IJELS Educating for the Future

International Journal of Education & Literacy Studies
ISSN: 2202-9478
www.ijels.aiac.org.au

AIAC Flourishing Creativity & Literacy

# Turning Social Problems Determined by Pre-service Teachers into Course Content in Primary Education

Ahu Taneri*

*Faculty of Education, Niğde Ömer Halisdemir University, Niğde, Turkey*

**Corresponding author:** Ahu Taneri, E-mail: ahutaneri@ohu.edu.tr

**ARTICLE INFO**

*Article history*
Received: February 17, 2021
Accepted: April 20, 2021
Published: April 30, 2021
Volume: 9 Issue: 2

Conflicts of interest: None
Funding: None

**ABSTRACT**

In the present study, after 109 pre-service teachers had completed at least one of the teaching practice or teaching practicum courses, their styles of identifying social problems and adapting social problems into lesson contents were examined. The pre-service teachers' perceptions of social problems, the values they want to teach while transforming social problems into course content, key competencies, and the teaching method and techniques they prefer to use were analyzed. In addition, the grade levels and primary school lessons at which they intended to teach social problems were also examined. As a result, it was concluded that the pre-service teachers were able to handle social problems within national and international contexts and turn them into course contents.

**Key words:** Teacher Training, Pre-Service Teachers, Elementary Education, Social Problems, Course Content

## INTRODUCTION

Professional development of teacher educators is receiving increasing attention globally (Maaranen et al., 2019). In recent years, in order to increase the effectiveness of teacher preparation programs, emphasis has been placed on which preparation features are associated with better teaching quality within and between programs (Ronfeldt et al., 2020). Teacher preparation and development are fundamental building blocks for training effective teachers, and teachers with greater teaching preparation appear to be more confident and successful with their students than those who have little or no preparation for teaching (Darling-Hammond, 2000, 2017). Teacher educators around the world are looking for new ways to bridge the gap between theory and practice (Hennissen et al., 2017). Hamodi et al. (2017) found that teachers used their experiences they had gained during their undergraduate education in their professional practices. This and many other studies should encourage universities and academics to increase the areas where teachers can gain more experience during their undergraduate period. Pre-service preparations of pre-service teachers should be considered and evaluated more in-depth.

In the Communiqué of Turkish Framework of Competencies prepared in Turkey (Communiqué of Turkish Framework of Competencies, 2016), teachers are expected to impart some certain competencies whose quality has been ensured to their students. The key competencies included in the curriculums that started to be implemented in 2018 in all schools affiliated to the Ministry of National Education were determined in accordance with the European Framework of Key Competencies. In this connection, it is expected from teachers and teacher training institutions to be qualified enough to put the national framework of competencies into practice. Teachers are asked to bring issues related to social life in national and international contexts to the classroom environment and to guide students in gaining awareness, knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviours related to these issues.

The subject of determining social problems and converting the determined social problems into the course content was chosen in the present study because this requires pre-service teachers to employ their skills of organizing an educational environment compatible with the situations they have newly encountered. While transforming the social problem into course content, pre- service teachers will need to use their curriculum literacy skills at a certain level. Curriculum literacy skills are extremely important for pre-service teachers to understand the nature of social problems and to develop ideas for their solutions so that they can perform the roles expected of them. They should also be able to design learning environments in a way suitable for the relevant contexts in order to guide students in gaining awareness of issues concerning social life at both national and international levels.

In the research on social problems, all kinds of problems in life, including intrinsic / non-social problems, impersonal problems, interpersonal problems, and more comprehensive social problems are addressed (D'Zurilla et al., Maydeu-Olivares, & Kant, 1998). Social problem solving

Published by Australian International Academic Centre PTY.LTD.

http://dx.doi.org/10.7575/aiac.ijels.v.9n.2p.151

as a term refers to problem solving as it occurs in the real world (D'Zurilla, & Maydeu-Olivares, 1995). Individuals' adapting to their physical and social environment helps them to lead a healthy life. The individual needs to understand, interpret and evaluate the events related to the society he / she lives in (Selçuk, 2008, p. 58). Contributing to the development of individuals' social skills and their being a good member of society is among the basic functions of education (Şişman, 2015, p. 32). In schools, which continue to function as a social institution, education is carried out in accordance with the methods and techniques chosen within a planned process. In addition, students receive education and experience learning by observing and experiencing themselves and their environment (Taneri, & Yel, 2017). Teachers should take into account the situations that students encounter and are likely to encounter in daily life while structuring their educational environments. Guiding students in their acquisition of knowledge, attitudes, values, skills and competencies necessary for them to cope with the social problems they encounter are among the roles defined by the education system for teachers. In this context, teachers should be able to perceive and define social problems themselves, develop alternatives to solve them, and transfer them to learning environments in order to develop students' social problem solving skills.

When the studies on social problems in the literature were examined, it was seen that the researchers studied issues such as problems, problem-based learning, and social problem solving skills. Working group children (Weissberg et al., 1981; Pettit et al., 1988; Webster-Stratton & Lindsay, 1999; Serin & Derin, 2008; Arı & Yaban, 2012; Dereli-İman, 2013) and teacher/teacher candidates (Buluç et al., 2010; Samancı & Uçan, 2015; Saracaloğlu et al., 2016; Çalışkan, 2019) indicate that these skills are important for both educators and students.

### Objective and Research Questions

In this study, it was aimed to examine pre-service teachers' ways of identifying social problems and adapting the identified social problems to course content. For this purpose, the following research questions were posed:

1. What are the pre-service teachers' perceptions of social problems?
2. What are the social problems the pre-service teachers want to teach in primary education?
3. What is the distribution of the school subjects and grade levels in which the pre-service teachers want to teach social problems across the grade levels the pre-service teachers are attending?
4. What are the values the pre-service teachers associate with social problems?
5. Which key competencies do the pre-service teachers associate social problems with?
6. What are the teaching methods and techniques the pre-service teachers would prefer to use in the lesson plan they would construct to teach the social problem to students?

## METHOD

### Research Design

The research model refers to the plans and procedures that include the steps to support data collection, analysis and interpretation methods for research with comprehensive assumptions (Creswell, 2014, p.3). Research methods and techniques should be used in order to observe, analyze, ask questions, formulate hypotheses, follow a systematic and controlled way while evaluating, and know that the measurement tools used are appropriate and reliable (Fraenkel et al., 2012, p. 7). In the present study, qualitative research method was used to determine the social problem perceptions of the pre-service teachers attending the department of elementary education and to examine how and within the context of which course they will convert these problems into course content in the primary school classroom environment. Qualitative methods are suitable for studying deep and detailed issues (Patton, 2014, p. 14). In qualitative research, the researcher can describe how participants make sense of structures. It is convenient to limit the number of topics and study the situation in depth (Johnson, & Onwuegbuzie, 2004).

Case studies, which are among the qualitative research methods, are seen as a distinctive approach used in seeking answers to scientific questions (Büyüköztürk et al., 2018, p. 23). In case studies, a limited system is described and analyzed in depth (Merriam, 2013, p.40). The nature of the research problem and the questions to be answered constitute one of the reasons for the researcher to choose the case study. Case studies provide the opportunity to investigate complex social sciences that contain many variables that are potentially important for understanding a phenomenon. It also handles a phenomenon in an enhanced and holistic way as it is based on real events (Merriam, 2013, p.50). In this context, the present study was planned and conducted as a qualitative case study.

### Study Group

The study group of the current research is comprised of 109 pre-service teachers attending the Department of Elementary Education. While selecting the study group, the criterion sampling method, one of the purposive sampling methods, was used. In studies where the criteria sampling method is used, the units that meet the criteria determined for the sampling are included in the sample (Büyüköztürk et al., 2018, p. 95). In the present study, the criteria determined for inclusion in the study group were as follows: attending the department of elementary education of an education faculty, having completed the pedagogical content knowledge courses and having taken at least one of the teaching practice or teaching practicum courses. In this connection, the study group of the present study was constructed from the students attending a department of elementary education of a university in Turkey on a volunteer basis. The study group of the present study is comprised of 53 pre-service teachers having completed their third year ($6^{th}$ term) and 56 pre-service teachers having completed

their fourth year (8th term). Thus, a total of 109 pre-service teachers participated in the present study.

### Data Collection Tool

In the present study, a form developed by the researcher was used as the data collection tool. The developed form was finalized after the corrections required by a measurement expert, a language expert and experts in the field of elementary education were made. An item to elicit the gender of participants was added to form consisted of 10 open-ended questions initially and two open-ended questions were converted into closed-ended questions. Care was taken to ensure that the questions could be understood by the study group to be responded in detail.

### Data Analysis

In the present study, the document analysis and content analysis methods were used. Document analysis involves the analysis of written materials containing information about the subject being researched (Yıldırım, & Şimşek, 2011, p. 188). Content analysis is used to determine the presence of words, concepts, themes, characters or sentences in a text or texts (Kızıltepe, 2015, p. 253). In addition, content analysis is a systematic and repeatable method. It is used to identify the presence of certain words or concepts in a text or text groups, as well as to encode the text into categories (Stemler, 2001). In order to increase the validity and reliability of the study, besides obtaining expert opinions about the form prepared at the beginning of the study, detailed descriptions; that is, direct quotations from the statements of the participants were given in order to reveal the different perspectives, meanings and indicators brought to the research questions (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2011, p. 267).

While analyzing the qualitative data, the pre-service teachers in the study group were coded as T1, T2, T3,…, T109 and named with these codes in the findings section.

## RESULTS

In order to find an answer to the first research question (What are the pre-service teachers' perceptions of social problems?), the pre-service teachers were asked to define the social problem. The themes, codes and categories constructed from the responses of the pre-service teachers are presented in Table 1:

As can be seen in Table 1, the pre-service teachers' perceptions of social problems were subsumed under two categories according to their way of explaining. In these categories, it is seen that they defined the social problem by associating it to the cause of the social problem and the result of the social problem. In the responses given by those whose way of explaining the social problem was based on the cause, it was largely focused on the direct or indirect role of the individual, society and all humanity in the emergence of social problems. In the responses given by those whose way of explanation was based on results, more emphasis was placed on the effect of social problems on the individual, society and the whole humanity.

**Table 1.** Themes, codes and categories related to the pre-service teachers' perceptions of social problems

| Theme | Code | | Category |
|---|---|---|---|
| Perceptions of social problems | Way of explanation | Cause-based | People in the society, lack of communication, interpersonal conflicts, experiencing problems. |
| | | Result-based | Causing unrest, people's being harmed, disturbing, causing suffering, destroying the routines of the society, creating barriers to the society, negatively affecting social relationships, preventing social development, creating social pressure |

Below are some responses given by the pre-service teachers whose way of explanation is based on the cause:

> *Pressure, lack of communication between individuals (T12); Being closed to communication. Exhibiting behaviours to disrupt the social order.* (T23)

Below are some responses given by the pre-service teachers whose way of explanation is based on the result:

> *These are the problems whose consequences affect society negatively (T67); they are local or global problems that concern the country, the world; that is, all humanity.* (T95)

In order to find an answer to the second research question (What are the social problems the pre-service teachers want to teach in primary education?), the pre-service teachers were asked to identify a social problem they could teach in primary education by explaining why they preferred this social problem. The themes, codes and categories constructed on the basis of the pre-service teachers' responses to this question are given in Table 2:

As can be seen in Table 2, the responses of the pre-service teachers to the 2nd research questions are subsumed under two different categories in terms of the context in which the social problem is addressed; individual and social. The responses of 49 pre-service teachers were included in the category of the individual context while the responses of 60 pre-service teachers were included in the category of the social context. The reasons behind the pre-service teachers' preferences such as individuals' taking measures with their own acts and solving the problem were evaluated within the category of the individual context. In this category, there are responses emphasising the issues such as individual awareness, self-control, communication, self-confidence, respect, sharing, empathy, violence and noise. At the same time, the problems that can be encountered by individuals in the family and school environments were also gathered under this category. In the responses collected under the category of the social context, the precautions that the individual can take are more related to being a part of the solution, contributing to maintenance of the social order, and helping to

prepare a liveable future. In the category of the social context, responses that focus on issues such as social awareness, literacy problem, solidarity, traffic, consumption awareness, waste, recycling, air pollution, environmental pollution, genetically modified foods were collected.

Some excerpts from the responses of the pre-service teachers that can be taken into the category of the individual context are given below:

*I can consider peer bullying as a social problem. This is a problem that students can encounter throughout their whole life and finding solution requires highly comprehensive approaches (T41); Garbage scattered around the school garden or around rubbish bins but not inside the rubbish bins. Here we can talk about environmental problems with students because the problem is very close to them.* (T88)

Some excerpts from the responses of the pre-service teachers that can be taken into the category of the social context are given below:

*Global warming. Because if people continue like this, the world will experience a great climate change as in the ice age (T29); genetically modified organisms (GMOs). The harms given to human health by GMOs and the possible harms they will give in the future.* (T39)

In order to find an answer to the third research question (What is the distribution of the school subjects and grade levels in which the pre-service teachers want to teach social problems across the grade levels the pre-service teachers are attending?), the pre-service teachers were asked in which school subject and in which grade level they prefer to teach the social problem they have determined. The findings obtained from the responses given to the questions were analyzed in the SPSS22 program package. Findings are shown by frequency distribution (cross table) for two or more variables. In Table 3, the distribution of the school subjects and grade levels in which the pre-service teachers want to teach social problems across the grade levels the pre-service teachers are attending is given in the table below.

**Table 2.** Themes, codes and categories related to the reasons why the pre-service teachers preferred this social problem

| Theme | Code | Category | Participant |
|---|---|---|---|
| Reasons why they prefer this social problem | The context in which the problem is addressed | Individual | T (1, 5, 7, 12, 13, 14, 15, 20, 21, 22, 23, 25, 26, 31, 36, 41, 43, 44, 45, 46, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 55, 56, 58, 64, 65, 67, 78, 80, 82, 88, 89, 96, 97, 98, 99, 101, 102, 103, 104, 105, 106, 107, 108, 109). |
| | | Social | T (2, 3, 4, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 16, 17, 18, 19, 24, 27, 28, 29, 30, 32, 33, 34, 35, 37, 38, 39, 40, 42, 47, 48, 54, 57, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 66, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 79, 81, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 100). |

As can be seen in Table 3, the school subjects and the grade levels in which the third-year pre-service teachers want to teach the social problem can be given in the descending order as follows: 4th Grade Social Studies (f=29), 3rd Grade Life Sciences (f=9), 2nd Grade Life Sciences (f=5), 1st Grade Life Sciences (f=4), 4th Grade Sciences (f=2), 3rd Grade Mathematics (f=2), 1st Grade Turkish (f=2).

The school subjects and the grade levels in which the fourth-year pre-service teachers want to teach the social problem can be given in the descending order as follows: 4th Grade Social Studies (f=17), 1st Grade Life Sciences (f=16), 2nd Grade Life Sciences (f=9), 3rd Grade Life Sciences (f=8), 1st Grade Turkish (f=2), 4th Grade Sciences (f=1), 1st Grade Mathematics (f=1), 3rd Grade Turkish (f=1), 4th Grade Turkish (f=1).

The grade levels in which the third-year pre-service teachers want to teach the social problem can be given in the descending order as follows: 4th Grade (f=31), 3rd Grade (f=11), 1st Grade (f=6), 2nd Grade (f=5).

The grade levels in which the fourth-year pre-service teachers want to teach the social problem can be given in the descending order as follows: 1st and 4th Grades (f=17 each), 2nd and 3rd Grades (f=9 each).

**Table 3.** Distribution of the school subjects and grade levels in which the pre-service teachers want to teach social problems across the grade levels the pre-service teachers are attending

| Primary School Subject | Grade Level | Grade Level of the Pre-service Teacher | | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | 3rd Year | 4th Year | |
| | | f | f | f |
| Turkish | 1st Grade | 2 | 2 | 4 |
| | 3rd Grade | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| | 4th Grade | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| | Total | 2 | 4 | 6 |
| Life Sciences | 1st Grade | 4 | 16 | 20 |
| | 2nd Grade | 5 | 9 | 14 |
| | 3rd Grade | 9 | 8 | 17 |
| | Total | 18 | 33 | 51 |
| Mathematics | 1st Grade | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| | 3rd Grade | 2 | 0 | 2 |
| | Total | 2 | 1 | 3 |
| Sciences | 4th Grade | 2 | 1 | 3 |
| | 4th Grade | 29 | 17 | 46 |
| Social Studies | Total | 29 | 17 | 46 |

| | | 3rd Year | | 4th Year | | Total | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | f | % | f | % | f | % |
| General Total | 1st Grade | 6 | 6 | 19 | 17 | 25 | 23 |
| | 2nd Grade | 5 | 5 | 9 | 8 | 14 | 13 |
| | 3rd Grade | 11 | 10 | 9 | 8 | 20 | 18 |
| | 4th Grade | 31 | 28 | 19 | 17 | 50 | 46 |
| | Total | 53 | 49 | 56 | 51 | 109 | 100 |

In order to find an answer to the fourth research question (What are the values the pre-service teachers associate with social problems?), the pre-service teachers were asked which values they want to teach to their students in association with the social problems they determined. The findings obtained from the responses given to this question are given in Table 4.

As can be seen in the table, 109 pre-service teachers associated social problems with 26 different values and they repeated these values 319 times in total. The values associated with social problems are gathered under the value codes found in primary school curriculums. First of these codes is the basic values emphasized in each curriculum. In each of the curriculums put into effect in 2018, there are 10 basic values defined as the basic values that need to be taught to students. The pre-service teachers associated social problems with all the basic values found in the primary school curriculums. The second code named as values are the values in the social studies curriculum. There are a total of 18 values in the social studies curriculum and 7 of them are also found in the basic values category. There are 11 values apart from the basic values in the values category. The pre-service teachers mentioned 10 values out of 11 values in the social studies curriculum. The third code named as the other related values includes other values somehow related to the basic values and values. The values in the table are written according to their frequency of repetition.

In order to find an answer to the fourth research question (Which key competencies do the pre-service teachers associate social problems with?), the pre-service teachers were asked which key competency/competencies they aim to impart to their students while teaching the social problems they determined. Findings obtained from the responses given to this question by the pre-service teachers are given in Figure 1.

As can be seen in the figure, the competencies can be put into a descending order of importance as follows: social and civic competencies (f=72; 39%), communication in mother tongue (f= 41; 22%), sense of initiative and entrepreneurship (f= 20; 11%), mathematical competency and key competencies in science/technology (f= 18; 10%), digital competency (f= 10; 6%), cultural awareness and expression (f= 9; 5%), learning to learn (f= 6; 3%), wrong key competencies (f= 5; 3%), communication in foreign languages (f= 2; 1%).

**Table 4.** Values associated with social problems by the pre-service teachers

| Theme | Code | Category |
|---|---|---|
| Values associated with social problems | Basic values | Respect (61), Responsibility (53), Love (35), Self-control (18), Patriotism (15), Justice (14), Benevolence (13), Honesty (7), Patience (6), Friendship (4). |
| | Values | Sensitivity (26), Solidarity (13), Saving (12), Industriousness (5), Equality (5), Freedom (5), Attaching importance to the unity of family (4), Scientificness (4), Independence (2), Peace (1). |
| | Other related values | Tolerance (9), Truthfulness (2), Self-esteem (2), Respect to differences (1), Confidence (1), Self-confidence (1). |

The wrong competencies stated by some pre-service teachers are given below:

> *Socioscientific competence (T48); Personal competencies (such as thinking, problem solving, self-knowledge, and recognizing the other person can be gained (T49); social communication (T50); good communication (T53); communication skills competence.* (T68)

In order to find an answer to the sixth research question (What are the teaching methods and techniques the pre-service teachers would prefer to use in the lesson plan they would construct to teach the social problem to students?), the pre-service teachers were asked which methods and techniques they would prefer when they developed a lesson plan on the basis of the social problem they selected. The findings obtained from the responses of the pre-service teachers to this question are given in the Table 5 below.

As can be seen in the table above, 109 pre-service teachers participating in the present study wrote a total of 34 different instructional methods and techniques 226 times. As the instructional methods and techniques preferred by the pre-service teachers could be explained with the Kolb's experiential learning theory, the categories in the findings were coded according to this theory.

In Kolb's experiential learning theory, the learning cycle is driven by the integration of action and reflection, experience and concept (Kolb, & Kolb 2017). According to experiential learning, real learning happens when students are forced to apply concepts to solve problems in different situations and to experience problems at first hand. It also makes the student a stakeholder and this alone significantly improves the ability to internalize information (Hawtrey, 2007).

According to this theory, individuals in the concrete experience stage learn through their senses and special experiences (small group studies, individual studies, case study analysis, role playing, etc.); in the reflective observation stage, they learn through watching, listening and observing (brainstorming, problem solving, drama techniques etc.); in the concrete conceptualization stage, they learn through systematic planning, logical analysis (presenting theoretical information, expression, laboratory, etc.) and in the active experience stage, they learn through interaction (simulations,

**Figure 1.** Key competencies the pre-service teachers associated with social problems

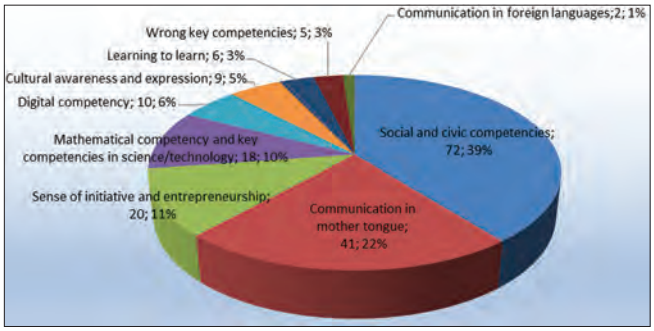

**Table 5.** Instructional methods and techniques preferred by the pre-service teachers to teach the social problem

| Theme | Code | Category |
|---|---|---|
| Preferred instructional methods and techniques | Concrete experience | Sample case (17), role-playing (15), speech circle (6), research and investigation (5), argumentation (2), aquarium technique (3), acting out (2), video (2), circle (1), visual interpretation and responding (1), induction (1), buzz groups (1), 5E (1). |
| | Reflective observation | Discussion (32), drama (23), brain-storming (18), through discovery (14), six-hats teaching technique (6), problem solving (5), teaching through analysis (3), snowball (3), creative drama (2), psycho-drama (1), socio-drama (1). |
| | Concrete conceptualization | Lecturing technique (21), presentation (15), question-answer (4), observation (2), fish bone (2), computer-assisted teaching (2). |
| | Active experience | Trip (4), project-based teaching (4), demonstration (5), educational games (2). |

group projects, active learning techniques, etc.) (Oral, & Avanoğlu, 2012, pp. 257- 259).

In the Table 5 above, under the code of Kolb's experiential learning theory, there are 13 different methods and techniques supporting concrete experience and preferred by the pre-service teachers to teach the social problem, 11 different methods and techniques supporting reflective observation and preferred by the pre-service teachers to teach the social problem, 6 different methods and techniques supporting abstract conceptualization and preferred by the pre-service teachers to teach the social problem and 4 different methods and techniques supporting active experience and preferred by the pre-service teachers to teach the social problem. In the categories section, the instructional methods and techniques preferred by the pre-service teachers are written in order of frequency. Correspondingly, the most preferred method is discussion (f= 32), while the least preferred ones are psycho-drama (f= 1), socio-drama (f= 1), induction (f= 1), buzz groups (f= 1), 5E (f= 1).

## DISCUSSION

In the present study, the results regarding the reasons why the pre-service teachers determined the social problem coincide with the states of positive problem-orientedness and negative problem-orientedness defined in the studies on problem orientation in the literature. Many of the most complex problems people have to solve occur in the social world. For this reason, the capacity to define and implement the right strategy in a particular social environment appears to be a skill that determines the degree of harmony of individuals with other individuals and their social environment (Ruby et al., 2013). University students encounter different problems such as adapting to a new environment and system, establishing interpersonal relationships and try to solve them. In this process, the strategies they use and their attitudes towards solution become very important (Buğa et al., 2018). The ability to solve a real-world problem is mostly determined by problem orientation and problem solving style. Problem orientation is primarily a cognitive emotional process that serves a motivational function in social problem solving (Thomas et al., 2011). Positive problem-orientedness refers to a constructive problem-solving tendency, which includes a general tendency to view a problem as a challenge rather than a threat and a belief in the person's ability to solve problems. Negative problem-orientedness refers to a dysfunctional or disabling cognitive emotional set and a tendency to view a problem as a threat to the well-being and expectation that problems cannot be solved (Jaffee, & D'Zurilla, 2009). Positive problem-orientedness is defined as a constructive cognitive set that reflects perceived difficulty, self-efficacy, and positive outcome expectation. Negative problem-orientedness is defined as a destructive cognitive-emotional set or attitude towards problems that includes perceived threat to health, self-inadequacy or doubt about the person's problem-solving ability, tendency to be pessimistic about the outcome (Robichaud & Dugas, 2005).

Chang (2017) conducted a study with the participation of 205 university students to determine whether positive mood plays a role in expanding and constructing the basic components of social problem solving, namely problem orientation and problem solving skills, respectively. In the study, it was concluded that the initial positive mood predicted both positive and negative problem-orientedness even after 2 months of controlling the simultaneous affectivity. Accordingly, it can be said that the pre-service teachers who defined the problem on the basis of the reason behind the emergence of the social problem had more positive feelings than others.

It can be said that life studies course is an important course in terms of contributing to the individual's personal, social and universal development. The content of life sciences course prepares children for life. In addition, it is understood that it will be effective in imparting a lot of knowledge, skills, values, attitudes and habits to students that can be used in life (Oker & Tay, 2019). In addition, life sciences course is an effective course that enables students to establish effective relationships with life, find solutions to the problems they encounter and express themselves comfortably (Ütkür et al., 2016). Social studies course is a course that includes useful facts about society that children need (İnan, 2014, p. 4) and knowledge, skills and values that students will use in daily life, and has an important place in primary school curriculums (Deveci, 2009). Social studies course has an important function in the inculcation of social and scientific knowledge, attitudes and behaviours in individuals. Many

social issues, which are included in its content and have scientific dimensions, begin to be transferred to the individual at an early age through this course (Taneri & Yel, 2017). It was concluded that the pre-service teachers preferred to teach the social problem they had determined within the life sciences (f=51) and social studies (f=46) courses. The life sciences course taught in the first, second and third grades is replaced by the social studies course in the fourth grade. It can be said that the pre-service teachers consider these two courses as the main courses to prepare students for social life and to introduce them to the problems concerning the individual, society and humanity.

In the present study, it was also found that the third-year pre-service teachers preferred to teach social problems most in the 4th grade of elementary education (f=31) while the fourth-year pre-service teachers preferred to teach social problems most in the 1st and 4th grades of elementary education (f=17 each). The other grade levels in which the third-year pre-service teachers preferred to teach social subjects were found to be 3rd grade (f=11), 1st grade (f=6) and second grade (f=5) of elementary education, while the other grade levels in which the fourth-year pre-service teachers preferred to teach social subjects were found to be 2nd and 3rd grades (f=9 each). The reason why the third-year pre-service teachers preferred 1st and 2nd grade levels less might be because they had not taken the teaching practice course yet. As the pre-service teachers having taken the teaching practice course gain the experience of preparing lesson plans and activities, they may prefer teaching to 1st graders than the pre-service teachers not having taken the course.

Studies have shown that pre-service teachers remain more passive while taking the teaching practicum course than they are while taking the teaching practice course although the teaching practicum course is more effective in terms of introducing pre-service teachers to the school environment and contributing to their professional development (Yüksel, & Kırçiçek, 2019; Yıldırım et al., 2019; Orhan, & Arseven, 2019; Selvi et al., 2017; Dönmez Usta & Turan Güntepe, 2016; Kavas, & Bugay, 2009). Moreover, in some other studies, it has been revealed that through the teaching practice course, pre-service teachers get more accustomed to the profession (Aslan & Sağlam, 2017), learn about how to solve problems and are introduced to alternative ways of solution (Esen Aygün & Şahin Taşkın, 2019) and gain experience and self-confidence (Başal et al., 2017; Baran et al., 2015).

The values associated by the pre-service teachers with social problems can be given in order of frequency as follows; respect (61), responsibility (53), love (35),…, peace (1), respect to differences (1), confidence (1), self-confidence (1). Tekin (2019), examining the effect of activity-based values education on the value of responsibility in primary school 4th graders, stated that the activities in the teaching of activity-based responsibility value education reified the process. In addition, it was concluded that it was effective on students as it fostered their learning by experiencing. It was also found that the activities facilitated the acquisition of the value of responsibility and made the instructional process enjoyable. This finding supports the conclusion reached in the present study that the pre-service teachers put the value of responsibility in the second place. Topal (2019) carried out a study on teachers and found that the teachers think that 6 of the ten basic values (patriotism, love, respect, friendship, benevolence, and justice) are given to students to a large extent in lessons, but that patience, responsibility and honesty values are partially given to students. While this finding concurs with the finding of the present study showing that the pre-service teachers mentioned the values of honesty and patience to a relatively lesser extent, it contradicts with the finding of the current study regarding the value of responsibility. The reason for the contradiction here may be that, compared to pre-service teachers, teachers face difficulties more directly during the implementation phase, and that they are alone while organizing the learning environment and performing learning activities.

It was observed that the pre-service teachers could determine the class levels and lessons that they could adapt to the social problem they chose. While transforming it into course content, they were able to associate it with the value and competencies in the curriculum. From these findings obtained from the study, it can be concluded that the pre-service teachers have information about the curriculum. In addition, they were able to integrate all these associations into the teaching process. This situation is in parallel with the studies (Aslan, 2019; Çetinkaya & Tabak, 2019; Kızılaslan et al., 2019; Kahramanoğlu, 2019; Erdem & Eğmir, 2018) that included classroom teachers or pre- service teacher studying in the classroom teaching department in the study group and found their education program literacy levels to be medium-sufficient.

## CONCLUSION

In the present study, it was found that the school subject and the grade level in which the pre-service teachers would like to teach social problems the most are social studies course and 4th grade, respectively and that they associated social problems with social and civic competencies to the greatest extent; thus, the findings of the current study can be argued to be consistent in itself.

In the present study, the teaching methods and techniques preferred by the pre-service teachers could be explained with Kolb's experiential learning theory and they most preferred to use the methods and techniques indicating that the pre-service teachers would create lesson plans in line with the concrete experiences. This can be explained by the fact that the pre-service teachers take the developmental characteristics of the age group into consideration while organizing the learning-teaching process. In addition, it can be thought that the preference of methods and techniques for the accomplishment of learning through experience shows that the constructivist approach in the education system has been assimilated by the pre-service teachers and that they have the ability to adapt it to different contexts.

In the present study, it was concluded that the pre-service teachers could determine social problems and explain the issues they see as social problems together with their

causes. Moreover, they were able to select the grade levels to teach the social problems they had determined. Cavanagh et al. (2019) concluded in their pilot study that pre-service teachers had difficulties in planning their lessons for students and determining clear learning goals that negatively affected students' ability to evaluate their learning. Based on the different results of these two studies, it can be thought that pre-service teachers' interactive studies on common issues at the international level will contribute to their professional development.

The pre-service teachers were also able to explain the processes to be followed to impart values and competencies compatible with the lesson plans they developed to teach the social problems they had determined. Moreover, they were able to relate the methods and techniques to the contents they had prepared.

Since social problems are closely related to students and prospective teachers of all ages, perceptions of pre- service teachers studying in different departments can be examined. In addition, their scope can be expanded by examining the styles of transforming social problems into course content with a joint study both nationally and internationally. This research is limited to the 2018-2019 academic year. In addition, classroom teaching was limited to pre-service teachers studying in the department.

## REFERENCES


Arı, M., & Yaban, H. (2012). Age and Gender Differences in Social Problem Solving Skills of 9-11 year-old children. *Education and Science*, *37*(164), 188- 203.

Aslan, S. (2019). An Analysis of Prospective Teachers' Curriculum Literacy Levels in Terms of Reading and Writing. *Universal Journal of Educational Research*, *7*(4), 973-979. DOI: 10.13189/ujer.2019.070408

Aslan, M., & Sağlam, M. (2018). Evaluation of teaching practice course according to opinions of student teachers. *Hacettepe University Journal of Education, 33*(1), 144-162. doi: 10.16986/HUJE.2017030313

Baran, M., Yaşar, Ş., & Maskan, A. (2015). Evaluation of prospective physics teachers' views towards the teaching practice course. *Dicle University Journal of Ziya Gökalp Faculty of Education, 26*, 230-248. DOI: 10.14582/DUZGEF.587

Başal, H, A., Kahraman, B, P., Uyar, Ö.R., Tabak, D., & Turan, N. (2017). The opinions of preschool preservice teachers, teacher trainess, practice ınstructors and practice school administrators on teaching practice course. *Journal of Uludağ University faculty of Education, 30*(2), 389-417.

Buğa, A., Özkamalı, E., Altunkol, F., & Çekiç, A. (2018). University students' social problem solving styles on the basis of their cognitive flexibility levels. *Gaziantep Journal of Educational Sciences, 2*(1), 48-58.

Buluç, B., Kuru, O. ve Taneri, A. (2010). Problem solving skills of preservice teachers in the department of primary education. 9th *National Classroom Teaching Symposium. Fırat Fırat University, Faculty of Education, Proceedings Book*, 535-538.

Büyüköztürk, Ş., Kılıç Çakmak, E., Akgün, Ö. E., Karadeniz, Ş. & Demirel, F. (2018). *Scientific research methods.* Pegem.

Cavanagh, M., Barr, J., Moloney, R., Lane, R., Hay, I., & Chu, H. E. (2019). Pre-service teachers' impact on student learning: Planning, teaching, and assessing during professional practice. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education (Online)*, *44*(2), 66. http://dx.doi.org/10.14221/ajte.2018v44n2.5

Chang, E. C. (2017). Applying the broaden-and-build model of positive emotions to social problem solving: Does feeling good (vs. feeling bad) influence problem orientation, problem-solving skills, or both?. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*, *36*(5), 380-395. https://doi.org/10.1521/jscp.2017.36.5.380

Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods approaches (4*th *ed.).* Sage Publications Ltd.

Çalışkan, E. (2019). Investigating the relationship between social entrepreneurship characteristics and social problem-solving skills of teacher candidates. *Journal of Science, Mathematics, Entrepreneurship and Technology Education*, *2*(2), 93-114.

Çetinkaya, S., & Tabak, S. (2019). Curriculum literacy efficiency of preservice teachers. *Ondokuz Mayis University Journal of Education Faculty, 38*(1), 296-309. DOI: 10.7822/omuefd.535482

Darling-Hammond, L. (2000). How teacher education matters. *Journal of teacher education*, *51*(3), 166-173. https://doi.org/10.1177/0022487100051003002

Darling-Hammond, L. (2017). Teacher education around the world: What can we learn from international practice?. *European journal of teacher education*, *40*(3), 291-309. https://doi.org/10.1080/02619768.2017.1315399

Dereli-İman, E. (2013). Adaptation of social problem solving for children questionnaire in 6 age groups and its relationships with preschool behavior problems. *Educational Sciences: Theory & Practice*, *13*(1), 479-498.

Deveci, H. (2009). Benefitting from culture in social studies course: Examining culture portfolios of teacher candidates. *Electronic Journal of Social Sciences*, *8*(28), 1- 19.

Dönmez Usta, N., & Turan Güntepe, E. (2016). Opinion of the preservice teachers on school experience and teaching practice. *Journal of International Social Research*, *9*(42), 1214- 1223.

D'Zurilla, T. J., & Maydeu-Olivares, A. (1995). Conceptual and methodological issues in social problem-solving assessment. *Behavior therapy*, *26*(3), 409-432. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0005-7894(05)80091-7

D'Zurilla, T. J., Maydeu-Olivares, A., & Kant, G. L. (1998). Age and gender differences in social problem-solving ability. *Personality and individual differences*, *25*(2), 241-252.

Erdem, C., & Eğmir, E. (2018). Prospective teachers' levels of curriculum literacy. *Afyon Kocatepe University Journal of Social Sciences, 20*(2), 123-138.

Esen Aygün, H., & Şahin Taşkın, Ç. (2019). Pre-service teachers' views on cognitive flexibility within the scope

of teaching practice. *Journal of Qualitative Research in Education, 7*(4), 1475-1499. doi: 10.14689/issn.2148-2624.1.7c.4s.8m

Fraenkel, J. R., Wallen, N. E., & Hyun, H. H. (2012). *How to design and evaluate research in education?* McGraw-Hill.

Hamodi, C., López-Pastor, V. M., & López-Pastor, A. T. (2017). If I experience formative assessment whilst studying at university, will I put it into practice later as a teacher? Formative and shared assessment in Initial Teacher Education (ITE). *European Journal of Teacher Education, 40*(2), 171-190. https://doi.org/10.1080/02619768.2017.1281909

Hawtrey, K. (2007). Using experiential learning techniques. *The Journal of Economic Education*, *38*(2), 143-152. https://doi.org/10.3200/JECE.38.2.143-152

Hennissen, P., Beckers, H., & Moerkerke, G. (2017). Linking practice to theory in teacher education: A growth in cognitive structures. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, *63*, 314-325. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2017.01.008

İnan, S. (2014). *Introduction to social studies education, concepts, approaches, activities.* Anı.

Jaffee, W. B., & D'Zurilla, T. J. (2009). Personality, problem solving, and adolescent substance use. *Behavior therapy*, *40*(1), 93-101. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.beth.2008.03.001

Johnson, R. B., & Onwuegbuzie, A. J. (2004). Mixed methods research: A research paradigm whose time has come. *Educational researcher*, *33*(7), 14-26. https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X033007014

Kavas, A. B., & Bugay, A. (2009). Perceptions of prospective teachers about deficiencies of pre-service teacher education and suggestions. *Pamukkale University Journal of Education, 25*(25), 13-21.

Kahramanoğlu, R. (2019). A study on teachers' levels of curriculum literacy. *The Journal of International Social Research, 12*(65), 827-840. http://dx.doi.org/10.17719/jisr.2019.3495

Kırçiçek, H., & Yüksel, İ. (2019). The opinions of academicians about school experience and teaching practice Course *Gazi University Journal of Gazi Educational Faculty (GUJGEF), 39*(3), 1319-1345

Kızılaslan Tunçer, B., & Şahin, Ç. (2019). Examining the knowledge level of pre-service teachers' about curriculum. *Erzincan University Journal of Education Faculty, 21*(2), 247-260. https://doi.org/10.17556/erziefd.511367

Kızıltepe, Z. (2017). Content analysis. In F. N. Seggie & Y. Bayyurt (Eds.). *Qualitative research: Method, technique, analysis and approaches* (pp. 253-266). Anı Publishing.

Kolb, A. Y., & Kolb, D. A. (2017). Experiential learning theory as a guide for experiential educators in higher education. *Experiential Learning & Teaching in Higher Education, 1*(1), 7-44.

Maaranen, K., Kynäslahti, H., Byman, R., Jyrhämä, R., & Sintonen, S. (2019). Teacher education matters: Finnish teacher educators' concerns, beliefs, and values. *European Journal of Teacher Education, 42*(2), 211-227. https://doi.org/10.1080/02619768.2019.1566317

Merriam, S. B. (2009). Qualitative research. A guide to design and implementation. (S. Turan, Trans). Nobel.

Oker, D. & Tay, B. (2019). Life science course from the eyes of primary school students and what they want to learn. *Journal of Education Theory and Practical Research, 5*(3), 409-425.

Oral, B., & Avanoğlu, Y. (2011). Learning styles and learning style models. In B. Oral (Ed.). *Learning-teaching theories and approaches* (pp. 251-282). Pegem Academy.

Orhan, A. T., & Arseven, İ. (2019). AN evaluation of school course teaching experience program acoording to teacher candidates and alternative program proposal. *Mehmet Akif Ersoy University Journal of Education Faculty, 47*, 461-490. DOI: 10.21764/maeuefd.425397

Patton, M. Q. (2014). Analysis, interpretation and reporting. In Bütün, M. and Demir, S. B. (Ed.), Qualitative research and evaluation methods (A. Çekiç and A. Bakla, Trans.) (pp. 429-539). PegemA.

Pettit, G. S., Dodge, K. A., & Brown, M. M. (1988). Early family experience, social problem solving patterns, and children's social competence. *Child development*, *59*(1),107-120.

Robichaud, M., & Dugas, M. J. (2005). Negative problem orientation (Part I): Psychometric properties of a new measure. *Behaviour research and therapy*, *43*(3), 391-401. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.brat.2004.02.007

Ronfeldt, M., Matsko, K. K., Greene Nolan, H., & Reininger, M. (2020). Three different measures of graduates' instructional readiness and the features of preservice preparation that predict them. *Journal of Teacher Education, 72*(1), 56–71. https://doi.org/10.1177/0022487120919753

Ruby, F. J., Smallwood, J., Sackur, J., & Singer, T. (2013). Is self-generated thought a means of social problem solving?. *Frontiers in psychology*, *4*, 962. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2013.00962

Samancı, O., & Uçan, Z. (2015). A research on classroom teacher candidate's abilities about solving social problems. *Bartın University Journal of Education*, 14th International Classroom Teaching Symposium Special Issue, 152-162.

Saracaloğlu, A. S., Altay, B., & Eken, M. (2016). Variables predicting social problem solving skills of pre-service elementary teachers *Adiyaman University Journal of Social Sciences*, *23*, 680-722. https://doi.org/10.14520/adyusbd.88693

Selçuk, Z. (2008). *Education psychology.* Nobel.

Selvi, M., Doğru, M., Gencosman, T., & Saka, D. (2017). Examination of science teacher candidates' opinions about school experience and teaching practice with regards to activity system theory. *Ondokuz Mayis University Journal of Faculty of Education, 36*(1), 175-194. doi: 10.7822/omuefd.327397

Serin, N. B., & Derin, R. (2008). İlköğretim öğrencilerinin kişilerarası problem çözme becerisi algıları ve denetim odağı düzeylerini etkileyen faktörler. *Uluslararası İnsan Bilimleri Dergisi*, *5*(1), 1-18.

Stemler, S. (2001). An overview of content analysis. *Practical Assessment, Research & Evaluation, 7*(17), 137-146.

Şişman, M. (2015). *Introduction to educational science.* PegemA.

Taneri, A., & Yel, S. ( 2017). Examination of the needs assessment styles of 4th grade students in primary school *Journal of Ahi Evran University Kırşehir Faculty of Education*, *18*(3), 772-791.

Tekin, S. (2019). Gaining responsibility value through activity-based value education in primary school 4th grades. *Unpublished master thesis,* Erzincan Binali Yıldırım University, Institute of Social Sciences, Erzincan.

Thomas, J. Z., Maydeu-Olivares, A., & Gallardo-Pujol, D. (2011). Predicting social problem solving using personality traits. *Personality and Individual Differences*, *50*, 142-147. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2010.09.015

Topal, Y. (2019). Values education and ten root value. *Mavi Atlas*, *7*(1), 245-254.

Türkiye Yeterlilikler Çerçevesine Dair Tebliğ (2016). *Resmi Gazete, 29581.* https://www.resmigazete.gov.tr/eskiler/2016/01/20160102-3.htm

Ütkür, N., Kabapınar, Y., & Önder, A. (2016). An action research towards using case study method in life studies courses. *Journal of Hasan Ali Yücel Faculty of Education*, *13*(2), 41.

Webster-Stratton, C., & Lindsay, D. W. (1999). Social competence and conduct problems in young children: Issues in assessment. *Journal of clinical child psychology*, *28*(1), 25-43. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15374424jccp2801_3

Weissberg, R. P., Gesten, E. L., Carnrike, C. L., Toro, P. A., Rapkin, B. D., Davidson, E., & Cowen, E. L. (1981). Social problem-solving skills training: A competence-building intervention with second-to fourth-grade children. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, *9*(4), 411-423.

Yıldırım, A., & Şimşek, H. (2011). *Qualitative research methods in the social sciences.* Seçkin Publishing.

Yıldırım, R. G., Özyılmaz Akamca, G., Ellez, A. M., Karabekmez, S., & Bulut Üner, A. N. (2019). A study of preschool teacher candidates' opinions on school experience and teaching practice. *Journal of Higher Education & Science, 9*(2), 306- 316. DOI: 10.5961/jhes.2019.332