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FIELD TRIPS IN SOCIAL STUDIES TEACHER TRAINING PROGRAM IN TERMS OF TEACHING CULTURE AND HERITAGE TOURISM

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Abstract

Tourism is seen as an important alternative to solve economic problems. In this regard, education contributes to create an awareness regarding tourism. In the education process, social studies which is an interdisciplinary course including social sciences such as geography, history, anthropology, economy, and tourism has a significant role in teaching about culture and heritage. In the social studies course, subjects related to natural, historical, and cultural heritage are taught, and field trips are organized. Therefore, investigating pre-service teachers' experiences regarding field trips may be useful for future studies. The aim of this study is to understand contributions of field trips in terms of teaching culture and heritage tourism to pre-service teachers in a social studies teacher training program. Qualitative research approach was used in the study. Participants of the study were 40 pre-service teachers enrolled in a social studies teacher training program. Field trips were organized to teach about culture and heritage tourism values in 2015-2016 academic year around the city of Eskisehir. At the end of the field trips, an open-ended questionnaire was applied to the pre-service teachers. Content analysis was employed for data analysis in the study. The analyses were done by two different researchers for reliability of the study. Results of the study show that field trips are effective in terms of teaching natural, historical, cultural, and touristic values; improving communication skills of pre-service teachers; and having good time. Moreover, suggestions are put forth about problems regarding organizing field trips.

Keywords: Field Trips, Social Studies, Culture and Heritage Tourism, Pre-service Teachers.

Introduction

Social studies is a primary education course that basically aims to furnish students with citizenship skills through integrating various social sciences such as history, geography, psychology, anthropology, sociology, economics, law, and philosophy with an interdisciplinary approach (National Council for the Social Studies [NCSS], 1992; Ministry of National Education [MNE], 2018). Field trips are an important part of this course due to both the goals and content of the course. Within the scope of social sciences course, trips are organized to several fields outside the school, in informal education settings. These fields range from the school's neighborhood to nearby bazaars, governmental offices, factories, exhibitions, archeological sites, botanical gardens, aquariums, workshops, museums, and to historical areas (historical buildings, monuments, museum-cities, battlefields, etc.) (Bozdogan, Okur, and Kasap, 2015; Guler, 2009; Hannu, 1993; Howe and Disinger, 1988; MNE, 2018).

Relevant body of research indicates that field trips and similar activities support official education (Gerber, Cavallo, and Marek, 2001; Hannu, 1993), lead to more effective learning (Ramey-Gassert, 1997), and offer students the opportunity to learn through experience (Meydan and Akkus, 2014). Besides, they are also conducive to use of five senses, converting knowledge into behavior by having fun, and establishing permanent learning (Farmer, Knapp, and Benton, 2007; Guler, 2009; Meydan and Akkus, 2014; Tatar and Bagriyanik, 2012; Yavuz and Balkan Kiyıcı, 2012). Furthermore, these field trips have been concluded to help students develop awareness about the responsibilities they should fulfil for social life in the community they live in (Demir, 2007a; Ozgen, 2011).

Such trips may ease the teaching process during which social studies teachers strive to integrate society, culture, economics, tourism, and technology via an interdisciplinary perspective. By the help of trips and expeditions to both natural areas and different places of the community, students may taste real learning experiences through interacting with nature, cultural environment, society, and their friends. They can enjoy the entire process due to learning by seeing, feeling, and smelling. They make a better sense of the world through active participation (Cengelci, 2013; 2015; Uztemur, Dinc and Acun, 2018). On the contrary, some research studies have determined that teachers are not sure about how to conduct such field trips and they are in need of guidance (Anderson, Bethan, and Mayer-Smith, 2006; Bozdogan, 2012; Demir, 2007b; Ferry 1993; Tal 2004; Tal, Bamberger and Morag; 2005). Taking pre-service teachers to such trips during undergraduate years matters considerably since they can make use of their experience when they do the same for their students, which poses as a significant measure to tackle this problem. This study aims to evaluate field trips organized for pre-service teachers in social studies teacher training program in terms of their efficacy to teach touristic values.

Method

This section provides information about the research model, participants, data collection, and analysis.

Research Model

This study has been conducted in accordance with qualitative research approach employing a phenomenological design. Phenomenology focuses on phenomena that we are aware of but not have detailed understanding about (Yildirim and Simsek, 2013). Since this research is on pre-service social studies teachers' experiences in learning about culture and heritage tourism, phenomenology was adopted as a suitable design.

Participants

The participants of the current study are 40 sophomore students (23 female and 17 male) studying at a social studies teacher training program.

Data Collection, and Analysis

In 2015-2016 academic year, the pre-service teachers in this research joined field trips organized to Odunpazari Kursunlu Islamic Social Complex (Kursunlu Kulliyesi), Sheik Edebalı's Tomb, Atlıhan, Museum of Cartoon Art, Museum of Contemporary Glass Art, Atatürk Museum, the Turkish Foundation for Combating Erosion, Reforestation, and Protection of Natural Habitats (TEMA), Selale Park, Sarhöyük Archeological Site, Sazova Park for Science Arts and Culture, and Kent Park. Following the field trips, the participants were given a questionnaire containing open-ended questions. The items in the questionnaire regard participants' demographic information, their opinions about what was interesting and appealing for them during the trip, their ideas about how trips can contribute to teaching touristic values, how they evaluate the trip, and their suggestions as to improve such trips. Semi-structured interviews were held and audio-recorded with 3 voluntary pre-service teachers in order to enhance the data set with relevant details. Interview records were transformed onto forms. Research data was analyzed through content analysis. Sentences indicating pre-service teachers' opinions and perceptions were identified and coded to form themes. Two field experts were consulted and two separate coding sessions were completed to establish research reliability (Miles and Huberman, 1994). Findings are presented under theme titles and supported with direct quotes from teacher candidates' opinions. Pseudonyms were used instead of participants' real names.

Findings

Research findings are grouped under two main titles which are "Contribution of field trips organized within social studies teacher training program to teaching touristic values" and "Evaluation of and suggestions for field trips organized within social studies teacher training program."

Contribution of field trips organized within social studies teacher training program to teaching touristic values

Pre-service teachers stated different opinions about the contribution of field trips organized within social studies teacher training program to teaching touristic values. Teacher candidates' opinions vary as follows: "I had the opportunity to learn about the geography (f33) and history (f30) of the places through experience; it helped with our social and communication skills (f29); and I had fun and good time during the trip (f 29)." In addition, some other opinions include "I became aware of the natural beauties around us (f 28), historical and geographical values (f 28), and archeological sites (f 22); I witnessed the effect of geography on historical places (f 24); I strengthened my previous knowledge (f 15); I saw nearby places that I had never seen before (f 12); I set up a link between past and present (f 8)."

What pre-service teachers found interesting and appealing for themselves during the trips include "parks (f 30), Odunpazari houses with their different architectural features and the structures in the parks (22), and museums (f15). Besides, archeological sites (f 12), Atlıhan (f 7), the Social Complex (Kulliyeye) (f 5), historical stories and memories narrated about the places (f 5), and non-governmental organization (f15) are also among the interesting and attractive places as reported by the pre-service teachers. Accordingly, participant D listed what s/he liked during the trips by saying "I didn't know Eskişehir has this many tourist attractions. Odunpazari houses reminded me of Safranbolu... Atlıhan, landscaping and thematic toys in Sazova park are really interesting."

Few of the participants reported their negative feelings about the field trips as follows: It did not meet my expectations (f 2), I think the students in the group are not interested enough (f 1), I haven't learned anything new about the visited places (f 1). Following the trip to an archeological site, participant S explained the effect of geography over historical places and what that trip meant to her/him by saying

“I learned why people settled here, how many different civilizations lived here, and what they left behind for us. It was a nice practice for archeology class.”

The benefits over social and communication skills were listed as “There were students who had been in the same class but had never talked for two years. These trips serve as icebreakers. Everybody talked with each other” by participant M, as “We started talking with our friends whom we had never spoken once” by participant F, and as “Since I felt relaxed and comfortable during the trips, I was better at expressing myself” by participant D. Participant Z stated that s/he had the chance to see places that s/he had never seen for two years by saying “I have never been to Selale Park although I have been living here for two years. I haven’t even heard the name of Sarhoyuk. I saw places that I had never seen thanks to these trips.”

Evaluation of and suggestions for field trips organized within social studies teacher training program

Pre-service social studies teachers evaluated the field trips in terms of their relation to social studies education, the time they are organized, duration, number of participants, things to bring to such events, problems, and courses in their programs that are suitable for such trips. Mostly, teacher candidates think that field trips are relevant to social studies education (f 38). Accordingly, participant F, T, and P said “The topics in the trips are actual topics in social sciences”, “Social studies become solid with field trips”, and “Field trips equip students with different perspectives in social sciences” respectively.

As for pre-service teachers, field trips within social studies teacher training program should be organized during spring (f 31). Accordingly, they stated that the calendar for such events can be scheduled by the end of the courses (f 8), before the midterms and finals (f 5), or anytime except for the exam weeks (f 5). What the participants noted regarding the duration of such trips is as follows: daily tours should be organized (f 13); the duration should be determined according to the goal and significance of the trip and to the distance of the place (f 12); and it should be a two-day trip out of town (f 2). Considering the size of a group to be taken to such field trips, teacher candidates provided various ideas ranging from less than 50 (f 15), between 30 to 40 (f 14), between 20 to 30 (f 12), and to uncrowded groups (f 10) and not too small a group (f 3).

Pre-service teachers’ opinions as to the materials and tools to be taken to such field trips include camera, video camera, audio-recorder (f 19), foods and drinks (f 18), map and sketch (f 15), documents about the places to be visited (f 12), raincoat and umbrella (f 8), hat (f 5), sunglasses (f 5), casual clothes (f 4), trainers (f 4), notebook, pen/pencil (f 3), compass (f 1), bags for garbage (f 1), and first aid kit (f 1). One of the participants stated that s/he had no idea (f 1) about this question.

Accordingly, pre-service teacher F said “Taking pictures of the places we visit is necessary since we can use them in our classes when we start teaching. Thus, camera or a video camera is a must-have item. Only one of the participants, Z, underlined the need for garbage bags during such trips by saying “We saw a lot of garbage at the places we visited. We should take garbage bags with us.”

While almost half of the participating pre-service teachers thought that the field trips went smoothly without any problems (f24), the other half (f16) reported some problems they experienced during the trips. As a matter of fact, the teacher candidates noted different opinions as regards the problems, which include ‘uneven distribution of responsibilities’ (f 15), ‘undisciplined and irresponsible behaviors of the participants’ (f 6), ‘overpopulated group’ (f 4), ‘inefficient use of time’ (f 3), ‘less time for resting’ (f 3), ‘inadequate materials and tools’ (f 2), ‘bad weather conditions’ (f 2), and ‘not meeting the expectations’ (f 1). Both pre-service teachers A and O underlined the responsibility issue by saying “Although some students were given responsibilities, some others had no role” and “We are the

teachers of future, we can't just go to such trips without any responsibility, We should be given some responsibilities both before and after the trip" respectively. Furthermore, participant M expressed her/his dissatisfaction from the trip by saying "I am disappointed with the trip, I guess fun was missing."

In general, pre-service teachers set forth some suggestions for the problems they identified during the trips. These include 'there should be a solid plan' (f 29), 'labor and responsibilities should be divided evenly' (f 23), 'weather forecast should be checked beforehand' (f 7), 'volunteers should be assigned roles and duties' (f 4), 'the size of the group should not be crowded' (f 4), 'the trip leader should be a disciplined person' (f 3), 'universities should provide support for such trips' (f 1), and 'students' awareness about such trips should be increased' (f 1). The significance of a proper planning was stated in participant U's words as "I realized that such trips should be well-planned. It is a must to use the time efficiently and to organize students properly. There are lots of things to be done, before, during and after such trips."

The participating teacher candidates listed the courses into which such field trips can be embedded as geography (f 37), history (f 33), archeology (f 15), and anthropology (f 4). Although there are various courses that pre-service teachers take during the first two years in social studies program, the participants, interestingly, listed the names of few courses.

Conclusions

The current research concluded the contributions that field trips organized within social studies teacher training program can make to the teaching of touristic values. Among them are learning about the geography and history of the visited places through experience; awareness about historical, cultural, geographical values, natural beauties, and the influence of geography over historical sites; and seeing some places for the first time. A large body of research in the literature state that field trips offer learning through experience about the visited places (Aytac, 2014; Gerber, Cavallo, and Marek, 2001; Gokkaya and Yesilbursa, 2009; Hannu, 1993; Meydan and Akkus, 2014; Robson, 2002). Because teacher candidates generally visit historical sites as part of their geography courses, they underlined geographical and historical values more than others. The fact that some pre-service teachers strengthened what they had learned earlier indicate that field trips and similar activities support education provided by schools, increase the efficiency of learning, ease transformation of knowledge into behaviors, and enhance retention of information as pointed by other studies (Aytac, 2014; Bozdogan, Okur and Kasap, 2015; Farmer, Knapp, Benton, 2007;;Gokkaya and Yesilbursa, 2009; Guler, 2009; Ramey-Gassert, 1997).

The research finding that the organized field trips improved teacher candidates' social and communication skills and gave them an opportunity to have fun and spend good time with friends is also compatible with those of various studies (Aytac, 2014; Fuller, 2006; Malkoc, 2014; Bozdogan, Okur and Kasap, 2015; Robson,2002). According to Aytac (2014), interacting with nature, going out to open air, and getting out of the four walls of classrooms increase students' motivation.

An important finding for tourism is that pre-service teachers listed parks, buildings with different architectural designs, museums, historical sites, stories and narrations about the visited places, and non-governmental organizations as what was interesting and appealing for them. Likewise, Guler (2009) supports this by concluding that national parks can serve as laboratories and natural & cultural values they host can be utilized to boost ecotourism. The findings of the current study have pointed that field trips organized within social studies teacher training program contribute to the teaching of many natural, historical, and cultural touristic values and that these expeditions facilitate having fun and spending good time, which is vital for tourism.

An evaluation of field trips conducted within social studies teacher training program both sheds light onto the problems and indicates the importance of planning. Problems identified based on the findings of this research include uneven distribution of responsibilities, undisciplined and irresponsible behaviors of group members, overpopulated group size, inefficient use of time, less time for resting, inadequate materials and tools, bad weather conditions, and dissatisfied expectations. Several other studies concluded similar problems. Robson (2002) emphasizes that field activities should be planned meticulously; otherwise, students can be worn out both physically and mentally. Present findings are valuable since they can give us some ideas about the possible problems that can arise within social studies teacher training programs. According to the relevant literature, the most crucial component of field trips is planning (Bozdogan, 2012; Demir, 2007b; Ertas and Parmasizoglu, 2011). Besides, another point shown by relevant research studies is that planned expeditions outside the school influence students' knowledge, attitude, and behaviors positively (Ballantyne and Packer, 2009; Guler, 2011; Kete and Horasan, 2013; Knapp and Barrie, 2001; Orion and Hofstein, 1994; Ozgen, 2011).

Although participating pre-service teachers clearly stated the relation between field trips and social studies education, field trips are embedded into only limited number of courses. Thus, as also underlined in other studies, teacher candidates should be furnished with knowledge and skills necessary to plan and organize field trips through undergraduate courses and projects (Bozdogan, 2012; Bozdogan, Okur, and Kasap, 2015).

In conclusion, field trips organized within social studies teacher training program play a crucial role in terms of teaching touristic values. So, it is reasonable to suggest that field trips be organized as part of other courses too so that teacher candidates can improve themselves and can be more beneficial for their future students, and such practice should be the focal point of various prospective research studies.

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