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The role of communication in tolerance education

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Abstract The idea of tolerance, which has a long historical background, has become a necessity rather than a choice for today's multicultural, pluralistic and democratic society structures. The idea of tolerance in today's societies is transferred to individuals of the society through family, school as well as the elements of both society and social structure. The way in which the idea of tolerance is transferred to individuals at all three levels is communication. Communication processes are entering the various forms in the family, in the school system and in the social structure and are developing individuals' understanding of tolerance. This study focuses on the way how communication works at family, school and society levels as a path in the education process and how the communication process can be utilised effectively in order to develop the democratic community. The role and significance of communication in the process of tolerance education was investigated by the literature review method in the case study pattern as one of the qualitative research methods and the findings were evaluated comparatively.

Keywords Tolerance · Tolerance education · Communication · Multiculturalism · Democracy · Pluralism

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1 Introduction to tolerance and tolerance education

It can be said that the wars, immigrations and trade movements among nations thought all the world history had an effect on the demographic characteristics of countries and contributed to the formation of the population structures of today's societies. Today, it is seen that the formation of multinational and multicultural society structures has begun by globalization, migration, international business and policy activities, by removing the borders between the world countries and by bringing the cultures closer and making them more diversified (Weidenfeld 2002). Multicultural society structures emphasize the need for individuals in the society to live together in spite of their differences and this allows tolerance to come into prominence.

As stated by Aslan (2001), the concept of tolerance, which was put forward as a philosophical concept by the German philosopher Nicolaus Cusanus in the fifteenth century and was expressed for religiously disagreements more often for many centuries, has been published in the Turkish Dictionary of the Large Turkish Dictionary (2017) (http://www.tdk.gov.tr/) with the word "hoşgörü" and is defined in the same dictionary as "to tolerate everything, to tolerate as much as possible, to tolerate others to freely express their thoughts and to live according to their beliefs". Akarsu (1990) defines tolerance as being not disturbed by differences in language, religion, belief, attitude, gender, etc. Kuçuradi (1995) deals with the concept of tolerance at the individual and community levels. Tolerance at the individual level is related to whether or not the individual is tolerant towards human relations, the tolerant individual views other individuals as their own, and respects the rights of other individuals even when they are different from themselves. The intolerant individual does not respect, accept or even harm others if there is a difference in their own opinions and beliefs in other respects. Tolerance at the community level is the attitude of group or minority in governance towards ideas and practices they approve or disapprove and it manifest itself in community-based regulations and in the creation of legal order.

The understanding of tolerance, which has vital importance for multicultural societies, is developed through formal and informal learning experiences in individuals in the society. Individuals learn the idea and behaviours of tolerance in the family, school as well as the society and community. According to Almond (2010), majority of people believe that providing tolerance education is a duty of families for schools and the whole society. According to Kuçuradi (1995), the fact that individuals can gain tolerance and become tolerant people is associated with ethics education, which teaches to have the humanistic perspective, regardless of the circumstances. Ethics education should be started at an early age and teachers to give this education should be educated with philosophical knowledge considering the conditions of the country. According to Başaran (1995), the most suitable environments for individuals to learn about tolerance are the family, school and democratic community settings. The political form of government in the country affects the way of the family management, and the children who grow up by adopting it learn by experiencing tolerance or intolerance.

The need for a healthy and productive implementation of tolerance education at the family, school or social and community levels demonstrates the importance of communication processes in educational settings. The effectiveness and permanence of the learning process in almost all disciplines are related to the management and interaction of the educational process. Çilenti (1988) considers the intersection point of the source as the most important items in the communication process and the receivers' living space as the "common living space". Demirel et al. (2001) state that there is a direct correlation between the surplus and extent of these common living spaces and the increased success.

The process of learning of a person as a social entity starts with visual learning, emulation and imitation. As Dağabakan and Dağabakan (2008) point out, the long time spent by children with the family and the reactions of others around them are transformed into language by the children over time and this development continues through reinforcements such as rewards and punishment. The values that the family emphasizes, with or without awareness in the children's education process, are transferred to the children through the relationship and communication with the child and contribute to their characterization.

Family, school, community and society are the places where tolerance education takes place and good communication processes, which are one of the natural elements of education, are also very important for tolerance education. Communication within the family, school and community and society in which the individual lives, also shapes individuals' tolerance education experiences and learning. It is possible that these three elements, which affect tolerance education and are affected by each other as a counterpart are evaluated from a perspective extending from the family to the community.

2 Method

Case study method as one of the qualitative research designs was preferred in this study, which aims to evaluate the place and importance of communication in tolerance education. Case study can be used in both quantitative and qualitative patterns, and the aim is to be able to draw conclusions about a particular situation. Case study in qualitative research enables one or more cases to be studied in depth with a holistic understanding and it is widely used (Yıldırım and Şimşek 2011).

The data collection method of the study is literature review. Literature review has been used in order to provide comprehensive information on the role and importance of communication in the process of tolerance education. The findings obtained through literature review about the place and significance of communication processes in the tolerance education were grouped in three dimensions as family, school and environment and society, and the obtained data were analysed and interpreted comparatively.

3 Findings

3.1 Family and communication in tolerance education

It can be said that the family as the smallest social unit of the society is the first point at which individuals forming the society encounter with the idea of tolerance. The perceptions, reactions and behavioural patterns of families within the natural life period are effective on the shaping of individuals' personality traits According to Çiftçi (1991), children within families adopt the behavioural patterns of their parents consciously or unconsciously over time. The initial learning environment of individuals occurs within the family and the conditions of the family influence the development of the individual's mental powers.

The family should be the place that brings in concepts such as tolerance, respect, love, freedom and human rights to the younger generations because the most basic structure that can teach the understanding of democracy to the young generation is family (Üstün and

Yılmaz 2008). A child growing up in a family with high tolerance threshold, who can look at the events and situations from a broad perspective, who has a sense of empathy, respectful universal values, is considered to be prone to tolerance behaviours. It can be said that a child who grows up in a family environment composed of individuals who are not tolerated at different situations, who think and act within certain stable patterns, who do not or cannot empathize will have difficulties in developing tolerance behaviours. Yavuzer (1993) states that children who grow up in a tolerant and democratic family environment are able to make their own decisions, take responsibility for their own decisions, express themselves comfortably, build self-confident, effective friendships, and respect the their rights as well as others'.

It is possible to say that the tolerance education in the family is also related to the school and community elements that form the other two angles of the triangle and that the effectiveness and permanence of the tolerance learning process can be rendered possible with the learning in these two other social structures. Learning such as empathy, ethical values, problem-solving skills that an individual gets in the family will be more meaningful when the individual is supported by school and community experiences. According to Hollingsworth and Hoover (1999), the positive attitude to be adopted by children at school through teachers can easily be spoilt or destroyed by the mother and/or father in the home environment. The mutual intellectual and behavioural adjustment of school, family and society are important in order for individuals to make a behavioural change of tolerance education.

In societies with patriarchal characteristics, customs and traditions may sometimes be considered to be contradicting with tolerance education. It may conflict with values such as localization, authenticity, universal understanding, human rights, democracy, ideas and freedom of conscience. The dilemmas that such oppositional values may create are conflicts in the value system of the individuals' accuracy and legitimacy. At this point, communication processes can play a critical role in which a compromise between conflicting values can be created. Value conflicts between family and society can be delivered in a more positive way through communication, empathy and understanding.

3.2 School and communication in tolerance education

The second social structure in which tolerance education takes place is the education system and schools. Individuals deriving the bases of tolerance education from the family firstly meet school and community structures when they are at school age. During the process of tolerance education, it can be said that community and society are in harmony and parallelism with school at a certain level. This is because school is the place where education policies of state are put into life and it is similar to a small model of society with all its elements. Moreover, students at school, parents, teachers, administrators and other employees in the school, i.e., all shareholders of education, are also involved in the education process with their personal characteristics and competence. As noted by Gay (1994), all participants must take responsibility in the education process in order to achieve the objectives of a multicultural education, education programs should be developed in this direction, guidance and management services should be planned accordingly, education, assessment and evaluation processes should be carried out accordingly (as cited in Polat 2009).

Schools are the structures in which the values learnt from families will be developed and new values will be acquired; thus, just as it is in the family, it is a more accurate way for the students to be given the values that are desired to be given as a part of their

educational experiences in schools (Hökelekli and Gündüz 2007; as cited in Ogelman and Erten-Sarıkaya 2015). Tolerance education is provided to students through formal and informal teaching processes in schools. Informal learning is self-constitutional behavioural changes that are not directly involved in the content of the education program, but occur through learning experiences. On the other hand, formal learning defines behavioural changes that are desired to be transferred to the students in a planned and programmed way in the course of education and teaching. Workshops such as "democracy education", "value education", "tolerance education", "character education" which are becoming widespread in Turkey in recent years and included in the curricula can be considered as formal examples of tolerance education. This suggests that in today's democratic and multicultural societies, the state started to arrange regulations at the level of educational policy for the individuals' tolerance education and the individuals' tolerance education is not left to chance. It is observed that the tolerance education to be given to individuals are prepared and implemented on the basis of universal values such as democracy, rights, law, humanism, world peace, pluralism rather than individual values such as personal beliefs, opinions, customs, traditions, political views.

School education after family education corresponds to significant ages in the process of growth and individualization of students and is therefore included in critical learning. It is thought that the right tolerance education in the school era will contribute to character formation and be more permanent. Therefore, it is possible to say that the communication that educators and teachers will perform will have an important place in tolerance education. For this reason, it would be useful if the educator is a good communicator at the same time. A good educator must raise the empathy level to the top and know the right channel and message while reaching the target audience. It is very important for the educator to be able to reach the level of communication of the student, to understand the students, to have positive values personally is significant for the communication with the student and for the education to be effective. According to Kıroğlu et al. (2012), it is important and necessary for faculty members at all levels of education institutions, and especially in universities that train future teachers, to work in a tolerant classroom climate, to model their students and to try to develop similar behaviours in them, to be able to grow new democratic dependent generations.

3.3 Society, community and communication in tolerance education

One of the most natural and permanent ways of learning is to learn latently, without realizing it. A large part of learning in community and society through communication can be considered as latent learning. Individuals may adopt common thoughts, behaviours and values in society in order to adapt and to be harmonious with society. Therefore, the behaviours to be widespread in the society and to lead to behavioural change from individual to individual through taking individuals as model should be selected and implemented carefully. According to Parashar et al. (2004), values have meaning both at the micro level and at the macro level. Values at the micro level provide the compromise between the needs of individuals and the demands of community on the basis of individual's behaviours. Macro-level values also help the individual to integrate into society on a larger ground, such as cultural life.

Settlement of values espoused by individuals in the community increases the importance of learning processes that take place naturally by taking a model in the axis of communication processes. A conscious society plays the most important role in healthy communication between the community and the learning individual in the phenomenon

"community role model", which should be seen as one of the important pillars of tolerance education. According to Dewey (2008), society builds up its future by transferring its accumulated knowledge to younger members through schools. Schools are institutions where individuality and collectivism are united (as cited in Çengelci et al. 2013). This situation re-underlines the fact that school is a social institution in addition to its physical existence and re-emphasizes the school-society relationship.

It can be assumed that individuals may have impact and contributions towards the society as much as the instructiveness of the society towards individuals. Having considered the the relationship of tolerance education with the communication processes in the context of community, the concept of "media", which has an important place in communication, also comes to the forefront. Particularly in the recent years, it has been observed that the rapidly developing social media environments improve collective-oriented communication to a greater extent and that the individuals have come to the forefront. Having considered in this sense, it is seen that social media tools are richer, faster and more interactive in terms of opinions, thoughts and conceptual discussions compared to the classical media tools. The fact that the one-way communication in classical media tools can be carried to the multiple communication platform through the existing social media elements on the internet indicates that the new media can be used in a targeted way in tolerance education.

4 Conclusion and recommendations

Having evaluated tolerance education in terms of communication variable in family, school and community and social levels, it can be stated that communication variable influences and shapes tolerance education in different ways at all three levels. While tolerance education at the family level constitutes the foundation of the characterization of a child through the child's first learning, the communication style used in the family has the power to influence the child's thoughts and perceptions of the adulthood. In this period in which the effects of the external world are relatively less than those of other developmental periods, the family can lay the foundations of tolerance or intolerance in the child through communication. According to a study conducted by Türe and Ersoy (2014) on teachers of social studies, teachers indicated that they were influenced by their parents on tolerance and modelled their parents.

In the school environment, which can also be thought of as the second structured social structure the child is faced with after the family, the role and importance of right communication is highly significant in shaping the learning experiences through which the idea of tolerance can develop. It is possible to achieve both planned and natural learning through formal and informal learning processes in the school environment. According to Akbaş (2007), one of the most important duties of the school is to provide children with values, support their self-perceptions and character development and to support the children's moral development by means of open or implicit programs in line with the objectives of the current education system (as cited in Çengelci et al. 2013). For this reason, it is very important for teachers and all educators to be the right role models for the students in terms of tolerance. Since family and school are the elements that are in constant interaction, it is useful for them to have at least a close understanding of tolerance.

Tolerance education at the society and community level is shaped by communication and interaction between the individual and society and behavioural changes at the macro

and micro levels can be achieved through culture and personal relationships. Having considered the society and community in the context of communication, the media which can be easily spotted with its place and importance, has changed its shape with the existence of the internet nowadays and has become an interactive structure that individuals can make contributions rather than being a unilateral communication medium in the past with classical ways. It is seen that this new media, which started to be seen through social media applications, has a reshaping power for the family and society through the individual because it can directly reach the individual. By using this power with the right communication elements and purpose, it can be thought that the idea of tolerance in individuals can be developed faster and more practically than in family and school. Along with this, the interactive structure and update speed of social media should be taken into consideration and messages to be given about tolerance should be reviewed at short time intervals.

Based on the idea that human exists with communication, it should not be overlooked that tolerance education can be given more effectively and permanently through right structured communication processes at all three levels. It should not be forgotten that at least one of these three levels of intensive interaction with each other will affect the other aspects of the idea of tolerance through education and communication. Providing education on right communication along with the tolerance education in schools will also develop and support a pluralistic, multicultural and democratic understanding of society.

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