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Research Article

Views of Prospective Teachers About Reflective Journals on Teacher Education

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Abstract

Reflective thinking skill helps prospective teachers to learn "thinking and acting like a teacher" with different ways and therefore has an important role on teacher education. The aim of this study is to determine the views of prospective teachers on their reflective journals in "Teaching Practice" course. Study group consisted of twenty prospective teachers who were enrolled in Teaching Practice course in Hacettepe University, Department of Computer Education and Instructional Technology at 2013-2014 Spring semester. Data were collected with an open ended questionnaire which had six items in this case study. Besides, in order to see the long-term impact of reflective journals on their professional life, researchers carried out an interview with three of prospective teachers who worked as ICT teachers on the following year. Interview data were analyzed with content analysis method and examined under themes that matched with the research questions. Prospective teachers underlined that they have evaluated themselves as a holistic way, watched their own development, gained a critical perspective, expressed their sense of responsibility and developed their writing skills

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with the help of journals. Results also showed that they gained new experiences through others' blogs. Moreover, interview results showed that reflective journals contributed their personal and professional development.

Keywords: *Reflective thinking, reflective journals, teacher education*

Introduction

Currently, many disciplines create learning environments associated with real life and/or professional life to prepare individuals for the future, the society they live in and the business world. The students are expected to reflect theoretical knowledge onto practice, thus their skill of reflective thinking comes into prominence. The reflective thinking is one of the basic skills at being successful in case of complicated or unpredictable circumstances. Dewey's (1933) approach to learning by practicing and experience constitute theoretical foundations of reflective thinking. Dewey's view that "Learning is reflection on experience" is important to understand the effect of reflection on the learning. Dewey (1933) defines the reflective thinking as effectively, constantly and carefully thinking any knowledge. Schön (1983) was influenced by Dewey's view on reflective thinking and suggested that individuals reshape their act in line with the data that they obtain by continuous reflective thinking on their act. Taggart and Wilson (1998) define the reflective thinking as logical decision-making process based on knowledge including assessment of consequences in regard to education-related matters. Atay (2003) defines the reflective thinking as the process of recalling, thinking over and assessing any experience by usually considering a certain objective; and Lee (2005) defines the reflective thinking as a gradual process including one's recalling their experience according to circumstance, one's establishing relationship between their experience (making reasonable), and using experience for personal change and development (reflection).

The reflective thinking is important for development of anybody that is specialized in a specific field. This is because reflective thinking skills involve a sort of self-assessment skill that requires to identify weaknesses and strengths in the process of thinking and learning and to make plans to improve them in addition to individual's awareness for thinking and learning process. Furthermore, the students of the 21st century are expected to have skills such as problem solving, researching, questioning, thinking, and being aware of what and how to learn. Such requirements bring the importance of reflective thinking forward. Upskilling students with reflective thinking will allow them to think, question and make decisions (Duban and Yanpar Yelken, 2010). To upskill students with such skills, it is obvious that it is necessary to arrange learning environments accordingly, and for teachers to have reflective thinking skills, who will help students gain such skills.

The concept of reflective thinking constitutes the foundation of many studies and has been addressed as a critical issue for educating teachers (Bataineh, El Karasneh, & Barakat, 2007; Köksal and Demirel, 2008; Duban and Yanpar Yelken, 2010; Gedik, Akhan, & Kılıçoğlu, 2014). Collin and Karsenti (2011) indicated that reflective practice that allows expressing experience is one of compulsory skills that need to be included in education of teachers. No doubt that reflective thinking has an important place in educating preservice teachers. As stated by Jay and Johnson (2002), the teachers should be taught "to think as a teacher" through many methods prior to service for teachers to reflect it. Having reflective thinking skills by preservice teachers and improving such skills mean that such skills are directly transferred to the learning environment in their professional life, and that students also gain these skills.

A variety of activities may be used to upskill preservice teachers with reflective thinking skills. The examples of activities may include keeping a journal or a blog, videotaping and portfolios. As seen in the literature, one of the widely used instruments to gain reflective thinking skills is the reflective journal (Ekiz, 2006; Anılan and Anagün, 2007; Işıkoğlu, 2007; Lee, 2008; Tok, 2008; Koç and Yıldız, 2012). A journal helps preservice teachers to ask questions on the learning process, to develop a hypothesis (Lee, 2008), to overthink on the problems that they face in the class (Ekiz, 2006), and to express oneself as a teacher. As pointed out by Ersözlü and Kazu (2011), a reflective journal is a record book in which preservice teachers write what they know or what they do not know, the level of their understanding, weaknesses and strengths that they have, what kind of knowledge that they have for their own learning, the strategies that they use, their objective and the level of achieving their objective, and what their feeling and thought on any matter or situation.

Blogs are used to upskill preservice teachers with reflective thinking skills (Xie, Ke, & Sharma, 2008; Lai and Land, 2009; Yang, 2009; Bayrak and Koçak Usluel, 2011). A blog is a journal-like material where people write what they want to write (e.g., text, video, and image) and whenever they want to write without having a high level of technical knowledge, and is very easy to use. Blogs have drawn attention in a short time in the field of education (Richardson, 2006) and been regarded as an appropriate tool for students at various stages of education as they provide flexibility in many aspects, do not require technical knowledge, and their content can be individualized (Usluel and Mazman, 2009).

Blogs relieve the learning process from limitations of time and place and allow continuous learning in any environment that can be accessed on the internet. In this sense, blogs support the learning activities outside the class. The relevant studies suggest that students assume the responsibility of learning when they use blogs, they express their thoughts more freely, they are able to express themselves better in the blogs, they actively interact with followers through comments on their writing and improve their learning skills in time (Meredith, 2010; Kang, Bonk, & Kim, 2011; Yeo and Lee, 2014; Jacklinga, Natolia, Siddiquea, & Sciullia, 2014). In addition, the students may improve their reflective thinking skills by keeping a journal where they reflect their own thought, activity and role regarding anything that they learn in the classroom or a discussion that they participate. Each student can be encouraged to implement the reflective thinking process by evaluating their own development processes about the activity in their own blog. The students get new information by actively participating in the learning environment and using their experience. So, it is ensured to use what they have learnt in new conditions. Such new knowledge is shared by interaction in later processes, and the reflective thinking skills begin to improve when involved in new interactions. With reflective thinking, one of the high-level thinking skills, the students have skills to learn by comprehending rather than memorizing, to use knowledge, and to solve problems that they face.

The education of teachers and preservice teachers is very important in preparing learning environments where students can gain reflective thinking skills. A teacher that has reflective thinking shills is able to identify problems that may occur in the learning – teaching process and to produce solutions for overcoming such problems (Shoffner, 2006). If the learning environments that are arranged for education of preservice teachers are organized to gain reflective thinking skills, this will lead them to arrange such learning environments when they become a teacher. Keeping a journal, video records, student development file and reflective journal are the widely used materials to gain reflective thinking skills. Especially, the reflective journal helps students to see their own improvement through monitoring and documenting improvement in learning as well as ensures improving thinking skills and active involvement in the process. The preservice teachers can gain skills by using theoretical information that they learn through reflective thinking in practice. Particularly, arranging learning environments to gain reflective thinking skills and developing activities in the Teaching Practice class will help preservice teachers use their knowledge and skill during practicing and solve the problems that they may have as well as contribute to professional

qualification of preservice teachers. In this context, objective of this research was to identify preservice teachers' view on reflective journal activities performed in the Teaching Practice class so that it can be possible to develop recommendations for organizing reflective journal activities more efficiently in education of teachers.

Method

Design

The case study, a qualitative research method, was used in the present research. A case study is defined as researching a fact where boundaries of context and fact are not precisely definite in the context of real life (Yin, 2003), and described as a research method that requires careful design of each stage, being based on firm justification, and technical research knowledge (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2006). The case addressed in this research was to use reflective diaries in education of teachers. In this research, view of 20 preservice teachers on reflective diary was obtained, who studied in Department of Computer and Instructional Technologies, Hacettepe University in the Spring Term of 2013-2014 Academic Year, were enrolled in Teaching Practice class, and voluntarily participated in the research. The data was recollected after 1 year from three preservice teachers who were assigned as teacher of Information Technology among preservice teachers participated in the research in order to obtain their view on the effect of such practice on the professional life of preservice teachers. These three preservice teachers were identified considering assignment and accessibility factors and interviewed through an online chat.

Data Collection Tools

Data were collected by a structured form that was developed by researchers and revised in line with the view of two domain experts to give it a final form. The form includes six open-ended questions. These questions were intended to identify positive and negative aspects of blogs, contribution to professional and personal development, and positive and negative aspects of blogs being open to sharing. At the next stage, the data was collected online by semi-structured interview questions asked to 3 teachers who took place in this practice and were subsequently assigned. The semi-structured interview form used for interview of

teachers includes questions for contribution of blogs, whether it is used for classes, maintaining to write a blog, and whether previously written blogs were referenced.

Research Process

The preservice teachers were provided with four different themes during the class. The themes were published on the webpage of the class, and preservice teachers were asked to write their own blog for the theme provided and specify the link address under the theme as comment. The preservice teachers opened their blog to sharing and allowed to receive comments. So, all of the students were able to read comments of other students and make a comment.

The preservice teachers wrote the answers of the following questions on the blog during the term:

- How should a good teacher be?
- Please specify the support you have received during the class of Teaching Practice (for faculty and practice school).
- What are the difficulties you have encountered during the class of Teaching Practice?
- What have you learnt in the class of Teaching Practice? (e.g., communication, classroom management, time management, assessment and professional development)

In the end of the term, the printed form was distributed to preservice teachers and they were asked to complete it.

Analysis of Data

The content analysis method was used to analyze data, and the data was reviewed under the theme matching with open-ended questions. To ensure reliability of the research, the forms including view of students were shared by two researchers. Each researcher analyzed the forms and completed under the themes at stage one. The researchers checked analysis of each other and agreed on the analysis at stage two.

Findings

The findings from the research are provided under the theme topics. View of preservice teachers on blogs:

- Positive and negative aspects of blogs,
- Contribution to professional and personal development,
- View on blogs being open to sharing, and
- View of assigned teachers on the blogs

Positive and negative aspects of blogs

Table 1 and Table 2 provide the views addressed under positive and negative aspects of blogs.

Table 1

Positive views on blogs

Views	Frequency (f)	Percent (%)
Documentation of experience	9	45
Deducing from others' experience	8	40
Reviewing experience	7	35
Expressing feelings & thoughts in writing	3	15
Encountering real problems	3	15
A free environment	3	15
Planned	2	10
Giving motivation	1	5
Easy to use	1	5
An individualized environment	1	5
Objective assessment	1	5
Learning not restricted by classes	1	5
Directive as provided in questions	1	5
Possibility for in-depth analysis of process	1	5
Repeating what is learnt	1	5
Concretization of problems	1	5
Reinforcement of solutions	1	5
Thinking over problems	1	5

As indicated in Table 1, majority of preservice teachers found blogs useful and delivered positive view on the blogs. The example of views of preservice teachers supporting this finding is provided below:

> *"The reflective blogs have allowed us to gather experience together we had in teaching practice with the help of questions and assess it with an objective point of view. So, we were able to make comments on the cases from different perspectives."*
>
> *"One of the positive results is that we were able to write our blogs more sincerely because a blog is easy to use, it can be individualized, and it is a free environment. Another thing is that I was able to make comments on thoughts of other people through blogs. I don't think that it has a negative aspect."*

As seen in the views of students, the mostly expressed views include ability to document experience through blogs, and opportunity provided by blogs to deduce from others' experience and to review experience. Other positive views include opportunity provided by blogs to express feelings and thoughts in writing, encountering real problems on blogs, and being a free environment to convey experience. Besides this, the preservice teachers emphasized that a blog puts teaching practice process into plan and enhances motivation for courses, learning is not limited to classes, it concretizes the problems encountered in practice and reinforces the solutions, and they think over problem cases through blogs and are able to make an objective assessment.

Some of the preservice teachers delivered negative views on using blogs. Table 2 provides these views.

Table 2

Negative views on blogs

Views	Frequency (f)	Percent (%)
None	11	55
An environment not visited frequently as other social netw.	2	10
Questions repeat one another	2	10
Excessive work load	1	5
Boring	1	5
Less interaction	1	5

As indicated in Table 2, the students delivering negative view expressed that a blog is not an environment that is frequently visited as other social networks, and the questions raised on the blogs repeat one another. Other negative views are that a blog puts excessive work load on the classes and is boring, and there is less interaction in a blog environment.

The example of negative views of preservice teachers on using blogs is provided below.

"Only negative aspect is that Facebook is frequently used online and we have push notification, therefore we are able to make comments one another and read writing of others more frequently. This could also be used for environment of blogs."

"I remember that blogs made me tired and bored a little. I remember that I was reluctant to participate in blogs because my motivation was very low."

Contribution of blogs to personal and professional development of preservice teachers

Table 3 and Table 4 provide view of preservice teachers on contribution of blogs to their professional and personal development.

Table 3

Contribution of Blogs to Professional Development

Views	Frequency (f)	Percent (%)
Gaining experience from others' life	4	20
Using blogs in classes	3	15
Adoption of teaching profession	3	15
Description of cases	2	10
Realization of imperfections	2	10
Assessment of processes	2	10
Classroom management	1	5
Time management	1	5
Possibility of practicing	1	5
Researching	1	5
Gaining experience other than routines	1	5
Focusing on one matter	1	5

The preservice teachers expressed that they regarded contribution of blogs to their professional development as an opportunity to gain experience from others' sharing and life

of teaching practice, and they met an application which they could use for their own class. The preservice teachers pointed out that blogs helped them to adopt teaching profession, to describe cases they encountered, to realize imperfections, and to assess the process of teaching practice. They also indicated that writing a blog made a contribution to them for classroom and time management, they found an opportunity to practice what they learned, and writing directed them to do research. Some of them stated that they gained experience other than routines in the class of Teaching Practice, and they focused on matters where they had problems and addressed it in-depth. Table 4 provides contribution of blogs to personal development of preservice teachers.

Table 4

Contribution of Blogs to Personal Development

Views	Frequency (f)	Percent (%)
Self-assessment	11	55
Monitoring self-development	6	30
Gaining critical point of view	4	20
Improvement of ability to write	4	20
Ability to use blogs	3	15
Self-control	2	10
Self-confidence	2	10
Self-criticism	1	5
Realization of self-skills	1	5
Self-learning	1	5
Thinking in detail	1	5
Development of sense of responsibility	1	5
None	1	5

The preservice teachers indicated that a blog contributed to self-assessment for personal development, monitoring self-development, gaining critical point of view, improving ability to write, and that keeping a blog regularly gave them responsibility and enabled self-control. The summary of students' view is provided below:

> "It has highly improved my ability to write. Writing is an act that I have ignored throughout my life such that I wasn't even aware that I couldn't write well. I had to write both letters frequently and write a blog in that period of my life, and this has improved me a lot."

> "Writing one's own experience allows you to make a self-assessment. We've written where we had difficulties by presenting a slice of our lives using questions

in themes provided. We've also written incidents we had difficulty but finally overcame. Since other friends did the same, we've had idea about problems we may have in the future, although we haven't had during the internship period."

Views on Blogs Being Open to Sharing

The preservice teachers found useful in some respects that blogs are open to sharing on the web. Table 5 provides the relevant views:

Table 5

Views on Blogs Being Open to Sharing

Views	Frequency (f)	Percent (%)
Seeing different point of views	9	45
Being more attentive	2	10
Under-expressing because of refraining from others	2	10
Reading what you write by large masses	1	5
Development of thoughts	1	5
Experience sharing	1	5
Realization of overlooked matters	1	5
Spending more time in the environment	1	5
Should be accessible after everyone's written, for being original	1	5

The positive aspects that the content of blogs is opened to sharing of anybody include seeing different point of views, trying to write more attentively, reading what is written by large masses, developing thoughts, sharing experience with others, and realizing overlooked matters during practicing. However, some of the preservice teachers reported that they could not fully express their thought because the content of the blog was opened to sharing, and it would be more useful if it was opened to sharing after they completed writing on the blog. The summary of students' view is provided below:

" … being in the position to read writing of others and make comments on it have made considerable contribution to use in terms of our profession. This is because we've seen different lives and processes use for such lives other than experience we have individually. This allowed us to gain experience from others' life and to think "I wonder what I would do if I were him/her"

"As said by J. M. Keynes, 'We'll all be dead in the long term" and losing accumulation we've acquired with us would be a loss of activity. Information is information when it is shared. It remains just a secret when it is hidden. Besides, I

think that I've learnt a lot from not only our teachers but also from my friends in that time. Their experience and attitude was also important to me. Therefore, it was good to share it for me."

In addition to this, some expressed negative aspects of being open to sharing what was written, such as under-expressing thoughts because of refraining from friends and being influenced by writing of others.

View of Assigned Teachers on Blogs

In regard to view of three teachers, who received this class in 2013-2014 Academic year and were assigned as teacher of Information Technologies, on contribution of reflective blog to their professional life, the teachers stated that keeping a blog improved their ability to write, they continued to write a blog, they wanted to use it if it was possible to do so, they often read their previous blogs, they compared their previous experience with the new one, and they had an opportunity to review their past experience.

> *"Certainly, this process made some contribution. On the blog, I can compare my view before I took a step into teaching with my view when I am teaching."*
>
> *"For now, I can't afford technically but I want to use blogs in my class if possible. I've realized that I write more carefully when I use it, that is what my students need."*

Results, Discussion and Recommendations

The preservice teachers participated in research found keeping a blog useful to a large extent, however some preservice teachers mentioned that blogs had also some negative aspects. The positive aspects that were mostly mentioned by the preservice teachers include documenting experience through blogs, an opportunity provided by blogs to deduce from others' experience, to review experience, and to express feelings and thoughts in writing, and an opportunity offered by blogs to provide a free environment for conveying experience. Hourigan and Murray (2010) indicated that keeping a blog improved ability of individuals to write. In a research by Mansor (2011) investigating the effect of blogs on the reflective thinking, the author suggested that students enriched their learning through their friend's blog

as well as blogs improved their ability to write. Although many preservice teachers mentioned keeping a blog did not have a negative side, several of them noted that it was unfavorable that environment of blogs was not often visited. This view can be explained by increased graphic of use of social networks and by probability of failure of blogs to achieve such increase. In addition, lack of push notification function that is used by several social network applications such as Facebook might not motivate preservice teachers to enter the environment.

A large number of preservice teachers emphasized that blogs were useful both for personal development and professional development. The mostly mentioned benefit of blogs was that preservice teachers read their friend's blog and deduced from their friend's experience in their own way. The preservice teachers expressed that they read their friend's problems and solution suggestions in terms of communication, classroom management, time management and profession and deduced from others' experience. Chu, Chan and Tiwari (2012) reported that preservice teachers using blogs suggested that reading their friend's blog allowed benefiting from others' experience in problem solving. Lin and Shen (2013) performed a similar study on individuals studying nursing and concluded that reflective blogs of individuals helped their learning in depth, professional development and seeing other individuals' point of view. The preservice teachers pointed out that they reviewed what they learnt during the class and assessed the process through blogs. Several preservice teachers indicated that they had self-control over their learning in the class through blogs and the environment of blogs became a personal learning environment to them. Similarly, Tomberg, Laanpere, Ley and Normak (2013) reported that blogs both were a tool for teachers to allow controlling and coordinating the class and created an individualized learning environment. The blogs are a learning instrument used as a communication, reflection, cooperation and social support tool during the internship period (Chu, Chan, & Tiwari, 2012). The blogs also make favorable contribution to the teaching practice process because they are open to sharing. On the other hand, Xie, Ke and Sharma (2008) stated that keeping a blog made positive contribution to the reflective thinking and learning output of university students, but as blogs were open to sharing, this reduced the reflectivity of the content of the blog.

When it is considered that the class of Teaching Practice is a process of gaining experience and sharing, it is concluded based on the view of preservice teachers that a blog is an appropriate tool for this process. Deng and Yuen (2011) reported that preservice teachers

using blogs mentioned that reading their friend's blogs made favorable contribution to their learning and received emotional support from friends. Killeavy and Moloney (2010) suggested that newly assigned teachers improved their reflective practice on teaching experience through blogs, and a community of practice was established that received support from colleagues by means of blogs.

It appears that the effect of blogs was maintained in the processes after preservice teachers had been assigned. The teachers verbalized that they wanted to use blogs in their own class if it was possible. Referencing by teachers to previously written blogs to compare past and present experience and to review what they experienced indicates that blogs have become a written reference guide to them. When it is considered that the mostly mentioned positive aspect by the preservice teachers was to document experience, it is obvious that such consequence is inevitable.

The results suggest that it is necessary to provide preservice teachers with practice environment where they can reflect their own feelings, thoughts and experience. It can be recommended to support preservice teachers to interact more, to enable faculty-school cooperation, and to include practice teachers in the process. In addition, it can be suggested that it is necessary to use environments for teacher education, which would promote students' reflective thinking and are more interactive, and where more time is spent such as social networks. So, it is considered that use of such environments can be maintained.

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Research Article

Faculty Members' Point of Views Regarding Lifelong Learning[1]

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Abstract

The purpose of the current study is to investigate faculty members' thoughts and characteristics regarding lifelong learning. The research has been designed as phenomenology. The sampling of the research consisted of 65 academicians who are professors, associate professors, assistant professors and research assistants from 17 faculties of Anadolu University in fall term of 2014-2015 education year. These participants have been selected by using purposive sampling method according to the proportional distribution of faculty members in the universe of study. Researchers designed semi-structured interview form and written-interview form to collect qualitative data. Collected data was analyzed by using content analysis. Based on the themes and codes in which analysis result achieved, faculty members' thoughts about lifelong learning and factors which effect faculty members' lifelong learning characteristics were determined. At the end of the study, it was found that faculty members participated in professional activities, social activities and personal development activities. However, academicians stated that they encounter some problems to participate in lifelong learning activities. It was found that these problems have personal, professional, institutional, social aspects and also they are originated

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from the structure of academic system, technology, bureaucracy and inadequate facilities. Faculty members stated that lifelong learning is important for them in personal, professional and social ways. However, the participants identified the different aspects of lifelong learning. The participants stated that both individual and environmental factors are effective on faculty members' lifelong learning characteristics. Based on the results, several suggestions were put forward for implementation for higher education institutions and researchers.

Introduction

Rapid development in information technologies today facilitates sharing of information, information that is produced rapidly is also consumed quickly and thus, increases the need for learning in individuals. This process revealed the requirement for lifelong learning beyond the scope of the schools (Knowles, 2009). Lifelong learning is an approach where individuals of all ages participate in the learning process and all individuals are included in formal, informal and non-formal learning processes all throughout their lives, from birth to death (UNESCO, 2013). Laal (2013a) identified lifelong learning as a process that enables social awareness and empowers democratic understanding via personalized and flexible learning opportunities that aim the realization of social, cultural and economic development of individuals. Biçerli (2012) defined lifelong learning as the learning activities that the individuals participate all through their lives to improve their knowledge, skills and proficiencies within the context of in-school and out-of-the-school education without the limitations of age, socio-economic status and level of education. Jarvis (2007) described lifelong learning as a holistic development and self-improvement process inclusive of the experiences the individual gains as a result of interaction with the environment and physical, cognitive, and emotional fields. Definitions of lifelong learning reflect that it is a process that includes the whole life of individuals in preschool and post-educational periods and personal, social and professional development of individuals within the context of universal learning, technical education and all in-service and out of service training and instruction (Günüç, Odabaşı, & Kuzu, 2012).

In addition to its importance for individuals of all ages, it is almost a must for faculty members that work in universities which is the driving force of social development today to improve themselves. Faculty members are individuals who provide instruction services and conduct scientific research in universities that provide higher education. Translators, specialists, instructional planners, research assistants, lecturers and teaching assistants who are instructional assistants that work in universities and assistant professors, associate professors, professors and professors-in-ordinary who are faculty members in universities are academic staff of different levels. Faculty members are specialists in a field that have responsibilities such as scientific research and enlightening the society with scientific facts when necessary. Under these circumstances, faculty members need to develop themselves in several dimensions as both teaching and learning individuals (Lunde and Healy, 2002).

There are studies in the literature that scrutinize lifelong learning processes of faculty members from different perspectives. In this context there are theoretical studies that stress technology as an effective tool that could be utilized in this process (Aggarwal, 2013; Kato, 2013; Latchem, Odabaşı and Kabakçı, 2006), scale development studies that aim to determine lifelong learning levels within the framework of particular dimensions (Günüç, Odabaşı, & Kuzu, 2014; Kirby et al., 2010; Uzunboylu and Hürsen, 2011), and research that investigate the effectiveness of programs developed for career development of faculty members (Banks, 2002; Brown, 2001; Soran, Akkoyunlu, & Kavak, 2006). Furthermore, there are studies in the literature that aim to determine the views of faculty members on lifelong learning, the significance of lifelong learning and lifelong learning competencies (Duta and Rafaila, 2014; Köğce et al., 2014; Yavuz-Konokman and Yanpar-Yelken, 2012).

An analysis of previous studies on the subject demonstrate that these concentrated on determination of the current status of faculty members concerning lifelong learning based on particular dimensions. However, it is also necessary to conduct studies that would identify the views of faculty members on lifelong learning and the factors that affect their lifelong learning characteristics in detail. The objective of the present study is to identify the views of faculty members on lifelong learning and the factors that affect lifelong learning characteristics. Thus, it is the aim of this study is to provide a holistic perspective on the lifelong learning processes of the faculty members. The following research questions were determined to serve the general purpose of the current study:

1. What are the activities that faculty members participate, the problems they face and their recommendations concerning these problems within the context of lifelong learning?
2. What are the views of faculty members on the significance and definition of lifelong learning?
3. What are the factors that affect the lifelong learning characteristics of faculty members?

Method

Study Design

The present study was designed with phenomenological design since it would make it possible to discover detailed answers for the research questions. Phenomenological design makes it

possible to identify the views of individuals on a particular phenomenon comprehensively (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2011).

Study Context and Participants

Study universe consisted of a total of 1298 faculty members working at 17 faculties at Anadolu University during 2014 – 2015 academic year fall semester including research assistants, assistant professors, associate professors and professors. Participants of the present study were selected on a voluntary basis and 65 faculty members were selected using purposeful sampling based on the proportional distribution of faculty members in the universe. Thus, 5% of the specified universe was reached. Distribution of the study participants based on gender, academic titles and the faculties they work in is presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Distribution of the Participants Based on Gender, Academic Titles and the Faculties they Work in

Gender	n	%	Faculties	n	%
Female	32	49,2	Faculty of Sciences	3	4,6
Male	33	50,8	Faculty of Fine Arts	4	6,2
Total	65	100	Faculty of Aeronautics and Astronautics	3	4,6
Academic Title			Faculty of Law	3	4,6
Professor	12	18,5	Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences	4	6,2
Associate Professor	13	20	Faculty of Economics	3	4,6
Assistant Professor	20	30,8	Faculty of Communication Sciences	4	6,2
Research Assistant	20	30,8	Faculty of Business Administration	4	6,2
Total	65	100	Faculty of Architecture and Design	2	3,1
Faculties			Faculty of Engineering	2	3,1
Open Education Faculty	5	7,7	Faculty of Health Sciences	3	4,6
Faculty of Pharmacy	4	6,2	Faculty of Sport Sciences	3	4,6
Faculty of Humanities	4	6,2	Faculty of Tourism	3	4,6
Faculty of Education	11	16,9	Total	65	100

The present study was conducted in Anadolu University since this particular institution has a deep rooted history in distance and lifelong learning and provides significant financial support and opportunities for faculty members in their scientific activities (Anadolu University, 2014; Kaya, 2014; Ministry of National Education, 2012). Furthermore, the institution has an

advantageous position for it facilitates data collection processes since it employs the researchers of this study. When all these reasons are considered, Anadolu University was chosen as the setting of the present research since it is a higher education institution with adequate characteristics for the aim of the present study.

Data Collection Tools

Data were collected using a semi-structured interview form and a written interview form developed by the authors. Semi-structured interview form was designed by the researchers to determine the views of faculty members on lifelong learning and the factors that affect their lifelong learning characteristics. For this purpose, open-ended questions were developed to search for answers via face-to-face interviews and the abovementioned data collection tool was constructed. Furthermore, additional questions were prepared to obtain in depth data. Written interview form was designed by the authors to identify the views of faculty members on lifelong learning and the factors that affect their lifelong learning characteristics. For this purpose, open-ended questions were developed for the participants to respond in writing and the abovementioned data collection tool was constructed. Developed written interview form also included explanatory information about the study for participants. Data collection tools used in the study were presented to 7 field experts in Computer Education and Instructional Technologies, 3 measurement specialists and 1 language expert. According to feedback from experts, data collection tool reorganized and it tested in a pilot study with 3 faculty members with similar characteristics with the sample was conducted to determine the comprehensibility of the questions included in the form and it was finalized based on the obtained feedback. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 26 participants in the sample (2% of the universe) and 39 participants were asked to complete the written interview forms (3% of the universe) to collect data.

Data Collection and Analysis

Prior to data collection in the study, an application was presented to Anadolu University Ethics Committee and the ethical approval to conduct the study was obtained. Faculty members included in the study were approached individually and appointments were made and interviews were conducted at a place and time appropriate for the participants personally by the author. Different data collection methods were used for data triangulation and to improve the

credibility of the study. Furthermore, data were collected from participants with different characteristics for data triangulation. However, to maintain long-term interaction during the data collection process, the number of participants were not limited to a small number and 22-63 minutes long interviews were conducted with the participants. Before applying the data collection tools, the objective of the study, its content, how the collected data would be used and their rights and privacy principles were presented to the participants in writing and these information were explained by the researcher verbally and the written consent of all participants were obtained stating that they have participated in the study voluntarily.

The interviews were recorded with a sound recording device. During the interviews, additional questions were asked to the participants based on the course of the interview in an attempt to collect more detailed data. Furthermore, the participants were asked to explain their thoughts in detail when the responses were nor completely understood by the researcher. Thus, an in-depth approach was adopted during the data collection process to improve the credibility of the present study. The views expressed by the interviewees during the data collection process were listened by the author without a guiding or judgmental attitude, a positive communication environment was established and the participants were allowed to express their thoughts freely. At the end of the interviews, the author summarized the collected data for the participant and their approval for the accuracy of the collected data was obtained to improve the credibility of the study. After the interviews were completed, the sound recordings were transcribed. If there were incomprehensible data in the transcribed interviews, the related participant was approached to clarify her or his views. Furthermore, data were collected using written interview forms from the participants included in the study sample. Related forms were given to the participants personally by the author and they were asked to respond the questions in the form in writing. Participants replied to the questions whenever they found appropriate and personally returned the forms to the author.

When the data collection process was over, collected data were analyzed using content analysis method. Content analysis is a method used to reach concepts and correlations that could explain collected qualitative data (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2011). Using the content analysis process, the data were coded based on categories and themes. Thus, the views of the faculty members on lifelong learning and the factors that affect their lifelong learning characteristics were identified. This analysis was conducted by two field experts to maintain credibility of the study and consistency in coding was established. For the qualitative analysis, NVIVO 10 software was

utilized. Analysis results were reported by direct quotes of the participants to maintain the transferability of the present study.

Findings and Comments

Findings on the Activities that Faculty Members Participated within the Context of Lifelong Learning

The responses given by the participants of the present study, the faculty members, for the first research question of the study on the activities they participated within the context of lifelong learning were analyzed with content analysis and the themes and sub-themes presented in Table 2 were identified.

Table 2

The Activities that Faculty Members Participated in within the Context of Lifelong Learning

Themes and Sub-themes	*f*	Participant Statements
Occupational Activities		
Scientific	65	*"I attend symposiums, conferences and panels."* [K3]
		"I follow the books, articles related to my field." [K54]
Educative	17	*"I instruct classes. One prepares for the course and learns."* [K7]
		"Online instruction processes contributed to me intensively." [K29]
Administrative	4	*"My duties as a deputy dean make me improve as an administrator."* [K13]
Social Activities		
Cultural	28	*"I like to visit the museums to learn about history."* [K32]
		"I visit fairs and shows organized in various subjects and fields." [K64]
Artistic	26	*"I am interested in painting. I received training on painting as well."* [K15]
		"I like to dance. I take lessons on modern dances." [K26]
Sports	12	*"I am interested in football. We play among friends."* [K2]
		"I am into body building to have a healthy body.." [K33]
Civil Society Work	10	*"I am a member of TEMA foundation and I have duties in that institution."* [K15]
		"For example, I worked as a UNICEF volunteer for 15 years." [K26]

Themes and Sub-themes	*f*	Participant Statements
Personal Development Activities		
To Fulfill Needs	16	*"I am taking child development courses to raise my son better."* [K19]
		"I try to improve myself in cooking." [K23]
On Information Technologies	15	*"I improve myself by following current technologies."* [K39]
		"I follow current events on social networks." [K55]
Media Follow Up	14	*"I read newspapers to follow current events."* [K21]
		"I watch the news on TV." [K31]

The frequencies of the themes in Table 2 demonstrated that the participants primarily participated in scientific activities followed by social and personal development activities, respectively within the context of lifelong learning.

Findings about the Problems Encountered by Faculty Members During the Lifelong Learning Process

The responses given by the participant faculty members, for the first research question of the study on the problems they encountered during the process of lifelong learning were analyzed with content analysis and the themes and sub-themes presented in Table 3 were identified.

Table 3

The Problems Faculty Members Eencountered during the Process of Lifelong Learning

Themes and Sub-Themes	*f*	Participant Statements
Personal Problems		
Time management	25	*"I make mistakes in time management and cannot participate in different activities."* [K62]
Individual Differences	16	*"Certain academicians rest on the laurels they receive."* [K9]
		"Certain academicians do not tend to share knowledge." [K64]
Marriage	10	*"I could not attend to conferences in distant locations due to my child."* [K51]
		"One needs to travel out of the city or abroad for scientific activities. I had experienced problems with my partner on these occasions." [K65]

Themes and Sub-Themes	*f*	Participant Statements
Occupational Problems		
Academic Factors	14	*"The lack of awareness of the academicians on lifelong learning is a problem."* [K10] *"Conflict of generations makes the communication between younger and older academicians difficult."* [K18]
Educational Factors	10	*"My course load prevents me from indulging in different topics."* [K4] *"Sometimes, I could not find training opportunities on topics that I feel a need for."* [K59]
Structure of the Academic System	19	*"Standardization in academics hinders creativity."* [K18] *"Academia in our country is disconnected with the society."* [K24]
Insufficient Opportunities	15	*"I spend extensive efforts to prepare the experimental environment I need."* [K13] *"I am the only research assistant in the department and I deal with the class of 85 individuals alone."* [K21]
Institutional Tasks	14	*"My administrative duties limit my learning activities."* [K7] *"Unaccounted for tasks could come up in the institution and could slow you down."* [K8]
Social	8	*"I want to learn things but I am intimidated by the reaction of the society."* [K23] *"It is a problem that the society does not possess a lifelong learning culture."* [K49]
Technological	5	*"I think the information pollution on the Internet is a problem."* [K44] *"Sometimes the Internet connection speed is unsatisfactory."* [K46]
Bureaucratic	2	*"We are overwhelmed by the bureaucracy. For instance, when the rector changes, all projects come to a halt."* [K25]

The frequencies of the themes in Table 3 demonstrated that the participant primarily experienced personal problems during the lifelong learning process. Furthermore, it was observed that these personal problems were followed by occupational factors, the structure of the academic system, lack of opportunities, institutional tasks, social, technological and bureaucratic factors, respectively.

Findings Related to the Solutions for The Problems that Faculty Members Encounter During Lifelong Learning

The responses given by the participant faculty members for the first research question of the study on the solutions for the problems they encountered during the process of lifelong learning were analyzed with content analysis and the themes presented in Table 4 were identified.

Table 4

Solution Propositions on the Problems Faculty Members Encountered during the Process of Lifelong Learning

Themes	*f*	Participant Statements
Personal	13	*"Activities in lifelong learning should be organized based on priorities."* [K8]
		"Academicians should influence each other positively in that matter." [K12]
		"Academicians should improve their time management skills." [K17]
Structure of the Academic System	6	*"There should be a system where academicians who prefer to conduct research and instruct classes are be differentiated."* [K13]
		"Personal benefits provided for the academicians should be enforced." [K18]
Educational	5	*"Producing proceedings or articles within the context of graduate courses would be appropriate."* [K10]
		"Awareness for lifelong learning could be improved via advertising." [K42]
Technological	4	*"It could have been better if Internet was a more organized and easily accessible resource."* [K3]
		"Internet infrastructure should be further developed." [K46]
Institutional	4	*"University should support us for development on topics outside our field of study."* [K1]
		"Institutional support on maintaining professional – personal life balance would be preferable." [K19]

The frequencies of the themes in Table 4 demonstrated that the participant proposed primarily personal solutions for the problems they encountered during the lifelong learning process.

Findings on the Significance of Lifelong learning for Faculty Members

The responses given by the participant faculty members for the second research question of the study on the significance of lifelong learning were analyzed with content analysis and the themes and sub-themes presented in Table 5 were identified.

Table 5

Significance of Lifelong Learning According to Faculty Members

Themes	*f*	Participant Statements
Professional		
Educational Significance	30	*"Lifelong learning is important to be an example for the students."* [K37]
		"It is important for the academicians to be role models." [K45]
Academic Significance	28	*"Lifelong learning is significant for academic inspiration."* [K13]
		"Lifelong learning is significant to sustain scientific self-confidence." [K62]
Personal	25	*"In my opinion, lifelong learning is a way of life for us."* [K11]
		"It is significant in developing a critical assessment and perspective." [K32]
Social	13	*"It is significant for the academicians to understand the society and the society to understand the academicians."* [K17]
		"It is significant for us to fulfill our responsibility to increase social awareness." [K39]

The frequencies of the themes in Table 5 demonstrated that the participants expressed their views on the significance of lifelong learning primarily based on professional followed by personal and social aspects.

Findings on the Definition of Lifelong Learning by the Faculty Members

The responses given by the participant faculty members for the second research question of the study on the definition of lifelong learning were analyzed with content analysis and the themes and sub-themes presented in Table 6 were identified.

Table 6

Definition of Lifelong Learning According to Faculty Members

Codes	*f*	Participant Statements
Continuous learning throughout life	47	*"Lifelong learning is learning from cradle to tomb."* [K17]
Formal, Informal and Non-Formal Learning Processes	17	*"Includes all knowledge acquired in formal and informal settings about all topics and it is an infinite process."* [K15]

Codes	*f*	Participant Statements
Personal Development	10	*"Learning activities conducted within the context of personal development."* [K30]
Everything conducted to acquire knowledge	9	*"It is everything we conduct to acquire knowledge."* [K20]
Adapting to the age	8	*"It is the adaptation of the individual to her or his age by renewing herself or himself."* [K28]
Development based on needs	5	*"It is the ability of the individual to develop based on needs."* [K13]
Learning based on interests	4	*"It includes learning activities conducted within the context of personal interests."* [K30]
Being beneficial for the society	4	*"Being beneficial for the society by transferring the learned knowledge."* [K9]
Learning independent from time and space	3	*"Developing knowledge, skills and competencies without the limitation of time and space."* [K29]
Professional Development	3	*"Self-improvement of the individual for the purpose of professional development."* [K1]
Effort to learn	3	*"Lifelong learning is to spend effort to learn new information."* [K41]
Life Experience	3	*"It is the cumulative knowledge we acquire through life."* [K58]
Acquiring Awareness	3	*"It is the self-improvement of the individual by developing an awareness."* [K31]
Social Development	2	*"Continuing social development of the individual."* [K54]
Academic Development	2	*"It is a lifelong process where we develop ourselves academically."* [K34]
Curiosity to Learn	2	*"It is a developmental process that occurs as a result of curiosity to learn."* [K2]
Using Information and Communication Technologies	2	*"Self-development of the individual by acquiring new knowledge using primarily information and communication technologies and other resources."* [K36]
A Culture	2	*"If we need to make a secondary definition, lifelong learning is a culture."* [K17]
A Learning Process Encompassing All Individuals	1	*"It is an information acquisition process that includes all individuals and occurs at all times."* [K11]
A Multi-Dimensional Communication Process	1	*"It is a multi-dimensional communication process that entails sharing information."* [K58]
Preparing the self for the future	1	*"Individual preparing for the future through self-training."* [K60]
Cultural Development	1	*"Cultural improvement of individuals by self-development."* [K33]
Freedom to Learn	1	*"In my opinion, lifelong learning is freedom to learn."* [K38]

Codes	*f*	Participant Statements
Internal Motivation	1	*"It is learning new information and self-renewal through internal motivation."* [K16]
Problem Solving	1	*"Self-development and problem solving while looking for answers for the questions."* [K12]
Questioning	1	*"The situations where I question while experiencing that contribute to my knowledge."* [K24]
A Research Process	1	*"Lifelong learning is a research and learning process."* [K65]
Staying Alive Both Physically and Mentally	1	*"Lifelong learning could also be expressed as a learning effort to stay alive both physically and mentally."* [K65]
Spiritual Satisfaction	1	*"Spiritual satisfaction by acquiring new information."* [K64]
Earning Money	1	*"A continuous self-development process to earn money."* [K20]

Analysis of the Table 6 would demonstrate that participants defined lifelong learning from different perspectives.

Findings on Personal and Environmental Factors That Affect Lifelong Learning Characteristics of Faculty Members

The responses given by the participants for the third research question of the study on the factors that affect their lifelong learning characteristics were analyzed with content analysis. Themes and sub-themes, which demonstrated that lifelong learning characteristics of faculty members were affected by both environmental and personal factors, were obtained as a result of conducted analysis. Related findings are listed in Tables 7 and 8, respectively.

Table 7

Environmental Factors that Affect Lifelong Learning Characteristics of Faculty Members

Environmental Factors	*f*	Participant Statements
Institution of Employment		
Qualifications of the Institution	50	*"Facilities provided by the institution are significant for the self-development of the individuals."* [K2] *"In my opinion, the significance the institutions assign to lifelong learning is effective."* [K8]
Work Environment	24	*"An adequate work environment is indispensable for academicians to work comfortably."* [K4]

Environmental Factors	*f*	Participant Statements
Professors	10	*"In my opinion, support provided by the professors and their active contribution are effective."* [K11] *"If your advisor is open to knowledge, you become open as well."* [K18]
Institution Administration	9	*"The perspective of university administration is an effective factor."* [K19]
Colleagues	8	*"Studies conducted by your colleagues affect you as well."* [K4] *"We learn new things from our colleagues in different disciplines."* [K19]
Students	6	*"I learn a lot from my interaction with students."* [K1] *"We try to improve ourselves to adopt to the students."* [K14]
Society	25	*"Culture of the society is important in lifelong learning in my opinion."* [K10] *"Awareness of society in all topics is effective."* [K20]
Information and Communication Technologies	19	*"Information and communication technologies encourage active participation in lifelong learning since they facilitate Access to information and render this process interesting."* [K56]
Structure of the Academic System	19	*"The structure of the academy that forces individuals for development is effective in lifelong learning."* [K17]
Environment	17	*"One is guided by the opportunities in the environment for self-development."* [K26] *"People reading around you would influence you to read as well."* [K60]
Family	16	*"If you grew up in a family that is aware of the virtue of reading, this would affect learning positively."* [K10] *"In my opinion, family support is effective on the individual with respect to lifelong learning."* [K11]
Economic Opportunities	10	*"Global economic conditions would affect the resources reserved for this purpose."* [K25] *"National economy would affect the resources reserved for lifelong learning."* [K56]
State Administration	10	*"The country should have primarily policies that support lifelong learning and these policies should be sustainable."* [K25]
Media	7	*"Media is an effective instrument in lifelong learning."* [K54]
Concerned branch of science	3	*"Law is a living field. I need to learn the innovations concerning my field."* [K7] *"Pharmacy is a dynamic field. This field makes continuous learning a requirement."* [K13]

Table 7 demonstrates that the institution of employment was considered as a significant factor in assessment of lifelong learning by the faculty members within the context of environmental factors.

Table 8

Personal Factors that Affect Lifelong Learning Characteristics of Faculty Members

Personal Factors	*f*	Participant Statements
Personal Traits		
Affective Traits	70	*"It is important how the individual perceives the lifelong learning process."* [K1]
		"In my opinion, curiosity triggers learning." [K7]
		"I think disciplined behavior guides learning." [K11]
Cognitive Traits	35	*"In my opinion, learning priorities of the individual are effective in lifelong learning."* [K10]
		"Critical thinking is necessary for self-development." [K14]
Social Traits	8	*"Social competencies of the individuals are important in learning from others."* [K12]
Psychological Traits	8	*"If the individual is happy, this would positively affect her or his learning motivation."* [K5]
		"Healthy psychology of the individual is significant for lifelong learning." [K41]
Occupational Traits	28	*"The way we perceive academic life, whether as a public service or a developmental process, is important in becoming a lifelong learner."* [K10]
Cultural Traits	12	*"In my opinion, the quality of past educational experiences are important for lifelong learning."* [K23]
		"I could say that the cultural infrastructure of the individual is effective in lifelong learning." [K25]
Economic Traits	6	*"Economic factors are effective. You could accomplish as much as your budget allows."* [K23]

Table 8 demonstrates that statements related to personal traits were prominent about personal factors. The frequencies of the themes identified in Tables 7 and 8 showed that environmental factors were prominent as indicators of lifelong learning according to faculty members.

Result, Discussion and Recommendations

Results on Activities that Faculty Members Participate within the Context of Lifelong Learning

It was understood that participants of the study primarily participated in professional followed by social and personal development activities. It could be argued that this was due to support provided for faculty members in the current academic system was focused on scientific development promoted the scientific development of the faculty members and left participation in other activities to the self-initiative and efforts of the faculty members. Thus, it could be argued that the opportunities and criteria provided by the current academic system is insufficient in supporting the holistic development faculty members.

Results on the Problems Faculty Members Encounter in Lifelong Learning Process and Recommendations for Solutions

The participants stated that they have faced limiting or prohibiting problems on active participation in lifelong learning process. Previous studies also reported that planned work and effective management of time that the participants of the present study argued they have experience problems as well, was significant in learning (Loyens, Magda and Rikers, 2008). On the other hand, participants stated that certain faculty members limited their self-development process with the academic title they have obtained and put this problem, which is specific to this occupation, on the agenda. Furthermore, the participants stated that their family responsibilities hindered their learning processes (Gouthro, 2005). In addition, statements of certain faculty members that negative attitudes of their partners in life prevent them in participating in scientific activities were significant for the literature. It was considered that reasons for the limitation caused by the abovementioned familial responsibilities were various factors such as the lack of time management skills, lack of mismanagement of family responsibilities and cultural traits of the individuals.

The participants stated that they have encountered academic and educational problems. Thus, due to the limitations in quality personnel, the participants argued that their course responsibilities increased in the institution. This view was parallel to the findings in the literature that institutional duties limited the individuals' lifelong learning (Clapper, 2010).

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Certain participants proposed to divide the faculty members into two groups of specialized research and instructional academicians to resolve these problems.

Similar to the reports in the literature (Stewart, 2009), faculty members stated that the negative example of the faulty mentality of other academicians in the same institution on lifelong learning affected them negatively. Furthermore, the participants argued that the conflict among generations in academia created communication problems, resulting in further limitations in lifelong learning. This finding was considered significant for the literature.

Similar to the reports in the literature that environmental opportunities were important in learning (Wolflin, 1999), participants of the present study stated that their inability to access the training they required was a limitation as well. On the other hand, parallel to the reports in literature that lifelong learning understanding of the society affected the individual (Cedefop, 2003), study participants reported that the lack of the lifelong learning perspective and culture in the society could limit their learning and could sometimes create a pressure that prevents it.

Certain faculty members among participants expressed that standardization was experienced in academic life and individuals without democratic approach in academia could limit the creativity of other individuals. When it is considered that lifelong learning approach is shaped on the basis of respect to individual differences, democracy and freedom of thought (Martin, 2004), it could be argued that the abovementioned condition could be an obstacle against the enforcement of lifelong learning. On the other hand, participating faculty members in the study stated that the universities were disconnected with the society under existing academic conditions. When it is considered that lifelong learning could not exist independent from the society and its dynamics (Van Weert, 2005; Warren, 2004), it could be argued that the inefficiency of current academic system in supporting and encouraging social interaction could slow down penetration of the lifelong learning approach.

The participants expressed that the problems they experienced in using information and communication technologies and accessing the information they need on the Internet limited their lifelong learning efforts. When it is considered that today technology literacy skills and information literacy skills are required for each individual to become a lifelong learner (Diker-Coşkun, Kızılkaya Cumaoğlu and Seçkin, 2013; Gürdal, 2000; Hammer, 2013; Laal, 2013a; Stasane, 2008), it could be argued that the faculty members should be supported in that respect.

On the other hand, since the participants stated that they sometimes experienced problems in providing scientific resources they need and encountered red tape during implementation of their project, it is necessary to reduce the related bureaucracy.

Results on the Significance of Lifelong Learning for Faculty Members

It could be argued that participants believed that lifelong learning was important for academicians and reflected this importance in personal, professional and social spheres. In this context, parallel to the reports in the literature, the participants expressed that lifelong learning was significant for the personal development of individuals (Kirby et al., 2010) and to act in a critical manner (Scales, 2008) and it was required to adapt to the rapid changes in life and follow the advances in every field and to update their information (Güleç, Çelik and Demirhan, 2012).

The participants expressed the professional significance of lifelong learning both with respect to academic and educational perspectives. Accordingly, faculty members thought that lifelong learning was significant due to the nature of their profession, since they are engaged in scientific work. Furthermore, they stated that lifelong learning was important for them to update their academic knowledge along with the advances in their respective fields, sustain their professional self-confidence and to become pioneers in science by publishing quality papers. On the other hand, faculty members argued that lifelong learning was important to better perform their duties as educators and become role models since they have duties to train students.

The participants expressed the personal significance of lifelong learning by arguing that it is a lifestyle for them. Parallel to this statement, Yavuz-Konakman and Yanpar-Yelken (2014) reported that faculty members are in a continuous effort to learn and considered lifelong learning competencies as a requirement. On the other hand, parallel to the idea that universities possess social responsibilities and roles (Soran, Akkoyunlu, & Kavak, 2006), participants of the present study stated that they need to improve themselves and thus, lifelong learning is significant for academicians to understand the society better and to be understood by the society better based on the premise that faculty members had a responsibility to the society and social environment.

The frequencies of the responses given by the participants are concerned, it could be stated that they expressed the significance of lifelong learning based on professional development followed by personal and social perspectives, respectively. It was considered that this was due to the effects of the incentives provided for the faculty members with a focus on professional development and the lack of powerful university-society relationships in the current academic system on the perspectives of faculty members about lifelong learning.

Results on the Definition of Lifelong Learning by the Faculty Members

The participant faculty members defined lifelong learning from different perspectives. These definitions were primarily concentrated on the idea of continuous learning throughout an individual's life. Furthermore, parallel to the reports in the literature, the participants defined lifelong learning based on self-development of individuals (AGE, 2014) based on formal, informal and non-formal education processes (Selvi, 2011), independent of time and space (Biesta, 2011) and with the freedom of learning (Tuschling and Engemann, 2006). Furthermore, faculty members reduced lifelong learning to their private lives and defined it based on learning activities to achieve personal development, professional development, social development, cultural development and academic development. It could be argued that these statements were consistent with the views that lifelong learning was related to personal, social, cultural, physical development, including individual's professional development (Jarvis, 2007; Laal, 2013b; Morgan-Klein and Osborne, 2007; Preece, 2009). On the other hand, certain participants defined lifelong learning within the context of contributing to the society and holding on within the social system.

When the frequencies of these definitions are considered, it could be identified that faculty members expressed lifelong learning as a process that entails all and continues for the whole life and particularly defined it based on its benefits for the individual and its social benefits were mentioned comparatively less. This could be due to the perception that lifelong learning was a development process that occurs within the framework of professional development of the individual in Turkey and the social benefits of lifelong learning were not perceived as strongly.

Results on Personal and Environmental Factors That Affect Lifelong Learning Characteristics of Faculty Members

The study participants stated that lifelong learning characteristics were affected by personal and environmental factors. This views were similar to the reports in the literature that adult learning processes were affected by both personal and environmental factors (Jarvis, 2009).

Results on Environmental Factors

Within the scope of environmental factors, the participants expressed that the structure of academic world that forces the individual towards improvement promoted self-development of the faculty members. Furthermore, the participants stated that the opportunities provided by the institution they were employed by, its financial support, work culture of the institution, the importance assigned to lifelong learning by the institution and the awareness of institutional administration about lifelong learning, their perspective and support were effective on this process. In addition, the participants stated that lifelong learning culture in the work environment, self-development tendencies of their colleagues were effective factors for participation of faculty members in lifelong learning process. On the other hand, the participants expressed that attempts by faculty members to adapt to new generations of students and their interaction with students were effective in the self-development process. Furthermore, similar to the reports in literature, faculty members stated that the qualifications of the professors in the department and their support and assistance and model were effective factors in their active participation in the lifelong learning process (Jarman, Mcaleese and Mcconnell, 1997; Lunenberg, Korthagen and Swennen, 2007; Steward, 2009).

The participants, similar to the conception in the literature that family traits were important for development of an awareness on lifelong learning (Bruce, 2011; Hendrick, 2015; Knoche, Cline and Marvin, 2012), expressed that the family settings and conditions that the individuals were raised could make them more open to learning and furthermore, they stated that parent support was effective on lifelong learning process. In addition, faculty members stressed that the qualifications of the partner in life was also significant and effective on lifelong learning process. Additionally, the participants indicated that the awareness of the social setting of the individual on lifelong learning and the opportunities presented by the environment on learning were among the effective factors on self-development during the lifelong learning process.

Moreover, the participants stated that cultural characteristics of the society, awareness for lifelong learning in the society, the perception of the society for lifelong learning were effective on the lifelong learning process of the academicians. Similar to the abovementioned statements, it was reported in the literature that individuals exist within their environment and society and are affected by these factors (Edwards, 1997; Jarvis, 2012; Medel-Añonuevo, Ohsako, & Mauch, 2001).

Similar to the view that economic factors were effective on the penetration of lifelong learning approach in the society (Falch and Oosterbeek, 2011; Strain, 1998; Toprak and Erdoğan, 2012), the participants expressed that the world and the country provided lifelong learning opportunities consistent with the current economic conditions and these conditions were effective on the status of faculty members as lifelong learners. Furthermore, the participants indicated that decisions and strategies determined by the state in accordance with the reality, demands and needs of the society were significant in penetration of lifelong learning approach. It could be stated that these statements were parallel to the view that the states should develop policies to extend lifelong learning approach in the society (Gibb and Walker, 2011; Lynch, 2008; Thompson, 2008).

Certain faculty members among the participants of the study stated that the rapid rate of developments in their field of study forced them to develop themselves professionally and update their knowledge more rapidly than others. Thus, it could be stated that the field of study of the faculty members was also an effective factor in their lifelong learning characteristics. This finding is considered to be significant for the literature.

Results on Personal Factors

Parallel to the reports in the literature, the participants indicated that personal, economic, professional and cultural traits of the individual were effective on lifelong learning within the context of personal factors (Çubukçu, 2011; Figel, 2007; Günüç, Odabaşı, & Kuzu, 2012; Tan and Morris, 2006; Walters and Watters, 2001). Thus, faculty members stated that continuous efforts spent by the individuals for learning, their information literacy skills, their capabilities to use information and communication technologies, critical thinking skills, time management skills, cognitive capabilities such as self-criticism and self-assessment were significant for

lifelong learning (Adams, 2007; Cornford, 2002; Crowther, 2004; Günüç, Odabaşı, & Kuzu, 2012; Koç, 2007; Nyiri, 1997).

Consistent with the reports in the literature on affective traits, the participants indicated that the will and drive of the individual to learn, individual's motivation to learn, self-confidence in learning, curiosity to learn, openness for learning, the need to learn and constancy in learning were effective in this process (Bryce, 2006; European Commission, 2006a; Köymen, 2002; Nyiri, 1997; Schunk and Pintrich, 2002; Slavin, 1994). Furthermore, similar to the reports in the literature, participants stated that tolerance of the individuals, their level of openness to different ideas, criticism and collaboration were important in the self-development process (Biesta, 2011; Çubukçu, 2011; Jarvis, 2008; Martin, 2004). Moreover, faculty members indicated that the sense of professional responsibility, love for the profession and self-respect as a scientist guide individual for learning. Furthermore, the participants stressed that the willingness to sacrifice other occupations for the purpose of learning and ethical awareness were important, indicating topics not widely mentioned in the literature (Figel, 2007; Köğce et al., 2014).

Parallel to the findings in the literature (Dong, 2004; Endrawes, 2010; European Commission, 2006b; Figel, 2007; Günüç, Odabaşı, & Kuzu, 2012; Yasukawa, 2009), the participants expressed that social skills and financial opportunities of an individual were effective on the individual's lifelong learning. Furthermore, the participants also stated that willingness to conduct scientific activities that would provide financial benefits would support self-development processes. On the other hand, the participants stressed the significance of positive and healthy psychological traits since this would provide happiness and hope for the future for individuals and indicated that learning processes were affected by the psychology of the individual. The academicians who participated in the present study stated that the views on their profession was also important and this profession should not be perceived as merely public service or its aim should not be to achieve titles. In addition, the participants argued that their willingness to get promotions in their profession could be a supporting factor for self-development, however, when the real purpose is to achieve a title, faculty members could halt self-development when they reach that particular title. It is considered that these statements describe factors specific to faculty members in lifelong learning process and important for the literature.

Faculty member participants of the present study indicated that competency in their fields encourage academicians for self-development. It could be argued that this statement is consistent with the reports in the literature that the experience and competency of an individual in her or his profession is a factor that supports self-development (Knapper and Cropley, 2000; Rotwell and Kazanas, 1998). On the other hand, parallel to the findings in the literature, study participants stated that foreign language fluency of faculty members (Adams, 2007; Çubukçu, 2011; European Commission, 2002; Scales, 2008) and their needs to update their classes supported self-development processes. Furthermore, the participants stressed that the culture, which the faculty members were raised in and the quality of their previous academic experiences were effective on their being active participants in lifelong learning and expressed views that were consistent with the reports in the literature (ELLI, 2010; European Commission, 2007; Holmes, 2002; Phoenix, 2002).

The frequencies of statements on environmental factors effective on lifelong learning demonstrated that the participants predominantly indicated views based on the institutions they were employed. It is considered that this was due to the fact that faculty members approached lifelong learning from the perspective of career development. On the other hand, when the frequencies of statements on personal factors effective on lifelong learning are considered, it could be argued that the participants predominantly made statements based on personal traits. In this context, the participants expressed that factors based on affective and cognitive traits of individuals were effective, respectively. On the other hand, it was observed that faculty members mentioned social or psychological traits of individuals less than other factors. In addition to personal traits, it was observed that faculty members stressed professional traits of the individuals as effective factors. In contrast, it could be argued that the frequency of the views on cultural and economic factors were lower. It could be stated that one of the reasons for this situation was the increasing significance of cognitive and affective traits due to the individual's responsibility of self-learning. Furthermore, it could be argued that another reason for the abovementioned situation could be the secondary role which social, psychological and cultural factors play in our society due to the career focus of lifelong learning approach in Turkey.

When the findings of the study are assessed within the context of Anadolu University, it could be concluded that the extensive financial opportunities, courses and seminars organized within the context of academic development are significant and beneficial in supporting faculty

members' lifelong learning processes. On the other hand, it was identified that despite all opportunities provided the participants experienced problems in lifelong learning. It is considered that, albeit lifelong learning has a multi-dimensional structure which is affected by several factors, activities conducted in the institution were insufficient or ineffective since this characteristic was not completely understood. In fact, it could be argued that most of the activities which the participants participated within the context of lifelong learning and the fact that their statements on the significance and definition of the concept were based on career development indicated this deficiency. Thus, it could be stated that current lifelong learning approach in Anadolu University was career development oriented and present awareness levels of faculty members should be developed to provide a holistic development.

Based on the findings of the present study, the following recommendations could be made for institutions, and implementation and research purposes:

- Projects to enable further integration of universities with the society could be developed.
- Nationwide projects could be developed and implemented by a structure that all stakeholders such as education experts, media institutions, non-governmental organizations and universities participate to extend the penetration of the lifelong learning approach.
- Media institutions could focus on successful individuals who are role models in their fields to provide examples for the society at large.
- The government could initiate partnerships between related national and international institutions and organizations for both the society and academicians on lifelong learning and create a basis for new applications.
- The government could determine national lifelong learning strategies parallel to the social structure and realities of our society in collaboration with field experts and stakeholders and provide the necessary budget and human resources and act within a predetermined action plan.
- Activities could be organized to expand the understanding that lifelong learning includes holistic development of faculty members in addition to their career development.
- Current levels of the factors that have negative effects on lifelong learning processes of faculty members in higher education institutions could be identified and applications could be developed to remove these factors.

- Moral and material institutional support could be provided for faculty members to improve themselves in all areas of development within the context of lifelong learning in higher education institutions.

- New criteria that includes development and activities of faculty members in different fields within the context of holistic development could be determined and implemented for academic promotions and assignments. Thus, multidimensional self-development of academicians could be promoted.

- Educational activities could be organized in higher education institutions to strengthen ethical awareness of faculty members. In this respect, university administration could create a serious supervision mechanism to research the degree of effective use of opportunities provided by the university.

- Similar studies could be conducted in different universities to investigate the views of faculty members on lifelong learning and their lifelong learning characteristics.

- Similar research could be conducted in universities in different countries to compare the findings with the present conditions of faculty members in Turkey with respect to lifelong learning.

- Different scales could be developed for factors that affect lifelong learning characteristics of faculty members determined in the present study and the status of other universities could be determined based on these factors.

- Data could be collected using the scales developed for factors that affect lifelong learning characteristics of faculty members and statistical models could be developed to establish correlations between these factors.

- Action researches could be conducted to increase the quality of educational activities provided for faculty members in the institution within the context of lifelong learning.

- Interdisciplinary researches could be conducted to determine lifelong learning understanding of the society and the effects of this understanding on faculty members.

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Ulaş İlic, Yüksel Deniz Arıkan

Research Article

Analysis of Student Views on Foreign Language Learning in Second Life Environment[1]

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Abstract

The aim of the present study is to assess the views of participants about the learning environment and the problems experienced in that environment by designing a three dimensional learning environment in Second Life (SL) virtual world. The study, designed as a case study, was conducted with 24 volunteer students registered to foreign language courses for 10 weeks in Ege University, Faculty of Education during 2011 – 2012 academic year, where the volunteers participated in five different main activities. Personal Information Form was used to determine demographic features, computer literacy and English proficiency of the students in the study. Furthermore, Feedback Form and SL Learning Experience Survey were used to collect the data regarding the views of participants about the activities and medium. In addition, semi-structured interviews were conducted to obtain general views of participants on the application. Study findings demonstrated that the participants found SL environment interesting and entertaining and the activities beneficial for themselves to overcome their timidity in verbalizing in foreign language. It was also conceived that participants experienced difficulties in speech with the application due to various reasons and encountered different technical problems. However, the participants stated that SL could be used in several different fields in addition to foreign language education, provided that frequent issues encountered such as in-

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campus access and sound problems could be avoided. At the end of the study recommendations for the future applications and research based on study findings were presented.

Keywords: Virtual world, Second Life, foreign language instruction, problems encountered in virtual worlds.

Introduction

Today, English is among the most frequently used foreign languages with a high demand from learners (Fang, 2012; Jacobsen, 2015; Liao, 2012; Nepomuceno Reyes, 2014). As stated by Verikaite (2008), there are three important stages of language learning; instruction of presentation behavior, explanation of new material, and application and test. Various technologies are utilized in these stages of language instruction. A historical analysis of language instruction would demonstrate significant developments. The efforts in 1960's to realize speech experience in language instruction as a result of the use of computer technologies have advanced into more developed dimensions with the recent advances in technologies (Seferoğlu, 2005). In this period, several software had emerged and these new software have been frequently used in foreign language learning in personal computers. In the period that lasted until 1980's, the desired success was not achieved in foreign language instruction (Torut, 2000). In 1980's, multimedia software were presented to the users that utilized CD technology and thus, more developed interactive media were provided (Butler-Pascoe, 2012; Felix, 1998). In 1990's, with the development of Internet technology, diverse tools were developed and used for purposes of language instruction. As interaction, which is very important in language instruction, increased in Internet environment, several education institutions started to utilize Internet technologies (Butler-Pascoe, 2012; Pufahl, Rhodes, & Christian, 2001).

Efficacy of individuals in verbal communications is an essential goal in foreign language instruction (Payne & Ross, 2005; Zhang & Mi, 2010). Several studies reported that conventional instruction methods were insufficient to reach that goal. Thus, the interest of educators to include multi-user virtual media in conventional classrooms or to replace conventional classrooms with multi-user virtual media have continuously increased (Dickey, 2005; Dieterle & Clarke, 2007; Foreman & Borkman, 2007; Lim, Nonis, & Hedberg, 2006; Roussou, 2004). It could be argued that the above tendency has increased the significance of virtual worlds in education (Vogel et al., 2008). Virtual worlds such as Second Life, World of Warcraft and There could be given as examples of virtual worlds. One of the media used for foreign language instruction in virtual worlds is Second Life (SL). SL, designed by Linden Labs in 2003, albeit being perceived by some as a gaming environment, is in fact a three dimensional virtual world where there are no levels or tasks like computer games (Rymaszewski, 2007). SL

is a 3D online virtual environment where users use an avatar to interact with other users in an artificial environment (Inman, Wright, & Hartman, 2010).

Several education-instruction institutions created educational areas on SL and conducted educational-instructional activities. Educators prefer SL because they could design the education environment they desire and control the time and space with this tool (Vogel et al., 2008). Previous studies reflected that SL was used for instruction of several languages. For instance, studies investigated whether SL activities contributed to self-confidence, motivation and verbal communication skills of Spanish learners (Hislope, 2009; Jauregi, Canto, de Graaff, Koenraad, & Moonen, 2011; Ortega et al., 2010; Wehner, Gump, & Downey, 2011). In addition to Spanish, there are studies in the literature on English as a foreign language education in several countries using SL (de Jong Derrington & Homewood, 2008; Peterson, 2012). In addition to Spanish and English, Kaplan-Rakowski (2001) conducted a study where seven different activities were planned and applied to students who were learning German. Furthermore, other studies were also conducted to investigate the role of SL in learning grammar (Milton, Jonsen, Hirst, & Lindenburn, 2012; Sweeney et al., 2011). In a study by Deutschmann, Panichi and Molka-Danielsen (2009), participation of students in the conversation in SL for two verbal efficacy classes was scrutinized. On the other hand, Liou (2012) researched the role of SL in computer-aided language instruction in Taiwan.

Among the studies conducted on SL in Turkish literature, Esgin, Pamukcu, Ergül and Ansay (2012) investigated the effect of educational use of SL on student achievement and motivation. On the other hand, Bezir, Çukurbaşı and Baran (2011) presented a design process of activities developed on foreign language instruction using role playing technique in SL environment. They investigated activities conducted and student views about the environment. Furthermore, it was observed that the potential of educational potential of SL was also investigated (Baran, Çukurbaşı, Çolak, & Dogusoy, 2012).

Literature review demonstrated that researchers studied on voice calls in different languages, primarily in English and Spanish, but also in German (de Jong Derrington & Homewood, 2008; Deutschmann et al., 2009; Jauregi et al., 2011; Liou, 2012; Milton et al., 2012; Sweeney et al., 2011; Wehner et al., 2011). Study findings demonstrated that SL environment was considered useful by the participants since it was close to real life (Childress & Braswell, 2006; Deutschmann et al., 2009; Iqbal, Kankaanranta, & Neittaanmäki, 2010), it increased student

motivation (Wehner et al., 2011), improved language skills of the students (Liou, 2012; Ortega et al., 2010), affected students' participation and loyalties positively (Deutschmann et al., 2009; Peterson, 2012), and provided feedback capabilities (Kaplan-Rakowski, 2011). Furthermore, studies showed that SL had a comprehensive and student-centered structure (Peterson, 2012) and students found the environment as entertaining (Liou, 2012; Peterson, 2006) and useful (de Jong Derrington & Homewood, 2008; Kaplan-Rakowski, 2011; Sanchez, 2009). In addition to all these advantages of SL, certain Internet connection and hardware problems were experiences in related studies as well (Bezir et al., 2011; Hislope, 2009; Liou, 2012).

Although, instruction of English as a foreign language is compulsory in all educational levels in Turkey (Kirkgöz, 2007), several studies reported that English education was inefficient in acquisition of proficiency in speech by the learners (Bekleyen, 2007; Tok, 2009). It was observed that the students experienced language and auditory problems. Although reading and writing skills of learners improve, their verbal skills remain deficient (Bekleyen, 2007). Tok (2009), on the other hand, reported that students are generally late in learning the language and it is important to apply the language in daily life when learning languages, learners of English as a foreign language should try talking English both in the classroom and in different situations with different people outside the classroom.

SL medium was selected due to the problems experienced in foreign language learning and the text and speech possibilities the software provides in language instruction. In applications conducted with SL, it was observed that views of the participants on the medium were never investigated in depth along with the experienced problems. This situation is similar to the situation in Turkey. It was observed that especially the studies conducted in Turkey were insufficient quantitatively. Thus, in detail studies are needed to comprehend the topic in detail. In the present study conducted for this purpose, it was aimed to analyze views of the participants on SL used in foreign language education and the problems experienced in this process in depth and in conjunction. The objective was to answer following research questions based on the abovementioned aim:

1. What were the views of participants on the activities conducted in SL environment during foreign language instruction?
2. What were the views of participants on the problems they experienced in SL application?

Method

Design

The present research was designed in the qualitative research method of case study. Glesne (2012) defined case study as a method that requires in depth study of a phenomenon. Selected case includes connected working components of a limited system. The researcher decides what would occur within these limitations. In this context, views of the participants on SL used in foreign language education and the problems experienced in this process are analyzed in depth, the case is limited with the sample determined by the researcher and voluntary students.

Study Context and Participants

For implementation of the study, Ege University Faculty of Education was selected with convenience sampling. Convenience sampling is a purposeful sampling method that is used in investigation of easily and inexpensively accessible situations (Patton, 2005). After the faculty of education was selected as the study field, criterion sampling method was used for selection of the participants. In this sampling method, attention was paid on situations that meet certain predetermined significance criteria (Patton, 2005). Thus, a presentation on SL medium was given by the researcher to all students registered in foreign language courses in seven different departments at Ege University Faculty of Education during 2011 – 2012 academic year. Although 60 students that attended the presentation volunteered for the study, 24 participants who had available technical facilities participated in the study voluntarily. To meet technical compatibility criteria, the participants were asked to install and test SL application, identify their Internet and computer speeds and note whether their Internet connection was continuous and unlimited. Fourteen participants who met the required criteria were female and 10 were male. Twenty-two participants were Computer Education and Instructional Technology and two participants were Science Teaching undergraduate students. The ages of participants were between 10 and 22. To keep the names of the participants confidential for ethical purposes, nicknames were used, but in the present study, they will be quoted as K1 (Participant 1), K2 (Participant 2) and so on.

Data on self-perception of participants in English were collected with Personal Information Form. In a four-degree level scale, it was observed that the participants perceived their efficacy

in reading mostly as 2 (n = 10) and 3 (n = 8), in writing again as 2 (n = 12) and 3 (n = 9), in listening as 1 (n = 8) and 2 (n = 11), and in speaking as 1 (n = 12) and 3 (n = 8). It could be observed that the participants were generally considered themselves at middle level in reading and writing skills, and at low level in speaking and listening skills.

Personal Information Form data provided the status of the study group on using computer facilities to develop their English. It was determined that study participant students rarely used their computer to study English (n = 10), however, 23 out of 24 participants "completely agreed" (n = 6) and "agreed" (n = 16) with the statement that "I utilize the facilities provided by the computer to improve my English." The technologies that participants used for learning English were books (n = 5), serials (n = 3), songs (n = 3) and Internet sites (n = 2), respectively.

To determine the participants' knowledge level on SL, Personal Information Form was used to ask them questions on their general knowledge on SL. Out of those who responded the question, 14 marked the response "agreed" and 2 selected "completely agreed.". Two more questions were posed to these 16 participants on for how long and for which purpose they used SL. It was understood that these participants started to use the application after the orientation training during the last ten or fourteen days. Furthermore, the responses of participants for the question on the reasons for using SL demonstrated that 7 participants used the software to improve their English and 2 participants used the software out of curiosity and interest.

Data Collection Tools

Personal information form

Personal Information Form developed by Jee (2011) to collect demographical characteristics of participants such as age, gender, department, their general level of computer use and the level of their use of SL environment. The questionnaire was translated into Turkish by three English instructors from College of Foreign Languages and a Turkish Literature branch teacher and a language validity study was conducted. Two pilot schemes were conducted for Turkish version of the form. Initially, the questionnaire was applied to nine students attending College of Foreign Languages who were proficient in English. After the questionnaire was translated to Turkish, it was retranslated to English and applied to the same students after 10 days. Responses were compared with Kappa test and assessed by a measurement and assessment specialist and

a education programs and instruction expert, and as a result, it was concluded that Turkish version of the questionnaire was usable. In addition to age, gender and departments of the participants, there are eight additional questions to collect information on foreign language levels of the students in the demographical information section of the form. Following the demographical information, 12 questions on general computer use of the participants, level of the use of computers for English education, level of knowledge on SL and the purpose of using this medium were posed to the participants. All questions included in the questionnaire aimed to determine pre-activity participant profiles.

Second Life Learning Experience Questionnaire

SL Learning Experience Questionnaire developed by Jee (2011) was used to determine the views of students on the activities they participated. In the first section of the questionnaire, there are 21 items that are graded between "I completely disagree" and "I completely agree.". In the second section of the questionnaire, there are five open ended questions on the activities liked, difficulties experienced and recommendations about the application. The questionnaire was translated to Turkish by three English instructors from College of Foreign Languages and revised by a Turkish Literature branch teacher. After translation to Turkish, the questionnaire was translated back to English by language experts and compared to its original version. The questionnaire was evaluated by two field experts who authored studies on 3D virtual world, a measurement and assessment expert and an education programs and instruction expert and the Turkish form of the questionnaire was deemed usable after their approval.

Feedback form

The feedback form developed by Jee (2011) and included nine Likert-type items and four open ended questions was used to determine the problems the participants experience in activities conducted in SL medium. The form was translated to Turkish by three English instructors from College of Foreign Languages and revised by a Turkish Literature branch teacher. After translation to Turkish, the questionnaire was translated back to English by language experts and compared to its original version. The questionnaire was evaluated by two field experts who authored studies on 3D virtual world, a measurement and assessment expert and an education programs and instruction expert and the Turkish form of the questionnaire was finalized. In the first section of the questionnaire, there are 9 five-point Likert-type items that are graded

between "I completely disagree" and "I completely agree.". This section included questions that reflected general views on SL and activities. In the second section, there are four open ended questions. Open ended questions asked the participants the tasks they completed comfortably in SL activity and the tasks they experienced difficulties with and their views on the activity and recommendations for future activities. Recommendations of the participants were recognized when organizing the activities conducted later.

Interview form

Interview form, prepared by the authors, was used to obtain detailed opinion of the participants about the application. When preparing the interview questions, views of two field experts, a measurement and assessment expert, and an education programs and instruction expert were consulted. Interview form included 13 open ended questions. Interviews were conducted face to face. Participants were reached using e-mail and phone calls and appointments were set up for interviews at whenever and wherever appropriate for the participants. Participant consent was obtained for recording the interviews.

Video recordings

Activities realized in SL environment were recorded with Camtasia 7.1.1 software including sound and vision. The researcher utilized different angles to observe all actions conducted in the activity environment. The duration of activities conducted in SL were 135, 84, 83, 66, 83 and 50 minutes (total 501 minutes), respectively and sizes of the same were 60.1, 40.9, 33.7, 44.2, 40.1, and 22.5 (total 241.5) gigabytes.

Application Process

As could be observed in Figure 1, the application started with a 21 slide presentation that provides information about the present study given to all students that attends Foreign Language I and II courses in all departments in Ege University, Faculty of Education. In addition to information about the study, topics such as SL specifications, activities that would be conducted in SL and the rights of the participants were also covered in the presentation. After the presentation, volunteering students were asked to install SL application in their computers and provide information on the specifications of their computer and their Internet access speed. E-

mail assistance was provided for students who installed but failed to run the SL application. Students who experienced problems in SL environment were left free to quit the study throughput the process. Before the application, two exercises were conducted with participating students in two separate occasions. These orientation sessions lasted for 60 minutes in average and information on the medium and the study were provided for the participants during orientation.
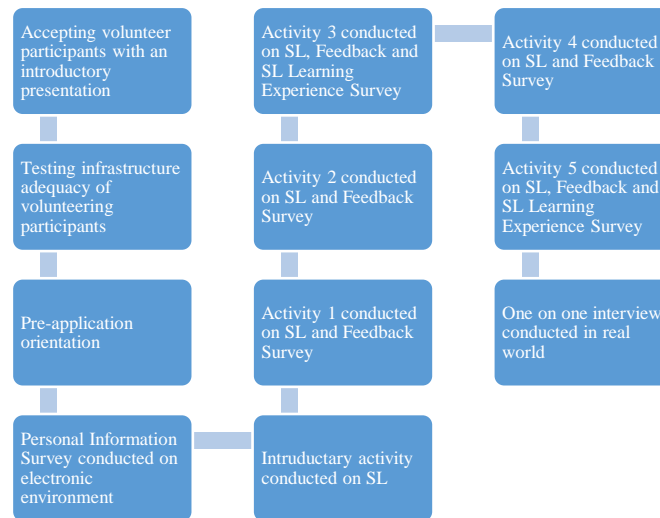
Figure 1. Application Process and the Steps of this Process

Application was started on the second week of March 2012 and conducted for eight weeks. In this process, introduction and five activities were conducted in SL environment. In activities conducted in SL environment after the first introductory activity, topics such as greeting, acquaintance, asking the time and the date, narrating a job someone does were scrutinized. In the second activity, topics such as discussing an experienced problem, narrating a sad event such as an accident or illness, and narrating a positive event were included. In the third activity, placing an order and making a proposal topics were scrutinized. A telephone conversation, buying medicine at a pharmacy and check-in at the airport were the topics of the fourth activity. In the fifth activity, a trip was narrated, certain tasks were planned and a request was made for a business need. In all abovementioned activities, an English instructor from the College of Foreign Languages also took part in addition to the author. English instructor acted as the activity manager and decided when to start and end the activities and participated in all dialogues of participants related to English. Furthermore, the instructor was introduced to the participants as an American teacher to make the activities more interesting for the participants. Selection of the instructor who speaks English as a foreign language was based on the fact that

the English proficiency levels of the participants were low and the view that an instructor who speaks the same native language as the participants would be more beneficial. This view was supported by Medgyes (2001) who stated that foreign language teachers that do not teach their native language would better understand and assist the students and Blasing (2010) who stated that students felt higher anxiety when interacting with others who spoke their native language on SL. The author participated in all activities along with the instructor and recorded all voice communication activities in video and sound. The author played the role of the assistant to resolve the technical problems that the participants and the instructor experienced during activities. In addition to the author, the owner of the SL island where the application was performed also participated in the activities and intervened in the technical problems directly. Topics covered in the study were selected from daily events sections in "Everyday Expressions" conversations unit selected by course teachers at the faculty of education departments. As could be observed in Figure 1, feedback forms were applied to the participants after each activity and SL learning experience forms were applied to the participants after the first three and the last two activities. At the end of the process, real life interviews were conducted with volunteering participants.

Data Collection and Interpretation

Inductive content analysis was used to analyze data collected with feedback form, SL learning experience survey and in the interviews in the present study. Content analysis is a method where the data is summarized and interpreted with descriptive analysis and subjected to a deeper process (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2011). Thus, concepts and themes that could not be identified with descriptive approach could be determined. The themes related to the items and questions in data collection tools were determined and utilized in coding qualitative data. To determine the themes, initially the interview recordings were transcribed. Since the data collected with other data collection tools were already in the data processing software, these were not processed. In the next step, transcribed statements were transferred into word processing software and statements were read sentence by sentence and different colors were assigned to these statements to create draft codes. Draft codes were transferred to electronic tabulation software and responses given by each student for each draft code were inscribed in the related cell in the table as could be observed in Figure 2. The actual codes were retrieved as a result of this step and these main codes were grouped under specific themes.

During the coding process, interview transcripts of each participant was thoroughly read twice and codes were reexamined during a three-week period to establish the codes and themes with inductive analysis. In quantitative analysis process, data collected with personal information form, five feedback forms and two interview forms were analyzed using frequencies. These frequencies were used to support obtained themes.

Figure 2. Analysis of Qualitative Dataset

Validity and Reliability Measures

Validity in qualitative research is observation of the researched phenomenon as is and objectively (Kirk & Miller, 1986). Validity is scrutinized under two topics; internal and external validity. Merriam (2013) calls internal validity as trustworthiness as well and defines the concept as the compliance between the data and current reality. External validity is accepted as transmissibility in the literature and defined as the degree of applicability of study results on different situations (Merriam, 2013). Several measures were implemented in the present study

to provide trustworthiness and transmissibility. To provide trustworthiness, the author participated in all activities conducted within the context of the application and attempted to maintain long-term participation principle. These applications and findings were described in detail. In addition, interview data collected during the study and findings obtained at the end of the process were presented to the participants and they were asked to confirm these data and findings. In addition to trustworthiness, study participants were described in detail to provide transmissibility.

Merriam (2013) defines reliability as capability to recreate study findings and states that it could be referred to as consistency in the literature. To establish reliability that could be divided into two as internal and external reliability in research, several measures are taken. The following measures were implemented in the present study to provide internal reliability:

- Data collected in the study were presented to the reader using direct quotes without any interpretation and related interpretations were presented separately.
- The author defines the theoretical framework and conducted the data analysis within this framework.
- Data analysis processes were approved by another expert with respect to the process and findings in addition to the author.

In addition to internal reliability, the following measures were implemented in the present study to provide external reliability:

- The role of the author was described in the study.
- Sound recordings of the face to face interviews were played for the participants of the interviews to provide participant control. Furthermore, these interviews were recorded with a sound recording device for storage purposes.
- In addition to interview findings, other research findings were also controlled by a different expert and presented for the approval of participants.

Ethical Principles and the Role of the Researcher

Required permissions to conduct the applications in the study were obtained from the institution where the study was carried out and participants were informed about the application and their

consent were also obtained. Similarly, during the interviews conducted with the participants, their wishes and approval were prioritized. Furthermore, real names of the participants were omitted from the study and participant nicknames were coded and these codes were used in the paper. In addition, when application screenshots or the screenshots of theme creation process where participant nicknames are visible were needed to be used in the paper, the participants were informed that their nicknames will be blacked out before use.

Similar to other qualitative research types, the primary data collection and analysis tool in case studies is the researcher himself (Merriam, 2013). In the present study, the researcher participated in the application and played the role of the primary data collection tool as well. The researcher was the "participating observer" in the application. Although the researcher who plays the role of participating observer primarily acts as the observer, interacts with the participants to a certain degree (Glesne, 2012). Since the researcher in the present study is not a foreign language expert, a foreign language expert and the owner of the island where the applications were conducted and also a foreign language expert were also participated in the applications, accompanying the researcher. In addition to the island owner, the researcher also provided assistance for the students when they experienced technical problems. To preserve the spontaneity of the environment, the process was not interrupted and the researcher rather played a role of a guide in the environment. Furthermore, the applications recorded by the researcher in video and sound were backed up in two different electronic media to prevent data losses.

Findings and Interpretations

In the present section, research data obtained through the data collection tools are presented and interpreted. As could be seen in Figure 3, the findings include two main topics; feedbacks of the participants about the SL environment and problems they experienced in the SL environment. These main topics also contained subtopics as could be observed in the related figure.
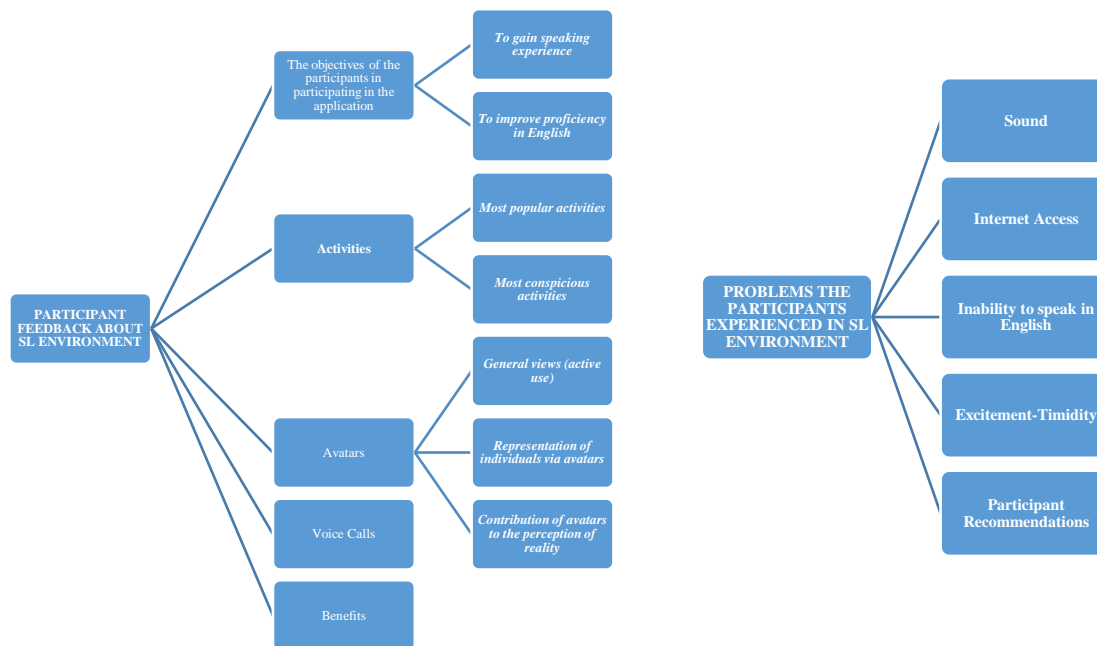
Figure 3. Main and Subtopics Related to the Findings

Participant Feedback on Second Life Environment

Questions were posed to the participants to determine their views on the use of SL application in foreign language instruction with respect to the first research question of the study. Responses obtained from feedback forms and SL Learning Experience Questionnaire were analyzed with descriptive and content analysis methods and content analysis was used to analyze interview data. The themes and codes obtained as a result of the abovementioned analyses are listed below:

The Objectives of the Participants in Participating in the Application: Study participants stated that they participated in the study to gain experience in speaking and to improve their proficiency levels in English. Related analyses are presented below:

To gain experience in speaking

Three students who participated in the study stated that they participated in the study to improve their experiences in speaking. They expressed these views as follows: *"...We are trained in grammar in English, but we do not have the opportunity to practice our speech. I wanted to participate for this reason in the beginning [K20]", "...In theory, we know a lot of stuff in*

English, but we could not speak, for example, when we meet a tourist. It was the same in SL in the beginning, but then we got used to it [K8]".

To improve level of proficiency in English

Two students stated that they participated in the study to improve their proficiency in English. The participants expressed that *"...I speak/write faster and better now [K7]"*, *"...It guided me in learning English better [K24]"*.

Activities: Participants' views on activities were divided into two groups; most popular and most conspicuous activities.

The most popular activities

It was observed that the participants liked the ordering activity the most. It could be stated that this activity was popular because the selected activity environment was suitable for the topic and high level of interaction was maintained throughout the activity. K24 stated that (s)he liked the activities of giving directions for addresses and making a proposition. Another participant expressed her/his opinions as follows: "*The activity of narrating a trip was good. I liked talking about a nice place I visited [K12]*".

The most conspicuous activities

When the participants were asked what were the elements that attracted their attention the most during applications, five students stated that the activity environment attracted their attention the most. Certain student responses were as follows: "*The environments created in SL [K12]*", "*...Visually 3D spaces [K20]*". K18 and K10 stated that the presence of different islands and the ability to teleport between them attracted their attention.

Avatars and several motions made with avatars were also the center of attention for the participants. Two participants stated that they found the movements of avatars, one participant the avatars themselves and another stated that (s)he found the avatar of the English teacher attractive. K21 said that being able to dive into the water with the avatar was interesting. Three participants found being able to interact with the objects in the environment interesting. K7 said riding a jet ski and a peer flying the helicopter were interesting. Participants expressed the following views on avatars:

"... It was nice to fly and look at the environment from above." [K13]

"... The fact that avatars did what I wanted to do; walking, running, flying..." [K24]

It was observed that the participants found their conversations with the English teacher interesting. Three participants stated that they found one on one communications with the English teacher, the individual attention paid by the English teacher and the English teacher comprehending their half-comprehensible statements interesting. One participant said that "*It was nice for the English teacher to understand the half-comprehensible English we spoke [K17]*".

In addition to conversing with the English teacher, it was observed that being able to speak in turns during applications and being able to converse with their peers were attractive for the participants. K18 and K24 confirmed this fact. On the other hand, two participants stated that they found the benevolence of the individuals in the environment impressive. K24 said that their peers were helpful, while another participant said that "*The friendliness of volunteering individuals affected me very much. The same goes for their willingness to teach [K3]*".

It was found in the study that 10 participants had positive views on SL activity based on ease of use, feeling relaxed and attractiveness of the application when compared to the classroom. Certain statements of support are as follows: "*...You cannot find the environment available in SL in the classroom. While the environment in the class is monotonous, it changes continuously in SL [24]*", "*...I was in a horizontal position in all activities [K20]*". On the other hand, certain participants stated that they considered the classroom environment more positive: "*...We were able to express ourselves better in the classroom since we were face to face [K7]*", "*It was good, but I think that when we spoke to each other in the classroom face to face, the teacher was able to understand our emotions reading our mimics [K18]*". K20 stated that (s)he enjoyed the face to face conversations in the classroom, however (s)he was comfortable in SL as well. The participant stated the following on the issue:

"*The class has a particular fun since it is face to face. In a face to face conversation one needs to pay attention to behavior, gestures and mimics, but in SL, this is not necessary. For instance, I was in a horizontal position during all activities.*" [K20]

Avatars: The views of the participants about avatars were examined under three topics: general views, representation of individuals by avatars, and contribution of avatars to the perception of reality.

General views (active use)

It was observed that the study participants were able to use the avatars easily. Six participants agreed, four participants disagreed with the statement "I tried to use my avatars as much as possible during the activity" and one participant was indecisive. Similarly, four participants agreed with the statement "I participated actively in activities thanks to the avatars," while two participants were indecisive. Responses to both statements demonstrated that the participants thought that they actively participated in the activities by means of their avatars. Participants stated that there were several avatars with different types and this diversity created a chance of selection. Some of their statements are sampled below:

"Since there are several choices, there are quite different avatars." [K20]

"There are avatars that address everyone's taste." [K8]

"There were certain types of avatars. Some were crazy." [K21]

Representation of individuals by avatars

Ten participants presented views on representation of individuals by avatars. Six of these participants stated that their avatars did not represent them. K13 and K24 explained the reasons for the fact that their avatars did not represent them as the presence of numerous types of avatars and the fact that they were not interested in the appearance of their avatars. Some of these views are as follows: *"My avatar does not completely represent me. Finally, there are so many different people on the world. No one could be limited by ten avatars [K13]", "No, it does not yet represent me. Because I did not deal with its dresses, etc. yet [K24]"*. Two study participants stated that their avatars represented them. K12: *"...It represents. I tried to make it look like me as much as I could when I created it"*.

Contribution of the avatars to the perception of reality

Seven participants expressed views on the effect of reality created by avatars on individuals. Two of these participants said they considered the speech of avatars realistic: "…When I saw

the images my perception of reality was altered. When dancing, their movements were identical. It was interactive [K13]", "…It was quite realistic to hear a human voice when they were speaking [K8]". Certain different views on the contribution of avatars to the sense of reality are as follows:

> *"…It was not much realistic for me, finally we were in a virtual World back then… It was realistic though to hear the speech when compared to writing." [K12]*

> *"Avatars move their lips when talking, but it is not completely realistic… It is better than normal voice recording though." [K21]*

Voice Calls: Nine participants stated that voice calls contributed to their speech experiences. Furthermore, it was stated by the participants that it provided a relaxed form of communications especially those who were timid in talking. A participant said *"…We hardly had a setting where we could speak in English, but we had plenty of chances in SL [K13]"*. K10 and K12 said that they overcame their fear of speech, their self-confidence in speech improved and they were comfortable when speaking. On the other hand, K7 and K12 expressed hat voice calls helped them in learning the correct pronunciation of the words. Six participants noted that voice calls provided the opportunity to listen as well as speaking. Two of these views are as follows:

> *"Especially the fact that we used our own voices made us both hear our own voice and facilitated our communication with other friends." [K24]*

> *"… It is more comfortable than writing. You only push a button and talk. It provides one on one communications in a rather short period of time." [K10]*

Four participants stated that voice calls were beneficial in improving their vocabulary. It was considered that the fact that participants heard different words during the activities was effective on this response. K13 and K10 stated that the voice calls were beneficial for grammar. Three participants expressed that voice calls had an effect on reading. K1 argued that (s)he benefited from voice call activities in writing. The fact that voice calls were considered beneficial for reading and writing skills, which are not expected to be related to voice calls, is considered to be related to the fact that certain participants preferred text-based chat instead of speaking during the activities. Participants' views showed that voice calls were effective on overcoming fear of speech, providing speaking experience, learning the meanings of the words, and listening and interactions.

Benefits: Three participants stated that they have benefited from the SL applications. These participants indicated that the fact that the activities were conducted in environments which were related to the course topics was beneficial for them. One participant supported this view by saying: "*It is better when we conduct the activities related to the topic we handle in the class in environments that are related to the subject. For instance, it is better to be in that environment when ordering something compared to the classroom [K13]*". Two participants stated that the fact that the topics covered in the activities were similar to daily life and beneficial for daily life was an achievement for them: "*These were useful activities in daily life [K10]*", "*…Activities were better than the ones we have to use in daily life [K18]*". K13 and K24 stated the following on the benefits of the application for them:

> "*…We saw the setting, it was nice, it widened our horizon…*" [K13]

> "*It altered my perspective on English. I thought it was impossible for me to speak in English. I realized that if I put an effort, I could do it. I was not using English in daily life. Now I watch serials and movies, I listen to music. I would like to participate to such an application again.*" [K24]

One participant mentioned the significance of hearing. The participant indicated that hearing is important in learning languages and the present application could be beneficial for this purpose. Another participant stated that the difference of the application was a big achievement for her or him: "*…The environment in which we communicated was not monotonous like the classroom and let us move (talking, walking, etc.) more freely…*" [K24]

It was observed that the participant generally liked the application and found it useful, entertaining and didactic. It was considered that good general planning of the applications and the locations that were chosen for the activities were effective on the fact that the majority of the participants had positive views about the application.

Problems Participants Faced in Second Life Environment

Data obtained from feedback and SL learning experience surveys applied after the activities and interviews conducted with the participants at the end of the application were used to respond the second sub-problem of the present study. Descriptive analysis and content analysis methods were utilized in the analysis of abovementioned data. Based on the analysis results, the problems that participants faced were scrutinized under the themes of sound, Internet access,

insufficiency in speaking English, excitement – timidity, and participant recommendations about the application.

Sound: According to the study findings, nine participants stated that they experienced at least one problem about sound. K13 and K10 said that they experienced echo problems the most: *"...There is a sound problem. The voices echo. We lost sound on and off. I did not understand anything from what people said for this reason [K13]"*. In addition to these participants, four others also stated that they had the problem of sound cutoff. Participants indicated that they were not able to hear and comprehend what was said completely due to sound cutoff problems: *"...The sound was on and off. Due to the sound, it was difficult to understand what the other person said... [K21]"*, *"...Also I am having problems in hearing the voice of the teacher [K3]"*. One participant argued that this problem disappeared in time. Four participants stated that they experienced sound problems due to the microphone. Two of these participants stated the following: *"...The fact that microphones caused static sounds [K24]"*, *"I did not experience hardware problems, only I had to buy a new microphone since the microphone of my laptop was broken, in the beginning I had trouble in adjusting the volume of the microphone [K8]"*. Two participants considered that two individuals speaking at the same time created problems. These views were expressed as follows by the participants:

> *"... I could not understand when the other person's voice was not clear."* [K21]

> *"Since we did not see each other, sometimes we spoke altogether at the same time. "Nobody was able to make sense of what was being said."* [K24]

It was observed that the participants experienced problems in adjusting the volume, microphone and leaving the button on when their counterpart was speaking during voice calls in SL, however, they have resolved these problems in time.

Internet Access: It was observed that participants experienced various Internet access problems in the application. These were slow connection speeds, disconnections, inability to access the SL environment from the campus and power outages. It was observed that these problems affected the participation of students in the application. Participants stated the following on the issue:

"Images were loading slowly. I do not know exactly if that was due to Internet, but the display is not too good." [K13]

"I could not participate in two activities due to Internet, and another two due to my own chores." [K21]

Insufficiency in Speaking English: According to study findings, seven participants stated that they experienced problems in the application due to their low level of knowledge in English. These participants indicated that they had problems in comprehending and participating in conversations and thus, felt stressed. Some participant views supporting abovementioned angle are presented below:

"... Some friends were not speaking much. The teacher was not able to get responses to the questions he asked. This was a problem." [K13]

"I had problem in comprehending the teacher and was not able to participate in conversations." [K7]

Excitement–Timidity: Eight participants mentioned that they experienced excitement, timidity and fear of making mistake in the study: *"...The first week we were not able to speak, we were excited. We had the fear of saying a wrong world... [K10]"*, *"...In the beginning I was timid, but after a while, I got rid of it [K8]"*. One participant stated that (s)he preferred to write slowly on text-based chat when (s)he could not speak and this made the other party wait longer. In the application, it was observed that participants who were timid and excited had problems in completing the activities. It is considered that the problems the participants experienced with speech could be due to the fact that they were new in the environment and had little experience in verbal English.

Participant Recommendations: A review of participant recommendations on the application would demonstrate that their recommendations concentrated mostly on topics that could be chosen for applications. Two participants stated that selecting a course related to the department could improve the interest. One said: *"...If it was a class related to the department, interest and participation could be improved. There was not much interest for English [K13]"*. On the other hand, K7 said it would be helpful not to stay on one topic during the application process. Three participants stated that the application could be more productive in verbal courses. Participants stated the following on the subject:

"...It could be used for conversations in Turkish class." [K21]

"...One on one course instruction in verbal courses would be more beneficial." [K7]

"It would be more comfortable to use it in verbal courses." [K18]

Four participants stated that the application would be more successful when subjects that everyone could be active in would be selected. K13 argued that the application could be useful in different activities such as dance and swimming, while K24 argued that it could be more useful in the fields of science and technology. Two participants proposed interesting topics and daily affairs could be selected. One of these participants said *"The subjects that would be discussed should be determined before the application and these should be topics that are of interest for all. That way all can discuss [K12]"*. Participant K24 stated that it would be useful to conduct the activities in different environments: *"I do not like virtual environments that much. I would feel better if we do our discussions in SL in open fields, forests, mountains or seas"*.

Participants also had recommendations about the problems experienced in the application. Five participants indicated that individuals should take turns when speaking, because the voices were mixed with each other: *"I think that individuals should take turns in speaking, otherwise those who comprehend what is said response and the rest experience no improvement [K7]"*, *"It could be solved by those that would not talk turning off their microphones. The sound is mixed up."* [K1]

Participant K13 argued that it could be useful to conduct the activity and implement the examples after the course was instructed in real life. The same participant considered that it would be beneficial to write down all conversations in English and Turkish. It could be argued that this response was related to the fact that the participant was not able to comprehend the conversations that took place in voice calls. Similar to the views of this participant, K20 proposed that English language activity applications should be conducted with more advanced students and conversation activities should be used more in applications. K12 recommended that the application could be used for activities designed for introduction with different individuals. Participants also made recommendations about hardware problems they experienced. K13 stated that Internet connection must be speedier for the applications to be

more conducted more efficiently. K12 and K3 indicated that in-campus access should be given for the application.

Result, Discussion and Recommendations

During the present study, it was observed that the participants liked the foreign language instruction activities conducted on SL and followed these activities with interest. The most popular activities among the participants were ordering and narrating a place which was previously visited. It was observed that the activities were beneficial for the participants in gaining speech experience. Parallel to the findings in the present study, Jauregi et al. (2011) reported that activities and environments which are similar to daily life attracted more attention. Furthermore, Deutschmann et al. (2009) indicated that letter-perfect and realistic elements affected the commitment of the students to the environment positively.

In the application, participants mostly found the unlimited place and space, ability to interact with the objects available in the environment, movements and mimics that the avatars were able to do and the fact that the activities were conducted in related environments interesting. Similarly, in a study by Peterson (2012), it was reported that avatars used for language instruction encouraged the participants. Furthermore, avatars give a feeling of reality to the individuals and reflect the experiences closer to reality (Iqbal et al., 2010; Sanchez, 2009). Moreover, avatars affect the sense of presence of the participants and allow them to merge into the environment (Chung, Shearman, & Lee, 2003; Yee & Bailenson, 2007).

The participants found SL activities more different and interesting when compared to courses instructed in classroom. This finding was parallel to the findings by Koenraad (2008). Furthermore, the findings that conversations in the SL environment reduced the anxiety levels of the participants and increased their motivation were consistent with the findings in a study by Wehner et al. (2011). It was observed that the participants did not experience the problems they had in classroom environment in SL and they were more relaxed about this issue. This finding was similar to the study results by Bezir et al. (2011).

Participants stated that the English teacher comprehended them rather easily and tolerated their mistakes in an understanding manner. Furthermore, they indicated that the teacher guided them

perfectly in several activities. This finding was consistent with the finding reported by Medgyes (2001) that especially a teacher who spoke the same language with the students would understand their problems and could guide them with adequate techniques for the instruction of the target language. It was observed in the study that the participants were also had good communication with their peers in addition to the English teacher. Previous study results reported that SL promoted the communications and social interaction between users (Deutschmann et al., 2009; Mansour, Bennett, & Rude-Parkins, 2009).

It was observed that the participants experienced problems in speaking in English in the application. However, the participants stated that they considered the speaking experience in the environment important and their self-confidence in speech improved as a result of voice call activities. Self-confidence and motivation affects both each other and verbal skills in foreign language instruction (Chen & Lee, 2011; Cook, 2001; Soozandehfar, 2010; Stroud & Wee, 2006; Woodrow, 2006). Similar to these findings, studies in the literature reported that SL reduced the level of anxiety, increased motivation and developed individuals' verbal skills (Bezir, Çukurbaşı, & Karamete, 2011; Kaplan-Rakowski, 2011; Ortega et al., 2010; Sweeney et al., 2011).

It was observed that the participants predominantly experienced sound problems in SL environment. Another significant problem was the restriction of SL access in the campus. These results were consistent with the findings of other studies in the literature (Dudeney & Ramsay, 2009; Hislope, 2009; Sobkowiak, 2012).

As a result, it was observed that SL environment was generally liked and found useful in learning English by the participants and improved their verbal skills. If problems due to sound and Internet access could be resolved in the future, it was considered that educational use of SL will be more popular. Based on the data collected during the study, recognition of the following recommendations could be beneficial for the researchers in similar applications that would be conducted in SL environment:

- In future applications, implementing a pilot scheme would remove factors that limit the applications such as the lack of technical requirements and students would be able to conduct more applications and thus, the lack of experience will be minimized with pre-research applications.

- To maximize participation in further studies, the application could be considered as a part of the course and a curricula where the results would affect the grades of the participants could be designed.

- To maximize the student motivation in future applications and to increase the awareness of faculty on the advantages of the SL environment, inclusion of instructor faculty members in the application could be considered.

- In future applications, similar environments to locations that are important in foreign language instruction could be designed in SL environment and could be used in the applications.

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Oktay Cem Adiguzel, Onur Ergunay, Seray Tatli Dalioglu

Research Article

Investigating the Current and Future Functions of Primary Schools Based on Primary School Teachers' Opinions[1]

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Abstract

Serving to seed decency in children's manners in society, to help them adopt new habits and to expand their social skills and emotional features, the functions of primary schools are of great importance in building the society. Thus, the purpose of this study is to describe the goals and functions of 21st century primary schools based on the opinions of primary schools teachers. The study is conducted as part of an international research project. The research is designed as a qualitative study in order to describe the functions of primary schools from the perspectives of primary school teachers. In the study, the data is collected through semi-structured interviews from 20 volunteer primary school teachers working at different levels of primary schools located in Eskisehir, Turkey. Criterion and convenience sampling which are both categorized under purposeful sampling are used in determining the participants. The data obtained from the interviews is analysed through content analysis and the findings are presented under each

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research question. The findings of the research reveal that participant teachers emphasize three functions of primary schools as socialization, instruction and qualification. Nevertheless, socialization is perceived as the primary function of the primary schools, and functions of instruction and qualification follows it respectively. As for the findings related to role of families, teachers care about the cooperating with families especially in socialization issues.

Keywords: *Primary education, functions of schools, socialization, instruction, qualification*

Introduction

Schools have a prominent role in educating individuals in a society with desired and basic knowledge, skills, and behaviours. Even though education may be considered as a by-product of living in a society and several social institutions such as family, religion, and mass communication media, it is still the schools that provide a planned and programmed education in almost all societies (Bloom, 1979). Stating that every single concept that a society produces for itself is transferred to each individual through schools, Dewey (2010) believes that the best of any society for its own good can come true only in this way. An individual's cognitive, social, and professional skills and behaviours can be built on a fully developed personality (Altunya, 1995). Especially primary education has a tremendous influence on the development of children's social skills and emotional characteristics. In addition to social and emotional skills, primary schools also bear the most significant responsibility in improving children's cognitive skills such as knowing, understanding, analysing, applying, assessing, and creating (Genc, 2005). Primary schools teach literacy, mathematics, geography, and history to children in terms of cognitive skills (Dewey, 2010) as well as working to equip them with a rational and realistic point of view concerning the world and the society they live in (Egan, 2010).Taking the views mentioned above, primary schools may be described as performing three basic functions known as instruction, socialization, and qualification.

It is only the social skills that help children become a member of the society they dwell in, realize that they are a part of their society, and fulfil their social responsibilities. These social skills include building healthy relations with others, complying with social norms and rules, undertaking responsibilities, helping others, and using legal rights (Cubukcu & Gultekin, 2006). Primary schools are the base serving to seed decency in children's manners and attitudes, help them adopt new habits (Dewey, 2010), and expand their social skills and emotional features.

The expectations from primary schools are not limited to only improving children's cognitive skills and helping them socialize, they are also expected to guide them in actualizing their own potentials and establishing self-respect. Sanford and Donovan (1984) regard self-respect as a personality variable effective over different aspects of individuals' lives and as a prerequisite to cultivate a healthy personality (cited in Aydin and Guloglu, 2001). Advocating that an

individual must have self-respect to lead a productive and successful life, Maslow links this to two sources such as 'love, respect, and acceptance' that an individual welcomes from the others and 'feelings of success and competence' that an individual feels him/herself (Joseph, 1995; cited in Dogru and Peker, 2004). Thus, the foundation of educational programs may be based on facilitating the improvement of children's self-respect and personal differences in a positive way.

The educational program of primary schools in Turkey was designed in accordance with a realist and pragmatist philosophy based on a 'theme and process oriented approach' in the academic year of 2005 and 2006. As for realism, the main goal of education is to transmit the cultural legacy to new generations and to make individuals happy and virtuous by preparing them for social life (Sonmez, 2005). Thus, educational programs aim to provide individuals with not only cognitive skills but also values and norms easing compliance with the society. With regard to pragmatist philosophy, educational programs should host courses across all levels and practice should be favoured over theory through topics selected from real life (Sonmez, 2005). An overview of the weekly course plan of educational programs employed in primary schools shows that a total of 30 hours of lessons are completed each week. For the first graders, 26 of 30 hours are allocated for compulsory classes and four hours are spared for free activities while the compulsory classes take a total of 28 hours and only 2 hours are left for free activities weekly during the second and third grades. As for the fourth graders, no time is given for free activities and all 30 hours are used for compulsory classes. During the first three years of primary education, Turkish, Mathematics, and Social Studies comprise almost 65% of all the courses. Considering the fourth grade, the same rate continues with Science classes replacing Social Studies. This course outline used in primary schools may serve as a solid evidence as to how the program aims at cognitive skills. Developing social skills required for social harmony are conceived as secondary outcomes to be attained via activities conducted during the lessons. Moreover, the program contains no courses on choosing professional goals or about qualification function.

In spite of the fact that goals targeting to expand students' cognitive and social skills and emotional characteristics are noteworthy within the official educational programs of primary schools, it is hard to know how to attain goals concerning emotional features since the nature and development of emotional characteristics are not known clearly (Ozcelik, 2009). Thus, it

is not obvious both how to dress students with emotional features in educational settings and what affects these features. Also, to what extent installing and enhancing these characteristics are prominent components of educational goals. Considering the fact that the emotional goals determined for children are closely connected with social values, it is not wrong to state that teachers' values, beliefs, and perceptions of social values are also influential over this process. Therefore, it becomes more vital to discuss the functions of future primary schools via teachers' opinions.

This study is conducted as part of an international research project named "Instruction and Socialization among Primary School Teachers: An International Comparison" (ISEP-CI) which involves more than 30 researchers across 11 teams from seven different countries (Belgium, Canada, Chile, France, Mexico, Romania and Turkey). The aim of this study is to identify the goals of 21st century primary schools and the role of families in attaining these goals based on the opinions of primary school teachers. Accordingly, answers have been sought for the following two questions:

1. What do primary school teachers think about functions of primary schools?
2. What do primary school teachers think about the role of families in attaining the goals of primary schools?

Methodology

Research Model

This research was designed as a qualitative study which aimed to determine and describe teachers' opinions of the functions of education and schools. Qualitative studies involve interpretive and naturalistic approaches to the world in general and thus qualitative researchers try to make sense of or interpret the phenomena studied regarding the meanings people bring to them (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Yıldırım & Simsek, 2013). In this study, the opinions of primary school teachers were taken to describe the functions of schools and qualitative design was used in order to present a more detailed description based on teachers' own views and explore the phenomena in-depth. (Neuman, 2013).

Participants

The participants of the study are 20 primary school teachers working at various primary schools located in Eskisehir. They were determined through criterion sampling and convenience sampling both of which are classified under purposeful sampling methods that are commonly used in qualitative research (Yıldırım and Simsek, 2013). The criteria for determining the participant teachers are that they are all primary school teachers who teach in state schools in Eskisehir and expressed that they were volunteer to participate in the study. As for the convenience sampling, only the volunteer teachers who work in city centre were chosen, which can be stated as one of the limitations in the study.

Of all the participants, 16 are females and 4 are males. As for the age range, three are between 26 and 30, two are between 31 and 40, 12 are between 41 and 50, and three are over 51.The distribution of participants in terms of seniority is as follows: one has been working for less than 5 years, two for 6-to-10 years, 4 for 11-to-15 years, 7 for 16-to-20 years, and 6 for more than 21 years.

Data Collection

Data for the study was collected through semi-structured interviews. All the interviews were recorded and notes were taken during the interview by the researchers. The questions to be used in the interview form were prepared during a 3-day workshop organized based on the opinions and contributions of almost 30 experts working on ISEP-CI Project. As mandated by the theoretical framework of the study, the questions on the form are easy-to-understand, logically sequenced, and free of any kinds of direction. There are 13 key questions and some sub-questions concerning the meanings that teachers assign to the word 'education', how teachers perceive the functions of schools, the courses and the goals of these courses, the role of families within the education process, the problems that schools have to face, and relevant solutions. There are several samples of interview questions below:

- What do you think when you hear the word "education"?
- What does the school function (mission, role) of teaching knowledge (to instruct) mean to you?

- What does the school function (mission, role) of ensuring learning related to social life at school (to socialize) mean to you?
- In your view, what is the role of students' families in their education nowadays?

The consensus was to utilize this semi-structured interview form during all the interviews to be conducted across all the countries within the project. Then the form was translated into Turkish by three researchers independently and three versions were negotiated during follow-up meetings to reach a final translated counterpart for all the items in the form. Two pilot interviews were held to test the clarity of the questions, and the form was finalized following the last modifications.

Before contacting the participant teachers, official permission was taken from the local authority. Since the interviews were done in the primary schools where the teachers worked, permission was also taken from each school principal. The participants were contacted before the interviews and an interview schedule was prepared by the researchers according to the available time of the participants. A demographic information form and a consent form were asked to fill out by the participants prior to the interviews. They filled out the forms and approved participating in the study. All the interviews were done in quiet classrooms in the primary schools that the participants work in. In order to maintain consistency across the interviews, first two sessions were run by all three researchers, and a brief assessment meeting was organized subsequently. At the end of this meeting, it was clear for all the researchers what to be careful about during the interviews, and a common understanding was established. Afterwards, each researcher conducted the interviews on his/her own. All interviews lasted between 40-to-50 minutes and all were audio-recorded. Then all the records were transcribed and documented as they were, and all relevant analyses were completed on these transcripts.

Data Analysis

The core elements of qualitative data analysis include reducing the data into meaningful segments and assigning codes for each, combining the codes into themes and displaying them (Creswell, 2013). This procedure is also defined as content analysis which includes coding the data, categorizing them under themes, organizing them, and finally describing and interpreting them (Yildirim and Simsek, 2013). The data collected in the study were analysed through

content analysis. In this sense, first thematic codes were identified as a result of examining the data set in accordance with the conceptual framework. During data interpretation based on these codes, new themes emerging from the analysis were added to the code list, or old codes were replaced with the new ones. Frequency distributions were calculated for the detailed codes obtained after working on the data. After that the findings were described and interpreted.

Trustworthiness in qualitative research includes credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability, and reflects the quality of the study (Given and Saumure, 2008; Guba, 1981; Yıldırım and Simsek, 2013). For the credibility in the study, triangulation and peer review were used. The study was conducted by three researchers who work in the field of curriculum and instruction. One of them was an associate professor in the field of curriculum and education. The other researchers were doctoral students during the study period. As for triangulation, the study and the data coding was carried out by multiple investigators. In this sense, one of the authors coded and analysed the interviews first. These codes were taken as the primary analysis of the research. Then, the other two researchers also coded and studied the interviews independently, and a comparison across these codes was conducted. The consistency percentages between the first researcher and the other two authors were also calculated via Miles-Huberman (1994) formula. As for Miles and Huberman (1994), the consistency percentage must be 70 or higher. Thus, consensus meetings were held for each interview with a consistency percentage lower than 0.70 and these percentages were calculated again following these meetings. So, the consistency percentage between the first and second researcher increased up to 0.77 from 0.63 after discussions and negotiation sessions. Similarly, the consistency percentage between the first and the third author went up to 0.80 from 0.75 following the meetings. All these data reflect the credibility and consistency of codes. As for the peer review, the interview form was developed by nearly 30 scholars who collaborated in the project during an international meeting. As for the transferability, purposeful sampling was used and the findings were presented through rich descriptions. Finally, data collection tools, collected data and the analysis procedure were under the control of three researchers and the other project partners, which serves as the confirmability of the study.

Another issue for the trustworthiness is the ethics of the study (Merriam, 2009; Creswell, 2013). Ethical issues were considered in all phases of the study. Official permission was taken from the local authorities before data collection, all participants were informed about the purpose of

the study and signed the consent form. The confidentiality was provided in the study by taking the privacy of the participants' information and data into consideration.

Findings

Findings Regarding the Research Question: "What do primary school teachers think about the functions of primary schools?"

Initially, teachers' opinions about the functions of schools were identified. The aim was to understand what basic goals of schools were of prior importance for teachers and also to analyse the meanings that teachers attributed to schools. Teachers' answers were thematically coded through meticulous study, and the most frequent responses are presented in Table 1:

Table 1
Teachers' Opinions about the Functions of Schools

Opinions	The number of teachers
Socialization	
- To guide students develop attitudes and behaviours necessary to fit in with the environment they live in.	19
- To improve students' reflective and critical thinking skills and to enhance their autonomy.	16
- To structure students to comply with social rules and norms through discipline.	13
Instruction	
- To furnish students with knowledge necessary to facilitate their liberation process.	19
- To provide opportunities where theoretical knowledge in the program can be put into practice.	10
- To provide a dense education loaded with information in order to help students actualize their autonomy.	3
Qualification	
- To provide opportunities where students can actualize and improve themselves, and where they can achieve happiness in a coercion-free environment.	18
- To guide students in planning their future in order to be successful.	18
- To help students prepare for their professional life.	16

As clearly shown in Table 1, teachers' opinions concerning the functions of schools can be classified under three titles such as 'socialization', 'instruction', and 'qualification'. Socialization function seems to be the most frequent one mentioned by the participants. On the

contrary, teachers referred to the qualification function rather less frequently compared to the others. More detailed analyses regarding these themes were conducted via deeper questions.

Findings regarding teachers' opinions about the socialization function of schools

As for the socialization function of schools, the participating teachers underlined that schools should guide students develop attitudes and behaviours necessary to fit in with the environment. Following is one of the related quotations from the interviews:

> *"I mean, in the end, it will help him/them adapt to his/her environment. Isn't this the aim of life? The one who complies with the environment and who can deal with the problems in the environment will stand, not the strongest one."* (P7, 920)

Another point that teachers underpinned with respect to socialization function of schools is that students' reflective and creative thinking skills should be improved. One example quotation is as follows:

> *"… I help them keep up with what is going on in our society. For instance, we talk and exchange opinions about the daily news every morning. Or, I introduce en event either from our country or from the world, and we talk and discuss about it like, why is it like this, how should it have been, what are the problems here, etc... I think they should be treated as adults and directed to criticize the current issues."* (P5, 715)

Teaching social norms and rules to students through disciplining them is another opinion stated about the socialization function during the interviews:

> **"***I keep saying that this is school. Every place has its own rules. Homes are no exception. Wherever we go, wherever we are, in the car, on the bus, there are rules. If you are at a hospital, there are some specific rules. Life turns out into an asylum without these rules. Thus, we have to comply with the rules where we are."* (P1, 36)

Table 2 displays other opinions stated by the participants about the socialization function of schools and the frequency of each opinion:

Table 2

Teachers' Opinions as to How Schools Should Perform Its Socialization Function

Opinions	The number of teachers
- Firstly, it should focus on cultural characteristics.	8
- Firstly, it should focus on approving and accepting cultural and ethnic variety in the society	8
- It should inoculate social norms and rules about citizenship to students.	5
- Firstly, it should be one of the responsibilities of schools.	5
- Firstly, it should be one of the responsibilities of families.	5
- It should not be a process limited with schools.	3

An examination of Table 2 reveals that a majority of teachers noted that the socialization function of schools should focus on cultural characteristics:

> *"In my opinion, one of the responsibilities of schools is to introduce students with social environments and to keep them there, and to organize many relevant activities. Social activities, going to movies and dramas, other settings such as interviews and symposiums all contribute a lot to school life. And I say that schools should do more of them."* (P5, 725)

Another idea underpinned by a significant portion of the participants is that schools should ease approval and acceptance of cultural and ethnic differences in a society through socialization function:

> *"Other people should not be pressured. I will never forget one incidence, and I can say that I am, now, barely conscious about that. There was a Jewish friend at the university. No one used to make friends with him. He spent all four years alone. Why? Because he was Jewish. Now, it sounds really ridiculous, but we did it at that time. Why did we behave like that, because of his ethnic identity, the kid was excluded because of his belief. Is this necessary? We are all humans in the end."* (P1, 174)

Moreover, some of the participating teachers think that socialization function should serve teaching social norms and rules to students as part of citizenship training:

> *"The main function of schools is to raise good people, qualified people, then good family members, be it the father or the mother, then good citizens and a good world citizen."* (P1, 12)

When the participants were asked about the roles of families and schools in terms of socialization function, they stated that the primary role belonged to schools:

"*I think all kinds of settings helping students improve should be arranged because children first socialize at schools. So, schools should be the primary environment. (...) Schools should be the number one choice for everything about socialization.*" (P11, 1509)

However, some other teachers emphasized that socialization should not be a responsibility of schools only; instead, families should also bear a major role:

"*It is a duty for all of us, it is not schools' responsibility only; kids need to pick up several things from their families in order to fit in with the environment...They should stand on their own feet, and shoulder some responsibilities. If these are not provided by families, then we go through difficulties at schools. It is just like the legs of a trivet, they should also be involved. Accordingly, families should definitely help teachers and schools to help kids adapt to their environment.*" (P9, 1206)

Findings regarding teachers' opinions about the instruction function of schools

Another topic that teachers frequently mentioned is the schools' function in helping children improve cognitively. The participants noted that schools should facilitate students in terms of living freely by instructing them with information necessary and useful in their lives.

"*...the more they know the freer they will be. The more they know, the freer they are, the better they will express themselves and the more confident they will be. I honestly think that knowledge makes them free.*" (P5, 697)

Based on teachers' opinions, practicality of information stands as a major point in terms of schools' instruction function:

"*For sure, knowledge matters a lot, but we shouldn't focus only on knowledge. Children should know how to apply the knowledge. I think mere information, as I said earlier, doesn't mean much. They need to know how and when to make use of that information.*" (P4, 605)

In addition, some of the teachers advocated that students should go through information-oriented instruction so that they can reflect their autonomy:

"I believe students should be equipped with necessary information to pick up new skills, to achieve something on their own, to express themselves, to be independent, and briefly to fight and survive." (P9, 1192)

Moreover, teachers' answers as to what kind of information schools should mainly provide are grouped under five sub-themes in Table 3.

Table 3

Teachers' Opinions about the Instruction Function of Schools

Opinions	The number of teachers
- Primarily, it should focus on the practicality of information.	7
- Primarily, it should focus on improving techniques and skills related with daily lives.	7
- Primarily, it should focus on enhancing students' critical thinking skills.	5
- Primarily, it should focus on learning techniques and skills.	5
- Primarily, it should focus on instructing the topics in the educational program.	3

As depicted in Table 3, teachers think that schools should improve the use of information in daily life by focusing on developing relevant techniques and skills:

"*I believe it should be about everything we make use of in our social lives, for instance, they should be able to cook, I don't know, maybe, we should prepare a game or a drama with students, it may always be in the game format, not like making them memorize information, or transferring the information as it is, but helping them to be creative and functional (...) it could be anything that they can put into practice.*" (P17, 2329)

Furthermore, the participants also underlined that students' critical thinking skills and learning techniques and skills should be expanded as well as spreading the use of information to practical life:

"*we should show them how to access information, information oriented, I guess there is no instruction like that, ways to access information. We should not give them fish, teach them how to fish.*" (P3, 481)

Although few in number, still some teachers reported that instruction function of schools should primarily focus on transferring the information in the educational program to the students:

"yes, the information specified in the program should be taught; of course, the schools will have a function at that point." (P18, 2553)

When the participants were asked to give solid examples as to what kind of information should be taught, they produced examples that could be grouped under five types in Table 4.

Table 4

Teachers' Opinions Concerning the Kinds of Information that Should Mainly Be Taught at Schools

Opinions	The number of teachers
- Information necessary for students to fulfil their social functions (tolerating others, listening, being open to differences, etc.)	14
- Information necessary for mental development (critical thinking, scientific approach, analytic capacity, etc.)	6
- Information necessary to make sense of the development of mankind's cultural, scientific, and historical legacy (significant historical events, main artistic fields of work, great inventions, etc.)	6
- Information regarding the nature and humanity surrounding the students (earthquakes, global warming, etc.)	6
- Information that will be necessary for their professional career in the future (group work, effective communication, info-communication technologies, etc.)	4

Table 4 indicates that most of the participating teachers think that schools should primarily teach information necessary for students to perform their social functions:

"Efforts to turn students into individuals who consider others' rights, who know about children's rights, who have a sense of rights, and who can claim their rights at least at high school level..." (P8, 1128)

On the other hand, some underpinned the necessity of information that helps students' mental development, the improvement of mankind's cultural, scientific and historical legacy, and that is relevant with the nature and humans surrounding students:

"students should know that their existence is defined with many other life forms in the world, that the world is continuously evolving, that they should become a part of the world, that the same is true for schools on a micro scale. I mean children should be aware of survival rights of other creatures, and should recognize that humans need the creatures they destroy, but other creatures do not need humans.... Therefore, they should perceive the world holistically. For instance, modern children should know the size of their carbon footprint. I mean you can't learn that by only turning off the lights. It is not that simple." (P8, 1126)

Another small group of participants stated that schools should primarily teach information that will be necessary in terms of students' future professional careers through its instruction function:

> "Primarily the information that will be useful for students, the society, and the country. But, first of all for themselves. Thus, we claim that each individual should be trained in accordance with his or her own interests and skills. Therefore, primarily the information that will guarantee them a profession and a good future…" (P15, 2124)

Findings regarding teachers' opinions about the qualification function of schools

During the interviews, teachers emphasized the functions of instruction and socialization more often than qualification. Yet, three noteworthy opinions were recorded about qualification. A significant number of participants underlined that schools should provide opportunities where each child can actualize and improve him/herself, and become happy in a coercion free environment:

> "The goal of education is to guarantee the happiness of the nation, society, and individuals." (P15, 2091)

Besides, teachers also mentioned that schools should facilitate students in planning their future in order to be successful later in life:

> "Yes, education may also focus on planning future because we are generally late helping kids shape their future, especially for choosing their careers. It should be like right after the secondary school, and kids should choose their branches in the high school." (P10, 1323)

Lastly, the participants noted that primary schools should offer help to students in order to prepare for professional world:

> "...actually, I train them in this direction, preparing them for their future careers; I constantly tell them that they need to study more, and they need to have a job in the future because this is how education is perceived in our society... In Turkey, in the society we live in, this is a must. Thus, this turns out to be my first goal." (P5, 691)

Findings regarding the research question: "What do primary school teachers think about the roles of families in attaining the goals of primary schools?"

As mentioned earlier, teachers underpinned the significance of family involvement in furnishing students with social skills. Families keep up their role as a major partner in education not only during preschool, but also throughout primary school. Teachers' answers concerning the role of families in education are grouped across five themes in Table 5.

Table 5

Teachers' Opinions about the Role of Families in Education

Opinions	The number of teachers
- Families should partake in students' social development (confidence, freedom, etc.)	13
- Families should cooperate with schools	8
- Families should be responsible to follow students' homework assignments	7
- Families should help children learn the importance and function of schools	6
- Families should teach children to obey the social norms and rules	5

As can be seen in Table 5, a great majority of the participants think that the role of families in education should mostly be helping their children improve their social skills and be socially functional:

> *"Sometimes schools can fall short in terms of socialization. Let me give you an example; some schools have swimming pools used for swimming courses. If the school doesn't have such facilities, families should provide support here. I value socialization more than others, I mean."* (P4, 624)

Another bigger portion of teachers noted that families should cooperate with schools as part of their responsibilities:

> *"Of course, the families and schools should cooperate. They shouldn't have a broken relationship. It shouldn't be too close of a relationship though, like it is in our schools. In that case, families, either one of the parents, get involved in more things than necessary. As teachers, you can't feel free then."* (P9, 1270)

Furthermore, some teachers said that families should also be responsible for the monitoring of homework assignments:

> *"It is very important. Sure, the role of families can't be instruction of a topic. The difficulty level of homework assignments should be within the reach of students so that they can do the homework. Families' responsibility is to create a suitable study environment, which is quite, mild, and adequately lighted. They should provide this."* (P19, 2739)

As for some of the participants, the role of families in education is to help children understand the function and importance of schools:

> *"One more thing, I expect families not to reflect their negative feelings and opinions about education and school onto their children."* (P4, 624)

Another role of families, as mentioned by the participants, is to teach the social norms and rules to their children:

> *"Families should teach certain things to their children until the age of 5, and control them as well. They should support their children, but also they should establish some rules at home ....there must be some ground rules. Kids are having trouble complying with the rules at school if there is no rule in the family. Therefore, there have to be some rules."* (P9, 1268)

Discussion, Conclusion and Suggestions

What are the goals and functions of education and schools? No accurate list of goals and functions that educational philosophers agree upon has been produced yet as an answer to this question. Current research aims to determine teachers' perceptions about primary schools' functions. In this regard, semi-structured interviews have been held with teachers, and it has been noted that teachers mostly emphasize three functions of education, which are socialization, instruction, and qualification. The ways how the teachers, as the actual implementers and one of the stakeholders group, perceive the curriculum can be considered as an important aspect in such that they may possibly reveal how the curriculum comes into being in the classrooms. In a recent one of such studies, Kruger, Won & Treagust (2013) investigated teachers' perceptions on the changes of in the curriculum of K-10 schools in Australia and found that teachers welcomed the added contents that leaded students to learn about how the topics can be applied to their daily lives. This finding of the study is compatible with the overall perceptions of the participant teachers of the current research on the functions of schools, in

that most of the teachers, as regard to function of instruction, emphasized the practicality of the information presented in the curriculum.

Since the aims of education and functions of schools has been a challenging and controversial issue for ages, each philosophy has a different answer for the issue (Turan, 2010). According to one approach, the goal of schools is "to transfer the dominant cultural values distilled since the beginning of history to students, and to help them comply with the society in this way" whereas another perspective considers the goal of schools as "to teach the constantly changing aspects of life, rather than stable and conventional standards in a society"(Neill, 1990; cited in Kiraz, Demir, Aksu, Daloglu, &Yildirim, 2010).The aims of education were also discussed by Webster (2009) from a Deweyan perspective and focusing on 'personhood of the learner' is emphasized as the runner of the curriculum. He asserted that the learners should be seen as social beings and aims should primarily be designed to feed these social beings, rather than emphasizing the benefits of teaching only for effective learning or transmitting knowledge (Webster, 2009). This point of view was also emphasized by the teachers participated in the current study as most of them suggested the view "*furnishing students with knowledge that facilitates their liberation process*" in concern with the instruction function of schools. The view was also supported by the perception of the teachers on qualification function of schools, in that nearly all of them considered function of qualification as "*providing opportunities where students can actualize and improve themselves, and where they can achieve happiness in a coercion-free environment.*"

As for teachers, socialization function of schools has three dimensions such as helping children fit in with their environment, improving students' reflective-creative thinking skills and autonomy, and teaching social norms and rules through discipline. In their study investigating what school administrators think about the goals of education, Kucuk and Polat (2013) concluded the following results: "furnishing students with skills necessary in life", "matching the behaviours students acquire with the goals of society", "raising individuals loving their nation and country", and "equipping children with desired behaviours." The findings of this study examining the opinions of school administrators are mostly consistent with the present research studying the opinions of teachers. In both studies, socialization function refers to complying with the society and the environment and developing suitable behaviours. However, improving students' reflective-critical thinking skills and enhancing their autonomy are the

aspects that only teachers in this research, but not administrators in Kucuk and Polat's (2013) study, mentioned concerning the socialization function.

Analysis of teachers' opinions regarding the socialization function reveals that teachers think that socialization should focus on the approval and acceptance of cultural characteristics and cultural and ethnic varieties. Furthermore, teachers also underline the role of families in helping students gain social functionality. In this sense, teachers believe that socialization is not only schools' responsibility; rather it is a process to be completed in cooperation with families.

Another point that teachers underpinned about the socialization function is that norms and rules concerning citizenship training should also be taught to students via this function. This finding is consistent with those of Kucuk and Polat's (2013) study, too. Similarly, this is also parallel with conclusions of Esen's (2005) in which teachers were found to identify the goals of education as "transmission of social and ethical values" and "raising virtuous and honest individuals."

Along with socialization function aiming to help students comply with the society, schools also fulfil the function of instruction. What construct the foundation of educational programs are some crucial questions such as "What information is more necessary than others?", "What should students be taught first?", and "What information is valuable in a society?" (Gutek, 1988). In this research, examination of teachers' opinions concerning the instruction function of schools has yielded that teachers mostly think that schools should provide information that will facilitate students' liberation process.

Teachers believe that instruction should focus on developing students' critical thinking skills. Besides, teachers have been identified to prefer teaching practical information and learning techniques and skills, rather than an instruction process loaded heavily with information. In this sense, teachers value acquisition of different ways to access information and "learning how to learn" more than directly pouring information into students.

A closer look at teachers' opinions about the qualification function of schools indicates that teachers generally emphasize providing opportunities where students can actualize themselves and plan their future. Furthermore, teachers also noted the significance of preparing students

for their professional life with respect to qualification function. These findings are compatible with those of Kucuk and Polat's (2013) study in which they investigated the schools administrators' opinions about the goals of education. Kucuk and Polat (2013) concluded that school administrators regarded education as a means of raising members of professions and preparing students for the business world. Similarly, some of the views noted by the teachers in current study seem parallel with the findings in Winch's (2002) study. He remarked the economic aims of education as important in a society from both an individual and a social perspective by noting that students should be encouraged both to realise their own goals in life and to be part of the society economically. The perceptions of teachers in current study similarly reflects these views, in that most teachers considers qualification function as guiding students in planning their future in order to be successful and helping them prepare themselves for their professional life.

As for the information that should be taught at schools, teachers have been determined to think that firstly the information necessary for social functions should be instructed, which compatible with the findings is obtained about the socialization function. Along with social functions, teachers stated that instruction should also include information necessary for children's mental development. Other aspects that participating teachers emphasized concerning the kinds of information to be instructed primarily at primary schools are those that are necessary to understand the evolution of cultural, scientific, and historical legacy and that are relevant to human life and nature. In addition, the participants also stated the significance of practical professional information. The fact that teachers noted the necessity of practical information related with professional life indicates that the qualification function of schools is also considered important by the participants.

Teachers' opinions regarding the role of families in education were another aspect of the current study. Findings have pointed out that teachers consider the role of families in education as taking responsibility in completing social functions and cooperating with schools. Responsibility in monitoring homework assignments and inculcating the importance/function of schools in children are two other aspects of teachers' opinions about the role of families, which reveals that teachers care about cooperating with families. This is totally compatible with the findings of Argon and Kiyici (2012), Celenk (2003), and Gokce (2000), who examined the opinions of teachers. In these studies, teachers, initially, noted the vitality of cooperating with

families, and stated that parent support was definitive for this cooperation. Nevertheless, analysis of teachers' opinions shows that families are expected to be less dominant than teachers in terms of instruction function. As for teaching social norms and rules, some teachers believe that families' role is prior than that of schools, and any malfunctions on part of families to perform this role harms the processes of socialization and instruction at schools. Views on the collaboration with families were also stated in Forster's (2012) study focusing on the codes of ethics in Australian education. She valued paying regard to multiple voices including teachers, students and their families in constructing a new society (Forster, 2012). With regard to this issue, Boon (2011) and Cohen (2006) stated that the overall beliefs that values education mainly be carried out under the responsibility of families and other stakeholders had recently been abandoned. Thus, they emphasized collaborative work among teachers, families and other stakeholders.

Briefly, participating teachers have emphasized socialization, instruction, and qualification as three main functions of education. Furthermore, teachers' opinions can also be interpreted as socialization function should be emphasized more and the information provided within instruction function should be more practical. These perceptions of participant teachers are highly consistent with the views of Cohen (2006), in that he considered overemphasizing literacy/mathematical learning and neglecting socialization processes as among the educational problems in the United States.

In conclusion, upon being asked to rank the functions of socialization and instruction in terms of importance, teachers stated that both were crucial. However, one possible way to interpret the overall findings is to conclude that teachers care more about socialization than instruction and qualification respectively. This ultimate finding of the current research was highly supported in several studies. Seligman, Ernst, Gillham, Reivicha and Linkins (2009) and Ong (2013) described such a process by using the term "positive education", in which social, emotional, behavioural development, happiness and life satisfaction are aimed to be achieved. Similar views were also highlighted by Hinchliffe (2001) and Diamond's (2010) studies, in that they both proposed a fundamentally and multiply interrelation among the aspects of academic achievement, social-emotional competence, physical and mental health, which goes parallel with the aspects, namely socialization, instruction and qualification, of education discussed from the perspectives of teachers in current study.

The study also has some limitations in that the data reflects only the views of 20 primary school teachers who taught in city centre of Eskisehir, Turkey. In other words, the views of other stakeholders such as the parents, school directors or local authorities and students were not taken in the study. The same design in different regions may be carried out in order to describe the same issue and compare the results in further studies. The issue may also be focused on through collecting data from other stakeholders of the issue. Mixed designs which include gathering both qualitative and quantitative data from larger groups of participants may be used and the differences in the opinions of various stakeholders for different variables may be examined in further studies.

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İbrahim Hakkı Acar, Süleyman Yıldız

Research Article

Professional Development of Elementary School Teachers through Online Peer Collaboration: A Case Study[1]

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Abstract

The purpose of the current case study is to explore the influence of online peer collaboration among Turkish elementary school teachers in order to gain an understanding of the contributions from online peer collaboration to teachers' professional development. For the purpose this study, online peer collaboration is defined as online support provided by teachers to one another through a web-based professional development platform called "Learner-Teachers". This case study involves eight volunteer elementary school teachers who have been involved in "Learner-Teachers" online peer collaboration professional development process. Qualitative data collection consisted of semi-structured interview and utilizing teachers' online entries on the web-based exchange platform. Open coding method and entry analyses were done as data analyses. Four main themes emerged from the current study: 1) Satisfaction with peer collaboration 2) Usefulness of online peer collaboration 3) Improvement of classroom teaching methods and techniques 4) Improvement of classroom management skills. Overall, teachers who participated the online peer collaboration appeared to benefit from this

collaboration in their personal and professional development. The importance of peer collaboration via online tools are discussed.

Keywords: Online peer collaboration, professional development, elementary school teachers, Case Study

Introduction

Teaching has been considered an important profession for centuries across all cultures. Children are considered to be the future of communities are guided and developed by teachers; therefore, teaching can be considered as backbone of a society as well as a prestigious profession among all others. Teachers are not only in charge of the academic development of children but also social, cognitive, and other aspects of development (Farmer, McAuliffe, & Hamm, 2011; McNergney and Carrier, 1981; Merell, Ervin, & Gimpell, 2006). From this point of view, teacher can be defined as a guide or supporter for children's learning, knowledge, and experiences in an educational setting (Demirel, 2007).

Teachers often use a variety of learning methods and techniques to deliver their subject content as well as assess the learning process to assure whether children in their classrooms have gained preset learning objectives (MacFarlane and Woolfson, 2013; Pianta, La Paro, & Hamra, 2008; Stes, Coertjens, & van Petegem, 2010). To gain better understanding of classroom processes, teachers need to have sufficient professional development through both formal education in college and non-formal education platforms such as workshops, seminars, and peer collaborations (Hildebrandt and Eom, 2011; Rigelman abd Ruben, 2012). While significant attention has been paid to the importance of professional development for teachers in the Western World (e.g, My Teaching Partner-MTP; Pianta, Mashburn, Downer, Hamre, & Justice, 2008) in relation to better teacher and child outcomes, there is a lack of research investigating professional development of teachers via peer collaboration in Turkey. Considering the importance of the professional development of teachers, the current study aimed to explore peer collaboration among elementary school teachers. A case study approach was used to examine an online professional learning community and its effects on professional development of teachers.

The Importance of Teachers in Education

Teachers play an important role in children's social, academic, cognitive, and well-regulated behavior development (Hännikäinen & Rasku-Puttonen, 2010; Zurek, Torquati, & Acar, 2014). Teachers are responsible for providing a supportive environment whereby children learn how to behave appropriately, grasp concepts, develop self-esteem, use classroom materials, and

establish positive peer interactions. In this vein, teacher-child relationships are paramount in the learning process of children (Hännikäinen and Rasku-Puttonen, 2010). Teachers, use different strategies including questioning, play, and hands-on activities to teach main classroom subjects and manage preschool children's behaviors (de Rivera et al., 2005; Hännikäinen, et al., 2010; Lee et al., 2012; Rosemberg and Silva, 2009). Besides learning strategies, teachers use behavior management skills to maintain the learning process and motivate children during learning activities (Dobbs-Oates et al., 2011; Hännikäinen, et al., 2010). Briefly, quality teaching and behavior management strategies help teachers to deliver educational concepts to the children and manage children's behaviors.

Hännikäinen et al. (2010) conducted an ethnographical investigation to examine the role of teachers' involvement in preschool and primary school children's learning activities. They also investigated teachers and children's roles in learning activities. The researchers observed (approximately 100 hours of observation) toddler and preschooler's interactions with their teachers in teacher-led learning settings. The researchers categorized data into three clusters: 1- "participation and joint learning in preschool", 2- "participation and joint learning in primary school", and 3- "similarities and differences" (p. 151). Findings from the study (Hännikäinen et al., 2010) showed that teachers supported children's learning motivation by providing a comfortable environment and facilitating children's active participation in teacher-led activities. Teachers encouraged children to exhibit prosocial behaviors, such as helping each other and taking turns. Teachers' role modeling of well-mannered behaviors (i.e., offering help, providing feedback) was observed as a motivator of primary school children's active participation in the activities. Teachers provided feedback for children's learning to motivate their interactive participation. In addition, teachers in preschools used less complicated conversation styles than those in primary schools. Both preschool and primary school teachers promoted children's active participation through encouragement and guidance of learning process. Findings suggest that teachers' facilitation through different strategies in preschool and elementary school years may help children's prosocial behavior and early concept development. Positive teacher-child interactions are also important for both teacher and children to have positive learning atmosphere in classroom settings.

In line with previous research (Hännikäinen et al., 2010), Mashburn et al. (2008) investigated how teachers' instructional support and emotional support influence children's social and

language skills. Findings from their study revealed that teacher's emotional support was positively associated with children's social competence and negatively associated with children's problem behaviors. Quality of teacher's instructional support was associated with children's receptive language skills, rhyming, applied problems, and letter naming. The findings provide evidence that teachers' effective instructional support in classrooms is important for development of children's language and academic skills. The findings also provide evidence that children's social behaviors are influenced by teachers' emotional support in classroom.

Considering effectiveness of teachers in children's development and learning, teachers should be trained and supported though professional development programs on their classroom processes. Therefore, the following section discusses the professional development of teachers.

Professional Development of Teachers and Its Effects on Child Outcomes

The quality of an education system is undoubtedly rooted in its teachers who are considered the basic foundation of the system. For this reason, there is always a need for professionally developed teachers. The professional development of a teacher is closely related to his/her willingness to teach, motivation, interpersonal relationships, environmental support (e.g., peer, authority, and institutional support) (Hildebrandt and Eom, 2011; Stes, Coertjens, & Van Petegem, 2010). As it is in Turkey, the central monitoring system of teacher training programs may impede professional development of teachers or undermine their desire to engage in professional development. Nevertheless, professional development of a teachers will be reflected upon children's achievement (Lee, Kinzie, & Whittaker, 2013).

In today's world, it is ideal to think that teachers should have microteaching knowledge and competence in order to increase quality of their teaching skills as well as learning processes of children in their classrooms. Development of teachers' professional development through microteaching competences has been increasingly valued in educational institutions (Demirel, 2000).

Stes and colleagues (2010) found that teachers who were able to develop themselves in terms of teaching methods and techniques had higher levels of motivations to teach in the classroom

than teachers who were limited to professionally developing themselves. Similarly, Lee et al. (2012) conducted a quasi-experimental study on teachers' open-ended questioning and pre-k children's language use. The researchers assigned treatment and control groups of teachers. The treatment group consisted of teachers who received blended and open-ended questioning support via electronic and face-to-face workshops (n=11). Teachers who received only curricula support were designated as a control group (n=15). Thirty-five teachers were divided into 3 groups; the first group (n=11) received curricula and blended supports, which are trainings for teacher to learn how to use questions effectively in classroom. In addition to the curricula support, this group of teachers also received open-ended questioning support in the form of workshops to provide information about what kinds of questions they should use and how they should use these types of questions through December and January. The second, control group of teachers (n= 15) received only the curricula support. The third group of teachers (n= 9) received neither curriculum support nor blended and open-ended questioning support; they only applied their district's (mid-Atlantic State) curricula. The researchers provided the science curriculum (earth science, inquiry-based activities) derived from MTP-Math/Science curricular package (Kinzie, et al., 2009) to teachers for use in science activities in classrooms. Researchers conducted web-based workshops to provide professional development for the treatment group and in-person workshops were used to train quality questioning during months of December through February. Researchers (Lee et al., 2012) found that treatment group teachers' open-ended questions were significantly different from the control group teachers' open-ended questions use. In addition, they found significant results as following: Students in the treatment group produced a larger number of words in response to teacher's questions than the students in the control group. Support for teachers' open-ended questioning were significant mediators of student's use of complex sentences (Syntactic complexity) (95% CI .077, .893); however, it was not a significant mediator for other types of utterances. This study showed that professional development through web-based and in-person workshops helped teachers use effective teaching techniques such as open-ended questions and which in turn influenced on children's language use and syntactic complexity (use of complex sentences).

In addition to pre-structured tools, teachers also use peer-based tools for professional development (Lu, 2010; Manouchehri, 2002). Previous research has shown that academic and motivational peer-support was effective for preservice teachers' professional development (Lu,

2012). Peer collaboration among teachers has also been found to help improve their teaching techniques, problem solving skills, and mathematical teaching skills (Manouchehri, 2002). Overall, quality peer support appears to have positive effects on teachers' professional development, which in turn helps children in their classrooms to have better social and academic outcomes.

Considering increasing utilization of online tools such as social media, webinars, and Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) as part of professional development of teachers, exploration of utilization of an online peer collaboration of Turkish elementary school teachers will shed a light on understanding of how online peer-support may help teacher's professional development. In addition, the current study may provide implications for professional development of teachers in Turkey.

Learner-Teachers Online Peer Collaboration Project

Learner-Teachers project is presented as an opportunity for elementary school teachers who are new in their careers to develop their classroom teaching and behavior management skills through peer collaboration. In addition, the project also aimed to help advanced teachers recognize mistakes they have made in classrooms as well as share their experiences with teachers who are new in their careers. Overall, this project has helped teachers develop their professional competencies and exchange experiences/ideas with their colleagues. This project can be considered as microteaching which has steps of planning, teaching, getting feedback, re-planning, re-teaching, and re-feedback. This cycle of microteaching continues as a teacher develops his/her classroom teaching and management skills (McAleese, 1973).

Although the project began in Arnavutkoy, Istanbul as part of the District National Educational Directorate, it has been opened to teachers from all over Turkey. It allows teachers to upload their classroom videos (each about 30-40 minutes long) to an online platform so peers across from Turkey could watch the video online and comment; as well provide feedback about target teachers' classroom behaviors including his/her teaching skills, behavioral management skills, and effective questioning types. In addition, if a teacher wanted, he or she could complete an evaluation form which includes a feedback section for each part of the classroom processes such as introduction to a subject, approach to children during teaching, providing active

participation of children, and time management. Examining these teachers' process of the online collaboration for their professional development will shed a light on understating of the importance of using online platform in teachers' professional development. In addition, this study will reveal underlying characteristics of online collaboration among teachers for their professional development, which can be used by teacher development and training programs.

The Current Study

The purpose of this qualitative case study is to explore the influence of online peer collaboration among Turkish elementary school teachers in order to gain an understanding of the contributions from online peer collaboration to teachers' professional development. For the purpose this study, online peer collaboration is defined as online support provided by teachers to one another through a web-based professional development platform called "Learner-Teachers". The central research question for this study is: *How has online peer collaboration impacted the professional development of elementary school teachers?* In addition, the following sub-questions were addressed: *In what areas does online peer collaboration help elementary school teachers?* And *what perceptions do elementary school teachers have about online peer collaboration as a tool for professional development?*

Methodology

Rationale for Qualitative Case Study

Qualitative research allows researchers to bring meaning to natural phenomena as part of the emerging actions or events (Merriam, 2009). In addition, Creswell (2013) stated that qualitative research is appropriate to explore a complex problem in an in-depth level. Further, case studies are suitable when the purpose of a study essentially seeks to explore how things have become the way they are (Merriam, 2009). Considering the purpose of the current study is to examine effectiveness of online peer collaboration on elementary school teachers' professional development, the qualitative case study is the best fit design.

Participants

In a case study, sampling takes a place in two levels. First, identifying the case in terms of its boundaries and second, identifying instances of the pre-identified case that will allow the researcher to investigate the case in-depth level (Merriam, 2009). The case for the current study was defined as peer collaboration of elementary teachers on a web-based platform. Creswell (2013) recommends using purposeful sampling which is considered to be a form of variation sampling. In this type of sampling, the researcher identifies the participants that reflect strong and weak aspects of the researched phenomena. Considering the criteria, the current study recruited eight elementary school teachers who have been involved in "Learner-Teachers" online peer collaboration professional development process. The participants were contacted by the secondary investigator and consents were obtained from eight participants to take ethical consideration into account. All participants were from elementary schools in a suburban district of Istanbul. Three of the participants were female and five were male. All of the teachers had college degree in elementary education and one had a post-graduate degree in education.

Data Collection Tool and Procedures

Case study designs allow researchers to utilize multiple ways of collecting data (Yin, 2003). Utilizing a variety of methods for data collection allows for triangulation of the qualitative data which provides evidence of credibility for validation of the data (Creswell, 2013). In addition, Yin (2003) claims that using multiple data sources in a case study strengthens understanding and complexity of variables regarding researched phenomena. With all these in mind, the current case study used two forms of data collection. We developed a semi-structured interview and utilized teachers' online entries on the web-based exchange platform. Interviews with eight elementary teachers from different subject areas were completed by asking open-ended questions regarding their development through the online peer collaboration. We also examined these teachers' entries on the online platform. These entries included teachers' comments and feedback they provided for each other as well as other participants on the system. This process is parallel to document analysis which enables researchers to use these entries as substitutes for interviews (Yin, 2003). In addition, during both phases of data collection, we focused on examining how teachers' experiences with online peer collaboration

have helped them improve their classroom processes including classroom management and course delivery. Interview questions are available upon request.

Data Analysis

Data analysis for the current study followed procedures described by Stake (2010) and Creswell (2013). First, primary investigator read through interviews line by line several times to create "memoing" and make margin notes as detailed by Creswell (2013). Second, an open coding strategy was employed by which researchers analyzed the verbatim transcripts and created concepts and major points establishing initial codes (Stake, 2010). In addition to analyzing the transcripts, the participants' online entries were recorded to create documentation of their entries for further analysis. In order to co-inform understanding of the data, a triangulation design was employed and interviews and online entries were joined together to complement each other (Creswell, 2013).

As a last step, all initial codes created from both interviews and online entries were canalized into categories. The categories were combined and meaning units or themes reflecting commonality of each individual's story in the defined case emerged (Merriam, 2009). The themes were then reviewed by some of the participants to utilize member checking, an additional form of data validation (Creswell, 2013). After receiving participant feedback, final themes and descriptions were created (See Table 1 for final themes and descriptions).

Findings

Four main themes emerged from the current study: 1) Satisfaction with peer collaboration 2) Usefulness of online peer collaboration 3) Improvement of classroom teaching methods and techniques 4) Improvement of classroom management skills.

Satisfaction with Peer Collaboration

Codes from both interviews and online entries of elementary teachers revealed that teachers were satisfied with the online peer collaboration process. Teachers consistently talked about

how they found the exchange process as fulfilling. This theme also reflected that teachers considered the online peer collaboration as valuable for their professional as well as personal development. An excerpt from an interview illustrating the level of satisfaction a teacher experienced throughout the collaboration process is presented below.

> *"It is a great feeling that your class is watched and evaluated as well appreciated and criticized by someone. I have tried to implement several applications in my classroom that my colleagues tried in their classrooms. I have noticed some mistakes that I have been doing again and again; and I saw these mistakes done by my colleagues too so this made me able to recognize my own mistakes clearer. By recognizing these mistakes, I have ceased some of my ineffective teaching methods in my class. If there was no such –online peer collaboration- project, I would continue doing these ineffective teaching behaviors"*

This theme reflected that online peer collaboration enhanced elementary school teacher's motivation as well as engagement with their classrooms.

Usefulness of Online Peer Collaboration

In this theme, elementary school teachers reflected about the usefulness of the online peer collaboration through this project as well as general social media. All participants of the current study emphasized that using this online peer collaboration (e.g., exchange of ideas and teaching methods via online platforms) is really important for their professional development. They also pointed out that social media itself is a potential platform for peer collaboration. In addition, teachers mentioned that embedding social media tools into the current project enhanced and catalyzed their collaboration with the peers. An example illustrating the usefulness of social media and online peer collaboration is presented below.

> *"Social media and web-based platforms facilitate multi-dimensionality of education. It provides different perspectives to education and increases quality in education when effectively used. I think each school should implement this project by uploading their classroom videos on an online school platform and share it with parents. By doing so, parents can better recognize their child's school and changes perspectives toward school to a positive direction. I personally have received many appreciations from parents and they found this system to be very useful"*

This theme showed the usefulness of social media and online peer collaboration an important component of their professional development. In addition, teachers emphasized that online peer

collaboration via social media and the current project helped them not only improve their classroom process, but also increased their positive interactions with parents.

Improvement of Classroom Teaching Methods and Techniques

This theme demonstrated that all elementary school teachers in the current study experienced improvement in their teaching techniques and methods after attending the professional development project. In detail, teachers mentioned an awareness of their own deficiencies in terms of delivery of classroom content. In addition, receiving feedback and constructive criticism from peers via the online platform provided a means of personal and professional development. The example below illustrates how a teacher experienced improvement in classroom teaching methods and techniques.

> *"I have discovered via this online peer collaboration how effective my tone of voice, jest, gesture, and mimics are. I have taken lessons through my peers' critiques about how to use my voice in my teaching. I've learned how to effectively engage my students in the learning process. I think I've increased my level of organization in my teaching…"*

Online peer collaboration provided support for elementary school teachers to improve their teaching methods and techniques. Improvements of teachers' teaching methods and techniques may be reflected in students' social and academic outcomes.

Improvement of Classroom Management Skills

Parallel to previous theme, this theme reflected that online peer collaboration helped elementary teachers improve their classroom management skills. Teachers made positive inferences about their classroom management skills such as dealing with disruptive behaviors of students, using proactive rather than reactive management skills, and recognizing difficulties in children's peer interactions. Teacher stressed that online peer collaboration provided them with positive insights about their weaknesses as well strengths so that they could improve their weak sides and increase strengths. The example below provides insight about how teachers experienced improvement in their classroom management skills through the online peer collaboration.

> *By watching other peers' classroom process and receiving constructive criticism from my peers has helped me to see my own classroom processes changing in a positive direction—including my approach to children as well as my "discipline" perspective in classroom."*

This theme clearly stated that online peer collaboration including watching another peer's classroom processes can help teachers to use more effective strategies in their own classrooms; by doing so, teachers help children to develop better social and academic outcomes.

Table 1

Summary and Description of Themes

Theme	Description
Theme 1: Satisfaction with the peer collaboration	The fulfillment of the online peer collaboration regarding their professional and personal development
Theme 2: Usefulness of online peer collaboration	Reflections of elementary teachers' ideas about the usefulness of online peer collaboration through this project as well as general social media
Theme 3: Improvement of classroom teaching methods and techniques	Experiences of elementary teachers in improvement of their teaching techniques and methods after attending the current professional development project
Theme 4: Improvement of classroom management skills	Support of online peer collaboration in elementary teachers' improvement of their classroom management skills.

Table 1 demonstrates that we extracted four main themes representing cluster of different perspectives of teachers. Common ground for all the themes is that they all represented positive experiences of teacher throughout the online collaboration with their peers. First two themes

were about satisfaction and usefulness of peer collaboration and last two themes were about how this collaboration helped teachers to improve some specific skills and techniques.

Discussion and Conclusion

The purpose of the current qualitative case study was to examine the influence of online peer collaboration among Turkish elementary school teachers in order to gain an understanding of the contributions to teachers' professional development. Primary examined professional developmental areas were how elementary teachers experienced online peer collaboration and its usefulness in terms of classroom management skills and teaching methods/techniques. Overall findings from the current case study revealed that elementary teachers experienced the process of the online peer collaboration positively and they found the collaboration process to be supportive and influential in their professional development. It is clear that collaboration with peers appeared to be fulfilling and valuable for elementary school teachers' professional development. This finding is congruent with previous research (Meirink, Meijer, & Verlop, 2007) showing that collaborative settings allow teachers to learn from one another and exchange ideas to improve their individual learning towards their development and cognition. Teachers may experience positive feelings and satisfaction as they engage in collaborative exchanges with peers as they improve their personal and professional skills.

In addition, elementary school teachers mentioned that they have used social media as a tool for collaboration with peers parallel to advancements in usefulness of social media in professional development (Hung and Yuen, 2010; Luehman and Tinelli, 2008). Social networking has been increasingly used as a means to stay connected and exchange knowledge; especially by college students (Hung and Yuen, 2010). Although social networking has been widely used among college students, teachers may benefit from social networking tools such as using blogging in their professional development.

Elementary school teachers constantly talked about the value of online peer collaboration as a tool for their classroom management as well teaching processes in the classroom. In particular, teachers in the current study found that receiving feedback from peers and observing their peers' classroom processes tremendously helpful in their own teaching and improvement of

classroom management and teaching. The perception of teachers in the current study is similar to findings from the previous study (Gregory, Allen, Mikami, Hafen, & Pianta, 2014; Lee et al., 2012). Previous research has showed that receiving support from coaches or peers has helped them improve teachers' professional skills in their classrooms. For example, "My Teaching Partner" (i.e., personalized coaching and systematic feedback on teachers' classroom process) professional development has been found to improve teachers' behavior skills in the classroom as well their positive interactions with students, and in turn, this improvement is reflected on students' positive outcomes such as behavior engagement and academic achievement (Gregory et al., 2014). From this perspective, the findings from the current study shed light on understanding the importance of peer collaboration for teachers in relation to better teacher and student outcomes during the elementary school years.

In conclusion, this study suggests that teacher training programs should create peer-collaboration platforms where pre-service teachers can effectively share their own learning and teaching processes as well as receive constructive feedback from peers about their process. Trainings should not be limited to pre-service teachers; collaboration opportunities should be extended to in-service teachers so that they can improve their professional teaching skills to effectively scaffold their students' learning. Professional development programs focusing on teachers' classroom management and teaching methods such as My Teaching Partner (Pianta et al., 2008) can be implemented with Turkish elementary school teachers, which in turn aids student readiness for concurrent learning as well as their future academic life.

The findings from the current study also highlights that there is a need for online platforms for teachers to improve their professional and personal skills regarding their occupation. For this reason, educational institutions targeting teacher development can integrate online collaborations among teachers to help them develop their professional skills. Teachers can use these skills in the teaching and classroom organization to have better students' social and academic outcomes. The current study also informs future research that should examine importance and characteristics of online collaborations among teachers via using mixed methods design to obtain in-depth understating on this phenomenon.

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Elvan Günel

Research Article

Infusing Global Perspectives in Social Studies Education in Turkey:
Pre-service Social Studies Teachers[1]

Elvan Günel[2]

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to explore how pre-service social studies teachers understood global perspectives within social studies education and how they interpreted social studies teacher education program in terms of providing global perspectives. Phenomenological design was employed in order to gather the data. The data obtained as a result of two semi-structured interviews with 11 pre-service social studies teachers and participants' journals were analyzed by using NVivo 10 package program. The data were analyzed with inductive analysis. The data were collected in the spring semester of the 2009-2010 academic year. Findings indicated that the participants' definitions or thoughts about global perspectives were shaped by their belief about globalization. The participants also stated that teaching social studies by employing global perspectives would help students to understand their own

prejudice and stereotypes about different cultures, ethnic and religious groups and teacher education programs are incompetent to provide such training.

Keywords: Social studies, global perspectives, global education, teacher education

Elvan Günel

Introduction

Globalization refers to a process in which boundaries and barriers are diminished therefore connections and interactions between people are increased (Banks *et. al.*, 2005; Kaymakçı, 2012; Scholte, 2005; Robertson, 1991). Because of globalization and new improvements in technology have resulted in increasing people's awareness of the world outside of their hometown and developing relationships and interactions between people from different cultures (Kirkwood, 2001; Cappon, 2004). Therefore cultural, ethnic, racial, and religious diversity is inevitable in our classrooms and it certainly shapes how we define education, and how and what we teach in classrooms (Alger and Harf, 1985; Apple, 2006, 2013; Banks, 2009; Hanvey, 2004; Kirkwood, 2001; Merryfield, 2002; Nieto, 2013; Pike, 2000; Ukpokodu, 1999).

Since outcomes of globalization, such as diversity being exclusively included in the classrooms, become more visible in education as well as in social and economic life, educators around the world have begun to question current educational systems and schooling in their home countries in terms of preparation of students for the challenges they might face in today's global world (Banks, 2004; Merryfield, 1998; Mundy and Manion, 2008; Kirkwood, 2002). As much as scholars in education, some educational and professional organizations such as UNESCO, UNICEF, and NCSS have pointed out that there was an increasing need to re-shape the educational policies, programs, and schools to educate students in a way that they will be ready to understand the complexities and conflicts of the ever-changing world and become informed and responsible citizens (Açıkalın, 2010a, 2010b; Banks *et. al*., 2005; Günel and Öztürk, 2016; Maguth and Hilburn, 2015; Merryfield, 1998, 2002; Merryfield, 2002; Mundy and Manion, 2008; Rapoport, 2009, 2010).

At this point, scholars in countries such as Canada, United States of America, and United Kingdom, which have rapidly become diverse in terms of culture, race, ethnicity, and religion, have argued about how to educate young people to become citizens of the global world for last couple decades. They also have suggested instructional materials, programs, and courses to infuse global perspectives in education (Merryfield, 1997, 2002; Mundy and Manion, 2008). Thus global education has found its way into the social studies curricula across the world.

Global education addresses issues such as open- mindedness, multiple perspectives, eliminating stereotyping, discrimination, racism, acceptance of diversity, different cultures, and universal values as well as different cultural values and empathy for the marginalized students (Banks, 2004; Kirkwood, 2001; Merryfield, 1998; Merryfield and Subedi, 2003). Global educators also focus on interconnectedness of the world, cross-cultural awareness, perspective consciousness, human rights, gender inequity, tolerance, social justice, respect for views of who come from different backgrounds and values of others (Hanvey, 2004; Kirkwood, 2002). In addition, global perspectives has four learning themes: Multiple perspectives, comprehension and appreciation of cultures, knowledge of global issues, and the world as an interrelated system (Kirkwood, 2001).

These new improvements in education around the world had a profound influence on educational policies in Turkey. Therefore scholars and officials from Ministry of National Education in Turkey developed a new curriculum in 2005 (MEB, 2005a, 2005b). As one of the new implementations to the social studies curriculum in Turkey, a new learning theme called "Küresel Bağlantılar " (Global Connections) was employed in the social studies curriculum from grade 4 through 7. The theme includes four units titled "Ülkemiz Ve Dünya" (Our Country And The World), "Ülkelerarası Köprüler" (Bridges Between Countries), "Uzaktaki Arkadaşlarım" (My Far Away Friends), and "Hepimizin Dünyası" (Our World) (MEB, 2005a, 2005b).

Throughout the existing literature, it has been suggested that the themes of global education are not entirely represented in the social studies curriculum in Turkey (Açıkalın, 2010a; Balkar and Özgan, 2010; Günel and Pehlivan, 2015; Kaymakçı, 2012). Researchers also pointed out that multiple perspectives as one of the themes is diminished or ignored across the curriculum and the textbooks. In addition, some researchers claimed that even though the social studies curriculum somewhat includes topics of global education, teachers are neither enthusiastic nor qualified to teach such issues in Turkey (Günel and Öztürk, 2016; Özkan, 2006). On the other hand, some studies found that in spite of having a general idea of global perspectives and appreciating positive outcomes of employing the principles of global education, teachers lacked of comprehensive knowledge and skills to implement global education into their teaching effectively (Appleyard, 2009; Mundy and Manion, 2008; Rapoport, 2010). Not surprisingly some studies stated that teacher education programs

inadequately train pre-service teachers to teach global issues. (Alazzi, 2011; Mangram and Watson, 2011).

Research showed that teaching complex global issues effectively depends on teachers' experiences, knowledge, and critical thinking capacity (Merryfield and Kasai, 2004; DeNobile, Kleeman and Zarkos, 2014). Thus more research needs to examine how pre-service teachers' beliefs, perceptions, and values are shaped and how their experiences, training, and prejudices might influence their teaching (DeNobile, Kleeman and Zarkos, 2014).

There have been a number of studies in to what extend the new improvements in education meet the needs of in-service and pre-service teachers and teacher educators in Turkey (Aykaç, 2007; Dinç ve Doğan, 2010; Doğanay, 2009; Doğanay ve Sarı, 2008; Gömleksiz, 2005); however, relatively little attention has been given to using global perspectives in social studies teacher education programs and pre-service social studies teachers' perception of global education in Turkey (Açıkalın, 2010a, 2010b; Cırık, 2008; Günel and Öztürk, 2016; Günel and Pehlivan, 2015, 2016). It is important to understand how pre-service social studies teachers perceive global perspectives within social studies education and how they interpret social studies teacher education program in terms of providing global perspectives. Hence this study aims to examine these questions:

1) How do pre-service social studies teachers perceive global perspectives within social studies education?

2) How do pre-service social studies teachers interpret social studies teacher education program in terms of providing global perspectives?

The goals of this study are particularly important because global education is a recently introduced concept in education and receives inconsiderable amount of attention within the current social studies curriculum and teacher education programs in Turkey.

Research Methodology

The purpose of this study is to understand how pre-service social studies teachers understand global perspectives within social studies education and how pre-service social studies teachers

interpret social studies teacher education program in terms of providing global perspectives. The phenomenology design was used to conduct this study. Phenomenology aims to examine one or more individuals' views, experiences, and perceptions about a phenomenon (Creswell, 2012). As a qualitative research approach phenomenology focuses on how an individual perceives, makes sense of, and express a phenomenon (Glesne, 2012). Since this study investigates pre-service teachers' perception of global perspectives, it is important to examine participants' understandings of the phenomenon and their experiences.

Participants

The participants of the study were 11 pre-service social studies teachers who were enrolled in social studies teacher education program at a faculty of education in Turkey during the time of the study. The purposeful sampling method was employed to select participants. Thus the participants of the study were pre-service social studies teachers who were enrolled to the course titled "Global Education", which focused on issues such as globalization, contemporary concepts (i.e., prejudice, discrimination, stereotypes, democracy and democratic education, diversity etc.) and approaches, and emerging issues (i.e., war, terror, political and social conflicts etc.) around the world. The participants were selected also based on their hometown to examine to what extend cultural differences would influence their perception. The participation was on a voluntary basis. Profiles of the participants were presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Profiles of the Participants

Participants	Age	Sex	Hometown
Aliye	22	Female	Uşak
Didem	20	Female	Zonguldak
Esra	22	Female	Samsun
Hakan	24	Male	Kahramanmaraş
Öznur	20	Female	Afyon
Şevket	23	Male	Bingöl
Şeyda	21	Female	Bartın
Serkan	22	Male	Kırklareli
Servet	29	Male	Manisa
Selçuk	22	Male	Batman
Tarık	21	Male	Ardahan

Data Collection and Analysis

In phenomenological studies, interviews are the main data collection tools because they can be used to understand and define an individual's experiences and thoughts on a phenomenon (Creswell, 2012; Glesne, 2012). In the study, two 30-minute individual and semi-structured interviews conducted to obtain further information about the questions of the study such as how the participants defined global perspectives. The interview questions were prepared under three categories from general to the more detailed questions: Background information of the participants such as age, hometown, environment they live in and their definitions of global perspectives, global education, and globalization; detailed questions regarding the participants' experiences inside and outside of the class, and how they perceive global perspectives and global education within social studies education in terms of the social studies curriculum and teacher education programs; questions to gain insight into how well they think global perspectives and global education fit into the Turkish educational system.

In addition to the interviews, the researcher also asked the participants to keep a journal during the time of the study and the course. The journals focused on how the participants felt during the in-class activities (including mid-term exam and final assignment) and what their thoughts were about in-class and online discussions on controversial issues. Table 2 presents the assignments of the "Global Education" course.

Table 2
Assignments of the "Global Education" Course

Assignments	Duration
Read a newspaper and interpret pictures	Approximately 60 minutes
Re-writing a story	Approximately 60 minutes
Preparing a concept map	Approximately 60 minutes
Lectures about global/international issues	Approximately 30 minutes per class
In-class discussions/current events	Approximately 25 minutes per class
Online discussions/current events	13 weeks
Interaction with students from various ethnic groups	13 weeks
Reading research articles/multicultural and global education	13 weeks
Preparing a lesson plan	Approximately 60 minutes
Watching/examining movies	2 weeks

While conducting interviews, it is important to build a trustworthy relationship between the researcher and the participants so they can freely express their thoughts and feelings about the phenomenon (Glesne, 2012). In this study, since the researcher was also the instructor of the "Global Education" course that the participants were enrolled during the time of the study, second interviews were conducted after the students completed the course. Oral and written consent of the participants were also taken to gather data in the study. The written consent forms included that all the participants was going to be informed how the data was going to be gathered, used, and that she/he did not have to answer questions that she/he found uncomfortable. The researcher also made sure to provide privacy and confidentiality; therefore the participants were given pseudonyms during the study. The participants was also informed by the researcher that they were free to withdraw from participation at any time during the study and their decision to withdraw from the study was not going affect their grades. The data obtained as a result of the interviews and participants' journals were analyzed through in NVivo 10 package program. Since there were no structured themes, inductive analysis approach was used. First, codes then based on these codes, themes were found by coding the data line by line. After completing the first line-by-line coding, total 30 nodes were found. Then these nodes were reduced to four main themes and at the end of in-depth the analysis, three major findings were emerged. In order to improve the trustworthiness of the study, the researcher conducted face-to-face member check with all the participants and employed multiple methods (i.e., multiple individual interviews with the participants and participants' journals) to collect data.

Findings

The findings of the study emerged under three main categories; 1) Pre-service social studies teachers' understanding of global perspectives in social studies education, 2) Pre-service social studies teachers' ideas about the importance of infusing global perspectives in social studies education in Turkey, 3) Pre-service social studies teachers' understanding of different cultures and their ideas on their own proficiency in teaching about sensitivity to differences and awareness of different cultures, people, multicultural, ethnic, and religious influences.

Participants' Definitions of Global Perspectives

Findings of the study indicated that the participants' definitions or thoughts about global perspectives were based on their beliefs about globalization and associated with such concepts as exploitation, imperialism, and liberalism. In addition, a majority of pre-service social studies teachers stated that they have not heard or learned about global perspectives. Therefore they either could not define global perspectives at all or defined it incorrectly. According to participants' responses, there are two main factors that contributed to the participants' lack of knowledge and disinformation. These factors included not being able to learn about global perspectives in school during their education (i.e., primary school through college) in Turkey and learning about it in informal ways such as through the Internet, media, and uninformed peers. For example Aliye said that, *'it is going to be a little difficult for me to define global perspectives. I can only guess and as far as I know it is something regarding globalization, imperialism, and liberalism.'* Selçuk and Servet stated that, *'I don't know about global perspectives at all.'* Findings showed that participants' lack of knowledge about global perspectives led to major misconceptions about what global perspectives actually means. Some participants associated global perspectives with globalization. Thus, they simply described the term as "something related to globalization." Aliye added, *'I do not know for sure, if I have to guess, it is to create homogenous world and homogenous culture.'*

Furthermore, when participants were asked to define global perspectives, some participants defined it as an *'educational system, which would make all people become identical to each other and cause loss of individuality so people would speak a common language and share the same religious beliefs all around the world.'* Other participants stated that, *'since globalization is becoming more important everyday around the world, it seems to me global education means everyone receiving the same education all around the world…For example, education in Turkey is getting equal to an education in Europe or in the United States.'* Hakan stated that, *'thinking about global education, first I can say that it is about globalization and education. An education that is planned to improve human behavior and it is universal. It can be employed in Turkey and at the same time in Europe.'*

On the other hand, Serkan added;

> *"Technology has developed all around the world. For example, I have been in this university for couple of years and things change very fast. Perceptions for example change. Educational policies change. There are new improvements in education, new methods. I believe this forces people to learn about the world. Global education is important; for example, I might receive the very same education I am getting right now from the United States. I mean equality. Equal right to access to the same education all around the world."*

In addition Şeyda explained;

> *"In fact, I am just beginning to learn about global perspectives. That is why I am mostly curious about globalization. To me globalization is spreading some ideas and perspectives to all around the world. In this case global education is a development in education based on new improvements on technology, science, and communication around the world."*

In addition, Elif and Tarık explained that global perspectives are about *'globalization of the world and relationships and interactions among people who have different cultural backgrounds.'* Findings of the study also showed that all the participants in the study stated that after completing the assignments of the "Global Education" course their understanding of global perspectives shifted from "unclear" and "harmful" to "necessary" and "helpful."

Importance of Infusing Global Perspectives in Social Studies Education in Turkey

All the participants in the study suggested that infusing global perspectives in social studies education in Turkey is crucial since Turkey has racially, culturally, ethnically, and religiously diverse social structure. Participants also pointed out that during the course they had a better understanding of their own prejudice and stereotypes about different cultures and ethnic groups so they have come to believe that global education might help eliminating stereotypes and discrimination. Tarık explained;

> *"I realized that we already have stereotypes against different cultures in our own society let alone about other cultures around the world and people from different countries might have prejudice about Turkish culture too. Global education might help eliminate or diminish stereotypes about different cultures. I would try to do the same thing as a social studies teacher."*

In addition Hakan, Şeyda, Esra, and Didem strongly emphasized that the "Global Education" course ought to be offered in not only social studies teacher education program but also all

teacher education programs in Turkey. Hakan explained;

> *"All teacher education departments must offer a global education course because it is about relationships and interactions among people and different worldviews. College is where students re-describe themselves and re-shape their worldviews. It also should be offered in secondary education as well. I mean in the curriculum as a separate course so that students might learn about concepts such as prejudice, discrimination, tolerance, and stereotypes at an early age."*

Esra stated that global perspectives might help social studies teachers to be more critical when they teach about history, which is a significant part of the social studies curriculum in Turkey. Esra also claimed that the "Global Education" course enabled her to explore her own ethnocentric views therefore it may help social studies teachers to examine and discuss their own ethnocentric views and issues of race and class in Turkey as well as the world. She further explained;

> *"First of all, I believe we teach history but we do not know our own history...our understanding of history is about only our national flag and saying hey "we are the Turks"...but we need to think and discuss these issues. I mean it is good that we love our flag and nation but if we perceive our nationality higher than other nationalities around the world, it is inappropriate."*

Similar to Esra, Öznur, Selçuk, and Şevket emphasized that infusing global perspectives into social studies courses and the curriculum would help students to be familiar with different cultures and be aware of their own prejudices.

Participants' Understanding of Different Cultures

The findings of the study also showed that pre-service social studies teachers' knowledge about different cultures comes from non-formal education and they found themselves inadequate in terms of being sensitive to differences and being aware of different cultures, people, and recognizing multicultural, ethnic, and religious influences as social studies teacher candidates. All the participants emphasized that their knowledge about different cultures mostly comes from media, social media, and their peers rather than from schools. They stated that the only time they have learned and discussed about different cultures in-class during their education was in this "Global Education" course.

While Şevket pointed out that he learned from different cultures from his own by watching TV and documentaries, Serkan, Şeyda, and Didem stated that they met with people who have different backgrounds while socializing in college and this is how they mostly have learned about different cultures. In addition, Serkan explained that only after completing the "Global Education" course, he realized that even though Turkey is a multicultural society in terms of religion, ethnicity, race, and political views, people including himself *"somehow prefer spending time with people who have similar cultural beliefs and worldviews rather than people from different cultures."*

In this study, even tough participants often used "different culture" as a term when they described their relationship with their ethnically and religiously different peers during the interviews, when they were asked to define different culture as a concept; all the participants except Serkan described different culture as cultural beliefs that are different from their own and exist outside of geographical borders of Turkey. None of them focused on ethnic, cultural, and religious differences even though they referred to different ethno-cultural groups in Turkey during interviews.

Şevket stated;

> *"Different culture means a cultural beliefs that are different from ours…for example I don't see any differences between Turkish and Kurdish culture…maybe geographical differences like in the East people are a bit tough…we have more strict rules compared to the West…different cultures, they are outside of Turkey. I believe they are more flexible as far as I know from the documentaries."*

Didem also explained that, *"when you ask how I define different culture, I can describe it as everything that is different such as different food, clothes, and language…I consider everyone in Turkey including myself as Turkish even though I am from the Black Sea Region and I have a different ethnic background."*

The participants also stated that they have learned about concepts such as discrimination, prejudice, racism, and diversity thoroughly for the first time in their educational life during the course and they believed in "finding a common ground" when it comes to in-class discussions about cultural differences.

Pre-service social studies found themselves inadequate in terms of being sensitive to differences and being aware of different cultures, people, and recognizing multicultural, ethnic, and religious influences. Şevket pointed out that *"if we were to infuse global perspectives into social studies courses and the curriculum thoroughly, it would be a bit difficult to find teachers who are eligible to teach these issues in Turkey…more teachers need to be educated and one elective course in the social studies teacher education program is not enough."* Moreover all the participants pointed out that although they believed infusing global perspectives into their teaching is important to educate students to become informed and responsible citizens and deal with the challenges they might face in a global world, they stated that they lacked of proficiency in teaching about sensitivity to differences and awareness of different culture, people, multicultural, ethnic, and religious influences.

Discussion, Conclusion, and Implications

In the last decade, nation-states throughout the world had to welcome growing diversity and increasing recognition of diversity due to immigration of many people who were pursuing better economic, social, and political opportunities to live more comfortable lives. Therefore countries such as United States of America, Canada, France, and Germany experienced immigration and its outcomes. Increased diversity and its recognition led educators in such countries to reexamine educational policies since culturally, religiously, and ethnically diverse societies are faced with the challenge of infusing mutual values, standards, and objectives to which all citizens are committed regardless of their race, ethnicity, religion, and status (Banks *et. al.*, 2005; Kılınç and Korkmaz, 2015; Maguth and Hilburn, 2015; Mundy and Manion, 2008; Rapoport, 2009, 2010).

Even though nation-states which have been culturally, religiously, and ethnically diverse since their foundation such as Turkey were used to deal with immigration and its consequences, they had political and social conflicts over changes in ethnic composition. Hence balancing unity and diversity has become a big challenge for countries such as Turkey (Atasoy, 2005). In order to overcome this challenge by implementing new educational policies, Ministry of National Education of Turkey developed a new curriculum and included global perspectives into the social studies education (MEB, 2005a, 2005b).

In the study, it was found that the participants' definitions or thoughts about global perspectives were shaped by their belief about globalization and associated with such concepts as exploitation, imperialism, and liberalism. Thus they stated that what global perspectives/global education actually means is "unclear" and integrating global perspectives into social studies courses and the curriculum might be "harmful" and considered as unpatriotic. Similar to the findings of this study, Cırık (2008), in his research focused on multicultural education approach and its reflections and Cushner (1998) claimed that multicultural education is a highly misunderstood and feared concept by educators and students. This fear might come from the belief that employing multicultural education approach might destroy social cohesion and national unity. Hence it might be considered as unpatriotic movement easily. Günel and Öztürk (2016) also found that social studies teachers in Turkey had negative attitudes towards global education since they associated global education with globalization, which would mean social, political, and economic conflicts around the world. In addition, Günel and Pehlivan (2016) investigated social studies pre-service teachers' perception of global citizenship and global citizenship education, which addresses issues such as human rights, social justice, and environmental problems. It also aims to develop global skills similar to global education. They found that the participants did not consider themselves as global citizens because they believed that one of requirements to be a global citizen was being free of national feelings. However, Göl (2013) and Richardson, Blades, Kumano and Karaki (2003) found that pre-service social studies teachers especially in Canada and Japan had positive attitudes towards global citizenship. Atasoy (2005) also pointed out fear of losing national unity due to globalization and employing global education and claimed that rise of globalization would never cause loss of nationalism. Moreover one would be a global citizen without losing his/her national feelings (Günel and Pehlivan, 2016; Kılınç and Korkmaz, 2015).

The participants of this study stated that after completing the assignments of the "Global Education" course, their perception of global perspectives/global education have changed from "unclear" and "harmful" to "necessary" and "helpful." Similar to this finding, Günel and Pehlivan (2016) found that some elective courses such as global education, values education, and effective citizenship education in some social studies teacher education programs in Turkey affected students' perception of global citizenship positively.

Another finding of the study regarded pre-service social studies teachers' ideas about the importance of implementing global perspectives in social studies education. The participants claimed that as they experienced in the "Global Education" course, teaching social studies by employing global perspectives would help students to understand their own prejudice and stereotypes about different cultures, ethnic and religious groups. Thus it would improve their worldviews as well as their understandings of social and political events that affect the world and eventually help them to become open-minded and informed citizens. They also said that they would be more critical when they teach about history. However, the participants emphasized that the social studies curriculum and social studies teacher education programs in Turkey lacked providing students with such skills. Likewise, Açıkalın (2010a, 2010b), Günel and Pehlivan (2015), and Günel and Pehlivan (2016) revealed that the social studies curriculum, eighth grade citizenship and democracy education curriculum, the textbook, and social studies teacher education programs in Turkey are found to have shortcomings in terms of the skills and values global and multicultural education aim to teach. Moreover Ersoy (2013) claimed that teachers were incompetent and unenthusiastic about teaching their students how to solve real-life problems, use multiple perspectives inside and outside of classroom, and be more open-minded and empathetic in Turkey.

The participants also explained that they have learned about different cultures through media, social media, and their peers. They added that the only time they have learned about different cultures exist both within and outside of Turkey in-class was during the "Global Education" course. Similarly, Günel and Pehlivan (2016) found that pre-service social studies teachers learn about global citizenship and related concepts via peers, social media, and non-governmental organizations rather than in-class. They also stated that it was somewhat mentioned only in two elective courses; global education and effective citizenship education. Findings of these two studies emphasize that teacher education programs in Turkey lack of providing students with opportunities to learn about complex global issues.

The participants defined different culture as "cultural beliefs, food, clothes, and language different from their own." They added that what they mean by different culture is that cultural beliefs and worldviews different from their own and exist outside of Turkey. Modern Turkey with the legacy of Ottoman Empire is "multi-ethnic and multi-cultural country, housing approximately 50 different Muslim and/or non-Muslim ethno-cultural groups: Sunni Turks, Alevi Turks, Sunni Kurds, Alevi Kurds, Circassians, Lazis, Armenians, Georgians; Jews,

Greeks, Arabs etc." (Kaya and Harmanyeri, 2010, p. 4). The participants of this study emphasized that these ethno-cultural groups cannot be categorized as "different culture" but can be considered as "cultural differences" within Turkish culture. Based on the participants' definitions of different culture, it can be said that offering one course in teacher education programs is not enough for pre-service teachers to develop deeper understanding complex global issues such as culture. Thus teacher education programs need to improve students' learning experiences so that they can have a better understanding of complex global issues.

All the participants strongly emphasized that even though they believed infusing global perspectives into social studies classrooms and the curriculum is significant especially while teaching history, democracy, and human rights, they found themselves inadequate to teach about sensitivity to differences and awareness of different culture, people, multicultural, ethnic, and religious influences. They claimed that not only social studies teacher education programs but also all teacher education programs should offer courses, which would help them, develop intercultural competence. Similar to the finding of this study, Ceylan (2014), Ersoy (2013), Günel and Öztürk (2016), Günel and Pehlivan (2016), Rapoport (2010), and Smith (2009) found that both in-service and pre-service social studies teachers had difficulties while teaching their students various skills such as using multiple perspectives in-class discussions, being more open-minded about differences, problem solving, and critical thinking.

Based on the findings of the study, several useful implications can be suggested: Integrating global perspectives into social studies courses and the curriculum in Turkey should be a priority for educators. Social studies teacher education programs should offer courses both elective and mandatory to teach pre-service teachers to develop skills such as being open-minded and empathetic to differences, critical thinking, problem solving, using multicultural perspective while teaching current events and controversial issues. Current courses that are offered in social studies teacher education programs ought to be redesigned in a way that they would improve students' understanding of others and help them to learn how to teach global issues by employing different technologies, strategies, and instructional methods. Moreover further studies that employ different methods such as action research should be conducted to improve pre-service teachers' knowledge and skills on global education and examine developments and changes in teacher education programs.

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Suzan Duygu Bedir Erişti

Research Article

Participatory Design Based Digital Storytelling and Creativity Indicators in Elementary School

Suzan Duygu Bedir Erişti[1]

Abstract

The present research study aims at determining how the participatory design approach within the framework of digital storytelling would reflect onto the process in which students reveal their creativity on design based application process. The participants of the study were chosen elementary school. The students are in the city of Eskişehir, Turkey. While determining the participants, the criterion-sampling method was used. In the study, the criterion for determining the participants taking the "Digital Storytelling" course incorporated in the Education Program for Talented Students (EPTS). 58 elementary school 6th-, 7th- or 8th-grade students taking the course of "Digital Storytelling" in EPTS participated in the study. The elementary school 6th-, 7th- and 8th-grade students actively participated in the phases of creating their own digital stories, heroes and characters. The students indicated their visual explanations and views throughout the design process. The data obtained at the end of the design process in the study were analyzed according to the visual research methodoloyg with focusing on image analysis and content analysis. The application process affected students' creativity in an efficiant manner depending on the students' and field experts' views.

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Introduction

Digital storytelling is a process that includes learning, creating and sharing using technology. In this process, students interpret their thoughts by using active participating approaches such as illustrating, photographing, audio recording, writing, drawing and so on (Robin, 2008; Tendero, 2006). The digital storytelling system is a short digital media production includes individual narratives, experiences, historical sharing, autobiographical interpretations in a form of a visual explanation (Gils, 2005).

Participatory digital storytelling involves participants acting and learning basic storytelling skills with professionals (Mazzone, 2007; Barret, 2006; Dorner et. al., 2002). The process makes students work together to create a story based on their creativity potentials and empower students to enable to take action and decision-making for solving their creativity problems. Participants uses participatory approaches to analyses and synthesis the stories through creativity potentials (Morajevi et. al., 2007). By the way of using participatory digital storytelling students reflect their thoughts, imaginations, experiences and emotions to find their creative way. Additionally, the participatory digital storytelling build technology skills, communication skills and visual explanation skills with the help of professionals.

The interaction and collaboration is one of the biggest challenge of participatory digital storytelling process. Participatory storytelling is an effective application of pardicipatory design approach. The participatory design approach appeared in 1960s and was mostly used effectively in design processes and in studies conducted regarding adults (Druin, 1996). As children have become effective users of technology, projects and studies in which children are design partners are now considered to be a necessity (Druin, 1999; Muller & Kuhn, 1993). It encourages students to open their creative potential to share and to build ongoing links through their creativity (Eristi, 2014; Clark & Percy-Smith, 2006; Meadows, 2003). So the students participate actively to the process by taking responsibility, deal with organization and putting forward experimenting and developing unique suggestions for solution (Skivenes and Strandu, 2006).

As a result of the participatory design approach, students enable characteristics of being creative individuals such as creative thinking, flexibility, fluency, originality, critical thinking ability, sufficiency of analyze, synthesize, organize and evaluate of a process, connecting relationships

(Skivenes & Strandu, 2006; Lubart & Guignard, 2004). The participatory digital storytelling process includes an individual transformation of a student by encourage them to find their way of producing their creativity. So the process is more important than the product during the storytelling applications. Creative approaches, creative stories, creative thoughts and creative explanations such as drawing, designing and writing are totally the way of being creative and way of something new to be creative in a playful and funny process.

There is a close interaction between crativity and the participatory digital storytelling approach to prepare the conditions that help creativity occur. Depending on the points mentioned above, the present study aims at determining how the participatory design/digital storytelling approach within the framework of digital storytelling would reflect onto the process in which students reveal their creativity.

Taking into subject to this purpose, the following research questions were proposed:

1. How does the participatory design approach based on the digital storytelling application reflect onto the process of revealing elementary school students' creativity depending onfield experts' views?

2. What are students' views about the application in the context of the participatory design approach within the digital storytelling application?

Method

The study was conducted in two phases subject to the visual research method on the basis of the use of the digital storytelling approach in the processes of revealing elementary school students' creativity. The purpose of the first phase was to determine the reflections of the participatory design approach within the scope of the digital storytelling application onto the process of revealing the students' creative behavior based on the views of the field experts and of the researcher. The data obtained the views of the field experts and of the researcher were analyzed according to the visual research method with focusing on image analysis and content analysis. The second phase, where the students' views were determined, included the analysis of the data within the framework of content analysis. Visual research methods offers researchers a reality of which they are unaware. This reality is the visual reality which is investigated through meanings based on researchers and participants' symbolic and image based meanings.

Visual reality can be used as a means of gathering data as well as being a tool for analysis and explanation. Visuality contributes new dimensions to research processes different from actually existing ones and focuses on generate knowledge rather than reveal it. (Cahnmann, Taylor & Siegesmund, 2008; Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2006). Visual research approach can be suggested to broaden researchers' perspectives, perceptions and knowledge (Barone, 2008).

Participants

While determining the research sample, the criterion-sampling method, one of the purposeful sampling methods, was applied. The criterion used for determining the participants in the study included not only the technological facilities of the school which the students attended but also its capacity to execute a course with digital storytelling content in its curriculum. In the context of the criteria determined, the research sample was made up of 58 elementary school 6th, 7th and 8th grade students taking the optional course of "Digital Storytelling" in EPTS (Education Program for Talented Students), and it is an optional course given by the researcher at EPTS for four weeks (6 hours a week) in the Education Faculty of Anadolu University Eskisehir, Turkey, in the Spring Term of academic year of 2009-2010 (between 15th of March and 15th of April for four weeks). EPTS (Education Programs for Talented Students) is an after school program for talented students in elementary and secondary schools constructed at Anadolu University in the weekends and summers. The program includes identification, curriculum, instruction, assessment, program, and teacher training models of talented students (Sak, 2013; Sak, 2011). The instruction process of digital storytelling application was consturcted at EPTS program by researcher through the sequential components of EPTS program related a lecture and learning activities given and guided by an academician.

Application Process

Within the scope of the study, the digital storytelling application was introduced to the students. At the first week of the process the steps of digital storytelling was discussed with the participants' of the study. The steps were presented to the students through focusing an idea, investigating and exploring focus idea, create a scenario, design storyboard, gather visuals, images, animation, audio and video, combine the whole component and represent the digital story. After the introduction lesson a task analysis process was constructed based on the participated student skills. The researcher encourage the participating students to determine the

working groups conducted with their interests, sufficiencies and creative approaches. The working groups included scenario, illustration, design, sound and music and story. design programs (Adobe Flash CS 5, Adobe Photoshop CS 5, Sound Recorder and Office) related digital storytelling were taught to the students the during the application process. The content was presented to the students in a structure including the participatory design approach that could be considered as a design process in which students were active participants. In this respect, the students became designers of their own creativity.

The participatory design approach within the scope of the digital storytelling application was applied in creating content in the context of the response to the question of "Do the design elements used in the interactive environment design include meaningful metaphors for the target audience?" The students taking part in the study within the scope of the participatory design approach participated in the design development processes with a critical perspective. Among the design techniques in the participatory design/storytelling approach, the content inquiry and illustration (Preece et. al., 2002; Holtzblatt et. al., 2005; Muller & Kuhn, 1993) displayed for students' participation in the design process.

The phases of the research application process were planned as follows:
(1) design process
(2) student-technology-creativity interaction
(3) evaluation

The first phase included a digital storytelling study conducted via the participatory design approach with a sample group of elementary school 6th, 7th and 8th grade students. Depending on the culture-themed subjects determined within the scope of the application, this process aimed at helping students to display their imaginations, thoughts and creativity and to use the visual explanation they created in the design process. The second phase of the study included the development of an interactive environment design in which the participants in the design team would make use of their creativity. The third phase of the study included evaluation of the process based on the students' views. In this respect, a systematic way was followed in the study as illustrated in Figure 1:

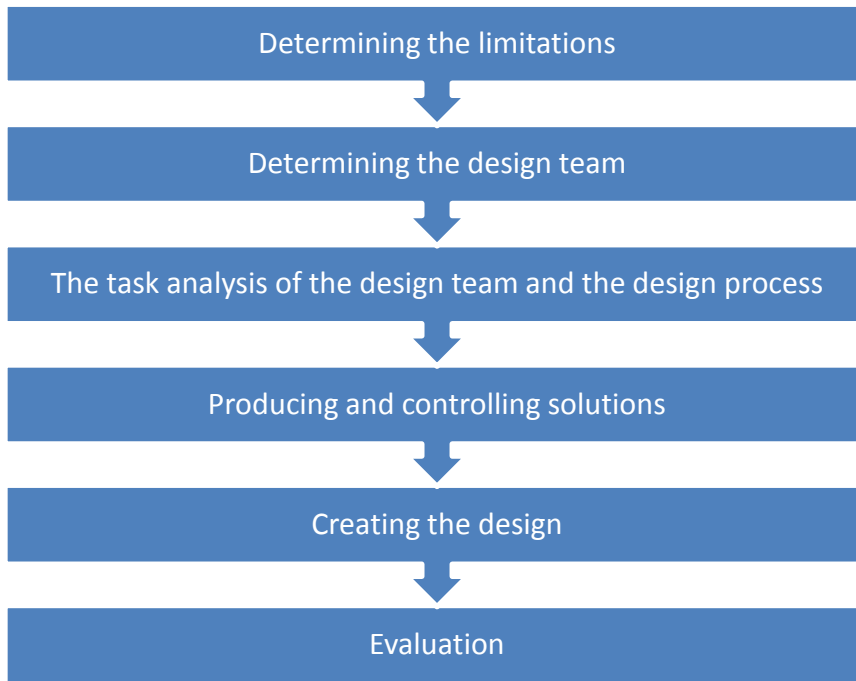| Determining the limitations |
| :---: |
| ↓ |
| Determining the design team |
| ↓ |
| The task analysis of the design team and the design process |
| ↓ |
| Producing and controlling solutions |
| ↓ |
| Creating the design |
| ↓ |
| Evaluation |

Figure 1. Design Process

Prior to the application process, the students were not only told that they were involved in the design process of an interactive environment design in which they could tell their cultural values to their peers but also informed about the digital storytelling approach, its components and types. Following this, interviews were held with the students based on the content inquiry method in the context of the participatory design approach regarding the subjects to be taught within the scope of the digital storytelling approach. In this respect, the subject was determined as being of cultural values, significant aspects of these cultural values, significant people, characters and events. Following the content inquiry study, the digital story telling study was conducted with the idea of combining the heroes - based on the independent cultural themes and events - in a new and original story. In the digital storytelling study, five different characters in Anatolian culture were gathered in a new story independent of their own individual traits. These characters were Keloglan (one of the heroes in folktales in Anatolian culture), Dede Korkut (a story narrator in Dede Korkut Stories in Anatolian culture), Deli Dumrul and Tepegoz (the main characters in Dede Korkut Stories) and Sahmeran (one of the characters prominent in mythological stories in Anatolian culture).

The research sample was divided into three groups with respect to the participants' interest within the scope of the digital storytelling study, scenario, sound recording and illustration in the context of their efficacies and creativity (Prosser & Schwart, 1998; Rose, 1996; Muller &

Kuhn, 1993). Preliminary studies were conducted with the groups regarding the application process, storytelling approaches, sound recording methods and certain design programs that they were likely to need prior to the application. These studies were carried out in the first two weeks of the research process. These groups gathered the determined themes within the framework of a few original scenarios based on their own narrative languages in the context of digital storytelling, created the characters and personalities prominent in cultural values, sound-recorded the stories they created and decided on how to form the design elements in the design. In this process, the participating students re-interpreted the characters in the context of creative approaches within the scope of the study, re-wrote the stories originally and decided collectively not only on which characters and stories to use in what way in the design process and but also on what to include in the interactive environment design. The students also decided to include a button in the design to allow the characters to introduce themselves. When these buttons were clicked on, the characters appeared with their images and sound recordings on the screen. In addition, the students decided to have sections under the headings of the stories and drawings and to include pictures regarding the stories. Eventually, the students started the design process with the help of the researcher and the teachers. The researcher and the teachers directed the process in a way to make the designs available for use in digital environments with technical support when the students required it. Regarding the content of the interactive environment design within the scope of the study, a total of four original stories, ten background illustrations created with a computer-supported design program, twelve original characters created with the help of the design researchers and twenty six original character drawings and sound recordings were all prepared by the students. The metaphors in the stories and the characters created in the design process were used to evaluate the students' creative approaches.

Collection of the Data

The research data were collected via analysis of the digital stories designed by the students and its components (which the students put forward in the application process); via interpretation in the framework of the focus group interviews based on the expert views; via observation of the process; interviews held with the students regarding the process; and via the participatory diaries of the students. The purpose of the interviews held with the students was to determine not only their views about the process of the digital storytelling application via open-ended questions and but also their views about the reflections of the process onto the reflection of their creativity based on image analysis. The purpose of the participatory diaries of the students was

to reveal what phases they experienced in the research process, how they expressed themselves in the process and how they reflected their creative potentials to the design process. The observations in the research process and the interviews were recorded with audio and video recorder devices. In this way, the data collected were enriched, and the validity of the data was increased.

Analysis and Interpretation of the Data

A two-phase method was applied in the interpretation of the findings in the study. In the first phase, the findings obtained via the focus group interviews based on the expert views in the context of reflections of the digital storytelling approach onto the reflection of the participating students' creativity in the process were interpreted. Two focus group interview was designed with field experts. One of the focus group was about determining the creativity indicators of storytelling products and the other focus group was constructed to evaluate the students' storytelling products based on creativity indicators. In the study, the reflections of the participatory design approach onto the students' participatory approaches within the framework of the digital storytelling process were determined. Focus group interviews held with the participation of 6 field experts and the researcher (two art educators, an expert linguist, an educational scientist, the researcher and a doctorate student from the field of educational technology) on the basis of the product subject to the digital storytelling application that occurred.

The first focus grouping interviews included field experts opinions regarded the creativity based on storytelling. The second focus grouping interview was conducted with the students' participation to the design process. So the focus grouping interview questions were prepared to evaluate the students' participation to reflect creativity, skills, technology use and originality. The main themes of the focus group interview questions were the students' aim with the story, the students' thoughts that they want to tell with the story, originality of students' choices related the storytelling steps, the students' creation reflecting to the process, the students' organizing skills on the story in a significant manner, effectiveness of story reflection and connection of story with the main theme, the effective use of storytelling components to improve the story such as music, sound, illustration, animation, video recording, meaning of storytelling for the students based on reflecting idea, creativity, skills, thoughts and feelings.

In the first phase, in the evaluation process of the digital storytelling application, the design created by the students, the visual explanation regarding the design, the subjects related to the visual explanation, effectiveness of the visual explanation, the quality of storytelling, characteristics of the characters and the structure of the design as a whole were evaluated. Visual coding was done depending on the field experts' views about the designs and the metaphors created by the students on the basis of the characters were determined (Finley, 2005; McNiff, 2000; Eisner, 1985). In addition, the field experts evaluated the stories, the structure of the design as a whole and the visuals in the interactive environment design in the context of the students' creativity approaches and also determined certain indicators regarding the evaluation of the creative approaches in the framework of the digital storytelling application. While determining these indicators, the criteria in McDrury & Alterio's Model of Reflective Storytelling (McDrury & Alterio, 2003) regarding the evaluation of the digital storytelling process was taken into consideration. These criteria included determining the story, designing the story, expanding the story, building the story in the process and reconstructing the story (Sanders, 2009). The evaluating criteria of storytelling was designed through the five steps of Reflective Storytelling and these five steps was connected with the storytelling components (Figure 2). The evaluation criteria of storytelling process related cretativity was deeply expanded by the fielt experts based on focus group interviews.
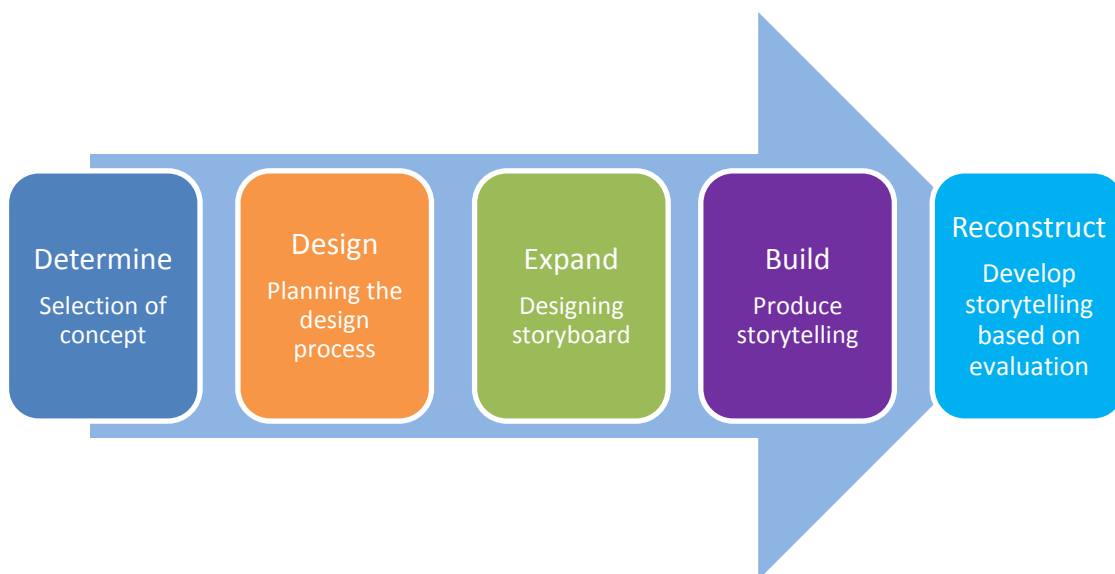

Figure 2. Evaluating Criteria of Digital Storytelling

In the second phase, the findings for determining the participating students' views about the digital storytelling approach were interpreted within the framework of content analysis based on the qualitative research method (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2006). In addition, in order to increase the internal reliability and validity of the research findings, the students' views were frequently quoted. Content analysis is a process that allows researchers to reveal the themes based on the data obtained. The researcher tries to explain the participants' views depending on the themes obtained from the participants in the process (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The concepts and the themes obtained via the data collected from the interviews, from the participants' diaries and from observations in the study within the framework of content analysis were associated, interpreted and explained (Nevitt & Hancock, 2004). Consequently, meaningful explanations were provided regarding the focus of the study with the concepts and themes obtained, and the themes were interpreted (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2006).

In the phase of data analysis, two different forms were developed to examine the participants' views. In addition, the parts of descriptive index and researcher's comments were included in the forms, and these parts were filled in by the researchers. For the reliability of the study, the researchers and field experts (one educational science specialist and one art education specialist) examined the forms and determined the items they agreed on and those they disagreed on. In order to calculate the reliability of the study, the formula suggested by Miles and Huberman (1994) was used. As a result of the calculations, the reliability of the study was found as 97%.

Findings and Discussion

Findings Regarding the Evaluation of the Students' Creative Approaches in the Process of the Digital Storytelling Approach

Although creative individual characteristics differ in determining creativity, it is possible to make certain generalizations. According to Runco (2003) and Florida (2003) creativity requires individual flexibility and fluency. Bristol & Viskontas (2006) emphasize that creative students are successful in transferring and associating information. According to Souza Fleith (2000), creative students are generally ambitious entrepreneurs. Aljughaiman and Mowrer-Reynolds (2005) believe that creative individuals are curious, humoristic, spirited and artistic individuals

who put forward original thoughts, who take risks and who have a wide range of vocabulary knowledge (Runco, 2008). According to Treffinger and his colleagues (2013), creativity varies depending on individuals and disciplines. However, basically, creative individual characteristics indicate producing new and original ideas, examining and explaining the ideas in depth, being open to discovering new ideas and being courageous and sensitive. From a present perspective accepted indicators of the creativity potential are not limited to one ability field. Cognitive factors, personal traits, emotional factors and environmental interactions occurs during the creativity process (Eristi, 2014; Besancon & Lubart, 2008). In this respect, occurrence of creativity varies depending on different disciplines and on the tasks and environment (Eristi, 2014; Lubart & Zenasni, 2010). Thus, instructional activities that allow revealing students' creativity behavior are significant for them. The fact that the digital storytelling approach includes different components and that it provides students with opportunities to express different statements within the framework of their creativity potentials helped determine the creativity indicators in the study (see Figure 3).

Figure 3. Digital Storytelling Study Interface

In this respect, in the study, the components of the digital storytelling process and their reflections on the occurrence of creativity were evaluated individually and as a whole by field experts to answer the research question related the digital storytelling application reflectin onto the process of revealing elementary school students' creativity depending on field experts'

views. The experts interpreted the creativity approaches in the digital storytelling process in a framework that takes different creativity fields into consideration. In the first phase of the study, it was emphasized that the students demonstrated a substantial creative approach in such dimensions as the effectiveness of the characters, the quality of sound recordings, the association of the stories with visuals and the way of their presentation in the interactive environment design examined based on the expert views. The experts examined such features of the interactive environment design separately as visuals, content, sound recordings and color use, which are all design elements, and evaluated the students' creativity in the context of these features. In addition, the experts evaluated the digital stories created in the development process of the interactive environment design within the scope of the digital storytelling project in the context of their degree of originality, their narrative features, enrichment and structuring of concepts and putting forward contributions (McDrury & Alterio, 2003). In this respect, the indicators that the field experts took into consideration while interpreting the creative approaches are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Creativity Indicators of Digital Storytelling Based o Expert Views

Characteristics of Illustrations
Originality of the characters
Drawing-related features of the characters
Effective use of metaphors reflecting the personality traits of the characters in the drawings
Color features of the characters
Description of the Characters
Originality of the descriptions of the characters
Harmony of the visual representations and character descriptions
Capability of character descriptions to reflect the personality traits of the characters
Design and Storytelling
Association of storytellings with visuals
Degree of originality of the storytellings
The narrative features of the storytelling and its features in the context of enrichment of concepts
Restructuring of storytelling in the context of design
Sound Recording
Harmony of the sound recordings with the personality traits of the characters

In the digital storytelling application, it was found to be creative that the students placed five different Anatolian-culture heroes in new stories by characterizing them again. In addition, the character designs put forward by the students in the process of restructuring the characters were considered by experts as a significant application that made the digital storytelling study effective. The sound recordings constituted another area of application that required the students to behave according to the personality traits of the characters. When the design elements of the digital storytelling study were examined separately, especially the storytelling study applications related to developing character design, creating original stories and gathering character designs effectively were found effective. The findings based on the experts' views regarding the features of the stories and the characters that occurred as a result of reinterpretation of the Anatolian-culture characters in the design are presented below (Figure 4):

Figure 4. The Character of Deli Dumrul

In the application process, Deli Dumrul, one of the characters in the students' drawings, was one of the characters prominent in Dede Korkut Stories in Anatolian culture. The Deli Dumrul characters of the students in their pictorial representations include power, horse-riding, combat, dominance and self-confidence. Based on the experts' views, it could be stated that these metaphors were creatively reflected in the character drawings. The creativity indicators expressed based on the experts' views show not only the originality of the character drawings but also successful visualization and concretization of the personality traits that the character owns in the original story. In addition, descriptions such as horse-riding, carrying a sword and shooting arrows, which are all the traits that the character has, could be said to be the reflections of the influence of Anatolian culture onto the pictorial representations. When the Deli Dumrul character projected by the students was examined, it was seen that similar to the pictorial

representations, the character was described as one with power and authority (Figure 4). In the stories, the effects of the Anatolian culture on the Deli Dumrul character were observed, yet it was also considered striking that the characters were reflected with such certain utopic creative thoughts as time-travel. In this respect, it could be stated that within the student group, the students put forward a valid original and creative approaches in line with their creative potentials.

Figure 5. Tepegoz Character

Another character, Tepegoz, reflected by the students was one of the characters found in Dede Korkut Stories in Anatolian culture. The metaphors prominent in characters such as Tepegoz included being supernatural and powerful. These metaphors in the characters were described successfully. Based on the experts' views, it could be stated that these metaphors reflected the creativity of the students as well as their abilities in drawing. According to the experts' views, the stylistic features, effective use of colors and original perspective could be considered as indicators of the creative approaches of the students in terms of reflecting the character (Figure 5). Similarly narrated in stories as a supernatural character representing the evil, Tepegoz was punished in different ways at the end of each story. In addition, in the storytellings, the approaches to the Tepegoz character were successful in the framework of the criteria determined by the experts' views depending on the occurrence of creativity. The reason was that the descriptions regarding the Tepegoz character in the storytellings were original and fluent as well as effective in terms of imagination of the students.

Figure 6. Keloglan Character

The Keloglan character was one of the heroes in folktales in Anatolian culture. The metaphors prominent in the Keloglan character created by the students demonstrate well-mannered, cheerful and traveller personality traits (Figure 6). According to the experts' views, the metaphors in the Keloglan character were found to be in harmony with the original Keloglan stories. Successful reflection of the characteristic features was another indicator observed in the drawings. Depending on the experts' views, it could be stated that the Keloglan characters were created with creative approaches and that they carried the traces of the Anatolian culture. In addition, the descriptions regarding the Keloglan character in the storytellings were found to be effective by the experts with respect to such creativity indicators in their originality, fluency and extraordinariness.

Figure 7. Sahmeran Character

"Sahmeran", one of the characters prominent in mythological stories in Anatolian culture, was a surreal therapeutic character with a snake-like body and a human-like head. Sahmeran, one of the characters that interested the students most in the process of digital storytelling study, was represented effectively in the drawings. Although each character demonstrated different

traits, they generally carried metaphors regarding a powerful and well-mannered, though startling, character (Figure 7). These traits matching the personality traits of the character in Anatolian culture powerful were clearly seen as well-mannered and therapeutic Sahmeran in the stories put forward by the students. In addition, the Sahmeran character was one of the characters that pushed the limits of the students' imagination most because the students were interested in this character due to its superhuman as well as human-specific features.
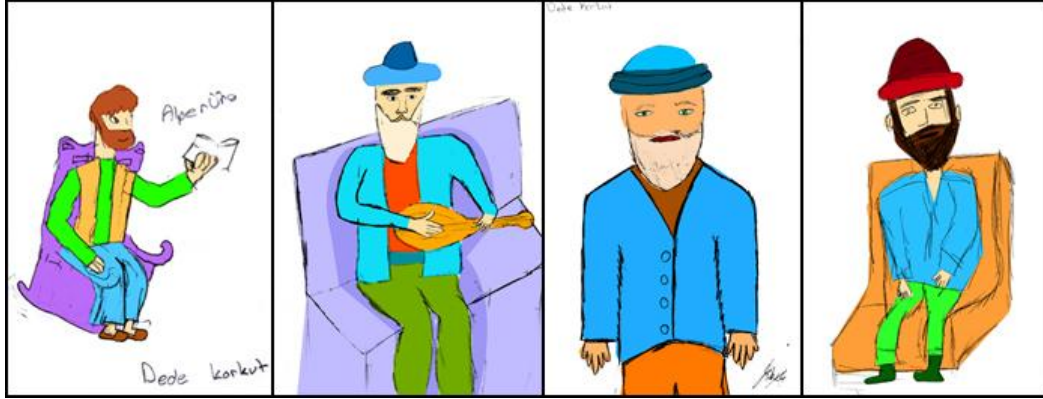

Figure 8. Dede Korkut Character

Dede Korkut, the main hero in Dede Korkut stories in Anatolian culture, was a respected and advice-giving character that narrated these stories and had great influence on humans. The most striking feature of this character was that the character narrated the stories by playing a lute-like instrument (a traditional instrument in Anatolian culture). Metaphors based on such certain characteristic features as wisdom, narration and powerfulness were prominent in the students' drawings, and these features corresponded to Dede Korkut stories in Anatolian culture (Figure 8). The character in the stories created by the students was described as a helpful, leading and advice-giving story-narrator.

Depending on the experts' views, it could be stated that besides the whole study put forward as a result of the digital storytelling study, such applications as character development, storytelling and sound recording were the fields in which the students demonstrated creative behavior effectively. In this respect, in the focus-group interviews held regarding the reflections of the participatory design approach - within the framework of the digital storytelling application - onto the students' creativity were as follows:

- The digital storytelling application could lead to an instructional process with active participation,

- The digital storytelling application can help students gain organizational efficacy regarding the design process and can allow them to discover their creative potentials.

- It can provide more effective permanency regarding the instructional content.

- Students can direct their creative approaches effectively with respect to their interests and efficacies in the process.

- Technical efficacies regarding the effective use of technology can prepare an environment which allows students to demonstrate their different creativity potentials.

- Effective use of team work can help students to discover each other's creative approaches and to encourage one another.

- It can contribute to the development of students' creativity skills as they have the opportunity to express themselves.

Findings Based on the Students' Views Regarding the Process of the Digital Storytelling Application

The research question related the students' views about the application in the context of the participatory design approach within the digital storytelling application was constructed through the Table 2 below presents the findings based on the students' views regarding the digital storytelling application:

Table 2.
Students' Views about the Digital Storytelling Application

Themes
Reflections of the digital storytelling application on revealing students' creativity
Reflections onto students' demonstration of creative behavior
Reflections onto students' discovery of their different efficacies
Reflections onto students' self-expression in a specific manner
Effectiveness of the participatory design approach and its reflections on creativity
Reflections of participation in the design process as an active participant onto the development of creative approaches
Reflections of participation in the design process as an active participant onto students' self-confidence
Provoking curiosity regarding the application process of the participatory design approach

Themes
Reflections of group work onto creativity
Reflections of group work onto development of creative behavior
Reflections of the group work application on increasing motivation
Technology use efficacy and its reflections on creativity
Reflections of technology as an active participant on creativity
Reflections on effective use of technology
Cultural awareness
Reflections on raising cultural awareness
Reflections on provoking interest and curiosity regarding cultural identity and values

One of the students, A14, reported his/her views regarding the sub-theme of "*reflections onto students' demonstration of creative behavior*" within the scope of the main theme of "*revealing students' creativity*" by stating;

> "*It helped me learn to think creatively, and the lessons were entertaining. I became more interested in the lesson. I was happy because I was able to achieve a study with the help of creative thoughts. I contributed to the digital story by preparing an animation and I was able to show my creativity.*"

Another student, A24, reported his/her views regarding the sub-theme of "*Reflections onto students' discovery of their different efficacies*" within the scope of the main theme of "*revealing students' creativity*" by stating "*...everybody becomes more successful when they do things in line with their own interests.*" Regarding the same theme, another student, A31, reported his/her views as follows:

> "*I had the chance to express my thoughts freely. Also, I animated my drawings via animations. In this respect, I think I developed myself. Thanks to this course, I will be able to prepare cartoon films I have dreamt about by preparing animations. Today, we recorded sounds for the characters. It was very entertaining. Thus, I feel closer to writing and literature.*"

In fact, students' participation in the process lies in line with their own interests and expectations. It helped them recognize the creativity fields that they were interested in, they were unaware. A32, another student who created the theme mentioned, supported this situation remarking that "*the task distribution in class allowed me to discover my abilities and helped*

me gain experience; in this way. I recognized that I was more successful in writing stories because one of the stories belonged to me."

According to the students' overall views constituting the sub-theme of "*Reflections onto students' self-expression in a specific manner*" within the scope of the main theme of "*Revealing students' creativity*", they were able to make use of their efficacies in a way to benefit from their creativity areas more effectively as they became aware of these areas. One of the students, A23, supported this finding recognizing that *"I did drawings; I tried to improve my drawings; by creating these amateur drawings, I saw what my mistakes were. Then I improved my drawings a bit more, and I managed to express myself more effectively in this way"*.

Another main theme, "*Effectiveness of the participatory design approach and its reflections on creativity*", was the one on which most of the students agreed. In general, the students reported positive views about taking part in the process, creating designs effectively and having a say in every phase of the process. One of the students, A2, reported effective views about the sub-theme of "*Reflections of participation in the design process as an active participant onto the development of creative approaches*" within the scope of the main theme of "*Effectiveness of the participatory design approach and its reflections on creativity*". A2 emphasized that active participation guided him/her regarding creativity and stated that;

> *"We used my drawings in the digital story. One of the digital stories in the digital story was mine. I was happy that my handicraft products were favored. Thus I was proud of myself. I recognized my willingness to write stories and draw characters, and I became more interested."*

The sub-theme of "*Reflections of participation in the design process as an active participant onto students' self-confidence*" regarding the main theme of "*Effectiveness of the participatory design approach and its reflections on creativity*" was another theme emphasized by most of the students. One of the students, A4, reported his/her views about the positive reflection of the process onto his/her self-confidence admitting:

> *"I contributed effectively to the digital story, and this made me proud of myself. I contributed both to the character drawings and to the sound recordings. The result was very good. It is a wonderful feeling to see my drawings used in the design. You believe what you have done is a beautiful thing, and you feel happy."*

The last sub-theme regarding the main theme of "*Effectiveness of the participatory design approach and its reflections on creativity*" was "*Provoking curiosity regarding the application process of the participatory design approach*". Regarding this sub-theme, one of the students, A26, *stated;*

> *"I think I contributed to the lesson in terms of character creation. The character of Dede Korkut that I drew was a part of design. The use of my drawing in the design made me happy. I was glad to be a part of this activity. In this way, I became more interested in the subject."*

The main theme of "*Reflections of group work onto creativity*" revealed based on the research findings was another main theme that the students reported solid positive views about and found fairly effective. One of the students, A16, who reported views about the sub-theme of "*Reflections of group work onto development of creative behavior*" regarding the main theme of "*Reflections of group work onto creativity*" emphasized the effectiveness of group work admitting "*In the digital storytelling course, we gathered and animated five different heroes in the digital environment. During the group works, we did a better job by discussing on different thoughts with our group mates.*" Another student, A10, reported his/her views about the sub-theme of "*Reflections of the group work application on increasing motivation*" remarking that;

> *"In the digital storytelling course, it was nice to work in groups and to carry out the design cooperatively. As a member of a group, taking part in such an activity honored and pleased me, and I became more interested in the lesson. I liked this course."*

Regarding the sub-theme of "*Reflections of technology as an active participant on creativity*" revealed based on the findings constituting the main theme of "*Technology use efficacy and its reflections on creativity*" within the scope of the study, one of the students, A57, reported his/her views as follows:

> *"I actively participate and contribute to the digital storytelling design process. I learnt to work in groups and to put forward perfect products. I have also learnt that I can learn unfamiliar things by studying hard and by asking for help when necessary. And, in this course, I learnt that technology is not just a means of playing games. Thus, I learnt technological art. Thanks to technological art, I managed to create a number of background items. I was able to express my thoughts creatively. I contributed to this course by writing a scenario. I helped with the character*

drawings. In this way, I creatively used my drawing ability as well as my ability to write stories."

One of the students, A40, reported his/her views about the sub-theme of *"Reflections of technology as an active participant on creativity"* indicating:

"Photoshop is a program which is entertaining yet difficult to use, and we tried to use it to obtain a number of images. I have learnt that we can do changes on numerous sounds and images by using technology. I learnt how to create a cartoon film, how to draw with the help of a computer and how to do sound recordings. I first created the Keloglan character. Later, I dubbed Deli Dumrul. I read the text changing my voice. I got very excited doing vocalization, but I became happy when I saw the product. No one could believe it was my voice. As I used technology effectively, I managed to do things I had imagined. There was much creative reflection of mine as well as of my friends."

One of the students, A33, stated his/her views about the sub-theme of "*Reflections on effective use of technology"* indicating:

"In this course, I learnt how to do changes on images. I learnt how to combine two images and how to draw characters. I also learnt how to animate the characters I created and how to do sound recordings. I had much fun during the lessons. Also, I learnt the overall features of Anatolian characters."

The main theme of *"Technology use efficacy and its reflections on creativity"* within the scope of the study was one that the students clearly expressed their views about. In addition, in their design diaries the students emphasized the effectiveness of the process mostly with respect to this theme.

In the study, another finding obtained based on the students' views was the main theme of *"Cultural awareness"*. One of the students, A51, reported his/her views about the sub-theme of "*Reflections on raising cultural awareness"* saying:

"In this course, I learnt that Tepegoz was a very strong character. Because it had only one eye, it was called Tepegoz. This character believed nobody could defeat it. Sahmeran was a snake and knew the formula of therapeutic magic potions. Keloglan was naïve yet very clever. Dede Korkut was a very famous folk hero. Deli Dumrul was against Azrael (the angel of death)."

A39, another student, reported his/her views regarding the sub-theme of *"Reflections on provoking interest and curiosity regarding cultural identity and values"* admitting:

> *"I increased my knowledge about cultural characters. Also, we wrote a story using these characters. In this course, I learnt that Dede Korkut had a lute-like instrument; Tepegoz ate human; Deli Dumrul was willing to fight with Azrael; Sahmeran was a snake; and it lived under the ground. All these drew my attention. I also wondered about other heroes in our culture. In addition, thanks to the story we wrote, I became more interested in the digital story we developed. This made me happy, and I liked the digital story."*

Depending on the students' views about the effectiveness and reflections of the digital storytelling application onto their creativity, it could be stated that actions such as guiding students especially in line with their interests, encouraging them to do group work, involving them in the design process as a participatory designer and providing them with the opportunity to participate effectively in every phase of the design process helped them express themselves, discover and make use of their creativity and develop themselves. In addition, it could also be stated in line with the findings obtained that it allowed learning by discovering the process and made the instructional process more effective and interesting. It is also important to associate such applications with instructional areas and subjects that allow students to discover their creativity (Skivenes & Stranbu, 2006). The reason is that the students' use of interesting stories and characters from the Anatolian culture in the process provided the students with an in-depth application opportunity to discover themselves.

In the participatory design process within the scope of the digital storytelling approach, students test their knowledge regarding a purpose determined and participate in the discussion and decision-making process regarding the design. In addition, students revise their creative potentials, efficacies and needs regarding the purpose determined, associate them with the design process and make, test, evaluate and develop decisions. While creating all these, they benefit from both individual and group interactions. In addition, the fact that students are participatory designers in the participatory design process motivates them more, encourages them to participate, allows them to put forward their needs clearly and helps them discover themselves and one another (Morajevi et. al., 2007). As such, the participatory design approach could be said to be an effective and entertaining process thanks to which students discover themselves as well as their creativity.

The first phase of the participatory design approach based on digital storytelling starts with the definition of students' participation in the process. Simply put a good-quality creative process will be available for students. While defining their participation in the process, students discover their creativity and define, revise and effectively make use of their efficacies and skills based on their creative potentials. Students put forward suggestions regarding solutions to a problem or a certain purpose based on the participatory design approach, and they introduce products cooperatively. In the participatory design process, students, who also constitute the audience of the process, can demonstrate a design approach based on the appearing product which meets their needs better (Skivenes & Stranbu, 2006). With such a design approach, students have the opportunity to use different creativity potentials based on their needs.

Conclusion

Today, with the influence of globalization, it is important to train individuals for future not only in line with national criteria but also according to international standards. As a natural result of this situation, in a number of countries in the world, many educational institutions of different types and at different levels try to provide opportunities to increase students' knowledge with the help of technology-based instructional applications. In this respect, instructional methods, applications and activities that require effective use of technology are important. With the participatory design approach based on the digital storytelling application within the scope of the study, the students were provided with the opportunity of technology use associated with a design process in which they were active participants. As a result, an educational environment in which the students could use their creative behavior effectively was established. The participatory design approach within the framework of digital storytelling in the study could be said to be an application process in which the students could clearly discover their creative potentials because prior to the application, the students had a tendency to discover themselves for the purpose of being involved in the process as active participants and of recognizing themselves within the context of the participatory design approach. The use of participatory digital storytelling includes creativity related to facilitate colloborate digital media in numerous contents in an effective manner based on critical thinking capacity (Gubrium & Harper, 2013; Lambert, 2013; Ohler, 2013). Participatory storytelling is a creative process based on deeply thinking and deeply imagination dealing with storytelling components effectively and reflecting

multiple ideas to construct digital platform on story (Matthews & Sunderland, 2013; Willox, 2012).

As a result of the study, it was revealed that at the end of the application process, the students had positive views about the digital storytelling approach and about their involvement in the digital storytelling process as participatory designers. The students stated that they participated in the design process; that they created the scenario in the design; that they drew the characters; and that they took part in an entertaining training process as they did sound recordings. Most of the students reported that it was pleasing and exciting to take active part in the design process and to see their products displayed. In addition, a majority of the students stated that their excitement in seeing that their own designs were appreciated and used increased both their interest in the instructional process and their self-confidence and helped them discover their creativity. Depending on the students' views, it could be emphasized that especially participation in the process as an active participant motivated the students to become interested in the instructional content. According to the research findings, the digital storytelling approach could be said to be an interactive, effective process which provokes active participation and which allows students to discover themselves.

Consequently, the research findings pointed out that an application in which students actively participate in line with their expectations, efficacies and interests not only help them to reveal their creativity and to find pleasure in learning but also increase their motivation in the course. In addition, effective use of the digital storytelling approach motivated the students' educational experiences to become more effective. Also, the digital storytelling approach, which places students in the center of learning, leads to more effective instructional experiences.

Additionally, the project gave students the opportinities to tell stories of their creative approaches based on the participatory storytelling method. The digital stories included a powerfull and personal insights of creativity, participation, self confidence and communication.

Participatory storytelling methods included the creative forms of self expression such as drawing, designing, drama, music and writing. The colloborative process of participants allowed them to find an effective way of creativity.

Based on the research findings, it could be stated that the digital storytelling approach constitutes an effective learning environment which allows students to use their limited time more effectively and productively.

The participatory design approach also allows putting forward designs that meet students' real needs in the design process. The reason is that the actual users or the audience of a design are the students themselves who are participatory designers in the process. In this respect, studies could be conducted regarding the effectiveness of designs in which students are participatory designers. In the process of the participatory design approach within the scope of the digital storytelling application, students discovered their creativity and the process encourage them to reflect their efficacies. In the process of developing digital storytelling application, students constructed the design environment in line with their interests, expectations and needs.

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Ömür Gürdoğan Bayır

Research Article

The Role of Social Studies Course in Creating Society with Skilled Citizens: Pre-Service Elementary Teachers Express their Views [1]

Ömür Gürdoğan Bayır[2]

In memory of Sefik Yasar

Abstract

The aim of this study is to reveal pre-service elementary teachers' views about the role of the Social Studies course in creating a society with skilled citizens. An interpretive research design was adopted in the study. The participants of the study were senior students attending the department of Elementary School Teaching at the Education Faculty of Anadolu University. The data were collected through focus group interview, open-ended survey and elementary school pre-service teachers' lesson plans. The data were analysed through inductive analysis. In this study, the results of the analyses revealed several themes such as "perception of being skilled", "skilled citizens and society with skilled citizens", "importance of Social Studies course in creating society with skilled citizens", "problems experienced" and "suggested solutions". As a result of this study, which examined the elementary school pre-service teachers' views about the importance of the Social Studies course in creating a society with skilled citizens, it was concluded that elementary school pre-service teachers gave importance to the course. Moreover, elementary school pre-service teachers determined

problems about the content of the Social Studies course and about the implementation of the curriculum, and they put forward suggestions related to the teaching-learning process, content and the stakeholders.

Introduction

Society, in traditional sense, is formed by citizens who live within same boundaries and share a common culture. However, with globalisation, a society can be identified as a structure which embodies citizens who have different languages, religions and ethnicity. Societies aim to develop constantly to meet the needs of entire society, to live in better conditions, to live in harmony with citizens who have diverse characteristics and to be skilled. In this sense, skilled citizens can contribute to the constitution of a skilled society. It could be stated that skilled citizens are those who are sensitive to social problems, constantly develop themselves, have high order thinking skills, adopt national and universal values, and can adapt to the information and communication era.

A reflection on the educational and cultural aspects of information could result in a better-qualified society made up of responsible and critical citizens (Hesse, Muller & Ruβ, 2008). An institute of education, a social open system established to meet the needs of individuals in a society, is a tool that develops the well-educated qualified man force of a country. In addition, an institute of education could also be said to have an important place in providing the welfare and happiness of both individuals and of the society. In recent years, while expressing the development levels of countries, the focus has been on the ratio of man force of countries as well as on the per capita income (Hosgorur & Gezgin, 2005). Training children as responsible, conscious and skilled citizens is important for the present and future of societies (Aral and Gursoy, 2001). Development of children in many aspects through education is the basis of creating socially, culturally, economically and politically developed societies with skilled citizens (Cilga, 1999). In other words, for societies with skilled citizens, children should be exposed to a qualified education starting from early ages. Education provided at schools is of great significance considering the fact that all the citizens supposedly attend these institutions.

In order to reach a certain level of development, societies expect citizens to have skills such as being cooperative, effective in communication, problem solving, critical thinking, using technology effectively, conflict resolution, being empathetic, being assertive and productive. Besides, with increasing information, citizens are asked to have the skill of using information effectively. In this sense, Erdem and Akkoyunlu (2002) listed the characteristics of citizens

who can use information in reading, writing, speaking, listening, decision making, reasoning, and taking responsibility. In elementary education all courses contribute to teach skills. However, Social Studies is one of the important course aiming to teach these skills in elementary education. Also, Social Studies aims to enable citizens to take part in the society as effective citizens.

Social Studies is a course which helps children become a part of the society as knowledgeable individuals and which attaches importance to the development of good and social relationships. This course focuses on how the lives of individuals are affected by the environment, how they affect the environment, how institutions were formed in the past, how individuals coped with the difficulties in the past and how they do today (Shamsi, 2004). Social Studies is defined as a course that uses the information and method from social sciences to train effective citizens who can make decisions and solve problems in cases of changing conditions (Ozturk, 2009). Providing one of the most comprehensive definitions, NCSS (1993) defined Social Studies as a course fed by anthropology, archaeology, economy, geography, history, constitution, philosophy, political science, psychology, religion and sociology as well as humanities, mathematics and natural sciences. In Turkey, the Ministry of National Education (2004) approached to Social Studies as an elementary school course that aims to help individuals fulfil their social existence; which reflects social sciences and citizenship subjects such as history, geography, psychology, philosophy, political science and justice; which includes combining learning areas in a unit or theme; in which the interaction of people with their social and physical environment is examined in the context of today and future and is formed based on a holistic approach to teaching. Emphasizing social sciences, the Social Studies course enables skilled citizens to be trained with related content. As for the primary aim of the Social Studies course, it is to help students develop a social personality. The most important characteristic of social personality is being a good citizen. A good citizen is one who knows his/her responsibilities and is aware of the events in his/her environment (Sozer, 2008, p.49). At the same time, a good citizen is an individual who has adopted and internalized the culture of the society and had an understanding of developing that culture. In fact, maintaining the sustainability of nations is only possible with training good citizens (Safran, 2008, p.15). In this respect, implementing the Social Studies course which aims to train good citizens effectively could be said to play a key role in creating societies with skilled citizens.

When the literature on the Social Studies course is examined, it is seen that there are studies which focused on the citizenship practices from various aspects in the course (Ersoy, 2007; Hoge, 2002; Karaduman & Ozturk, 2014; Goz, 2010); which aimed to develop different skills (Gurdogan Bayir, 2010; Celikkaya, 2011; Yazici, 2006; Whitworth and Berson, 2002); which investigated the effect of different activities on academic achievement (Cengelci, 2005; Karakus, 2006; Box and Little, 2003); and which examined the practices regarding the values of education (Cengelci, 2010; Baydar, 2009; Rainey, 1999). However, in related literature, there is no research conducted to examine elementary school preservice teachers' views about the role of the course of Social Studies in creating societies with skilled citizens. Accordingly, identifying the views of future teachers in this respect would be of great significance. In this sense, the aim of this study was to reveal elementary school pre-service teachers' views about the role of the Social Studies course in creating societies with skilled citizens. The following research questions were directed in line with this purpose:

- What are elementary school pre-service teachers' views about skilled citizens and about societies with skilled citizens?
- What are elementary school pre-service teachers' views about the importance of the Social Studies course in educating societies with skilled citizens?
- What are the problems experienced in relation to the Social Studies course according to the elementary school pre-service teachers?
- What are elementary school pre-service teachers' suggestions regarding effective Social Studies teaching?

Methodology

Research Design

The study was conducted using the qualitative research method. In this study, the interpretive research design, which is an umbrella term in qualitative research, was used. Interpretive research focuses on how individuals interpret their experiences, on how they structure their own worlds and on the meanings they attach to their experiences (Merriam, 2002). In this study, which was based on the elementary school pre-service teachers' experiences in their undergraduate courses and school practicum, their views about the role of the Social Studies

course in creating a society with skilled citizens were examined through an open-ended survey, focused group interview and the lesson plans they prepared.

Participants

The participants of the study were senior students attending the department of Elementary School Teaching at the Education Faculty of Anadolu University. In this research criterion sampling which is one of the purposeful sampling methods was used. These criteria were determined as taking the courses of Social Studies teaching, school experience and teaching practicum. Therefore, they had experience in observing and teaching in a real classroom environment. The personal characteristics of the participants are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Characteristics of the Participants

Personal Characteristics of the Participants	f
Gender	
Female	43
Male	24
Observing Social Studies course at the practicum school	
Yes	33
No	34
Preparing Social Studies lesson plan	
Yes	57
No	10
Enthusiasm with Social Studies course	
Yes	52
No	15
Total	67

As can be seen in Table 1, 43 of the participants were female, and 24 of them were male. Of all the participants, 33 of them observed a Social Studies course, while 34 of them did not. Also, 57 of the participants prepared a lesson plan for the Social Studies course, while 10 of them did not. Besides, while 52 of the participants liked the Social Studies course, 15 of them did not. Following the open-ended survey, a focus group interview was held with 10 of the participants. While selecting these participants for the focus group interview, whether they

had observed a Social Studies course and prepared a lesson plan was taken into account. In addition, 20 students' lesson plans for the Social Studies course were analysed.

Data Gathering and Analysis

The research data in the present study were gathered using different data collection tools. The data collection tools used in this study were as follows:

Open-ended survey: An open-ended survey was administered to the elementary school pre-service teachers to reveal their personal characteristics, their perceptions regarding skilled citizens and society with skilled citizens, the importance of Social Studies in creating societies with skilled citizens, the related problems experienced and their suggested solutions. The open-ended survey developed by the researchers was administered, and the participants were informed about the fact that there were not any right or wrong answers. The time allocated for the survey was 30 minutes.

Focus group interview: A focus group interview was held with the pre-service teachers in the study. The purpose of this interview was to gather more in-depth data. During the interview, the students were asked to define societies with skilled citizens, to indicate its characteristics, to explain by giving reasons, to explain the roles of the Social Studies course in creating a society with skilled citizens as well as its reasons, and to present their views about the problems experienced and their suggested solutions to these problems. Therefore, the interview was in the form of a discussion, and it lasted 80 minutes in total.

Lesson plans: The lesson plans prepared by the pre-service teachers were also analysed in the study. The type of the activities planned by the pre-service teachers in relation to Social Studies teaching was examined.

The data were analysed using inductive analysis. In inductive analysis, researchers firstly develop categories related to the research topic. They then count the words, sentences or images falling in these categories in the dataset being examined (Silverman, 2001, cited in Ozdemir, 2010). The basic procedure in inductive analysis is combining similar data in certain themes (Yildirim and Simsek, 2008). In this sense, the open-ended survey, the interview and the lesson plans were analysed together in this study; the themes were

developed; and the codes to be included in these themes were identified. These codes were then counted. The themes and the codes revealed in the study were interpreted by relating them to each other. Two researchers were involved in the analysis of the data in this study. Different data collection tools were used together to ensure the validity of the study. As for the reliability issue, the researchers conducted the analysed independently. After the researchers formed their themes, they identified the themes that they agreed and disagreed on. In the study, the pre-service teachers were coded with numbers used in the quotations. Furthermore, the same numbers were attached to the participants for all the data collection tools, and letters were used next to the numbers to represent the dataset from which the quotations were taken. For example, while the open-ended survey data for one pre-service teacher was coded as S18, the interview data were coded as I18 and the lesson plan as P18.

Findings

The findings revealed in the study are presented under the headings of "perception of being skilled", "skilled citizens and society with skilled citizens', "importance of Social Studies in creating societies with skilled citizens", "problems experienced" and "suggested solutions".

Findings Related to the Perception of Being Skilled

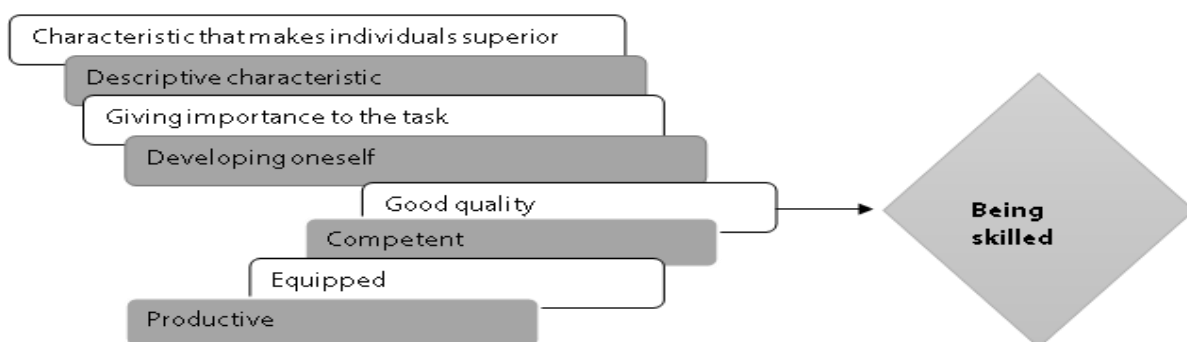Figure 1 presents the elementary school pre-service teachers' perception of being skilled.

Figure 1. Perception of Being Skilled

The elementary school pre-service teachers' perception of being skilled was found to be related to being productive, equipped, competent, good quality, giving importance to a task, developing oneself, descriptive characteristic and the characteristic that makes individuals

superior. One of the elementary school pre-service teachers who related being skilled to being equipped reported that *"In relation to being skilled, I firstly think of being equipped. Being skilled is closely related to being equipped; in other words, being versatile (S21)".* Regarding self-development, one pre-service teacher said: *"It is individuals' effort to develop themselves in every aspect as much as possible (S36)",* while another pre-service teacher reported: *"it was developed, and it includes everything necessary; it is good... (S34)".* One pre-service teacher who related being skilled to good quality said: *"... I think of good quality; it is related to being skilled (S12)",* and another pre-service teacher said: *"It means good quality in everything and effectiveness in the task (S49)".* Similar to this view, another pre-service teacher explained his/her views as follows: *"It is the way it should be. If a task is to be performed, it should be good-quality; then, it means being skilled and performing a task conscientiously (S57)".* One of the pre-service teachers who defined being skilled as a descriptive characteristic provided another definition as follows: *"It is the non-numeric characteristics of something. In other words, the standards that are described and seen (S16)",* while another defined it as *"a set of characteristics used to describe a concept, phenomenon or event. It is used to make sense of something (S43)".* Based on the views of the elementary school pre-service teachers, it could be stated that they perceived being skilled as the characteristics that individuals should have and that they believed these characteristics should be developed.

Findings Related to Skilled Citizens and Society with Skilled Citizens

The elementary school pre-service teachers' views about skilled citizens and societies with skilled citizens are presented in Figure 2.

```
                          ┌─────────────────┐
                          │ Skilled citizens │
                          └─────────────────┘

┌──────────────────┐      ┌─────────────────────┐      ┌──────────────────────┐
│ Knowledge        │      │ Skill               │      │ Value                │
│ Knowing the rights│     │ Planned             │      │ Protecting their values│
│ Knowing their pasts│    │ Entrepreneurial     │      │ Respectful           │
└──────────────────┘      │ Social              │      │ Tolerant             │
                          │ Doing research      │      │ Hard-working         │
                          │ Keeping pace with the era │ │ Responsible          │
                          │ Showing empathy     │      │ Benevolence          │
                          │ Democratic          │      └──────────────────────┘
                          │ Productive          │
                          │ Following the technology │
                          │ Problem solving     │
                          │ Versatile development │
                          │ Obeying the rules   │
                          │ Developing thinking skills │
                          │ Struggling for the society │
                          └─────────────────────┘

                          ┌───────────────────────┐
                          │ Society with skilled citizens │
                          └───────────────────────┘

                          ┌───────────────────────┐
                          │ Effective citizens     │
                          │ Democratic             │
                          │ Modern                 │
                          │ High level of education │
                          │ Having common culture  │
                          │ Peaceful               │
                          │ Information society     │
                          │ Questioning            │
                          │ Developed              │
                          │ High level of economy  │
                          │ Self-reliant           │
                          │ Humanist               │
                          │ Qualified teacher education │
                          └───────────────────────┘
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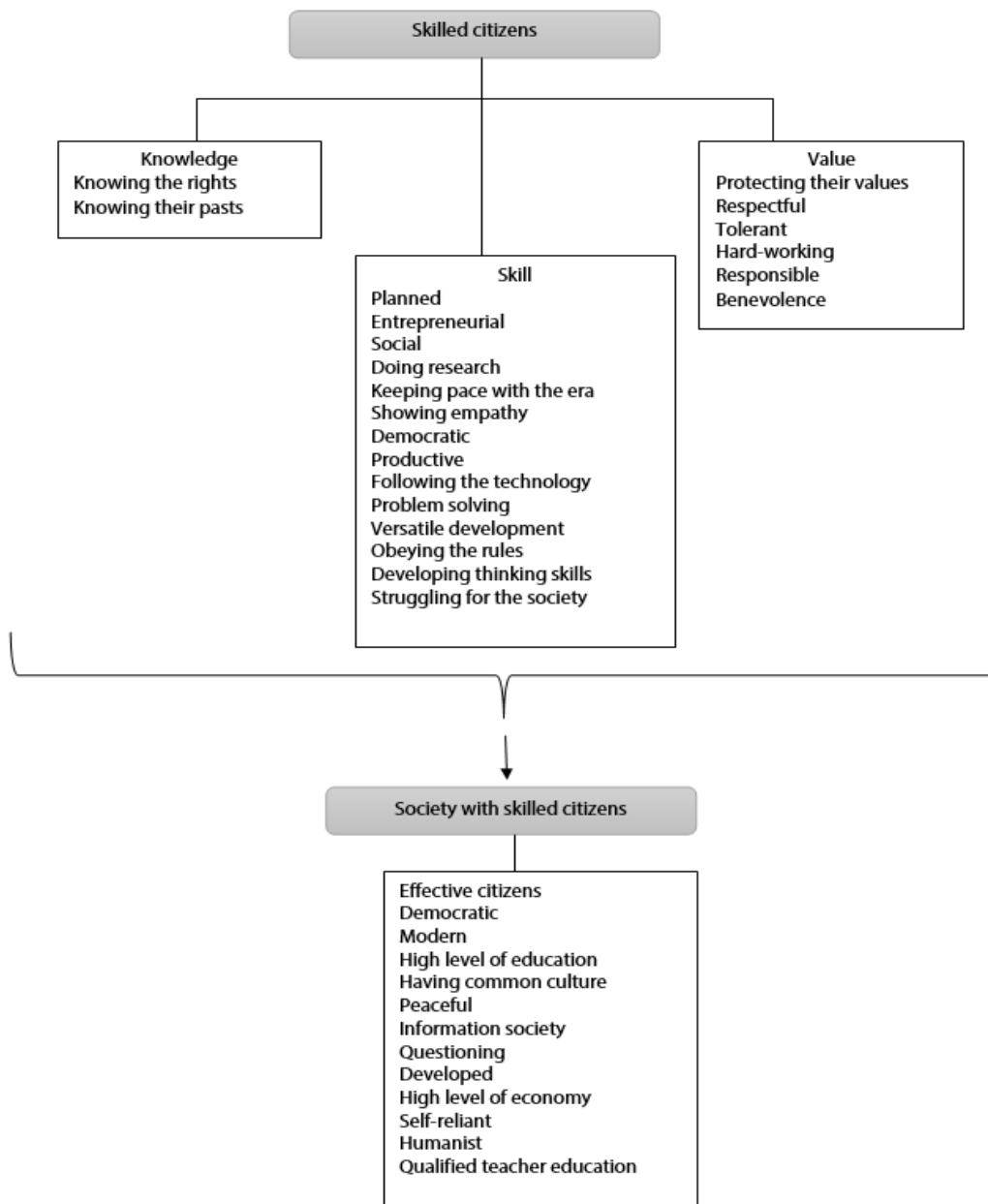
Figure 2. Skilled Citizens and Society with Skilled Citizens

It was observed that the elementary school pre-service teachers discussed the characteristics of skilled citizens in terms of the dimensions of knowledge, skill and value. The elementary school pre-service teachers stated that skilled citizens should be knowledgeable about their rights and past; about the skills of being planned, entrepreneurial, social, doing research, keeping pace with the era, showing empathy, being democratic, productive, following the technology, solving problems, versatile development, obeying the rules, thinking, and struggling for the society; and about the values of protecting their values, being respectful,

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tolerant, hard-working, responsible and benevolence. One of the pre-service teachers indicated that skilled citizens should know their rights saying: *"They know their citizenship rights and what their rights are (S41)",* while another pre-service teacher said: *"...they should know their own culture, and they should do this based on their past (S18)".* Another pre-service teacher stated during the interview that *"Citizens who know their past and learn from their past... Skilled citizens are those who show respect to their past and learn from it for their future (I35)"* and reported in the open-ended survey that *"They know their past and show respect to it; they should know their past so that they can learn from it... (S35)".* Arguing that skilled citizens should have research skills, another pre-service teacher said: *"They should be citizens who conduct research... (S35)".* One of the pre-service teachers stated that citizens should keep pace with the era saying *"They should keep pace with the era by following the developments (S48)",* and another pre-service teacher argued that *"They should be open to any innovation brought about by the era… (S21)".* Similar to these views, another pre-service teacher explained that citizens should follow the technology saying *"They should use the technology and follow the developments (S18)".* One of the pre-service teachers who thought that skilled citizens should develop themselves in versatile aspects said: *"The society develops in line with the development of various fields together. For this reason, citizens should develop themselves in many areas (S24)".* One other pre-service teacher indicated that obeying social rules is a skill that skilled citizens have, saying: *"...they obey the rules because people show respect to others' rights as long as they obey the rules. In this way, conflicts are prevented (S36)",* while another pre-service teacher said: *"Citizens who live in accordance with the rules while waiting for a bus in the queue or communicating with others...(I42)".* Another pre-service teacher who focused on owning thinking skills pointed out that *"They should be critical citizens who can do questioning because those who live based on others' opinions cannot progress (S47)",* and another pre-service teacher said: *"They have thinking skills and also express their opinions appropriately... I44)".* Arguing that individuals should have the skill in struggling for the society, one of the pre-service teachers reported via the survey that *"Individuals should help each other and be beneficial for the society (S9)"* and pointed out during the interview that *"If teachers or doctors work for the society and do their job in the best way they can, that society will develop (I18)".* Another pre-service teacher reflected this argument in their lesson plan by asking students *"If there is a problem in the society, what can be done to solve it? How can the public opinion be moulded for solving this problem? (P22)".* One of the pre-service teachers reported his/her

views about showing respect in terms of the values citizens should have, saying: *"They show respect to individuals' views and opinions... (S17)"*. Another pre-service teacher, giving examples regarding the days special for societies, pointed out that citizens should show respect to such issues (P20). Another pre-service teacher used a poem in his/her lesson plan regarding the value of benevolence and stated the students that they would be asked questions as *"What is benevolence, and what is its importance in the society? (P18)"*. One pre-service teacher explained the importance of protecting values saying *"They should protect the customs, religion and the judicial traditions of the society (S60)"*. Based on these views of the elementary school pre-service teachers, it could be stated that they thought the characteristic features that skilled citizens have are important.

Regarding the characteristics that society with skilled citizens should have, the pre-service teachers' statements included being made up of effective citizens, democratic, modern, having high level of education, peaceful, being an information society, questioning, advanced, having high level of economy, self-reliant, humanist and having qualified teacher education. One of the pre-service teachers pointed out that societies with skilled citizens are made up of effective citizens saying *"It is the society in which citizens vote, pay their taxes, know when to take responsibility for their country and have conscious and sensible ideas (I41)"*. In addition, another pre-service teacher who associated the society with skilled citizens to being democratic said: *"The government should apply a transparent policy to citizens. In other words, the active justice should be the same with the existing one. Namely, it should be democratic (I2)",* while another said *"It should be a democratic society; namely, it should have freedom of thought (S26)"*. One of the pre-service teachers indicated that modern societies are skilled saying: *"It is the society that has reached the level of modern civilization (S37)"*. During the interview, another pre-service teacher said: *"It is the modern society and a modern country that meet the needs of the current era (I34)"*. Another pre-service teacher mentioned peaceful societies saying *"They are societies that live in peace (S28)",* and another said during the interview that *"There are people living peacefully in those societies, everybody is in peace (I42)"*. Indicating that information societies are skilled, one of the pre-service teacher reported his/her views as follows: *"A society with skilled citizens is knowledgeable; thus the productivity is high (S4)"*. One of the pre-service teachers regarded the development level as an indicator of being a society with skilled citizens, saying *"Societies with skilled citizens are those who have different characteristics and who are*

socially and culturally developed in every aspect (S33)", while another pre-service teacher reported the same view saying: *"It is the society with the desired level of development (S18)"* Emphasizing that development should be constant, one pre-service teacher said: *"We are in the era of technology, and a society with skilled citizens should follow it, develop and be open to development (I17)".* It could also be stated that the elementary school pre-service teachers emphasized the importance of skilled citizens in creating societies with skilled citizens.

Importance of the Social Studies Course in Creating Societies with Skilled Citizens

The elementary school pre-service teachers' views about the importance of the Social Studies course in creating societies with skilled citizens are presented in Figure 3.
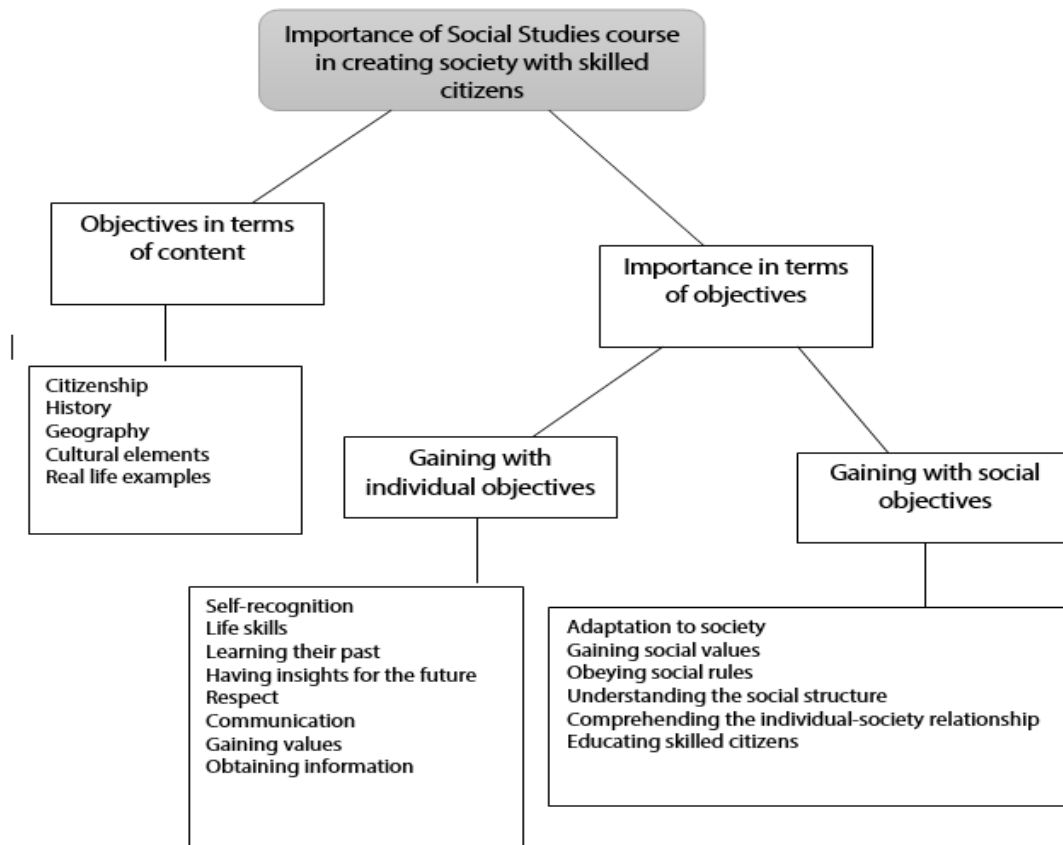

Figure 3. Importance of the Social Studies Course in Creating Society with Skilled Citizens

The elementary school pre-service teachers discussed the Social Studies course in terms of its importance regarding the content and the objectives of the course. They explained its importance in terms of the individual objectives as self-recognition, life skills, learning the

past, having an insight for the future, gaining the value of respect, having communication skills, and obtaining information. One of the pre-service teachers emphasized the importance of self-recognition as one of the individual objectives saying*: "The course enables individuals to develop self-recognition (S26)".* Arguing that the course is important for helping individuals acquire life skills, another pre-service teacher said based on his/her experiences: *"It also helped me acquire the skills that I can use in my own life (S49)",* and the same pre-service teacher supported this view saying: *"Social Studies is a course intertwined with daily life. For this reason, it helps individuals acquire life skills. They should attend this course to form a society with skilled citizens (S49)".* Another pre-service teacher thinking that the Social Studies course is important in terms of teaching the past stated: *"It allows individuals to know their past and to be aware of the past events; namely, it helps them learn their past (I43)".* Emphasizing the importance of the course in helping individuals develop an insight for the future, one of the pre-service teacher said based on his/her prior experiences that *"Social Studies helped me learn from the history. Consequently, it helped me make better decisions about my future (S13)",* while another pre-service teacher explained the same notion as follows: *"People learn the history, geography and culture of the region they live in and shape their future (S11)".* One of the pre-service teachers claimed that the Social Studies course helped equip students with values, saying based on his/her experiences that *"It taught me the values that I should gain in relation to my social environment (S12)".* Similarly, another pre-service teacher stated that the course is important in increasing one's knowledge, saying based on his/her experiences that *"It was theoretically useful and informative, and it taught me the basic knowledge to progress to the next phases (S60)".* One pre-service teacher who reflected the notion of gaining knowledge into his/her lesson plan and provided information about the responsibility of local government units for the purpose of teaching local government units (P7). In relation to the importance of the course in terms of the social objectives, the elementary school pre-service teachers mentioned adaptation to the soceity, learning social values and rules, understanding the social structure, comprehending the society-citizen relationship and educating skilled citizens. Regarding adaptation to the society, one of the pre-service teachers said: *"Citizens adapt to the society by being informed about its structure at early ages (S2)".* Thinking that the Social Studies course is significant in teaching social rules, one pre-service teacher said *"The Social Studies course teaches the rules that should be obeyed in the society (S46)".* Discussing the importance of understanding the social structure, another pre-service teacher reported that *"The Social Studies course*

enables students to understand the social structure by recognizing the societies and their management policies (S38)". Some of the pre-service teachers related this situation to their own experiences saying *"I have raised awareness of the society and of the social structure (S28)"*. Similarly, another pre-service teacher said during the interview that *"Through this course, citizens learn social rules at elementary school. Therefore, the course is important in terms of learning how to become a society (I42)"*. Considering these views of the elementary school pre-service teachers, it could be stated that they considered the Social Studies course to be important in creating a society with skilled citizens both individually and socially.

It was observed that the pre-service teachers perceived the course as important in creating a society with skilled citizens because it included contents such as citizenship, history, geography, cultural elements and real life examples. One of the pre-service teachers indicating its importance in terms of citizenship content said: *"Since the Social Studies course provides basic information, it has the content necessary to make them good citizens (S18)"*. Besides, another pre-service teacher explained the same notion during the interview as follows: *"Since the aim of this course is to educate good citizens, it is important to include such contents (11)"*. One of the pre-service teachers related the teaching of history contents to his/her prior experiences, saying *"Learning about the history developed me a lot (S40)"*, and another pre-service teacher referring to his/her experiences said: *"Learning history contents was important for me (S12)"*. Mentioning the importance of the geography contents, one pre-service teacher reported that *"It makes us get to know the country we live in and other countries as well (S1)"*. Another pre-service teacher stated that the course includes cultural elements, saying *"Students learn their rights and wrongs with the cultural elements being presented in the course... Learning cultural elements is important for a society with skilled citizens (I44)"*. With regard to giving real life examples, one pre-service teacher said *"... this course also touches the events and discusses topics from real life, which makes it important in this respect (S8)"*. The elementary school pre-service teachers perceived the Social Studies course content to be important for creating a society with skilled citizens in terms of presenting citizenship content, making students get to know their environment and providing real life examples.

Findings Related to the Problems Experienced in the Social Studies Course

The elementary school pre-service teachers' views about the problems experienced in the Social Studies course in creating a society with skilled citizens are presented in Figure 4.
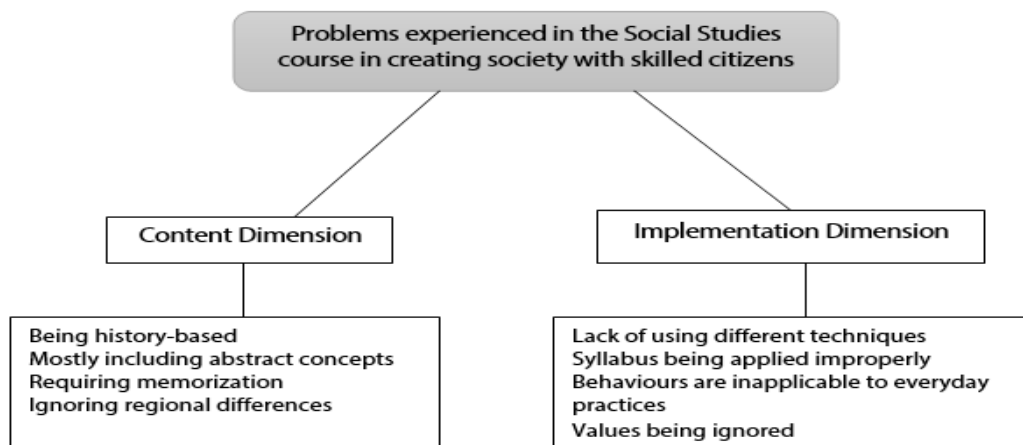

Figure 4. Problems Experienced in the Social Studies Course

The elementary school pre-service teachers stated that the problems experienced in the Social Studies course in creating a society with skilled citizens were related to the dimensions of content and implementation. They described the problems regarding the dimension of content as the content being mostly related to history and involving abstract concepts, the contents being perceived to require memorization and the regional differences unpaid attention to in the content. One of the pre-service teachers thinking that the course is mostly history-based said: *"We always tell them about wars since the course contents are heavily loaded with history, which affects the effectiveness of the lessons (I17)".* One pre-service teacher related the contents requiring memorization to history: *"There is history, and we expect students to memorize it, not comprehend it well (I34)".* Regarding the problem of not considering the regional differences in the contents, another pre-service teacher said *"No attention is paid to regional differences while preparing the syllabus. As a result, different lifestyles in different regions cannot be presented, it is not possible to give examples regarding the climates. Teachers do not want to spend time on this (I18)".* In relation to the problems with the implementation dimension, the statements of the pre-service elementary teachers included lack of using different techniques, the syllabus being unapplied properly, ignoring the values and failure to turn behaviours into practice. In relation to lack of use of different techniques in the teaching process, one of the pre-service teacher said *"The content cannot be made*

concrete since different techniques are not used. For example, children's rights are covered by students coming to the board and reading the rights loudly. It can be covered using different techniques (I44)". One of the pre-service teachers thinking that the values are ignored said: *"I observe cultural alienation in children, which results from the ignoring the values that constitute a society within the scope of the Social Studies course (I18)".* Arguing that the syllabus is not applied properly, one of the pre-service teachers said: *"The syllabus, which was changed in 2005, is a perfect syllabus with all its contents. However, we see that it is not applied in the classrooms. The teachers only provide the titles and move on. The syllabus is not applied properly (I34)".* The same pre-service teacher pointed that behaviours do not turn into practice saying *"For instance, think about critical thinking. We can see that it is not acquired by students. The information we present only remains at the theoretical level (I34)".* The pre-service teachers stated that the problems were due to the content and that there were difficulties in implementation as well.

Findings Related to the Suggested Solutions

The pre-service teachers' suggestions for effective teaching of the Social Studies course to create a society with skilled citizens are presented in Figure 5.
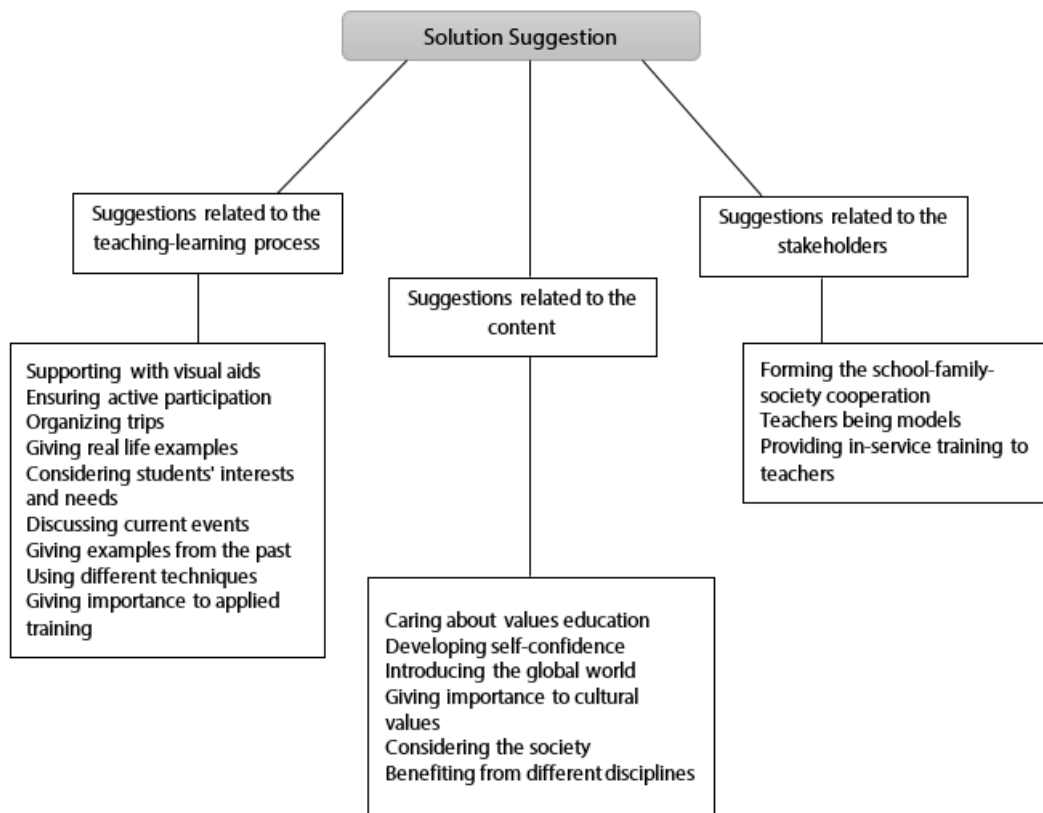
Figure 5. Suggested Solutions

For effective teaching of the Social Studies course to create a society with skilled citizens, the elementary school pre-service teachers offered suggestions related to the teaching-learning process, the syllabus contents and the stakeholders. Regarding the teaching-learning process, the pre-service teachers' statements included supporting teaching with visual elements, ensuring active participation, organizing trips, providing real life examples, considering students' interests and needs, discussing current topics, giving examples from the past, using different techniques and attaching importance to applied training. One of the pre-service teachers arguing that visual elements should be used in the teaching-learning process explained his/her views as follows *"The contents in the Social Studies course should be supported with audio and visual tools to present the environment better (S48)".* Another pre-service teacher reflected this idea by using a video in his/her lesson plan regarding public institutions (P22). One pre-service teacher indicating that organizing trips is important said: *"Trips should be organized to introduce students into real life experiences, and lessons should not be conducted only in the classroom (I41)".* Another pre-service teacher also emphasized the importance of trips saying *"Activities like trips and observations provide*

students with opportunities for real life experiences (S7)". Regarding the use of current events in the course, a pre-service teacher explained his/her views as follows *"While preparing the curricula, the necessary explanations should certainly be included to mention current phenomena (I2)"*. Moreover, in his/her lesson plan, a pre-service teacher used a newspaper bulletin related to public opinion regarding the topic covered (P50). One of the pre-service teachers arguing that the lessons should be taught in an applied way reflected this view in his/her lesson plan by creating an election in the class while covering the election topic (P55). Based on these views of the elementary school pre-service teachers, it could be stated that they pointed out the necessity of the students to be active in the teaching-learning process.

Related to the elementary school pre-service teachers' suggestions for the content, they put forward the idea that importance should be given to values education and that developing self-confidence, introducing the global world, caring about cultural values, considering the society and benefiting from different disciplines should be included. One of the pre-service teachers focusing on developing self-confidence said *"The contents should be related to developing self-confidence. Confidence is important for students to develop themselves (S8)"*. Another pre-service teacher explained the importance of introducing the global world as follows *"Besides learning cultural values, understanding the global world is also important (S28)"*. The elementary school pre-service teachers mostly suggested that different topics should be included in the Social Studies course content in detail.

The elementary school pre-service teachers' suggestions related to the stakeholders included forming school-family-society cooperation, teachers' being models and providing in-service training for teachers. One of the pre-service teachers focusing on school-family-society cooperation reported his/her views as follows *"Teachers should cooperate with parents. Schools should be intertwined with the society. This cooperation is important for children (S18)"*. The same pre-service teacher pointed out that teachers should become models saying *"Teachers should be models both for the society and for the students (S18)"*. One of the pre-service teachers suggested that teachers should be provided with in-service training saying: *"Teachers should constantly develop themselves; for this reason, they should be provided with in-service training to follow the current trends and to improve the quality of the society*

(I42)". Probably, the elementary school pre-service teachers perceived the *stakeholders* as important in creating a society with skilled citizens.

In the present study, the findings revealed the importance of the Social Studies course in creating a society with skilled citizens. However, it was found that there were several problems experienced in the teaching process of the Social Studies course. In addition, according to the elementary school pre-service teachers, these problems can be solved through improvements in various dimensions.

Discussion and Conclusion

The elementary school pre-service teachers' views about the importance of the Social Studies course in creating a society with skilled citizens were examined in terms of perception of being skilled, skilled citizens and society with skilled citizens, the importance of the Social Studies course in this process, the problems experienced, and suggested solutions.

In this respect, the elementary school pre-service teachers defined being skilled with concepts such as characteristics related to individuals, characteristics that individuals should have, good quality, being productive and being equipped. Turkish Language Institution (2014) defines being skilled as "the characteristics of something related to being good or bad; good quality". In this sense, the elementary school pre-service teachers' definitions are consistent with those included in the dictionary.

The elementary school pre-service teachers referred to the characteristics that skilled citizens should have as knowledge, skill and values. The pre-service teachers indicated skills such as doing research, showing empathy, following technology, problem solving, and having thinking skills. Today, the skills that individuals should have in relation to the 21st century skills are described as creativity, critical thinking, problem solving, communication, cooperation, knowledge and technology literacy (Partnership for 21st century skills, 2011; OECD, 2013; MEB, 2007). Besides, these skills were also among the skills that should be taught within the scope of the curriculum of the Social Studies course which was put into practice in 2005 (Ministry of National Education, 2004). Therefore, the skills mentioned by the elementary school pre-service teachers are among the ones mentioned in related literature

today. The elementary school pre-service teachers explained the values that individuals should have as respect, tolerance, being hard-working, benevolence and responsibility. In a study conducted on values by Can (2008), the most frequently emphasized values were found to be responsibility and respect. The elementary school pre-service teachers mostly emphasized the value of respect that skilled citizens should have. Besides, these values mentioned by the elementary school pre-service teachers are also included in the curriculum of the Social Studies course. However, apart from these, the curriculum includes many values such as being fair, independence, peace, environment and cooperation. The elementary school pre-service teachers described societies with skilled citizens using characteristics such as information society, developed, high education level, modern and peaceful. According to the elementary school pre-service teachers, skilled citizens could constitute the societies with skilled citizens.

The elementary school pre-service teachers mentioned the importance of the Social Studies course in creating a society with skilled citizens in terms of the course objectives and the course content, and they discussed the objectives in terms of individual and social objectives. Similarly, in the curriculum of the Social Studies course, the values that should be taught are gathered under headings such as knowledge, skill, value and concept (Ministry of National Education, 2004). In addition, the objectives of the Social Studies course are categorized as those related to knowledge, skill, values and social participation (Michaelis & Garcia, 1996). NCSS (1992) described these values as individual and cultural identity development, participation in the society, and sensitivity to problems. The most important objective of the Social Studies course is to develop social personality (Sozer, 2008). In this respect, Turner (1999) described the universal objectives of the course as educating citizens, developing awareness of social issues, teaching the methods of social sciences, and developing students' high order thinking skills. Briefly, the importance of the Social Studies course objectives emphasized by the elementary school pre-service teachers is consistent with the related literature. The elementary school pre-service teachers stated that the Social Studies course was also important in terms of its content, and they related this importance to history, geography, citizenship, culture and real life examples. This relationship established by the elementary school teachers is also consistent with the definitions of Social Studies in literature (Ministry of National Education, 2004; NCSS, 1993; Ozturk, 2006). The reason is that according to the definitions, the Social Studies course is related to sciences such as

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history, geography, sociology, anthropology, economy and justice. However, it could be stated that the elementary school pre-service teachers had insufficient knowledge about the content since they only mentioned history and geography. At the same time, in studies conducted with elementary school students, the students were found to define the course content with similar statements such as history, geography, social issues and about the past (Yasar and Gurdogan Bayir, 2010; Deveci and Gurdogan Bayir, 2011; Zhao and Hoge, 2005). The results of these studies related to the Social Studies course are also consistent with this study although the age groups of the participants were different.

The elementary school pre-service teachers discussed and regarded the problems experienced in this process as problems with the dimensions of the content and implementation. In the content dimension, they mentioned abstract concepts' being intense, being history-based, ignoring regional differences and being considered to require, while in the implementation dimension, their statements included the syllabus being unapplied properly, lack of using different techniques, and the values being ignored. Similarly, Sozer (2008) stated that the concepts, principles and generalisations in the Social Studies course result in a perception of a memorization-based course, while in their studies, Aykac (2007) and Ekinci (2007) found that regional differences are not considered within the scope of the curriculum of the Social Studies course. Also, Doganay (2008) stated that curriculum is consistent in terms of knowledge and skills, but there are problems with implementation at schools. In this sense, it could be stated that the problems mentioned by the elementary school pre-service teachers were also revealed in related literature.

The solutions suggested by the elementary school teachers in relation to effective teaching of the Social Studies course were related to the teaching-learning process, the content and the stakeholders. Regarding the teaching-learning process, the pre-service teachers' suggestions included giving real life examples, using visual aids, using different techniques, and organizing trips; values education and benefiting from different disciplines in relation to the content dimension; and school-family-society cooperation, teachers being a model and providing in-service training for teachers in relation to the dimension of stakeholders. Aytac (2007) pointed out that visual elements such as photographs, maps and films should be used in teaching Social Studies and that organizing trips is important. Similarly, Akbaba (2009) stated that the use of visual aids in teaching Social Studies could attract students' attention. In

this sense, the suggestion of supporting teaching with visual elements is also considered important in related literature. In a study study, Akgul (2006) found that teachers used different techniques in teaching Social Studies and that they mostly used question-answer and traditional teaching techniques. Additionally, Ozpolat (2009) emphasized the use of methods that would make students active in the Social Studies course. The elementary school pre-service teachers also pointed out that different techniques should be employed. In their study, Gomleksiz and Curo (2011) reported that importance should be given to values education, which was also suggested by the elementary school pre-service teachers in the present study. Yapici and Demirdelen (2007) reported that the teachers did not get enough in-service training related to the curriculum. The elementary school pre-service teachers also emphasized teachers' receiving in-service training for effective teaching of the Social Studies course. Karatas and Karaman (2010) found that in the Social Studies course, the school-family cooperation could be partially established. Similarly, the elementary school pre-service teachers attached importance to the development of school-family-society cooperation.

As a result of this study, which examined the elementary school pre-service teachers' views about the importance of the Social Studies course in creating a society with skilled citizens, it could be concluded that they gave importance to the course. In addition, the problems in terms of both content and implementation were mentioned. However, suggestions such as preparing and implementing the curriculum, providing in-service training for teachers and enriching the application dimension of the course were put forward. In this sense, in order to create a society with skilled citizens, the Social Studies course could be said to be significantly important considering its aim of socialization.

Suggestions

Based on the results of the study, the following suggestions could be offered in relation to creating society with skilled citizens:

- Teachers should conduct practices to make students active in the Social Studies course.
- School-family-society cooperation needs to be established.

- In order to create societies with skilled citizens, all stakeholders should give importance to the Social Studies course.

- Studies on the importance of other courses in creating a society with skilled citizens could be conducted using different methods.

- In order to create societies with skilled citizens, values education should be given importance teaching-learning process.

Acknowledgement

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