

## Is My Social Studies Teacher Democratic?

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### Abstract

*Problem Statement:* Democracy and education are two concepts that influence, transform, and improve each other in time. In this sense, we could talk about a symbiotic relationship between democracy and education. The social studies teacher himself or herself must primarily be tolerant towards the class, respect both students and fellow teachers, cooperate with all when needed, and then expect such behavior of the students. This is certainly not the sole responsibility of social studies teachers but a collective responsibility incumbent on all teachers. However, a teacher who is teaching the concept of democracy in class is obviously burdened with more responsibility in this context. It is therefore crucial that both the students and the teacher know the extent to which fairness, justice, freedom, and participation are actually practiced in the classroom. If a person's self-concerning remarks are to be taken as significant and realistic, they need to be corroborated by others. In other words, a social studies teacher's declaration 'I am democratic' gains significance only if their students, too, declare, 'Yes, our teacher is democratic'.

*Purpose of the Study:* This study aims to reveal the extent to which social studies teachers' behaviors are democratic in the classroom.

*Method:* The democratic behaviors of social studies teachers in primary school classrooms were assessed by means of two scales (teacher form and student form) developed by the researcher. The arithmetic mean, standard deviation, and t-test were used in the data analysis for comparable results of teacher (N: 194) and student (N: 1712) views.

*Findings:* The in-class democratic behaviors of social studies teachers in public primary schools are considered in four dimensions, i.e., freedom, equality, justice, and participation. According to the results of this study, social studies teachers' perceptions of their democratic behaviors in the

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classroom are not shared by their students, as far as the freedom, equality, justice and participation dimensions of the research is concerned.

*Conclusion:* When we look at the results of this study, we cannot miss the dichotomy between the perceptions of teachers and those of the students. While social studies teachers claim to apply the core dimensions of democracy to real life, their students claim otherwise. The students who participated in this survey responded that their teachers did not do their share when it came to the free expression of opinions, equal treatment, consideration of their differences, acceptance as they are, fair treatment, and encouraging student participation in the class.

*Keywords:* Democracy, social studies teachers, 8th grade students, education

Democracy is a form of life and government based on human rights and freedoms where the majority has the right to make policies and the minority has the right to participate and criticize (Gömleksiz, 1988). According to Tortop (1992), the basic principle of democracy is to be respectful and tolerant of different opinions. Dewey considers democracy as more than just collective decision-making in the political process. According to Dewey (1916), 'a democracy is more than a form of government; it is primarily a mode of associated living, of conjoint communicated experiences'. In other words, unlike certain perceptions, democracy is not just about going to the ballots. It is about the internalization of such concepts as tolerance, rights, justice, fairness, respect of differences, participation, honesty, cooperation, freedom, responsibility, collaboration, and peace by the individual as an active member of society. The only way to internalize democratic principles is through education. Educational institutions play a pivotal role in raising democratic citizens and forming a democratic culture (Giroux, 1989; Apple & Beanne, 2011; Biesta, 2007). Democracy and education are two concepts that influence, transform, and improve each other in time (Dahl, 2010; Putnam, 2000). In this sense, we could talk about a **symbiotic relationship between democracy and education**. As Yeşil (2002) points out, while education is key to the existence, adoption, and flourishing of democracy on the individual and social levels, democracy, too, is a prerequisite to quality-raising in education and in educated individuals becoming useful for themselves and all humanity. In a democratic society, schools must be in harmony with democracy and teach relevant values, attitudes, and behaviors (Doğanay, 2010). Democratic classrooms are the optimal environment where students can best learn and live these values. Students learn how to make decisions autonomously, how to lead, how to tolerate different opinions, and how to collaborate with and respect the rights of others in the classroom (Matusova, 1997). In addition, a suitable classroom environment and a teacher with appropriate attitudes, expertise, and behaviors allow students to develop their critical thinking skills (Tanriverdi, Ulusoy & Turan, 2012).

The principles of a democratic society have to be 'lived' in the classroom if students are going to understand the full impact of their meaning (Gang, 1989). A

democratic classroom is one where values like equality, freedom, justice, and participation prevail (Kesici, 2008; Shechtman, 2002; Knight, 2001). Reflecting society on a micro level, the democratic classroom is where students can live freedom, express their views, and learn to respect all sorts of differences. According to Hahn (1998), a participatory climate in the classroom gives individuals the chance to experience democratic life. These experiences enable students to grow conscious of their rights and justice as democratic values so as to guarantee student rights, as Grandmont (2003) puts it. Kubow and Kinney (2000) stress eight characteristics of a classroom environment with the above qualities. These characteristics are active participation, avoidance of textbook-dominated instruction, reflective thinking, student decision-making and problem-solving choice, controversial issues, individual responsibilities, recognition of human dignity, and relevance. The person to bring about a classroom environment with all these qualities is undoubtedly the teacher. If a teacher has democratic values, then his or her students will easily absorb these values. The adoption of these democratic values by the teacher will also make their internalization by the students easier (Selvi, 2006; Knight, 2001). If the students feel afraid of and intimidated by their teacher, that classroom is by no means democratic. Teachers with no democratic qualities do not care much about student participation and know or use no other technique than lecturing. Democracy is a system that requires multiple methods, not a single one. Quietness and democracy have a negative correlation. In a democratic classroom, communication is initiated in three ways: from the teacher to the student, from the student to the teacher, and, last but not least, from the student to the student. Not only does such communication negate quietness **but requires controlled 'noise'**. Osler and Starkey (2006) and Print, Ornstrom, and Nielsen (2002) hold that the teaching-learning setting in a democratic classroom requires the teacher to open subjects for debate and let the students freely express their views. Another characteristic of democratic teachers is that they treat all their students fairly and equally. If a teacher discriminates against their students on the basis of language, religion, creed, gender, socio-economic status, attire, and other points; is partial in giving out rewards and punishments; does not let everyone have an equal say; and is knowingly unfriendly towards certain students, then that teacher cannot be said to be fair or equalitarian – or, consequently, democratic. Another significant token of a democratic classroom is that all students feel free. This is not a feeling that the students can experience by themselves; the person who is to help them experience it is the teacher who has internalized democracy.

As a matter of course, all teachers should have their fair share in creating a democratic classroom setting. Having said that, teachers of social studies in particular, both in Turkey and in the rest of the world, have a special mission in imparting democratic values to students. As in almost all countries, social studies curricula have a certain amount of time allocated for the teaching of democracy and its constituent concepts, such as tolerance, rights, justice, fairness, respect of differences, participation, honesty, cooperation, freedom, responsibility, collaboration, and peace. In Finland, for instance, the social studies curriculum in primary education visibly stresses the teaching of democracy and the raising of conscious citizens as a result. Similarly in the US, what social studies curricula in

different states conspicuously have in common is the teaching of democracy and democratic values. In Turkey, following the foundation of the Republic, the subject of democracy was taught in 'Citizenship Studies' which was renamed 'Social Studies' in 1969. It became part of 'Citizenship Studies' again from 1985 until 2005, when the new curriculum was adopted, and democracy and relevant concepts have since been taught under the headings of 'The Individual and the Community', and 'Power, Government, and Society' in a total of 41 lessons in eight units from year four until year seven. This constitutes about a quarter of the existing curriculum. A 2010 addition to the curriculum – 'Citizenship and Democracy Studies' as a separate subject in year eight – aims to raise awareness of democracy.

The main target of social studies is to raise active and participating citizens for a democratic and modern society (Öztürk, 2007). However, sole lecturing of democratic concepts or their rote learning by students will miss the target. It is not sufficient when a social studies teacher simply tells the class to 'be tolerant', 'respect each other', or 'cooperate'. These are far better if experienced and lived in person in the classroom. The social studies teacher himself or herself must primarily be tolerant towards the class, respect both students and fellow teachers, cooperate with all when needed, and then expect such behavior of the students. This is certainly not the sole responsibility of social studies teachers but a collective responsibility incumbent on all teachers. However, a teacher teaching the concept of democracy in class is obviously burdened with more responsibility in this context. It is therefore crucial that both the students and the teacher know the extent to which fairness, justice, freedom, and participation – the basis of democracy and the pillars of a democratic classroom – are actually practiced in the classroom. For this reason, this study aims to reveal the extent to which social studies teachers' behaviors are democratic in the classroom.

## Method

The democratic behaviors of social studies teachers in primary school classrooms was assessed by means of two scales (teacher form and student form) developed by the researcher.

### *Population and Sample*

The population of this study consists of social studies teachers and eighth-year students in public primary schools in central Samsun, Turkey. In the selection of sampling, the numbers of public primary schools, teachers, and students were taken into consideration. Targeting all of the social studies teachers in the research population, no sample was taken, but all 194 teachers were surveyed. As for the students, 10 were randomly selected for each teacher. Thus, 1,940 scales were sent out and 1,712 were returned, of which 61 were discarded for not complying with the survey standards. The most significant handicap of the survey was the possibility of the students being pressured by the teachers and not filling in the scales freely and realistically. In order to overcome this, the scale envelopes carried the warning that 'the scales were to be administered especially by teachers other than the social

studies teachers'. Of the teachers who participated, 53% (103) were female, 47% (91) were male, 78% (151) were married, and 22% (43) were single. Of the students, 57% (938) were female and 43% (713) were male.

#### *Development of the Data Collection Instrument*

The research data was collected using the scale for democratic behavior in the classroom (teacher and student forms). The teacher and student forms were separately tested for validity and reliability. Both scale forms that were used as data collection instruments are described below:

#### *Scale for Democratic Behavior in the Classroom (Teacher Form)*

Following review of the literature on democratic behaviors in the classroom, a 29-item scale was developed for teachers. In order to test the validity and reliability of the scale, a pre-survey was administered to 89 teachers of social studies in the Bafra and Çarşamba districts of Samsun. Following the analysis of the pre-survey data, 10 items--with a total item correlation lower than .30, with factor load values lower than .40 and with items not parallel in two scales (teacher and student scales)--were taken out and the remaining 19 items were used for the scale. The Cronbach  $\alpha$  internal consistency factor of the scale was found to be 0.82.

The KMO and Bartlett tests were used to find out whether factor analysis would be necessary for the pre-survey data. The KMO test yielded a result of .71, which suggested that the scale could be interpreted through factor analysis; and the result of the Bartlett test (.000) being lower than the significance level of 0.05 meant that a factor could be obtained from the correlation matrix (Şencan, 2005). In the analysis for structural validity, the scale was divided into four factors (freedom, equality, justice, and participation), and the factor load values varied between .43 and .85. The total variation of the scale with a four-factor structure was calculated around 53%. A five-step Likert scale was used to reveal the extent to which social studies teachers' behaviors were democratic in the classroom. The lowest value of the scale corresponded to 'never' and the highest to 'always'. The sub-scales of the research scale are described below.

*Freedom.* This subscale had the following items: 'I let my students freely express their views in class', 'I give my students the chance to experience the freedom to choose', 'When assigning tasks, I organize elections', 'I avoid embarrassing my students in class', and 'I treat my students with love and respect'. The Cronbach  $\alpha$  internal consistency factor for this five-item subscale was calculated as 0.77, and the factor analysis showed factor load values varying between .52 and .80.

*Equality.* This subscale had the following items: 'I empathize with my students in all circumstances', 'If students have doubts about their grades, I show them their exam papers', 'Students can easily talk to me about any problem they may have', 'I treat my students fairly', and 'I tolerate all sorts of difference in the classroom'. The Cronbach  $\alpha$  internal consistency factor for this five-item subscale was calculated as 0.75, and the factor analysis showed factor load values varying between .59 and .83.

*Justice.* This subscale had the following items: 'I accept all students in my class as they are', 'I am fair in giving out rewards', 'I treat all my students fairly in letting them have their say', 'I inform my students about matters that may concern them', and 'I set an example of democracy with my behavior in the classroom'. The Cronbach  $\alpha$  internal consistency factor for this five-item subscale was calculated as 0.70, and the factor analysis showed factor load values varying between .43 and .86.

*Participation.* This subscale had the following items: 'I conduct student-centered classes to encourage them to participate', 'I keep my students active through class debates and project tasks', 'I use techniques (e.g., six hats, station, brainstorming, etc.) that facilitate the transfer of democratic values to real life', and 'I encourage posters and bills in the classroom, which are known to raise democratic awareness'. The Cronbach  $\alpha$  internal consistency factor for this four-item subscale was calculated as 0.67, and the factor analysis showed factor load values varying between .58 and .76.

#### *Scale for Democratic Behavior in the Classroom (Student Form)*

Following review of the literature on democratic behaviors in the classroom, a 29-item scale was developed for students. In order to test the validity and reliability of the student form, the scale was administered by the researcher to 300 eighth-year students in five randomly selected schools in Bafra and five in Çarşamba, the largest districts of Samsun. Two hundred ninety-seven scales were included in the analysis, and three were discarded for not complying with the survey standards. Following the analysis of the pre-survey data, seven items with a total item correlation lower than .30 and with factor load values lower than .40 were taken out, and 22 items remained for the scale. A further three items were discarded in order to ensure a parallel structure to the teacher form, and the remaining 19 items composed the student form. The Cronbach  $\alpha$  internal consistency factor of the scale was found to be 0.88.

The KMO and Bartlett tests were used to find out whether factor analysis would be necessary for the pre-survey data. The KMO test yielded a result of .93, which suggested that the scale could be interpreted through factor analysis; and the result of the Bartlett test (.000) being lower than the significance level of 0.05 meant that a factor could be obtained from the correlation matrix (Şencan, 2005). In the analysis for structural validity, the scale was divided into four factors (freedom, equality, justice, and participation), and the factor load values varied between .41 and .79. The total variation of the scale with a four-factor structure was calculated around 55%. A five-step Likert scale was used to reveal the extent to which social studies teachers' behaviors were democratic in the classroom. The lowest value of the scale corresponded to 'never' and the highest to 'always'. The sub-scales of the research scale are described below.

*Freedom.* This subscale had the following items: 'Our teacher lets us freely express our views in class', 'Our teacher gives us the chance to experience the freedom to choose', 'When assigning tasks, our teacher organizes elections', 'Our teacher avoids embarrassing us in class', and 'Our teacher approaches us with love and respect'. The

Cronbach  $\alpha$  internal consistency factor for this five-item subscale was calculated as 0.83, and the factor analysis showed factor load values varying between .54 and .78.

*Equality.* This subscale had the following items: 'Our teacher empathizes with us in all circumstances', 'If we have doubts about our grades, our teacher shows us our exam papers', 'We can easily talk to our teacher about any problem we may have', 'Our teacher treats us fairly', and 'Our teacher tolerates all sorts of difference in the classroom'. The Cronbach  $\alpha$  internal consistency factor for this five-item subscale was calculated as 0.78, and the factor analysis showed factor load values varying between .45 and .79.

*Justice.* This subscale had the following items: 'Our teacher accepts us all as we are', 'Our teacher is fair in giving out rewards', 'Our teacher treats us all fairly in letting us have our say', 'Our teacher informs us about matters that may concern us', and 'Our teacher sets an example of democracy with his/her behavior in the classroom'. The Cronbach  $\alpha$  internal consistency factor for this five-item subscale was calculated as 0.76, and the factor analysis showed factor load values varying between .44 and .59.

*Participation.* This subscale had the following items: 'Our teacher conducts student-centered classes to encourage us to participate', 'Our teacher keeps us active through class debates and project tasks', 'Our teacher uses techniques such as six hats, station, and brainstorming', and 'Our teacher encourages posters and bills in the classroom, which are known to raise democratic awareness'. The Cronbach  $\alpha$  internal consistency factor for this four-item subscale was calculated as 0.71, and the factor analysis showed factor load values varying between .41 and .77.

#### Data Analysis

The SPSS 16.0 statistical package program was used in the analysis of the research data on social studies teachers' democratic behaviors in the classroom. The arithmetic mean, standard deviation, and t-test were used in the data analysis for comparable results of teacher and student views.

## Results

In this section, the in-class democratic behaviors of social studies teachers in public primary schools are considered in four dimensions, i.e., freedom, equality, justice, and participation. The t-test was used to find out whether the views of social studies teachers and those of eighth-year students differed.

#### Freedom

The t-test results for social studies teachers' and eighth-year students' views on the freedom dimension of the scale are given in Table 1.

Table 1.

***The t-Test Results for Teachers' and Students' Views on the Freedom Dimension***

Dimension	Variables	N	$\bar{X}$	Ss	sd	t	p
Freedom	Student	1651	19.92	5.435	1843	5.128	.000
	Teacher	194	21.98	3.718			

\*p&lt;0.05

As can be seen in Table 1, a significant difference was found between the teachers' and the students' views on the freedom dimension of the scale [ $t_{(1843)} = 5.128$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ]. In other words, social studies teachers' perceptions of their democratic behaviors in the classroom are not shared by their students, as far as the freedom dimension of the research is concerned. Teacher and student views have been found to differ on the free expression of opinions, freedom to choose, elections in assigning tasks, avoiding embarrassing students in class, and approaching students with love and respect.

*Equality*

The t-test results for social studies teachers' and eighth-year students' views on the equality dimension of the scale are given in Table 2.

Table 2.

***The t-Test Results for Teachers' and Students' Views on the Equality Dimension***

Dimension	Variables	N	M	SD	df	t	p
Equality	Student	1651	19.46	4.519	1843	4.787	.000
	Teacher	194	21.08	4.096			

\*p&lt;0.05

As can be seen in Table 2, a significant difference was found between the teachers' and the students' views on the equality dimension of the scale [ $t_{(1843)} = 4.787$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ]. In other words, social studies teachers' perceptions of their democratic behaviors in the classroom are not shared by their students, as far as the equality dimension of the research is concerned. Teacher and student views have been found to differ on empathizing with the students, showing the students their exam papers, talking to the teacher about any problem that the students may have, fair treatment of the students, and tolerance of all sorts of differences in the classroom.

*Justice*

The t-test results for social studies teachers' and eighth-year students' views on the justice dimension of the scale are given in Table 3.



Table 3

**The t-Test Results for Teachers' and Students' Views on the Justice Dimension**

Dimension	Variables	N	M	SD	df	t	p
Justice	Student	1651	20.00	5.076	1843	5.709	.000
	Teacher	194	22.15	3.974			

\*p&lt;0.05

As can be seen in Table 3, a significant difference was found between the teachers' and the students' views on the justice dimension of the scale [ $t_{(1843)} = 5.709$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ]. In other words, social studies teachers' perceptions of their democratic behaviors in the classroom are not shared by their students, as far as the justice dimension of the research is concerned. Teacher and student views have been found to differ on acceptance of all students as they are, fairness in giving out rewards and letting students have their say, informing students about matters that may concern them, and setting an example of democracy in the classroom.

*Participation*

The t-test results for social studies teachers' and eighth-year students' views on the participation dimension of the scale are given in Table 4.

Table 4.

**The t-Test Results for Teachers' and Students' Views on the Participation Dimension**

Dimension	Variables	N	M	SD	df	t	p
Participation	Student	1651	14.23	3.577	1843	3.240	.001
	Teacher	194	15.11	3.296			

\*p&lt;0.05

As can be seen in Table 4, a significant difference was found between the teachers' and the students' views on the participation dimension of the scale [ $t_{(1843)} = 3.240$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ]. In other words, social studies teachers' perceptions of their democratic behaviors in the classroom are not shared by their students, as far as the participation dimension of the research is concerned. Teacher and student views have been found to differ on conducting student-centered classes, keeping students active through class debates and project tasks and encouraging them to participate, use of techniques (e.g., six hats, station, brainstorming, etc.) that facilitate the transfer of democratic values to real life, and encouraging posters and bills in the classroom, which are known to raise democratic awareness.

## Discussion and Conclusion

School is the small sample of a society. Students soon take their places in society as adults, making use of the knowledge and skills they acquired throughout their education. It is for this reason that the objectives, content, methods, and democratic qualities of formal education offer important clues on the future of a country. The significance of the role of the teacher is undeniable, especially in learning democracy, which is the acquisition of attitudes and behaviors that require practice and a role model. In this process, the mission of social studies teachers is more critical than that of other teachers. Besides being role models simply as teachers, social studies teachers have a unique place in that they are the teachers of democracy as presented in the curriculum. For this reason, the present study aimed to reveal the extent to which social studies teachers, who have crucial responsibilities for the internalization of democracy by their students, display democratic attitudes and behaviors themselves in the classroom.

If a person's self-concerning remarks are to be taken as significant and realistic, they need to be corroborated by others. In other words, a social studies teacher's declaration 'I am democratic' gains significance only if their students, too, declare, 'Yes, our teacher is democratic'. When we look at the results of this study, we cannot miss the dichotomy between the perceptions of teachers and those of the students. While social studies teachers claim to apply the core dimensions of democracy – freedom, equality, justice, and participation– to real life, their students claim otherwise. The students who participated in this survey responded that their teachers did not do their share when it came to the free expression of opinions, equal treatment, consideration of their differences, acceptance as they are, fair treatment, and encouraging student participation in the class. This is despite the democracy units in the social studies curriculum that were put in place in 2006, the student councils, and the Citizenship and Democracy courses in the new 2010 curriculum, which all aim to help students absorb democracy and create a more democratic classroom setting. Consistency between theory and practice depends on the teacher playing his/her part properly. The findings of this study, however, show that it is quite difficult to create a democratic classroom setting with teachers who are not democratic themselves, no matter how often the curricula are changed or how many democratic elements they may contain.

The literature review suggests similarities between the findings of this study and those of the few others conducted in this field. Kınca (2000), for instance, concluded that eighth-year primary school students did not find their teachers democratic enough and thought that a significant number of their teachers showed no tolerance or even resorted to violence. According to Tomul, Çelik, and Taş (2012), most students think that teachers behave unfairly in both distributing instruments, grades, punishment, rewards, and the like, and in their relations with some students. Durmuş and Demirtaş (2009) found that while secondary school teachers claimed to be democratic in class, their students claimed otherwise. In his 2004 survey of university students, Demirtaş concluded that the lecturers were not adequate in 'democratic classroom management'. Likewise, Duman and Koç (2004) found that

university lecturers rarely sympathized with their students or admitted their own mistakes. In his two studies ten years apart, Ertürk (1970) compared teacher behaviors and concluded that teacher behaviors were mostly undemocratic and that these inadequacies increased significantly. Küçükahmet (1989) pointed to a positive correlation between teachers being democratic and students turning out democratic. Teachers' democratic attitudes and behaviors in class will have a positive effect on education and help students internalize democracy.

When we consider the findings of this study and those of similar ones in the field, questions such as the following spring to mind: 'Is it a dream to form democratic classroom settings in Turkey?', 'Can democratic behaviors be expected of the teachers of a country which has itself been unable to climb over the 88<sup>th</sup> rank since 2006 in the Economist Intelligence Unit democracy index, which ranks 187 countries according to democratic practices?', 'Is Turkey an undemocratic country because its education is undemocratic, or is Turkish education undemocratic because the country is undemocratic?'. The smoothest way out of the vicious circle of these questions is through education. Social structures become democratic through educated individuals. In order for democratic culture to remain, educational institutions must do their duties, and especially the teachers of these institutions must adopt and practice democracy as a method in the classroom. So long as freedom, equality, justice, and participation are not transferred to real life, democracy will merely remain as a dream. From the educational point of view, freedom, justice, and equality can come into life depending on participation. Any system that is not participatory can guarantee neither freedom nor equality nor justice. The constructivism that has been promoted in the Turkish educational system since 2005 essentially highlights participation and student-centered classes, which are closely related to the methods, techniques, and strategies that a teacher adopts when conducting classes. For example, a teacher can encourage collaboration and mutual assistance through the cooperative learning approach, looking at a fact from different viewpoints through the six-hats teaching technique, collectively completing an unfinished task through the station technique, problem-solving through brainstorming, and empathy and participation through drama. Such a classroom setting can change a student's approach to events, interaction with people, preferences, values, and, in short, their view of life. It can affect the students' interaction with their schoolmates, their teachers, and the individuals outside school. It can also help shy, reserved, and timid students become more active. It enables students with different characteristics to work in cooperation and learn together. It improves the sense of duty and responsibility in students. In the long run, an individual who was educated this way can internalize participatory democracy and help contribute to a future democratic society.

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### Sosyal Bilgiler Öğretmenim Demokrat mı?

#### Atıf:

- Kiroglu, K. (2013). Is My Social Studies Teacher Democratic? *Egitim Arastirmalari – Eurasian Journal of Educational Research*, 50, 127-142.

#### (Özet)

*Problem Durumu:* Demokrasi, çoğunluğun politika oluşturma, azınlığın katılma ve eleştirme haklarının bulunduğu; insan hak ve özgürlüklerine dayalı bir yaşayış ve yönetim biçimidir. Demokrasi; toplumun etkin bir üyesi olarak bireyin hoşgörü, hak, adalet, eşitlik, farklılıklara saygı, katılım, dürüstlük, işbirliği, özgürlük, sorumluluk, dayanışma ve barış gibi kavramları içselleştirmiş olmasıyla ilgilidir. Demokratik değerlerin içselleştirilmesinin tek yolu ise eğitimden geçer. Eğitim kurumları demokrat vatandaşların yetiştirilmesinde ve demokratik bir kültürün oluşturulmasında önemli bir role sahiptir. Demokrasi ve eğitim öyle iki kavramdır ki bunlar birbirlerini etkiler, dönüştürür ve zaman içinde birbirlerini geliştirirler. Bu anlamda demokrasiyle eğitim arasında simbiyotik bir ilişki olduğu söylenebilir. Demokratik bir toplumda, okullar demokrasiyle uyumlu olmalı ve demokrasiye ilişkin önemli değerleri, tutumları ve davranışları öğretmelidir. Öğrencilerin bunları öğrenebilecekleri ve yaşayabilecekleri en elverişli ortam ise demokratik sınıflardır. Eğer bir öğretmen demokratik değerlere sahipse, öğrencileri de demokratik değerleri kolaylıkla öğrenirler, ayrıca öğretmenin demokratik değerleri özümsemesi, bu değerlerin öğrenciler tarafından da içselleştirilmesini kolaylaştırır. Demokratik bir sınıf ortamının oluşturulmasında elbette bütün öğretmenlere ayrı ayrı önemli görevler düşmektedir. Bununla birlikte hem Türkiye’de hem de dünyada demokratik değerlerin öğrencilere aktarılmasında Sosyal Bilgiler Öğretmenlerine ayrı bir misyon yüklenmiştir. Çünkü neredeyse tüm ülkelerde Sosyal Bilgiler ya da onun eş değeri olan derslerin programlarında, demokrasi ve onun özünü oluşturan hoşgörü, hak, adalet, eşitlik, farklılıklara saygı, katılım, dürüstlük, işbirliği, özgürlük, sorumluluk, dayanışma ve barış gibi kavramların öğretilmesi için ayrı bir başlık açılmıştır. Kuşkusuz bu sadece Sosyal Bilgiler Öğretmeninin üzerine düşen bir sorumluluk değil, bütün öğretmenlerin gerçekleştirmesi gereken genel sorumluluklardır. Ancak demokrasi kavramını sınıfta öğretmeye çalışan bir öğretmenin bu anlamda daha fazla sorumluluk üstlenmesi gerektiği de aşikârdır. Bir insanın kendine ilişkin söylediklerinin anlamlı ve gerçekçi olabilmesi için başkalarının da o kişi hakkında

aynı şeyleri söylemesi gerekir. Yani bir Sosyal Bilgiler öğretmenin “ben demokratım” demesi, öğrencilerinin de “evet, öğretmenimiz demokratiktir” demesiyle anlam kazanır. Sosyal Bilgiler Öğretmenlerinin demokrasi konularının özünü oluşturan ve demokratik bir sınıfın temel özellikleri sayılabilecek eşitlik, adalet, özgürlük ve katılım kavramlarını sınıfta ne derece yaşatabildiğinin hem öğrenci hem de öğretmenin gözünden belirlenmesi büyük önem taşımaktadır.

*Araştırmanın Amacı:* Bu amaçla bu çalışmada Sosyal Bilgiler öğretmenlerinin sınıf içi demokratik davranışları belirlenmeye çalışılmıştır.

*Araştırmanın Yöntemi:* Sosyal Bilgiler öğretmenlerinin sınıf içi demokratik davranışlarının belirlenmesi amacıyla yapılan bu araştırma, tarama modeli niteliğindedir. Bu çalışmada ilköğretim okullarında görev yapan Sosyal Bilgiler öğretmenlerinin sınıf içi demokratik davranışları, araştırmacının geliştirdiği ölçekler (öğretmen formu ve öğrenci formu) aracılığıyla belirlenmeye çalışılmıştır. Bu araştırmanın evreni, Türkiye'nin Samsun ili merkez ilçelerinde yer alan resmi ilköğretim okulu Sosyal Bilgiler öğretmenleri ve 8. sınıf öğrencilerinden oluşmaktadır. Örneklem seçiminde resmi ilköğretim okul, öğretmen ve öğrenci sayıları göz önünde bulundurulmuştur. Araştırma evrenindeki Sosyal Bilgiler öğretmenlerinin tamamına ulaşılması hedeflendiğinden örneklem alma yoluna gidilmemiş, Samsun ili merkez ilçelerinde görev yapan 194 öğretmene ölçek uygulanmıştır. Öğrencilerin belirlenmesi aşamasında her öğretmenin dersine girdiği sınıfta 10 öğrenci yansız olarak seçilmiş ve 1940 öğrenciye ölçek yollanmış ancak çeşitli nedenlerle 1712 ölçek geri dönmüş, 61 ölçek yönergeye uygun şekilde doldurulmadığı için değerlendirmeye dâhil edilmemiştir. Verilerin öğretmen ve öğrenci görüşlerine dayalı olarak karşılaştırabilmesi amacıyla aritmetik ortalama, standart sapma ve t-testi kullanılmıştır.

*Araştırmanın Bulguları:* Araştırma sonuçları dört boyutta (özgürlük, eşitlik, adalet ve katılım) incelenmiştir. Ölçeğin özgürlük boyutuna ilişkin öğretmen ve öğrencilerin görüşleri arasında anlamlı bir fark bulunmuştur. Başka bir deyişle bu sonuç, Sosyal Bilgiler öğretmenlerinin özgürlük boyutunda, sınıfta demokratik davranışlar sergilediklerine ilişkin algılarının öğrenciler tarafından paylaşılmadığını ortaya koymaktadır. Öğretmenlerin öğrencilerin sınıfta görüşlerini özgürce ifade etmelerine, seçme özgürlüğünü yaşayabilmelerine olanak tanıma, görevlerin dağıtımında seçim yöntemine başvurma, öğrencileri sınıfta küçük düşürecek davranışlardan kaçınma, öğrencilere sevgi ve saygı çerçevesinde davranma konularında öğretmen ve öğrenci görüşlerinin farklılaştığı belirlenmiştir. Ölçeğin eşitlik boyutuna ilişkin öğretmen ve öğrencilerin görüşleri arasında anlamlı bir fark bulunmuştur. Başka bir deyişle bu durum, Sosyal Bilgiler öğretmenlerinin eşitlik boyutunda sınıfta demokratik davranışlar sergilediklerine ilişkin algılarının öğrenciler tarafından paylaşılmadığını ortaya koymaktadır. Öğrencilerle empati kurma, sınav sonuçlarına itiraz eden öğrencinin kağıdını görmesine izin verme, herhangi bir sorunu olan öğrencinin öğretmenle kolayca iletişime geçme, öğrencilere eşit davranma ve sınıftaki her türden farklılığa hoşgörü gösterme konularında öğretmen ve öğrenci görüşlerinin farklılaştığı belirlenmiştir. Ölçeğin adalet boyutuna ilişkin öğretmen ve öğrencilerin görüşleri arasında anlamlı bir fark bulunmuştur.

Başka bir deyişle bu sonuç, Sosyal Bilgiler öğretmenlerinin adalet boyutunda sınıfta demokratik davranışlar sergilediklerine ilişkin algılarının öğrenciler tarafından paylaşılmadığını ortaya koymaktadır. Öğretmenlerin öğrencileri olduğu gibi kabul etme, ödül dağıtımında ve söz hakkı vermede adil davranma, öğrencileri ilgilendiren konularda onları bilgilendirme ve onlara demokrasi konusunda örnek olma noktalarında öğretmen ve öğrenci görüşlerinin farklılaştığı belirlenmiştir. Ölçeğin katılım boyutuna ilişkin öğretmen ve öğrencilerin görüşleri arasında anlamlı bir fark bulunmuştur. Başka bir deyişle bu durum, Sosyal Bilgiler öğretmenlerinin katılım boyutunda sınıfta demokratik davranışlar sergilediklerine ilişkin algılarının öğrenciler tarafından paylaşılmadığını ortaya koymaktadır. Öğretmenlerin öğrenci merkezli bir ders işleyerek sınıf içi tartışma ve proje görevleriyle öğrencileri derste etkin kılma ve derse katılmalarını sağlama, demokratik değerlerin hayata geçirilmesini kolaylaştıran teknikleri (altı şapka, istasyon, beyin fırtınası vb.) kullanma, demokrasi bilincinin yerleşmesine katkı sağlayan afiş, poster gibi şeylerin sınıfta sergilenmesine özen gösterme konularında öğretmen ve öğrenci görüşlerinin farklılaştığı belirlenmiştir.

*Araştırmanın Sonuçları:* Bu çalışmanın sonuçlarına bakıldığında öğretmen ve öğrenci algılarının farklılaştığı görülmektedir. Sosyal Bilgiler öğretmenleri demokrasinin özünü oluşturan özgürlük, eşitlik, adalet ve katılım boyutlarını sınıf içinde hayata geçirdiklerini iddia ederken, bu öğretmenlerin öğrencileri, öğretmenlerinin bu şekilde davranmadıklarını belirtmişlerdir. Bu çalışmaya katılan öğrenciler fikirlerin sınıfta özgürce ifade edilmesi, kendilerine eşit davranılması, farklılıkların dikkate alınması, oldukları gibi kabul edilmeleri, kendilerine adil davranılması ve ders işlenirken öğrenci katılımının göz önüne alınması gibi konularda öğretmenlerin üzerlerine düşeni yapmadıklarını ifade etmişlerdir. Oysa 2006 yılında uygulanmasına başlanılan Sosyal Bilgiler programında yer alan demokrasi üniteleri, Öğrenci Konseyi uygulaması ve 2010 yılında yeniden programa dâhil edilen Vatandaşlık ve Demokrasi Eğitimi dersi gibi düzenlemelerin temel amacı öğrencilere demokrasiyi özümsetmek ve daha demokratik bir sınıf ortamı yaratmaktır. Kuram ve uygulama arasında tutarlılığın sağlanması uygulayıcının üzerine düşeni, başka bir deyişle rolünü etkin şekilde yerine getirmesine bağlıdır. Ancak bu çalışma sonuçları, programlar ne kadar değiştirilirse değiştirilsin ya da daha demokratik öğeler içersin, kendileri demokratik olmayan öğretmenlerle demokratik bir sınıf ortamı oluşturmanın oldukça zor olduğunu göstermektedir.

*Anahtar Sözcükler:* Demokrasi, sosyal bilgiler öğretmeni, 8. sınıf öğrencileri, eğitim