

The Attitude of the Students towards the Value of “Paying Attention to Being Healthy” in 4th Grade Elementary Social Sciences Course*

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Abstract

This study was aimed to define the teaching of the value of “Paying Attention to Being Healthy” in 4th grade elementary Social Sciences course and to determine the students’ attitude towards this value. To reach this goal, activities to teach the value of paying attention to being healthy were prepared and conducted. The effect of these activities on the students’ attitudes and gains was determined. “The mixed method”, a combination created by the use of qualitative and quantitative research patters, was employed in the study. The experiment group consisted of 22 students while there were 23 students in the control group. In order to collect the research data, “Attitude Scale of Being Healthy” was applied to each group before and after the study process. Additionally, “the Interview Form” was developed to identify the students’ ideas and level of gains about the value of “Paying Attention to Being Healthy”, and it was also applied before and after the application process. The unrelated samples t-test was used in the analysis of the quantitative data, and the descriptive analysis method was employed for the analysis of the qualitative data. When the final test evaluation results for the test and the control group were analysed, it was seen that there existed a significant difference in favour of the test group for which the activities developed according to value teaching methods were applied [t (43) =11.949, p< .05]. It was also concluded that the positive behaviours towards being healthy by the experiment group increased. According to these results, the activities developed according to value teaching methods had a positive effect on the students’ attitudes and behaviours towards being healthy.

Key Words

Values, Values Education, Paying Attention to Being Healthy, Values Education, Activities, Attitudes.

- * This research was developed from the PhD thesis titled as “Teaching the Values of “Nature Love, Cleanness and Being Healthy” in 4th Grade Elementary Social Sciences Course and Determination of Students’ Attitudes towards These Values”. Moreover, this study was presented at the Values Education Symposium, October 26–28, 2011, Eskisehir Osmangazi University, Eskisehir, Turkey.
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Today it can be said that individuals don’t pay enough attention to their health as the start age of smoking is down to primary school level, alcohol and drug addiction increases rapidly, and due to unhealthy diet and disobedience to traffic rules. In order to overcome these problems and bring up healthy individuals, it is first needed to make individuals care about their health. It is thought that children are required to gain the value of being healthy at an early age. When the effect of values on human life is considered, the importance of being healthy as a value increases more and more. Therefore, we can say that the value of paying attention to being healthy should be taught directly to a person to preserve his health. Thus, the research problem was taken as “Teaching the Value of Paying Attention to Being Healthy in Primary School Fourth Grade and the Identification of the Children’s Attitudes”.

One of the fundamentals of being happy, successful and at peace with oneself is to be healthy. Hence, it is

important to know the value of being healthy (Bridge, 2003, p. 21). Nevertheless, the priorities depend on the conditions. They mostly vary according to the degree and dimension of the value they possess (Bono, 2007, p. 83). A person's beliefs, expectations, motivations, values, senses, personal attitudes, and additionally psychological characteristics, behaviour patterns and habits affect his health behaviours (Tokgöz, 2002). Whether one has correct decisions in and attitudes towards his own health is related to his health condition and problems and how one perceives his health (Önal et al., 2008).

Preservation and improvement of health is only possible with the development of people's knowledge, ideas and value judgement. It is aimed to find out the reasons behind a person's and a society's negative behaviours, learn and change the educational behaviours underlying these, reinforce positive behaviours, and develop new positive behaviours (Saltık, 2004; Yılmaz, 2007). The personal belief determining someone's positive health behaviour explains his value towards health. In this case the health belief can be interpreted as value expectation as well (Stoddard et al., 1998; Grubbs, 2000 as cited in Mutlu, 2006). Kale (2007, p. 317) states that a well-educated person uses his mind to direct and control his behaviours. Values' teaching possesses a vital role in educating people correctly (Tozlu & Topsakal, 2007, p. 180). Because values affect every aspect of our lives consciously or unconsciously and determines the life line of human (Özden, 2005, p. 37; UNESCO, 2005, p. 13). According to Özensel (2003), the determination of good and evil and ideal ways of thinking and acting are all created by values.

Almost every idea and every work has a piece of value. It is impossible to ignore values. It is because every decision we make includes values and represents wishes, target, and reasons and aims we seek. Values affect every aspect of our life consciously or unconsciously. Besides, they even define the steps we take, decisions we make, and the quality of the responses we show to something we oppose. Hence, values are the real reasons behind our attitudes and assumptions (Avcı, 2007; Bono, 2007; UNESCO, 2005). Therefore, it is vital that children should gain values so that children can adopt and experience them (Bolay, 2007, p. 19). Some of the approaches used in values teaching and development are Value Explanation, Value Analysis, and Moral Judgement.

The approach of Value Explanation is based on how individuals define what is important for them in their life. Instead of direct approaches, it is princip-

le that individuals freely decide on what to do after analysing possible outcomes and alternatives instead of other people's suggestions (Doğanay, 2007, pp. 268-269). Raths, Harmin, and Simon (1978, p. 28) base the approach of value explanation on three processes such as Choice, Appreciation, and Acting. Teachers and students should refrain from any attitude that would make it hard to think on subjects of value during the application of this process.

The main target of Value Analysis approach is to help people to learn a process which goes step by step and logically to be able to make moral decisions. It is needed to think about all the possibilities about a value before actually making a decision (Lickona, 1977, p. 21-22). These steps are organized in three stages (Cassidy & Kurfman, 1977 as cited in Thomas, 1992, p. 105) which are the explanation of decision making conditions and choices, evaluation of the choices by analysing them, and making the decision and meditating on the decision. Coombs and Meux (1971) define that there are six tasks needed to be done in the process of value analysis (cited in Bacanlı, 2006, p. 35). These tasks are (i) Determination and clarification of the value problem, (ii) Merging of the facts, (iii) Evaluation of the facts, (iv) Clarification of the facts, (v) Reaching a temporary value decision, (vi) Testing the suggested value rule.

Moral Judgement (dilemma) is the real life problem where two different value principles clash. The students are required to choose the behaviour they see fit to themselves, and they are asked to state their reasons. A good dilemma must have the following properties (Oliner, 1976 cited in Doğanay, 2007, p. 275); (i) the dilemma should be related to the subjects covered in the class, (ii) it must be as simple as it can, (iii) it must be open ended to allow different answer possibilities instead of one single answer, (iv) it must help the students focus on reasoning instead of factual knowledge, (v) it must be appropriate to the level of the students. It is defined in UNESCO (1986) that the steps to be used in moral dilemma discussion are (i) the definition of dilemma, (ii) students' request of answers about the dilemma, (iii) the determination of the position of the students on the dilemma, (iv) the evaluation of the idea in the dilemmas, (v) meditation on the reasons of the dilemma and making the decision.

In this approach, the teacher confronts each student with the moral dilemma and gives them the opportunity to hear what other students say about the sample event (Leming, 1997 cited in Akbaş, 2004).

Method

The Research Pattern (Model)

This research was designed in accordance with the mixed method techniques where quantitative and qualitative data collection methods are used together. Trial method with control grouped pre-test post-test was utilized in the study. The quantitative dimension of the study was performed as trial method with control grouped pre-test post-test in order to determine the differences between students who participated and who didn't participate in the sessions which were directed at teaching the value of paying attention to being healthy. In the method, there were two groups, one control and one experiment, assigned randomly, and evaluation were conducted on them before and after the experiment. The qualitative method of the research includes the interviews before and after the application (experimental) process of activities.

Study Group

The research was conducted on fourth grade students in İ. Ethem Baysal Primary School (22 students) and Atatürk Primary School (23 students) of Aksaray Provincial Directorate of National Education in Yesilova town. Two groups were created as one study group (fourth grade students in İ. Ethem Baysal Primary School) and one the control group (fourth grade students in Atatürk Primary School) using the unbiased random selection method.

Application (Experimental) Process

1. "The Attitude Scale of Being Healthy" as the pre-test was applied to the experiment and control group simultaneously. A preliminary interview (pre-interview) was conducted for the experiment group.
2. The activities of teaching being healthy, which were developed in accordance with values teaching methods, were applied to the experiment group.
3. The application procedure covered a total of 27 class hours during 9 weeks.
4. The control group was not subjected to any extra activities but regular classes as instructed in Teacher Manual for Social Sciences Class in Fourth Grade.
5. "The Attitude Scale of Being Healthy" as the post-test was applied to the experiment and

control group simultaneously. A final interview was conducted for the experiment group after the application.

Data Collection Tool

The Attitude Scale of Being Healthy: The Attitude Scale of Being Healthy developed by Tahiroğlu (2011) for fourth grade students was employed to determine the students' attitudes towards the value of "Paying Attention to Being Healthy". This is a Likert type scale (5: totally agree, 4: agree, 3: neutral, 2: disagree, 1: totally disagree) which includes 13 positive and 12 negative questions and can be applied individually or in groups. The articles were grades as 5-4-3-2-1.

Interview: A semi-structured interview form consisting of questions to learn the attitudes and ideas of the students on the values of Paying Attention to Being Healthy was prepared. The fundamental rules and principles of interview technique were kept in mind during the preparation, and the questions were open-ended to expose the children's feelings and ideas.

Data Analysis

Analysis of the Quantitative Data: Independent Samples T-Test was used in the comparisons between the groups after gathering the scores from pre-test and post-tests of the experiment and control group, and the trust level of 0,05 was adopted as the significance level. The data were analysed with SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Science) 15 program

Analysis of the Qualitative Data: Descriptive analysis method was used in the analysis of the qualitative data. During the process, direct quotes from students were done when deemed necessary, and these quotes were given under the pre-test and post-test interview titles. Additionally, coding method was used in quotes instead of giving the actual names of the students. The coding was done as Participant 1 (P1) and Participant 2 (P2) and so on for the students.

Results

Findings and Comments about the Scores of Students in the Experiment and Control Group from the Attitude Scale of Paying Attention to Being Healthy

There is a 0,02 point difference in favour of the control group in the mean scores of the groups from the

Attitude Scale of Being Healthy pre-test. In order to understand if this difference is significant or not, it has been tested with t test in the significance level of 0,05, and the t value was 0,272 [t(43)=.272, $p>.05$]. This result shows that the difference between the mean arithmetical score between the groups is not significant.

There is a 1,20 point difference in favour of the experiment groups in the mean scores of the groups from the Attitude Scale of Being Healthy post-test. In order to understand if this difference is significant or not, it has been tested with t test in the significance level of 0,05, and the t value was 11.949 [t(43)=11.949, $p<.05$]. This result shows that there is a significant difference between the experiment group to which the activities of values teaching has been applied and the control group to which only the 4th grade Social Sciences co-ur programme has been applied.

Findings and Comments about the Ideas of the Students in Experiment Group towards the Value of Paying Attention to Being Healthy

When the findings acquired from the interviews of the experiment group before and after the experimental procedure, it is seen that following the experimental procedure;

- There was an increase in the behaviours towards self-cleaning,
- There was an increase in choosing food from all nutrition groups and a decrease in choosing harmful food,
- There was a huge increase in the number of students paying attention to hygiene, health approval, production and expiry date of a product when shopping for food.
- There was a huge increase in the number of students paying attention to healthiness and seasonal appropriateness of clothes
- There was a huge increase in behaviours to keep away from contagious illnesses to be healthy
- There was an increase in the rate of exercising to be healthy.

Discussion

It was seen in the study that the health education activities developed in accordance with values teaching techniques increased the attitude scores of being healthy and positive behaviours. These findings conclude that the activities developed in accordance with values teaching techniques affected

the positive attitudes and behaviours of the students towards being healthy. There are some studies in literature that the activities of values teaching have positive effects on students' attitudes and behaviours towards a specific subject (Dilmaç, 2007; Keskinoglu, 2008; Koç, 2007; Meaney, 1979; Taylor, 2007; Yüksel, 2006). When the results of these studies are kept in mind as well, it is possible to state that the activities of values teaching is effective in developing children's positive attitudes and behaviours towards the related value or values positive.

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