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Activity–based teaching in Social Studies education: An action research

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The aim of this study was to determine pre-service social studies teachers' skills to plan and apply the activity-based teaching and contribute to their development of these skills. In the study, the action research design of qualitative research was used. The sample of the study consisted of 6 pre-service teachers who were 4th year students at the Department of Social Studies Teaching of Atatürk University Kazım Karabekir Faculty of Education in the fall semester of 2014-2015. The data of the study were gathered using document review, observation, and interviews. Content analysis was used in data analysis. It was revealed in the research that pre-service teachers' skills for planning and implementing activity-based teaching improved remarkably and they gained some knowledge and skills regarding teaching profession and direction subject.

Key words: Teaching, education, pre-service teacher, activity-based teaching.

INTRODUCTİON

The way to catch the era is to raise efficient and productive individuals who can attain knowledge they need, can organize knowledge in different forms, can use and develop it and are well-equipped with higher order skills ad can use them. Teachers, one of the most important components of these educational institutions, are important to bring up qualified individuals. For this purpose, Guskey (1994) argues that schools will not develop without fostering teachers' skills and abilities. By saying "A school, though, is only as good as its teachers", Kavcar (1999) stresses the importance of teaching profession. Teachers must go through a quality education process because it is required for their place and importance in education system.

Adopting activity-based teaching approaches and popularizing them can be helpful to train teachers with the qualities as desired. Thus, Padmavathi (2013) states that teachers of the 21st century should adopt innovative teaching techniques in place of traditional teaching methods and perspectives and stresses that activity-based teaching is one of these techniques. Activity-based teaching is a technique which uses before and after behaviour stimuli which have natural and meaningful relations with behaviours and environment, offers learning opportunities to students in natural environment, chooses functional and generalisable skills and activities based on the child's interests, and teaches individual goals embedded in routines and planned activities (Özen and Ergenekon, 2011 as cited in Pretti-Frontczak and Bricker, 2004). In other words, activity-based learning is a teaching approach which includes all in-class and out-of class activities which will help students to reach desired

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goals, to gain value, attitude, knowledge, and skills, to foster their cognitive, affective, and motor skills, and to actualize learning by doing. The research studies conducted reveal that activity-based teaching is an effective and beneficial approach. Within this context, activity based teaching approach is student-centred and encourages students to learn on their own. Moreover, activity-based teaching allows everyone to learn regarding their own abilities and skills (Shah and Rahat, 2014; Bansal and Kumar, 2012). It enables students to participate in lessons and helps them to learn how to learn. Due to its higher interaction ability, activity-based teaching involves motivating, facilitating and educational skills (Stößlein, 2009). Furthermore, it allows students to work with their peers and experts in their own learning settings. It also provides opportunities for students to discuss and share ideas with each other. Students gain independent and critical thinking skills via activity-based teaching. Activity-based teaching offers students independent and critical thinking opportunities (Serag, 2011 as cited in Choo, 2007). It is innovative, interesting, and also it supports class interaction (Bansal and Kumar, 2012). Activity-based teaching fosters higher order skills such as communication, problem-solving, analytical thinking independent thinking, and creative thinking. It also helps to eliminate misconceptions. Activity-based teaching allows for interesting, interdisciplinary, and collaborative learning (Thinker, 1992; Carlton, 2000; Tilya, 2003). Rillero (1994) says, “a child best learns how to swim in water; similarly, a child best learns science by doing science” and this statement summarizes the benefits of this approach (as cited by Shah and Rahat, 2014).

Although activity-based teaching has a place in contemporary trends and approaches, it is not implemented effectively in our schools and it could not attract attention in scientific research studies. However, as stated by Özen and Ergenekon (2011), activity-based teaching implementations can be embedded in course contents of programs which train teachers and can be taught in academic settings. Moreover, they can be taught in natural settings by integrating them in developmental skills and daily routines. Thus, this research study is based on the idea that it can make contributions to improve teacher education, it can introduce sample activities to be used in teaching and learning environments and provide basis for new research studies.

Purpose of the study

The aim of this study was to determine pre-service social studies teachers’ skills to plan and apply the activity-based teaching and contribute to their development of these skills. To fulfil this aim, the pre-service teachers were, first, asked to plan some activities related to the subject “directions” and present them. The pre-service teachers presented the subjects using the activity-based teaching. This process was recorded by the researcher with observations and video recordings. By analyzing the recordings, pre-service teachers’ mistakes throughout the process of planning and applying the activity-based teaching were identified and they were informed of their mistakes. They were given information about the isssues “What is the activity-based teaching?”, “What are the benefits of the activity-based teaching?”, “How is the activity-based teaching planned and applied?”. Action plans were prepared together with the pre-service teachers. Pre-service teachers prepared their own action plans and presented them. In this way, it was aimed to determine the problems encountered in the activity-based teaching process and help to imrove the social studies teacher education.

Research Problem

The research study was based on the following problem: What are the pre-service social studies teachers’ levels of planning and implementing activity-based teaching and can these skills be developed by action research? In line with this main problem, the study seeks to answer the research questions below.

1. At what levels do pre-service social studies teachers’ skills for planning and implementation of activity-based teaching change before and after the action?
2. What are the difficulties pre-service social studies teachers encounter during the planning and implementation of activity-based teaching process?
3. Are there any differences between the knowledge and skill levels of pre-service social studies teachers about the directions subject before and after the action?
4. What are the pre-service social studies teachers’ views on the contributions activity-based learning made to their professional development?

METHOD

Research model

Action research, one of the qualitative research methods, was used in the study. When the relevant literature is reviewed, action reach is attributed to social psychologist Kurt Lewin. Kurt Lewin used action research concept in his paper “Action Research and Minority Problems” in 1946 and he described action research as a research leading to social action. Although action research in education had its roots in John Dewey’s studies, Stephen Corey was among the first to use action research systematically in the field of education to solve educational problems (Aksoy, 2003).

Action research is described as the process of studying a school or real classroom situation to understand and improve the quality of education (Johnson, 2014 as cited in Hensen, 1996). Ferrance (2000) states that action research is a process in which participants examine and assess their own educational practices carefully and systematically, using research techniques.

Action research is a cyclical process of study designed to collect data about the problem, review resources, and take actions to solve the problem. This cyclical process includes the following steps: Identifying an area of focus, collecting data, analyzing and

interpreting the data, and designing a plan of action. (Uzuner, 2005 as cited in Miles, 2003).

There are some characteristics of action research which distinguish it from other social research studies: 1- The main purpose of action research is to improve the practise. Therefore, generating theoretical knowledge is not considered as the priority of a researcher.

2- Action research enables the practitioners to be involved in the research process directly and encourage them to learn through first-hand experiences and thus more willing apply what they have learnt. 3- Because the research is carried out in real world circumstances, it aims at solving real problems. 4- Action research emphasizes direct involvement of individuals and thus increasing awareness about their own strengths sand it stresses collaboration and social change. 5-As a result of direct participation in the research, the solutions suggested remove the resistance experienced during the implementation process (Aksoy, 2003).

Action research bridges the gap between the theory and practise. It facilitates teachers' effectiveness and makes contributions to their professional development and in-service training (Johnson, 2014).

Study group

The study sample of the research consisted of total 6 undergraduate pre-service teachers, 3 females and 3 males, studying in the fourth grade of Social Studies Teaching in Kazim Karabekir Education Faculty in Ataturk University in 2014-2015 fall term.

Research procedure

Pilot study: A pilot study was conducted with 10 pre-service teachers who studied at the Department of Social Studies Teaching of Atatürk University Kazım Karabekir Faculty of Education in the summer semester of 2014-2015 academic year. The problems in the process of conducting the research and in the data collection instruments were identified. The necessary measures were taken to prevent from the same or similar problems during the real study.

Identifying participants and getting the necessary permission: At the beginning of the 2014-2015 academic year, the pre-service teachers were informed about the study. Then, the pre-service teachers who volunteered to participate in the study were determined. Because the research procedure involved recording and interviews for data collection, the participants were asked to sign informed consent forms. They were reminded that the collected information would be used for only scientific purposes. The researchers shared the action research plan with the pre-service teachers.

Identifying pre-service teachers' current conditions regarding skills for planning and implementing activity-based teaching before the action: The pre-service teachers were asked to prepare an activity-based planning for "directions" subject and then they were asked to present it in the class. Directions is a 4th grade primary school subject and it is included in the content area of "People, Places and Environments" of the unit "The place Where We Live" (Kaya et al., 2014). The pre-service teachers were given two weeks for their preparations. The pre-service teachers submitted their activity-based lesson plans and then presented them in the class. The researcher observed the pre-service teachers' presentations, took notes, and they were recorded.

Informing pre-service teachers about their current conditions regarding skills for planning and implementing activity-based teaching before the action: The researcher examined the pre-service teachers' lesson plans which were prepared before the action. The researcher analysed the observation notes and video recordings. As a result of the analyses and examinations, the weaknesses and strengths of pre-service teachers' skills for planning and implementing activity-based teaching before the action were determined. The results were shared with the participants. Moreover, the pre-service teachers watched their video recordings to consider their own weaknesses and strengths.

Presenting information and samples about the subject which was planned and practised using activity-based teaching by the researcher: The participants were provided with the theoretical knowledge on the following topics for three weeks by the researcher: What is activity-based teaching? What are the practises which the activities are based on? What do you pay attention while preparing and presenting activities? What are the benefits of activity-based teaching? Following this, practises were carried out to plan directions with activity-based teaching and to actualize learning.

Preparing a plan of action with the pre-service teachers: A plan of action was created with the pre-service teachers. Decisions about what types of activities pre-service teachers would prepare and present directions were made. The pre-service teachers were given two weeks for their preparations. The researcher helped the pre-service teachers during the preparing, planning, and implementation process of activities after the action.

Pre-service teachers' planning and presenting their plans of action: The pre-service teacher submitted their activity-based action plans and performed their presentations in the class. Their presentations were observed, notes were taken, and also they were recorded.

Informing pre-service teachers about the results of action plans: The researcher examined the lesson plans which the participants prepared after the action and the observation notes and video recordings were analyzed. As a result of the analyses and examinations, the weaknesses and strengths of pre-service teachers' skills for planning and implementing activity-based teaching after the action were identified. The results were shared with the participants. Moreover, the pre-service teachers watched their video recordings to consider their own weaknesses and strengths. The lesson plans and presentations prepared before and after the action were compared.

Evaluating activity-based teaching process: Semi-structured interviews consisting of open-ended questions were administered to pre-service teachers. The data obtained from the interviews were analysed and presented in tables.

Data collection tools

The data were gathered via document analysis, observations and interviews. Document analysis is the systematic examination of written materials which include information for the examination of the phenomena/ phenomenon (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2011). Observation is a systematic data collection of the researcher in a research field usually using an instrument via five senses and it is a phenomenological process which is recorded for scientific purposes. (Creswell, 2013 as cited in Angrosino, 2007). Interview is to elicit information by asking questions from a relevant person or people about a subject (Aziz, 2011).

Document analysis was used to determine whether the lesson plans prepared by the pre-service teachers before and after the action included the essential components of an ideal lesson plan and to reveal their weaknesses and strengths. In order to find out whether the lesson plans cover the elements which an ideal lesson should have or not, a sample lesson plan was prepared modelling

the lesson plans by Sönmez (1999). The sample lesson plan was checked by the experts in the field in terms of its language, structure, and content. Then it was revised according to the feedback from them. Finally, the activity-based lesson plans of the pre-service teachers were evaluated according to the sample lesson plan.

Observation was performed to identify the pre-service teachers' skills to practise activity-based teaching before and after the implementation and notes were taken and they were recorded via video camera. To determine pre-service teachers' activity-based teaching skills, an observation form was prepared. Experts were asked to evaluate the reliability of this form. After the pilot study, with the necessary revisions, the final version of the form was prepared.

A semi-structured interview, consisting of three open-ended questions, was used to elicit pre-service teachers' views on activity-based teaching process. The following questions were included in the interview form: What are the difficulties you encountered during the planning and implementation process of activity-based teaching before and after the action?, compare your prior knowledge on directions and your navigational skills before and after the action, and what contributions did activity-based teaching make to your professional development? At first, there were 5 semi-structured questions in the interview form. To learn whether these questions fulfil the purposes of the study, the evaluations of the experts were asked again.

After the pilot study, it was seen that pre-service teachers gave similar answers to some questions. Therefore, these questions were combined and the final draft of the interview form was obtained.

Data analysis

The data in the research was analysed using content analysis. Content analysis is a method for understanding and comparing the publications, speeches, and recordings. The purpose of content analysis is to systematically identify the special characteristics of a message in a written document (Arıkan, 2011). The steps below are followed during the data analysis.

- The lesson plans prepared by the pre-service teachers before and after the action, the observation notes on their presentations, and video recordings were analysed via content analysis. The findings related to each pre-service teacher's lesson plans and presentations were summarized, their weaknesses and strengths were presented and interpreted.
-The responses of pre-service teachers to open-ended interview questions about activity-based teaching were analysed via content analysis and codes and categories were composed. The findings were presented in tables and interpreted. In addition, some excerpts from the responses of the participants were introduced in the analysis.

FINDINGS

The findings about pre-service teachers' skills for planning and implementing activity-based teaching before and after the action

PT1's condition conditions regarding skills for planning and implementing activity-based teaching before and after the action

Before the action

PT1 prepared a lesson plan before the action which included the following titles: subject, introduction to the lesson, procedure, activity, and ending the lesson and made short explanations about them.

PT1 started teaching-learning process with the description of direction concept. He also gave short information on how to find directions with the instruments and methods. He set up a small premise on a carton and the students performed activities on it. For that purpose, he gave a toy car to the students who he called to the board. PT1 asked the students to go to the school, the hospital, and the mosque from a one point in the premise and also asked them to use directions while going to these places. With reference to the lesson plan, PT1 asked the students to fill the gaps in the questions which he wrote on the board such as "the school is _____ the hospital (Where is the school?) and ended the lesson.

After the action

PT1 identified the basic components in the lesson plan prepared after the action, explained teaching-learning process systematically, summarized the main points of the subjects, and finally included evaluation and assessment questions.

PT1 started teaching-learning process with the definition of directions. He exemplified to clarify the definition. He determined the students' levels of knowledge and abilities for giving directions. He presented the main points of the subject with explanation and question and answer. Moreover, he supported his presentation with visuals created using power point. Then he shared the products which were formed as a result of the poem, slogan, and short story activities prepared with station technique with his students. He asked students to sing the song "I know" with the keyboard and the students did the exercises in the worksheet. Finally, he administered an assessment tool consisting of gap filling, true-false, and multiple choice questions to the students and ended the lesson.

PT2's condition regarding skills for planning and implementing activity-based teaching before and after the action

Before the action

PT2 prepared a lesson plan before the action which was structured like lecture notes. , She exactly wrote how she was going to teach directions in the class environment.

PT2 informed the students about the subject before the action and started teaching-learning process. She asked the students what direction was and received some answers. Then, using the direction arrow which she drew on a carton, she explained cardinal directions and inter-mediate directions. She also gave information on the tools and methods to find directions. She put up the political map of Turkey on the board. She asked such

questions as “Where is Bulgaria with respect to the map?” to the students and received answers. Finally, she ended the lesson.

After the action

Except for the references, PT2 explained the other main points clearly, correctly, explicitly in her lesson plan prepared after the action and also she included teaching-learning activities, summary and evaluation and assessment in her lesson plan.

PT2 started teaching-learning process after the action by preparing the models which she was going to use on the sand table with the students. She set up a small residential area with the students on the sand table. Afterwards, using the questions and the instructions in the work sheets such as “if you walk along the Milli Egemenlik Street on the sand table to the north, what do you see on the west?, “what objects are there on the southeast of the mill on the sand table?”, “can you draw the sketch of the residential area on the sand table? and she asked students to do the activities. She also assessed and evaluated the students using multiple choice, gap filling, and open-ended questions and finally she ended the lesson.

PT3’s condition regarding skills for planning and implementing activity-based teaching before and after the action

Before the action

PT3 included such components as name of the course, class grade, subject, time, concepts, methods-techniques and gains in his lesson plan which he prepared before the action. He divided teaching-learning process into three parts: introduction, teaching, and evaluation.

PT3 started teaching-learning process before the action with an anecdote which stressed the importance of navigational knowledge and skills. He drew a direction arrow on the board. Based on the sunrise, he explained cardinal directions and intermediate directions. He asked the students what tools and methods were used to find direction. He gave information on the tools and methods to find direction. He also read the letter written by Christopher Columbus about the discovery of America. Considering this letter, he emphasized the importance of acquiring navigational knowledge and skills. He asked one of the students to go out of the classroom. He hid an object with the students. Then they called the student in and asked him to find the object. During this activity, the student was given directions by his peers to find the hidden object. The student found the hidden object and the lesson finished.

After the action

PT3 explained the other main components clearly, correctly, explicitly in his lesson plan prepared after the action except the references and he included teaching-learning activities, summary and evaluation and assessment dimension in his lesson plan.

PT3 started teaching-learning process with a few questions to check the students’ prior knowledge. He presented the subject using instruments such as watch, compass, and pictures. He had the students read the story “I learn to find directions” and then the students did the activities in the worksheet about the story. Following this, he carried out the activity called story cloud with the students. He wrote questions about the subject on the paper which he cut like a cloud and tied them to a carton with a string. He asked some students who went to the blackboard to read the questions on the paper clouds and wrote the answer on the back of the paper cloud. He continued the activity with few students. Then he summarized the subject and ended the lesson with evaluation and assessment.

PT4’s condition regarding skills for planning and implementing activity-based teaching before and after the action

Before the action

PT4 included elements such as subject time, goals, and method and also mentioned the educational value of the material she was going to use in the lesson.

PT4 began the process asking students the question “what is direction?”. After he got the answer from a student, he went on explaining the subject. After he stressed that there were four cardinal directions and four intermediate directions, he told the methods and tools used for finding directions. He occasionally tried to involve students in the process with question-answer method. He had the students do activities on a residential area which he prepared with models. He performed the activity by asking the following question to the students: using the material, he said, “you leave school and go to the hospital. How can you get to the hospital using directions?” In case of need, PT4 gave students clues; therefore, he helped the students to perform a correct action. After doing the same activity with a few students, he finished the lesson.

After the action

PT4 explained the other main components clearly, correctly, explicitly in his lesson plan prepared after the action except for the references and he included teaching-learning activities, summary and evaluation and assessment in his lesson plan.

During the teaching-learning process after the action, firstly PT4 took his students to some locations such as mosque, church, and graveyard. He gave some information about the directions, the importance of navigational knowledge and skills, and the tools and methods used to find directions. He showed the students how to find directions benefiting from the shadow lengths of a mosque, compass, watch, and an object and he explained it via engagement method. He asked questions to the students such as with respect to the position of the mosque, where is X district? Regarding the position of the tombs, where is X district? and the students were engaged in activities. After they went back into the classroom, he asked students what knowledge, skills, and impressions they gained during the trip-observation after receiving their opinions, he summarized the topic. By carrying out evaluation and assessment, he finished the lesson.

PT5's condition regarding skills for planning and implementing activity-based teaching before and after the action

Before the action

PT5 included class, subject, content area, gains, teaching method, instruments and tools, concepts, and time in the formal section of the lesson plan which she prepared before the action. She designed teaching-learning process with introduction, teaching and evaluation.

PT5 explained the directions with sun photos which she put up on the walls of the classroom within the teaching-learning process before the action. She also gave some information on some methods for finding directions. She had the students do activities on the sketch she put up on the board. She asked the student who went to the board to go from one place to another on the sketch using the directions and finished the lesson.

After the action

PT5 included all the main elements in the lesson plan which was prepared before the action and she explained teaching-learning process clearly and explicitly. Moreover, she summarized the subject and included evaluation and assessment questions.

PT5 took the students to the track where she was going to perform the activity. She gave short theoretical information about the topic. She explained the purpose of the orienteering activity and told them how to perform it. PT5 also said that she prepared targets between the control points and added that they should proceed from the course start to finish by visiting a number of control points with the help of the instructions and would complete the course using their navigational skills. She divided the students into groups and performed orienteering activity. She rewarded the group which came in first. After going back into the classroom, PT5 had the students fill the worksheet on orienteering which was prepared before. She finished the lesson with evaluation and assessment.

PT6's condition regarding skills for planning and implementing activity-based teaching before and after the action

Before the action

PT6 included elements such as name of the course, class grade, subject, time, concepts, method-technique and gains in the lesson plan which she prepared before the action. She organized the teaching and learning process under the titles of introduction to course, teaching, and evaluation.

PT6 started the teaching-learning process with the definition of navigation and route. Then, she asked a question to the class. She wanted one of the students to answer it. PT6 gave short information on cardinal and intermediation directions with reference to direction arrows which she put up on the class walls regarding the sunrise and sunset. She mentioned methods of navigation. She occasionally asked the students to repeat what she told. She put up the mute Turkey map on the board. PT6 attached the picture of fairy chimneys on the relevant place on the map by regarding Nevşehir as the centre. Then, she asked the students to go to the board and choose picture. She asked them in which city these landmarks were located. The students described the picture and told the city in which it existed. PT6 asked the students to stick the picture on the relevant place on the map. Then she asked the students where this city was located with respect to Nevşehir. After all the pictures were attached on the map, she summarized the subject and finished the lesson.

After the action

PT6 explained the other main components clearly, correctly, explicitly in her lesson plan prepared after the action except for the references and she included teaching-learning activities, summary and evaluation and assessment in her lesson plan.

After PT6 explained the gains during the teaching-learning process, she presented the subject via explanation and question and answer method. After that, she had the students read the poem "What do directions tell us?" and the students did the activity in the worksheet about the poem. PT6 had the students do activities on Turkey map where envelops and information tags were attached.

For that purpose, she used the envelop on Yozgat as the starting point. She called a student to the board and she wanted him to open the envelop on the starting point and then she asked the student to read the information tag in the envelop.

PT6 said that the student must find the city written on the information tag (questions on the information tag: on the front of the information tag it said which city is located on the east of Kastamonu, southwest of Elazığ and on the farthest northern point of Turkey? On the back of the tag, what is the city located on the northwest of the city you live in?) The student by following the information tags in the envelops tried to find the other cities. PT6 had many students do this activity. Finally, she summarized the topic and ended the lesson with evaluation and assessment activities.

Results before the action

Lesson plans prepared by the pre-service teachers were usually inadequate in terms of structure, content, language and basic components.

They expressed the main component incorrectly in some plans.

They did not inform the students about the goals in teaching-learning process.

They did not include studies which aimed at determining students' prior knowledge or they remained incapable.

They did not include concept teaching or they remained incapable.

They transferred inadequate, incomplete and sometimes wrong information.

They did not include clear and explicit instructions about the activities.

They were not able to increase student participation at a satisfactory level.

They did not include revision, summary, reinforcer, feedback, correction, and evaluation and assessment activities or they remained incapable.

While using question and answer, they ignored some guiding principles and thus could attain the goal.

They left some questions unresolved.

They designed activities appropriate to the students' needs, interests, and levels.

However, these activities were inadequate to achieve the goals and gain the skills.

Results after the action

Lesson plans prepared by the pre-service teachers were usually good (despite some weaknesses) regarding structure, content, language and basic components.

They did not inform the students about the goals in teaching-learning processes adequately although they included them in the plan.

They tried to determine the students' prior knowledge at an acceptable level.

They involved clear and explicit instructions about the activities.

They included concept teaching although it was not effective.

They made necessary explanations about the activities and administered them at the right time.

They designed activities appropriate to the subject's pattern, goals, skills, and the students' needs, interests, and levels, and the student-centred approach and they practised effective teaching.

They were able to get students' active participation.

They benefited from different visuals, instruments and tools, and locations in teaching.

They included revision, summary, reinforcer, feedback, correction, and evaluation and assessment activities at an acceptable level.

Some pre-service teachers could not summarize the subject.

They were usually able to evaluate and assess the questions only at knowledge level.

Findings indicated that pre-service teachers' skills for planning and implementing activity-based teaching were very weak and inadequate before the action. What draws attention is that pre-service teachers usually prepared activities which were appropriate to student-centred teaching and students' interests, needs and levels; however, they could not prepare an effective plan. They made important pedagogic mistakes during the teaching-learning process, and they could not carry out effective teaching. When pre-service teachers' skills for planning and implementing activity-based teaching were considered, in spite of weaknesses, they prepared better and more systematic lesson plans. They particularly designed activities which were appropriate to gains and skills, were open to develop students in many ways, and were more functional and practical and they completed teaching-learning process more efficiently. Therefore, it is suggested that pre-service teachers' skills for planning and implementing activity-based teaching has considerably improved.

Findings on pre-service teachers' views about activity-based teaching

When Table 1 is examined, the pre-service teachers encountered some difficulties before the action such as generating ideas for activities, not being able to carry out effective teaching due to lack of experience, preparing activity-based lesson plan, supplying equipment and tools, increasing student participation and having suitable physical conditions. Moreover, one pre-service teacher stated that he had difficulty in designing activities appropriate to the students' levels and another pre-service teacher said that she could not connect the topic

Table 1. Pre-service teachers' views about the difficulties they encountered during the process of planning and implementation of activity-based teaching before and after the action.

Difficulties encountered by pre-service teachers		f	%
Before Action	Generating ideas for activities	5	25
	Not being able to actualize effective teaching due to lack of experience	4	20
	Preparing activity-based lesson plan	3	15
	Supplying equipment and tool to use in the activities	3	15
	Inappropriate physical conditions of classroom	3	15
	Providing student participation	2	10
Total		20	100
After Action	Supplying equipment and tools to use in the activities	4	40
	Unsuitable weather conditions for out-of class activities	3	30
	Unsuitable physical conditions of the classroom	2	20
	Students' not being prepared for the course	1	10
Total		10	100

with the activities. Still another pre-service teacher had difficulties in selecting a suitable method for the activity.

The most important problem pre-service teachers encountered after the action is that they were not supplied with the equipment and tools they needed. Furthermore, the pre-service teachers stated that they could not carry out effective teaching due to unsuitable weather conditions, students' lack of readiness for the lesson and unsuitable physical conditions of the classroom.

When findings are examined, they reveal that the pre-service teachers experienced factors which caused difficulties for them to carry out effective teaching in both processes. However, what draws attention is that pre-service teachers did not have any difficulties in generating ideas for activities, preparing a lesson plan, and increasing student participation. Therefore, it can be suggested that pre-service teachers managed some problems after the action which they encountered before the action. The following quotes were chosen from the pre-service teachers' views about the subject.

PT1 said, "First of all, what I would like to state is that I had difficulty generating ideas for the activities because I did not have an idea about activity-based teaching. What is activity-based teaching? How a subject is planned and taught using activities? I did not have any answers for these questions. I did research and prepared my plan".

PT2 said, "I did not know what to do and how to behave while preparing a lesson plan. I just put in order what I was going to tell and do in the class. Lack of tools such as map, compass and costumes restricted us".

PT3 said, "Because I did not have enough teaching experience, I got excited during the presentation and forgot some things. I could not do my presentation as I wanted".

PT4 said, "Because I could not find a transportation vehicle, I thought of giving up the out-of-class activities for a moment. However, after I talked to the instructor of the course, we were able to manage this problem with our individual efforts. I think that the institution should allocate a vehicle for out-of –school practises".

PT5 said, "I prepared orienteering activity for the students. But, it became difficult for us to carry out the activity both in the planning and implementation stages due to the cold weather, and the track covered with snow and mud".

When Table 2 is examined, it is revealed that all of the pre-service teachers did not have enough navigational skills and knowledge and also some of them stated that they had difficulty in finding and giving directions.

Pre-service teachers stated that they learned new tools and methods which can be used for finding directions, they could find their direction easily in a place which they have been to for the first time, they started to feel themselves competent about the directions and also they started to look at different places and objects carefully after the action. Considering these findings, it can be stated that pre-service teachers' navigational skills and knowledge developed and improved at an acceptable level after the action. The following quotes were chosen from the pre-service teachers' views about the subject.

PT2 said, "I had some theoretical knowledge about the subject before the process. I can say that I won't get lost in the places where I am going to go from now on. Moreover, I am happy that I will teach directions better".

PT5 said, "I had primary level knowledge about directions before the action. After the action, I believe that I have gained the knowledge and skills which a pre-service teacher should have".

PT6 said, "I think that I became more conscious about directions after the lesson. I started to look at places like graveyard and mosque and clock and the North Star more carefully after the lesson".

When Table 3 is examined, all of the pre-service

Table 2. Pre-service teachers' views on their navigational skills and knowledge which they gained before and after the action.

	Pre-service teachers' direction knowledge and skills	f	%
Before Action	Lack of knowledge and skills about directions	6	60
	Having difficulty in finding directions	4	40
Total		**10**	**100**
After Action	Learning new tools and methods for finding directions	6	38
	Finding direction in the place where he has been for the fist time	5	31
	Feeling competent about directions	4	25
	Looking at different places and objects carefully	1	6
Total		16	100

Table 3. Pre-service teachers' views on the contributions activity- based teaching make to their professional development.

Contributions of activity-based teaching to professional development	f	%
Gaining knowledge and skills to prepare an activity-based lesson plan	6	20
Gaining knowledge and skills to teach a subject using different methods, materials, and activities	5	17
Gaining new knowledge and skills about directions	5	17
Acquiring ideas about how to realize permanent learning	4	13
Realizing that learning with fun is easier	4	13
Realizing that learning by doing is more effective	3	10
Learning some ways to increase student participation	2	7
Experiencing that environment can be used in teaching	1	3
Total	30	100

teachers stated that the process of activity-based teaching made positive contributions to their professional development. These contributions were listed as follows by the pre-service teachers: preparing an activity-based lesson plan, gaining knowledge and skills to teach a subject using different methods, materials, and activities via learning by doing, permanently, effectively and with fun, benefiting from the environment in teaching-learning process and learning how to increase student participation. Regarding these findings, it can be suggested that activity-based teaching makes considerable contributions to pre-service teachers' professional development. The following quotes were chosen from the pre-service teachers' views about the subject.

PT2 stated, "This lesson both contributed to my professional development and also I competed against nature, I enjoyed and gained new vital information".

PT3 said, "I experienced that out of-school-activities were more effective in teaching Environment must be used in teaching –learning process within the realms of possibility because I realized that lessons which were performed in the environment are more enjoyable".

PT4 said, "Thanks to this course, I learned how to carry out more effective, more efficient, more enjoyable and more permanent teaching. I actualized that teaching became more permanent with practise and implementation".

PT6 said, "I observed that learning by doing and making learning fun could be implemented using more than one method".

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this study conducted to find out the social studies pre-service teachers' skills to plan and use the activity-based teaching and to contribute to their advancing these skills, the following results were obtained.

- Pre-service teachers' skills for planning and implementing activity-based teaching were weak and inadequate before the action; despite some weaknesses, their conditions developed and improved considerably after the action.
- They encountered some problems before and after the implementation but they managed these problems after the action.
- They gained some navigational skills and knowledge.
- They acquired some important skills and knowledge about teaching profession.

When the research studies in literature are examined, it is found that activity-based teaching usually yielded positive results and these results show parallelism with the results presented above.

For instance, Stößlein (2009) summarizes the benefits of the activity-based teaching as integrating learning within students' knowledge, exposing them to different activities, and helping them learn how to learn. Pointing the high level of interaction in the activity-based learning, Stößlein states that the instructor should have the skills to facilitate, motivate, enable and coach instead of just presenting facts and figures didactically.

Similarly Harfield et al. (2007), in their study on construction students, found that that active-learning provided successful learning outcomes. As an another important finding of their study, they reported a direct link between specific teaching practice and student learning.

In addition, Shah and Rahat (2014) mentions the following the advantages of activity-based teaching methods as learners are involved actively in hands-on minds on experiences and acquire an opportunity to relate intangible concepts and theories with actual observations. Activity based teaching method helps learners to understand the scientific concepts. Students' actively involved in teaching learning process and activities help them in application of scientific knowledge in various real life situations.

In this context, Fallon et al. (2013) also argued in their study that students who were not exposed to intensive teaching experience or materials did not actively participate in the lesson, but students understood better, experienced more enjoyable learning, and they participated more frequently in the lesson. Similarly, Venkata and Lakshmi (2005) reveal that students learned faster via building their new knowledge on their prior knowledge in more participatory teaching-learning environments, they shared knowledge with their peers, and they improved knowledge accumulation. Köstereliođlu et al. (2014) conducted a study to determine pre-service teachers' views on activity-based teaching. They found that activity-based teaching took students beyond the role of passive, developed their communication skills, and the learned knowledge had positive effects on retention due to learning by doing and having fun while learning. Khan et al. (2012) argued that activity-based teaching method was more effective than traditional teaching methods when developing high order skills. Moreover, the results obtained from the other studies reveal that activity-based teaching increased students' end of year achievement scores considerably (Schoolscape, 2009), the performances of students who were actively engaged in the learning process were better than the students' performances who learned via traditional teaching methods (Tilya, 2003 as cited in Hake, 1998; Redish et al., 1997), activity-based teaching was effective in solving ration problems (Küpcü, 2012), activity based teaching increased students' academic achievements (Savaş et al., 2014), and it provided retention of the learned information (Arı et al. 2010). All these results reveal that activity-based teaching is an effective method and it will make important contributions to practitioners and teachers if it is used in teaching-learning process.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following suggestions can be made regarding the findings obtained from the research:

- The physical conditions of education faculties should be improved so that activity-based teaching implementations in teacher education can popularize. Materials, equipment and tools needed must be provided and classrooms and workshops should be designed in such a way that activity-based teaching is practised.
- Pre-service teachers must be offered more opportunities for practice to experience activity-based teaching.
- Activity examples regarding social studies learning domain must be designed to develop pre-service teachers in many ways.
- Experimental studies must be carried out to determine the effect of activity-based teaching on pre-service teachers' cognitive, affective, and motor skills.

Conflict of Interests

The authors have not declared any conflict of interests.

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