

Examination of Reference Value Preferences in Theses Prepared on the Existence of Values

RESEARCH ARTICLE

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to determine the reference value preferences as an analysis unit in the graduate theses prepared on values education in our country. For this purpose, as a result of the search conducted with the concepts of “values” and “values education” in the YÖK thesis database, research was carried out on 340 theses prepared to determine the existence of values. The data of the study were coded through the form developed by the researcher and the data were analyzed by the content analysis method. As a result of the research, it was seen that the number of theses in question increased with small fluctuations since 2007 and reached the highest number in 2019. It has been determined that almost all of the theses prepared on this subject are master’s thesis. Atatürk University, Gazi University and Necmettin Erbakan University are the prominent institutions in this field. More than half of these theses have been prepared in Turkish Language Education departments. In the most frequently used reference values, it was determined that the core values and the values in the Social Studies Curriculum were preferred. It was determined that almost half of the theses did not specify reference values. In the research conducted until 2019, it was seen that there was a tendency to take the values in the Social Studies Curriculum as reference values in all departments. In the theses prepared in 2019 and after, it was determined that there was a shift towards core values.

Keywords: *values education, reference values, graduate theses*

Değerlerin Varlığı Üzerine Hazırlanan Tezlerde Referans Değer Tercihlerinin İncelenmesi

Öz

Bu çalışmanın amacı ülkemizde değerler eğitimi üzerine hazırlanan lisansüstü tezlerde bir analiz birimi olarak referans değer tercihlerini belirlemektir. Bu amaçla YÖK tez veri tabanında “değerler” ve “değerler eğitimi” kavramlarıyla yapılan arama sonucunda değerlerin varlığını tespit etmeye yönelik hazırlanan 340 tez üzerinde araştırma yürütülmüştür. Araştırmanın verileri, araştırmacı tarafından geliştirilen form aracılığıyla kodlanmış ve içerik analizi yöntemiyle veriler çözümlenmiştir. Araştırmanın sonucunda söz konusu tezlerin sayısının 2007 yılından itibaren küçük dalgalanmalarla arttığı, 2019 yılında ise en yüksek sayısına ulaştığı görülmüştür. Bu konuda, en çok yüksek lisans tezinin hazırlandığı, Atatürk Üniversitesi, Gazi Üniversitesi ve Necmettin Erbakan Üniversitesinin öne çıktığı tespit edilmiştir. Bu tezlerin yarısından fazlasının Türkçe Eğitimi ana bilim dallarında hazırlandığı görülmüştür. En sık kullanılan referans değerlerde ise kök değerler ile Sosyal Bilgiler Dersi Öğretim Programındaki değerlerin tercih edildiği saptanmıştır. Tezlerin yarıya yakınında ise referans değer belirtilmediği tespit edilmiştir. Araştırmada 2019 yılına kadar yapılan tezlerde bütün ana bilim dallarında Sosyal Bilgiler Dersi Öğretim Programındaki değerlerin, referans değer olarak alınmasına yönelik bir eğilim olduğu görülmüştür. 2019 yılından sonra ise Milli Eğitim Bakanlığının bütün ders öğretim programlarına eklediği kök değerlere doğru bir kaymanın olduğu belirlenmiştir.

***Anahtar Kelimeler:** değerler eğitimi, referans değerler, lisansüstü tezler*

Introduction

The concepts of values and values education emerge in close relation to certain other concepts such as acceptance, belonging, adoption, principles, beliefs and rules in a process that takes one from being an individual to a part of the society. Various disciplines answer to the question “What is a value?” and define it from their own respective perspectives. Therefore, the concept of value has several definitions. Values, which can be summarized as superior qualities, virtues, and treasures (Turkish Language Society, n.d.) are the tendency to prefer a situation to another (Erdem, 2003). Preferring goodness to evil or preferring honesty to lying are examples to this. Values can also be defined as general principles and core beliefs that guide one’s behaviors, and or as standards that define whether an action is good or desirable or not (Halstead and Taylor, 2000).

Values education started to gain currency in the USA under the title of character education in early 1900s, and scientific papers on the subject started to be published under the titles such as values education, character education, moral education etc.

in the world in 1970s (Demircioğlu and Tokdemir, 2008). Values education is particularly emphasized in Türkiye. Character education or moral education is a subject regarded as significant by the Turkish society. Until modern schools were established, it was a responsibility of institutions that offered religious education. With the establishment of modern schools, this type of education became a part of the curriculum under the title of moral education at the beginning and under values education later on (Yıldırım and Demirel, 2019).

Similar to the trend in the world, there was a significant increase in the number of studies conducted on values education in Türkiye in the last two decades (Can, 2008; Kapkın, Çalışkan and Sağlam, 2018; Kardaş and Cemal, 2017; Sökmen and Nalçacı, 2020; Thornberg and Oğuz, 2013). Values education gained prominence as the instruction programmes were reformed in 2005, and it was put into practice as a relevant circular order was issued in 2010 (Can, 2008; Şimşek, 2015). It is important to know how values are covered by the instruction programmes (Yaşaroğlu, 2018). This is because when subject teachers decide how to teach a value and when the academics who work on this subject decide which values they will take as references in their studies, one of the primary sources they resort to is instruction programmes. For a long time, values were covered in different ways in the instruction programmes of various classes in Türkiye. For example, values were covered in detail in Social Studies Curriculum (2005), whereas they were not covered at all in other classes including Turkish (2005) classes. As the programmes were reformed, changes were made on the lists of values to be covered in various classes. Finally, with the “studies on the renewal and change of curricula” in July 2017, 10 root values were defined and covered in the instruction programmes of all classes, including primary and secondary schools (Ministry of Turkish Education, 2019).

It is important to reach a consensus on values education. It requires not only equipping children with information, but also helping them gain national and universal values to raise qualified individuals. A healthy society is composed of individuals who own and internalize values. The continuation of social life in a plausible way is closely related to both the happiness and quality of individuals who compose it and to what degree values adopted by them (Ekşi and Katılmış, 2016, p. 12). For these reasons, it is inevitable for nations to place a special significance on values education. Indeed, values education is covered in the curricula of many countries and highly emphasized (Edgington, 2002, p. 115). The issues that what values education is, how it should be conducted, in which way it should be covered in instruction programmes, how and to what extent values education is given a place in textbooks and extracurricular resources are important and have been the subject matter of many studies (Aydın

and Gürler, 2012; Bolat, 2016; Cihan, 2014; Kenan, 2009; Kumbasar, 2011; Meydan, 2014; Uygun, 2013; Yazıcı, 2006; Yılmaz, 2013). A review of national resources reveals that a number of publications contain the topic of “values education”. On the other hand, the number of international publications originating from Türkiye is relatively quite low (Sökmen and Nalçacı, 2020).

There are also scientific publications examining the studies on values education in the literature (Elbir and Bağcı, 2013; Gözler et al., 2020; Güçlü, 2015; Gündüz, Başpınar and Büyükkaracı, 2017; Kapkın, Çalışkan and Sağlam, 2018). These studies examined the scientific publications on values education in terms of various methodological qualities. However, there is no study focusing on the reference values in the publications on value education. Reference values are those values that are set to be the research theme in scientific studies identifying the values in a certain work or document. To conduct data analysis on studies employing descriptive analysis or content analysis, creating a framework to display under which categories the themes will be organized prevents data loss or incorrect data arrangements (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2011). In studies aiming to identify values, the data to be looked for, the categories this data will be coded under, and the way to carry on this coding depend on the research themes. The research themes in such studies are taken as the reference values in this study.

It is important to understand which reference values are chosen as research themes by different disciplines when determining their starting points in scientific studies on values. For example, a researcher examining social studies textbooks in terms of values education has a list of values or a guide (Social Studies Curriculum, 2005). However, what values should a researcher examining Turkish textbooks from the same perspective take as a reference? Have the 10 root values added to instruction programmes of Turkish (2018) and other classes after a while changed the course of such research? Similarly, which values do researchers from other disciplines take as reference values in similar research? How can these values be associated with respective disciplines? Offering answers to these questions is important in terms of determining the course of values education in Türkiye, guiding the researchers in this field, and contributing to the values education programs. The differences between instruction programmes will result in differences in practice. To develop an effective values education enforcement policy, it is necessary to build a consensus on which values to be taught before how to teach them.

This study aims to identify the reference values in graduate theses on values education in Türkiye. For a scientific study on values education to have reference values, its aim should be identifying values. For this purpose, graduate theses aiming to iden-

tify values and uploaded to the database of the Council of Higher Education (YÖK) were reviewed and the values taken as references by these theses were identified. The research questions of this study are as follows:

1. How is the distribution of graduate theses on the identification of values by years, institutions, departments and disciplines?
2. Which values are taken as the reference values by graduate theses on values education?
3. How is the distribution of these reference values by disciplines?

Method

This study is a qualitative study in which the data is obtained through document review. Qualitative methods employ texts and images as data and help the researcher taking an authentic course in data analysis (Creswell, 2013). Reviewing documents related to research questions is preferred to make richer and more comprehensive inferences (Baş and Akturan, 2013). In this study, questionnaires, interviews, experiments, etc., which require ethical committee approval. techniques were not used. Therefore, ethical committee approval is not required.

Collection of Data

The YÖK database is searched by the keywords “values education” and “education” (in August 2022). This first step included all master’s and doctoral theses regardless of the scientific field or discipline. The theses belonging to irrelevant fields that has no concern with values education such as engineering and medicine are then eliminated. The results of the first search revealed 1039 theses. Not only the titles but also the summaries were reviewed to make sure that the purpose and content of theses were relevant. For the purpose of the current study, the topics of theses were reviewed and those aiming to identify the values were chosen. Other theses focusing on different topics such as parents’, teachers’ or students’ opinions on values, the statuses or changes of values in individuals etc. excluded from the scope of this study.

A majority of the theses on the identification of values are composed of so called “compilation” studies aiming to identify the values in various texts such as works of an author or a poet, newspapers or periodical publications, or textbooks. The final elimination left 340 theses to be reviewed.

Analysis of Data

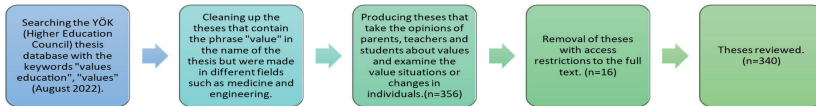
The documents were subjected to content analysis based on the research questions. The stages of content analysis such as defining concepts, determining unit(s) of

analysis, locating relevant data, developing a logical structure, determining coding categories, counting, interpreting and writing (Büyüköztürk et al., 2012) were followed carefully. The form prepared by the researcher to code the data was employed to create Excel files. The data coded in these files were subjected to content analysis.

The titles, topics, disciplines, types, years of writing, institutions and the reference values of the theses were processed to the Excel files. These files were subjected to content analysis. At this stage, four randomly selected theses were analyzed by a different researcher. The results were compared with the researcher's data. As a result of the comparison, the similarity was found to be 0.91 by using the Reliability=Consensus/(Agreement+Disagreement) formula (Miles and Huberman; 1994). Thus, the researcher continued the analysis. Frequency distributions in coding were used for data analysis. The data obtained from the analysis were visualized in the form of charts, figures and tables and interpreted. A flow chart displaying the data collection and analysis process is given below.

Figure 1

Working Flow Chart



Limitations

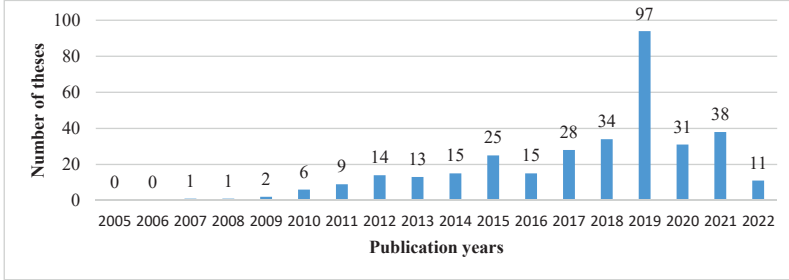
This study was carried out to examine the reference values in the postgraduate theses on values education. Only the theses aimed at detecting the existence of values were included in the analysis. Reference values, which express the main purpose of the research, are included in the theses aiming to determine the existence of values, but are not included in the theses prepared on subjects such as opinions, attitudes, and value changes in individuals. The theses examined were limited to after 2005, when the subject of values education first started to take place in the curriculum.

Findings

Distribution of Theses by Year

Figure 2

Distribution of Theses by Years

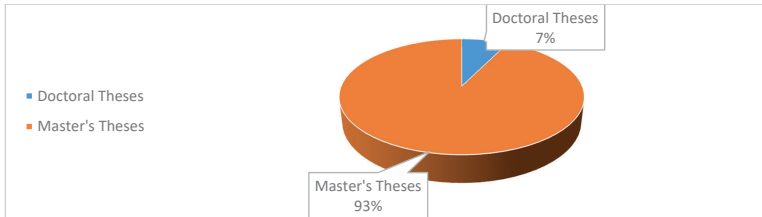


An examination of the distribution of the theses by years revealed that there was no such thesis written in 2005 and 2006. The year 2022 is not over as of the time of this writing and there is an ongoing data flow. The least number of theses on this subject were written in 2007 ($f=1$) and 2008 ($f=1$). The highest number of theses, on the other hand, were written in 2019 ($f=97$).

Distribution of Theses by Type

Figure 3

Distribution of Theses by Type



An examination of the distribution of the theses by types showed that master's theses constituted 93% of all theses on the subject ($f=315$), whereas the percentage of doctoral theses on the subject was 7% ($f=25$).

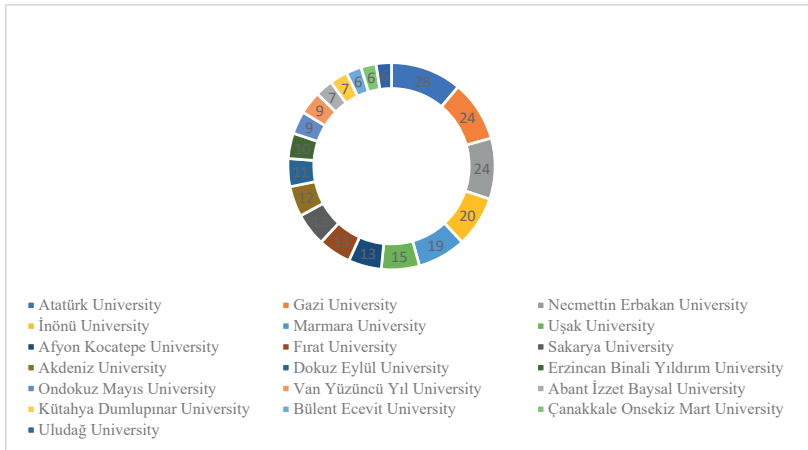
Prominent Universities

An examination of the prominent universities in the theses showed that Atatürk University is in the first place. Sixty-four percent of the graduate thesis prepared in

Atatürk University belonged to Turkish Education Department. Gazi University is in the second place. The theses prepared in Gazi University belonged to Turkish Language and Literature (38%) and Turkish Education (17%) Departments. The chart given below shows the prominent universities and the relative number of theses prepared in these universities.

Figure 4

The Prominent Universities

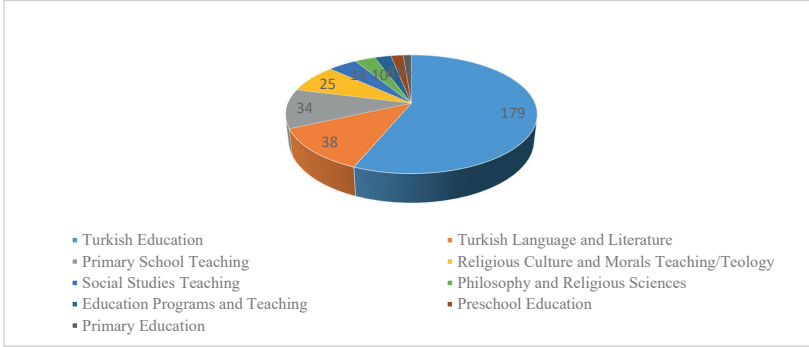


Distribution of Theses by Departments

The examination of the distribution of the theses by department revealed that Turkish Education Department comes into prominence with 179 theses out of 340. This number constitutes 56% of all reviewed theses. Turkish Language and Literature Department followed it with 12%.

Figure 5

Distribution of Theses According to Main Disciplines

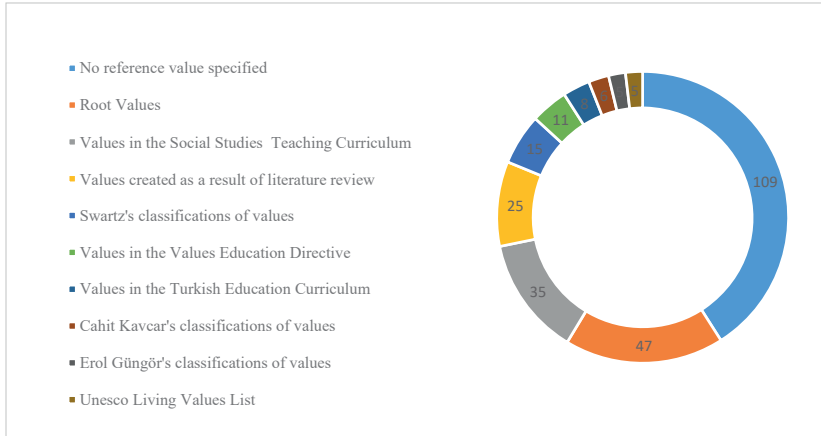


Most Frequently Used Reference Values

The findings on the most frequently used reference values revealed that no reference values were found/specified in 42% of the theses. On the other hand, the root values identified by the Ministry of Education (%18) were the most frequently used reference values. The values specified in Social Studies Curriculum were in the second place with 13%. Ten percent of all theses used their own reference values through field and literature reviews. The chart below shows the most frequently used reference values and the number of theses they were used in.

Figure 6

The Prominent Reference Values



Distribution of Reference Values by Prominent Departments

The distribution of the reference values preferred by the departments in which the highest number of theses were prepared are given in this section. The data of the five most prominent departments is given below.

Reference values used in the theses prepared within Turkish Education Department: Twenty-three percent of the theses prepared within Turkish Education Department have no reference values. On the other hand, the most preferred values in this department are the root values (21%), which is followed by the values specified in Social Studies Curriculum (13%) and values found in the classification of Shwartz (9%).

Table 1

Prominent Reference Values in the Department of Turkish Education

Reference Values	Frequency
No reference value specified	37
Root Values	33
Values in the Social Studies Curriculum	21
Shwartz's classifications of values	14
Values created as a result of literature review	10
Values in the Turkish Education Curriculum	9
Values in the Turkish Education and Social Studies Curriculum (together)	9
Values obtained from MEB (Ministry of Education) general purposes	7
Values in the Values Education Directive	7
Spranger's classification of values	5
C. Kavcar's classifications of values	5
Güngör's classifications of values	3

Reference values used in the theses prepared within Turkish Language and Literature Department: Similar to those prepared within Turkish Education department, the theses prepared within Turkish Language and Literature Department mostly have no reference values (21%). The root values, the values specified in Social Studies Curriculum and the values specified in the general purposes of the Ministry of Education were preferred equally (14%). A relatively equal distribution is observed in Turkish Language and Literature Department compared to other departments.

Table 2*Prominent Reference Values in the Department of Turkish Language and Literature*

Reference Values	Frequency
No reference value specified	6
Values in the Turkish Language and Literature Curriculum	4
Values obtained from MEB (Ministry of Education) general purposes	4
Root Values	4
Güngör's classifications of values	3
Values in the Social Studies Curriculum	3
Values in the Values Education Directive	3
Values created as a result of literature review	2

Reference values used in the theses prepared within Classroom Teaching Department: Twenty-nine percent of the theses prepared within Classroom Teaching Department have no reference values. On the other hand, the most frequently preferred values are the values specified in Social Studies Curriculum (23%), which was followed by the root values (19%).

Table 3*Prominent Reference Values in the Department of Primary Education*

Reference Values	Frequency
No reference value specified	9
Values in the Social Studies Curriculum	7
Root Values	6
Shwartz's classifications of values	2
Values created as a result of literature review	2
Values in the Turkish Education Curriculum	2
Unesco Living Values List	1
Güngör's classifications of values	1
Values in the Values Education Directive	1

Reference values used in the theses prepared within Religious Culture and Ethics and Theology Departments: Religious Culture and Ethics and Theology Departments are analyzed together in this section. According to the results of the analysis, 68% of the theses prepared within Religious Culture and Ethics and Theology Departments have no reference values. It is seen that other reference values are preferred with similar percentages.

Table 4

Prominent Reference Values in the Department of Religious Culture and Morals Teaching / Theology

Reference Values	Frequency
No reference value specified	17
Values in the Religious Culture and Morals Curriculum	2
Values obtained from MEB (Ministry of Education) general purposes	1
Values created as a result of literature review	1
Root Values	1
Values in the Values Education Directive	1
Rokeach's classifications of values	1
Values mentioned in the Quran and hadiths	1

Reference values used in the theses prepared within Social Studies Education Department: Approximately 80% of the theses prepared within Social Studies Education Department took the values specified in Social Studies Curriculum as reference values. The root values and UNESCO living values list were preferred equally (7%). Approximately 7% of the theses specified no reference values.

Table 5

Prominent Reference Values in the Department of Social Studies Teaching

Reference Values	Frequency
Values in the Social Studies Curriculum	11
No reference value specified	1
Unesco Living Values List	1
Root Values	1

Discussion, Conclusion and Suggestions

The distribution of the theses on the identification of values indicates that there is a slow but steady increase in the number of theses since 2007. On the other hand, the year 2019 witnessed a threefold increase in the number of such theses compared to the previous year. It can be said that this increase took place right after the Ministry of Education added ten root values to the instruction programmes. This reform is thought to result in an increase in the number of graduate theses. The distribution of the graduate theses by years presented by Kapkın et al. (2018) is in parallel with the findings of the current study.

Looking at the distribution of the theses by types, it can be seen that 93% of all theses were master's theses. Similarly, the bibliography essay by Kardaş and Cemal (2017) on values education showed that master's theses constituted the majority of all theses. There are other studies in the literature sustaining that master's theses constitute the majority in this field (Baş and Beyhan, 2012; Kurtdede Fidan and Öner, 2018; Batur and Akdeniz, 2020). The topics of the doctoral theses on values education reveal that these theses are predominantly experimental and practical theses rather than those focusing on the identification of values. Therefore, the majority of the doctoral theses was not included in the dataset of this study. It is thought that since preparing a thesis aiming to identify values is easier than an experimental or practical one, it is preferred more in master's programs.

The most prominent university in terms of the number of theses on the subject is Atatürk University, which is followed by Gazi University and Necmettin Erbakan University. Similarly, Kurtdede Fidan and Öner (2018) found that Atatürk University and Necmettin Erbakan University were the most prominent universities in terms of the number of theses on values education. On the other hand, Dündar and Hareket (2016) found in their study examining the articles on values education that Marmara, Sakarya and Selçuk Universities were the most prominent universities in this field. It was found that a majority of the theses prepared in Atatürk University were from Turkish Education Department. Similarly, the theses prepared in Gazi University were mostly from Turkish Education and Turkish Language and Literature Departments.

The distribution of the theses aiming to identify values by departments showed that Turkish Education Department was the most prominent department, as 56% of the theses were prepared within this department. It was followed by Turkish Language and Literature, Classroom Teaching, Religious Culture and Ethics, and Social Studies Education Departments with close percentages. The results of the analyses showed that the theses were prepared within twenty-one departments. Such a distribution is thought to imply that values education is an interdisciplinary subject.

The examination of the most frequently used reference values showed that the expression “no reference values” took the first place. That most of the theses does not have or specified reference values appears to be a shortcoming of these theses in terms of methodology. This is because in descriptive analysis (which were predominantly used by the theses), predetermining themes and conducting analysis based on these themes is the scientifically accepted approach (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2011). The prominent reference values, on the other hand, are the root values and the values specified by the Social Studies Curriculum. Similarly, Metin and Yılmaz (2019) found that the values specified by the Social Studies Curriculum were the predominantly used values. Especially the theses prepared after 2018 predominantly preferred the root values as their reference values. The reason for the increased orientation towards the root values thought to be associated with the convenience of working on these values, owing to that Ministry of Education added the root values to all instruction programmes and all departments can use these values when studying values education, and these values are relatively few in number. Other prominent values show that some researchers can create their own list of values (10%) by reviewing the literature. This can be explained by the unsuitability of the existing lists/classifications to the research topics or that values are not explicitly stated in their respective departments’ instruction programmes. This is thought to be reason for these researchers to create their own lists.

The distribution of reference values by fields show that the majority of the theses prepared within Turkish Education Department have no reference values. The most frequently used values, on the other hand, are the root values, which is followed by the values stated in the Social Studies Curriculum. A detailed examination of theses reveals that most of the theses prepared within Turkish Education Department used the values specified in the Social Studies Curriculum until the root values were published. Root values are preferred more in this department since 2018. It is thought that the researchers from this field had to seek a values list because there was no list covered in their own instruction programmes. Most of the theses prepared in Turkish Language and Literature specified no reference values. Most frequently used values were the ones specified in Turkish Language and Literature Instruction Programme and those obtained from the general purposes of the Ministry of Education.

A similar situation is observed in Classroom Teaching Department. Most of the theses did not specify reference values. On the other hand, most frequently used ones were the ones from the Social Studies Curriculum. Sixty-eight percent of the theses prepared in Religious Culture and Ethics and Theology Departments similarly specified no reference values.

However, the situation is different in Social Studies Education Department. Seventy-nine percent of the theses prepared within this department employed the values specified in the Social Studies Curriculum as reference values. Such a high percentage imply that researchers prioritize the values covered in their respective instruction programme when preparing a thesis on the identification of values. Values have explicitly been listed in the Social Studies Curriculum since 2005 (Kan, 2010). This provides a convenience for researchers from both Social Studies Education Department and other departments. The findings reveal that until the root values were covered in all instruction programs, other disciplines also used the values listed in the Social Studies Curriculum.

This study aimed to find which reference values have been used by the theses aiming to identify values. It is concluded that instruction programmes of respective departments should explicitly list the values. In addition, it was found that each department has their own distinctive applications in terms of values education. It should also be stated that though various values classifications offer diversity to researchers, it will also make it harder for them to decide on the reference values. The results of this study allow one to infer those researchers tend to prefer the most convenient themes they can reach. Similarly, results of the various studies conducted by different researchers support that there is a tendency in Türkiye for scientific studies that can be completed easily in a short time (Erdoğan and Çağiltay, 2009; Şenay et al., 2020). In addition, that the values listed in the Social Studies Curriculum are high in number, being more comprehensive compared to other values classifications, can be another reason for researchers to use this list. Similarly, in a study conducted in Spain, it was revealed that the values given in the curriculum are not inclusive and sufficient, and that both researchers and teachers tend to create their own value lists (Pérez-Jorge et al., 2017).

Another problem identified in the study arises as a result of different researchers trying to determine the existence of values in a work by selecting and examining different reference values as the research theme. While the same work is found to be quite rich in terms of values by one researcher, another researcher may describe it as “adequate but needs improvement”. (Şen, 2008; Yaman et al., 2009). The reason for this can be attributed to the different values in the curriculums. Even if they examine the same work in terms of the existence of values, the results of the studies that refer to different curricula are also different.

This study revealed that there is no unity on values education in Türkiye. It can be said that there are not enough studies yet on the inclusiveness of the root values added to the curriculum in recent years or their guidance in scientific studies. From

this point of view, it may be suggested to determine a more inclusive and common list of values. Thus, a unity can be achieved in values education and more systematic studies can be made. This study focuses on the reference values employed in graduate theses on values education. Following research can use a wider sample and examine the reference values preferences in other scientific publications. It is found that root values are predominantly used in the theses prepared since 2018. It can be discussed that whether root values are comprehensive enough to identify values in a work (books, magazines, newspapers, textbooks, other literary genres), and studies on this line can be conducted.

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