Chapter 12

Peace Education and Empathy: The Effect of Peace Education Program on the Empathy Trends of Primary School Students

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ABSTRACT

In this experimental study, the effect of the peace education program on empathy tendencies of fourth-grade students was examined. The research was designed in an experimental design. In the 2016-2017 academic year, all of the fourth grades (eight classes) of Şirinköy Elementary School in Gölcük province of Kocaeli were determined as the experimental group, and all of the fourth grades (seven classes) of Barbaros Elementary School were determined as the control group. The sample of the study included 275 fourth grade students. One hundred thirty-nine of these students are in the experimental group where the program is applied, and 136 students are in the control group where the program is not implemented. The peace education program was implemented for a period of 14 weeks, one lesson per week. SPSS 21.0 program was used to analyze the quantitative data. The analysis of the data was based on .05 significance level. When the findings obtained in the study are examined, it is seen that peace education is an effective program in increasing the empathy tendencies of fourth-grade students.

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**INTRODUCTION**

All societies contain riches in terms of social differences. If these differences are well managed and social cohesion is achieved, the differences become essential elements that strengthen the unity and development of that country or society and strengthen the national structure. However, encouraging differences to establish and maintain peace is difficult to achieve. The most important task in ensuring lasting peace lies with the educational institutions. It seems difficult to maintain peace as long as intercultural understanding, respect and tolerance towards others’ differences are not provided, empathy is not established and a culture of peace is not created.

**BACKGROUND**

**Peace and Its Levels**

In the dictionary of the Turkish Language Institution (TLI), the word “peace” is defined as “an environment created with harmony, mutual understanding and tolerance.” Galtung (1969), on the other hand, described peace as “the absence of violence, not only personally or directly, but also structurally or indirectly” (p. 167-168). Galtung (1969) divided peace into “negative peace” and “positive peace.” Negative peace is defined as the absence of war or physical/direct violence, while positive peace is defined as ecological well-being and the absence of the main causes of conflict.

The most significant resource in creating a culture of peace are the people themselves because peaceful relations and structures develop through individuals. However, in order to establish peace within any geography of the world, it is not enough just for individuals to live in peace, they need to live in peace with their society and their environment. Total peace cannot, therefore, be established without peace with the individual, and their social and natural environment (UNESCO, 2005).

In addition to the individual being the foundation of peace, that is not enough to achieve peace universally. Individuals must live peacefully with themselves, and then with society and also with their environment. As seen in Figure 1, the settlement of universal peace takes place at seven levels.

The respect, tolerance and justice that individuals at each level show to each other and their environment creates a wave effect, and helps to develop other levels in a positive way. Attempting to establish peace at each level expands the area of peace from the individual to the visible/invisible universe. Peace is not possible by itself. In this context, there are duties that fall to organizations and states at both the regional and international levels. One of the tools that states can utilize in the establishment of peace is education. Education is seen as the most effective way to...
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