The Value Preferences of the Academicians in Turkey towards Their Children, Students, and Colloquies

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to determine the preferences of Turkish academicians about the values of the most positive and negative characteristics that they want to see in their children, students, and colleagues. In this study, Bacanlı's (2002) 'the most positive' and 'the most negative' adjectives data gathering tool is used to collect the data. The population includes 75.000 academicians from public and private universities. Moreover, the sample, which consists of 3400 academicians, is selected by using systematic sampling. The survey method is used and frequency, percent, and Chi-square are conducted to analyze the data. When the results of the study are considered, the academicians valued that the most positive characteristics of their children is to be "honest," of their students is to be "hard-working," and of their colleagues is to be "open-minded." However, the most negative characteristic of their children is to be a "liar", of their students and colleagues are to be"inconsistent" in their behaviors.

Key Words

Turkey, University, Value, Academicians' Value Preference.

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Every society defines the desirable and undesirable features of the individual that the culture wishes to produce. It is also clear that institutions within the social structure have their own values. The family, for example, has a significant role in keeping the values of education and religion alive (Özensel, 2003). The university, which is the primary institution involved in social research, uses two social desirability scales to identify these features: the Edwards Social Desirability Scale and Crown Social Desirability Scale (Bacanlı, 2002).

According to Aktan (2004), the university is an institution that produces knowledge, synthesizes and distributes knowledge through academic research. The primary responsibility of the university is research and education. The university is an important resource both for developing a country and producing an informed society. Pines (2003) indicates that the university's primary activity should be producing knowledge, not simply supplying information. Practically, producing knowledge is the shared responsibility of the lecturers and students. Başar (1996) stated that the aim of the university is to give a high level of professional training to students through scientific research and tutoring.

Rosovsky (1998) states that universities mirror societies and exhibit strengths and weaknesses that fluctuate over time. The universities do not have enough power on their own to change the society or to raise its level of prosperity. Accordingly, the responsibilities of universities include teaching basic knowledge and occupational skills and producing new knowledge. Their mission is to improve the quality of knowledge. Gould (1970) claims that universities in the future cannot ignore developments in the society, and in order to survive they must take social changes into consideration.

There are many different types of research and publications about values in educational institutions (Akbaş, 2007; Atabek, 2003; Avcı, 2007; Aydın, 2003; Bacanlı, 2002; Calp, 2006; Erdem, 2003; Güngör, 1993; Mehmedoğlu, 2007; Sağnak, 2007; Sarı, 2005; Sezgin, 2006; Ulusoy, 2007; Ünal, 1981), but their focus is primarily on students and the pre-university context. There are few studies about university lecturers' value scales. There is some research related to the teaching staff at Gazi University (Özdemir, 2003) and other teaching staffs in Turkey (Özdemir, 2006). However, there has not been enough research concerning values and teaching staff.

The Purpose of the Study

The objective of this study is to investigate the features that lecturers most desire to see in their children, their students, and their colleagues, including the features they definitely do not want to see.

Conceptual Environment

The University and Values: Universities are value-based organizations. The values of a university can be classified as follows (Erdem, 2003):

1. Academically-oriented values: to be academic, to honor knowledge, and to make self-sacrifice in order to produce knowledge.

2. Humane values: the belief that the individual served is valuable and that the student's personality is to be respected.

3. Moral values: trustworthiness and honesty

To identify the university's value profile, it is important to use suitable techniques. To be aware of the norms and choices of the lecturers it is necessary to create an effective motivation system (Sağnak, 2005). It is necessary that the individual should have aims that make life and its events meaningful, even if they are difficult or impossible to reach. A vision of power comes into existence with the creation of aims supported by values (Özden, 1998). Hence the university's vision of power is based on its aims and values, and it maintains operations in order to reach its aims.

The Values in Relation to Psychology and Sociology: According to Feather and McKee (2008), values are the desired attitudes or general beliefs in general aims. Values belong to humankind and the relative importance of values is up to individuals. The values themselves, in fact, are abstract, beyond the realm of specific events. They are connected with emotional and motivational systems. People accept values as the rules guiding their lives. As an educational term, values are described as "*the approved or noble features which an entity has in terms of psychology, sociology and morals*" (Oğuzkan, 1993, p. 33). According to Bolay (2007), the value is the thing that is needed or wished. It infers not the just presence but the necessity of existing. It is a requirement of the human being.

Plato, who integrated Socrates' ideas, is one of the philosophers who considered axiology to be important (Ülken, 2001). In philosophy, the

term 'value' is defined in various ways from both subjective and objective perspectives (Özlem, 2002).

According to Rokeach, who does research about value scales in terms of psychology (1973), a value is a powerful belief that causes behavioral choice. Schwartz (1992) states that a value is a belief, a statement of a desired result that has the power to guide and to evaluate behaviors and events (cited in Bacanlı, 2002). Güngör (1993, p. 27) explains a value as *"bir şeyin arzu edilebilir veya edilemez olduğu hakkındaki inanç"* (*a belief about something approved or disapproved*); he also states that values embody the aims that the individual wants not only for himself but also for others.

Sağnak (2005) posits that values are the basis for a human to introduce himself, evaluate the behaviors of his own or others, and persuade other people. Bolay (2007) states that a value is based on two factors: knowledge and belief. Of the two, knowledge is less effective, while beliefs embodied in such things as art, morals and religion are more effective. Özden (1998) emphasizes that during the process of transformation of values to action, vision, mission, and aims are needed. Poyraz (2007) says that a value comes true with actions. Sociologically, according to Tezcan (1995, p. 222), values are defined as *"grup ya da toplumun, kişilerin, kalıpların, amaçların ve diğer sosyo-kültürel şeylerin önemlerini ölçmeye yarayan ölçütler"* (the criteria, models, and other socio-cultural objectives that a group, society, or people use to measure the importance of something). A society's values are often stated in general or abstract terms such as "success," "truthfulness," and "collaboration". These values turn into norms and traditions in order to protect the lives of individuals and groups. As a result, values, beliefs, and norms are essential elements of organizational culture.

Values in the Administrative Process: The role of values in decision making is often studied. Values determine the procedures that individuals and groups choose to perpetuate, and these values are subject to "multifactor" influences (Willower & Licata, 1997). An administration searches for new strategies that reflect the changes and the improvements in the society. This search is indispensible for the success of the organizational work and the existence of the organization in the society (Nartgün, 2006). Social change is a dynamic process. The basic element making it dynamic is humanity or the relations between people (Urhan, 2007). The values which are already in social changes or

the new ones that result from social changes should be acquired by the youth (Doğan, 2007). The moral values are applied with the awareness of their impacts on individuals and groups. For an organization to reach its aims, the nature of its values should be examined and their function improved (Begley, 1999; Erdem, 2003). The school is a habitat in which values form the base for living and learning. The school has also its own values, as an individual or society has values, and these values are developed over the course of time. An individual may make up his own values as might the school, the values of the society, the individual, or the school change (Turan & Aktan, 2008)

Feather (1975, 1990, 1993) and Rokeach (1973) state that values research defines the individual's features and tendencies, as well as those of the culture and the society (cited in Sarı, 2005). It is important to identify the values in the university environment where the intellects of the future grow, as well as the values of the lecturers. It is also important to know how their values will be shaped in the future. In addition to research that implies that the values of the schoolteacher affect the students' behaviors (Gözütok, 1995; Varış, 1973), the values of university lecturers can also affect the students' behavior. Thus, research in this field becomes more important.

Method

A survey method is used in this research. Survey method is a research design that aims to describe a current or a past situation (Karasar, 1999). In this research, the values that lecturers want their children, students, and colleagues to have are to be determined. The study is limited to the second term of the 2003/2004 academic year. Related topics are "lecturers in Turkey" and "the Value Scale of the Lecturers' Children, Students and Colleague in Turkey".

The participants in the research consist of lecturers working in private and state universities, and research institutes in Turkey. Therefore, 75,000 lecturers (the count taken from the Higher Educational Council in 05.08.2003) are the total field under survey. The sampling scale is 1/10; ten percent of the lecturers from all institutes were surveyed. The data collecting tool was sent at the end of the second term of the 2003/2004 academic year so that the lecturers could easily complete the survey. Of the 7500 questionnaires sent out, 3400 were returned. In the

analysis, items left blank were ignored. For this reason, the totals in the analysis differ. The return rate of the questionnaire was 45%. Reasons for failure to return the questionnaire could include being abroad, being out of the cities, illness, workload, or unwillingness to participate.

In this study, the terms describing the most approved/liked and most disapproved/disliked features that the lecturers think their own children, their students, and colleagues should have were taken from the study done in Turkey. Among the features identified by Akkoyun and Bacanlı in 1988, those most desired were open minded, dignified, honest, merciful, clever, and hard working. Those most disliked were merciless, intolerant, inconsistent, untidy, vain, lying, and gossipy (Bacanlı, 2002).

After 48 incorrect or inadequate forms were removed, the data forms were analyzed one by one. During the data analysis, the statistical program SPSS 11.0 was used. In the analysis of data about the lecturers, frequency (f) and percent (%) rates were calculated. Whether there was a logical relationship between two discontinuous variables was tested by using x^2 testing. When this test is used, it is necessary that the rates of the cellule do not fall below five. If it was necessary, the amount of the cellules was raised by connecting the columns, and also when necessary, the analysis of frequency and percent was done by using cross tables (Büyüköztürk, 2002).

Results

Nearly half of the lecturers (46%) state that the feature they most want their children to have is candor. Then, in order, the other desirable descriptors are "open-minded," "clever," "hard-working," "merciful," and "dignified." It is noteworthy that being merciful and dignified are desired features of children. 60% of the lecturers state that the most disapproved feature in children is "being a liar." Then, the others are "inconsistency," "mercilessness," "impatience," "vanity," and "untidiness," respectively. While the lecturers' most approved feature is "candor," the most disapproved is "being a liar." These two features are opposite, which is consistent.

Less than half of the lecturers (41%) want their students to be hard-working. Then in order, the other choices are "being open-minded," "being honest," and "being organized". Naturally the lecturers want their students to be hard-working and open-minded. In this situation,

the students are supposed to be the individuals who have cognitive powers and can easily express themselves.

Less than half of the lecturers (42%) state "inconsistency" as a feature they don't want their students to have. Then in order, the others are "untidiness," "impatience," and "gossiping". While the most approved feature expected from the students is "being hard working," "inconsistency" is the most disapproved.

More than one third of the lecturers (39%) expect their colleagues to be open-minded. The others are "being hard-working," "being honest" and "being organized". Because duty is the basis of the lecturers' occupation, it can be understood why occupational features such as being open-minded and hard-working are desirable rather than features about personality, such as being dignified or merciful. Somewhat less than half of the lecturers (45%) state that the most disapproved feature in their colleagues is "inconsistency"; then in order, "gossip," "impatience" and "vanity". While being open-minded is the most approved feature, "inconsistency" is the most disapproved feature.

Discussion

Nearly half of the lecturers want their children above all to be honest. Then come "being open-minded," "being clever," and "being hard-working". In spite of such positive features, more than half of the lecturers consider deceptiveness as a most disapproved feature that their children may have. Then in order, the others are "inconsistency," "mercilessness," "impatience," "vanity," and "untidiness". The lecturers want their children to be honest and expect them not to lie. This is a moral value according to Güngör's research (1993). It is also considered a social value, not just an individual one. For both genders and for each generation in the study, moral values are at the top of the list, in first position for females and second position for males. In other words, moral values are in the forefront. So it can be said that above all lecturers want their children to be individuals with moral values. In the broad study of Yazıcı (2003), Turkish university youth state that the most important feature (22%) is "candor" for themselves. In addition to this, moral values are in second place on the value scale for the students in Sarı's study (2005). According to Nartgün's study (2006), the university administration thinks "candor" as an institutional value and it is in third

place (%15) for the lecturers. Consequently, the studies of Güngör (1993), Sarı (2005), and Nartgün (2006) support the claim that the lecturers desire their children to be honest, so the concept of candor is very important.

For their students, "being hard-working" is the feature most desired by nearly half of the lecturers (41%) and 42% of the lecturers also desire that their students not be inconsistent. "Being hard-working" is supposed to be the most approved feature according to the Bacanlı's study of university students (2002). These data support the lecturers' expectations. Both the students and the lecturers believe that "being hard-working," which has an impact on academic success, to be the most important feature. In addition to this, Erdem (2003) thinks that "producing" and "being hard-working" are necessary values in an organizational culture.

More than one third of the lecturers state that "being open-minded" is the most approved feature for their colleagues. Then in order come "being hard-working," "being honest," and "being organized". Somewhat less than half of the lecturers chose "being inconsistent" as the most disapproved feature in their colleagues. The other undesirable features are "gossiping," "impatience," and "vanity". This finding reflects Atatürk's aim that colleagues should have "free ideas, free knowledge, and free conscience". In academic life, it is important that the ideas and thought should be free. Güngör (1993) posits that "being open-minded" is an academic value. According to the results of this study, while academic values are in third place on the value scale for young males, it is in fifth place for females. It is to be expected that this kind of value would not the at the top of the scale for young people, because they think moral, political, and social values are more important. Inconsistency, which the lecturers do not want their colleagues to have, is not a suitable characteristic in an academic environment. Thus, inconsistency is a disapproved feature in the environment where academic research and academic data are central. Consequently, in university life, it is important that being open-minded and consistent are approved features.

These results indicate that lecturers want their children to be honest, their students to be hard-working, and their colleagues to be open-minded. The expectations for each group are different because they are cast in different contexts, moral and academic. The lecturers' primary

expectation from their children is to have moral values, while they ask their students and colleagues to have academic values that are closely related to the university's aims. The results are the lecturers' value scale. In Nartgün's study (2006) it is clear that while 37 percent of the lecturers have the expected values such as tolerance, respect, and endearment, a further 20 percent of the lecturers do not have these kinds of values at all. Thus it can be understood that to create values and then to act on those values in university life is really a difficult process.

These results show that apart from the most wanted expectation from the colleagues, the approved or disapproved expectations of the lecturers from their children, students, and colleagues consist of the matters in social, scientific and sanitary fields.

In terms of this study and its findings, the lecturers' values generally are based on moral and academic aspects. In spite of exceptions, the value scales for the children, the students and the colleagues are nearly same. First of all humanistic values, then academic and scientific values are expected. The creation and the assimilation of values is a process which can be changed and renewed. However the lecturers' current value scale is important since it has an impact on the academic environment.

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