

HOW HAVE VALUES EVOLVED IN HISTORY COURSE CURRICULA IN TURKEY? A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS¹

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Abstract

Societal values have evolved over time, shaped by cultural and individual differences. Values hold society together while also enabling individuals to maintain their presence in social life. Education, especially history teaching, plays an important role in the transmission of values shaped by social change and transformation. History represents the collective material and intangible heritage of a society. Therefore, history is the memory of society. However, history teaching, like other disciplines, is carried out within the framework of a curriculum. In Turkey, a constructivist approach has been adopted in course curricula since 2005. Headings such as skills, values, concepts, and achievements have been included in curricula. Although the constructivist approach has been applied in history course curriculum since 2007, values were only included as a separate heading much later, in 2016. In history course curriculum prior to 2016, values were presented indirectly under general headings such as objectives and outcomes. In this context, the history course curriculum implemented since 2007 was examined using the document analysis method, and the findings were interpreted using descriptive analysis techniques. The results of the study show that history course curriculum focuses on elements such as a sense of trust and social belonging. However, the study concluded that more systematic strategies and implementation guides are needed to effectively instill these values in students.

Keywords: Curricula, History, Values.

Introduction

Values are fundamental principles that guide the goals and ideals of both societies and individuals. (Demirhan Iscan, 2019; Ozden, 2020). In this sense, the values that constitute the structure of society encompass the fundamental characteristics that belong to humans and distinguish them from other living beings (Tezcan, 2018). Therefore, values are transmitted from the past to the future, forming the collective memory of society. The importance of the concept of values and the focus on it by different scientific fields have led to its definition having a rich and diverse content. Balci (2014) defines the concept of values as “useful, meaningful, wise, beneficial”; Keskin (2008) as “desired goals, aims, rules, beliefs, judgments, and thoughts”; Halstead (1996) defines it as “criteria used by individuals to explain right and wrong,” and Schwartz (1994) defines it as “desired goals that serve as guiding principles for

¹ This study was derived from the master's thesis titled "*The transmission of the values in the curricula of history courses through the literary texts in history textbooks*" written by the first author under the supervision of the second author.

the life of an individual or other social entities, with varying levels of importance beyond the relevant circumstances.”

The transmission of values from one generation to the next is crucial for the continuity of social cohesion. In this context, history lessons are one of the best tools for creating a shared sense of values within society. This is because history lessons not only teach knowledge about the past within a chronological sequence of events but also facilitate the transmission of values. Many values, such as values related to the individual and society, values related to education, and national and universal values, are acquired through history courses (Tokdemir & Artan, 2012). Students can inherently assimilate values as part of the numerous benefits encompassed in the objectives of history courses, including the development of awareness regarding their rights and responsibilities, empathetic thinking abilities, and critical thinking skills. Therefore, the values taught in history contribute to students' development by increasing their awareness.

The most important statement regarding the use of values within the education system in Turkey is found in the National Education Basic Law No. 1739 of 1973, which states: “To raise individuals who embrace, protect, and develop the national, moral, human, spiritual, and cultural values of the Turkish nation” (MoNE, 1973). However, it was only possible to include values as a direct heading in teaching programs in 2005 with the adoption of the constructivist approach. The first history course curriculum under the constructivist approach was prepared in 2007 for 9th graders. However, values were not included as a separate heading in this curriculum (MoNE, 2007). This situation continued in subsequent history course curricula.

For the first time, in a very late year, such as 2016, a specific heading for values was added to the high school history course curriculum (MoNE, 2016). Thus, for the first time in history course curricula, values and values education were addressed under an independent heading and have continued to the present day. In previous history course curriculum, values were not presented under a specific heading; instead, they were indirectly mentioned within the lines under headings such as aims, approaches, and achievements, such as "...adopting, protecting, and developing the national, moral, human, spiritual, and cultural values of the Turkish nation...", "...ensuring a willingness to uphold secular, democratic, national, and contemporary values... Expressions such as "...social values..." and "national values..." are included (MoNE, 2007; MoNE, 2008; MoNE, 2009; MoNE, 2011a; MoNE, 2011b). Additionally, when values are mentioned, the phrase "such as" is used to provide examples, and a clear framework is not established regarding which values are emphasized. This situation has led those who examine or implement curricula to shape the concept of value according to their own interpretations and understanding.

Method

The document analysis method was used to collect data for this study. Because of its economic benefits and ease of data access, this approach is widely used in the social sciences (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Document analysis allows for the systematic examination of all types of written, visual, etc. documents containing information related to the topic being studied (Karagoz, 2021). In this context, the study examined the values included in the high school history course curriculum implemented between 2007 and 2024. The findings obtained were analyzed and interpreted using the descriptive analysis method.

Findings

The first concrete headings and statements related to values in the study were found in the 2016 high school history course curriculum for grades 9-11. Therefore, the values in the high school history curricula implemented between 2016 and 2024 are presented below.

Values in the 2016 History Course Curriculum for the grades 9,10, and 11

The high school history curriculum developed in 2016 included a section titled “values.” This represented a significant innovation in history teaching. However, while values were mentioned in the curriculum, no clear list was provided. Instead, values were included through examples such as “...social values such as democracy, equality, and justice...” and “...personal values such as honesty, love, respect, and tolerance...” (MoNE, 2016).

Table 1. Values in the 2016 History Course Curriculum for Grades 9, 10, and 11

Justice	Honesty	Tolerance	Love
Democracy	Equality	Respect	

As shown in Table 1, seven values have been included in the history course curriculum: “justice,” “democracy,” “honesty,” “equality,” “tolerance,” “respect,” and “love.” Given these values, it is evident that the goal is to raise educated people who are active, responsible, sensitive, and conscious of democracy.

Values in the 2017 History Course Curriculum for Grades 9,10 and 11

In 2017, as part of efforts to update curricula, a draft high school history course curriculum was designed. While the values included in the 2016 high school history course curriculum remained the same, only the title was changed to “Values Education in the Curriculum” (MoNE 2017a). In the actual high school history curriculum prepared in the same year, the values were reorganized, and the title of the values section became “Values Education” (MoNE, 2017b). Another important feature of the 2017 high school history course curriculum is that values are presented not only as concepts but also in conjunction with attitudes and behaviors related to these values. Therefore, the curriculum offers a more concrete and actionable framework in terms of values and values education.

Table 2. Attitudes and Behaviors Related to Values in the 2017 History Course Curriculum for Grades 9, 10, and 11

Value	Attitude and Behavior
Justice	Being fair, Treating everyone equally, Sharing
Friendship	Altruism, Trust, Loyalty, Fidelity, Cooperation
Honesty	Being open and clear, Being truthful, Acting ethically, Being reliable, Keeping one's word
Self-control	Controlling one's behavior, Taking responsibility for one's behavior, Having self-confidence
Patience	Being determined, being patient
Respect	Modesty, Treating others the way you want to be treated, Valuing other people's personalities
Love	Valuing family unity, Making sacrifices
Responsibility	Being responsible to oneself, the environment, the nation, and the family
Patriotism	Diligence, Solidarity, Adhering to rules and laws, Being sensitive to historical and natural heritage, Caring about society

Benevolence	Being generous, Being self-sacrificing, Cooperating, Being compassionate, Being hospitable, Sharing
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As shown in Table 2, the 2017 history course curriculum includes 10 values: “justice,” “friendship,” “honesty,” “self-control,” “patience,” “respect,” “love,” “responsibility,” “benevolence,” and “patriotism.” While the values of “democracy,” “equality,” and “tolerance” included in previous history course curricula are not included, the values of “friendship,” “self-control,” “patience,” “responsibility,” “patriotism,” and “benevolence” are included for the first time. It is noteworthy that the values included in the curriculum shape both the individual's behavior in social life (justice, honesty, respect, love, responsibility) and the fundamental values that shape individual discipline and social solidarity (self-control, patience, benevolence).

After 2017, the values in the history course curriculum remained the same, but some modifications were made to the way the values were presented. In the updated 2018 curriculum, the values were presented under the heading “our values.” Attitudes and behaviors related to values were not included (MoNE, 2018). When evaluated in this regard, the 2018 curriculum overlaps with the 2017 curriculum in terms of the scope of values, but it has a more abstract structure in terms of behavior-based examples and explanations. In the 2023 update, it was determined that the values included in the history course curriculum remained unchanged in terms of both content and scope, remaining the same as in the 2018 curriculum. Therefore, it is seen that the approach accepted in the previous two curricula has been continued and the principle of continuity has been adopted.

Values in the History Course Curriculum for Grades 9, 10, and 11 in 2024

In the new high school history curriculum, restructured in line with the Century of Türkiye Education Model and implemented in 2024, values have gained a more comprehensive perspective. The key difference between the new curriculum and previous ones is that values are not seen merely as conceptual elements to be conveyed. According to the curriculum, values are actions that are intended to be reflected in students' attitudes and behaviors. They have also been integrated into the educational process by combining social and emotional development (MoNE, 2024). Thus, values have been transformed into a learning area that helps students gain a sense of responsibility while learning and interpreting history. As shown in Tables 3, 4, and 5 below, the values included in grades 9, 10, and 11 differ according to grade level. Values are presented gradually.

Table 3. Values Included in the 2024 History Course 9th Grade Curriculum

Justice	Sensitivity	Aesthetics	Modesty	Benevolence
Family Integrity	Honesty	Privacy	Patriotism	

As shown in Table 3, nine values are listed at the 9th grade level: “justice,” “family integrity,” “sensitivity,” “honesty,” “aesthetics,” “privacy,” “modesty,” “patriotism,” and “benevolence.” Among these, individual values such as “family integrity,” “honesty,” “privacy,” and “modesty” are highlighted.

Table 4. Values Included in the 2024 History Course 10th Grade Curriculum

Justice	Compassion	Respect	Benevolence
Diligence	Patience	Love	

As shown in Table 4, seven values are included at the 10th grade level: “justice,” “diligence,” “compassion,” “patience,” “respect,” “love,” and “benevolence.” These include

universal human values such as “patience,” “respect,” and “love,” as well as values that will increase both individual and social awareness.

Table 5. Values Included in the 2024 History Course 11th Grade Curriculum

Justice	Sensitivity	Compassion	Responsibility	Cleanliness
Diligence	Aesthetics	Freedom	Thriftiness	Patriotism

As shown in Table 5, 10 values are included at the 11th grade level: “justice,” “diligence,” “sensitivity,” “aesthetics,” “compassion,” “freedom,” “responsibility,” “thriftiness,” “cleanliness,” and “patriotism.” The aim is to instill civic awareness through values such as “justice”, “diligence”, “sensitivity”, “freedom”, and “responsibility”.

Conclusion

According to the results of this study, values were not addressed directly, explicitly, or systematically in the high school history course curriculum developed between 2007 and 2016. Values were attempted to be conveyed implicitly and indirectly through historical events and content. The lack of explicit definition of values and the absence of methodological guidance for the teaching process led to different practices based on teachers' personal interpretations and pedagogical approaches. This situation prevented the formation of a framework for values. Consequently, it emerged as an important factor limiting the consistency of education.

The 2016 high school history course curriculum addressed “values education” directly and explicitly for the first time. This enabled both teachers and students to interpret values in a more understandable and functional way. Values education, as a fundamental element of the curriculum, was addressed within a framework emphasizing the quality of the learning-teaching process; the objective was to not only convey values cognitively but also to convert them into attitudes and behaviors (MoNE, 2016). In this curriculum, guided by the constructivist approach, values are structured around two main themes: social values and individual values. In this regard, the curriculum illustrates that the conveyance of values should not be restricted to content knowledge alone; this process can foster awareness in individuals when accompanied by practical applications.

The curriculum developed in 2017 introduced significant changes in certain values. Reflecting the educational policies and social priorities of the period, values focused on social participation, such as “democracy,” “equality,” and “tolerance,” have been replaced by values that emphasize individual and behavioral aspects, such as “friendship,” “patience,” “self-control,” and “generosity” (MoNE, 2017b). It emphasized that values education must be underpinned by both cognitive and affective skills; consequently, the individual's capacity to make value-related decisions and manifest these decisions through behavior was highlighted.

The 2018 curriculum largely retained the approach of the 2017 curriculum, but guidance on the applicability of values in a pedagogical context remained limited (MoNE, 2018). In the 2023 curriculum, the necessity of relating values to daily life is emphasized, and it is stated that values education should be addressed in the context of its impact on the social problems students face (MoNE, 2023). As in previous years, this curriculum also adopts an approach that focuses on the reflection of values in individual behavior, their internalization, and their influence on decision-making processes.

In 2024, the new history course curriculum, updated according to the Century of Türkiye Education Model, addresses values in a more structured, thematic, and systematic approach that partially addresses criticisms compared to previous history course curricula. Values are not presented at a general level but are integrated into units and topics at each grade level (MoNE, 2024). Values are designed not to remain mere rhetoric but to be transformed into action through historical content. This has largely eliminated uncertainties encountered during the implementation process.

Discussion

Since 2016, the values included in high school history course curriculum have undergone significant structural changes over time, both in terms of content and approach. It has been observed that these changes are not only related to pedagogical preferences but also to the socio-cultural and political context of the period.

Table 6. Values Included in High School History Course Curricula Since 2016

	2016	2017	2024	Total
Justice	+	+	+	3
Family Integrity	-	-	+	1
Diligence	-	-	+	1
Democracy	+	-	-	1
Friendship	-	+	-	1
Sensitivity	-	-	+	1
Honesty	+	+	+	3
Aesthetics	-	-	+	1
Equality	+	-	-	1
Tolerance	+	-	-	1
Privacy	-	-	+	1
Compassion	-	-	+	1
Modesty	-	-	+	1
Self-control	-	+	-	1
Freedom	-	-	+	1
Patience	-	+	+	2
Respect	+	+	+	3
Love	+	+	+	3
Responsibility	-	+	+	2
Thriftiness	-	-	+	1
Cleanliness	-	-	+	1
Patriotism	-	+	+	2
Benevolence	-	+	+	2
Total	7	10	18	35

As shown in Table 6, values such as “democracy,” “equality,” and “tolerance,” which were included in the 2016 curriculum, have not been included in the curriculum since 2017. This situation stems from the political and social transformation that Turkey has undergone since 2016.

Following the coup attempt in Turkey on July 15, 2016, political fractures occurred, and themes of national unity and security came to the fore in society. A security-oriented approach centered on internal and external threats became dominant. The approach to education also

shifted to a more security-based model that strengthened the sense of collective belonging. In this context, national unity was emphasized through values such as friendship, self-control, patience, responsibility, patriotism, and benevolence, with the aim of rebuilding the “acceptable citizen,” as described by Ustel (2013). The values added to the program after 2017 also shaped the values and behaviors expected of the “acceptable citizen.” According to the curriculum, an approach based on social unity and social solidarity, self-control, traditionalism, and character education has been adopted (MoNE, 2018). Therefore, the sole purpose of the curriculum has been to create a sense of social belonging around a shared identity.

The removal of universal values such as “democracy,” “equality,” and ‘tolerance’ from curricula has been a consequence of the political rupture experienced in Turkey and a reflection of the reconstruction process. This circumstance also leads to the elimination of the value of "democracy," which promotes pluralism and is a critical and inquisitive value, from the curriculum. But according to international organizations like the Council of Europe and UNESCO, to which Turkey is also a member, one of the main goals of education is to foster critical thinking and democratic values (UNESCO, 2015; Council of Europe, 2016). Consequently, the history course curriculum after 2017 appears to have moved away from universal values and prioritized traditional values.

Recommendations

The data from the study shows that after 2016, history course curriculum underwent significant restructuring in terms of values education. However, the implementation has not yet reached the desired level. Simply listing values in curriculum texts is not sufficient; comprehensive strategies, practice-oriented activities, guidance materials, and assessment tools are needed to effectively impart these values to students (Yildirim, 2017). Furthermore, teachers' active participation in this process should be supported by in-service training programs and guided by application guides. History teaching should not be limited to the transfer of information; it should be approached with a multidimensional understanding that contributes to strengthening students' social awareness, increasing their ethical awareness, and developing their historical empathy skills. In this context, history teaching and values education should be redesigned with a holistic approach that also encompasses universal values.

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