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PROBLEMS RELATED TO THE TEACHING OF SOCIAL STUDIES AND SUGGESTIONS FOR SOLUTION: TEACHERS' OPINIONS BASED ON A QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to determine opinions and suggestions of teacher about the problems encountered in teaching social studies in secondary schools. In this study, interview technique was used as qualitative research method was utilized as a means of data collection. For this purpose, interviews were held with 12 teachers in the study group. According to the results obtained from the study was identified that participants have encountered similar problems related to teaching of social studies. It was observed which the most frequently expressed problem situations by teachers as follows textbooks, lack of physical conditions, teaching of knowledge-skill-values and teaching of Kemalism. Some of the solution suggestions offered by the participants: presence of social studies classrooms in schools, emphasis on teaching of notion-value-skill, increasing the weekly course hours.

Key words: teaching of social studies, views of teachers, problems of social studies

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1. Introduction

2005 social studies program, prepared with constructivist philosophy aiming Social integration and adoption of value judgement of individual and to bring up good citizens, foresees activity based education process reflecting the data of social science disciplines with interdisciplinary mentality (Safran, 2011; Öztürk, 2011). According to Mathisoni, Ross and Vinson (2006: 103-105) all the disciplines of social sciences should take place in social studies program and the acquisitions of social studies configured with interdisciplinary mentality should provide different perspectives to the students. In the new social studies program, started to be applied in 2005, the mentality of 1998, which included separate education of history and geography, was abandoned, 8 learning fields were determined and each of these fields was organized to contain a dominant social studies discipline (Ata, 2005).

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In the social studies program, consisting of information, skill and value dimension, it is possible to see also the reflections of the modern paradigm. Because in the developing World, not only knowledgeable people but also individuals with the basic skills (Critical and creative thinking, decision making) to solve the problems (Ata, 2006: 76), who adopts the value system that is approved by the society, are needed (Doğanay, 2011: 229-230). In this respect, besides the acquisitions of social studies, the information, skill and value dimensions of the program of 2005 and its broadened scope are thought to contribute to the multilateral development of the student. Moreover, social studies basically aims to bring up good citizens. With regards to this, “citizenship depression” of multiculturally structured America became a social problem in early 1900s. Social studies, which started to be taught to solve this problem, brought about unignorable success in bringing up “American citizens.” It can, however, be claimed that in our country social studies has not yet reached to desired level. With regards to the duty of citizenship or the intended behaviours and values to be taught, it is obvious that there are several deficiencies (Safran, 2011: 14). Therefore, it is wondered what kind of problems are confronted by and what are the views and suggestions of the teachers of social studies, who are experiencing the problems in person. Under the light of these explanations, the aim of this study is identified as follows:

The Aim of the Study: Determination of the problems confronted by the social studies teachers in teaching social studies and the presentation of solutions related to these problems.

Method

Research Design

Aiming the determination of the problems confronted in teaching social sciences and the suggestions for their solution, this study is a qualitative research made in descriptive survey model. In the process of collecting and interpreting data, phenomenological method among qualitative research methods is used in this study. Phenomenological design focuses on the facts that we recognise in everyday life but do not deep and detailed understanding of them. Phenomenology is a qualitative research design and it tries to describe the phenomenon, that is confronted in everyday life but not known in details, with the experiences, thoughts and decisions of people experiencing them (Patton, 2002: 105; Şimşek, 2006: 72).

Study Group

In the determination of the teachers attending to the study, “standard sampling” and “snowball sampling” approaches from the purposeful sampling methods were preferred. The fundamental understanding in standard sampling is to study all cases matching with a standard that is either determined by the researcher or prepared previously. (Yıldırım ve Şimşek, 2006: 112). For this study, the standard for the attendants is to be a master student or to graduate from a master program. On the other hand, snowball approach is an influential method in determining rich information sources – individuals and circumstances – related with the solution of problem. (Patton, 2002; Yıldırım ve Şimşek, 2006). Demographic data about the 12 attendant teachers is as follows:

- 7 of the attendants are male while 5 of them are female.
- 2 of the teachers are the graduates of a master program and five of them are still graduate students.
- In terms of the length of the attendants’ services, 7 of them have been serving for 4-7 years and 5 of them for 1-3 year/s.
- All of these teachers have graduated from 4 years license program of a social studies department.

Data Gathering Tool

In this study semi-structured meeting technique was used to gather data. For this purpose, a meeting form consisting of 7 questions was developed by the researcher to be applied to the teachers. The meeting form took its final form after the views of the specialists of the field and the specialists of assessment and evaluation are consulted.

The Process of Gathering Data and the Analysis of Data

The meetings with the teachers made in the working room of the researcher lasted 40-45 minutes on average. Content analysis method was used in analysing the data. In this process, the act of coding was performed primarily “according to the concepts deduced from the data.” This kind of coding is rather valid for the research made about the topics that do not have a certain theoretical basis (Yıldırım ve Şimşek, 2006; Gökçe, 2006). The gathered data is compounded under themes and “direct quotations” are also used.

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