Opinions of Social Studies Prospective Teachers on Out-of-School Learning

Meral Metin Goksu *
Kafkas University, TURKEY

Tugba Somen
Kafkas University, TURKEY

Abstract: This study aims to analyse opinions of social studies prospective teachers towards out-of-school learning. It was conducted with 12 prospective teachers who were at their final year at Kafkas University Education Faculty, Social Studies Teaching Department. In this qualitative study, phenomenological design was adopted, and the data was collected with semi-structured interview form which was developed by the researcher. To explain qualitative data and to find relationships, explanatory and inferential codes during analysis were adopted. Based on the results obtained from this study, prospective teachers expressed that they had inadequate knowledge about out-of-school learning, and out-of-school learning may present advantageous to learning process such as learning with doing-experiencing, permanence of subjects, and materialisation of information. Additionally, regarding out-of-school learning, prospective teachers expressed that there may be problems with time and incorrect learning practices. Recommendations were presented for these results.

Keywords: *Social studies, prospective teachers, out-of-school learning.*

Introduction

School is an institution that is at peace with society, with appropriate interior and exterior physical conditions, well-trained successful teachers that cooperates with families by using all opportunities of the environment and socio-cultural landscape without imprisoning education and teaching activities behind four walls (Oktay, 2011). Therefore, school is a place where education and teaching activities are carried out not only behind four walls but also out-of-school (Simsek & Kaymakci, 2015). Thus, the idea of education in out-of-school environments in addition to school environments is presented under out-of-school learning concept.

Out-of-school learning, which aims to develop positive attitudes and behaviours towards the surrounding environment and is applied by various disciplines such as mathematics, geology, communication, history, social studies, and political studies, was first considered in connection with environment; however, in time, out-of-school learning was viewed as one of the alternative education methods (Safran & Ata, 1998; Okur Berberoglu & Uygun, 2013, Yazici & Yildirim, 2017).

Out-of-school learning, which is education in which locations and institutions outside of school are connected with school programs, serves as a bridge between informal and formal education (Salmi, 1993; Ertas et al., 2011). One of the most important objectives of out-of-school learning that is an approach that expands learning process is to apply school syllabus outside the school with direct observations and experiences. In such environments, students learn discovering and questioning by personally doing-experiencing, and gaining experience (Turkmen, 2010).

During their education, only in-class education causes students to fail at forming connections with real life. Learning by doing-experiencing that will help students to form connection with real life has an important place in out-of-school learning activities. With out-of-school learning, the aim is to teach subjects that are explained theoretically and have no experience foundation by using experiences. As Dewey stated, "Schools should have benches, laboratories, fields, and barns. The aim should not be teaching art and occupations to children. Rather, it should be providing "learning by doing" opportunities by including real life activities in school, teaching scientific research methods to children, showing the social value of work, how to help one-another in social environments and developing social and ethical habits such

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* **Corresponding author:**
Meral Metin Goksu, Department of Social Sciences and Turkish Education, Kafkas University, Kars/ Turkey.
Email: mrlmtngks@gmail.com

as helping and solidarity (Akyuz, 1979). With out-of-school activities, an appropriate learning environment should be organized to support an inquisitive spirit in children, and to develop natural interest and questioning skills in the learning-teaching process (Sontay et al., 2016).

There are two main impacts of out-of-school learning activities on individuals. These are reserving an important place among mental structures with long-term memories and having an effective place in the lives of individuals with regular, planned, and class-related activities. (Falk & Dierking, 1997). Out-of-school activities applied within the class are worth attention for developmental properties of student. In this period where curiousness level of students are high, students can be guided to surrounding environment and cognitive, physical, and affective development can be provided as these students are connected with natural and humane environments. This contribution will make learning of students more meaningful and help individual and social development (Altin & Demirtas, 2009).

Carefully selecting out-of-school learning activities is important for active participation of all individuals and offering subjects in integrity (Tsai, 2006; trans. Okur Berberoglu & Uygun, 2013). Active participation of children to activities contributes to their "learning by doing" processes and ensures permanent learning. However, organizing educative activities at out-of-school environments and to executing this process effectively is extremely difficult and requires both efforts and endeavour.

Due to included subjects, using out-of-school learning activities in Social Studies class that is an integral part of life and prepares students towards life will contribute students to link subject of this class with real world. In this sense, it is important for Social Studies teacher and prospective teachers to have adequate knowledge and information regarding out-of-school learning. Accordingly, identifying opinions of Social Studies prospective teachers that will start their occupational life and guide the new generations will be helpful to determine current conditions.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to determine opinions of Social Studies prospective teachers towards out-of-school learning. In this sense, to popularise benefiting from out-of-school learning environments, the purpose is to determine opinions of prospective teachers to contribute to identifying needs, objectives, and plans of higher education. To determine opinions of Social Studies prospective teachers towards out-of-school learning, answers to following questions were considered:

What are the opinions of prospective Social Studies teacher trainees?

- Towards self-competence levels in out-of-school learning?
- Towards opinions of out-of-school learning?
- Towards environments that could be used in out-of-school learning?
- Towards effects of using out-of-school learning on learning process?
- Towards problems that could be faced in out-of-school learning environments?

Method

Study Model

In this study where opinions of Social Studies prospective teachers towards out-of-school learning were investigated, qualitative method was adopted for gaining knowledge. Qualitative research is research where qualitative data collection tools such as observation, interview, and document analysis are used, and processes regarding realistic and holistic results are used. (Yildirim & Simsek, 2008). In parallel with the study aim, the study design was specified as phenomenological design, in which the researcher tries to understand how people make sense and perceive reality (Johnson & Christensen, 2014).

Study Group

When the study group was selected, purposeful sampling was adopted. The study group was created using purposeful sampling wherein individuals and groups can be selected to easily collect research (Sonmez &Alacapinar, 2014). The study group consisted of 12 prospective teachers in their 4th year at Kafkas University Education Faculty, Social Studies Teaching Department. Six female and six male students participated in the study.

Data Collection Process and Data Analysis

In this study, qualitative research method was adopted, and interview technique was used for data collection. Interview is a technique that enables deep information gaining about research and can be used at every stage of research (Buyukozturk et al. 2010).

The data was collected with a semi-structured interview form which was developed by the researcher. In the interviews, the order of statements and questions could be changed on the basis of the interview process. Also, non-structured questions could be asked (Robson, 2015, 347). Questions to identify self-competence perception and attitudes of prospective teachers towards out-of-school learning and using out-of-school learning environments were

prepared in an open-ended and clear manner. To determine whether forms were suitable for the study goals, expert opinions were received and pilot scheme with 2 Social Studies prospective teachers was practiced. Interviews with prospective teachers took approximately 10 minutes and were conducted in the office of the researcher. During the interview, comfortable atmosphere was created for prospective teachers to provide sincere answers.

Answers of prospective teachers were recorded with a recording device. Data were obtained for data analysis. To explain collected qualitative data and to find relationships, explanatory and inferential codes during analysis were adopted. To ensure safety of coding, consistency after coding of two researchers were calculated as 84%. Researchers tried to reach a consensus on inconsistent data portions.

Codes obtained from the study were presented without any comment from researchers and using direct quotes which can be understood by readers. Prospective teachers were coded as PT 1, PT 2, PT 3....

Findings

Findings of this study were presented below.

Self-Competence Level of Prospective teachers Towards Out-of-School Learning

Table for self-competence level of prospective teachers towards out-of-school learning was presented below.

Table 1. Opinions of prospective teachers towards self-competence level for out-of-school learning

Self-competence level	f
Adequate level of knowledge (PT 5, PT 6, PT 7, PT 9, PT 10)	5
Inadequate level of knowledge (PT 1, PT 2, PT 3, PT 4, PT 8, PT 11, PT 12)	7

The prospective teachers were asked whether they had adequate information about out-of-school learning to determine their self-efficacy perceptions. Most of prospective teachers (f=7) expressed that they had inadequate knowledge regarding out-of-school learning. Additionally, they expressed that they had not received adequate level of education during undergraduate education.

Perception of Prospective teachers Towards Out-of-School Learning

Table presenting perception of prospective teachers towards out-of-school learning and prospective teacher opinions is given below.

Table 2. Opinions about perceptions of prospective teachers towards out-of-school learning

Out-of-school learning	f
Activities in social environment (PT 1, PT 3, PT 5, PT 8, PT 9, PT 10, PT 11)	7
Organising trips (PT 2, PT 3, PT 5, PT T12)	4
Informal learning (PT 4, PT 6, PT T7)	3
Teaching in museum (PT 11)	1

The participant prospective Social Sciences teachers were asked what out-of-school learning was. When the table was analysed, it was seen that out-of-school learning was mainly defined as activities in social environment, organising trips, and informal learning. Below, examples from opinions of prospective teachers were presented:

"*Everything learned in social life.*" *(PT 1)*

"*Learning type in social environment with out-of-school activities. Like going to*

places to see..." *(PT 3)*

"*Informal learning made out-of-class*" *(PT 7)*

"*Teaching not only in class but also with social environment. Like teaching history at a museum...*" *(PT 11)*

Opinions of Prospective teachers Towards Environment Used in Out-of-School Learning

Table presenting opinions of prospective teachers towards environment used in out-of-school learning and prospective teacher opinions were given below.

Table 3. Opinions of prospective teachers towards environment used in out-of-school learning

Out-of-school learning environments	f
Museums (PT 1, PT 2, PT 6, PT 10, PT 11, PT 12)	6
Historical places (PT 1, PT 2, PT 5, PT 6, PT 12)	5
Family environment (PT 3, PT7, PT10)	3
Friend environment (PT3, PT7)	2
National parks (PT1)	1
Natural parks (PT1)	1
Social activity areas (PT3)	1
Libraries (PT6)	1
Courses (PT4)	1

The participant prospective Social Sciences teachers were asked in what possible settings and environments in which out-of-school learning could be used. When the table was analysed, out-of-school learning environments were mostly expressed as museums and historical places. Below, examples from opinions of prospective teachers were presented:

"*Museums, historical places, national and nature park areas etc.…*" *(PT1)*

"*Environments where family, friend, social activities are conducted…*" *(PT3)*

"*Courses given in public education centres…*" *(PT4)*

"*Libraries, museums, historical places…*" *(PT6)*

Opinions Towards Effects of Using Out-Of-School Learning on Teaching Process

Below, table presenting opinions of Social Studies prospective teachers towards effects of using out-of-school learning on teaching process was presented.

Table 4. Effect of benefiting from out-of-school learning environment on teaching process

Effect of benefiting from out-of-school learning environment on teaching process	f
Learning with doing and experience (PT2, PT3, PT5, PT6, PT9, PT11, PT12)	7
Permanence (PT1, PT6, PT9, PT11, PT12)	5
Materialising (PT6, PT9, PT11, PT12)	4
Time savings (PT1, PT8, PT9)	3
Effective participation (PT2, PT12)	2
Consolidation (PT1, PT3)	2
Attracting interest (PT8, PT10)	2
Entertainment (PT3)	1
Socialising (PT4)	1

The participant prospective Social Sciences teachers were asked about the possible effects of using out-of-school learning on the education and teaching process. When the table was analysed, it can be seen that prospective teachers expressed that out-of-school learning environments benefited for presenting effective learning environment,

permanence, and materialising abstract information. Below, examples from opinions of prospective teachers were presented:

"*This will consolidate what students learn and learning will become more permanent*" *(PT1)*

"*Learning with doing and experience will happen. Since students will get bored in classes all the time, different activities will make the class entertaining and subjects and classes will be consolidated.*" *(PT3)*

"*Since students will materialise the subjects, permanent learning will be achieved and this will be effective on learning by doing-experiencing.*" *(PT6)*

"*In addition to explaining the subject to students, showing in concrete way will increase learning speed. As this will be more than memorising, permanence will increase. It will enable learning by doing-experiencing.*" *(PT9)*

Problems That Could Be Faced in Out-Of-School Learning Environments

Below, table presenting opinions of Social Studies prospective teachers towards problems that could be faced in using out-of-school learning on learning process was presented.

Table 5. Opinions of prospective teachers towards problems that could be faced in out-of-school learning environments

Problems that could be faced in out-of-school learning environment	f
Not sparing enough time (PT3, PT4)	3
Incorrect learning (PT5, PT8)	2
Climate-related problems (PT9)	1
Safety precautions (PT1)	1
Insufficient money (PT2)	1

The participant prospective Social Sciences teachers were asked about the challenges and difficulties in making use of out-of-learning settings. When the table was analysed, it can be seen that not sparing enough time, incorrect learning, problems related with climate are among most common problems that could be faced in out-of-school learning. Below, examples from opinions of prospective teachers were presented:

"*Taking safety precautions may be hard*" *(PT1)*

"*It may not be economically suitable*" *(PT2)*

Results and Discussion

Results of this study indicated that majority of Social Studies prospective teachers had inadequate knowledge regarding out-of-school learning, and their opinions regarding out-of-school learning environment were activities in social environment. Additionally, prospective teachers defined out-of-school learning activities as organising trips and informal learning. Similarly, Gorecek Baybars (2017) found that prospective teachers mainly defined out-of-school learning as informal learning and learning from social environment. Avci Akcali (2015) found that teachers and prospective teachers mostly mentioned about taking students to historical places. Class/out-of-class application and activities, trips-observations (close and remore environment) and field trips, trips to social, cultural, industrial and scientific environments (museums, nature history museums, science and technology museums, planetariums, arboretums, botanic parks, zoos, meteorology stations, water purification centres, dams, industrial institutions), artificial reality applications, nature educations, sports activities for nature sports, life-long sports activities, sports activities (especially nature sports), social and cultural and scientific programs (exhibitions, conferences, congresses, panels, conferences and symposiums) spatial arrangements and practices for learning should complement formal teaching and learning (Karadogan, 2016). Out-of-school learning concept that can benefit education and teaching outside class and school is different than informal and formal education, and trip-observation technique is one of the out-of-school learning techniques (Simsek & Kaymakci, 2015). In this sense, it could be thought that prospective teachers have insufficient knowledge regarding out-of-school learning. This result is linked with low level of self-competence expressed by prospective teachers in out-of-school learning.

In this study, out-of-school learning environments used by Social Studies prospective teachers were mainly expressed as museums, historical places, and family and friend environments. Ay, Anagun & Demir (2015) found that prospective teachers listed science centres, zoos, natural life parks, and museums respectively for out-of-school learning environments. Gorecek Baybars (2017) found that prospective teachers listed museum zoos, botanic parks, public

education, and social environment out-of-school learning. Bostan Sarioglan & Kucukozer (2017) defined out-of-school learning environment as house, course, study centre, preparatory school, family and friend environment, museums, parks, natural life areas, and historical places. Although answers of prospective teachers were similar, difference in out-of-school learning environment can be caused by different departments of the participants.

The participant prospective Social Sciences teachers stated that using out-of-classroom learning environments can ensure learning-by-doing, permanence and concretization of learning materials-namely becoming more meaningful and saving time, active participation, drawing interest and providing both entertainment and socialization. Findings of other studies support findings of this study. Ay, Anagun & Demir (2015) have concluded that teacher candidates believed that they may benefit from using out-of-school learning environments, learning by living, providing durability, and embodying abstract concepts. Similarly, in the studies of Bostan Sarioglan & Kucukozer (2017), the teacher candidates reached to the point that they are enduring points such as permanence, attracting interest, becoming active student. Gorecek Baybars (2017) also showed that prospective teachers discussed issues such as learning by doing-experiencing and permanent learning. Dillon et al. (2006) stated that out-of-school activities in educational settings will be remembered by students' later in life and thus will lead to permanent learning.

In some studies, results for attracting interest and curiosity and motivation dimensions in out-of-school environments were presented. Kurtulus (2015) found that informal learning environments attracted attention of students and supported interest and curiosity. In the study of Avci Akcali (2015), the use of out-of-school learning environments in history class reached the conclusion that the teaching process can have benefits such as ensuring permanence of learning, arousing curiosity and avoiding lesson monotony. Salmi (1993) found that visits to the science centre in his study increased the motivation of his students Wellington (1990) concluded that trips to the science centres were positively influential in motivating and developing positive attitudes. Jui Chenyu (1999) mentioned that museum visits contributed to making the learning process fun. Today, learning by doing-experiencing is important for students. In this sense, benefiting from out-of-school learning environments can increase interest and will to learn of students and provide new social experiences by supporting motivation and attitude. Providing different learning environment opportunities to students will contribute to increasing permanence of knowledge.

In this study, Social Studies prospective teachers stated that there could be problems in sparing time, incorrect learning, climate, and safety precautions as well as economic insufficiencies in out-of-school learning. Gorecek Baybars (2017) similarly stated that prospective teachers expressed planning, time, incorrect information, and economic problems. In their studies, Bostan Sarioglan & Kucukozer (2017) indicated the difficulty of controlling the teaching process of the prospective teachers, the distractions of the students, and the difficulties that may arise in the safety. Ay, Anagun & Demir (2015) have touched on difficulties such as the control of student candidates, time and cost problems and authorization procedures in their work. In his study, Avci Akcali (2015) reached the conclusion that problems related to materiality, permissions and shortage of teaching hours were mentioned regarding the use of non-class learning environments. It is clear that in these studies, similar problems were identified. However, possible difficulties can be avoided with several plans and regulations. For example, planning elaborate out-of-school activities, taking precautions against possible obstacles and improvements and regulations by institutions that execute such activities would help minimize possible problems.

Recommendations

Based on the data obtained from the results of this study, following recommendations are presented.

1. It can be seen that prospective teachers expressed insufficient knowledge regarding out-of-school learning. Under Special Teaching Methods course in undergraduate education, it is required that prospective teachers should plan a detailed activity for benefiting from out-of-school learning environment related to a predetermined topic.
2. Prospective teachers should actively participate and act in out-of-school learning activities during undergraduate education. Hence, they can gain experience in practising and executing out-of-school activities.
3. Elective classes that centre Social Studies with out-of-school learning activities should be provided.
4. Prospective teachers should be more aware of benefits of out-of-school learning and positive attitude towards out-of-school learning should be presented.
5. To minimise problems during out-of-school learning, need for detail planning for student activities should be emphasised.
6. This study was applied on 12 prospective teachers studying in Kafkas University Education Faculty Social Studies Teaching Department. Different sample can be selected and opinions of this sample regarding out-of-school learning can be collected.

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