Comparing teachers' views on morality and moral education, a comparative study in Turkey and the United States

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ABSTRACT

In this study, the researchers examined how K-8 teachers approach morality, moral education, and the moral development of children in Turkey and in the United States. Both countries have diverse cultures and long histories with secular education systems. Surveys were sent to teachers in nine cities in both countries. Results suggest that Turkish teachers emphasized societal values and global values, which have implications for the sustainability of the Turkish nation-state. American teachers emphasized moral action and morality in context (cultural relativity) rather than global values. Our findings emphasize the importance of inter-cultural awareness and tolerance.

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1. Introduction

In this study, researchers examined how elementary school teachers in Turkey and the United States defined morality, taught moral lessons, and encouraged moral development in children. An important goal was to determine how teachers viewed morality so both groups could better understand how people in diverse cultures approached moral challenges. Researchers emphasized the commonalities that people from diverse cultures shared in their beliefs and attitudes toward morality. By asking teachers to answer both open-ended qualitative questions and Likert style questions, we compared the perspectives of teachers in Turkey with teachers in the West Coast State of California in the USA.

Our research was originally motivated by our interest in better understanding how our two countries, with such disparate cultures, and religious and historical backgrounds, have been able to maintain democratic-style governments and secular education systems. And, how the two countries with such different cultures and traditions teach children to be moral and ethical in a way that

sustains these values over time. Ultimately, if we seek to sustain a peaceful co-existence with other countries, we need to nurture connection through understanding and knowledge.

2. Contexts of the study and literature review

Most people agree that schooling is not only a means for the acquisition of scientific knowledge and life skills such as problem-solving and critical thinking, but, it is also, to some extent, responsible for the moral education of students. In the literature, teachers have been depicted as significant contributors to the moral development of their students (Revell & Arthur, 2007; Schuitema, ten Dam, & Veugelers, 2007). In their research, Schuitema et al. (2007) found that most studies on morality in education focused on moral education, and more specifically, problem-based approaches, the socratic method, problem-solving and critical thinking skills, while other studies focus on drama and service learning. In a recent study in China, researchers' studied music as a way to promote morality in the classroom (Ho, 2010). Moral education is often connected to specific content and taught through case studies regarding specific people (e.g., Martin Luther King), or a historical event (genocide). Due to this widespread belief, moral education has become an unavoidable part of the school experience (Sanger & Osguthorpe, 2005).

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Many people believe that an important aim of education is to socialize the young (Ornstein & Levine, 2008). According to Durkheim and Dewey, education needs to have a moral agenda for the sake of social cohesion. They believe that profound changes within the society need to be addressed through schools, and schools need to be contextualized for the larger forces behind these changes, indicating that morality itself is a social endeavor (Dill, 2007). Purpel and Ryan (1976) suggested that in K-12 schools "moral education goes with the territory." Jackson, Boostrom, and Hansen (1998) observed classrooms in the United States to better understand whether, and how, morality was integrated into the curriculum. They demonstrated that classrooms are places where the moral development of students is richly woven into the fabric of everyday life.

Fewer studies examine how teachers view themselves in relation to moral development. A study in the US examined 180 public school teachers' understanding of themselves as moral agents, which included a description of their moral selves and their decisions and behaviors as moral educators (Joseph & Efron, 1993). The authors found that teachers perceived their role not only as teaching subject matter, but also included teaching moral values. They found especially that teachers' individual moralities shape the choices they make in their classrooms.

In another example, Sockett and LePage (2002), explored teachers' use of moral language over time. They analyzed products developed by practicing teachers from a nontraditional Master's program (exit portfolios, papers, reflective essays, and admission essays). Results suggest that the teachers often described their work in technical terms when they first started the program (except when they were explaining why they became teachers). Later in the program, they were encouraged to envision classrooms as moral rather than technical arenas. By the end of the program, they used moral vocabulary consistently to describe their work.

2.1. Turkey

To understand the responses of Turkish and American teachers, it is necessary to give a brief description of the history of these two countries' approach to moral education within their historical and cultural contexts. Turkey was transformed into a modern democratic nation-state seeking social cohesion and solidarity through education with the foundation of the Republic after 1923 (Kaya, 1984). At that time, the aim of education was to teach basic knowledge and instill social values in the young (Akyuz, 2001). In line with the Ministry of Education's core programs, the Turkish Constitution suggests that the ultimate aim of education is the development of generations of Turkish citizens who respect secular, democratic and national values. Factors that define education principles are listed as 1) Education shall be national; 2) Education shall be republican; 3) Education shall be secular; 4) Education shall have a scientific foundation; 5) Education shall incorporate generality and equality; and 6) Education shall be functional and modern (National Education Law number 1739). Thus, education promotes ideal citizens in the Turkish educational policy, which exerts Plato's "virtuous citizen" (Keyman & Icduygu, 1998).

Therefore one aim of education in Turkey is to maintain strong democratic values, and the essential foundation of democracy is most fundamentally based on equality that addresses commitment to collective solidarity (Salmoni, 2004).

Through an in-depth examination of how democracy and pedagogy were woven into the schooling system in several countries such as France, Germany, Britain, and the United States, a former teacher and an educational policy-maker in the Central Education Ministry in the late 1920s and through the 1930s, Hilmi Ziya Ülken, wrote articles that spelled out a democratic form of government that rejected both social stratification and a socio-political role for religion. Rather, the articles guaranteed legal equality, secularism, and the rational pursuit of common interests through active commitment to state- and society-oriented service (İsmail Hakkı, cited from Salmoni, 2004, p. 87). According to İsmail Hakkı, a policy-maker of Ülken's period, ethics of a democratic republic should be completely positivistic and worldly which eliminates religion from the sphere of morality (cited in Salmoni, 2004). This highlights a socio-political concern especially after the establishment of a new Republic that secured a national sovereignty from imperialistic powers and the displaced the Ottoman Dynasty (Salmoni, 2004).

Despite all critiques, the military has become guardians of the secular republic. After a coupe d'tat in Turkey in the 1980's due to unstable civic movements and leftist upheavals by university students, the military regime encouraged the introduction of a "Religious Culture and Moral Education Course" as compulsory in the elementary and secondary schools. The President of the time, Kenan Evren, who was formerly from the military, spoke out that it was the lack of compulsory moral and religious education that led the nation-state into a chaotic situation (Uncular, 1987). Moral education, including religious culture, became part of the formative curriculum in Turkey and has been much an issue of debate since that period by assertive secularists who underscore the importance of separation between state and religion (Kuru, 2009). The debate about whether and how to teach moral values, and whether to use religion as a base for this education has been argued in other countries as well (Tan, 2008).

Despite the changes referred to above, research indicates that primary school curriculum requires schools to develop the values and attitudes that promote respect for human rights and to build a culture of peace for the sustainability of a secular and democratic society. Teachers and parents in Turkey have maintained those values over time (Engin-Demir & Paykoc, 2006). Other research supports this idea. For instance, according to the European values research, 83% of Turkish people think that respect for human rights is not sufficient in Turkey (Esmer, 2002). Most would agree there has been an increase of individualization in modern western societies (Schuitema et al., 2007). Similarly, value orientations of Turkish youth in 1989 underwent major changes toward a more competitive and individualistic orientation in 1992 and 1995, indicating that values are being modified to fit the changes that the society was experiencing (Cileli, 2000).

2.2. The United States

The United States of America is also a democratic country with a separation between religion and state. The population is pluralistic in its ethnic origins, with a higher percentage of people descended from Western European countries, although this trend has begun shifting due to changing demographics within the immigrant population. Now there are more immigrants of Hispanic origin entering the US. The US is also home to a number of religions with Christianity and Judaism representing the two largest segments. Like Turkey, the teachers in the US help the United States maintain democracy and perpetuate certain moral values, such as tolerance for difference and equality.

Various US researchers have provided insight into the moral dimensions of teaching. In their book, LePage and Sockett (2002) explained that moral development in the US is often misunderstood because people have different opinions on what it means to be moral. Some believe morality is tied directly to religious beliefs, and others believe morality is not dependent on religion. Some believe that to express a moral viewpoint is merely to express an

opinion, and by definition, an opinion is merely subjective. Others believe that morals are relative, differing from society to society or from age to age so that any form of moral condemnation cannot be warranted. Finally, many equate the moral with very limited categories of human experience such as sexual behavior, leaving out such important issues as honesty, fairness, care, etc.

In the US, philosophers have shared diverse philosophical perspectives on morality and ample literature has explored the politics of morality, its development in people and society, its connection to schools, as well as how and why it changes over time. Kant and his followers root ethics in basic principles that have been defined and are shared by groups of people. People act on principles according to rules they create for themselves. Kohlberg's (1984) theory of moral development is rooted in the concept of justice. This approach has been criticized for universalizing and depending on rules that denigrate the importance of particularities and relationships (Strike, 1999). Carol Gilligan (1982) also offered a critique of Kohlberg's work. She suggested that a morality of care could supplant a morality of justice. A comprehensive treatment of this can be found in the book, *The Challenge to Care in Schools* (Noddings, 1992). Others might associate themselves with an ethics of virtue. This approach has its roots in Aristotelian philosophy, which emphasizes "identity." Sockett (1993), emphasizes five virtues including honesty, courage, care, fairness and practical wisdom when describing moral professionalism for teachers. Oser (1994) criticizes this approach for focusing exclusively on the teacher as an individual. Many American educators associate themselves with pragmatism. These programs often teach constructivism and have been heavily influenced by Mead (1936), and Dewey (1916). Many of these people are concerned with the moral attributes of institutions (e.g., schools). Unlike those interested in principles or virtues, moral understanding for pragmatists is constantly renegotiated.

Morality has a dual meaning in the Turkish context as well. According to the philosophy dictionary by Orhan Hançerlioğlu (1980), one definition of morality entails social behavior and attitudes as moral acts under certain social or global norms. The other definition relates to ethics or ethical conduct. Ethics is a science that helps to distinguish between good and evil.

For the US, the history of the separation of "church" and state dates back to when it won its independence from the British. The separation of "church" and state has been upheld through the years, although people point to Christian icons and Christian rituals that permeate the government arena. Public schooling has remained secular, to the point where prayer has been banned in schools and people argue over whether creationism should be taught in schools and whether (and how much) sex education should be offered in the curriculum.

In this research, we examined teachers' views of morality. We also analyzed viewpoints across people and countries. The authors make the argument that education should foster students' identity development, and teach how to participate in society in a moral way with the help of domain-specific knowledge and skills while paying attention to social differences among students (Schuitema et al., 2007).

3. Method

3.1. Data collection

This study is part of a larger, longitudinal study that has three phases that include qualitative and quantitative methodologies. In this first phase, a survey was sent to practicing teachers in Turkey and in the United States. This survey included both qualitative and quantitative questions that will be discussed in this article. In the second phase, practicing teachers in the US and Turkey will be interviewed and asked five specific questions such as, "How do you talk to children in your class about the Iraq war, or how do you talk to children in your class about poverty?" In the third phase, a small group of teachers in the US (from those interviewed) will be asked to allow researchers to observe in their classrooms. From surveys to interviews to classroom observations, the same teachers are followed over the course of a few years to determine whether their attitudes or practices change during that time. In this way, the researchers will have a chance to see how teachers put their moral beliefs into practice. In this paper, we report on the initial data collected in our surveys, both qualitative and quantitative, from Turkey and the United States.

3.2. Participants

Researchers selected a random sample of ∼1100 elementary and junior high school teachers in both California and in Turkey (2200 total). Then we sent surveys to teachers in those schools to determine how they defined morality, taught moral education, and fostered moral development among the children they taught. Nine cities in California were selected using specific criteria that ensured representation of the diverse regions geographically, politically, and religiously in both of those areas. Special emphasis was placed on selecting cities that represented coastal and mountainous regions, as well as inland and border towns. Fourteen were selected in Turkey based on their growing (rather than declining) population from different regions to end up with social, economic, and cultural diversity. In the US, school districts were also selected randomly from these nine cities, and then 15 schools were selected randomly from each district. In the United States, we sent surveys with self-addressed stamped envelopes to the principals of these schools and asked them to distribute them to 15 teachers at each school. In both countries, the sample was systematically selected from diverse schools (primary and junior high public or private schools,) to represent the entire population of teachers.

In Turkey, the researchers selected 14 provinces based on the data from the State Statistical Institute. The cities that were selected in Turkey showed a steady increase in population growth (+10 and more) due to inter-regional movements (TUIK, 2006). Within those cities the number of public and private schools were examined based on a database of all schools in Turkey at the Ministry of National Education (MONE) (MONE, 2006). Private and public primary schools in those 14 cities were selected proportionately and randomly in each province. In Turkey, 1100 surveys were sent to 14 provinces and ∼800 were returned (73% response). In the United States, 1200 surveys were sent to nine cities and approximately 60 were returned. The American researchers were required to send out another 500 surveys, and they also gave some out in classes at the university and 39 were returned. Over the next year or so, 57 more were sent back from those first two batches. Later, the researchers sent out 600 more of the Likert portions of the surveys to random schools in California in an attempt to get more quantitative responses. Altogether, researchers sent out 1700 full surveys in California along with 600 more Likert portions of the survey and 47 were returned from the 600, for a total of 2300 sent out with 203 responses (8% response). In comparison, 1200 were sent to teachers in Turkey. Researchers got back ∼800 surveys from the Turkish teachers.

The American researchers decided to select the state of California (CA) to survey, instead of the entire USA because CA is a very large State with a large population that is representative of the country as a whole. California is populated by a very diverse group of people. It has a more liberal coastal area, and a more conservative rural and suburban area. It has mountains and valleys. It has small towns as well as large urban cities. It has a border with Mexico and

also a large farming community. California is also one of the United State's most diverse states. The researchers determined the State of California was like a microcosm of the United States and it was easier to get a more realistic population sample from one state, rather than surveying the entire United States. In size and population, Turkey was closer to the State of California than to the whole of the United States.

3.3. Instrumentation

The questionnaire was developed based on literature and research utilizing a two-way mixed design. First, multiple interviews were conducted with Turkish social studies teachers based on a convenience sample. Data that appeared from the interviews were compared with the literature and after multiple correspondences between the researchers and a draft survey was constructed. The final survey was submitted for review to an expert panel in Turkey including seven experts from different fields: Professors in guidance ($n = 1$); Curriculum and Instruction ($n = 2$); Literature and Values Education ($n = 1$); Philosophy ($n = 1$); Sociology ($n = 1$); and 1 prospective Ph.D. candidate teaching at the primary school level. The draft instrument was pilot tested with 34 teachers in three public schools in three cities in Turkey based on a convenience sample. Next, the survey was also cross checked with the American research team. The final version was translated and retranslated in English and Turkish and piloted again in Turkey for final considerations ($n = 13$). Surveys were sent to schools via paper mail in these various cities in California and Turkey based on cluster random selection.

In Turkey, the Educational Directorate in each city administered the survey questionnaires in closed envelopes in schools. The surveys were administered in closed envelopes to two social studies, two Turkish Language, two Religion and Moral Education, one Citizenship and Human Rights, and four primary school teachers (Total 11 teachers in each school), and only teachers who accepted the envelopes filled out surveys. The surveys were mailed back to the researchers by the experts in the Educational Directorate of each district in self-addressed stamped envelopes. The Likert Scale questions and responses are provided later in the paper. The qualitative questions in this paper include:

Please define morality.

1) What are the values a "moral person" holds? Please explain.
2) What are the values a person with a "strong personality" holds? Please explain
3) What shapes your beliefs about morality? Please be specific and give reasons.

3.4. Data analysis

In the surveys, teachers were asked about how they, 1) defined and described morality in respect to education, 2) taught moral values, and 3) encouraged moral development in children. Both quantitative and qualitative data collected from the United States and the US was analyzed separately. After the data were analyzed separately, we brought the data from Turkey together with the US data for comparison. Researchers analyzed qualitative data using a cross categorical approach.

Researchers analyzed quantitative data by displaying descriptive statistics and number counts in tables and comparing frequency scores of various questions on the survey. A *t*-test was used to determine significance between the means of any of the individual question on the survey. Findings highlighted the similarities as well as the differences between the two countries.

3.5. Limitations

One limitation of this study was that although the researchers used random samples for schools, and the samples were fairly large, especially for the Turkish teachers, the teachers who were surveyed had the choice whether to participate or not. Both groups of teachers self-selected to participate. For the American teachers that may have had an affect. In the US, the researchers had a difficult time getting teachers to return the surveys, so many of those who did return surveys may have felt very strongly about the topic. So, teachers in the US who were more neutral about this topic may not have chosen to complete and return the surveys. Another, aspect was the number of teachers with religious, culture and morality credentials, and who graduated from Theology Faculties included in the sample of the Turkish case and represented about twelve percent (11.88%, $N = 98$) of the sample. In the US (California), approximately 7.6 percent of the schools randomly selected were private schools which could include either special education, specialized secular, or religious schools.

One other issue that needs to be discussed is the rate of return of the surveys. The Turkish teachers returned 800 of 1200 sent during their first round of mailings (73% return rate). The American teachers returned 203 of the 2300 sent out over the course of 2+ years in three mailings (8%). Both results were surprising. The rate of return for the Americans was arguably on the low side and the rate of return for the Turkish teachers was incredibly high. It would be interesting to follow up on the question as to why there was such a disparity. Among the American researchers, there was speculation as to why the return rate was low. Some suggested that because teachers in the US are surveyed so often, many ignore education surveys. It was also suggested that some US teachers view surveys as added paperwork to be thrown away. Others suggest that the principals, who were asked to distribute the first set of 1200 surveys, may not have delivered them to teachers. We have no way of determining the reason, so no conclusions were made. However, it should be noted that in the past, the United States has connected with other countries through diplomatic and educational collaboration. It can be effective for people who come from different cultures in different parts of the world to find peaceful resolutions to conflicts by learning and understanding each other. The Turkish teachers were given a choice whether to return the surveys. Their participation was anonymous and they were not required in any way to return the surveys. The American researchers found it uplifting to see such a large response from the Turkish teachers.

4. Results

4.1. Short answer qualitative questions

4.1.1. Turkish teachers

For the qualitative question, "What is morality?" the Turkish teachers focused on four categories including social values, global values, humanistic values, and nationalism. They also listed three categories that described important virtues: honesty, respect, and justice. Preliminary data show that teachers in the Turkish context hold values that are mainly in line with the values imposed by the Constitution and the Ministry of National Education (MONE) in Turkey. Morality is described as individuals being respectful and living their lives based on the societal values and rules. Also, global values, such as humanism, honesty, respect toward others, social justice, and tolerance were emphasized. Religious values, such as faith and organized religion, were not emphasized in the short answer portion of the survey.

For Turkish teachers, if a person is to be considered moral, they need to hold global values: honesty, reliability, and respect for

others and the environment. Turkish educators also emphasized tolerance, care, the capacity to love. They valued helpful attitudes.

Although religion and faith were deemphasized in this section of the survey, teachers stated that their family, social values, and religious beliefs shaped their values. Although the Turkish teachers emphasized that global values included honesty, respect, tolerance, humanism, human rights, and social justice, Atatürk's Principles and nationalism were not highlighted as values influencing moral beliefs despite the Basic Education Law in the MONE.

Turkish teachers reported that people needed to instill global values from early childhood beginning with the family. These values would then be reinforced in the educational context once children began their schooling. Many reported that they believed certain values were important for the welfare and sustainability of society and humanity. They also stated that if students were educated with these moral values, they would engage in certain behaviors, and would become "self-actualized" persons. The Turkish teachers connected moral values often with social values, below we have two examples: (morality is) Evaluation criteria of what is true or wrong, acceptable or unacceptable in society, behaviors or rules that people are expected to follow

1) Values adopted an/or constructed by the society
2) General judgments and rules that determines what is wrong or right in a society

Honesty was the virtue most often quoted in the survey's short answers. Here were the values most reported:

1) Being honest (One who is right or does not lie, candor)
2) Justice (To object to injustice or unjust decisions toward others)
3) Tolerance (to accept others and differences)
4) Care (cares for people in need)
5) Love of nation and a respect for national values were also reported, however, they were less reported than social values, and values of virtue.

4.1.2. American teachers

The American teachers emphasized the importance of moral action. Many defined morality not only as knowing right from wrong, but also as making choices based on those beliefs. Below are two examples:

1) Morality is knowing right from wrong and making life choices based on these values.
2) Using one's set of values to help with personal decision-making.

A large sub-set of teachers also talked about the importance of their religion, but very few talked about patriotism or nationalism. Since so few American teachers sent back the initial surveys, we were interested in seeing if the teachers who sent back the first 100 surveys were influenced by their faith. Many of the teachers who sent back the first 100 surveys expressed a strong attachment to their religion and felt their values were shaped and influenced by their faith. There was also a slightly smaller subgroup of individuals in those first 100 surveys who indicated that the larger society influenced their morals and principles. This sub-set emphasized a strong connection between one's behavior and one's moral principles. They were not influenced by faith. Below is an example of some common responses:

Morality is how an individual behaves according to an established code of ethics and values. (Morality is) Socially acceptable standards of right and wrong behavior.

When American teachers answered the question about what makes a person moral, they almost all responded with an answer that described some type of virtue, as opposed to focusing on a behavior or talking about principles. They seemed to be listing virtues off the top of their heads as they remembered them:

1) Accepts others, respects others.
2) Honesty, fairness, integrity, goodness, virtues, courage, perseverance, stewardship, patriotism, respect, responsibility.
3) A "moral person" will value honesty and loyalty, and will look for the good in all people.

When Americans answered the question about what makes a person strong, some defined 'strong' as a quality that was negative (mean, demeaning, domineering, and controlling) while others had a very positive association with the term (a good leader, can face adversity, assertive, etc.). As far as what strength had to do with morality, the Americans talked about how difficult it sometimes was to stand up for one's moral beliefs. They thought that people who were strong had a better chance of standing up for their beliefs. Some thought that people with a strong personality could better determine the difference between right and wrong. Others did not understand why researchers were asking about strength. Below is an example of teachers confused by the connection:

1) Those 2 ideas (morality and strength) (*our addition*) don't go together. Strong personalities can have "good" or "bad" values!
2) Not sure what you mean? Personality is not related to values, is it?

By far, the three most salient characteristics influencing these teachers' value systems were religion, family, and friends. This was similar to the responses of the Turkish teachers. Many praised the powerful impact that their faith and families had on their lives while growing up as young people. For many, becoming an educator was a natural vehicle through which they could give back to society. The majority seemed cognizant of the major role they played in the moral development of their students. We speculated that values had led many to choose education as a vocation, and many felt gratitude for having the opportunity to play such an important role in the lives of children. This seemed in conflict with the result from the survey that few teachers were exposed to ethics development, moral decision-making and strategies for teaching moral education in their preservice teacher education programs.

4.2. Survey results

We compared the Likert Scale results for both groups (see Table 1 below). We have compared the averages of the means for each answer to each question.

The researchers found that almost half of the Likert question means were significantly different when the US teachers and the Turkish teachers' scores were compared. Below, we have developed a table showing the questions that presented a difference greater than $p > .001$ between American and Turkish teachers. They are presented in Table 2.

4.3. Summarizing the results

We categorized the answers that differed into three major themes that emerged from the data.

First, both groups had different views on the definition of morality, especially as it related to virtue.

Table 1
Comparing Likert Scale means for Turkish and American teachers Likert calculate from 1 to 5 (1 completely disagree to 5 completely agree).

Questions	American teachers			Turkish teachers		
	N	M	SD	N	M	SD
1. Moral education should be offered in schools.	203	4.14	1.00	741	4.15	0.982
2. Students' moral and character education should be part of the formal education.	203	3.99	1.02	748	4.65	0.625
3. Parents support teachers to teach their children to be moral.	203	3.80	1.24	734	3.93	0.993
4. Moral and character education should be a part of the curriculum independent from other classes.	203	2.93	1.28	738	3.68	1.306
5. Moral education is important for classroom management.	203	4.28	0.96	736	4.48	0.750
6. The moral values the students learn from their parents are similar to the ones I emphasize in my class.	203	2.99	1.07	739	3.32	0.982
7. Knowledge should be taught by teachers, and morality and character education should be left to parents.	192	2.17	0.99	740	2.17	1.242
8. Moral and character education is about teaching children to respect differences.	203	3.80	0.94	733	4.34	0.806
9. Moral values are connected with customs and traditions.	203	3.72	1.03	737	3.58	1.068
10. Moral and character education should be included in all the classes.	203	4.06	1.02	741	4.17	0.950
11. Concept such as citizenship and democracy should be taught.	0	0.00	0.00	750	4.52	0.691
12. Moral education is about teaching values related to religion.	203	2.01	1.14	735	3.77	1.225
13. My moral values and that of the institution where I work are different.	203	2.32	1.01	741	2.80	1.115
14. As a teacher I try to be a model in classes in terms of morality.	203	4.63	0.73	743	4.57	0.655
15. Moral education is about teaching values related to virtue.	203	3.66	1.17	737	4.42	0.725
16. Moral decision-making is an important part of formal education.	203	4.05	0.97	733	4.21	0.846
17. Teachers should teach their own moral values in classes.	203	2.59	0.96	741	2.65	1.129
18. Moral education should include honesty and virtue.	203	4.21	0.86	734	4.61	0.656
19. Moral values are personal/individual values.	203	3.32	1.06	737	2.55	1.283
20. Moral education should stress the importance of equality.	203	3.82	1.04	729	4.41	0.779
21. Teachers should be careful in classes NOT to impose their own moral values on children.	203	3.18	1.22	729	3.06	1.258
22. Moral education should be about respecting other peoples' privacy.	203	3.46	1.16	740	4.60	0.626
23. Moral education is about teaching fairness.	203	4.10	0.90	740	4.69	0.565
24. Moral values are similar to social values.	203	3.64	1.12	744	4.43	0.802
25. Morality cannot be taught but can only be gained through experience.	203	2.42	1.02	739	3.40	1.247
26. Moral education and character education should be used to control student behavior.	203	2.74	1.17	730	3.21	1.199
27. When teaching moral values, teachers should stress tolerance of differences.	203	4.05	0.94	743	4.56	0.672
28. Moral values are universal values.	203	3.54	1.24	746	3.81	1.239

Note: 1 equals completely disagree, 2 disagree, 3 undecided, 4 agree, and 5 completely agree.

Table 2
Table of significant difference at $p > .001$ (mean calculated on Likert Scale 1–5, where 1 = completely disagree and 5 = completely agree on questions listed below table).

Q num	American			Turkish			Abs diff	Std dev	t	DOF
	N	Mean	Std. dev	N	Mean	Std. dev				
12	203	2.01	1.14	735	3.73	1.25	1.72	1.43	9.96	188.83
22	203	3.46	1.16	740	4.57	0.642	1.11	1.24	8.39	155.36
2	203	3.99	1.02	748	4.62	0.663	0.63	0.75	5.21	171.56
23	203	4.10	0.90	740	4.66	0.577	0.56	0.76	5.18	168.15
24	203	3.64	1.12	740	4.34	0.824	0.70	0.72	5.02	182.02
25	203	2.42	1.02	739	3.21	1.246	0.79	0.70	4.87	187.39
15	203	3.66	1.17	737	4.33	0.721	0.67	0.71	4.86	165.63
20	203	3.82	1.04	729	4.45	0.75	0.63	0.70	4.84	178.14
18	203	4.21	0.86	734	4.70	0.545	0.49	0.70	4.83	170.61
26	203	2.74	1.17	730	3.45	1.21	0.71	0.60	4.19	191.53
27	203	4.05	0.94	743	4.52	0.735	0.47	0.57	3.96	186.75
4	203	2.93	1.28	736	3.63	1.424	0.70	0.51	3.60	192.01

Key: The questions in order of significance from highest to lowest.
12. Moral education is about teaching values related to religion.
22. Moral education should be about respecting other peoples' privacy.
2. Students' moral and character education should be part of the formal education.
23. Moral education is about teaching fairness.
24. Moral values are similar to social values.
25. Morality cannot be taught but can only be gained through experience.
15. Moral education is about teaching values related to virtue.
20. Moral education should stress the importance of equality.
18. Moral education should include honesty and virtue.
26. Moral education and character education should be used to control student behavior.
27. When teaching moral values, teachers should stress tolerance of differences.
4. Moral and character education should be a part of the curriculum independent from other classes.

24. Moral values are similar to social values.
15. Moral education is about teaching values related to virtue.
18. Moral education should include honesty and virtue.
27. When teaching moral values, teachers should stress tolerance of differences.
23. Moral education is about teaching fairness.

Second, teachers from both countries had different ideas about how morality should be taught to children.

2. Students' moral and character education should be part of the formal education.
25. Morality cannot be taught but can only be gained through experience.
26. Moral education and character education should be used to control student behavior.
4. Moral and character education should be a part of the curriculum independent from other classes.

Third, there was a difference in issues of moral action and local versus global issues:

22. Moral education should be about respecting other peoples' privacy.
1. Love of nation and a respect for national values were also reported, however, they were less reported than social values, and values of virtue.
2. Using one's set of values to help with personal decision-making.
3. Values adopted and/or constructed by the society

As far as similarities, we found that both groups of teachers agreed on the most basic issues such as whether or not morality

should be taught and by whom, and with what supports. Both groups agreed on the most important basic principles.

1. Moral education should be offered in schools.
3. Parents support teachers to teach their children to be moral
6. The moral values the students learn from their parents are similar to the ones I emphasize in my class.
8. Moral and character education is about teaching children to respect difference
9. Moral and character education is connected to customs and traditions
10. Moral and character education should be included in all classes
16. Moral decision-making is an important part of formal education.
19. Moral values are personal, individual values
21. Teacher should be careful not to impose their own moral values on children
28. Moral values are universal values

5. Discussion

We categorized the answers that differed into three major themes that emerged from the data. First, both groups had different views on the definition of morality. Second, teachers from both countries had different ideas about how morality should be taught to children. Third, there was a difference in issues of moral action and global orientation. As far as similarities, we found that both groups of teachers agreed on the most basic issues such as whether or not morality should be taught and by whom, and with what supports. Both groups agreed on the most important basic principles.

5.1. Differences: theme 1 – defining morality

The US teachers were clear that in comparison with the Turkish teachers, they were less inclined to consider morality tied to religion or social values. They also didn't connect morality as much with tolerance and equity. What they did associate the word morality with was "respecting differences and moral decision making."

The Turkish teachers, on the other hand, were quite inclusive with their idea of what morality meant to them. They included all the terms listed above, religion, social values, tolerance, equity, respecting differences, privacy, virtues, etc. In their view of morality, the Turkish teachers seemed to be more influenced by their faith. They got a higher score on the question that asked, "Moral education is about teaching values related to religion?" Early, in the qualitative portion of the survey, Turkish teachers did not emphasize organized religion as they described what it meant to be moral. Most described virtues, and they did say their values were shaped by their family and their faith, but they did not say their morality was directly linked to organized religion. The high score on this question could have been influenced by the "undecided 3 middle" category choice since this was not as obvious in the essay questions. Mostly, Americans did not connect morality with religious views as indicated with a 2.01 mean out of 5 point scale. This is important because many people in the United States are concerned about using the word "morality" because some people equate that word with a certain type of conservative Christianity, as in the cultural reference "moral majority."

American teachers also did not equate morality with respecting peoples' privacy, but the Turkish teachers did. In Turkey it can be considered rude and intrusive to probe into a person's personal life. Some people in Turkey may assume a person is trying to highlight someone's differences if they probe into another person's life. In Turkey, for people to be the same, this can equate to equal. This is in line with the idea of "equality" emphasized in the national

constitution in which the essence for democracy is regarded as given equal rights for all its citizens. Secularism alongside with nationalism, economic development, and westernization are regarded as the basis for modern Turkish Republic (Celenk, 2009), therefore, rather than focusing on differences, it highlights similarities. People in Turkey present personal information when they choose to do so.

In the US, it can seem rude not to ask about a person's experiences and to show you care and accept this person for who they are. It is often considered an act of kindness to acknowledge and celebrate a person's diversity, especially if they have faced adversity and have still been successful.

There was also a significant difference between the American teachers and the Turkish teachers when comparing the questions, "Moral education should stress the importance of equality?" And "When teaching moral values, teachers should stress tolerance of differences?"

More Turkish teachers listed equality (4.41) and tolerance of differences (4.56) as a moral issue than did teachers in the United States (3.82, 4.05). It was expected that both countries would be equal in their beliefs that these were moral issues. Although many people in both countries agreed they were moral issues (both rated these issues highly), it was interesting that there was a significant difference between the teachers in the two countries. Perhaps the American teachers view equality as a legal right, as opposed to a moral issue. Whether something is moral and/or legal are sometimes separated in the minds of Americans.

5.2. Differences: theme 2 – moral education and development

More Turkish teachers indicated that morality was something that could only be gained through experience. American teachers believed morality could be taught. This was an interesting finding given that the American teachers emphasized moral action, which would seem easier to teach experientially, and the Turkish teachers were more focused on virtues, which is often taught through stories or case studies.

In addition, more Turkish teachers believed that the concept of morality should be used when managing student behavior. This question was a bit ambiguous. What does it mean to manage students' behavior? Did the Turkish teachers mean that children should be taught right from wrong so they would be respectful to people in the school and in society? Did American teachers think the question was asking whether teachers should shame children into submission at school? This is something to follow up on in the interviews.

One of the last questions that produced a large difference between Americans and Turkish teachers was the idea that moral education should be taught separately from other content areas. The Turkish teachers more often thought morality should be taught separately. It is possible that because Turkish teachers think there is a religious culture in their county, they should bear responsibility for teaching explicitly about morality? Many American teachers indicated that morality should be taught within the context of other classes. So, although American teachers believe morality could be taught, they believed that it should not be taught as a stand alone topic. More Turkish teachers, on the other hand, believed that morality was better taught through experience, yet they believed it should be taught explicitly in a separate course. How Turkish teachers would frame ethics and morality as a stand alone course or topic would be an interesting follow up question.

5.3. Differences: theme 3 – moral action and global issues

American teachers also emphasized moral decision-making when they defined morality. The Turkish teachers emphasized

virtues and social values. The American teachers focused on action, and the Turkish teachers focused on thought.

The American teachers also focused more on local issues, and the Turkish teachers were more global in their orientation toward morality. The American teachers never really talked about ethics or morality being global in nature or even part of a cohesive national vision. To the Americans, morality was more personal, and they seemed to be more culturally relativistic, worried about imposing their values on other cultures, even those diverse cultures in their own local neighborhoods. There was speculation that this came from the fact that children in the US are often taught to respect other immigrant cultures in their own country, and more specifically in their local towns and communities. To the Turkish teachers, morality was tied with social, national, and even global values that they associated with humanism and global human rights.

5.4. Similarities: agreement on basic issues in moral education

It should also be noted that as a general rule, the American teachers tended to be more conservative in their scoring. In other words, almost all of the American mean scores were lower than the Turkish scores. The only two questions that were scored almost exactly the same for both Turkish and American teachers included the two questions, 1) moral education should be offered in schools (positive), and 2) only knowledge should be taught in schools and morality should be left to parents (negative). So, both groups of teachers were in complete agreement that morality should be taught in schools by teachers, not just by parents at home.

On the Likert Scale, the teachers in both countries agreed on other points as well. Teachers in both countries agreed that morality and ethics should be taught, but that teachers should not impose their own moral values on children. It was also positive to find that teachers in both countries believed that the institutions where they worked shared their values and that the parents supported them when teaching their children to be moral. This was a bit surprising for the US, because US teachers are often a bit negative about school culture and outside support. Finally, teachers in both countries agreed that moral decision-making was an important part of their jobs.

6. Implications for teacher education

It is be important to ask ourselves what does this mean? How can we use the findings to help us prepare our children to live in a morally complex world? We stated in the beginning the goal of this study was to better understand how our two countries, with such disparate cultures, and religious and historical backgrounds, could maintain democratic and secular education systems. And, we wondered if teaching children to be moral and ethical helps sustain these values over time. Do moral values have anything to do with maintaining democratic values or the separation of religion and state? These questions can't be answered with one survey. We need to continue this long term research project to work toward answering such broad questions. As a starting point, however, to sustain a peaceful co-existence with other countries, we need to nurture connection through understanding and knowledge.

This study tells us that not everyone has the exact same definition or conception of morality, and in fact, where countries have a more social focus rather than an individualistic focus we may find a greater difference in how others define morality and decide on moral priorities.

This study tells us that it could be helpful for both countries to have a global focus on morality and ethics, if for no other reason than both countries have a large influx of immigrants. And, teachers

need to understand diverse perspectives when they enter the classroom.

This study also suggests that the concepts of morality can be confusing for teachers and therefore they need to struggle with these concepts in their teacher education programs. They need to struggle with moral decision-making and they need to know how they can help their children develop morally. It may be helpful for teachers to work together in schools to define shared values and work toward a common set of standards (Husu & Kirsi, 2007).

If we want teachers to help prepare children to maintain a democracy. The results of this study suggest that teachers should grapple with the idea of moral action. They need to understand how to stand up against justice and how to teach others to stand up against injustice. These points will be elaborated in the following section.

6.1. Better understanding of morality and moral decision-making

In the US, it has been suggested that teachers are often confused by the definition of morality and the moral education of children (Fenstermacher, Osguthorpe, & Sanger, 2008; Sanger, 2008). The word "moral" can be confusing and often conjures up thoughts of organized religion. Yet, in the survey, when asked whether morality should be taught in schools, both the Turkish and US teachers agreed that it should be taught in schools. Both agreed that teaching morality is part of the schools' responsibility. Both agreed that moral decision-making was part of a teacher's job.

But, how important is moral decision-making in the life of a teacher? Some would argue that moral decision-making is at the heart of teaching (Sanger, 2008; Sockett, 2008), just as some believe finding evidence to support a position is at the heart of law and diagnosing a problem is at the heart of medicine (Darling-Hammond, Bransford, LePage, Hammerness, & Duffy, 2005). For some, the phrase moral decision-making, conjures up images such as a teacher having to decide whether to expel a student from school after he was caught cheating. But moral decision-making is also about whether teachers place children in homogeneous or heterogeneous ability groups (tracking by ability). Why? Because different people have conducted research that shows that placing children in low ability groups can sometimes hurt children's self-esteem (Iresibm & Hallam, 2009; Oakes, 1995; Oakes & Guiton, 1995) and sometimes placement in homogeneous groups help them learn (Robinson, 2008; Takako, 2010). A teacher has to make a moral decision in her class about how to place children in reading groups because it could affect a child's life. Therefore it is a moral decision. Whether a teacher calls on a child to answer a question is a moral decision. The teacher will ask herself, "If I call on this student, will her answer move the discussion along? Will I discourage her if I ignore her and call on someone else? Have I called on her too much? Have I called on her enough? Do I seem biased?" These instantaneous judgments go through a teacher's mind quickly and decisions are made moment to moment. Alone, each decision will affect a child only in a small way; but together, over time, these decisions can affect a child in a meaningful way. Thornberg (2006) conducted research on how the simple act of "hushing" created moral dilemmas for students in primary schools in Sweden. His findings demonstrated that students thought that by hushing, teachers were sometimes acting in the wrong way and, as a consequence, the students were forced to go against the teacher to act in accordance with their own moral standards, or to give up, in order to avoid the risk of getting a reprimand.

For this reason, we need to pay special attention to how we prepare teachers in moral decision-making, moral reasoning, and philosophy. In the past, the US educational system moved away from a moral base and toward a skills-oriented academic base (Brimi, 2008; Stiff-Williams, 2010). This study suggests teacher

educators should help teachers understand morality from a global, national, and local perspective. It suggests that educators should work with teachers to respect morality based on religious beliefs, as well as secular ideals, and to understand the difference. Also, it would be helpful for teachers to understand the difference between ethics and morality and between moral development and moral education. It would be helpful for teachers to understand the difference between their moral development as professionals and the moral develop of children. According to Reiman and Peace (2002), the more complex the level of moral development of teachers, the more likely a teacher is to be successful in meeting the moral, intellectual and interpersonal demands of the public school environment. Specifically, teachers who reason at higher levels are able to empathize with students, are tolerant of diverse viewpoints, and are flexible in their teaching approaches.

6.2. Teaching a global orientation toward culture

Diverse perspectives on morality can influence educational thought and practice. In this study a majority of teachers decided they should not impose their values on children as they engaged in moral lessons. As Etzioni (1996) suggested, however, there are dissimilarities between many societies on how to navigate complex moral issues, but there are also many areas in which there is moral congruence (e.g., the need to care for the sick). If we focus on our individual moral views, we risk ignoring the moral character of a community and the similarities between such communities. Understanding how teachers make moral decisions, teach moral education, and encourage moral development, will help to improve our understanding of how we as teachers, along with parents, influence our communities' moral character. And, it will help us understand each other.

In Turkey, the teachers emphasize social values, virtue, and nationalism as essential in identifying how they describe morality. From this finding it seems more likely the Turkish teachers would connect morality with democracy or the separation of religion and education. It is possible that Turkish teachers view democracy and the separation of religion and education in a different way than the US teachers because these changes are more recent in the Turkish history than in the US history. Fenstermacher et al. (2009) suggest that people should be aware of how the state is interested in putting moral content into the curriculum toward the development of civic competence and civic identity on the part of its future citizens. They demonstrate how many US citizens are cautious when it comes to civic education. They want some values maintained, but they also want children to be taught to be critical of their government's motives.

Social values are unwritten rules, and a person's values may be different from public values, as well as their colleague's, parents', and their children's values (Norberg, 2006). For instance, Turkish schools in inner and outer urban settlements are facing severe problems due to internal migration flows and rapid urbanization. And teachers are subjected to issues of inter-cultural challenges due to poverty that they find difficult to handle (Akar, 2010). The US being so large also faces a number of local issues, and the schools and the citizens often find themselves focused on their own communities and how they can make changes in the lives of their own children. If Americans value putting morality into practice, as is suggested in this study, it would seem more practical at a local level. In teacher education in the US, not only must teachers work with children to understand morality, they must help children learn how being more global in their orientation makes a difference in their lives. This starts with teachers educators showing teachers how being more global can make a difference in their lives.

6.3. Emphasizing the importance of being a moral agent

It is easy to carry signs and join a peace march if we have little to lose; it is not so easy if we could lose our jobs. It is easy to talk to our friends about how the world is unfair; it is harder to give money to the poor. It is easy to become selfish in education and justify that with the belief that we are protecting ourselves from being exploited by the system. To continue to make moral decisions and stand up against injustice, it is important to understand the complexity of moral thought and action, make moral decisions and stand up for what is right. To be able to do that, teachers need time to grapple with complex issues in their preparation programs. But, people also need to be given permission to stand up to injustice because those who seek to oppress other people bombard them with messages that it is not okay to stand up against injustice. People take strength from knowing that others agree with their convictions, even if they are unable to stand up themselves.

Ultimately, how our children are educated will determine how they grow up and make decisions about the world. Do we want our countries to be open to diversity, caring to the poor, and friendly with its neighbors? In places where we have demonstrated an interest in developing a moral stance on government, on global interactions, inclusion, and on eliminating inequalities, the first step is to start with the education of our children, which begins with the preparation of our teachers.

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