



Primary School Curriculum Reform in Türkiye: Analyzing Recent Innovations in National Education Policies

Ethem Gürhan*

Ministry of National Education, Türkiye

*Correspondence Author: ethemgurhan@gmail.com

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Abstract: *Türkiye has recently reformed its curriculum to emphasize 21st-century skills, integrating critical thinking, digital literacy, and values education. These efforts culminated in the 2023 Turkish Century Maarif Model, which balances modernization, national identity, and global frameworks like the OECD Learning Compass and UNESCO's Education for Sustainable Development Goals. This study aims to critically analyze the key features, implementation strategies, and practical implications of the Turkish Century Maarif Model within the context of global frameworks such as the OECD 2030 Learning Compass and the Sustainable Development Goals. Using qualitative research design, the study employed document analysis and thematic content analysis to examine official policy papers, national education reports, and peer-reviewed literature published between 2018 and 2024. Findings indicate that while the reform promotes innovation, digital literacy, and student-centered pedagogy, several systemic barriers persist. These include inadequate teacher training, regional disparities in educational infrastructure, and misalignment between assessment systems and new pedagogical goals. Bridging the gap between policy and practice requires inclusive teacher professional development programs, equitable investment in digital infrastructure, and a restructured assessment framework that supports competency-based learning.*

Keywords: *Primary School, Curriculum Reform, Competency-Based Education, 21st Century Skills, Education Policy*

Abstrak: *Turki baru-baru ini mereformasi kurikulumnya untuk menekankan keterampilan abad ke-21, dengan mengintegrasikan pemikiran kritis, literasi digital, dan pendidikan nilai. Upaya ini culminated dalam Model Pendidikan Abad ke-21 Turki 2023, yang menyeimbangkan modernisasi, identitas nasional, dan kerangka kerja global seperti OECD Learning Compass dan Tujuan Pembangunan Berkelanjutan UNESCO. Studi ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis secara kritis fitur utama, strategi implementasi, dan implikasi praktis Model Pendidikan Abad ke-21 Turki dalam konteks kerangka kerja global seperti OECD 2030 Learning Compass dan Tujuan Pembangunan Berkelanjutan. Menggunakan desain penelitian kualitatif, studi ini menggunakan analisis dokumen dan analisis konten tematik untuk mengkaji dokumen kebijakan resmi, laporan pendidikan nasional, dan literatur yang telah direview oleh rekan sejawat yang diterbitkan antara tahun 2018 dan 2024. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa meskipun reformasi ini mempromosikan inovasi, literasi digital, dan pedagogi berpusat pada siswa, beberapa hambatan sistemik tetap ada.*

Hambatan tersebut meliputi pelatihan guru yang tidak memadai, ketidakmerataan infrastruktur pendidikan antar wilayah, dan ketidakselarasan antara sistem penilaian dan tujuan pedagogis baru. Menjembatani kesenjangan antara kebijakan dan praktik memerlukan program pengembangan profesional guru yang inklusif, investasi yang adil dalam infrastruktur digital, dan kerangka penilaian yang direstrukturisasi untuk mendukung pembelajaran berbasis kompetensi.

Kata Kunci: *Sekolah Dasar, Reformasi Kurikulum, Pendidikan Berbasis Kompetensi, Keterampilan Abad 21, Kebijakan Pendidikan*

Introduction

In the 21st century, educational systems across the globe are undergoing unprecedented transformations influenced by a confluence of factors, including rapid globalisation, technological disruption, climate crisis, and shifting societal expectations. These changes demand a departure from traditional education paradigms, particularly those rooted in rote memorisation, standardisation, and narrow academic metrics. In their place, holistic educational models prioritising critical thinking, digital literacy, emotional intelligence, sustainability, and values education are gaining prominence (Schleicher, 2018; Biesta, 2020; OECD, 2023). As humanity grapples with rising inequalities, democratic backsliding, and global instability, education is increasingly seen as a moral and civic endeavour, not merely a cognitive one.

This reorientation has prompted many countries to re-evaluate the aims and design of their national curricula. In particular, values education, which encompasses ethical reasoning, empathy, civic engagement, environmental consciousness, and respect for diversity, has emerged as a central focus of global education reform efforts. Frameworks such as UNESCO, (2017) Education for Sustainable Development Goals and the OECD, (2020) Learning Compass 2030, advocate for education systems that cultivate responsible, reflective, and ethically grounded individuals prepared to navigate complexity and contribute meaningfully to society.

Within this global landscape, Türkiye has undertaken ambitious curriculum reform initiatives to modernise its education system while maintaining fidelity to its cultural and historical identity. The 2023 Education Vision and the Turkish Century Maarif Model introduced by the Ministry of National Education (MoNE) reflect a deliberate attempt to align with international educational frameworks while responding to long-standing critiques about exam-centric practices, regional disparities, and limited civic engagement among students (Akyüz, 2020; MoNE, 2018; MoNE, 2023). These reforms mark a paradigmatic shift toward an interdisciplinary, inclusive, and competency-based model that emphasises the holistic development of learners.

Historically, moral and civic values such as responsibility, empathy, cooperation, and respect for others were taught implicitly or in isolated moral education courses in Türkiye. These values were rarely integrated across subjects or supported by teacher education frameworks. The current reform model, however, aims to embed values education as a transversal component of all learning areas, echoing the principles of "whole child" education articulated by global pedagogical models (Fullan, 2007; Bozkurt, 2022). This holistic orientation is critical in multicultural and socioeconomically diverse societies like Türkiye, where social cohesion, democratic participation, and intercultural dialogue are essential to national development.

The theoretical foundations underpinning Türkiye's curriculum reforms are rooted in a multidimensional framework. Constructivist learning theory (Fosnot, 2013)

emphasises the active role of learners in constructing meaning through authentic, experience-based, and socially situated interactions. Competency-based education complements this view by applying knowledge in real-life contexts, encouraging students to develop ethical judgment, problem-solving skills, and social-emotional competencies (OECD, 2023). Additionally, transformative learning theory (Mezirow, 2000) advocates for education that fosters critical self-reflection, perspective transformation, and moral responsibility. These frameworks are further enriched by moral development theories, including Kohlberg & Power (1981) stages of moral reasoning and Gilligan's (1982) ethic of care, both provide foundational insights into how moral and ethical capacities can be developed through education.

Nevertheless, the realisation of these progressive pedagogical goals is not without challenges. Empirical research indicates that despite reform efforts, Türkiye's education system continues to be shaped by structural and systemic constraints that inhibit the full implementation of values-based approaches. These include centralised policy control, a heavy reliance on high-stakes examinations, insufficient teacher training in ethical pedagogy, and significant resource disparities between urban and rural regions (Dönmez & Gülen, 2023; Kotaman, 2008). The disconnect between reform discourse and classroom realities is further exacerbated by a lack of culturally responsive teaching practices, which limits the relevance and inclusivity of values education, especially in ethnically and linguistically diverse contexts.

International case studies provide valuable insights for Türkiye's reform journey. In Finland, values education is interwoven into all subjects and supported by a non-standardised assessment culture emphasising trust and teacher autonomy (Sahlberg, 2015). Singapore's Character and Citizenship Education (CCE) program has institutionalised moral development through clearly defined competencies and a robust teacher training infrastructure (Tan, 2010). Similarly, South Korea's "Free Semester Program" emphasises experiential and values-oriented learning without the pressure of formal testing, promoting self-awareness, cooperation, and social participation (Kim, 2016). These models demonstrate that successful implementation of values education depends on curricular content and systemic enablers such as teacher capacity, school culture, and community engagement.

Türkiye's case, therefore, presents a complex interplay between reform intent and implementation capacity. The challenges of embedding values education in a system historically defined by academic selectivity, centralised governance, and socio-political sensitivities require pedagogical innovation and institutional restructuring. Moreover, any meaningful progress must be accompanied by a redefinition of success in education away from test scores and toward the cultivation of ethically minded, socially responsible, and critically engaged learners.

In light of these considerations, this study aims to provide a systematic and critical analysis of Türkiye's recent curriculum reforms, focusing on the design, theoretical foundations, and implementation of values education. It examines how national reform efforts align with global educational frameworks and the extent to which they respond to the contextual challenges faced by teachers, students, and policymakers. Guided by this objective, the study seeks to answer the following key questions: What are the main goals and design elements of Türkiye's recent curriculum reforms concerning values education? How do these reforms align with international educational frameworks emphasising ethical, social, and civic competencies? Moreover, what practical challenges and contextual factors influence the successful implementation of values education in Türkiye?

By addressing these questions, this paper contributes to a growing body of research that examines the integration of values education in national curricula, particularly in middle-income countries, negotiating the tensions between modernisation, global alignment, and cultural authenticity.

Method

Research Type and Design

This study employed a qualitative, document-based research design to examine the philosophical underpinnings, structural logic, and implementation challenges of Türkiye's recent curriculum reforms. Specifically, a systematic qualitative content analysis was conducted to explore how values education is framed, conceptualised, and operationalised in policy documents.

Qualitative research is particularly effective for exploring complex and contextually embedded phenomena, especially in educational policy, where meaning is shaped by social, political, and historical factors (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The nature of curriculum reform is that it is interdisciplinary, multi-dimensional, and value-laden, and it necessitates a research approach that can capture both the explicit policy language and the implicit ideological messages embedded within it.

In this context, the study adopts a library research strategy, wherein existing documents such as policy texts, reports, and scholarly literature serve as the primary data sources. This approach allows for a critical and systematic synthesis of secondary data without direct fieldwork. It is appropriate for early-stage investigations or theoretical analyses of macro-level educational change.

Literature Search Strategy

The literature and document search was conducted between January and April 2025 using the following databases and institutional repositories:

1. Official institutional websites (e.g., Ministry of National Education, OECD, UNESCO),
2. National academic databases (e.g., YÖK Thesis Center, DergiPark),
3. International indexes (e.g., Web of Science, Scopus, ERIC).

Search keywords included curriculum reform, values education, competency-based learning, digital literacy, educational transformation, Türkiye education policy, and 21st-century skills. Publications were limited to 2018–2024, ensuring timeliness and relevance to recent reforms.

This process aligns with the PRISMA principles for transparent and structured document selection.

Selection Criteria

The inclusion criteria for this study encompassed peer-reviewed journal articles, strategic policy reports, and official publications from the Ministry that directly address the integration of values education and/or curricular reform in Türkiye. Selected sources were required to be accessible through open access or institutional availability, demonstrate methodological clarity, and make a theoretical contribution to the research topic. Conversely, the exclusion criteria ruled out non-refereed opinion articles, publications dated before 2018, and incomplete documents or reports lacking citation validity.

Data Sources

The final dataset comprised the 2023 Education Vision and the Turkish Century Maarif Model published by the Ministry of National Education MoNE, (2018); MoNE, (2023), reports from international organisations such as the OECD and UNESCO,

peer-reviewed academic studies from both Turkish and international journals, as well as government-commissioned strategy papers focused on curriculum change. A comprehensive search strategy, PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis), was implemented to identify relevant articles.

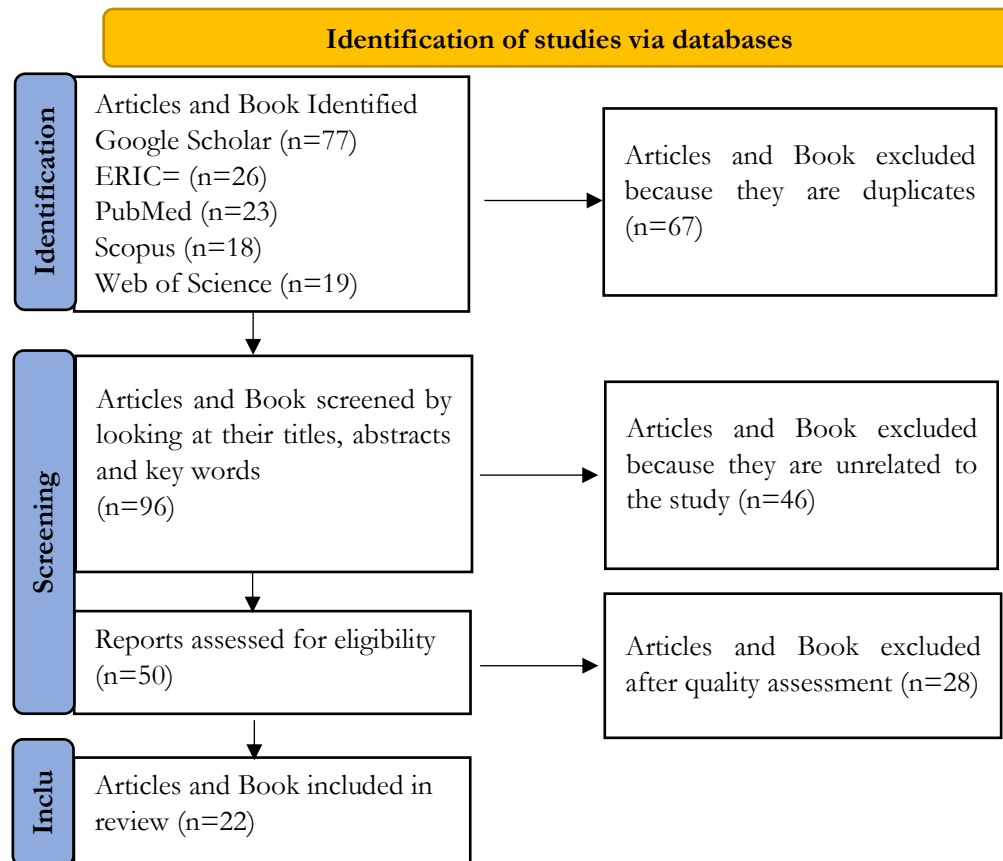


Figure 1. Search strategy

Data Analysis Procedure

A hybrid coding strategy was employed, combining deductive coding (based on pre-existing theoretical categories such as competence, values integration, and teacher agency) and inductive coding (emergent themes from the data).

The analysis followed these stages (Schreier, 2012):

1. Open coding: initial labelling of text segments,
2. Axial coding: grouping and linking of related codes,
3. Selective coding: constructing core themes related to reform vision, challenges, and implementation.

MAXQDA 2022 was chosen for its robust capabilities in managing qualitative data, enabling efficient visualisation and traceability of coding procedures.

Reliability and Ethical Considerations

To ensure reliability, the study applied Lincoln & Guba's (1985) trustworthiness criteria:

1. Credibility: achieved through multiple readings and intertextual triangulation,
2. Transferability: supported by rich contextual descriptions,
3. Dependability: ensured through systematic documentation of the analytic process,

4. Confirmability: achieved through critical reflexivity and audit trail maintenance.

No ethical approval was required since the study is based exclusively on publicly available documents.

Result and Discussion

Result

Understanding the theoretical underpinnings of curriculum reforms in Türkiye is crucial to understanding their goals, structure, and potential impact. The theoretical framework for this study combines different educational theories and worldwide viewpoints, offering a complete way to analyse curriculum reforms, primarily focusing on the importance of values education.

Table 1. Summary of the Extraction Results.

Author(s)	Title / Focus Area	Methodology	Relevance to Values Education	Quality Rating
Akyüz (2020)	Turkish education history	Historical analysis	Provides context for reform	High
Bozkurt & Sharma (2021)	Emergency remote teaching and equity	Case study	Digital access and inclusion	Medium
Brighton et al. (2022)	Project-based assessment frameworks	Theoretical synthesis	Competency-based learning	High
Chidinma Favour Chikwe et al. (2024)	Digital equity and socio-economic gaps	Quantitative analysis	Regional disparities	High
Dilsora (2024)	Continuous professional development	Policy review	Teacher empowerment	Medium
Djamalovna (2024)	Tools for assessing competencies	Instrumental design	Alternative assessments	Medium
Dönmez & Gülen (2023)	Teacher training in science curriculum	Document analysis	Teacher preparedness	High
Dunagan & Larson (2021)	Competency-based learning and assessment	Model-based study	Values alignment in testing	High
Foykas (2024)	Inclusive school leadership	Comparative analysis	Ethical leadership	Medium
Fullan (2007)	Educational change theory	Conceptual framework	Holistic transformation	High
Gilligan (1982)	Ethics of care in education	Theoretical	Moral development	High
Kotaman (2008)	Parental involvement in Turkish education	Survey research	Community inclusion	Medium
Mezirow (2000)	Transformative learning	Conceptual	Deep ethical reflection	High
MoNE (2018, MoNE, 2023)	National policy documents	Policy document	Curriculum content	High
OECD (2023)	Policy outlook for Türkiye	Policy analysis	Global benchmarking	High
Özudođru (2021)	Teacher perceptions of curriculum change	Empirical research	Practical implementation	High
Partnership for 21st C. (2019)	21st century skills framework	Conceptual	Competency and values-based	High
Sahlberg (2015)	Finnish education reform and values integration	Comparative analysis	Best practice reference	High
Schleicher (2018)	Global education for the future	Policy essay	Future-oriented education	Medium
Tan (2010)	Citizenship education in Singapore	Policy review	Institutional model	Medium

UNESCO (2017)	Education for Sustainable Development	Framework document	Values-based education	High
Yanfang (2011)	Teacher ethics education	Policy recommendation	Pedagogical ethics	Medium

1. Constructivist Learning Theory: Constructivism suggests that learners actively construct knowledge through experience and reflection rather than passively receiving it (Fosnot, 2013). The Turkish Century Education Model reflects this philosophy by promoting interdisciplinary, project-based learning and student-centred teaching strategies. Since the internalization of ethical principles requires personal engagement, critical thinking, and social interaction rather than memorization, constructivism is crucial for values education.
2. Competence-Based Education (CBE): CBE emphasizes the application of knowledge and skills in real life rather than merely acquiring theoretical knowledge. Türkiye's education reforms prioritize core competencies such as critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, communication, and digital literacy (MoNE, 2018; OECD, 2023). In this framework, values education is not seen as a separate subject but as an integrated dimension of competences such as civic responsibility, ethical reasoning, and social-emotional skills.
3. 21st Century Skills Framework: The increasing complexity of global challenges has prompted education systems to incorporate 21st-century skills into their curricula. These include global citizenship, environmental management, media literacy, and intercultural communication (P21, 2019). Embedding values education into this framework ensures that students are not only academically competent but also ethically aware and socially responsible.
4. Transformative Learning Theory: The transformative learning theory articulated by Mezirow (2000) emphasizes the process by which individuals critically examine their beliefs, values, and assumptions to achieve greater personal and social change. Integrating values education into Türkiye's curriculum reforms is consistent with this theory, which aims to educate students who are reflective, adaptive, and able to contribute positively to social transformation.
5. Theories of Moral and Ethical Development: Drawing on Kohlberg & Power (1981) stages of moral development and Gilligan's (1982) ethics of care, the revised curriculum aims to address multiple dimensions of moral development. Activities that promote empathy, respect for diversity, community involvement, and ethical decision-making are designed to nurture both justice-oriented and care-oriented moral reasoning in students.

By basing curriculum reforms on these interrelated theoretical perspectives, Türkiye's education policy aims to create a balanced educational model that integrates cognitive, affective, and ethical dimensions. The results of the analysis emphasize the importance of competency-based education and values education but also reveal implementation challenges. Inadequate teacher preparation, exam-focused assessment systems, regional inequalities, and lack of cultural sensitivity were identified as the main barriers. The document and content analysis of Türkiye's recent curriculum reform initiatives, particularly the 2023 Education Vision and the Turkish Century Education Model, revealed a comprehensive and forward-thinking vision for education. The reforms emphasize the integration of competency-based education, digital literacy, interdisciplinary learning, and especially values education. However, a critical review shows a significant gap between policy intentions and classroom realities and highlights challenges related to teacher preparation, systemic rigidity, and socio-economic inequalities.

1. Emphasis on Competency-Based and Values Education

The document analysis reveals a marked shift from rote learning to a competency-based and value-oriented educational paradigm. Both the 2023 Education Vision and the Turkish Century Maarif Model promote the integration of universal values, such as empathy, civic responsibility, and ethical reasoning across all disciplines. As explicitly stated,

“Values education should not be confined to isolated lessons but embedded across all disciplines as a transversal competency.” (MoNE, 2023, p. 17).

Similarly, the 2023 Vision Document frames education as:

“...not merely the transfer of knowledge but a process of nurturing responsible, critical, and ethically conscious individuals.” (MoNE, 2018, p. 5).

These goals are aligned with international frameworks such as the OECD Learning Compass 2030, which emphasizes the development of transformative competences.

2. Implementation Barriers

Despite these forward-looking policy documents, four key implementation challenges were identified:

a. Teacher Training Deficiencies

Many educators lack sufficient training in ethical pedagogy and socio-emotional learning. The 2023 Vision states:

“Teachers are not only implementers but co-designers of transformative learning environments.” (MoNE, 2018, p. 24).

However, this principle is not fully reflected in classroom practice due to limited and unevenly distributed pre-service and in-service training programs.

b. Incompatibility of Assessment Practices

The current national evaluation system remains heavily exam-oriented, privileging memorization over ethical reflection and critical thinking. This misalignment is not addressed at scale within assessment reforms.

c. Regional Disparities

There are pronounced inequalities in access to qualified staff, digital tools, and inclusive curricular resources, particularly between urban and rural schools. The Maarif Model acknowledges:

“A more equitable distribution of educational opportunities is needed to ensure nationwide implementation of values education.” (MoNE, 2023, p. 32).

d. Lack of Cultural Sensitivity in Curriculum Design

Although the reforms emphasize universal values, the curriculum materials do not consistently reflect Türkiye’s ethnic, linguistic, and cultural diversity. This occasionally results in disengagement or resistance, particularly in minority and multilingual school settings.

3. Professional Development and Teacher Empowerment

While policy texts underscore the importance of reflective teaching and leadership, the systemic mechanisms to support this vision are insufficient:

“A culture of reflective teaching and ethical leadership should be promoted through ongoing professional development.” (MoNE, 2023, p. 41).

Despite this commitment, many teachers report a lack of targeted training, mentoring opportunities, and structured reflection platforms.

4. Inclusion and Equity Commitments

Inclusion is presented as a foundational principle in both reform documents. Nevertheless, the integration of values education remains inconsistent among

marginalized populations, particularly refugee students and those in rural or disadvantaged communities. The Maarif Model states: “No child should be left behind in accessing ethical, inclusive, and future-ready education.” (MoNE, 2023, p. 6).

However, the realization of this ideal is limited by infrastructural gaps and the absence of inclusive teaching strategies in practice.

Table 2. Key Themes Identified in the Implementation of Values Education in Türkiye’s Curriculum Reform

Theme	Description	Supporting Evidence (Source)
Competency-Based & Values Integration	Emphasis on ethics, civic responsibility, and empathy as core competencies	MoNE, 2018; MoNE, 2023
Teacher Training Deficiencies	Lack of ethical pedagogy training and professional development	Dönmez & Gülen, 2023; Kotaman, 2008
Exam-Oriented Assessment Culture	Evaluation system misaligned with holistic learning goals	Özüdoğru, 2021; OECD, 2023
Regional Disparities	Unequal access to infrastructure and teaching capacity across regions	MoNE, 2023; Metlilo & Yıldırım, 2021
Cultural Responsiveness Gaps	The curriculum lacks inclusion of Türkiye’s multicultural and multilingual diversity	Bozkurt, 2022; Fullan, 2007
Inconsistent Inclusion Practices	Values education is inconsistently implemented among disadvantaged communities	Ağlar et al., 2024; MoNE, 2023

As summarized in Table 1, the implementation of values education in Türkiye faces a variety of interrelated challenges. While the curriculum is conceptually aligned with international standards, systemic deficiencies inhibit its equitable and effective application across the country.

Discussion

The Ministry of National Education published the 2023 Education Vision in 2018 in response to internal criticisms and global education trends. This strategic document emphasises competency-based learning, digital transformation, values education, and inclusive education policies (MoNE, 2018).

Building on this foundation, the Turkish Century Education Model, introduced in 2023, provided a more detailed blueprint for educational transformation. The model explicitly places value education at the centre of curriculum design and advocates the integration of ethical reasoning, civic responsibility, environmental awareness, and intercultural competence into all subject areas (MoNE, 2023).

Studies by Özüdoğru (2021) and Dönmez & Gülen (2023) emphasise that although these reforms articulate progressive and globally aligned visions, significant challenges remain in translating policy into practice. These include regional differences, infrastructural limitations, and inconsistencies in teacher training programmes.

The findings of this study illuminate a significant divergence between the transformative vision articulated in Türkiye's curriculum policy documents and the complex realities of classroom practice. While policy frameworks such as the 2023 Education Vision and the Turkish Century Maarif Model emphasise values integration, holistic learning, and competency-based pedagogy, these ambitions face deeply embedded institutional and cultural barriers that limit their realisation. Research shows that educational systems that successfully integrate values education produce students with higher levels of civic engagement, prosocial

behaviour, and global awareness (Schleicher, 2018). As a result, embedding values in education is now seen as essential to prepare students to meet the complex challenges of the 21st century.

One of the most prominent structural obstacles is the persistence of an exam-oriented assessment culture. Despite policy emphasis on formative and student-centred evaluation approaches, high-stakes standardised tests remain the dominant metric of academic success. This assessment culture favours memorisation and rigid content mastery over developing ethical reasoning, civic engagement, or socio-emotional skills. As Özüdoğru (2021) notes, failing to align evaluation practices with pedagogical innovations undermines the reform's transformative potential. This misalignment exemplifies Ball's (1993) assertion that education policy often functions more as a rhetorical aspiration than practical transformation, especially in systems with rigid accountability mechanisms.

Equally critical is the issue of teacher agency. Curriculum documents emphasise the importance of teachers as ethical leaders and moral role models (MoNE, 2018; MoNE, 2023), yet these roles remain largely unsupported in practice. Many educators lack access to structured training in values education, inclusive pedagogy, or reflective teaching. The absence of continuous professional development opportunities that address ethical instruction diminishes teachers' capacity to translate reform goals into classroom practice. This finding supports Braun, Maguire, and Ball's (2011) argument that policy enactment is limited to surface-level compliance without appropriate institutional support and autonomy. In Türkiye, teacher empowerment remains an unmet prerequisite for meaningful curriculum transformation.

Teachers have an important role as a mission in the successful integration of values education. Research emphasises that teachers need content knowledge, pedagogical skills, ethical sensitivity, and critical self-reflection capacities to promote classroom values effectively (Kotaman, 2008).

Professional development programmes in Türkiye have historically focused on subject matter expertise and classroom management rather than ethical pedagogy and values-based education. While recent initiatives have attempted to close this gap, participation rates and programme quality vary widely (Metlilo & Yıldırım, 2021).

Effective professional development for values education should include

1. Workshops on culturally responsive teaching strategies,
2. Training in socio-emotional learning (SEL) approaches,
3. Reflective practice sessions to examine personal biases and ethical beliefs,
4. Collaborative learning communities where teachers share experiences and resources.

Empowering teachers to take ownership of values education requires creating supportive school environments where ethical dialogue is encouraged, experimentation with pedagogical innovations is welcomed, and achievements are recognised and disseminated.

In addition to pedagogical constraints, cultural inclusivity emerges as another critical challenge. While reform texts frame values such as empathy, respect, and civic responsibility as universal, these values are not always interpreted or applied consistently across Türkiye's culturally diverse regions. Minority populations, particularly Kurdish, Arab, and Romani students, often encounter curricular materials that fail to reflect their linguistic and cultural identities (Bozkurt, 2022). This lack of representation can result in alienation, disengagement, or resistance to the moral messages embedded in the curriculum. Comparatively, international

models such as Finland's equity-based curriculum and Singapore's Character and Citizenship Education program have achieved success by localising values education in ways that are culturally resonant and contextually adaptive (Sahlberg, 2015; Tan, 2010).

The challenges identified in this study resonate with several theoretical frameworks in educational research. Constructivist learning theory (Fosnot, 2013) and transformative education (Mezirow, 2000) emphasise learner agency, critical reflection, and contextual relevance. However, applying these models in centralised and performance-driven systems like Türkiye's proves difficult without structural flexibility and cultural responsiveness. Biesta (2020) argues that the success of curriculum reform depends not only on changing what is taught but on redefining how educational purpose is conceived, moving from instrumental goals to ethically grounded and democratically informed visions of learning.

Ultimately, Türkiye's recent curriculum reform efforts demonstrate a bold alignment with global pedagogical discourses, yet the success of these initiatives is hindered by systemic inertia. Bridging the gap between policy and practice requires more than visionary documents. It demands sustained political will, institutional investment, and the cultivation of a professional teaching force equipped with the tools to enact ethical, inclusive, and transformative learning environments. Without these foundational supports, values education risks remain symbolic rather than substantive, a reform in intention rather than lived educational experience.

The strategic recommendations to support the effective implementation of values-based educational reform in Türkiye include several key actions. First, assessment practices should be aligned with competency-based learning by replacing rote-based national exams with holistic tools such as reflective portfolios (Djamalovna, 2024), project-based outputs (Brighton et al., 2022), and civic engagement rubrics (Dunagan & Larson, 2021). Second, ethical pedagogy must be integrated into teacher education by embedding values education, cultural competence, and socio-emotional learning into pre-service and in-service certification programs (Yanfang, 2011). Third, continuous professional development should be institutionalised through differentiated training modules and mentorship platforms focused on ethical instruction, inclusive practices, and digital competencies (Dilsora, 2024). Fourth, inclusive school leadership should be promoted by empowering school leaders to cultivate democratic and participatory cultures where values are actively practised (Foykas, 2024). Fifth, educational equity must be enhanced through targeted investments in under-resourced regions, including improvements in digital infrastructure and the development of culturally inclusive curriculum materials (Chidinma Favour Chikwe et al., 2024). Lastly, fostering policy-practice feedback loops is essential; this can be achieved by establishing monitoring and research units within the Ministry of National Education to assess local implementation and inform adaptive policy adjustments.

Conclusion

This study critically analysed Türkiye's recent curriculum reform initiatives, notably the 2023 Education Vision and the Turkish Century Maarif Model, through the lens of values education. The results highlight a progressive policy orientation aligned with global frameworks such as the OECD Learning Compass and UNESCO's Education for Sustainable Development. However, significant implementation barriers remain, including assessment misalignment, inadequate teacher training, and regional inequalities.

Values education must not remain an aspirational slogan but must evolve into the ethical foundation of Türkiye's education system. Realising this potential requires more than visionary documents; it demands institutional courage, collaborative leadership, and the cultivation of educators who are knowledge transmitters and ethical architects of a more inclusive and democratic society.

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