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VIEWS OF ELEMENTARY EDUCATION STUDENTS AT TERTIARY LEVEL ABOUT THE METHODS AND TECHNIQUES USED IN ATATÜRK'S PRINCIPLES AND REVOLUTION COURSE

Research Article

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Abstract

This study examines elementary education department students' view about the methods and techniques generally preferred by their instructors in teaching The History of Atatürk's Principles and Revolution I and II courses. For the purpose of the study, the questionnaire ($r=.90$), investigating the methodological and technical skills of instructors, developed by Çelikkaya and Kuş (2009) has been administered to 1st ($n=105$) and 4th ($n=123$) year elementary education students in the faculty of education at a public university. Descriptive statistics has been used to analyze the data about the views of the elementary education students who participated in the study about The History of Atatürk's Principles and Revolution I and II courses in terms of use of methods and techniques used by the instructors. Relying on the findings obtained at the end of the study, the participants reported generally negative views about their instructors' methods and techniques in The History of Atatürk's Principles and Revolution course, however, they draw attention to the points such as use of technological aids, students' presentations, feedback, opportunity projects, opportunity for students asking and answering questions both by the instructor and their peers, forming group works, and letting discussions in the classroom about the topics under discussions.

Keywords: Teachers' perceptions and experiences, teaching, learning, history of Atatürk's principles and revolution, tertiary education

1. Introduction

The ideal realization of methodological and technical knowledge in the classroom context in any field of study is the result of knowledge transfer through a sound teaching and learning activities. Therefore, "an effective pedagogy includes the content elements and the strategy for presenting that content; how the elements are assembled to construct a scaffold for learning based on the principles of cognitive psychology, and finally how to evaluate whether that process is working as intended and leading to increased learning" (<https://www.csusm.edu/ids/course-design-and-instruction/teaching-methods-and-techniques/index.html>). It has been a fact that during lectures especially in our case the instructors usually teach, while students take note down or listen without taking any notes down. Thus, students are usually passive participants of these courses at the tertiary level. However, some instructors try to change this classroom climate in such a way that requires students' presentations in order to make them active participants of the courses and discuss the topics under discussion. Similarly, in today's classroom settings instructional technologies are believed to transform teaching and learning in most powerful contexts via "learner-centered" or "active learning" that are considered the core of social constructivist theory by Vygotsky (1978) in which students assume responsibility and perform tasks through role plays. They engage, apply, synthesize and understand. It has become an unavoidable fact that this active learning style makes students active participants of classroom learning.

Active learning is all about meaningful learning activities in which students are required to apply the core concepts and engage with the course content. In that sense collaborative learning, cooperative learning or problem-based learning are the most favored ones by instructors.

Cooperative learning is a teaching strategy classroom teachers use to help their students process information more quickly by having them work in small groups to accomplish a common goal. Each member that is in the group is responsible for learning the information given, and also for helping their fellow group members learn the information as well (Cox, 2017).

Collaborative learning is based on the view that knowledge is a social construct in which the learner or student is the primary focus of instruction. The interaction and "doing" are of primary importance through group works. Solutions to real-world problems should be incorporated into learning. That is, collaborative techniques include Team Based Learning (TBL) and structured inquiry (Cox, 2017).

Problem-Based Learning (PBL) presents open-ended problems with no one "right" answer for the students. However, the problems should relate to their real life challenges, in other word, these problems should be context specific. As to the roles of students, they should act as active investigators and problem-solvers in small collaborative groups (Reigeluth & Squire, 1998; Shepardson, 1999; Stage et al, 1998) and more importantly they should direct their own learning. They should be given a specific problem from their real life experiences and set free to find their own solution. At this vein, the instructors should act as facilitators, guides, and create an environment of inquiry in such a way that students should apply knowledge to new situations to come up with meaningful solutions. Solely, students develop their critical thinking skills, thus become creative, which will increase their motivation and develop positive attitudes towards learning a foreign language by solving their own problems in that language.

Under the highlights of the above realities, this current study has an ultimate aim to investigate the following questions;

1. What are the views of the elementary education students who participated in the study about The History of Atatürk's Principles and Revolution course in terms of the use of methods and techniques used by the instructors?
2. What are the most favored methods and techniques in The History of Atatürk's Principles and Revolution course?
3. Is there a statistically significant difference between the participants' views about the methods and techniques used in The History of Atatürk's Principles and Revolution course in terms of;
 - a. Gender,
 - b. Age, and
 - c. Years of study.

2. Method

2.1. Research Design

The present study is a descriptive study and employs a survey research design.

2.2. The Participants

In the current study the participants are those undergraduate students who study in the department of elementary education at a public university in Turkey. A total of 228 tertiary level undergraduate students has participated in this study. 193 out of 228 are females and the rest 35 are males. They range in age between 17 and 21-and over. 91 of them range in age from 17 to 20, which is the first group and 137 of them are 21 and over. Of the 228 participants, 105 of them are first year students who have been offered The History of Atatürk's Principles and Revolution I and the rest 123 are fourth year students who have taken The History of Atatürk's Principles and Revolution II.

2.3. The Questionnaire

The ultimate aim of this study is to scrutinize elementary education department students' view about the methods and techniques generally preferred by their instructors in teaching The History of Atatürk's Principles and Revolution course. In addition to this, the current study also specifically investigates the instructors' knowledge of methodology, their practical skills of using methods, knowledge and use of technology, and awareness levels of interest and needs through a descriptive method. To do so, a questionnaire ($r=.90$), investigating the methodological and technical skills of instructors, developed by Çelikkaya and Kuş (2009) has been administered to 1st and 4th year elementary education students in the faculty of education at a public university. The reliability level of the current study is $r=.91$. It consists of instructors' perceptions and experiences on teaching history at tertiary level in Turkey in terms of teaching methods and techniques. The questionnaire with a 5-point Likert type consists of 29 items about the following methods and techniques utilized by the lecturers of this course. These are;

1. Lecturing (Items 8, 9)
2. Question-answer (Items 7, 11, 17, 19)
3. Field trip (Item 3)
4. Project work (Item 4)
5. Debates/discussions (Items 5, 22, 27, 28)
6. Demonstration (23)
7. Case study (14)
8. Drama/role play (Items 1, 13, 24)
9. Problem solving (Items 20)
10. Group work (Items 10,
11. Brain storming (Item 25)
12. Individual work (Item 16)
13. Using Realia/real (source) people (Items 6, 15)
14. Concept mapping (Item 29)
15. Use of technology (Items 12)
16. Note taking (Item 2)
17. Summary (Item 26)
18. Critical Thinking Skills (Item 21)
19. Using visual aids (Item 18)

3. Data Analysis and Discussion

In this part the first three research questions that have been formulated in line with the ultimate purpose of the current study are highlighted together as in the following.

1. What are the views of the elementary education students who participated in the study about The History of Atatürk's Principles and Revolution course in terms of the use of methods and techniques used by the instructors?
2. What are the most favored methods and techniques in The History of Atatürk's Principles and Revolution course?

Descriptive statistics has been used to analyze the data about the views of the elementary education students who participated in the study about The History of Atatürk's Principles and Revolution I and II courses in terms of the use of methods and techniques used by the instructors. As to the views of the elementary education students about their lecturers offering these courses, it is seen in Table 1 that the participants seem not to have reported positive views about the issue in general ($M=2,59$). However, for some specific points they seem to have favorable attitudes. For instance they have reported favorable attitudes towards the use of technological aids ($M=3,99$) by their lecturers, students presentations and instructor feedback for the missing points about their presentations ($M=3,77$), providing students with projects and opportunity to present them in the classroom ($M=3,70$), giving opportunities to students to ask questions to the instructor and their peers and get answers ($M=3,65$), form study groups (group work) with two or more students ($M=3,51$), and provide group discussions ($M=3,50$).

Table 1. *Students' views about the methods and techniques used in the History of Atatürk's Principles and Revolution Course*

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
1. Uses games in his/her teaching	228	1	5	1.62	1.110
2. Has students take notes down	228	1	5	2.12	1.096
3. Organizes field trips	228	1	5	1.43	.909
4. Provides students with projects and gives them the opportunity to present them	228	1	5	3.70	1.213
5. Forms discussion groups	228	1	5	3.50	1.113
6. Invites experts to the classroom for some specific topics	228	1	5	1.44	.861
7. Has question-answer drills	228	1	5	3.25	1.171
8. Lectures and students only listen	228	1	5	2.39	1.181
9. Assign students with presentations and gives feedback for the missing points	228	1	5	3.77	1.107
10. Forms small groups for collaborative study	228	1	5	3.34	1.394
11. Asks questions to develop students' critical thinking skills	228	1	5	2.71	1.169
12. Makes use of technological aids such as computers, projectors, video, cd, and etc.	228	1	5	3.99	1.103
13. Allows students to role play a case in the classroom	228	1	5	1.68	1.086
14. Narrate the historical events like a story	228	1	5	2.18	1.170
15. Has students prepare and make their own materials such as maps, globes, etc.	228	1	5	1.76	1.113
16. Gives homework for individual study	228	1	5	3.14	1.278
17. Uses test questions to clarify the topics under discussion	228	1	5	1.71	1.093
18. Uses visual materials such as maps, graphics, tables, etc.	228	1	5	2.50	1.292
19. Gives opportunities to students ask questions to both himself/herself and their peers.	228	1	5	3.65	1.160
20. Brings a real life problem into the classroom and asks students to solve it in the classroom.	228	1	5	2.48	1.278

21. Gives students the opportunity to produce new ideas about a topic and express their opinions about it.	228	1	5	3.22	1.309
22. Forms a small group and lets this group share their ideas with others.	228	1	5	3.29	1.378
23. Gives students the opportunity to act out (dramatization) in front of the class.	228	1	5	1.88	1.221
24. Asks students act out some important characters and narrate the events as if they were those characters.	228	1	5	1.66	1.052
25. Assigns students a topic and asks them to state their own opinions on it in a short time (10-15mins).	228	1	5	2.38	1.269
26. Has students summarize the topic	228	1	5	1.83	1.195
27. Improves students' knowledge through discussions.	228	1	5	2.89	1.313
28. Forms study groups of two or more students.	228	1	5	3.51	1.352
29. Lectures through mind mapping.	228	1	5	2.06	1.215
TOTAL	228			2.59	

In addition to the above findings the researcher felt the need for further analysis. In that sense she has decided to check the mean scores in-between 3.00 and 3.49 which can still be considered that the participants have almost mild favorable attitudes towards such items as forming small groups for collaborative study ($M=3,34$), forming a small group and letting this group share their ideas with others ($M=3,29$), establishing a question-answer session for their students to give them the opportunity to pose questions for clarifications ($M=3,25$), giving students the opportunity to produce new ideas about a topic and express their opinions about it ($M=3,22$), and giving homework for individual study ($M=3,14$).

3. Is there a statistically significant difference between the participants' views about the methods and techniques used in The History of Atatürk's Principles and Revolution courses in terms of gender, age, and years of study.

Independent sample t-test has been run in order to see if there is a statistically significant difference between the participants' views about the methods and techniques used in The History of Atatürk's Principles and Revolution course in terms of age, gender, and year of study. A careful analysis of Table 2, Table 3, and Table 4 below report no statistically significant difference between the participants' views about the methods and techniques used in The History of Atatürk's Principles and Revolution course in terms of age, gender, and year of study. Therefore, it can be said that gender does not play an important role in that issue. Both male and female instructors' choice and use of methods and techniques do not differ to a great extent.

Table 2. *Independent samples test for gender*

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
Variable		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Mean	Equal variances assumed	1.289	.257	-.146	226	.884	-.017	.118	-.249	.215
	Equal variances not assumed			-.161	51.622	.873	-.017	.107	-.232	.198

Table 3. *Independent samples test for Age*

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
Variable	Mean	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Mean	Equal variances assumed	.563	.454	-.805	226	.422	-.070	.086	-.240	.101
	Equal variances not assumed			-.812	198.618	.418	-.070	.086	-.239	.099

Table 4. *Independent samples test for year of study*

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
Variable	Mean	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Mean	Equal variances assumed	2.965	.088	-.693	102	.490	-.160	.231	-.619	.299
	Equal variances not assumed			-.531	7.636	.611	-.160	.302	-.862	.542

4. Conclusion and Recommendations

The ultimate purpose of the current study is to scrutinize the elementary education department students' view about the methods and techniques generally favored by the lecturers of The History of Atatürk's Principles and Revolution II and II courses in their departmental studies. For this aim, a questionnaire, developed by Çelikkaya and Kuş (2009), that investigates the methodological and technical skills of these lecturers has been

administered to 1st and 4th year elementary education students in the faculty of education at a public university. It consists of instructors' perceptions and experiences on teaching history at tertiary level in Turkey in terms of teaching methods and techniques.

Relying on the findings obtained at the end of the study, the participants have reported generally negative views about their instructors' methods and techniques in The History of Atatürk's Principles and Revolution course, however, they favor the use of technological aids, students' presentations, feedback, opportunity for projects, opportunity for students to ask and answer questions both by their lecturers and their peers. They form study groups and let discussions in the classroom about the topics under discussions.

Last but not least they have also indicated that their lecturers form small groups for collaborative studies and let them share their ideas with others, establish a question-answer session for their students to give them the opportunity to pose questions for clarifications, giving students the opportunity to produce new ideas about a topic and express their opinions about it, and give homework for individual studies.

It is recommended that the lecturers offering these courses at the tertiary level should bring a real life problem into the classroom and ask students to solve or share their own ideas about it in the classroom. They should invite subject area experts to the classroom for some specific topics, narrate the historical events like a story for retention (not have the students memorize the events), and have students summarize the topic at the end of each lesson. As a result, students should be encouraged to act in collaborative groups for testing ideas against alternative views and the use of alternative and primary sources for information as is stated by Shepardson (1999); Sage and Torp (1997); Domin, (1999); and DeVires and Zan, (1995) for constructivist model of learning.

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