Prospective Teachers' Opinions of Argument Culture in the Classroom Environment

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ABSTRACT

This paper focuses on the opinions of prospective teachers' related to argument culture in the classroom environment. The data stems from a phenomenological study including 12 prospective teachers attending the education faculty of a Turkish state university for the 2013-2014 academic year. Data collected from focus group interviews were thematically analyzed. Findings indicated that prospective teachers were aware of the pedagogical value of the argument culture. Argument culture was mostly associated with democratic environment, effective listening, and critical thinking skills, respect and tolerance. Nevertheless, prospective teachers did not characterize their classroom environment as open to argument. These perceptions stem from being silenced, suppressed or negatively criticized when opposing thoughts were presented. Results revealed that political, philosophical and sexual topics were avoided in classroom settings. Additionally, valued people and evolution are among the most avoided subjects. Students' prejudices and taboos related to specific subjects were found to be barriers to the argument culture. Teacher training programs and social culture were seen to be the other factors negatively affecting argument culture. Overall, argument culture in the classroom environment seems to be problematic in several ways. Especially, the question of how to build an argument culture is worth thinking about.

Key Words: Argument, Argument culture, Classroom environment, Prospective teachers

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INTRODUCTION

The topic of our research touches on different disciplines such as psychology, philosophy, linguistics, sociology, communication science, and educational sciences. As Andrews (2010) indicates, "argument and argumentation are so deeply embedded in subjects and disciplines, in different ways, that it is essential for teachers and students to know how the processes operate to be successful in that subject or discipline". In pedagogical practices, our topic is especially closely linked to the theoretical and empirical studies related to the skills of 'critical thinking' (Bailin & Siegel, 2003) and 'creative thinking' (e.g. Glassner & Schwarz, 2007). As one can guess, it is hypothesized that argument activity supports these skills, considered to be essential components of modern education systems of the 21st century. One of the underlying reasons why argumentation skills are paid so much attention arises from its role in the social construction of knowledge, as stated by Mirza and Perret-Clermont (2009).

Deli (2014) suggests that the nature and level of debate culture in certain countries are directly related to the social and political system of these countries. Also the formation of their democratic history is determinant of freedom of expression, providing a development opportunity for debate culture. For example, western cultures have historically contributed more to the development of debate than eastern cultures (Woods & Wang, 2004). These theoretical premises also find support with the findings of Woods and Wang (2004) which goes to prove that cultural differences do matter. In their exploratory study, the researchers considered Asian-American students' argumentativeness and their general attitudes toward and perceptions of intercollegiate debate; and they found that Asian-American students generally tended to possess negative attitudes when compared with Caucasian debaters.

Since the phenomenon of argument takes a central place in the development of democracy, intellectual and social life, students should be trained about argument skills to aid them to be participant citizens discussing social, political and economic issues (Harwood & Hahn, 1990; Graff, 2003). Marttunen, Laurinen, Litosseliti, and Lund (2005) have suggested that today's students are expected to analyze the current societal issues from different perspectives in which they come across in reading materials, textbooks and other learning sources. According to Yeşil (2004), students will become effective arguers if they know the meaning of argument, develop a positive attitude towards argument and observe and practice these skills in the classroom setting.

Rowland (1995) claims that academic debate is the most effective activity for students to develop argument, advocacy and research skills. Promoting the use of critical questions is one of the main activities of educational practices called `active learning'. When active learning takes place in the classroom environment and the evaluation of arguments are based on specific standards, they nourish critical thinking skills (Browne & Freeman, 2000). Therefore, critical thinking skill is the very core component of argument culture.

The Concept of Argument and Related Terms

The 'concept' of argument is often used interchangeably with 'discussion' and 'debate' in the literature. While some authors make distinctions among these concepts, others do not. Debate has a definition of "a formal discussion on a particular matter in a public meeting or legislative assembly, in which opposing arguments are put forward". Discussion

is defined as "the action or process of talking about something in order to reach a decision or to exchange ideas" (Oxford Dictionary, 2015).

The term 'argument' has various conceptualizations. According to Robinson (2009), argument can be defined as "a set of claims some of which lend support to another claim". Schopenhauer (2012, p.51) defines argument as a conversation which is made on a theoretical issue. He claims that arguing can be useful for both sides because the ideas that opposite sides confirm or verifies their opinions and evokes new ideas at the same time. Rainbolt and Dweyer (2014) defines "an argument as an attempt to provide reasons for thinking that some belief is true. All arguments have two parts. The first part is the reasons, and the second part is the belief that those reasons are intended to support. The reasons are the premises and the belief being supported is the conclusion". Andrews (2010) defines argument as a term that is used to indicate the products or manifestations of argumentation, like debates, essays, position papers, and dissertations. On the other hand, 'argumentation' is defined as a "process of arguing in educational, political, business, legal, and other contexts". Deli (2014) asserts that the concept of argumentation implies the relation between premises and conclusions which forms a structural union of statements.

Considering the conceptualizations up to now, we especially preferred the term 'argument culture' because we assume that an individual's argumentation skills may be affected by several factors including personal and school lives starting from family life. The conceptual status of culture made us think that argument culture will cover the factors shaping prospective teachers opinions stemming from societal issues and educational context they are fed by. By using argument culture in this paper, we intended to lean prospective students' dispositions towards argumentation activities in the classroom environment, influenced by common experiences, shared norms and attitudes of the members of the classroom. Thus, the term culture directly and indirectly covers the organizational and societal factors effecting classroom climate.

Argument Culture in Classroom Environment

As the pioneer organizations generating innovation, multivocality and development in society, universities' reasons for being can be achieved by providing a culture of criticism and argument to its members (Durak, 2012). Argument culture has many positive effects on triggering students' learning such as allowing explorative, critical and enquiring approaches to reality; providing an opportunity to test the validity of others' ideas by understanding a multiplicity of positions (Mirza & Perret-Clermont, 2009, p.1).

According to Rowland (1995), the pedagogical function of academic debate may be appreciated by identifying the educational goals that the activity is designed to fulfill. As academic debate is designed to train students with argument activity and critical thinking, the debate process will serve students' inventing and testing arguments. The author asserts that the relationship between argument activity and critical thinking is one of means and ends, in the sense that students' skills related to intervention and analysis of arguments makes them critical thinkers. At this point, the teaching of controversial issues develops students' critical thinking skills through constructing hypotheses and collecting and evaluating evidence (Harwood & Hahn, 1990). On the other hand, Burnett and Olson (1997) warn about the dark side of debates that effects the health of interpersonal relationships. According to the authors, by investing in a position or an argument, debaters become polarized which may result in termination of their relationships.

Tannen (2000) defines academic life as mostly agnostic claims that training approaches of teachers are directed by their ideological assumptions. She criticizes that the conventional framework of scholarly papers requires the individuals to oppose a disposition which is proved to be wrong. Such an expectation of following conventional tendencies leads students to oversimplify or mispresent other's positions as well as ignoring the facts. Further, this approach results in arrogance and narrow-minded behaviors in students which does not serve the main objectives of education. Another problem that Tannen warns against is the agonistic argument culture in graduate education, in that future scholars who do not feel comfortable in such a negative interaction may drop out. Consequently, many talented prospective academicians will be lost to academia.

There has been a fair amount of research on the critical thinking skills of students and teachers (e.g. Güven & Kürüm, 2006; Aybek, 2007; Grosser & Lombard, 2008; Cherubini, 2009; Beşoluk & Önder, 2010; Alkın-Şahin, Tunca, & Ulubey, 2014), however, argument culture in educational settings is an under-researched topic which deserves scholarly attention. Research related to the topic of argument in academia have been focused on the necessities of argument phenomenon, taboo topics in arguments and barriers to argument. Besides, some researchers who concentrate on the development of critical thinking and argument skills in classroom environment consider that 'controversial issues' are one of the indispensable characteristics of any classroom environment supporting critical thinking skills (Johnson & Johnson, 1979; Frager 1984; Harwood & Hahn, 1990; Walsh, 1998; Seçgin, 2009). For example, Frager (1984), as well as Johnson and Johnson (1979), advocated the necessity to introduce students with controversial issues in order to provide critical thinking skills. To achieve this, teachers should use activities related to controversial issues in the classroom. Another research revealed that authoritarian teacher behaviors hindered critical thinking skills (Tock Keng, 1996; Veznedaroğlu, 2007).

In a study on controversial and taboo topics, students were asked if they were willing to argue these topics, but as they did not have adequate social and communication skills, they avoided arguing about these topics (Yılmaz, 2012). In a study by Rambosk (2011) that included prospective teachers attending South Florida University, gay/lesbian rights were defined as the most controversial issue. In addition, prospective teachers' were less willing to teach about creationism than other issues. Tekin (2011), investigated Turkish students' attitudes towards two taboo topics generally perceived as taboo in Turkish society, namely homosexuality and adultery/pre-marital sex. He found that students were positive about arguing these topics and did not find the materials to be disturbing at all.

Theoretical assumptions and empirical findings discussed up to now imply that opinions of students portray both overlapping and conflicting points related to argument culture. Therefore it may be interesting to look at Turkish prospective teachers' perspectives about argument culture in the classroom environment through their subjective experiences. In light of these discussions, the purpose of this study was to determine the phenomenon of argument culture from the perspectives of prospective teachers, with its many aspects, through investigation of the following questions:

1. How do prospective teachers define the concepts of 'argument' and 'argument culture' in the classroom environment?
2. What are the opinions of prospective teachers related to the 'argument culture' they experienced in the classroom environment?

3. According to prospective teachers, how does a lack of culture open to argument in the classroom affect students?
4. What are the argument topics that students avoid to be argued in the classroom environment? What are the reasons for avoidance?
5. What are the suggestions of prospective teachers for the development of argument culture in the classroom?

METHOD

Design

This study aims to elicit how prospective teachers describe argument culture in the classroom environment, employing the phenomenological design, one of the qualitative research designs. This design was preferred as it focuses on the meanings of actual experiences and aims to make inferences from the individual's own perceptions and experiences (Reiter, Stewart, & Bruce, 2011). At the center of the study is the concept of the 'argument culture' phenomenon. The study focuses on the understating of how students who are the part of the argument culture occurring within the classroom environment make sense of their experiences related to 'argument culture'.

Participants

The study group is comprised of 12 prospective teachers attending the education faculty of a Turkish state university for the 2013-2014 academic year. In the selection of participants, criterion-sampling technique was employed. The criterion of this selection technique was the based on including the third and fourth-year students who have more experience in observing and participating in classroom discussions. The second criterion was set to be their participating in classroom discussions so that they could have relatively more experiences related to the concept of argument.

The purpose of the study was explained to the instructors of the third and fourth year students and they were asked to offer the names of students who could best provide rich data for the purpose of the study. Moreover, as it was thought that argument culture of the students may vary depending on their department, students were preferred to be selected from various different departments. Considering these factors, a total of 20 students from five different departments were offered to join a focus group interview via the telephone and 12 students volunteered to participate. When the number of participants in the focus group interview is higher than 10, there are some disadvantages (Edmunds, 2000 Cited in: Çokluk, Yılmaz, & Oğuz, 2011). By considering the difficulty of organizing a common time period to conduct the interviews as well as these disadvantages, it was decided to conduct focus group interviews in two different sessions. The first focus group interviews were conducted with two third-year students and four fourth-year students; a total of six students. Two of the participants in the first focus group are from the department of science teaching and four from the department of Turkish language teaching. The second focus group interviews were conducted with two female and four male fourth-year students. One of the participants in the second focus group is from the department of classroom teacher education, two are from the department of pre-school teacher education, and three are from the department of social studies teacher education.

Data Collection

Data was collected through focus group interviews. The reason for the selection of the focus group interview in order to collect data is that it enables participants to express their experiences related to the phenomenon of argument culture from different viewpoints (Glesne, 2012). The first focus group interviews lasted 1 hour and 50 minutes and the second lasted 2 hours and 25 minutes. The same questions were asked to the participants of sessions.

Data Analysis

The data collected from the focus group interviews were thematically analyzed together. During the analysis process, first the data were read; then coded in context of each sub-purpose of the study. The codes were reread so that their similarities and differences were determined, codes found to be mutually connected were placed together, and themes were constructed from the meanings conceptually indicated. The themes were then supported with direct quotations. For the reliability of the study, a researcher other than who conducted the analysis investigated each theme and code together with their quotations and the two researchers then discussed and reached an agreement on controversial codes and themes. Within the context of the reliability of the study, an expert on qualitative research was asked to analyze the suitability of the construct obtained. In line with the feedback of the expert, the required corrections were made to the research report.

FINDINGS

The findings obtained for this research are presented in line with the sub-purposes of the study.

Meanings Attached to the Concepts of 'Argument' and 'Argument Culture'

The participants view the concept of argument as a process in which opinions are expressed about an issue that is critically evaluated and subject to conflicting ideas. These are proposed and defended, and then true and false aspects of ideas are sorted in order to arrive at the truth. In this regard, the participants pointed out that argument is a process of exchanging ideas, by weighing what is correct and incorrect. While some of the participants emphasized that an agreement should be reached at the end of an argument, others stated that reaching an agreement is not actually a requirement. According to the participants, this whole process requires individuals to have critical thinking skills, develop empathy, have information about the given topic, able to present logical reasons for the viewpoint defended, to value and respect other's opinions, be flexible in their opinions and have listening and comprehension skills. Moreover, it was emphasized that argument could contribute to the socialization of students in the class. Some related excerpts of the participants are given below:

> *If a person tries to convince me to support his/her opinions, he/she should make reasonable explanations and show how he/she can prove his/her truth.*

> *Reaching truth as a result of agreement, one's valuing the opinions of the other, learning how to listen. Argument means all of these for me.*

> *What comes to my mind is flexibility, listening and respecting.*

> *…It is based on the idea of weighing; weighing what is correct and what is false…*

The participants see argument culture as individuals' stating their opinions in an environment dominated by democracy, effective listening, respect and tolerance. According to the participants, for the establishment of argument culture, individuals should have information about the topic to be discussed, be open minded, refrain from authoritarian behaviors, admit that they do not know something, be able to work in cooperation with others, steer clear of looking for a single truth, be respectful to others' opinions even in cases of uncertainty, be open to novelties, be modest and skeptical. Some related excerpts of the participants are given below:

Not being committed to a certain authority or viewpoint. When people commit themselves to a certain authority, they only transmit the ideas of this authority. Yet, when people are not committed to any idea and are tolerant to different ideas, then they listen to others.

They must be tolerant so that they could be open to arguments.

There must be freedom of expression, people can talk freely and do not feel under pressure…

…During this process, skepticism results in the emergence of new information and truths…

Opinions about the Argument Culture Experienced in the Class

The participants stressed that throughout their undergraduate education, there was no culture embracing argument in the class. The participants emphasized that students were silenced, especially by their peers in the class, and they were confronted with negative criticisms. According to the participants, when argument culture dominates the class, it encourages students to look for the mistakes of their opponent and to set up traps for them. In this culture, called violence or fight culture, individuals try to impose their ideas on others; they are intolerant of each other and avoid listening to each other. According to the participants, this culture makes students prefer to remain silent. These are some of the related excerpts from the participants:

As everybody tries to impose his/her own truth, it ends with a conflict…

It is a mistake seeking culture… "I wish I could find his/her mistake" approach is dominant.

What I mean by violence is not physical violence, but violence towards ideas; through speeches, facial expressions and mimics.

Opinions about How Lack of Culture Open to Argument in Classrooms Affects Students

The participants are of the opinion that a lack of culture open to argument in the classroom results in the formation of an insecure classroom environment. According to the participants, a lack of argument culture in classes leads individuals to feel a lack of self-confidence while expressing their opinions, to find their opinions valueless and to be reluctant in expressing their opinions. This makes individuals introverted in the class; thus,

they adopt the role of a passive receiver and feel hesitant about expressing their opinions. Some related excerpts of the participants are given below:

…When I try to tell something, three people with opposite ideas tell me "okay, shut up", then I easily give up and feel a lack of self-confidence.

Individuals become introvert; they are hesitant about expressing their opinions. It makes people passive.

Moreover, according to the participants, in such a classroom atmosphere, students are forced to develop defense mechanisms to express their opinions by overlooking what they do not like. A related excerpt is given below:

While doing the activity, my friends are excited as they will talk… then three or five other students say that "he/she is talking nonsense", then I tell them "if you feel uncomfortable with these students, then ignore them and talk looking at us. Let's ignore them".

According to the participants, lack of argument culture leads students to give up on questioning and show a tendency to accept whatever is said by the authority as being correct. A related excerpt is given below:

When I attempt to tell something, the teacher ignores it or looks as if he/she did not hear… Then I tell myself "my opinion is probably wrong, the teacher knows everything". This automatically prevents questioning.

Opinions about Argument Topics Avoided in the Classroom and the Reasons for This

The participants stated that in the class, political, philosophical, religious and sexual issues are considered taboo topic matters. Moreover, according to the participants, admired and respected people and the theory of evolution are among the topics avoided. The participants identified the reasons for the non-development of an argument culture in the class by referring to students, academicians, program and culture. Some related excerpts of the participants are given below:

There are some topics which are taboo for me. For example, I never think of discussing the concept of religion.

Our teacher gives us some examples, and his examples are usually connected with sexuality. We want to go to the teacher to ask his opinion about something; then, some other students say "The teacher seems to be an abuser".

The participants stated that prejudices and taboos prevent the argument of some topics. Moreover, the students think that lack of critical thinking and listening skills and lack of information about the given topic form serious obstacles to effective arguments. There are some other factors preventing effective arguments such as verbal or non-verbal (gestures, mimics) insult, harassment, humiliation, sarcastic behaviors and a lack of communication between students. Moreover, according to the students, worries about the instructor's

reaction to their responses given to open-ended questions is another obstacle to the development of argument culture. The participants stated that students talk and write considering in advance which opinions would be approved by the instructor in order that they can achieve higher marks; thus, their concern about instructor assessment prevents the development of argument culture. In the classroom environment, students' eagerness to reach a certain conclusion for an argument is another factor which harms the argument culture. Furthermore, the participants stressed that students' fear of developing a negative perception of a person they admire and respect as a result of an argument seems to be another factor negatively affecting argument culture. Some related excerpts of the participants are given below:

> *Statements such as "Sit down, idiot, what do you think you are talking about?" make the argument atmosphere tense and may end the argument. Thus, it may sometimes be difficult to defend opinions against the dominant ideology in the class.*

> *We may not respond due to lack of information. For instance, the topic is politics, and I have no idea about the topic, so I prefer to remain silent. Or, the argument topic is religion, we know some religious values but we are not knowledgeable enough to explain religious issues to others…*

> *I think, some of my friends have not internalized what listening is. Hence, I prefer not to invest any effort to explain my thoughts to such people.*

> *Even a small suspicion can be enough to change your side. I want to have strong beliefs about some topics; therefore, I do not want to have a suspicion.*

Moreover, the participants pointed out that instructors may exhibit some characteristics hindering the development of argument culture. These characteristics were identified as follows: during arguments, instructors reflect their political, social and religious tendencies; they exhibit authoritarian attitudes; they do not meet the requirements of a modern education system; as a result of not being able to manage the conflicting environment in the class, they try to silence students; they are not respectful to students' opinions; they do not pose questions worth thinking about; they do not encourage students to ask questions; they are not knowledgeable enough to lead the argument; and they are reluctant to talk about opinions conflicting with their own religious, political and social opinions. Moreover, the participants stated that instructors reflect their prejudices against some ideas, resources and books in the classroom and encourage students to develop negative attitudes towards some writers, books and materials proposing different viewpoints, and all of these negatively affect argument culture in the class. Some related excerpts of the participants are given below:

> *...we were in the class, and while the instructor was lecturing, one of the students asked him a question related to the topic. The instructor could not answer the question and said "I ask the questions here". The student asking the question never asked any questions again throughout the term.*

> *…The instructor told us that if some people not having internalized some values might be lead to wrong directions when they read this book. For another book, he said "because*

of the lack of information and the possibility of nurturing suspicions, some people might develop erroneous ideas, thus, these are dangerous works"…

The instructor's beliefs do not comply with the opinions defended in the book. Therefore, the instructor does not want to talk about these opinions because they conflict with his opinions.

This is because of what we have heard about the instructors and other students' experiences… Rumors such as students conflicting with the opinions of the instructor could not pass and the instructor failed them on purpose, resulting in students' avoidance of argument with the instructor -due to such rumors, students avoid discussions with the instructor- in order to be able to graduate by getting good grades.

In some classes, we are not even allowed to talk. Because of the instructor's attitudes, you get the feeling that your ideas and opinions do not mean anything to him.

The participants also stated that *teacher education programs* are obstacles to the development of argument culture. According to the participants, the teacher education programs do not aim to train teachers to possess sufficient information or the skills to develop different approaches to open-ended questions, who can think critically and creatively, have enough pedagogical information and background to manage an argument environment and have personality traits to direct the argument in such a way as to contribute to the accomplishment of course objectives. Classroom-centered learning and teaching process also hinders the development of argument culture. Moreover, the participants stated that although starting from elementary education, there are activities incorporated into school curriculums to promote argument in the class, teachers avoid such activities, course programs and textbooks do not put much emphasis on students' critical thinking and argument skills and all these create hindrances to the development of argument culture. According to the participants, teacher training programs distance teachers from thinking and promoting thinking. Here are some related excerpts from the participants:

What we will talk about depends on exams…

The instructor is prone to deal with topics quickly. Though the program requires more time to be devoted to the subject, he does not comply.

Even the goals and objectives are put into certain forms and the instruction is given within the scope of these goals and objectives. This restricts what can be taught by the instructor. Reading texts in textbooks are ridiculous! Instructive texts are boring, not giving enough information…

The participants think that family and social culture is also an obstacle in front of the development of argument culture. According to the participants, the tendency to accept the opinions of older people and obey them; the tendency to compare children by ignoring their individual differences; not giving enough opportunities to express their opinions during their early years; consideration of some topics as taboo in society result in prospective teachers' being hesitant about expressing their opinions freely. Some related excerpts of the participants are given below:

Since our childhood, we have always heard "do not talk about this, it is a sin, prohibited, a shame! Shut up!" The effects of such past experiences can still be seen.

In our culture, there is a strong tendency to listen to older people and respect them. Thus, when we come to the class, we are prone to accept whatever the teacher says as correct without questioning. Therefore, we are not very eager to discuss with the teacher. Even when we think differently, we may say "What the teacher says should be correct".

When we were children, we were told "you are a child, stop talking", we can see its effect now.

Suggestions for the Development of Argument Culture in Classes

According to the participants, for the promotion of argument culture in classes, courses and activities serving this purpose should be incorporated into curriculums. In addition, the participants pointed out that elementary and secondary school programs should be redesigned so that they can encourage teachers and students to think critically and creatively. Some related excerpts of the participants are given below:

A course can be given for this purpose and some activities to nurture argument skills can be conducted in the class…

The program should teach the teacher how to ask thought-provoking questions. It needs to find ways of developing the teacher. If the teacher can think, then he/she can make students think.

According to the participants, for the development of argument culture in classroom environments, their instructors should be a role model to show how to conduct the argument process in their pedagogic courses such as classroom management. They need to demonstrate the necessity of argument through both their words and actions. They need to respect students' opinions and encourage them to freely express their opinions by using encouraging statements such as "a very good idea, I did not think about it in that way" etc. In class, teaching methods and techniques such as 'six thinking hat technique', 'brainstorming' etc. promoting argument culture should be used. Rather than asking questions to students, students should be encouraged to ask questions. Furthermore, according to the participants, instructors should develop themselves by means of participation in seminars, conferences and in-service training for personal development, communications skills, listening, critical thinking skills and subject area knowledge. Some related excerpts of the participants are given below:

Rather than asking questions, the teacher should try to encourage students to ask questions.

If you ask questions whose answers are already known, then it becomes meaningless. So you need to ask open-ended questions…

For instance, management of the argument is an important issue. Concluding it is more difficult. There is turmoil; the teacher should be skillful enough to make this process conducive to course objectives.

The teacher should make students feel the benefits of argument and talking…

Students should be encouraged and motivated while talking by telling them "Oh, a very good idea, that's wonderful".

There are a lot of teaching methods and techniques such as six thinking hat technique, brainstorming... but no-one uses them. Even when any of them are used, then, the argument culture can start to naturally develop.

RESULT, DISCUSSION AND SUGGESTIONS

This paper was an attempt to understand prospective teachers' experiences related to argument culture in classroom settings. By focusing on prospective teachers' voices on argument culture through their classroom experiences, findings of this study shed a light on the argument topics avoided in the classroom, reasons for this avoidance and suggestions to improve this culture in the universities. Taken together, these findings portrayed a multidimensional argument culture analysis.

Prospective teachers' conceptualizations related to argument culture in the classroom environment indicated that the phenomenon of 'argument' could be defined as a process where different opinions are expressed; theses are presented and defended; right and wrong aspects of thoughts are discussed with the aim reaching the truth. While some of the participants thought that argument should be made to reach a common end, some did not. Findings showed that for a healthy argument culture, people should have critical thinking skills, emphatic abilities, knowledge about the topic, respect of others, and they should be open-minded.

Another finding that emerged was that prospective teachers were of the opinion that argument culture had a socializing function. Based on the participants' definitions, argument culture may be defined as a way of expressing individuals' opinions where democracy, effective listening, respect and tolerance exist. These results indicated that prospective teachers were aware of the pedagogical value of the argument culture. Despite stressing the weaknesses of the argument culture experienced in the classroom setting, they did not underestimate its theoretical and practical functions. This finding is in line with the findings of Yazıcı and Seçgin (2010), who found that most prospective teachers included in their study were positive towards controversial issues within their courses. In the same research, prospective teachers were of the opinion that controversial issues contributed most to critical thinking skills and citizenship competencies. Similarly, Tekin (2011) investigated Turkish EFL (English as a Foreign Language,) students' attitudes towards class discussion of two topics generally perceived as taboo in Turkish society, and found that students' attitudes towards taboo topics were actually highly positive. On the other hand, Yeşil (2003) reached contradictory findings that participants from a Turkish university were not aware of the functions of argument activity. The difference found between these two studies may originate from the different academic cultures of different universities. For example, academicians' teacher-centered or traditional teaching considerations may be shaping this differentiation. Another possible reason may be the past experiences of these student groups, such as previous school experiences and family backgrounds. One contribution to the limited research on the argument environment in history lessons by Kaya (2010) implied that the development of political and social democracy is as important as the development in the field of education.

In light of the findings of this study, it is concluded that; being modest, knowledgeable about the topic, being open-minded, being skeptical about the facts and being open to change, having distance with the authority figure, and adopting cooperation are the necessary elements to build a healthy argument culture. Despite being aware of the necessities of argument culture, prospective teachers were being silenced or suppressed and negatively criticized by their friends when they had opposing views. That's why prospective teachers characterize the classroom environment as a setting which is not open to argument. Further, participants depicted this picture as a 'fight' or 'violence' culture, where members of the culture struggle to impose their own ideas on others in an intolerant manner. In a way, argument culture turns out to be a 'silence culture' over time. This outcome is very similar with the findings of a study which focused on the learning experiences of East Asian masters students in dealing with Western academic norms of critical thinking in classroom debate (Durkin, 2008). The results of Durkin's (2008) study revealed that the majority of East Asian masters students preferred a 'middle way' norm of arguing, instead of full academic acculturation into Western norms of arguing. These consistent findings may imply that cultural motives of western or eastern traditions are significant in shaping the dispositions. Tannen (2002) warns about the dangers of agonistic academic discourse, which can lead to student dropouts. As one can guess, these perceptions negatively affect the feelings and attitudes of prospective teachers. Specifically, these problems with argument culture damages trust with feelings of valueless, lack of self-confidence, which in turn takes the form of reluctance to express oneself. As Evans, Avery, and Pederson (1999) stated, teachers play a vital role in promoting the argument of taboo topics. Since teachers create the classroom environment, they decide students' roles in expressing their ideas. Therefore, academicians' attitudes seems to be central in the development of argument culture or vice versa.

Results revealed that political, philosophical and sexual topics cannot be discussed in classroom settings. Additionally, valued people and evolution are among the most avoided subjects. Several studies (e.g. Massialas, Sprague, Sweeney, & Sugrue, 1970; Evans et al., 1999; Yazıcı & Seçgin, 2010; Yılmaz 2012) have findings consistent with this study, in the sense that religious, political and sexual subjects are taboo topics that are avoided in arguments. As Yazıcı and Seçgin (2010) stated, since controversial issues cover emotions and values, people avoid discussing them on rational grounds. One of the prospective teachers included in our study stated this situation as: "Even a small suspicion can be enough to change your side. I want to have strong beliefs about some topics; therefore, I do not want to have a suspicion". Several people feel disturbed from arguing the subjects they are sensitive about. As Evans et al. (1999) suggested, academicians can cover a wide range of alternative perspectives, representing conservative, liberal, radical, and extremist views related to the topic. This may encourage students to make up their own minds.

Prospective teachers were of the opinion that students' prejudices and taboos related to some subjects can damage argument culture. Lacking critical thinking and listening skills, and behaviors such as insulting, humiliating, sarcasm were the barriers of argument culture in the classroom setting. These findings were consistent with those of Yılmaz (2012) who examined social studies teachers' opinions on controversial issues and taboo topics. The majority of the participants were found to avoid arguing about controversial issues or taboo topics with their students because of their lacking of some communication and social skills. Also, the participants included in our study were found to feel anxious about having low marks when they offered contradictory opinions to their teachers. These findings echo those

of Yeşil's (2003), who proved that prospective teachers have anxieties about not being approved by academicians, which will in turn result in failure in that course. Students' beliefs that an argument should reach a certain conclusion is another barrier of engaging argument activity. Additional factors such as academicians' autocratic attitudes, disrespectful attitudes towards different dispositions and directive attitudes to adopt a specific view were among the main reasons of avoidance of arguments in the classroom. This finding is consistent with previous research (Tock Keng, 1996; Veznedaroğlu, 2007) that suggests teachers' authoritarian behaviors such as deciding what the 'right answer' is, can harm critical thinking skills. These results could be taken to mean that prospective teachers suffer from a didactic authoritarian teacher figure in their learning process which should be challenged, at least reconsidered by future research.

Teacher training programs were seen to be another source of problems that hinder argument culture. It means that teacher training programs were not designed with the aim of developing critical and creative thinking skills which could enable students to develop different perspectives. This problem was complemented with the exam-centered learning and teaching process adopted by academicians. Several researchers in the literature emphasized that active learning strategies were not applied in faculties of education and that academicians did not use active teaching strategies and techniques sufficiently (Kardaş, 2014; Işık, Budak, Baş, & Öztürk, 2015).

According to the prospective teachers, social culture, including family life, was a hindrance to argument activity in classroom settings. The tradition of following elders' advice in society and accepting it without questioning, comparing children without considering their individual differences and considerations of 'sin' and 'shame' attributed to some subjects, are among the other barriers to argument culture in the eyes of prospective teachers. In a study by Tümkaya and Aybek (2008), perceived parental attitude was found to be a predictor of critical thinking dispositions of prospective teachers. So, it is possible to think that the avoidance of some subjects may stem from parental, and in turn societal factors. An additional support comes from the findings of Woods and Wang (2004), who investigated Asian-American students' argumentativeness and their general attitudes toward and their perceptions of intercollegiate debate. Woods and Wang proved that there was a strong relationship between Asian-American students' cultural upbringings and their level of argumentativeness.

Concerning the prospective teachers' suggestions to improve argument culture in the classroom setting, the results revealed that courses or activities designed to improve argument skills should be included in teacher training curriculums. Moreover, it was suggested that these attempts should start from elementary school and continue through all education levels. Another suggestion that came from the prospective teachers, was that academicians should be a role model on managing the argument process in the classroom. Further, academicians should encourage students with their constructive attitudes.

Research findings support the results of this study; for example, Frager (1984) as well as Johnson and Johnson (1979) advocated that students should be made to come across with controversial issues in the classroom in order to properly achieve critical thinking. Additionally, Seçgin (2009) claimed that argument of controversial issues is important to cultivate students' open-mindedness. Lastly, prospective teachers suggested that academicians should continuously develop their communication skills, listening and critical

thinking skills, as well as their field of knowledge in order to improve their argument skills. These findings echo those from Rowland's (1995) suggestions about how a pedagogically sound debate program should look like. He claimed that a pedagogically sound program should provide students with both argumentative analysis and advocacy analysis skills.

All these findings and suggestions related to academicians are closely related to the suggestions about teacher behaviors/classroom environment, which support the developing of (critical) thinking skills cited in the literature. Several researchers (Costa, 1991; Newmann, 1991; McBride & Knight, 1993; Beyer, 2001; Kline, 2002; Ritchhart, 2002; Fisher, 1995 Cited in: Doğanay & Sarı, 2012; Alkın, 2012) mentioned these suggestions for teachers: a) asking open-ended questions and encouraging students to ask questions; b) giving supportive answers such as "it is a possibility", "I understand that…"; c) listening to students carefully; d) being a role model for thinking activities; e) helping students to develop self-respect; f) respecting students' opinions, whatever it is; and g) using active learning strategies in classroom activities. Considering the findings up to now, the first step in creating a healthy argument culture may be achieved by developing a true understanding related to this phenomenon in the minds of university shareholders. Simply, the real *meaning* of 'argument' and the *pedagogical function of* 'argument culture' should be learned beyond doubt and shared by the actors of the teaching and learning process. Above all, an awareness should be raised among academicians and students that the main concern of arguing is not 'winning' or 'losing'.

Overall, the results of this study indicated that argument culture in the classroom environment seems to be problematic in several ways. Especially, the question of how to build an argument culture is worth thinking about. Hence, there are clues from the prospective teachers' opinions that personal competencies and thinking skills such as critical thinking, being emphatic, respectful, and open-minded are necessary characteristics for arguers, and therefore it would be interesting to conduct cross-cultural analysis on argument avoidance or silence culture. Further research may employ wider populations from higher education providing the representation of different disciplines of the social sciences. Since universities are the institutions where free thinking is born and scientific knowledge produced, it seems clear that the topic of argument culture in higher education deserves more attention with its multiple dimensions such as socio-economical background of students and academicians, cross-cultural context and ranking of universities.

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Öğretmen Adaylarının Sınıf Ortamındaki Tartışma Kültürüne İlişkin Görüşleri

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Giriş

Tartışma etkinliği demokrasinin, entelektüel ve toplumsal yaşamın gelişmesinde merkezi bir öneme sahiptir. Bu bağlamda öğrencilerin, toplumsal, politik ve ekonomik konuları tartışabilen katılımcı yurttaşlar olabilmeleri için tartışma becerisini kazanabilmeleri önemlidir (Harwood & Hahn, 1990; Graff, 2003). Yeşil'e göre (2004) öğrencilerin etkili birer tartışmacı olabilmesi; tartışmanın anlamını ve nasıl olması gerektiğini bilmeleri, tartışmaya karşı olumlu bir tutum geliştirmeleri ve eğitim ortamlarında bu becerileri gözleyerek ve uygulayarak öğrenmeleri ile mümkündür. Rowland (1995), öğrencilerin akademik tartışma becerilerinin geliştirilmesinde eleştirel sorular sormanın önemli olduğunu ileri sürmektedir. Sınıf içinde aktif öğrenme etkinliklerinin uygulanmasının eleştirel düşünmeyi ve dolayısıyla tartışma becerilerini geliştirdiği kabul edilmektedir (Browne & Freeman, 2000).

Tartışma kavramı, genellikle karşıt fikirlerin savunulduğu ya da fikirlere karşı çıkıldığı bir süreci ifade etmek için kullanılmaktadır. Robinson (2009) tartışmayı, "başka bir iddiayı destekleyen bir dizi iddiadan bir kaçı" olarak tanımlarken, Schopenhauer (2012, 51) "teorik bir konu üzerinde karşılıklı konuşma" olarak tanımlamaktadır. Mevcut çalışmada, öğretmen adaylarının tartışma olgusuna ilişkin görüşlerinin araştırılması amacıyla "tartışma kültürü" kavramının tercih edilmesinin nedeni, öğretmen adaylarının kavrayışlarının aileden başlayarak üniversite yaşantılarında devam eden bir dizi kişisel ve toplumsal faktörden etkileneceği varsayımıdır. Tartışma kültürü kavramı bu çalışmada, sınıf ortamında tartışma kültürünü doğrudan ya da dolaylı olarak etkilediği düşünülen etkenleri kapsayacak içerikte kullanılmıştır.

Akademik yaşamda tartışma olgusuna ilişkin araştırmalar, öğrencilerin tartışma olgusunun gereklerine ilişkin görüşleri, tartışmada tabu konular, tartışmanın engelleri gibi konularda yoğunlaşmaktadır. Araştırmacılara göre, eleştirel düşünmeyi destekleyen sınıfın vazgeçilmez özelliklerinden biri de "tartışmalı konulara yer verilmesi" dir (Johnson & Johnson, 1979; Frager 1984; Harwood & Hahn, 1990; Walsh, 1998; Seçgin, 2009). Örneğin Frager (1984) ile Johnson ve Johnson (1979), sınıf içinde eleştirel düşünmenin tam anlamıyla gerçekleşmesi için, öğrencilerin çatışmalı konularla karşı karşıya getirilmesi gerektiğini savunmakta; bunun için öğretmenlerin sınıf içinde güncel çatışmalı konulara ilişkin etkinlikler kullanması gerektiğine işaret etmektedir. Başka bir araştırmada, öğretmenlerin, öğrencilere doğru yanıtları söyleyen, öğrenci yanıtlarının doğru ya da yanlış olduğuna karar veren birer "otorite" gibi davranmalarının da sınıf içinde eleştirel düşünmeyi engellediği belirlenmiştir (Tock Keng, 1996; Veznedaroğlu, 2007). Tartışmalı ve tabu konular üzerine yapılan bir araştırmada, öğrencilerin tartışmalı ve tabu konuları öğrenmeye istekli oldukları, ancak tartışma yapmak için gerekli sosyal becerilere ve iletişim becerilerine yeterince sahip olmamaları nedeniyle sınıfta tabu konular üzerinde tartışma yapmaktan kaçındıkları belirlenmiştir (Yılmaz, 2012). Rambosk'un (2011), South Florida Üniversitesi'nde öğrenim gören öğretmen adayları üzerinde yaptığı çalışmada, katılımcıların, eşcinsellerin haklarını en

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tartışmalı konu olarak değerlendirdikleri belirlenmiştir. Ayrıca öğretmen adaylarının yaratılış konusunu öğretmede diğer konulara göre daha az istekli oldukları bulunmuştur. Üniversite öğrencilerinin, Türkiye Toplumu'nda genellikle tabu olarak görülen eşcinsellik ve evlilik öncesi cinsel ilişki konularının İngilizce konuşma derslerinde tartışma konusu edilmesine ilişkin görüşlerini inceleyen Tekin (2011) ise, öğrencilerin bu konuları ve konuyla ilgili materyal ve etkinlikleri sınıf ortamında görmekten rahatsızlık duymadığını, üstelik bu tartışmalar sırasında hem eğlendiklerini hem de öğrendiklerini bulmuştur. Buraya kadar tartışılanlar ışığında, öğrencilerin akademik yaşamda tartışma olgusuna ilişkin görüşlerinin çelişen, farklılaşan ve net olmayan pek çok noktayı barındırdığı ileri sürülebilir. Bu çalışmadan elde edilecek bulguların tartışma kültürüne ilişkin teorik ve ampirik bilgi birikimine aşağıdaki sorulara yanıt arayarak ışık tutması beklenmektedir.

1. Öğretmen adayları akademik yaşamda "tartışma" ve "tartışma kültürü" olgusunu nasıl tanımlamaktadır?
2. Öğretmen adaylarının sınıf ortamında deneyimledikleri tartışma kültürüne ilişkin görüşleri nelerdir?
3. Öğretmen adaylarına göre akademik yaşamda tartışmaya açık bir kültürün olmaması öğrencileri nasıl etkilemektedir?
4. Öğretmen adaylarının sınıf ortamında tartışmaktan kaçındıkları konular ve nedenleri nelerdir?
5. Öğretmen adaylarının sınıf ortamında tartışma kültürünün geliştirilmesi için önerileri nelerdir?

Yöntem

Araştırma, nitel araştırma desenlerinden olgubilim ile gerçekleştirilmiştir. Çalışmanın odağında "tartışma kültürü" olgusu yer almaktadır. Araştırma, sınıf ortamında gerçekleşen tartışma kültürünün parçası olan öğrencilerin, "tartışma kültürü" olgusuna ilişkin deneyimlerini nasıl anlamlandırdıklarını anlamak üzerine yapılandırılmıştır. Araştırmanın çalışma grubunu, 2013-2014 eğitim-öğretim yılında, Türkiye'deki bir devlet üniversitesinin Eğitim Fakültesinde 3. ve 4. sınıfta öğrenim gören toplam 12 öğretmen adayı oluşturmaktadır. Katılımcıların belirlenmesinde ölçüt örnekleme tekniği işe koşulmuştur. Araştırmada odak grup görüşmesi iki oturumda gerçekleştirilmiştir. Birinci odak grup görüşmesi, ikisi 3. sınıf, dördü 4. sınıfta olan toplam altı kadın katılımcı ile gerçekleştirilmiştir. Katılımcıların ikisi fen bilgisi öğretmenliğinde, dördüyse Türkçe öğretmenliğinde öğrenim görmektedir. İkinci odak grup görüşmesi ise ikisi kadın, dördü erkek, her biri 4. sınıfta olan altı katılımcı ile gerçekleştirilmiştir. Katılımcıların biri sınıf öğretmenliğinde, ikisi okul öncesi öğretmenliğinde ve üçü sosyal bilgiler öğretmenliğinde öğrenim görmektedir.

Araştırmada veriler, odak grup görüşmesi ile toplanmıştır. Araştırmacılar tarafından gerçekleştirilen, iki oturumda gerçekleştirilen ve her iki oturumda da katılımcılara aynı soruların yöneltildiği odak grup görüşmelerinden elde edilen veriler, birlikte, tematik olarak analiz edilmiştir. Analiz sürecince, önce, veriler okunmuş; ardından araştırmanın her bir alt amacı bağlamında veriler kodlanmış, birbiriyle ilişkili olan kodlar bir araya getirilerek temalar oluşturulmuştur. Temalar doğrudan alıntılarla desteklenmiştir. Araştırmanın güvenirliği için, analizi yapan araştırmacının dışında kalan araştırmacı, her tema ve kodu, doğrudan alıntılarıyla birlikte inceledikten sonra, iki araştırmacı bir araya gelerek tartışmalı kod ve temalarda görüş birliğine varmışlardır.

Bulgular

"Tartışma" ve "tartışma kültürü" kavramına yüklenen anlamlar

Katılımcılar, tartışma kavramını, karşıt görüşler içeren bir konuya eleştirel düşünmeyle yaklaşılarak görüşlerin ifade edildiği, tezlerin sunulduğu ve savunulduğu, doğruya ulaşmak amacıyla fikirlerin doğru ve yanlış yönlerinin ayırt edildiği bir süreç olarak görmektedirler. Bu yönüyle katılımcılar, tartışmanın doğru ile yanlışı tartarak, fikir alışverişinde bulunma süreci olduğuna dikkat çekmişlerdir. Katılımcılara göre bütün bu süreç, bireylerin, eleştirel düşünmeye sahip olmasını, empati kurabilmesini, ilgili konuda bilgi sahibi olmasını, savunduğu konuya ilişkin mantıklı gerekçeler sunmasını, diğerinin görüşlerine değer vermesini, saygı duymasını, görüşlerinde esnek olmasını ve dinleme-anlama becerilerine sahip olmasını gerektirmektedir. Katılımcılar, tartışma kültürünü demokrasinin, etkili dinlemenin, saygının ve hoşgörünün olduğu bir ortamda ifade etme biçimi olarak görmektedir. Katılımcılara göre tartışma kültürünün inşa edilebilmesi için bireylerin tartışılan konuya ilişkin bilgilerinin olması, açık görüşlü olmaları, otorite figürlerinden uzak olmaları, bilmediklerini kabul edebilmeleri, işbirliğini benimsemeleri, tek bir doğruyu arama eğiliminden uzak olmaları, belirsizlik durumunda bile görüşlere saygı duymaları, yeniliklere açık olmaları, alçakgönüllü olmaları ve şüpheci olmaları gerekmektedir.

Sınıf içinde deneyimlenen tartışma kültürüne ilişkin görüşler

Katılımcılar, lisans eğitim-öğretim sürecinde sınıf içinde tartışmaya açık bir kültürün olmadığını vurgulamışlardır. Katılımcılar, sınıf içinde, öğrencilerin özellikle arkadaşları tarafından susturuldukları ya da sindirildikleri, sürekli olumsuz eleştirilerle karşılaştıkları bir kültürün olduğunu vurgulamıştır. Katılımcılara göre bu kültür, sürekli karşıdakinin hatasını arayan ve dinlerken karşıdakine tuzak kuran bir yapıdadır. Şiddet kültürü ya da kavga kültürü olarak ifade edilen bu yapıda, bireyler fikirlerini karşıdakine empoze etmeye çalışmakta ve birbirlerine karşı hoşgörüsüz olmakta, birbirlerini dinlemekten uzak olmaktadır. Katılımcılara göre bu kültür bireyleri susmayı tercih etmeye yönlendirmektedir.

Sınıflarda tartışmaya açık bir kültürün olmamasının öğrencileri nasıl etkilediğine ilişkin görüşler

Katılımcılar, sınıflarda, tartışmaya açık bir kültürün olmamasının güvensiz bir sınıf ortamı yarattığı görüşündedir. Katılımcılara göre, tartışma kültürünün olmaması, bireylerin görüşlerini ifade ederken özgüvensizlik yaşamalarına, görüşlerini değersiz bulmalarına ya da görüşlerini sunmada isteksizliğe yol açmaktadır. Bireylerin içine kapanmasını, öğretim sürecinde pasif alıcı rolüne girmelerini, fikirlerini iade etmekten çekinmelerini beraberinde getirmektedir. Ayrıca katılımcılara göre, böyle bir sınıf ortamında, öğrenciler, kendi görüşlerini ifade edebilmek için, hoşlarına gitmeyeni görmezden gelerek, savunma mekanizmaları geliştirmeye zorlanmaktadırlar. Yine katılımcılara göre, sınıflarda, tartışma kültürünün olmaması, bireyleri sorgulamayı bırakmaya ve otorite tarafından sunulanı doğru kabul etme eğilimine itmektedir.

Sınıflarda, tartışmaktan kaçınılan konulara ve nedenlerine ilişkin görüşler

Katılımcılar, sınıf ortamında genel olarak siyasi, felsefi, dini konuların ve cinsellikle ilgili konuların tartışılamadığını belirtmişlerdir. Ayrıca, katılımcılara göre, değer atfedilen kişiler ve evrim de tartışılmaktan kaçınılan konular arasındadır. Katılımcılar, sınıflarda

tartışma kültürünün oluşmamasının nedenlerini öğrencilerle, öğretim üyeleriyle, programla ve kültürle ilişkilendirerek belirtmişlerdir.

Katılımcılar, *öğrencilerin* bazı konuların tartışılamaz olduğuna ilişkin önyargılarının, tabularının tartışmayı engellediğini belirtmişlerdir. Katılımcılara göre öğrencilerin eleştirel düşünme ve dinleme becerisine sahip olmamaları ve tartışılan konuda yeterince bilgiye sahip olmamaları da tartışmanın önünde önemli bir engeldir. Sınıf ortamında öğrencilerin birbirlerine sözlü ya da sözsüz (jest mimik) hakaret, taciz, küçümseme, alaycılık içeren davranışları ve öğrenciler arasındaki iletişimsizlik de tartışmayı engellemektedir. Katılımcılara göre açık uçlu sorulara verilen yanıtlara hocanın bakış açısının ne olacağına ilişkin duyulan kaygı da tartışma kültürünü engellemektedir. Katılımcılar, öğrencilerin ne söyler ya da yazarlarsa hocadan daha fazla not alabileceklerini düşünerek konuştuklarını belirtmişler, not kaygılarının tartışma kültürünü engellediğini vurgulamışlardır. Sınıf ortamında öğrencilerin tartışmayı kesin bir sonuca bağlama eğilimi de tartışma kültürünü engellemektedir. Katılımcılar, öğrencilerin değer atfedilen kişi ya da konuya ilişkin şüpheye düşmekten kaçınma kaygılarının da tartışma kültürünün önünde engel oluşturduğuna dikkat çekmişlerdir.

Katılımcılar, *öğretim üyelerinin* de tartışma kültürünü engelleyen özellikleri olduğuna dikkat çekmişlerdir. Bunlar, öğretim üyelerinin sınıf içi tartışmalarda siyasi, sosyal ve dini eğilimlerini yansıtmaları, otoriter tutumları, çağdaş eğitim sisteminin gereklerini uygulamada işe koşmamaları, tartışma sürecinde sınıftaki kargaşa ortamını yönetememeleri sonucunda öğrencileri susturmaları, öğrencilerin görüşlerine saygı duymamaları ve değer vermemeleri, belli bir görüşü benimsetmeye yönelik yönlendirmeleri, üzerinde düşünmeye değer soru üretmemeleri, öğrencileri soru sormaya teşvik etmemeleri, tartışmaları yürütecek alan bilgisi açısından yetersiz olmaları, sınıfta kendi dini, siyasi, sosyal görüş ve eğilimleriyle çatışan görüşlere yer vermeye isteksiz olmalarıdır. Ayrıca katılımcılar, öğretim üyelerinin, bazı görüşlere, kaynaklara, kitaplara karşı önyargılarını sınıf ortamına yansıtmalarının, farklı bakış açıları yaratacak yazar, kitap, materyal ya da içeriğe karşı öğrencileri önyargıya itmelerinin de tartışma kültürünü engellediğini belirtmişlerdir.

Katılımcılar, *öğretmen eğitimi programlarının* da tartışma kültürünü engellediğine dikkat çekmişlerdir. Katılımcılara göre programlar, açık uçlu sorulara farklı görüşler geliştirecek bilgi ve donanıma sahip, yaratıcı ve eleştirel düşünen, tartışma ortamını yönetebilecek pedagojik bilgi ve beceriye sahip, tartışmanın derse hizmet etmesini sağlayabilecek özelliklere sahip öğretmenlerin yetiştirilmesini hedeflememektedir. Öğrenme öğretme sürecinin sınav odaklı olması da tartışma kültürünü engellemektedir. Ayrıca katılımcılar, ilköğretimden itibaren, programda yer almasına karşın, hocaların tartışmalı konuları işlememesini, programların ve ders kitaplarının öğrencileri eleştirel düşünmeye ve tartışmaya yönlendirecek kazanımlar içermemesini, etkinlikler sunmamasını, içeriklere yer vermemesini de tartışma kültürünün önünde önemli birer engel olarak belirtmişlerdir. Katılımcılara göre, öğretim programları öğretmenleri kolaycılığa itmekte ve düşünmekten uzaklaştırmaktadır.

Sınıflarda tartışma kültürünün geliştirilmesi için öneriler

Katılımcılara göre sınıf ortamlarında tartışma kültürünün geliştirilmesi için, *öğretmen eğitimi programlarına* bununla ilgili dersler ya da etkinlikler yerleştirilmelidir. Ayrıca katılımcılar, ilköğretim ve ortaöğretim programlarının da, öğrencileri ve öğretmenleri yaratıcı ve eleştirel düşünmeye teşvik edecek bir yapıya (etkinlikler, içerikler)

kavuşturulması gerektiğini vurgulamışlardır. Katılımcılara göre, tartışma kültürünün geliştirilmesi için öğretim üyeleri, özellikle sınıf yönetimi gibi meslek bilgisi derslerinde, tartışma sürecinde sınıfın nasıl yönetileceği konusunda rol model olmalıdırlar. Öğrencilere, gerek ifade ederek gerekse rol model olarak tartışabilmenin gerekliliğini açıklamalıdırlar. Öğrencilerin görüşlerine saygı duymalı, "çok iyi fikir, bu açıdan düşünmemiştim" gibi ifadeler kullanarak görüşlerini ifade etmeye onları cesaretlendirmelidir. Sınıflarda tartışma kültürünü destekleyen altı şapkalı düşünme tekniği, beyin fırtınası vb. öğretim yöntem ve tekniklerini kullanmalıdırlar. Öğrencilere soru sormaktan çok, onların soru sormalarını teşvik etmelidir. Ayrıca katılımcılara göre, öğretim üyeleri, kişisel gelişim, iletişim becerileri, dinleme, eleştirel düşünme ve kendi alanlarına ilişkin içerik bilgisi gibi konularda seminerlerle sürekli geliştirilmelidir.

Sonuç, Tartışma ve Öneriler

Araştırma ile ulaşılan sonuçlara göre, öğretmen adaylarının "tartışma kültürü" sürecine ilişkin tanımlamalarında; farklı görüşlerin ifade edilmesi, iddiaların ortaya atılması ve savunulması, fikirlerin doğru ve yanlış yönlerinin tartışılması gibi özellikler öne çıkmaktadır. Bu noktada, eleştirel düşünme becerileri, konu hakkında bilgi sahibi olmak, empati yeteneği, başkalarına karşı saygılı olma ve açık-fikirli olma gibi nitelikler tartışma kültürünün gereklilikleri olarak tanımlanmaktadır. Öğretmen adayları, tartışma kültürünün pedagojik değerinin farkında olmakla birlikte, sınıf içinde tartışma kültürünün yeterince gelişmediği görüşündedirler. Bu bulgular, alanyazındaki araştırma bulguları ile tutarlılık (Yazcı & Seçgin, 2010; Tekin, 2011) ve karşıtlık (Kaya, 2010) göstermektedir. Bulguların farklılık göstermesi, araştırma kapsamında yer alan üniversitelerin farklı akademik kültürlere sahip olması, öğrencilerin farklı okul, sınıf ve aile özgeçmişlerinden gelmesi ile açıklanabilir. Öğretmen adaylarına göre, sınıf içinde tartışma kültürünü olumsuz etkileyen nedenler arasında farklı görüşlerin susturulması, bastırılması ve olumsuz eleştirilmesi yer almaktadır. Bu gibi nedenler, sınıf içindeki tartışma kültürünün yerini zaman içinde sessizlik kültürüne bırakmakta, sağlıklı bir tartışma kültürünün gelişmesini engellemektedir. Doğu Asya kültüründen gelen yüksek lisans öğrencilerinin batılı tartışma kültürü normlarını benimseme düzeyini araştıran Durkin (2008) de benzer bulgulara ulaşmış ve katılımcıların batılı normlar yerine "orta yolu" tercih ettiklerini belirlemiştir.

Araştırma ile elde edilen bir başka bulgu, alanyazındaki diğer bulgularla (örn. Massialas, Sprague, Sweeney & Sugrue, 1970; Evans, Avery & Pederson, 1999; Yazıcı & Seçgin, 2010; Yılmaz 2012) paralellik göstermekte ve sınıf ortamında politik, felsefi ve cinsel konuların tartışmaktan kaçınılan konular olduğunu ortaya koymaktadır. Yazıcı ve Seçgin'in (2010) de belirttiği gibi, tartışmalı konular duygu ve değerleri kapsadığından, bireyler bu konuları rasyonel çerçevede tartışmaktan kaçınabilmektedir. Öğrencilerin eleştirel düşünme ve dinleme becerilerinin yeterince gelişmemiş olması, akademisyenlerin ise otoriter ve doğru cevabı arayan davranışları tartışma kültürünün engelleri arasında yer almaktadır. Otoriter ve aktif öğretim yöntemlerini işe koşmayan öğretmen davranışlarının eleştirel düşünme becerilerine zarar verdiği farklı araştırma bulguları ile de doğrulanmıştır (Tock Keng, 1996; Veznedaroğlu, 2007; Kardaş, 2014; Işık, Budak, Baş & Öztürk, 2015). Bunların yanında toplumsal kültürün bir parçası olarak bireylere çocukluk dönemlerinde yeterince söz ve katılım hakkının tanınmaması, toplumda bazı konuların konuşulmasının "günah ve ayıp" sayılması tartışma kültürünün diğer engellerindendir. Benzer şekilde Tümkaya ve Aybek (2008), algılanan ebeveyn tutumlarının eleştirel düşünmeyi yordadığını, Woods ve Wang

(2004) ise Asya asıllı Amerikalı öğrencilerin kültürel yetiştirilme biçimleri ile tartışmacı olma düzeyleri arasında ilişki olduğunu belirlemiştir.

Araştırmadan elde edilen bulgulara göre, öğretmen yetiştirme programlarının tartışma kültürünü geliştirecek biçimde tasarlanması ve hatta bu düzenlemenin ilkokuldan başlatılarak öğretim programlarının bir parçası haline getirilmesi önerilebilir. Ayrıca, öğretim elemanlarının sınıf içinde tartışmayı destekleyecek biçimde öğrencilere rol model olması, bunu yaparken öğrencilerini görüşlerini özgürce açıklamaya teşvik etmesi değerli katkılar sunabilir. Tartışmanın ne olduğu ve pedagojik işlevlerinin neler olduğu ve belki de en önemlisi tartışmanın bir kazananı ya da kaybedeninin olması gerekmediği anlayışının üniversite paydaşlarınca doğru bir biçimde kavranması tartışma sürecinin işlevlerine olumlu hizmet edebilir.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Tartışma, Tartışma kültürü, Sınıf ortamı, Öğretmen adayları