

Participation of Primary School Pupils who Stay at Institution of Social Services and Child Protection Dormitories in Social Science Lessons

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Abstract

This research aims to understand to what extent primary school pupils stay at the Institution of Social Services and Child Protection dormitories participate social science lessons. Data were obtained from pupils stay at the Institution of Social Services and Child Protection dormitories and attend primary schools in Istanbul and Çanakkale. Thirty pupils in Istanbul and fifteen pupils in Çanakkale were interviewed and observed. Qualitative research methods are used in this research. In order to analyse the data grounded theory methodology was used. The analysis involves open, axial and selective coding processes. The research findings indicated that pupils participate social science lessons at different levels. Pupils stated that history takes an important place in social science lessons. Therefore, using child-centred tasks will enable them to be more active in classrooms.

Key Words

Lesson Participation, Learning, Qualitative Research Methods.

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Researchers pointed out that although teaching takes place in a class; pupils' individual characteristics play an important role in learning (Özbek, 2005). Pupils stay at the Institute of Social Services and Child Protection dormitories start primary school when they are six years old. In this institute, people responsible from pupils are in contact with their teachers periodically and help their studies (Sosyal Hizmetler ve Çocuk Esirgeme Kurumu [SHÇEK], 2006). Researchers state that family has a crucial role in pupils' success and adaptation to the school (Kağıtçıbaşı, 2000; Öztop, & Telsiz, 1996). Socio-cultural and economical structures of the family shape pupils' behaviours (Sağlam, 1999). Different researchers carried out studies about the Institute of Social Services and Child Protection. Uslu (2008) investigated art development of pupils stay at the Institute of Social Services and Child Protection dormitories and with their parents. Tümkaya (2005) studied the hopelessness level of adolescence stay at the Institute of Social Services and Child Protection dormitories. Research investigated identity development (Gündoğdu, & Zeren, 2004) and worries (Baş, 1990) of adolescence stay at the Institute of Social Services and Child Protection dormitories and with their parents. Studies also carried out in mental health (Bulut, 1995) and behavioural and emotional problems (Şimşek, Erol, Öztop, & Özer Özcan, 2008) of adolescence stay at the Institute of Social Services and Child Protection dormitories.

Pupils' participation to the lessons was investigated by different researchers (Black, 2002). However, studies about pupils' lesson participation in primary education are limited. The new primary curriculum started to be implemented in 2005-2006 academic year has acknowledged the contribution of constructivism in Turkey (Millî Eğitim Bakanlığı [MEB], 2007). According to constructivism, activities are child-centred and pupils are encouraged to ask questions (Brooks, & Brooks, 1993). Pupils also should participate lessons actively (Çınar, Teyfur, & Teyfur, 2006). Through the new curriculum activity centred tasks and pupils' interaction with environment become important (Arın, 2006). Therefore, investigating pupils' participation to social science lessons will help us to understand how we can help them to learn effectively.

Aims of the Research

This research aims to understand to what extent primary school pupils stay at the Institution of Social Services and Child Protection dormi-

tories participate social science lessons and the way they interact with other pupils and their teachers in classrooms. Thus, new information will be obtained about providing better environment for pupils who come from different socio-cultural background.

Method

In this section, the design of the research carried out was described. The information about the sampling, data collection and analysis were given. It also discusses how particular strategies of data collection are selected.

Qualitative research methods are used in this study. This research focused on pupils' views about the way they participate Social Science lessons in primary schools and how they interact with other pupils and their teachers in classrooms. This requires an investigation of pupils' views, thinking, behaviour and their decision about learning. Many researchers indicated that qualitative research methods are appropriate to understand individual ideas, emotions, attitudes (Bell, 1993; Johnson, 1995). Pajares (1992) stated that people's views and thinking cannot be observed and measured directly. But, that can be understood through people's talking and practice about it. Therefore, interviews used in this research in order to understand pupils' views about the lesson participation. Interviews are widely used in education (Ekiz, 2003; Karasar, 2004). Patton (1990) stated that through the interviews researchers can enter people's world and understand their views about a subject. Interviews also provide us to learn people's attitudes, experiences, interpretations, etc. (Yıldırım, & Şimşek, 2005). Human behaviours are changeable. Researchers therefore should consider this during their research (Yıldırım, 1999). Observation technique was also used in order to understand the way pupils participate social science lessons. Thus, triangulation is used in order to enhance validity and reliability of the research (Cohen, & Manion, 1993; Denzin, & Lincon, 1994; Robson, 1993).

Sampling

Most of the dormitories of the Institution of Social Services and Child Protection were placed in Istanbul (ŞHÇEK, 2006). However, social, cultural and educational differences can be seen in different cities as well

as different regions. Data therefore were collected from pupils stay at the Institution of Social Services and Child Protection dormitories and attend primary schools (aged between 9-12) in Çanakkale and Istanbul in this study. Thirty pupils stay at three different dormitories in Istanbul and fifteen pupils stay at a dormitory in Çanakkale were participated in this research.

Data Analysis

In order to analyse the data grounded theory methodology was used. Data collected from the interviews are analysed concerning the stages of grounded theory methodology which are open coding, axial coding and selective coding (Strauss, & Corbin, 1998).

In open coding, comparative analysis was used. In comparative analysis, data collected from the interviews were examined line by line and abstract categories are developed through comparing data (Punch 2005). This enabled the researchers to use the analytic procedure freely. Thus, the data brought up many concepts. If these concepts shared common characteristics, they placed into the same code. Then, the concepts were grouped under the more abstract concepts. In axial coding, the data fractured during the open coding are reassembled. The categories emerged through the open coding are related to its subcategories and dimensions. In the stage of selective coding, the central category is selected. Then, the observations were interpreted according to the framework derived from the analysis of the interviews.

Findings

The data collected for this research were analysed concerning the stages of open, axial and selective coding. Three core categories derived from data at the end of the open coding process represented as below:

- Pupils' views of lesson participation and learning
- Pupils' expectation of lesson participation
- Social Science lessons and lesson participation

In axial coding, the categories above re-examined. Thus, they are systematically developed and linked with subcategories. The category of *pupils' views of lesson participation and learning* revealed that pupils partici-

pated the lessons in different levels such as full participation, silent participation and non participation. Teachers' and other pupils' behaviours also shaped pupils' participation to the lessons. The category of *pupils' expectation of lesson participation* has three subcategories: environment, facilities and teacher. Pupils indicated that the dimensions of these subcategories such as silence, computer, and teachers' voice influenced the way pupils participate the lessons. Therefore, this category is considered under the category of *factors influence lesson participation*. Re-examining the category of *social science lessons and lesson participation* also revealed that the subcategories of this category such as teaching methods and context influence the way pupils participate the lessons. Therefore, this category is also considered under the category of *factors influence lesson participation*. Thus, two categories emerged through the axial coding: *Pupils' views of lesson participation and learning* and *factors influence lesson participation*.

Selective coding is the process of integrating and refining categories. A close examination of the categories in axial coding revealed that the category of *factors influence lesson participation* can also be considered as pupils' views of lesson participation. Therefore, the category of *pupils' views of lesson participation and learning* is considered as a central category.

Discussion

Examination of the concept of education reveals that it is a system consists of input, output and feedback (Sönmez, 2003). Students' attributes are a part of the input of this system. Pupils participated this research live away from their families and have a lack of family care (Baş, 1990; Büyüksolak, 1995; Cılga, 1989; Gür, 1990). This influences them in a negative way in their lives (Ekşi, 1990). Many researchers indicate that pupils' emotional needs should be fulfilled in order them to develop their identities fully (Üstüner, Erol, & Şimşek, 2005). Family care and love influence pupils' emotional and social developments that are the important features of self-actualization (Arslan, 2006). Many researchers also state that family has an important role of pupils' school life (Erkan, 1995; Kağıtçıbaşı, 2000; Weiss, & Brigham, 2003; Yavuzer, 1983). Therefore, school-family relation is of great importance (Çelenk, 2003).

The findings revealed that pupils prefer to be silent in social science

lessons because they are shy and afraid that their classmates are going to make fun of them. This indicated the importance of absence of love and family care that shape pupils' behaviours and their participation in lessons. Considering Maslow's hierarchy of needs, if pupils' basic (low-level) needs such as safety and social needs are not satisfied, their higher level needs cannot be fulfilled (Sarma, & Hoek, 2004). Many pupils also stated that they learn better when their classrooms are not noisy. Researchers pointed out that class size is an important issue of effective learning (Alexander, 1994; Celep, 2002; Yalın, 2003) and silence takes an important place in pupils' lesson participation (Durukan, & Öztürk, 2004).

Another issue revealed through the analysis is that the teacher-centred teaching are often used in Social Sciences lessons in primary schools. Therefore, the techniques of drama, group work activities, etc. are not used frequently. Studies also pointed out that although most of the teachers do not feel comfortable when they meet a new curriculum, they later get used to practice it (Sahin, 2002). The research suggests that teachers should use child-centred teaching methods in Social Sciences lessons. Thus, pupils comes from different socio-cultural environment will have a chance to work and interact with other pupils in classroom.

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