

POLITICAL EDUCATION IN SOCIAL STUDIES CLASSROOMS: A PERSPECTIVE FROM TURKEY¹

(SOSYAL BİLGİLER SINIFLARINDA POLİTİK KONULARIN ÖĞRETİMİ)

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ABSTRACT

Today, the citizenship education has become a very important study field in the entire world. Political education, on the other hand, has another important dimension in the citizenship education. Thus, there is a rapid increase in the number of studies concerning the citizenship education and the political education. Educational system in different countries involves lesson or lessons aimed at bringing political knowledge in students. In Turkey, on the other hand, an important part of knowledge and skills that are required for students to become good citizens is brought via the Social Studies lesson. This study aims to determine the applications in social studies classes where citizenship and political education is basically taught via observations and to determine the views of social studies teachers on this subject. In this study using the mixed method, we received the opinions of 75 social studies teachers regarding the education of political subjects and observed the intraclass applications of 12 social studies teachers for 10 weeks. According to the results of the study, there are differences between the views of students and intraclass applications. While teachers emphasize the necessity of teaching political subjects in social studies classes and giving information about the political process, the observation results show that a number of social studies teachers do not involve political subjects and information about the political process.

Keywords: Politic, Political Education, Social Studies, Students, Turkey

ÖZET

Vatandaşlık eğitimi, artık bütün dünyada çok önemli bir çalışma alanı haline gelmiştir. Vatandaşlık eğitimi içerisinde ise politik eğitim önemli bir boyut oluşturmaktadır. Bu nedenle, vatandaşlık eğitimi ve politik eğitim ile ilgili yapılan çalışmaların sayısı hızla artmaktadır. Farklı ülkelerde, politik bilginin öğrencilere kazandırılması için eğitim sistemi içerisinde ders veya dersler yer almaktadır. Türkiye’de öğrencilere iyi bir vatandaş olmak için gerekli bilgi ve becerilerin önemli kısmı Sosyal Bilgiler dersi aracılığıyla kazandırılmaktadır. Bu çalışmada, vatandaşlık ve politik eğitimin öğretildiği temel ders olan sosyal bilgiler sınıflarında uygulamaların gözlem yolu ile tespit edilmesi ve bu konu ile ilgili sosyal bilgiler öğretmenlerinin görüşlerinin tespit edilmesi amaçlanmıştır. Karma yöntemin kullanıldığı bu çalışmada 75 sosyal bilgiler öğretmenin, politik konuların öğretimi ile ilgili görüşleri alınmış ayrıca 12 sosyal bilgiler öğretmenin ise sınıf içi uygulamaları 10 hafta boyunca gözlemlenmiştir. Araştırma sonuçlarına göre öğretmenlerin görüşleri ile sınıf içi uygulamalar arasında farklılıklar bulunmaktadır. Öğretmenler, sosyal bilgiler sınıflarında politik konuların öğretilmesi gerektiğini, politik süreç hakkında bilgiler verilmesi gerektiğini ifade ederken gözlem sonuçları ise birçok sosyal bilgiler öğretmenin, politik konulara ve politik süreç hakkında bilgilere, uygulama sırasında yer vermediğini göstermektedir..

Anahtar Sözcükler: Politika, Politik Eğitim, Sosyal Bilgiler, Öğrenci, Türkiye

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INTRODUCTION

Since Plato and Aristotle first discussed the matter, it has been clear that civic education is relative to regime type: democracies require democratic citizens, whose specific knowledge, competences, and character would not be as well suited to non-democratic politics (Galston, 2001). In historical terms, schools are considered key places in raising democratic citizens in all democratic countries (Bedolla, 2010). Similarly, John Dewey emphasizes that the democratic regime would not exist without educated people and the school system has a critical importance in raising democratic citizens (Tyack 2001 cited by Bedolla, 2010).

Together with great changes in terms of democratization in the world at the end of the 1980s and at the beginning of the 1990s, leaders in many countries embarked on a quest of educational systems that would teach the process of democratization. (Torney-Purta and Richardson, 2004). Within this quest, the citizenship education remarkably started to regain importance and the number of relevant studies started to increase rapidly. One of the striking results of studies being conducted in different countries is that there is a decrease in the participation levels of the young, they have very limited information about politics and the political system in their country and the political participation only signifies “voting in elections” for them (Fyfe, 2007; Angvik and von Borries, 1997; Galston, 2001; Euyoupart, 2005; Kimberlee 2002; Park 2004; Pirie and Worcester 2000; Print, Saha, and Edwards 2004; White, Bruce and Ritchie, 2000).

Studies being conducted in Turkey suggest that there is a decrease in the participation levels of the young and they consider the political participation only within the limits of voting (Doğanay et al., 2007; Erdoğan, 2003; Parlak, 1999). However, in democracies, participation is not limited with voting. There are some indicators expressing the social responsibilities of individuals. As well as voting, these indicators include having information about the political process and following the national and international incidents, participating in media, writing petitions and letters to representatives, talking to them face to face, raising an idea, objection and demand against the public bureaucracy, going on a strike, marching and participating in voluntariness activities (Schusler and Krasny, 2008). The young are unaware of these participation ways, which has naturally led us to reconsider the political education within the citizenship education.

In reality, the nature of politics is remarkably diverse and extensive. However, the main objective of political education is to enable students to learn how efficient they could be in public life by using their knowledge, skills and values (Advisory Group on Citizenship, 1998). This could also be called political literacy. The concept of political literacy is defined as acquiring the knowledge, skills and values that support the efficient and accurate decisions in democratic participation (Advisory Group on Citizenship, 1998). Political literacy continues to provide education with a theoretical framework for the development of policy and a focus for practice that supports young people to develop critical knowledge, skills and values framed around the politics of their everyday lives (m16).

Political participation is important because it has a positive influence on the values of democracy and the society, but it also has positive effects on the personal development and attitudes of people (Quintelier, 2008: 5). Political participation is according to Quintelier (2008) very important issue because political participation enhances equal representation and democracy, but also because it enhances citizenship, a feeling of belonging, personal and societal development.

The concept of political literacy or political education is actually not a recent concept. Davies and Sylvia (2004) state that the greatest difficulty within the scope of citizenship is the political literacy. For long years, there have been discussions about whether it is necessary to teach or not to teach political subjects at schools due to these difficulties and there has been a fear about the possibility for children to get brainwashed. However, as the young have been estranged from politics and there has been a decrease in participation in recent years, it has been mainly agreed to teach the knowledge of the political process and participation.

A number of factors like socio-economic variables, life conditions and personal traits are effective upon learning the political attitudes-values and participating in politics. Individuals with higher socio-economic status are known to have a higher interest and participation in politics (Verba et al. 1995). However, it is stated that knowledge (education) plays a key role in increasing the political participation (Hauser, 2000; Delli Carpini and Keeter, 1996; Zaller, 1992; Torney-Purta and Amadeo, 2003; Wilkins, 1999). Political knowledge, on the other hand, could only be acquired through political education. In their study that was conducted with 5000 people from 5 different countries (U.K., Germany, Italy, Mexico and USA), Almond and Verba (1963) determined that individuals with higher levels of education were better at realizing the effects of government upon themselves, showed a greater interest in politics and voting, could understand the political news and resources more easily and they were more active in the political process (Almond and Verba, 1963). In short, political knowledge is the most important prerequisite for using the citizenship right and the active participation.

Educational system in different countries involves lesson or lessons aimed at bringing political knowledge in students. In countries like USA, Australia, Canada and Turkey, an important part of knowledge and skills that are required for students to become good citizens is brought via the Social Studies lesson (Keskin, 2009; Öztürk, 2009; NCSS, 1994). In the Social Studies lesson, students learn their past, environment and social events. In addition to this, they should seek an answer to the questions, *“How is a government formed? How is it organized? What are the children’s rights and citizenship rights? What are their duties as citizens?”* (Kuş, 2013a). In Turkey, majority of the general aims of the Social Studies Curriculum is related with political literacy. Besides, many acquisitions in the social studies curriculums of the 5. grade, 6. grade and 7. grade could be associated with political literacy.

The Aim of Study

Today, the citizenship education has become a very important study field in the entire world. Political education, on the other hand, has another important dimension in the citizenship education. Thus, there is a rapid increase in the number of studies concerning the citizenship education and the political education.

These studies apparently focus on issues like the knowledge, skills and tendencies of the young concerning citizenship (Amadeo, Torney-Purta, Lehmann, Husfeldt, & Nikolova, 2002; Torney-Purta, Lehmann, Oswald, & Schulz, 2001; Westheimer & Kahne, 2004); and the effect of political knowledge, candidate selection and ideology on voting (Achen 2002, Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996). Besides, even though there are many theoretical studies on politics and studies regarding the political perceptions of the young, there is a very limited number of studies on how the political process knowledge are taught in the class or how the current political issues are handled. Even though there have been some studies on political education in Turkey especially in recent years (Akhan, 2011; Çal, 2006, Doğanay, 2009; Doğanay, Çuhadar, & Sarı, 2007, Kuş, 2013b; Tarhan, 2015), the number of these studies is very limited due to the concerns in this area. We know very little about how the teachers teach the political processes and political issues in the class. Thus, observation-based studies are very important in terms of determining the intraclass applications of teachers.

In this study, it has been aimed to determine the applications in social studies classes where citizenship and political education is basically taught via observations and to determine the views of social studies teachers on this subject.

METHOD

Mixed method was used in this study aiming to determine how the political subjects were taught in social studies classes. Mixed method is a general research type where qualitative and quantitative methods were mixed and used in one study (Somekh and Levin, 2005). Patton (2002) states that using more than one methods would make the studies more qualified. Golafshani (2003) emphasizes that validity and reliability in quantitative studies could be provided through the diversification in qualitative studies. Thus, it could be asserted that data sources could be confirmed by using different data collection methods. Survey technic was used in the quantitative dimension of this study. On the other hand, observation was used in the qualitative dimension of the study.

Study Group

The study group consists of social studies teachers rendering service in the provinces of Kastamonu and Denizli in the school year of 2014–2015. Main reason of conducting the study in these provinces is that the researchers work in these provinces. Kastamonu is a small province located in the Central Black Sea, in the North of Turkey. Families generally have a moderate socio-economic level. Denizli, on the other hand, is a moderate and important commerce and tourism city in the southwest of Turkey.

In this study, “convenience sampling” that is among the non-random sample types was used. A total of 75 social studies teachers (34 from the province of Kastamonu and 41 from the province of Denizli) participated in the study. Among the teachers, 33 were female and 42 were male teachers. Professional seniority of teachers generally varied between 5-15 years. A limited number of teachers (11%) had a professional seniority of 0-4 years and 20 years and above. Teachers had mainly (80%) graduated from the department of social studies teaching. The rest of them, on the other hand, had graduated from the departments of history and geography. All the teachers stated that they had received no education regarding the teaching of political subjects.

Qualitative Dimension: In this study, the qualitative data were obtained through “observations”. In addition to the data that were quantitatively collected from teachers, observations were made in an attempt to determine the intraclass applications of teachers. A total of 12 teachers (6 from the province of Kastamonu and 6 from the province of Denizli) were observed. All the teachers being observed were working in the city center. The observations were made by both researchers and observers that were trained. The observers were informed about the study content and they were required to fill the observaion form and take some notes while teaching the intraclass political subjects. 12 social studies teachers were observed in the 6. and 7. grades for 10 weeks in the fall term of 2014-2015. By this way, it was aimed to determine the intraclass applications regarding the teaching of political subjects and determine the differences between the thoughts and applications of teachers.

Among the teachers being observed, 8 were male and 4 were female. Since the observation was made at central schools, the professional seniority of teachers varied between 8-20 years. While 2 of teachers had graduated from history, 2 had graduated from geography and the rest of them from the department of social studies teaching.

Data Collection Tool

In this study, we used a data collection tool of totally 37 items (6 negative and 31 positive items). This data collection tool is a five point likert scale varying between (1) Never and (5) Always. The data collection tool was initially prepared as 40 items. A pilot study was conducted with teachers that were not involved in the sample group, three incoherent items were excluded and the statements in other items were reorganized. In the final form, the alpha reliability coefficient of the scale was determined as 0,82. Items in the data collection tool were reorganized and they were also used as an observation form in social studies classes. For instance, the item in the data collection tool, “*I define the political concepts and express their meaning*” was involved in the observation form as “*Defines the political concepts and expresses their meaning*”. Besides, direct notes were taken regarding the intraclass observations.

Data Analysis

The scales that were applied according to quantitative research technics were coded and analyzed on computer in the version of SPSS 17,0. In order to analyze the data that were obtained from the study, arithmetic mean, standard deviation, percentage and Two-way analysis of variance tests were performed. While interpreting the averages of scale items, they were graded from positive to negative as; “always” in the interval of 5.00-4.21, “frequently” in the interval of 4.20-3.41, “sometimes” in the interval of 3.40-2.61, “rarely” in the interval of 2.60-1.81 and “never” in the interval of 1.80-1.00.

Qualitative Dimension: The observers were required to fill an observation form for each class and take notes when necessary for 10 weeks. After completing the missing forms, a total of 110 observation forms were collected from 12 teachers. The general averages of this observation form were calculated in the SPSS environment and interpretations were made based on these averages. Besides, the notes taken by observers were directly given during these interpretations. Instead of the names of teachers, the codes were given during these citations. For instance, while (K1) signifies the first teacher from the province of Kastamonu, (D2) signifies the second teacher from the province of Denizli.

FINDINGS

Table . Two-Way Anova Results of the Views of Teachers regarding the Teaching of Political Subjects according to Some Variables

Resource	KT	Sd	KO	F	P.
City	,671	1	,671	2,034	,160
Gender	,232	1	,232	,702	,406
Professional seniority	1,607	5	,321	,974	,443
Department of graduation	1,372	3	,457	1,386	,258
Province and seniority	,342	3	,114	,345	,793
Gender and seniority	1,852	3	,617	1,870	,146

As is seen in Table 1 according to the two-way anova results, it is observed that the views of teachers do not show a difference according to the variables of province ($F=2,034$, $p>.05$); gender ($F=,702$, $p>.05$); professional seniority ($F=,974$, $p>.05$); and department of graduation ($F=1,386$, $p>.05$). Besides, there is no significant difference between the interactions of these variables.

Table 2. Percentage (%) Distributions of the Answers Given by Teachers to the Items

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Very Often	Always	\bar{X}
	%	%	%	%	%	
1.I encourage my students for their participation in social life	6	12	28	35	19	3,46
2.Political subjects should be taught in social studies classes	6	38	35	15	6	2,77
3.I define the political concepts and express their meaning	12	22	40	18	8	2,88
4.I give information about the political process	17	32	33	13	5	2,57
5.I give information about non-governmental organizations	9	15	16	40	20	3,46
6.I encourage my students for their participation in non-governmental organizations	10	14	24	35	17	3,32
7.I don't express my opinions while mentioning political subjects	24	20	28	13	15	2,74
8.I talk about the importance of universal values	2	18	22	37	21	3,53
9.I don't believe that the political subjects will serve the purpose of students*	18	33	24	17	8	2,64
10.I give information about the participation in social life	4	29	14	36	17	36,3
11.I discuss about different opinions and views and emphasize the importance of being indulgent	5	6	22	42	25	3,73
12.Political subjects should not be involved in classes*	18	26	36	10	10	2,68
13.There is no sufficient information about political subjects in the social studies curriculum*	8	32	30	18	12	2,96
14.I hesitate that the parents will misunderstand while teaching the political subjects*	8	4	25	26	37	3,78
15.I hesitate that the administrators will misunderstand while teaching the political subjects*	14	22	16	10	38	3,30
16.I hesitate that the students will misunderstand while teaching the political subjects*	12	5	30	17	36	3,57
17.I try to teach the features of the democratic process	4	17	23	36	20	3,50
18.I often involve the democratic values	1	19	32	32	16	3,42
19.I try to teach my students their basic rights as citizens	2	16	31	13	38	3,66
20.I discuss about the national issues (incidents) in my classes and make my students sensitive about these subjects	3	27	20	29	21	3,41
21.I discuss about the international issues (incidents) in my classes and make my students sensitive towards these subjects	7	20	28	32	13	3,25
22.I try to establish a democratic environment during the discussions	4	7	37	28	24	3,61
23.I compare our country with other countries in different aspects	5	15	27	37	16	3,44
24.I discuss about the current events in my classes	5	16	35	33	11	3,28
25.I try to enable my students to acquire a critical viewpoint	7	7	47	21	18	3,38
26.I use newspapers (online or printed) in my classes	31	22	27	17	3	2,38
27.I talk about legal rules in relevant issues	25	20	25	19	11	2,69
28.I try to make my students be sensitive towards (environmental, economic, political, current) issues	4	27	32	23	15	3,17
29.I discuss with my students about debated issues (such as equality, freedom, human rights, environment) in my classes	1	24	23	37	15	3,40
30.I try to make my students active citizens	4	20	31	24	21	3,38
31.I try to enable my students to learn their basic rights (such as children's rights, human rights)	3	21	17	31	28	3,60
32.I introduce the institutions by using different materials (such as internet, computer, books)	23	27	18	20	12	2,72
33.I discuss with my students about the social problems in my	9	13	34	33	11	3,22

classes						
34.I emphasize the necessity of having respect for different views		15	32	35	18	3,57
35.I emphasize that not the entire news in the printed and visual media may be accurate and that they should be approached with a critical viewpoint	5	20	35	25	15	3,24
36.I try to enable my students to acquire basic skills like problem solving and critical thinking	5	19	25	39	12	2,88
37.I organize trips to places where decisions about the local government are made (such as municipality, governorship)	92	8	-	-	-	1,19

As is seen in Table 2 teachers stated that political subjects should “occasionally” be taught in social studies classes; they “occasionally” defined the political concepts and expressed their meaning; and they “rarely” gave information about the political process. Teachers also stated that they “often” hesitated that the parents and students would misunderstand and they “occasionally” hesitated that administrators would misunderstand while teaching the political subjects.

Teachers stated that they “often” gave information about non-governmental organizations; they “often” talked about the importance of universal values; they discussed about different opinions and views and “often” emphasized the importance of being indulgent; they tried to teach the features of the democratic process and “often” involved the democratic values.

Teachers stated that they “occasionally” brought forward the debated issues (such as equality, freedom, human rights, environment) in their classes; they “often” discussed about the national issues and “occasionally” discussed about the international issues in their classes and tried to establish a democratic environment during the discussions; and they “often” emphasized the necessity of having respect for different views.

They stated that they “often” compared our country with other countries in different aspects; they “occasionally” used newspapers in their classes; and they “often” paid attention to enabling students to learn their basic rights.

Teachers stated that they “rarely” organized trips to places where decisions about the local government are made (such as municipality, governorship). 40% of teachers stated that they did not discuss about the political subjects in their classes and did not express their opinions on this issue. All the teachers stated that they did not try to convince their students to accept an opinion or impose it to them.

35% of teachers stated that they supported intraclass discussions regarding politics and did not express their opinions on this issue; but they encouraged their students to express their own opinions.

On the other hand, 25% of teachers stated that they supported intraclass discussions regarding politics and explained their opinions or positions on this issue and they encouraged their students to explain their own positions.

Table 3. Observation Results

In Social Studies Classes;	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Very Often	Always	\bar{X}
	%	%	%	%	%	
1.Talks about political subjects (Teacher)	44	31	19	6		1,87
2.Defines the political concepts and expresses their meaning	48	22	27	3		1,85
3.Gives information about the political process	59	30	11			1,52
4.Gives information about non-governmental organizations	48	26	17	8	1	1,90
5.Encourages students to participate in non-governmental organizations	60	21	13	4	2	1,66
6.Expresses her/his opinions while talking about political subjects	59	24	10	4	3	1,69
7.Talks about the importance of universal values	21	30	35	13	1	2,44
8.Gives information about the participation in social life	43	13	29	14	1	2,20
9.Encourages students to participate in social life	43	19	21	17		2,12
10.Discusses about different opinions and views and emphasizes the importance of being indulgent	18	26	35	20	1	2,63
11.Does not involve the political subjects in the class	45	31	9	9	4	1,98
12.Embodies the subjects in the social studies curriculum with current issues and gives examples	19	34	30	17		2,46
13.The teacher never involves political subjects due to some concerns	48	24	21	6	1	1,90
14.Talks about the features of the democratic process	41	26	21	12		2,04
15.Frequently involves the democratic values	37	19	30	14		2,22
16.Tries to teach her/his students their basic rights as citizens	30	29	19	16	6	2,39
17.Discusses about national issues (incidents) in the class	32	29	28	11		2,20
18.Discusses about international issues (incidents) in the class	46	35	16	3		1,77
19.Tries to establish a democratic environment during the discussions	20	18	41	20	1	2,70
20.Compares our country with other countries in different aspects	38	33	22	6	1	2,03
21.Brings current issues (economic, political, social) in the class	23	27	32	16	2	2,46
22.Tries to bring a critical viewpoint in students	22	27	37	13	1	2,46
23.Uses newspapers (online or printed) in the class	72	16	6	6		1,48
24.Talks about legal rules in relevant issues	46	24	24	6		1,91
25.Tries to make students be sensitive towards (environmental, economic, political, current) issues	23	33	25	19		2,43
26.Discusses with students about debated issues (such as equality, freedom, human rights, environment) in the class	37	26	20	16	1	2,22
27.Tries to make students active citizens	40	23	24	13		2,58
28.Tries to enable students to learn their basic rights (such as children's rights, human rights) whenever possible	30	34	21	14	1	2,24
29.Introduces the institutions by using different materials (such as internet, computer, books)	92	8	-	-	-	1,19
30.Discusses with students about the social problems in the class	25	30	28	17		2,37
31.Emphasizes the necessity of having respect for different views	22	14	48	13	3	2,62
32.Emphasizes that not the entire news in the printed and visual media may be accurate and that they should be approached with a critical viewpoint	50	24	17	9		1,88
33.Tries to enable students to acquire basic skills like problem solving and critical thinking	33	22	29	13	3	2,32
34.Organizes trips to places where decisions about the local government are made (such as municipality, governorship)	100		-	-	-	1,00

The observation results show that teachers “rarely” talk about political subjects; they “rarely” define the political concepts and express their meaning; and they “never” give information about the political process. The concepts being defined and explained by teachers include *public opinion, government, opposition, secularity, regimes (democracy, monarchy, oligarchy, theocracy)* (D3, K1). Regarding the political process, on the other hand, only one teacher explained the duty, election process and election time of some ministries (K1)

Non-Governmental Organizations are among the indispensable elements of democratic societies that enable students to understand the democratic process and make them volunteer to be involved in this proces. The observers stated that teachers “rarely” gave information about non-governmental organizations and they “never” encouraged students to participate in non-governmental organizations. The most frequently mentioned non-governmental organization in social studies classes is the *Turkish Foundation for Combating Erosion Reforestation and the Protection of Natural Habitats (TEMA)*. Apart from this, a few classes have mentioned foundations like the *Mother Child Education Foundation (ACEV)* and *Ataturkist Ideology Association (ADD)*.

It was determined that teachers “rarely” talked about the features of the democratic process and they “rarely” involved the democratic values in the class. Considering the observation data, teachers emphasize that students should be indulgent towards each other in the class. *Indulgence* is among the primary values being brought to agenda, which is followed by values like *equality, freedom, respect and solidarity*.

The observers stated that teachers “rarely” discussed about national and international issues in the class. The national issues being discussed show variety. According to the agenda of that day, some social studies teachers discuss about the *paid military service, current TV series (Diriliş Ertuğrul), mine accidents, labour rights, Parliament speeches, environmental problems* and they receive the opinions of students. The less popular international issues primarily involve the *Syrian problem, immigrants from Syria* as they are of particular concern to Turkey. Other subjects similarly involve the Middle East such as *ISIS, Hamas, Israel-Palestine conflicts*.

During the observations, it was determined that there was a limited use of newspapers in the class. A few social studies teachers using newspapers, on the other hand, were following the relevant news rather than political subjects. During the observations, it was also determined that none of the social studies teachers introduced the institutions by using different materials (such as internet, computer, books). This condition could signify that Social Studies teachers are unable to use different materials.

On the other hand, legal rules are “rarely” mentioned in relevant issues. Especially the rules (like paying taxes, joining the army, following the rules) to be obeyed by citizens are expressed.

Basic rights of students are not frequently brought in social studies classes. Especially the rights of children are never mentioned. Only a few teachers

emphasized what they had to do in case of being wronged and that they had the right to elect and be elected and the right of privacy as citizens (K1, K6).

It was observed that the teachers “occasionally” emphasized the necessity of having respect for different views; they “rarely” tried to enable students to acquire basic skills like problem solving and critical thinking; and they “never” organized trips to places where decisions about the local government are made (such as municipality, governorship). During the observations, none of the teachers organized trips to public enterprises.

Majority of social studies teachers being observed particularly emphasized the necessity of having respect and indulgence for differences. Teachers emphasized the concept of “indulgence” during a chaos in the class or an incident in the country. The observation results, on the other hand, showed that except for a few (D1, D2,, K2, K3,), the teachers did not bring the political subjects in the class and they did not express their opinions on this subject.

Subjects being brought and discussed in the class involve the Chernobyl disaster, violence against women, incidents in the Middle East, Syrian immigrants, as well as the troubles and environmental problems in Turkey.

Among the teachers being observed, only one reflected her/his opinions about current political issues as the absolute truth. For instance, she/he mentioned the current events (domestic policy-foreign policy), expressed the mistakes about these events and did not receive the opinions of students.

The observers stated that 20% of teachers supported the intraclass discussions on politics, did not express their opinions on this subject, but they encouraged their students to express their own opinions. For instance, one of the teachers asked, “what kind of a legal regulation could be made regarding violence against women” and they received the opinions of students on this subject. Similarly, they discussed about educational and environmental policies (K6, K1).

The observers stated that 26% of teachers supported the intraclass discussions on politics, explained their opinions or positions on this subject and encouraged their students to explain their own positions. For instance, a teacher explicitly expressed her/his opinions about Syrian immigrants in Turkey and encouraged students to express their own opinions (D5).

RESULTS

In this study trying to determine the views and intraclass applications of social studies teachers regarding the political education, the following results were obtained:

One of the most remarkable results of the study is that there are differences between the views of teachers and intraclass applications. While the quantitative results of the study present more positive outcomes regarding teachers’ “teaching of political subjects”, the qualitative results do not support these outcomes.

According to the quantitative results of the study, the teachers emphasized the necessity of teaching political subjects in social studies classes, defining and explaining the political concepts and giving information about the political process.

However, according to the results of observations that were made in social studies classes, many social studies teachers did not involve the political subjects and the political process. Only a few of them defined a few political concepts and gave information about the election process.

There are no differences between the variables such as the teachers' views, city of duty, gender, department of graduation and professional seniority regarding the teaching of political subjects.

Another result of the study is that teachers hesitated that the parents and students would misunderstand while teaching the political subjects. On the other hand, the teachers felt less hesitation about administrators at schools.

According to the quantitative results of the study, the teachers frequently emphasized the importance of non-governmental organizations, universal values, indulgence for differences and the democratic process in the class. The details of this subject are presented in the qualitative dimension of the study. Teachers mentioned only a few of intraclass applications and non-governmental organizations regarding the environment and education. However, they did not mention the ways of actively participating in non-governmental organizations, encourage students on this subject or carried out any relevant activities. Teachers did not involve different applications regarding "raising democratic individuals", which is the main objective of social studies, either. Social studies teachers being observed were completely devoted to the school book rather than focusing on the main objective of social studies and tried to teach the knowledge in the school book to students.

The teaching of debated issues has an important place in social studies. Teachers stated that they frequently discussed about the national issues and occasionally discussed about the international issues. According to the qualitative results of the study, on the other hand, some of the teachers brought current debated issues (example) in the class and a limited number of them brought international issues in the class. In social studies classes, there was no use of internet and occasional use of newspapers by a few teachers on non-political subjects.

Teachers emphasize some basic rights that we have as citizens such as the right to elect and be elected, right to education and right of privacy. However, they never mention the rights of children.

Social studies teachers frequently emphasize the concept of "indulgence". However, they do not involve applications aimed at developing the high-level cognitive skills of students such as critical thinking and problem solving.

Both the views of teachers and the observation results showed that teachers did not organize trips to places where decisions about the local government are made (such as municipality, governorship).

Teachers expressed their thoughts about bringing the political subjects in the class. While all the teachers stated that they did not try to impose the political subjects to students, majority of them stated that they did not bring the political subjects in the class and did not express their opinions about this subject. Only one fourth of teachers stated that they explained their opinions about the political subject being discussed and encouraged students to explain their opinions as well.

The observation results showed that except for a few, the teachers never brought the political subjects in the class, created an environment of discussion on this subject or expressed their opinions. Besides, majority of teachers showed no special effort to create a democratic classroom environment. They just told their opinions about the subject being discussed, received the opinions of students and then finished the discussion in a short time.

DISCUSSION

In order to develop the political literacy, it is required to focus on basic concepts and define these concepts (Advisory Group on Citizenship, 1998; Douglas, 2002). Political knowledge is an important prerequisite of participation. Participation should not be considered to be just consisting of voting. Considering the fact that the political participation is a part of democracy, focusing the attention on the democracy education would enable the young to evaluate the political participation on a large scale. The previous studies have determined that individuals with higher political knowledge have higher rates of active participation (DelliCarpini and Keeter, 1996; Milner, 2002). However, these studies have also showed that while some political concepts are defined and brought to agenda in social studies classes; political knowledge, political subjects and political processes are not mentioned. Teachers do not take risks on this subject. In order to have an efficient democracy education and a good citizenship, individuals are required to know and understand the structure, political process, national and international documents of the government (Boyer, 1990). Teaching the students how to perform personal evaluations regarding the political problems will enable them to make more efficient decisions and become more responsible individuals. It is not sufficient to only refer to these subjects in citizenship curriculums for students to know all this. It is also required to discuss about the political concepts, subjects, structures and systems at school and in the class (Glickman, 1998).

Non-governmental organizations have an important place in the political education. Because these organizations are very efficient in the development of the democracy culture and the consciousness of democratic life. This study has showed that among the non-governmental organizations, only the environmental one, TEMA is brought in social studies classes and other non-governmental organizations are not. There is no mention about the ways of actively participating in non-governmental organizations and students are not encouraged on this subject. In his study that was performed in 26 provinces in Turkey, Kuş (2012) concluded that students were unacquainted with the concept of civil society and they had no information about this subject. As a result of the study that was conducted by IEA, it was determined that there was a decreasing interest in political activities and political participation in many countries including England and also a decrease in the number of young people taking responsibilities in either governmental or non-governmental organizations and students failed in understanding and knowing the concept of democracy and basic democratic institutions (Kerr et al. 2002).

Social studies classes bring forward the current debated issues concerning Turkey. However, they avoid especially the subjects related with politics. Other current incidents, on the other hand, are not discussed for a long time. The classes do not immensely mention the features of the democratic process. In general, the teachers do not make a special effort to create a democratic classroom environment. Some teachers do not even let students explain their opinions about a subject. However, the studies being conducted determined that classroom atmosphere was very important in the citizenship education, the disputable classroom environments generally affected the students positively towards politics and enabled them to express themselves and participate in discussions (Campbell, 2005; Campbell; 2006; Campbell, 2008; Niemi&Junn, 1998; Torney-Purta et al., 2001; Hahn,1999; Baysal, 2009). Almond and Verba (1963) determined that students participating in intraclass discussions had a higher consciousness of political efficiency. Harwood (1992) examined the classroom environment in Social Studies classes and the behaviors of students towards political subjects. In the study, he determined that disputable classroom environments generally affected the students positively towards politics and enabled them to express themselves and participate in discussions. In the study of IEA Civic Education Study (Torney-Purta et al., 2001), it was revealed that even though open and participant classes were effective upon increasing the citizenship knowledge and responsibility, there was no standard approach and standard measure in a number of countries. While almost one fourth of students stated that they were encouraged to express their opinions during the classroom discussions, other students stated that they were rarely encouraged.

Another result of this study is that there is no use of internet, newspapers, books or other materials in relation with political subjects. Teachers prefer non-political news in newspapers. Mass media has an undeniable importance in the formation and development of the political consciousness. Today, mass media functions as a bridge in enabling individuals to reach the political consciousness. Using different materials will enable students to understand such subjects. Materials and methods like television, newspapers, internet, radio, banners, notices and brochures are used in understanding the political process of a country (Kalender 2003: 32). It is important to understand such subjects for an active participation in society. The studies being conducted also support this view. If individuals consider the subjects about the government and politics complicated, they show less interest and participation in politics (Bennett and Bennett 1989; Verba et al. 1995).

Teachers hesitate that the parents and students would misunderstand while teaching the political subjects. The large part of society abstains from politics due to the political conflicts and military coups that were experienced in Turkey during the 1970s and 1980s. Parents do not want their children to talk about politics, which generates a pressure on teachers to abstain from these subjects. Studies being conducted in different countries also suggest similar results. In his study, Hess (2004) concluded that a number of teachers abstained from bringing the debated political subjects in the class due to the concerns about imposing them to students or their immaturity. Hess also stated that teachers abstained from and had concerns

about politics as the political climate would disturb the school or parents. Similarly, Nancy, Niemi and Richard Niemi (2007) emphasized that teachers did not try to develop the political thoughts of students; they considered it personally and thought that these subjects were not convenient for the classroom environment.

Studies classes bring forward certain rights of students. Among these rights, the most obvious one is the right to elect and be elected. However, responsibilities are emphasized more frequently, whereas the rights of children are not immensely mentioned. Üstel (2004) states that there is a state-citizen relationship based on the systematic of *commitment-sacrifice-obedience* in Turkey and the school books have started to emphasize the “responsibility/work ethic” as from the first years of the Republic.

In order to solve the perception of politics that plays an important role in individuals’ participation in politics and exists from primary education until higher education, we could involve the practical politics applications in Social Studies and future lessons. Activities outside of curriculum increase the interest and participation of students (Gardner et al., 2008; Glanville, 1999; Smith, 1999). However, as a result of this study, it was observed that teachers did not organize an extra activity. Social Studies teachers neither organized trips to places where decisions about the local government are made nor introduced these institutions via internet. In Germany, students are taken to municipalities in their regions and they have meetings with senior managers, which enables them to pose questions that are prepared beforehand (Berg et al., 2003: 4).

This study suggests that except for a few, the teachers never bring the political subjects in the class, create an environment of discussion on this subject or express their opinions. It is required to enable students to have political knowledge so that they can make a logical inference when they encounter with political problems in daily life. If students are made tell their problems about politics and evaluate the politics, this will enable them to make more efficient decisions, solve the problems and become more responsible individuals. Patrick (2003) emphasized the necessity for teachers to enable students to discuss about the current events in a comfortable classroom environment in order to provide an efficient democracy education at schools. Diana Hess (2009) has found that students appear to enjoy discussing controversial political issues in their social studies classes. Hess has found that discussing controversial political issues in school refines students’ political identities by exposing them to divergent political beliefs. Even in seemingly politically homogeneous classes, students report that they are more likely to recognize and appreciate ideological diversity if they are given the opportunity to discuss political issues on a regular basis. Besides, bringing debated issues in the class will contribute to the development of natural democratic values of students such as equality, freedom, human rights and self-control (Levitt and Longstreet, 1983).

Finally, it is observed that there are problems about the political education in social studies classes and teachers do not have sufficient effort regarding the education of political subjects. This condition might have been caused by the

aforementioned reasons. However, apart from this, it is known that preservice teachers do not have sufficient information in the field of training teachers. In Turkey, the undergraduate program of social studies does not involve political knowledge and how to teach the political subjects, except for a few lessons. Teachers receive no in-service training on politics after taking up position. Even though the social studies curriculum involves basic political knowledge, it is not sufficient. It is suggested to increase them.

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