found that the "rightness" is the least highlighted value in the LSCC. It is understandable that teachers perceive the "rightness" as very important but LSCC considers it less important.

LSCC was understood very effective in values education. Yilmaz (2013) found that pre-service teachers perceive the Social Sciences Course is effective in acquisition of values. Ozen et al. (2012) found in another study that LSCC is effective for the values education. The findings of these studies endorse each other and it can be inferred that LSCC is effective in acquiring the values.

Answers to research questions can be compared in terms of means. Teachers view the "love" as the most significant value and LSCC is effective in teaching it. In this respect, findings are compatible. The "patience" is seen as less important value and LSCC is less effective in teaching them according to the other values.

CONCLUSION

Following the survey, it was identified that teachers perceive all values as "Extremely Sig-

nificant". The "love" is perceived the most important and the "patriotism" is the least important value compared to others. Teachers consider LSCC as "Very Effective" in acquiring values. LSCC is more effective in the acquiring the "helpfulness" and less effective in the attaining of the "patient" compared to other values.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This research can be carried out on different course curriculum and teachers groups. Also, in-service courses can be arranged for effective teaching of LSCC in values education.

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