

Pre-service Social Studies and History Teachers' Perceptions of History and Their Views on Purpose of History Teaching

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ABSTRACT The study aims to investigate the perceptions of pre-service teachers who will teach history courses and to learn their views about purposes of history teaching. This research study was conducted with 169 pre-service middle school social studies teachers and 39 pre-service secondary school history teachers. Qualitative research design was used in this study. The data of this study were collected by data collection form including two questions. The results of the study showed that the prospective teachers generally perceive the history as an objective science. It was observed that the students have nationalist-conservative perspective. Also, it was seen that pre-service teachers generally emphasize the history as learning from the past and directing to the future in terms of the results regarding the views towards history teaching. Besides this, the pre-service teachers stated that the purpose of history teaching is improving national identity and consciousness. Contrary to this, the pre-service teachers did not mention some purposes of history teaching, such as raising effective citizens, developing democratic perspective, creative thinking, and historical thinking.

INTRODUCTION

Social studies and history teachers are the people who will teach required historical information at all levels starting from the second part of the primary education. When the social studies curriculum is examined, the intensity of the topics from the history field draws the attention, even the social studies lesson have an integrated structure benefiting from social sciences disciplines. Historical information is begun to be taught as single units from the last class of the lower secondary education. Historical perception should be emphasized before analyzing the perceptions of pre-service history teachers towards history science and historical studies.

Carr (2002) states the first answer which can be given to the "What does history mean?" is the non-stop interaction process between the historians and the phenomenon, and a lasting dialogue between the present and past. The historian deals with the individual under time and place circumstances. First of all, he focuses on individual objects in the time and place, and then he pays attention to individual events and pro-

cesses which can be understood as the interaction and the events of the individual objects within the time and place (Hofstadter 1945).

Hobsbawm (1999) states that, one dimension of human conscious is an inevitable component of institutions of human society, its values and the other patterns. The problem with which the historians deal is analyzing the nature of the society's 'sense of past' and tracking the metamorphosis with the changes in this feeling. The definitions regarding our perceptions and experiences say more things about us than the definitions of the objects or phenomenon which we claim describe them. This situation was discovered a long time ago. Leonardo Da Vinci mentioned how someone interprets different landscapes or war scenes or faces when he/she looks at a stained wall (Southgate 2012).

The individual factor is prominent on the viewpoints to the historical information. The first question coming to a person's mind is: Is the historical information completely precise? The answer to this question differs to the person who interprets the answer and his/her age. The history is all "erroneous reporting" for the French

philosopher Pierre Bayle, and the historical events are not different from the ingredients which “the historians cook in their own kitchens and state its taste according to their own taste.” On the other hand, it can be said that the attitude of Bayle is generally about the historiography which became arbitrary in the late of the 17th century (Ozlem 2001).

According to Collingwood (1996), historical thinking is perception in a sense. There is one single thing in both of them as a unique object. What I perceive is this room, table, paper. What the historians think of is Elizabeth or Malborough, Pelopones War or the politics of Ferdinand or Isabella. However, what I perceive is always this, and it is here and now. Even we hear an explosion after it lasts or see sparkle of a star, there is a moment which can be perceived here and now. On the other hand, historical thinking is related to “something” which doesn’t exist, because it is never “here” and “now”. Its objects are the lasted events and circumstances which are not available any more.

Value judgments, beliefs, approaches and attitudes of the history teachers regarding history play an effective role in implementing their professional knowledge (John 1991). Besides the qualifications of Euro Clio in Europe and NCSS in USA, the qualifications of a good history teacher within the framework of general aims of Ministry of National Education (MoNE) towards history teaching can be classified under the following headings: The history teacher should be aware of the nature of history, should evaluate the historical events without individual prejudices, should have information about the academic and didactic innovations in history teaching and should be willing to practice those innovations in his/her classes (Culha 2010).

Ideas and actions of history teachers are affected by different factors like other teachers. Knowledge of the students and needs of them rule what teachers do as much as the aims and targets of history course. The knowledge of teachers’ about different sources and teaching strategies bridge the desires of the students and theirs (Husbands et al. 2003). History teachers can evaluate the deficiencies and needs of the students by using their own knowledge and skills can choose content, method and evaluation accordingly, and they can make some alterations about the teaching process by considering the results.

The task of history teacher is to direct the students to the fields which they know they are valuable but do not consider as useful or do not aim to learn (Safran 2000). The role of the teacher is to orchestrate the teaching process in modern history teaching methods. The teacher is not the resource of knowledge, but he/she is a tool to reach the information (Ozalp 2000). The key of a successful history teaching is blending the past to students’ own lives in their minds. Therefore, they can imagine themselves there, can hear those people and can participate in their arguments, discrepancies and adventures as an observer or a participant (Nichol and Dean 1997).

The increasing numbers of research studies focus on teaching historical thinking to the students. These studies are about how attention of students can be focused on historical investigation, historical empathy and historical perspective (Barton 1996; Barton and Levstik 1996; Downey and Lewstik 1991; Korbin 1996; Lewstik and Barton 2001; Seixas 1994; Vansledright 2002; Wineburg 1991; Yeager and Doppin 2001). Historical thinking emphasizes “how” part of historical knowledge by trying to understand how history and historical investigation are constructed (Van Hover and Yeager 2003). Teachers also should have historical thinking skill to direct their students to have that thinking skill “like a historian”. An active history student should have deep information about the discipline, should discuss and should attempt to teach historical investigation. Point of views of the pre-service history and social studies teachers towards to the history and historical studies are crucial in terms of the targeted historical teaching skill.

Purpose of the Study

It was aimed to explore the pre-service middle school social studies and secondary school history teachers’ perceptions of history and their views towards the purposes of history teaching in this study. The answers of questions of “How is their history perception?” and “What are their views towards purpose of history teaching?” were investigated with this purpose. Pre-service teachers’ perceptions and their views towards the purpose of history teaching are considered as important, because it is thought that these will shape the future generations. Eventually, they will teach history with these perceptions and views and affect young generations.

METHODOLOGY

This research study was designed according to qualitative research design. Qualitative research design is more suitable to analyze the views of the participants about research questions and to provide different perspectives (Creswell 2007; Biklen and Casella 2007).

Participants

Convenience sampling was used to select participants. This type of sampling is frequently preferred by the researchers, because participants can be easily reached and they are willing to participate in the study (Teddlie and Yu 2007). The data derived from 208 participants, 39 of them were secondary school pre-service history teachers and 169 of them were middle school pre-service social studies teachers.

Data Collection Techniques

The data were collected as written by opinion form which consisted of two open-ended questions and prepared by the researchers. The participants were asked to answer the two questions which were "What is history?" and "What are the purposes of history teaching?"

Data Analysis

The authors used open-coding procedure to analyze the data. In this procedure, the researcher forms specific categories of the data by analyzing the data collection tool (Creswell 2007; Kemper et al. 2003). The writers and another field expert transcribed the data individually and then they created categories. Because some participants gave multiple answers indicating different categories the total frequencies indicated in Table 1 and Table 2 were different from the total participants (n=208). The reliability formula of Miles and Huberman (1994) was used to test the reliability of data. The reliability of the study was found as 89.2% for the 1st question and 86.3% for the 2nd question. The calculated values were found as .70 and above that value, and this can be accepted as an indication of reliability of the results of the study.

RESULTS

The findings regarding history perceptions of pre-service social studies and history teachers

who will teach history are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1: Turkish pre-service social studies and history teachers' perception of history

<i>Categories</i>		<i>f</i>
<i>Pre-service Social Studies Teachers</i>	It's an objective science	79
	searching the events in the past indicating place and time within cause-result relationship.	52
	The past of the individual and nation.	24
	It's the transmission of past to the future.	17
	It's the collective memory.	8
	It's the future of a nation.	4
	It's the national heritage.	3
n=169		187
<i>Categories</i>		<i>f</i>
<i>Pre-service History Teachers</i>	It's an objective science	32
	searching the events in the past indicating place and time within cause-result relationship.	22
	It's all occurred events.	12
	It's the connection of past with today and future.	10
	It's the collective memory.	5
	It's learning the past.	3
	It's the national heritage.	2
	It's the projection.	1
	It's searching for the truths among the lies.	1
n=39		87

Pre-service social studies (46.74%) and history teachers (82.05%) perceived history as a science which investigates the past in a distinct way when Table 1 is analyzed. Table 1 shows that pre-service social studies teachers (30.76%) perceived history as the past of the individual and the society whereas pre-service history teachers (56.41%) perceived it as the occurred events. In the third line, it is obvious that pre-service social studies teachers (14.20%) perceived history as the transmission of past to the future while the pre-service history teachers (30.76%) considered it as the connection of past with today and future. Both pre-service social studies (10.05%) and history teachers (25.64%) perceived history as collective memory. While eight (4.73%) of pre-service social studies teachers considered the history as future of a nation, five (12.82%) of the pre-service history teachers

perceived it as learning the past. Four (2.36%) of the pre-service social studies teachers and three (7.69%) of the pre-service history teachers considered the history as national heritage. Three (1.77%) of social studies teachers considered the history as previous experiences while it was observed that two (5.12%) of them considered the history as a method of inference about the future which was based on the previous data. And, one (2.56%) of the pre-service history teacher stated that history is searching for the truths among lies.

The analyses of the views of pre-service social sciences and history teachers who will teach history in Turkey regarding the aims of history teaching are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2: Turkish pre-service social studies and history teachers' views on purpose of history teaching

	<i>Categories</i>	<i>f</i>	
<i>Pre-service Social Studies Teachers</i>	Planning-directing the future	56	
	Learning lessons from the past	52	
	Forming national consciousness-identity	34	
	Teaching the past	19	
	Answering the question 'where are we coming from and where are we going to'	9	
	Educate active citizens	2	
	n=169		172
		<i>Categories</i>	<i>f</i>
<i>Pre-service History Teachers</i>	Planning-directing the future	20	
	Learning lessons from the past	15	
	Forming national consciousness-identity	10	
	Teaching the past	10	
	Answering the question 'where are we coming from and where are we going to'	8	
	Helping understand today	5	
	Preventing national negativities	4	
	Imposing national ideology	3	
	Teaching awareness of material and moral support	2	
	Helping improving high order thinking skills	1	
n=39		78	

When Table 2 was analyzed, it was realized that the views of pre-service social studies and secondary history teachers are the same in the first four categories and they are on the same sequence. According to this, the views of social

studies (33.13%) and secondary history teachers (51.28%) mostly focus on planning-directing the future in terms of the purpose of history teaching. It was noticed that pre-service social studies and history teachers state learning lessons from the past (30.76% - 38.46%) on the second line, forming national consciousness-identity (20.11% - 25.64%) on the third line and teaching the past (11.24% - 25.64%) on the fourth line in terms of the aims of history teaching. 13 pre-service social studies teachers (7.69%) remarked that the purpose of history teaching is to make the students have multiple point of views. Nine pre-service social studies teachers (5.32%) emphasized that the purpose of history teaching is to answer the question of 'Where are we coming from and where are we going to?' Two pre-service social studies teachers (1.18%) stated that the purpose of history teaching is to educate active citizens. Eight pre-service secondary school history teachers (20.51%) remarked that the purpose of history teaching is to have an answer for the question of 'Where are we coming from and where are we going to?' Five (12.82%) pre-service secondary history teachers stated that the purpose of history teaching is helping understand today. Four (10.25%) pre-service secondary history teachers defined the purpose of history teaching as preventing social negativities such as intolerance. Three (7.69%) pre-service secondary history teachers emphasized that the purpose of history teaching is imposing the national ideology. Whereas two (5.12%) pre-service secondary history teachers stated the purpose of history as teaching awareness of material and moral support, one (2.56%) pre-service secondary history teacher expressed that the purpose of history teaching is to help developing high order thinking skills.

DISCUSSION

When the researchers examined the first research question, they saw that pre-service social studies and history teachers defined history with a classical definition included in the course books. Another salient feature in these definitions is the emphasis on the history as an objective science. On the other hand, none of the participants mentioned the comment (Husbands 1996; Husbands et al. 2003; Davis 2005) as a feature of the history. Also, no participant mentioned that the history has lots of debates on its

objectivity as a science (Acun 2006). Only one of the pre-service secondary history teachers emphasized the history as an interpretation and the objectivity of it as "searching for the truths among the lies". It was noticed that generally, the participants referred to the past, but they also have statements about the future. This is congruent with the view which supports history does not only cover the past, but it also includes the future (Safran 2010). However, the answers of the participants were superficial. The participants who answered "The connection of past with present and future" and "Transmission of the past to the future" were not given detailed information how these will occur. This finding is compatible with a similar study in the study of Yilmaz and Kaya (2011).

When the researchers examined the second research question, they saw that pre-service secondary school history teachers gave more different answers compared to pre-service social studies teachers. It can be inferred from the responses of the participants that they generally have nationalist and conservative point of views. And, this finding is congruent with the study of Yilmaz and Kaya (2011). It can be said that pre-service social studies and secondary school history teachers consider "Planning the future of a nation/country by learning lessons from the mistakes or experiences in the past" as the most important purpose of history teaching. Only two pre-service social studies teachers mentioned educating citizens which is one of the purposes of history teaching. Imposing the ideology of the state to the students (Demircioglu 2005) was mentioned by three pre-service secondary school history teachers. Only five secondary school history teachers stated that "it helps understand today" as one of the purposes of history teaching. Because only one secondary school teacher emphasized developing higher order thinking skills as the purpose of history teaching, we can say that this finding matches with the Safran's (2009), the purposes of the history program are not at desired level. On the other hand, the participants did not mention some purposes, such as making students have democratic point of view, emphatic point of view, scientific and critical thinking, perceiving the change, chronology, improving language skills (Yilmaz and Kaya 2011; Demircioglu 2005; Safran 2009). However, it can be said that the secondary history teachers gave answers which coincide with the purposes of the secondary history curriculum

(Demircioglu 2005). When the results of the study are generally evaluated, it can be said that the pre-service social studies and secondary history teachers have conservative and nationalist history perspective. And, they consider the purposes of history teaching in that way. This finding is said to be congruent with the "citizenship, scientific thinking and higher order thinking skills which are some purposes of the history teaching in Turkey are not at the desired levels" view of Safran's (2009).

CONCLUSION

The middle school pre-service social studies and secondary school history teachers' history perceptions and their views on purpose of history teaching were explored in the current study. The results show that pre-service social studies and secondary school history teachers perceive the history as an objective science. However, an answer considering history as an interpretation was not given by the participants. These pre-service teachers can be said to have conservative and traditional history perception. The researchers conclude that the pre-service teachers think the history not only as past but also as the reflection of the future.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The views of the middle school pre-service social studies and secondary school history teachers are quite similar in terms of the purpose of history teaching, and they generally have conservative and traditional history perception. The views of pre-service social studies and secondary school history teachers focused on learning from the past and directing to the future. However, pre-service social studies and secondary school history teachers did not mention some purposes of history teaching, such as developing higher order skills, empathy, historical thinking, active citizenship, developing democratic perspective. Accordingly, teaching is recommended to overcome this deficiency in undergraduate social studies education and history education programs.

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