Child and Democracy: Examination of Elementary Education School Students’ Democracy Perception by Metaphors

Fatma Sadık¹, Mediha Sarı²

Introduction
Almost in all of the countries the social purpose of education is bringing up individuals who quest, discuss, examine and who are aware of their responsibilities. Elementary education is the basis of democracy education according to the aspect of bringing up individuals who will develop democracy awareness that is gained in the family and who not only know democratic values but also have internalized them as a way of living. Both 2005 elementary education program with its aspects of encouraging students to cooperation, expressing their feelings and thoughts freely and the Democracy Education and School Parliaments Project (DESPP) with its aspect of preparing basis for learning the democratic political culture by experiencing it are considered as important efforts in aspect of democracy education. In this research students’, who are also the target group of DESSP, perception on democracy and the factors affecting this perception are examined thinking that every research that will be made in respect of gaining democratic knowledge skills and values to children, and enabling them to internalize and adopt these as a way of living will contribute to democracy education.

Methods
The research is a qualitative study performed in phenomenological design and is aimed at examining elementary education students’ perceptions on democracy concept by means of metaphors. Work group of the research consists of a total of 332 students of three elementary education schools of central provinces of Adana that are chosen by random method. The students are 6th, 7th and 8th grade students and are aged between 11 and 16. 50.3 % of the students are girls and 49.7% are boys. In collection of the data ‘’Democracy Metaphors Questionnaire’’ that was developed by the researchers was used. In the questionnaire students were asked their personal information as well as activities carried out about democracy, whether they participated in DESSP, the contribution of the project in their opinions about democracy and to develop a metaphor on democracy and to explain its reason. The final question in the questionnaire is asking what the factors affecting students’ thoughts on democracy are. Descriptive statistics were used in analysis of quantitative data obtained from the research whereas content analysis was used for qualitative data.

Results
The result of the research revealed that students developed 75 metaphors for democracy and that they generally perceive democracy as a regime that is synonym of equality, freedom and justice. It was found out that 106 of the students did not know that Democracy Education and School Parliaments Project was being conducted in their school and that 66.3 % (149) of students who participated in the project as voters, representative candidate and representative stated that student representative election process has not affected their opinions about democracy. According to the opinions of the students activities performed concerning democracy in school are usually monitor election and explaining what democracy is. As stated by the students, the factors that affect students’ opinions about democracy the most are; family, teachers and school directors whereas the least affecting

¹ Yrd. Doç. Dr., Çukurova Üniversitesi, fsadik@cu.edu.tr
² Öğr. Gör. Dr., Çukurova Üniversitesi, msari@cu.edu.tr
factors are TV serials, school activities except lessons and grandparents and other close relatives.

**Discussion and Conclusions**

The results obtained from this research revealed that despite a big majority of elementary education students know and want the concepts that democratic life brings together, like freedom, equality and justice, they do not understand that, for a democratic society, it takes showing effort individually and collectively and their responsibilities at this point. When students’ progression qualities are taken into account the reason for this can be that democracy includes abstract concepts like equality, freedom, respect, sympathy, sharing, compromise, confidence, empathy, etc. and that usually the activities in school about democracy is usually explaining in the lessons, what democracy is. In parallel with the obtained results, it can be said that; for the students to internalize democracy, democracy must be practiced in classroom and school, importance must be given to gaining democratic behavior and skills rather than giving information on what democracy is and active learning environments must be created where students will really be the subjects of the environments. Occasions must be created that will enable students to understand how it affects their life to live in a democratic society and their participation must be ensured in subjects and decisions affecting themselves. Additionally, researches evaluating the administration process of Democracy Education and School Parliaments Project can be made and administration quality can be increased.