Full Length Research Paper

A study of democratic school culture perceptions of sport high school students

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In this study; the perceptions of the students studying at sport high schools about democratic school culture were analysed in accordance with different variables. Participants of the research consisted of 216 students studying at Sport High Schools in Sakarya and Batman Provinces of Turkey. The data were collected with the Democratic School Culture Perception Scale (DSCPS). The estimated Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficient of the scale was .92. For the analysis of data, Mann Whitney U and Kruskal Wallis H tests from non-parametrical tests as well as descriptive statistical techniques were benefited from. According to the results of the research, the students' perceptions about democratic school culture did not vary in gender and number of sibling but varied in the relevant grade level.

Key words: Democracy education, democratic education, democratic school culture, sport high shool, student.

INTRODUCTION

For bringing individuals democratic attitudes and behaviours, schools come first in organizations functionally important. Because school is the most recognizable institution which comes in individuals' socialization after family, sometimes comes even before family. That is, the most outstanding characteristics of school as an organization is that the raw material it deals with is human beings who come from society and come to society (Bursalıoğlu, 1994). Schools are not only institutions which provide students certain information and skills, but also democratic powers which help them socialize and participate in each field of democratic life actively (Koliba, 2008). In this way, education makes a society to take part in democratic life by creating consciousness for living in a free society democratically (Gözütok, 1995). But spreading democracy conscience to the whole society is a function of education, furthermore; both education and the relavant society need a democratic system in order to meet the functional requirements of education completely (Baklavacı and Deniz, 2015).

It is possible to adopt a democratic life style in each field of life to create this system. When democracy is transferred to life, it takes significance. This is also possible with involving individuals with suitable democratic experiences beginning from small ages. Anyway, democracy is a share of fully-combined and concurrent experiences rather than being a management sytle (Dewey, 1996). According to Dottrens (1963), maybe information not acquired by practising or experiencing, knowledge and opinions not beneficial for practising and performing are the worst and most terrible

gifts of a scholar hostile to us. Therefore, democracy culture may exist by not only adding courses or topics related with democracy into curriculums in schools but also performing similar processes to democratic processes in real life by students (Genç and Güner, 2012).

Given that democracy only develops in appropriate environments, transferring democratic characteristics in schools to the dimension of acts is seen to be an important necessity (Ural and Sağlam, 2011). Anyway, if school environments have democratic characteristics, this one substantially affects teachers and students' success and such an environment will provide teachers and students to have democratic attitudes and behaviors (Gömleksiz and Çetintaş, 2011).

In order to give democracy education in schools, education environments must let participants experience democracy (Zencirci, 2003). For this, schools must be managed with democratic values, democractic schools and class environments must be prepared, and democratic education must be given in schools. But such an education represents individuals who are independent and free, interrogate and analyze viewpoints in the world, think critically, have responsibility and know the rules and practices of democracy (Karakütük, 2001; Şişman et al., 2010). Training individuals with democratic culture keeps going for all their lives. Because, voting process which individuals use to choose their class president as of primary school period, goes on determining executives in local and general elections when they become older (Gill and Gainous, 2002).

In making democracy as a lifestyle, any emphasis of the importance of education is available in many international texts, from all of these; within the *Article 13* of International Covenant on Economical, Social and Cultural Rights [ICESCR] of the United Nations [UN],
"*The States Parties of this Covenant, each one is entitled to education. The Covenant States have a consensus that education must be given for developing human personality and honour, and strengthening respect to human rights and basic freedoms. The States also agree that education must be given which will make each one take part in the liberal society effectively, develop understanding, tolerance and friendship between all racial, ethnical and religional groups, among all nations, and promote the activities for keeping peace by the United Nations*".

Education at an international level was emphasised to have an important role in developing human rights and democracy (UN, 1976). In our country, the issue of democracy in education was included with the principle "Democracy Education" within the *Article 11* of the National Education Basic Law Numbered 1739. In this principle, a conscience of democracy, information, understanding and behaviors associated with home management, a sense of responsibility and respect to

moral values citizens are given to students to have a strong, stable, free and democratic social order. But the provision "Political and ideological suggestions against Atatürk nationalism included in the Constitution and interferences in daily political events and discussion similar to these are never permitted in education institutions" was mentioned (Milli et al., 1973).

Again, within the *Article 5* of   "Instructions of Democracy Education and School Councils of the National Education Ministry" prepared given the National Education Basic Law numbered 1739, "the UN Child Rights Charter", "the European Charter Concerning Usage of Child Rights and the protocol "Democracy Education and School Councils Project" held between the Presidency of Turkish Grand National Assembly and the Ministry of National Education put into effect in 2004; it is aimed to strengthen Our Republic with democracy; create a permanent democracy culture, promote tolerance and pluralistic conscience, bring generations who internalise their own culture, have national and moral values and adopt universal values; make students acquire cultures about electing, being elected and voting; introduce skills about communicating, adopting democratic leadership and molding public opinion for being participants (Millî et al., 2004).

Within the *Article 5* of the Regulation of MEB High School Institutions which regulates procedures and principles regarding training, teaching, managing and proceeding formal and private high school instutitons depending on MEB; saying that the high school institutions fulfill their functions in conformity with the universal law, democracy and human rights towards the general and special objectives, fundamental principles of Turkish national education; with student-centered and active learning, and a democratic institution understanding, high school institutions are required to have democratic institution culture. Furthermore, in the Article 7 of the same regulation; it is aimed for high school institutions to develop students in terms of physical, mental, moral, spiritual, social and cultural aspects, be respectful to democracy and human rights, guiding them for future by furnishing them with knowledge and skills necessary for our age.
Sport high schools organized as a high school institution in our country started to serve as High Schools of Fine Art and Sport dating from the 2009-2010 academic year after high schools of fine art and sport were combined in order to reduce school variety and increase program variety in 2008 by MEB.

In the process of restructuring MEB, towards activities such as developing education system and raising contemporary standarts, in the 18th National Education Meeting, high schools of fine art and sport which had an understanding of two different disciplines, were divided into two different school types including sport high school and fine arts high school to continue training and teaching activities. Furthermore, sport high schools have

served as separate high schools dating from the 2013-2014 academic year.

LİTERATURE

Contributions of schools to democratic life at both primary-secondary and high schools under the general education are based on democratic school culture in their own bodies. In a democratic education, the rules and principles of democracy and human rights are only taught by experience. At schools and at education institutions except for schools the relevant education may be democratic; also, democracy education may be given during this training. So both democratic education and democracy education may be given together in this education process (Şişman et al., 2010).

Studies on the perceptions about democratic school culture are limited in literature, studies have mostly focused on democracy education (Koutselini, 2008; Duze, 2011; Gyamera, 2014; Akpınar and Turan, 2004; Emir and Kaya, 2004; Işıkgöz, 1999; Gürbüz, 2006), attitudes and behaviours regarding democratic education (Gözütok, 1995; Büyükkaragöz and Kesici, 1996; Karahan et al., 2006; Erdem and Sarıtaş, 2006; Saracaloğlu et al., 2004; Ektem and Sünbül, 2011; Gömleksiz and Kan, 2008; Yanardağ, 2000; Genç and Kalafat, 2007), democratic education and democratic values (Kıncal and Işık, 2003; Yeşil and Aydın, 2007; Yılmaz, 2011; Gürşimşek and Göregenli, 2004; Kolaç and Karadağ, 2012; Güven and Akkuş, 2004; Zencirci, 2003; Demirbolat, 1999) and these studies have been mostly done with the samples of teacher candidates, teachers and executives.

On democratic school culture, the studies such as "Framework of Qualifications for A Democratic School Culture" by Şişman et al. (2010), "Evaluation of Teacher Candidates' Behaviours in terms of a Democratic Class Environment" by Kayabaşı (2011), "Analysis of Factors Affecting High School Students' Citizenship Perceptions" by Doğanay and Sarı (2009), "Democratic Education in The Classroom: An Education Law Perspective" by Moswela (2010) are available. However, a study titled with "A Study of Democratic School Culture Perceptions in High School Students" by Kabasakal et al. (2015) aimed at the assessment of students' perceptions about democratic school culture is only found among the samples of high school students in literature, "The Perception Scale of Democratic School Culture" which was developed before and also used as a data collection tool in this study, makes contributions to the field. This study is the first one dealing with Sport High School students' perceptions about democratic school culture. That is why, the research is of great importance. Studying democratic school culture perceptions of students having education at Sport High Schools in terms of different variables set the objective of this study.

METHODOLOGY

This research is a descriptive study with a screening model to determine the democratic school culture perceptions of the students studying at sport high schools (Karasar, 2008).

Participants

The participants of the research consisted of 216 students including 81 male and 63 female students from Batman Sport High School and 53 male and 19 female students from Sakarya Sport High School in the first term of 2015-2016 academic year. These two cities were selected to reflect the democratic school culture perceptions of two geographically different cities in Turkey.

Data collection tools

Data concerning the democratic school culture perceptions in Sport High School students were obtained using Lykert type "The Perception Scale of Democratic School Culture (DSCPS)" developed by Kabasakal et al. (2015). A scale of total 26 items was made up of the choices "never"(1), "rarely"(2), "sometimes"(3), "always"(4), "usually"(5). The Cronbach's Alpha coefficient estimated for the scale reliability was .94; the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient for the scale reliability was found to be .92 in the current study.

Data analysis

The research data were analyzed using the SPSS 22.0 package program. To determine the students' democratic school culture perceptions, descriptive statistics were done. In the analysis of data, normality test was firstly performed to see whether data showed a normal distribution (Table 1); as a result of tests, it was seen that data did not show a normal distribution. Since these did not present any normal distribution, Mann Whitney U and Kruskal Wallis H tests from non-parametrical tests were benefited from in the analysis.

RESULTS

The students' personal information was given in Table 1. The descriptive analysis results from their democratic school culture perceptions are given in Table 2.

Of 216 students involved in the research group, 134 (62.0%) were male students and 82 (38.0%) were female students. 150(69.4%) were in 9th grade class, and 66(30.6%) were in 10th grade class. 3(1.4%) students had one sibling; 39(18.1%), two siblings; 29(13.4%), three siblings; 28 (13.0%), four siblings; 18(8.3%), five siblings; 99(45.8%), more than five siblings.

By examining Table 3, it can be said that the general average of democratic school culture perceptions in the students was positive (3.81 ±1.23). Looking at the point averages of the students' responses to the perception scale items about democratic school culture; the items "our teachers respect others' rights (4.18±1.02) and our teachers pay attention to respect others' rights (4.14±1.11)" had the highest point average. The student

Table 1. Results of Kolmogorov-Smirnov test to check normality of distribution in points concerning democratic school culture perceptions.

Values		Perception scale of democratic school culture
N		216
Normal parameters	*M*	99.00
	SS	18.57
Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z		0.074
p		0.00*

p<0.05*.

Table 2. Distribution of students ınvolved in research in accordance with variables of gender, class and number of sibling.

Gender	f	%
Male	134	62.0
Female	82	38.0
Class	**f**	**%**
9th Class	150	69.4
10th Class	66	30.6
Number of sibling	**f**	**%**
Only A Child	3	1.4
Two Siblings	39	18.1
Three Siblings	29	13.4
Four Siblings	28	13.0
Five Siblings	18	8,3
More than Five	99	45.8
Total	216	100.0

perceptions about both items are at similar direction. This shows clarity and consistency.

In Table 3, with the average point from the items *"our teachers allow our friends having different opinions say their thoughts exactly, our school executives pay attention to be respectful to others' rights, our teachers support us to be researcher and interrogative in courses and our school executives respect to others' rights"*, they were mostly observed to have a positive approach. However, the students sometimes showed different behaviours to their friends in accordance with their school executives and their teachers' gender. Their teachers and school executives sometimes supported them when they objected to the decisions in their class and they defended their rights.

In Table 4, as a result of non-parametrical Mann Whitney-U test used to determine whether the students' points from the democratic school culture scale significantly varied in the gender variable, there was not any meaningful difference between the groups (p=0.18>0.05).

In Table 5, a significant difference was found in favour of the students studying at 10th grade as a result of non-parametrical Mann Whitney-U test used to determine whether the students' points from democratic school culture scale significantly varied in their relevant class variable. There was not any meaningful difference between the groups (p=.00<.05). The democratic school culture perceptions of the students studying at 10th grade were more positive than the 8th class students. It is considered to result from more school life experiences in 10th class students rather than the 9th grade students.

In Table 6, there was not a statistically significant difference resulting from Kruskal Wallis-H test to see whether the students' democratic school culture perceptions differed in a number of sibling (X^2=3.528; sd=5, p=.61>.05). The students having five siblings, had the highest point on democratic school culture perceptions, the students with only one sibling, that is, without any siblings, had the lowest point.

Table 3. Descriptive statistical results concerning students' democratic school culture perceptions.

Items	N	M	SD
Our teachers encourage us to defend our rights.	216	3.67	1.12
Our school executives support us to defend our rights.	216	3.54	1.26
Each student is given an opportunity of expressing one's strong characteristics in our school.	216	3.71	1.24
Our teachers pay attention to behave individuals from different ethnic origins tolerantly.	216	3.85	1.19
Students' needs and requests are taken ino consideration while making decisions about them in our school.	216	3.90	1.23
School management gives importance to students' opinions and suggestions.	216	3.85	1.21
Our teachers guide us to investigate the question in various aspects when a problem occurs in class.	216	3.85	1.11
Our school executives pay attention to behave individuals from different religions and beliefs tolerantly.	216	3.86	1.25
Our teachers respect to others' rights.	216	4.18	1.02
Our school executives pay attention to be respectful to others' rights.	216	4.04	1.15
Our school executives pay attention to behave individuals from different ethnic origins tolerantly.	216	3.85	1.20
Our teachers allow our friends having different opinions say their thoughts exactly.	216	4.08	1.08
Objections to decisions in class are taken into consideration.	216	3.38	1.31
Our teachers support us when we defend our rights.	216	3.58	1.28
Different opinions in our class are regarded as richness.	216	3.58	1.27
Rules regarding courses in class are determined with our participation.	216	3.75	1.30
It is important that decisions in our class be appropriate for the opinion of majority.	216	3.99	1.15
Our teachers pay attention to be respectful to others' rights.	216	4.14	1.11
Our school executives respect to others' rights.	216	4.00	1.12
An opportunity of strengthening each student's weak characteristics is given without making any discrimination.	216	3.87	1.18
Our teachers support us to research and interrogate in courses.	216	4.00	1.16
In class environment all students are equal to each other in front of teachers' eyes.	216	3.82	1.42
School management takes requests and complaints conveyed by our class representative.	216	3.80	1.24
Our teachers pay attention to behave individuals from different religions and beliefs tolerantly.	216	3.93	1.27
Our teachers show different behaviours in accordance with our friends' genders.	216	3.45	1.59
School executives show different behaviours in accordance with our friends' genders.	216	3.31	1.58
Total	216	3.81	1.23

(1.00:Never, 2.00:Rarely, 3.00:Sometimes, 4.00:Always, 5.00:Usually).

Table 4. Results of Mann Whitney-U test to check significance of difference in students' democratic school culture perceptions in accordance with gender variable.

Gender	N	SS	MS	U	z	p
Female	82	9491.00	115.74	4900.000	-1.333	*0.18*
Male	134	13945.00	104.07			
Total	216	-	-			

Table 5. Results of Mann Whitney-U test used to check whether there is significant difference in students' democratic school culture perceptions in accordance with their relevant class variable.

Class	N	SS	MS	U	z	p
9th grade	150	15089.50	100.60	3764.500	-2.803	*0.00*
10th grade	66	8346.50	126.46			
Total	216					

Table 6. Results of Kruskal Wallis-H test used to determine students' democratic school culture perceptions in accordance with their number of sibling.

Number of sibling	N	SS	SD	X²	p
Only a child	3	92.67			
Two siblings	39	114.32			
Three siblings	29	99.34	5	3.528	*0.61*
Four siblings	28	94.77			
Five siblings	18	116.03			
More than five	99	112.39			
Total	216	-			

DİSCUSSİON

The research concluded that the general perceptions of the students studying at sport high schools about democratic school culture were positive. According to another result of the study, the students' democratic school culture perceptions did not differ in gender and number of sibling but differed in their relevant class. Towards these results, the democratic school culture perceptions of the students studying at 10th class were more positive than the students studying at 9th class.

When examining the researches related with this topic, similar results were obtained. Kabasakal et al. (2015)'s study titled "A Study of High School Students' Democratic School Culture Perceptions" showed that the students' democratic perception levels concerning culture in their schools did not vary in gender and number of sibling but significantly varied in their class level. Demir et al. (2012)'s study "A Study of School Life Quality Perceptions as an Element of School Culture in High School Students" claimed that there was no significant difference in having positive feelings about teachers and school in favour of 12nd grade students.

Morhayim (2008)'s study title "Evaluation of Student Tendencies Concerning Democratic School as an Alternative School Type" used democratic school-based, five, basic criteria with sub-dimensions, indicated that classes of small age groups attributed to sub-dimensions less, when classes became upper, these attributions increased. This situation resulted from increases in awareness related with their lives and environments when students grew up and became adults, also increases in their fiction levels related with democracy, democratic school and democratic education being researched, attributions were more in classes of older age groups, the reason for that the awareness level increased in this period.

Sarı et al. (2007) stated that students generally perceived life quality in their schools at a medium level; there were not differences about school life quality perceptions between female and male students, school life quality was higher in high schools at upper socio-economic level and students considered life quality in their high schools as more positive ones when class level increased. Within a research called "Level Determination of Democratic Values in Final Class Students of Primary-Secondary School" by Yüksel et al. (2013); any significant differences were not seen in the level of democratic values adopted by the final class students of primary-secondary school in accordance with a number of individuals in their families.

Democratic school environments affect both teachers and students in positive ways and contribute them to have democratic attitudes and behaviours (Duman and Koç, 2004). The rooted transformation process which Turkey started in the first quarter of 21st century and has still been going on, has made paradigmatic changes in the youth field like in many fields, "passive and inactive youth" policies started to replace "active and efficient youth" policies. This makes clear that changes are in question and democratic characteristics are adopted as parallel to trends in the modern world (Kızılkaya et al., 2013).

As atmosphere given by school environment and culture may provide positive social experiences to students, difficulties and pressures from school atmosphere, a functioning system of a non-democratic school may negatively affect students, may even lead to passive, fearful or aggressive individuals (İnal, 2009). Schools may be examples of democratic culture by making schools environments where students learn democratic life with their experiences (Harrison 2003). Because democratic schools are ones which locate students on center, introduce them freedom and benefit from democratic principles and practices in management of schools (Morhayim, 2008) .

When evaluating the results of the research, democratic school culture is a dynamical process, and students' perception styles concerning this process have importance in democracy education. To create a democratic school culture, school executives and teachers' efforts are important. These efforts are reflected on students as elements of democratic culture; they can determine their perceptions about a democratic school.

When making any research on a large sample group, studying students' democratic school culture perceptions in accordance with different variables will make contributions to the field.

Conflict of ınterests

The author has not declared any conflicts of interest.

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