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Turkish social studies teachers' opinions about performance tasks in elementary education*

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
	This study aims to reveal how Turkish social studies teachers regard performance projects in elementary education, to determine problems experienced and to find out their recommendations for them. The study is based on phenomenology, a qualitative study design. The population of the study is comprised of 20 social studies teachers working for schools located in the city of Sakarya. They were provided with the interview form designed by the researchers. The interview form consists of six questions designed in a way that will reveal how social studies teachers regard performance projects. The data were analyzed through descriptive analysis. The study concluded that the great majority of the teachers use performance projects for evaluation purposes. However, they do not believe that performance projects serve their purpose. They also stated that both teachers and students experience a number of problems during implementation and evaluation. According to the participants, both students and parents have a negative attitude towards performance projects. Keywords: Elementary education, social studies, performance task, teacher opinions

1. Introduction

In modern societies, elementary education is the most significant step in schooling individuals in a way that will enable them to adjust themselves to developments and changes. Thanks to elementary education, children learn that they are an important element of society. Therefore, elementary education is the basis of the formal education system and other educational stages are based on it in Turkey, as is the case for many other nations throughout the world. Seeing how important it is, curricula for elementary education should develop students' basic knowledge of and high-level thinking skills in all subjects. Furthermore, they should facilitate the process of learning at the next stages (Duban and Küçükyılmaz, 2008). The developments and changes in many areas of life have been reflected on the process of learning and teaching through curricula for elementary education (Çalışkan, 2011). Learning is no longer regarded as a process during which individuals react to the stimuli around them (Saban, 2004), but rather as a process that explains how individuals use and develop cognitive processes, and how learning occurs (Airasian and Walsh, 1997). This shift in the process has not only modified the philosophy of education but also brought about new opportunities in teaching practices. It has enabled one to witness different practices and models designed with the aim of schooling individuals with desired skills. In parallel with the shift in the philosophy of learning, an objective approach to learning and learner-centered teaching practices have started to be recognized (Tezci, 2002). Constructivist learning is a product of this approach and requires recognition in practices for teaching social studies. Basing the Curriculum for Social Studies on the constructivist approach has made alternative approaches to testing and evaluation necessary.

Testing and evaluation is an indispensable part of the learning/teaching process that aims to test and evaluate whether the curriculum is successful or not, whether students are able to develop the desired skills and

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attitudes, whether they can gain the required level of knowledge, and to what extent particular instructional methods are efficient. With different testing and evaluation tools, teachers determine the developmental process of their students and their level, and they provide feedback to them (MEB, 2005). They employ a number of testing and evaluation methods to do so. One of them is performance tasks. These tasks can be defined as "short-terms tasks that require students to associate their educational attainments with daily life, to use and develop cognitive, affective and psycho-motor skills at the same time and produce something (Çalışkan and Yiğittir, 2008). Performance tasks are used to test students' high-level thinking skills, to reveal how students will solve problems in their daily life and to determine how they will use their knowledge and skills to solve such problems (MEB, 2005).

Since they reflect a holistic, authentic and more complex approach to testing and evaluation, performance tasks draw attention to real-life experiences. Furthermore, they reflect a focus on the connection between school activities and non-school activities, and on personal accomplishment. The way learners carry on the process of constructing knowledge is of great importance, and so is the way they learn and divergent solutions are set forth (Tezci, 2002). Therefore, testing and evaluation for social studies should prioritize what students know rather then what they do not know. Accordingly, performance tasks should be taken into consideration as well as conventional testing and evaluation methods (Safran, 2004; Sağlam, 2006).

In parallel with the shift in the approach to learning, a corresponding change is experienced in the approach to testing and evaluation. In this sense, the emphasis of evaluation is not only learning products or solutions that are always right or wrong, but rather suitability for the task and reflecting learning ways are recognized as significant criteria for the evaluation, for the curriculum designs do not focus on producing or gaining knowledge but construction of knowledge on the part of students. Accordingly, teachers help learners to monitor their own development and to set standards for learning and qualified studying. Testing and evaluation is not considered as a process irrelevant to teaching, but rather as a continuing process in the center of teaching which directs teaching. Testing and evaluation is not undertaken at the end of the process, but provides constant information as to how to continue learning and curriculum development activities (Yurdakul, 2005). In this sense, it is not an end but a guideway to future learning (Erdem and Demirel, 2002). This perspective enables students to interpret the world within the framework of their own cognitive structures and previous experiences (Jonassen, 1994). It is an indicator of learning when a student constructs knowledge with a harmony between previous learning and new learning, and he/she puts the knowledge into practice in order to solve real-life problems (Perkins, 1999). Learners should be provided with such opportunities in order for them to be able to be trained as thinkers and problem-solvers. In this way, they can be taught how to cope with complex and conflicting multiple realities and facts, which they will encounter throughout their life (Brooks and Brooks, 1999; Johnson and Johnson, 2002; Korkmaz, 2004). Such learning requires a process-oriented evaluation that puts learners in the center and charges them with guiding teachers. Performance tasks can be considered within this scope (Çalışkan and Yiğittir, 2008). A review of literature suggests that there are a number of studies on the approaches to testing and evaluation for several subjects (Duban and Küçükyılmaz, 2008; Çiftci, 2010; Kumandas and Kutlu, 2010; Okur and Azar, 2011). Even so, there are a limited number of studies on social studies teachers' opinions about performance tasks (Kabapınar and Ataman, 2010; Palaz et al., 2015). This study aims to reveal how Turkish social studies teachers regard performance tasks in elementary education, to determine problems experienced and to find out their recommendations for them.

2. Method

2.1. Study design

The study is based on phenomenology, a qualitative study design. Studies on revealing and interpreting individual perceptions and perspectives about a certain phenomenon are generally defined as phenomenology (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2006).

2.2. Study Group

The study group is comprised of 20 social studies teachers working for schools located in central districts in in the city of Sakarya. Whereas 11 of them are male, the remaining nine are female. Seven of them work for schools located in city centers, eight in central districts and five in villages. The study was conducted on social studies teachers selected through maximum sampling from elementary schools with different socio-economic levels. The reason for choosing a sample based on maximum diversity is not generalization, but rather an attempt to determine whether such conflicting situations have anything in common and to reveal different dimensions of the problem in accordance with the diversity (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2006).

2.3. Data Collection Instrument

A semi-structured interview form was designed following a review of literature. In semi-structured interviews, questions are predetermined and an attempt is made to collect data through those questions (Karasar, 2005). Designed by the researchers, the interview form consists of six questions prepared in a way that will reveal how social studies teachers regard performance tasks. In order to ensure content validity of the questions, two specialists were asked for their opinion and required modifications were made in accordance with their recommendations. In addition, three teachers were interviewed in order to test whether the teachers included in the study will have difficulty in understanding the questions. Following the interviews, certain statements were revised and the form was finalized. The form consists of the following questions: "Do you use performance tasks in evaluating students for social studies course? Is it necessary to use them? Why?", "Do you think performance tasks serve their purpose? Can you explain?", "What difficulties do you encounter in implementing and evaluating performance tasks in social studies lessons? Can you explain?", "What difficulties do you think students encounter in the process of implementing and evaluating performance tasks in social studies lessons? Can you explain?", "How do students and their parents regard the use of performance tasks in social studies lessons?, "Can you explain?" and "What can you recommend for the process of implementing and evaluating performance tasks in social studies lessons?".

2.4. Data Analysis

The data were analyzed through descriptive analysis. The purpose of descriptive analysis is to make raw data more comprehendible and usable. The data obtained through descriptive analysis are summarized and interpreted in accordance with pre-specified themes. Moreover, direct quotations are often included so as to reflect the opinions of individuals interviewed or observed in a striking manner (Altunışık et al., 2001; Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2006). The data were assessed and coded separately by the researchers. The consistency between the codes was found to be 0.91. Considering that the level of consistency was higher than 0.70, the analysis was thought to have inner consistency (Miles and Huberman, 1994). Direct quotations were included during the process of reporting. The validity of the themes and codes were ensured through direct quotations from the teachers (Patton, 1997). For reporting the quotations, each of the teachers was granted a number from 1 to 20 and reflected in the form of T1 (Teacher 1), T2 (Teacher 2) and so on.

3. Results

As a result of the analysis carried out, the seven category were obtained from the social studies teachers: (1) The use of performance tasks, (2) The belief in the necessity of performance tasks, (3) Serving their purpose, (4) The difficulties experienced by teachers during implementation and evaluation, (5) The difficulties experienced by students during implementation and evaluation, (6) The attitudes of students and parents attitude to performance tasks and (7) Teacher recommendations for implementing and evaluating performance tasks. These categories are presented and explained below.

When the Table 1 is analyzed, the great majority of the social studies teachers stated that they use performance tasks. Only one of them said that he/she implements performance tasks as assignments and does not use them for evaluation purposes. "The reason why I do not use them is because I use them as assignments. Since I use them as assignments for fear that I cannot catch up with the curriculum, I have no expectation of feedback concerning them. In other words, I do not include them in the process of evaluation whether students take them to classroom or not (T4)" explained the teacher. "Another reason why I do not include performance tasks

in evaluation is the regulations. The regulations stipulate that the score students get on them must not be below the score they get on examinations. How am I supposed to evaluate those students who never carry out performance tasks then? If the GPA of a student who never carries out performance tasks is 60, then his-her score on performance tasks will be at least 60! Seeing that such students get 60, why do not those who carry out them at least incompletely get 100? (T4)" added the teacher.

Table 1. The distribution of the use of performance tasks

Category	The use of performance tasks	f
Sub-category	I use	19
	For evaluation	16
Codes	For enabling them to develop the feeling of responsibility	3
	For instructional purposes	2
	As an obligation	2
Sub-category	I do not use	1
Codes	Because of the fact that they are assigned as homework	1
	Because of the regulations	1

The teachers using performance tasks noted that they use them for "evaluation purposes". "I think students should be responsible for performance tasks for one or two courses…I use performance tasks in evaluation and I believe that this is very useful (T1)" said one of those teachers. "In other words, I take performance tasks into consideration while evaluating students (T18)" said another. Some of the teachers stated that they use performance tasks "for the purpose of enabling them to develop the skill of taking over responsibility". "However, the purpose is to enable students to develop the skill of taking over responsibility, of performing a task on time, of attaching importance to the task they assume, etc. (T12)" said one of them. "They enable students to develop the feeling of responsibility (T13)" said another. Some of the teachers noted that they use performance tasks "for instructional purposes" or "as an obligation". "I use them not for testing and evaluation purposes but rather for instructional purposes (T9)" said one of them. "I think such an evaluation is not reliable, for both teachers and students regard them as an obligation. Teachers use them since they are obliged to so. Students carry out them since they are obliged to do so (T18)" said another.

Table 2. The distribution of the belief in the necessity of using performance tasks

Category	The belief in the necessity of using performance tasks	f
Sub-category	They should be used	18
	Since they ensure a better and more permanent learning	7
	Since they promote self-confidence	5
	Since they develop the feeling of responsibility	4
Codes	Since what is learned can be transferred to real life	3
	Since they enable one to determine competency and deficiencies	3
	Since they make students active during the process	3
	Since they reveal different aspects of students	3
Sub-category	They should not be used	2
	Because of lack of time	1
Codes	Because of the fact that performance can observed during lessons	1
	Because of their failure to reveal facts	1

When the Table 2 is analyzed, nearly all the teachers believe that performance tasks are necessary. Only two of them think otherwise. "….*performance tasks require at least two weeks. Seeing that especially curriculum for social studies is extensive and current lesson hours are insufficient, we cannot catch up with the curriculum even if we implement only one performance task, for it means two hours of implementing and another two hours for evaluating…In addition, we undertake evaluation during lessons owing to the new educational system. Furthermore, students produce*

things during lessons. They carry out activities regarding the topic in question. I do not think implementing performance tasks are necessary at all since the activities I mentioned above can also be regarded as performance tasks (T3)", said one of these teachers, emphasizing "*lack of time*" and the fact that "*student performance can be observed through other classroom activities*". "*Students performance cannot be reflected truly since performance tasks are considered as an obligation* (T18)" said the other teacher.

Some of the teachers believing that performance tasks are necessary emphasized that they "*ensure a better and more permanent learning*". Some of the participants stated as follows: "*Students can learn better thanks to the performance tasks on the topic in question (T2)*", "*It is necessary to use performance tasks in order to enable students to better understand and internalize the kind of knowledge and skills they acquire (T5)*", "*Performance tasks provide permanent knowledge (T11)*" and "*However, performance tasks help them acquire permanent knowledge since they learn through practice. The more sense organs are involved, the higher the quality of learning (T17)*".

Some of the teachers noted that the reason why they use them is that they "*promote self-confidence*". "*I think performance tasks are important in that they promote self-confidence (T5)*" explained one of them. "If we can make students present their performance tasks, they will be more self-confident (T2)" said another. Some of the teachers stated that they use performance tasks "*for the purpose of enabling them to develop the skill of taking over responsibility*". "*The purpose of performance tasks is to enable students to develop the skill of taking over responsibility, of performing a task on time, of attaching importance to the task they assume, etc. (T12)*" said one of them. "*They enable students to develop the feeling of responsibility and skill of performing a task on their own (T13)*" said another. "*I believe that performance tasks are important in that they enable them to develop the feeling of responsibility (T17)*". Among other justifications for using performance tasks are "enabling what is learned to be transferred to real life", "determining competencies and weakness", "making students active" and "revealing their different aspects".

Tabel 3. The distribution of serving their purpose

Category	Serving their purpose	f
Sub-category	They serve their purpose	9
	When proper guidance is provided	4
	When time is managed properly	3
Codes	When scientific research steps are used	2
	When students are enabled to participate in the process of evaluation	2
	Since they ensure a better and more permanent learning	6
Sub-category	They fail to serve their purpose	11
	Because of the fact that they are not attached importance	8
	Because of the fact that resources cannot be found or used properly	5
	Because of environmental impossibilities	3
Codes	Because of lack of time	2
	Because of the fact that scientific research steps are not used	2
	Because of high number of students in a classroom	2
	Because of students' worry about marks	2
	Because of the differences in goals	2

When the Table 3 is analyzed, most of the participants noted that performance tasks do not serve their purpose whereas some of them think otherwise. Some of these teachers stated that "a better and more permanent learning is ensured thanks to performance tasks". They stated as follows: "*I think they mainly serve their purpose, for I can observe that students can still remember what is learned through performance tasks even after two months (T9)*", "*They enable students to learn better and in a more permanent way (T6)*", "*They enable students to attempt to acquire or construct knowledge on their own. Since they do not get ready knowledge but gain it through their own efforts, a more permanent learning is ensured (T13)*" and "*They help them understand especially Geography (T15)*".

Some of the participants thinking that performance tasks serve their purpose noted that "they guide students in a proper way". "*I believe that they will prove to be very useful on the condition that teachers enlighten students and guide them in a proper way about performance tasks (T5)*" said one of these teachers. "*They will serve their purpose if suitable topics are chosen for their level and the process is guided in a proper way (T10)*" said another. "*Performance tasks will serve their purpose if they are used with scales and instructions (T17)*" said another. In addition, there are

other teachers who believe that *"time management"* is a must for performance tasks to serve their purpose. *"I maintain that performance tasks will be very useful if time is determined well* (T5)" said one of these teachers. Among the other requirements for performance tasks to serve their purpose are "the use of scientific research steps" and "participation of students in the process of evaluation".

The participants thinking that performance tasks do not serve their purpose mostly noted that "they are not attached importance". *"The reason for this is that we can observe that students are still overwhelmed by certain conventional thoughts, they have fears of mark and they perceive performance tasks not as an opportunity to study, analyze and synthesize things, but rather they just copy a resource and write down something. Thus, I do not think that they serve their purpose properly* (T11)" said one of these teachers. *"Since students are assigned performance tasks also for other courses, they suffer from burnout, do not manage their time properly, leave them to the last minute and botch them* (T12)" said another. *"Whether they can serve their purpose is 90% dependent on students. I do not think they serve their purpose. Only a limited number of students carry out them willingly and by learning* (T14)" said another teacher similarly. *"Students do not attach enough importance to them although research topics, steps and marking are explained in a clear way* (T16)" said another teacher.

Other two reasons provided by the teachers who do not think that performance tasks serve their purpose are "inability to find resources" and "inability to use resources". *"Students print something from the Internet or use just one resource. Another reason is that they have difficulty in finding research resources* (T2)" explained one of these teachers. *"I cannot say that they fully serve their purpose. The reason is that students cannot find enough resources owing to the conditions of the environment they live in…(T12)"* said another. Other reasons are "lack of opportunities owing to their environment", "lack of time", "not using scientific research steps", "high number of students in a classroom" and "students' worry about marks".

Tabel 4. The distribution of the difficulties experienced by teachers during implementation and evaluation of performance tasks

Category	The difficulties experienced by teachers during implementation and evaluation of performance tasks	f
	Performance tasks not submitted on time or not submitted at all	9
	Too crowded classrooms	9
	Being time-consuming and tiring	7
	Students being indifferent and inattentive	6
	Problems caused by evaluation scales	5
Codes	Students not using different resources	5
	The difficulty in following tasks	3
	Parents-induced problems	3
	Students unaware of research steps	3
	Extensive curriculum	2
	Problems caused by the regulations	1

When the Table 4 is analyzed, the participants noted that they experience a number of problems while implementing and evaluating performance tasks. In the order of importance, they list the problems as follows: "students not performing or submitting tasks on time", "too crowded classrooms" and "implementation and evaluation being time-consuming and tiring".

Most of the teachers emphasized that tasks are not submitted on time as follows: *"The primary problem is that students either do not submit their performance tasks on time or do not submit them at all* (T3)", *"I experience problems with students who do not submit their tasks on time…(T8)", "Not submitting performance tasks on time or not submitting them at all create problems…(T10)", "Problems are experienced since tasks are not prepared on time* (T12)" and *"Tasks are not submitted on time although sufficient time is allocated* (T14)".

Most of the teachers emphasized that classrooms are too crowded as follows: *"Too crowded classrooms create problems with evaluation* (T14)", *"Performance tasks are difficult to implement especially in classrooms with 55 to 60 students. Teachers are obliged to evaluate too many performance tasks considering that classrooms are too crowded* (T5)" and *"Evaluation of individual performance tasks might create problems in classrooms with too many students* (T14)".

Some of the participants emphasized that it is time-consuming and tiring to implement and evaluate performance tasks. "*Evaluating each performance task in accordance with rubrics is both tiring and time-consuming on the part of teachers* (T5)" said one of these teachers. "*One of the problems for the process of evaluation is time. Considering the number of students classrooms have, there is really a limited amount of time for evaluation* (T11)" said another. Other problems are "indifferent and inattentive students, "problems brought about by the scales of evaluation", "students using different resources", "difficulty in following tasks", "parents-induced problems, "students unaware of research steps, "extentive curriculum" and "difficulties caused by the regulations".

Tabel 5. The distribution of the difficulties experienced by students during implementation and evaluation of performance tasks

Category	The difficulties experienced by students during implementation and evaluation of performance tasks	f
Codes	Failure to find resources	6
	Performance tasks above their level or incomprehensible performance tasks	5
	Their obligation to undertake performance tasks for each course	4
	Necessity of using too many tools and materials	3
	Their failure to plan their tasks properly	2
	Difficulties in group-work	2
	Problems caused by the socio-economic level of parents	1
	Lack of teacher counsellorship	1

When the Table 5 is analyzed, the participants noted that students experience a number of problems while implementing and evaluating performance tasks. In the order of importance, they list problems as "not being able to find resources", "performance tasks above their level and incomprehensible performance tasks" and "their obligation to undertake performance tasks for each course".

As for the first problem, some of the participants stated as follows: "*They sometimes have difficulty in finding resources for performance tasks. This is the biggest problem especially in schools located in villages* (T3)", "*They have problems with how to find information resources* (T8)" and "*They have difficulty in conducting research and finding resources* (T15)". As for the second problem, some of the participants stated as follows: "*Performance tasks are sometimes beyond their level* (T3)" and "*They cannot produce anything as expected since they cannot comprehend topics properly* (T9)".

Some of the participants emphasized their obligation to undertake performance tasks for each course. "*They have difficulty in carrying out performance tasks properly, for they undertake them for each course. They cannot complete tasks on time or have to do them inattentively…*(T1)" said one of them. "*In addition, they are tired of doing them when performance tasks for different courses coincide with each other in a couple of weeks* (T3)" said another. Other problems are "the necessity of many tools and materials", "not being able to plan tasks properly", "difficulty in group-work", "problems caused by the socio-economic level of parents" and "lack of teacher counsellorship".

Tabel 6. The distribution of the attitudes of students and parents towards performance tasks

Category	The attitudes of students and parents towards performance tasks	f
Sub-category	Students	20
Codes	Positive	4
	Negative	16
Sub-category	Parents	20
Codes	Positive	3
	Negative	17

When the Table 6 is analyzed, the participants think that both students and parents generally adopt a negative attitude to performance tasks. Very few teachers maintain that they are considered positive by students and parents. The teachers thinking that students generally adopt a negative attitude to performance tasks emphasized as follows: "*Most students do not open up to performance tasks. Therefore, they slide around with simple*

preparations (T2)", "*Students consider performance tasks as a great bother and unnecessary* (T3)" and "*Students dismiss performance tasks as trivial. It is clear that examinations like SBS have an influence on that perspective. A child attending to a private course for such examinations prefers to do tests rather than waste their time on performance tasks* (T19)". "*Students are generally willing to conduct performance tasks. However, some problems might be experienced with submitting on time* (T20)"" said one of the participants who maintain that students have a positive attitude to these tasks, which means that some problems might occur no matter how positive a child regards them.

Among the responses by the participants who believe that parents have a negative attitude towards performance tasks are "*Students and parents maintain that performance tasks are unnecessary. We often have to face their struggle about them. Parents think that their children should do tests rather than waste their time on such tasks, for their examination schedule is very busy. Considering that performance tasks are mandatory, it is parents who generally prepare them* (T18)" and "According to students, parents remark that performance tasks are very boring by saying '*Another performance task!*' (T6)". "*Parents regard performance tasks as tasks and do their best to support their children during the process, for they believe that performance tasks are very useful for students.* (T13)" said one of the teachers who believe that parents have a positive attitude towards performance tasks.

Teacher recommendations for implementing and evaluating performance tasks. Teacher recommendations for implementing and evaluating performance tasks are grouped under four categories: "recommendations for the content of the tasks", "recommendations for evaluation of the tasks", "recommendations for remedying the deficiencies of the tasks" and "recommendations for parents about the tasks". General recommendations for the content of the tasks are as follows: "*Students should be expected to undertake performance tasks not for all courses but just one or two of their favorite courses. They should be provided with the opportunity to choose between tasks depending on their age and skills. Performance tasks should make learning permanent and focus on developing those skills that can be used in their daily lives. They should attract students' attention and encourage them to conduct study, investigation and original research. They should facilitate adaptation to social life. They should enable them to be aware of their duties and responsibilities to their state, nation and family. They should focus on not memorization but comprehension and reasoning. Comprehension and reasoning should be taken into account during the process of evaluation. Materials and subjects should be accessible.*"

General recommendations for the evaluation of the tasks are as follows: "*Instead of assigning performance tasks, their year-long activities should be kept in their product files and evaluated as a whole. More detailed scales should be used for evaluation. The statements for the marking should be brief and concise. Evaluation scales should be designed and implemented with a consideration into the characteristics of the system*".

General recommendations for remedying the deficiencies of the tasks are as follows: "*Students should be informed about research steps. Teachers should be helped with their deficiencies in testing and evaluation. It is a must that performance tasks should be carried out in class under the guidance of teachers and they should not be regarded as homework. The time necessary for implementing and evaluating performance tasks should be specified and included in curriculum. They should be allocated more time than now.*" General recommendations for parents about performance tasks are as follows: "*Parents should be informed about performance tasks. They should provide their children with more support. Performance tasks should not be considered as an activity that must be carried out by parents*".

4. Discussion, Conclusion and Implications

It was observed that most of social studies teachers use performance tasks for evaluation purposes. This finding is supported by that of Çiftci (2010), who found that teachers believe that performance tasks are useful and use them for evaluating students. Among other uses of performance tasks are *enabling students to develop the feeling of responsibility, instructional purposes, assigning them as homework and as an obligation.* Nearly all of the participants believe that performance tasks are necessary in that *they ensure a better and more permanent learning, they promote self-confidence, they develop the feeling of responsibility, what is learned can be transferred to real life, they enable one to determine competency and deficiencies, they make students active during the process, and they reveal different aspects of students.* The finding supports that of Kabapınar and Ataman (2010), who discovered that performance tasks make students socialized and increase their awareness of responsibility. In addition, it is in parallel with that of Erdal (2007), who found that alternative testing and evaluation techniques encourage students to do research and thus increase their self-confidence. Two of the participants thought that performance tasks are not necessary *because of the fact that student performance can be observed during lessons and*

performance tasks cannot reveal facts. The finding is in parallel with that of Yücel (2008), who discovered that students tend to dismiss performance tasks as trivial.

More than half of the participants maintain that performance tasks fail to serve their purpose *since they are not attached importance, since resources cannot be found or used properly, because of environmental impossibilities, because of lack of time, since scientific research steps are not used, because of high number of students in a classroom, because of students' worry about marks and because of the differences in goals.* This finding is supported by that of Kabapınar and Ataman (2010), who found that performance tasks are prevented from serving their purpose owing to high number of students, lack of time and insufficient physical conditions. On the other hand, nearly half of the participants believe that a better and more permanent learning is ensured and thus performance tasks serve their purpose *when proper guidance is provided, when time is managed properly, when scientific research steps are used and when students are enabled to participate in the process of evaluation.*

The participants listed the problems they experience during implementation and evaluation as *performance tasks not submitted on time or not submitted at all, too crowded classrooms, performance tasks being time-consuming and tiring, students being indifferent and inattentive, problems caused by evaluation scales, students not using different resources, the difficulty in following tasks, parents-induced problems, students unaware of research steps, extensive curriculum and problems caused by the regulations.* This finding is supported by the study conducted by Duban and Küçükyılmaz (2008). It is also similar to that of Çiftci (2008), who listed the problems as lack of time, parents' attitudes towards performance tasks and too crowded classrooms. Studies carried out by Adanalı (2008), Kabapınar and Ataman (2010) yielded similar findings.

The participants listed the problems students experience during implementation and evaluation as failure to find resources, performance tasks above their level or incomprehensible performance tasks, their obligation to undertake performance tasks for each course, necessity of using too many tools and materials, their failure to plan their tasks properly, difficulties in group-work, problems caused by the socio-economic level of parents and lack of teacher counsellorship. Similarly, Erdal (2007) found that parents consider new testing and evaluation materials as costly and thus do not support their children properly, which, in turn, causes them not to carry out performance tasks properly. This finding is similar to that of Çiftci (2008).

According to the participants, both students and parents generally have a negative attitude towards performance tasks. This finding is similar to that of Çiftci (2010), who found that those students who are neither successful nor in the habit of studying regularly consider performance tasks as a bother and get uncomfortable about them. The researcher discovered that nearly all parents have a negative attitude towards performance tasks. Furthermore, he-she found that parents either are indifferent to them or do them on their own on behalf of their children. In the study conducted by Kanatlı (2008), the teachers noted that negative attitudes adopted by parents are reflected on their children. The finding is supported by that of Ay, Karadağ and Çengelci (2008). The recommendations made by the participants of the present study for implementing and evaluating performance tasks are grouped under four categories: *"recommendations for the content of the tasks", "recommendations for evaluation of the tasks", "recommendations for remedying the deficiencies of the tasks"* and *"recommendations for parents about the tasks".*

In conclusion, the great majority of the participants noted that they use performance tasks for evaluation purposes. They believed that performance tasks ensure a better and more permanent learning, increase students' self-confidence, develop the feeling of responsibility, enable what is learned to be transferred to real life, make students active and reveal their different aspect. More than half of participants maintained that performance tasks fail to serve their purpose because of students' failure to find resources, environmental impossibilities, lack of time, not use of scientific research steps, high number of students, their worry about mark and differences in goals. The participants listed the problems they experience during implementation and evaluation as performance tasks not submitted on time or not submitted at all, too crowded classrooms, being time-consuming, students being indifferent, problems caused by evaluation scales, students not using different resources, the difficulty in following tasks, parents-induced problems, students unaware of research steps, extensive curriculum and problems caused by the regulations. The participants listed the problems students experience during implementation and evaluation as failure to find resources, performance tasks above their level or incomprehensible performance tasks, their obligation to undertake performance tasks for each course, necessity of using too many tools and materials, their failure to plan their tasks properly,

difficulties in group-work, problems caused by the socio-economic level of parents and lack of teacher counsellorship. According to the participants, both students and parents generally have a negative attitude towards performance tasks. The recommendations made by the participants of the present study for implementing and evaluating performance tasks are grouped under four categories: "recommendations for the content of the tasks", "recommendations for evaluation of the tasks", "recommendations for remedying the deficiencies of the tasks" and "recommendations for parents about the tasks". The following recommendations could be made in the light of the findings:

1. Students should be assigned performance tasks for their favorite courses. They should be suitable for their level.

2. The materials used for performance tasks should be readily-available.

3. More detailed scales should be used for evaluating performance tasks. The statements for the marking should be brief and concise.

4. Students should be informed about scientific research steps and performance tasks should be carried out in class under the guidance of teachers.

5. Teachers should be helped with their weakness in testing and evaluation through in-service training.

6. Schools should be provided with necessary tools and equipment. Students should be enabled to carry out their performance tasks.

7. Parents should be informed about performance tasks properly. Necessary precautions should be made in order to make parents provide their children with more support.

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