


Chapter 1

Building Values in Primary Education Enhancing Social and Democratic Participation

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ABSTRACT

In this study, social and democratic participation skills were associated in the context of values education. Since the construction of values is the focus of many different social science disciplines, analyses were carried out by establishing a connection between the concepts. Basically, connections were established between concepts through child and childhood. The prevailing view of childhood often portrays children as innocent and disinterested in political matters, suggesting that they should be raised as apolitical beings. However, children are exposed to political content through both formal and informal education processes. Primary educational institutions have the aim of developing social and democratic participation skills in children. In the global context, the construction of values in children is regarded as essential for cultivating citizenship skills.

INTRODUCTION

Regarding developmental periods, the primary school period coincides with the “middle childhood” period (between the ages of 6-12). Middle childhood is the period of life that begins when children start school and lasts until adolescence (Özgen, 2021). Primary schools generally educate children between the ages of 6-11. Primary school education can be in different age ranges. The time spent in primary school may vary in different countries. Middle childhood years contribute substantially to a child’s adolescence and adulthood. During middle childhood, children move into expanding roles and different

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environments. They begin to spend more time in school and other activities. While adjusting to school life, they experience more of the world around them and gain new achievements. They become more flexible in their thinking and develop self-awareness and empathy. They achieve new academic skills (such as arithmetic, reading, and writing) and learn the rules of their culture or society. Thus, they begin to develop their own identity.

In the middle childhood development stage, personality, moral, and social development are some of the milestones for children. Children develop patterns of behaviors based on their social interactions, learn from the guidance of their caregivers and their observation, and reflect on the morals of the people with whom they interact at this stage of development.

Generally, primary school children go through various stages of development, both physically and mentally. Physical, cognitive, social, emotional, language and moral development areas contain a process that primary school children experience quickly. During primary school, when social groups gain importance for children in terms of social and emotional development and emotional regulation skills develop, children's awareness of moral values and rules is also formed. While students learn basic moral principles in primary school, moral values, and behaviors are also related to their social and emotional learning (Özteke-Kozan, 2021).

Moral development deals with the multi-faceted manifestations of ideas, issues, and evaluation processes in morality. It also means reaching a goal (Schrader, 2018). Parents and teachers are among the most essential factors in the moral development of students. Especially in primary school, students are affected by the model behaviors of their teachers. For the moral development of students in primary school, teachers can develop and reinforce values such as respect, cooperation, honesty, and responsibility among students. The Moral Development of students in primary school is related to many factors, such as teachers' model behavior, practical communication skills, social and emotional learning, and student participation. Education and training design should be done by considering the developmental characteristics of primary school students. Learning environments can be created to contribute to the multi-faceted development of students. Considering the developmental characteristics of primary school students, active learning and the development of social skills should be supported with a student-centered approach, and a sense of achievement and self-confidence should be encouraged.

Regarding the nature of teaching and learning, effective teaching practices are essential in developing individuals and society. Learning is also a social process. In this context, values, morals, character, and citizenship education have an essential place, significantly because they contribute to young generations' social, cultural, and moral development. Schooling and education contribute to the development of values in young people. Because teaching, above all, has content that considers the multi-faceted well-being of students (Arthur, 2011).

While examining the nature of teaching and learning, the concepts of "child" and "childhood" should also be addressed. Childhood refers to the period in human life from language acquisition (age 1 or 2) to puberty at 12 or 13. In other words, it is the period of the human lifespan between infancy and adolescence. When the meanings attributed to childhood are examined from a historical perspective, it is seen that there are transitions from a miniature adult to an individual on its own. Regarding the new sociology of childhood, the child is a living creature living in reality. When approaching teaching and the nature of learning, it should not be forgotten that children are individuals. The child should be approached by reviewing whether the contents that are tried to be indoctrinated are suitable for the nature of the child.

Citizenship values are the primary content among the subjects being tried to be indoctrinated into children. Social and democratic participation is directly related to citizenship education. Those who

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