

Primary School Education Pre-Service Teachers' Views about the Application of Storyline Method in Social Studies Teaching

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ABSTRACT

Social Studies is a study field that combines social and humanities in order to develop citizenship competence. Social studies should be a student-centered lesson far from rote learning where students seek and find or generate information to solve problems by using their creativity freely. Rather than giving the solutions, which students never think of to the problems, the storyline method raises problems in order students find solutions with their own questioning. Teachers and students produce ideas together. This approach is experimental and constructivist in essence. By forming groups of 8 pre-service teachers, the current study was applied storyline method for 10 weeks in social studies teaching lesson to the 3rd graders of primary school education department. Students' views were taken for 8 weeks with the use of focus group discussion after the practice. In the study, qualitative research method and phenomenological method were used.

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Introduction

Social studies are defined as a process of association based on proving from the perspective of social reality and dynamic data collected as a result of this process (Sönmez, 1999). Savage and Armstrong (1996) define social sciences as "a field of study joining social sciences with human sciences in order to improve efficiency of citizenship". Within curriculum, social sciences provide a systematic and coordinated study on the content attributed from anthropology, archeology, economics, geography, history, law, philosophy, political science, psychology, religion and sociology besides human sciences, mathematics and natural sciences. The very first aim of social studies is to help the young to improve their ability in decision making process. Social studies lesson shouldn't be based on memorization; it should be a student-centered lesson instead of transferring knowledge to students. It should let them seek and find information, and solve the problems and produce information by using creativity independently (Öztürk., 2009).

In accordance with this, the storyline method creates and brings students' problems in the foreground rather than giving solutions to the problems that students never think of. This approach is experimental and constructivist in essence. It shapes curriculum as a stimuli to explore social subjects and environment, meaningful arts and language as a means of communicating and explaining (Storyline Türkiye, 2010). Considering the curriculum of 2004, the role of social sciences requiring student-centered approaches to be

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used in order the lesson to be effective and permanent is to educate students who are effective and productive and are aware of and use their rights and responsibilities. (Çiftçi, Meydan and Ektem, 2012). There are three traditions in social studies teaching. As the oldest approach of transferring citizenship, the aim of teaching social sciences is to provide continuity of the current situation by teaching basic establishments, values and beliefs. The content is formed by adults. While transferring cultural heritage, the aim is to teach knowledge and facts in the past, basic social establishments, values and beliefs. Teaching social studies as a social science is based on the hypothesis that for an effective citizenship the acquisition of skills and values of social sciences is the best preparation. Knowledge, skills and values in the disciplines related to social sciences should be given to students (Öztürk, 2009).

Basic principles of storyline method are that it is student-centered, supports active learning, provides high motivation student-teacher interaction and opportunity for cooperative learning, establishes connection between the real world and basic skills, achieves easy harmony between language arts and social sciences easily, emphasises the importance of encouraging students to develop a conceptual model primarily and makes the use of the latest technology possible (Eiríksdóttir, 1995). The roots of the storyline method go back to 1965s. In those years, three teachers in Jordanhill College Inservice Department, Bill Michael, Fred Rendell and Steve Bell were asked to find methods to help teachers in primary schools around attract students' attention for the studies about environment. Up to that time, ecological sciences had been subject-centered and private lessons. Traditional teaching methods, especially in rural areas, weren't successful, so there was a need for change. Teachers from Jordanhill worked cooperatively with the teachers from the schools of West Scotland to change teaching methods and subjects. Storyline method emerged as a result of this cooperative work. In short, storyline method individualises learning to learn rather than teaching (Eiríksdóttir, 1995).

Purpose of the Research

The aim of the study is to determine views of pre-service teachers of the department of primary school teaching about using storyline method in teaching social studies lesson. Pre-service teachers' views are studied as the subtitles of applicability of storyline method in teaching social studies, problems they have while using this method and their suggestions relating to the application of this method. The following questions are asked to reach the purposes mentioned above.

1. What is the applicability of storyline method in teaching social studies?
2. What are the problems while using storyline method?
3. What are pre-service teachers' suggestions about application of storyline method?

Method

In this study, qualitative method and phenomenological method were used. Phenomenological method focuses on facts in detail (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2005). The study group consisted of pre-service teachers taking social studies lesson in the department of Primary School Education of Faculty of Education in Fırat University. Focus group discussion method was used to take pre-service teachers' views. As open ended questions were asked and tape recorder was used, only volunteer pre-service teachers were interviewed. 5 focus group discussions were recorded with groups consisting of 5 to 8 people. Voice records of interviews were transferred to qualitative data analysis program and investigated. To apply the method, the faculty member took part in Steve Bell and Sallie Harkness' workshop, who are the creators of the method, on the 14th of March in 2010 in Ankara University. By forming groups of 8 pre-service teachers and using storyline method, this study was applied for 10 weeks in social studies teaching lesson to the 3rd graders of primary education department. During the application process, one of the units of 4th grade social studies lesson was chosen for each week and applied through the week under control of the faculty member. The reason why the storyline method was chosen is that it enables all students in the classroom be active and is suitable for teaching social studies. Through the first two weeks, the method was explained theoretically and application

examples were mentioned. Pre-service teachers prepared their plan according to storyline method every week. The steps in this plan are as follows;

1. Sections of Storyline
2. Key Questions
3. Student Activities
4. Organisaition
5. Equipments
6. Product / Assessment

These programs consisting of six sections were prepared for each subject each week. After students applications for eight weeks, the focus group discussion method was used. The aim was to determine the pre-service teachers' views about using storyline method in social studies lesson. Their views were analysed under 3 subtitles; applicability of storyline method in social studies lesson, problems they have during application process and their suggesstions about storyline method.

Data Collection Tools and Analysis

In this study qualitative interview technique was used. The aim of using this technique is to create data rather than collect. In this study, researchers took part in the process of data creation. In the presentation and description of data, direct speech was also used. It enables each detail and each behavior recorded to be understood better in qualitative researches (Büyüköztürk, Çakmak, Akgün and et all., 2011). For this reason descriptions contain illustrations and words. Voice records obtained from interviews were analysed by transferring them to qualitative data analysis program. Themes were formed by categorising and sub-categorising in tree node section. During the analysis process, by using coding and retrieving and callback, reconstruction of themes were provided (Kuş, Sailord, 2010). After coding data, researchers determined the connections among categories and generalized them (Büyüköztürk, Çakmak, Akgün et, all. 2011).

For validity and realibility of the qualitative study, the process below adapted from Twycross and Shields (2005) was followed (*cited in Yıldırım,2010*):

1. Data was collected (Voice records)
2. The data was checked against original records and correction.
3. The data was categorised and subcategorised by using criteria of analysis.
4. For each section the data was analysed again.
5. Categories were checked (by using Nvivo8 program).
6. The data and the reasons of comments about them were checked by experts.

According to Twycross and Shields (2005), in this study an interpretative paradigm and qualitative research process were used based on non-linear reciprocal causality related to the concept trustworthiness. (*cited by Yıldırım, 2010*). According to Twycross and Shields (2005), in this study tape recorder was used to collect data. In order not to harm the originality of voice records, they were analysed by listening one by one without transferring. Thus, the originality of voice records was maintained. By determining analysis criteria the main categories and then sub-categories were formed. To determine these categories, computer-assisted data analysis program was used (*cited by Yıldırım, 2010*). Words and sentences were used for analysis units (Büyüköztürk, Çakmak &Akgün et. al, 2011). The data collected was checked by the experts.

Findings

The data collected was analysed under three main categories; the applicability of storyline method in social studies lesson, the problems pre-service teachers have in the application of storyline method and their suggestions about application of storyline method.

The Applicability of Storyline Method in Social Studies Lesson

Related to the aim of the study to determine the applicability of storyline method in social studies teaching, pre-service teachers' views were assessed. Findings were presented as a scheme in Figure 1.



Figure 1. Applicability of storyline method in social studies lesson

Pre-service teachers' views about applicability of storyline method in social studies lesson are as follows: it is holistic, instructive, entertaining, applied, sharer, easier to apply at university, student-centered, it enables share of ideas, active participation, active learning, quality teaching, games, different aspects, embodying, learning by doing and experimenting, responsibilities for students, associating with preliminary knowledge, more suitable to primary education, creativity, cooperative learning, teacher's guidance; it supports abilities; develops thinking skills, imagination; supports curiosity; prevents rote learning; benefits from different abilities; strengthens friendship; lesson becomes more interesting; differentiates in time; makes students enjoy lesson; provides permanent learning; products are valuable for

students. Pre-service teachers' emphasis on applicability of storyline method in social studies lesson according to group variable is given in Table 1.

Table1. Pre-service teachers' emphasis on the theme of applicability of storyline method in social studies lesson

CATEGORIES	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4	Group 5
Holistic	0	1	0	1	0
Makes Students Enjoy Lesson	0	1	0	1	1
Develops Thinking Skills	0	1	1	1	1
More Suitable To Primary Education	0	0	1	0	1
Cooperative Learning	1	0	1	1	0
Strengthens Friendship	1	0	0	0	0
Share Of Ideas	0	1	1	1	0
Sharer	1	0	0	1	0
Benefits From Different Abilities	0	0	0	1	0
Supports Cruosity	0	1	0	0	0
Student-Centered	1	0	1	1	1
Lesson Becomes More Interesting	0	0	1	1	0
Active Learning	0	0	0	1	0
Active Participation	0	0	0	1	0
Prevents Rote Learning	1	0	0	1	0
Applied	0	0	0	1	0
Games	1	1	1	1	0
Entertaining	0	1	1	1	0
Responsibilities For Students	0	0	0	1	0
Products Are Valuable For Students	1	0	0	1	0
Instructive	1	1	1	1	0
Different Aspects	0	0	1	0	0
Provides Permanent Learning	0	1	1	0	0
Quality Teaching	0	0	1	0	0
Associating With Preliminary Information	0	0	0	1	0
Teacher's Guidance	1	1	0	1	1
Teacher's Energy	0	1	0	1	0
Embodying	0	1	1	0	0
Easier To Apply At University	1	0	0	0	0
Learning By Doing Or Experiencing	1	1	1	0	1
Creativity	1	1	0	0	1
Develops Imagination	1	1	0	0	0
Supports Abilities	0	0	1	0	0
Method Differentiates In Time	1	1	0	1	1

According to Table 1, when pre-service teachers' views are analysed according to group variable, it is seen that they especially emphasized on the categories learning by doing and experiencing, teacher's guidance, the method differentiates in time, instructive, game, student-centered, develops thinking skills. Pre-service teachers' views in groups are as follows:

Group 1: "Students learn better with materials. As they learn by doing and experiencing they learn permanently. It's a useful method. This method develops students' creativity."

Group 2: "I think storyline method is quite effective in social studies lesson. It makes students enjoy the lesson. It also embodies the lesson. Subjects tend to rote learning can be learnt by doing and experiencing and thus the method enables permanent learning. It develops the students' imagination."

Group 3: “We have learnt the method as it advances by comprehending. We have comprehended the method in time. At first it seemed us simple but we have considered that it requires much more effort. The idea that we can use this method in our teaching career in the futute motivated us. Our aspect changed.”

Group 4: “ Guidance is quite important as teacher is a guide. Teacher always interacts with students. When compared to the traditional method, teacher’s workload is more. It supports creativity and enables group working. It enables share of ideas.”

Group 5: “To control classroom is quite important. In this method students are always active. We interact with students by giving feedbacks. At the beginning we didn’t like the method but then we changed our minds and now we think that it is quite an effective method. We liked the method much more as our products are admired.”

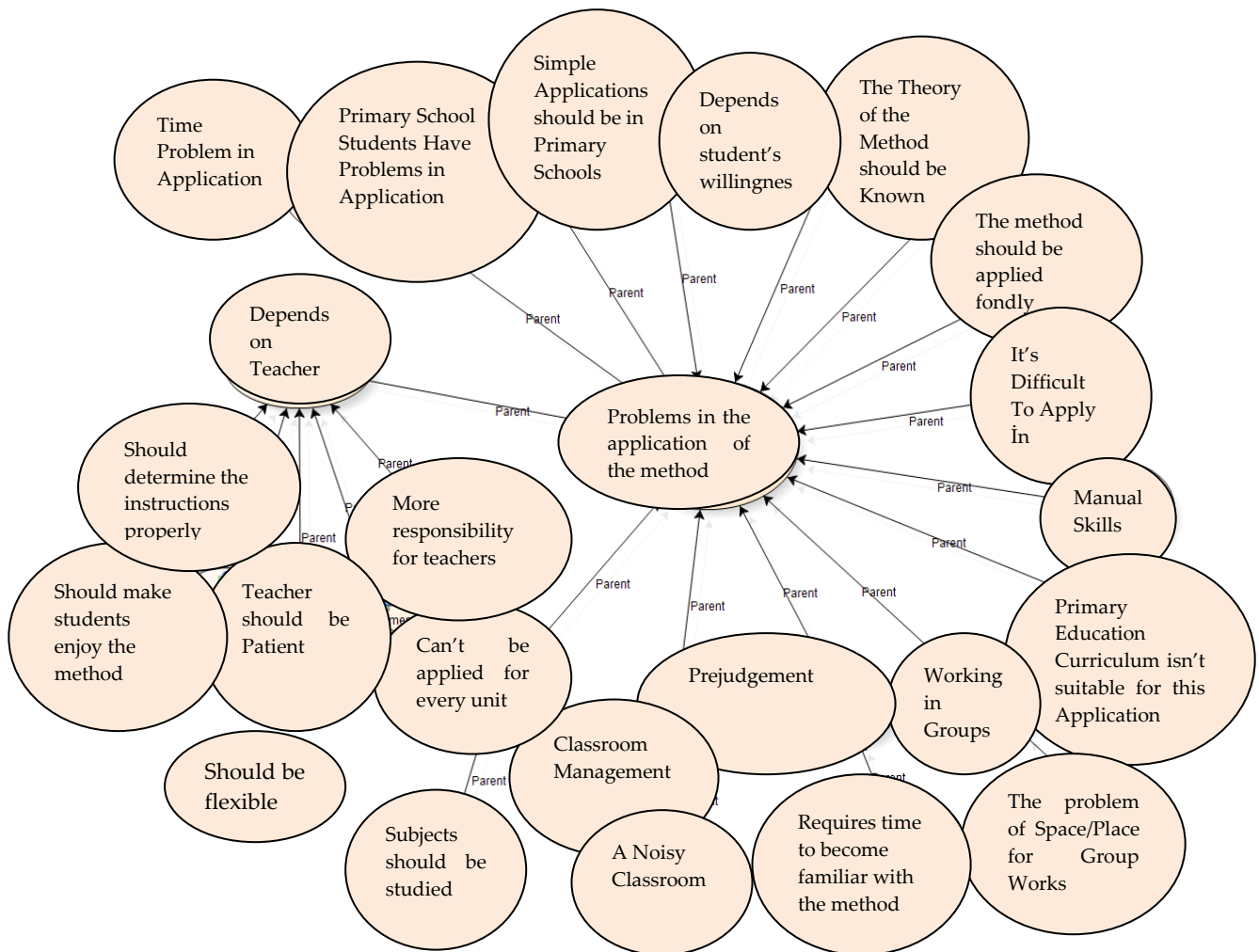


Figure 2. Problems in the application process of storyline method

Problems in the Application Process of Storyline Method

In accordance with the aim of the study, pre-service teachers’ views were taken to determine the problems in the application process of storyline method. The findings from data analysis are presented in Figure 2.

Pre-service teachers emphasized on those categories; difficulty in applications in crowded classrooms, time problem in application, classroom management, prejudgement, can’t be applied for every unit, working in groups, depends on teacher, the method should be applied fondly, primary education curriculum isn’t suitable for this application, manual skills, the theory of the method should be known, depends on student’s willingness. According to Table 2, when analysed for the group variable it is seen that pre-service teachers

emphasized on those categories; time problem in application, prejudgement, depends on teacher, difficult to apply in crowded classrooms, can't be applied for every unit.

Table 2. Pre-service teacher' emphasis on the theme the problems in the application process of storyline method

CATEGORIES	Group	Group	Group	Group	Group
	1	2	3	4	5
Problems In The Process Of Applying The Method	1	1	1	1	1
Manual Skill	0	0	0	1	0
Working In Groups	0	0	1	0	1
The Problem Of Space/ Place For Group Works	1	0	0	0	1
Can't Be Applied For Every Unit	0	1	1	1	1
Subjects Should Be Studied	0	0	1	1	1
Primary School Students Have Problems In Application	1	0	1	0	1
Primary School Curriculum Isn't Suitable For The Application Of This Method	1	0	0	1	0
Simple Applications Should Be Done In Primary Education	1	0	0	0	0
Difficult To Apply In Crowded Classrooms	1	0	1	1	1
Depends On Student Willingness	1	0	1	0	1
Depends On Teacher	1	1	0	1	1
Should Be Flexible	1	0	0	1	0
Teacher Should Be Patient	1	1	0	0	0
Teacher Should Make Students Enjoy The Method	1	1	0	1	0
More Responsibility For Teachers	0	0	0	1	0
Teacher Should Determine The Instructions Properly	0	1	0	1	0
Prejudgement	1	1	1	1	0
Requires Time To Become Familiar With The Method	0	1	1	1	0
Classroom Management	1	1	1	1	1
A Noisy Classroom	0	1	1	1	0
Time Problem In Application	1	1	1	1	1
The Method Shoould Be Applied Fondly	0	1	0	0	0
The Theory Of The Method Should Be Known	1	0	1	0	0

Pre-service teachers' views in groups are as follows:

Group 1: "Students should like and be willing to do this. They may feel bored. In primary education there should be simpler applications. There may be a chaos or difficulty in application in crowded classrooms. Applying to primary school students is more difficult."

Group 2: "Even we had difficulties let alone primary school students. Teacher should be patient. Also teacher should have a powerful imagination. If teacher's guidance isn't adequate there may be some problems. Storyline method can't be used for every subject. It should be applied to 1st., 2nd and 3rd grades. Classroom management is quite difficult."

Group 3: "Due to my prejudgement against this method I adopted it after a while. Problems may emerge when groups have different ideas. It is a difficult task for group working."

Group 4: " Students spend much effort all the time, teacher shouldn't decrease their encouragement. If teacher doesn't adopt himself/herself to the method there may be problems. Teachers should interact with students otherwise students' interest for learning may decrease. Primary education curriculum isn't suitable for this method. The method is holistic and it is strength of it ; however teacher should prepare a good plan for presentation."

Group 5: "There is time problem. It requires much effort. As it is group working students can't agree to each others all the time. There may be different ideas. It is difficult to apply for ever subject. Classroom management is difficult. It is quite difficult to demand students be quite when they are so active. In general, it is quite enjoyable to apply. Our ideas about the method at the beginning changed a lot."

Suggestions For The Application of Storyline Method

In accordance with the aim of the study to determine pre-service teachers' suggestions for the application of storyline method, their views were taken. Findings from data analysis are presented schematically in Figure 3.

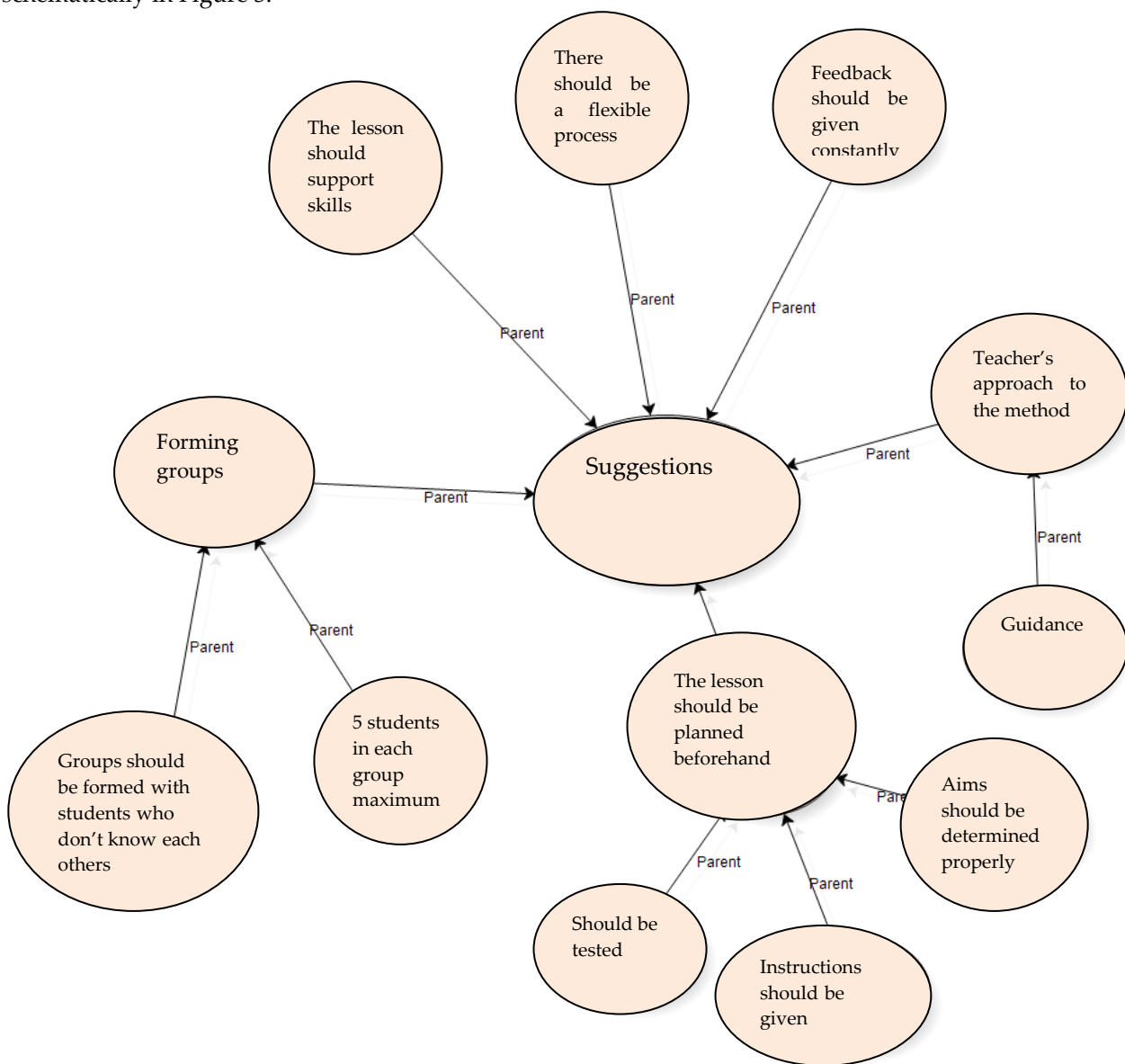


Figure 3. Suggestions for the application of storyline method

Pre-service teachers emphasized the categories forming groups, teacher's approach to the method, the lesson should be planned beforehand, there should be flexible process, feedback should be given constantly. Pre-service teachers' views in groups are presented below.

Group 1: "Groups should be formed with students who don't know each other. Thus friendship strengthens. That's how we had the process. We had strong connections with our friends with whom we didn't know each others before. Teacher should determine the instructions properly."

Group 2: “Teacher should determine instructions clearly. He/she should plan the lesson properly and make clear explanations. He/she should tolerate noise. Teachers’s energy and approach during the process affect the method. Teacher should give feedbacks.”

Group 3: “At group works students study together, so group working should be planned properly. Groups should consist of 5 students maximum.”

Group 4: “There should be an interaction between teacher and students. Teacher should guide students. Group working enables different ideas. An ideal space should be designed for group working.”

Group 5: “Teacher should give the instructions clearly and properly. Teacher’s approach to the method is important.”

Table 3. Pre-Service Students’ Emphasis On The Theme The Suggestions To The Application Of Storyline Method

CATEGORIES	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4	Group 5
Suggestions	1	1	1	1	1
The Lesson Should Support Skills	0	0	0	1	0
The Lesson Should Be Planned Beforehand	0	1	0	0	0
The Aim Of The Lesson Should Be Planned Properly	0	0	1	0	0
Should Be Tested	0	1	0	0	0
Instructions Should Be Given	0	0	0	1	0
There Should Be A Flexible Process	0	0	1	1	0
Forming Groups	1	0	1	1	0
Groups Should Consist Of Students Who Don’t Know Each Other	1	0	0	0	0
5 Students In Each Group Maximum	0	0	1	0	0
Teacher’s Approach To The Method	0	0	0	1	1
Guidance	0	0	0	1	0
Feedback Should Be Given Constantly	0	1	1	0	0

In Table 3, when groups are analysed according to group variable, pre-service teachers emphasized on those categories; there should be flexible process, forming groups, feedback should be given constantly.

Results and Discussion

The aim of the study is to determine views of pre-service teachers of the department of primary school teaching about using storyline method in teaching social studies lesson. Pre-service teachers’ views are as follows. They emphasized on those categories; makes students enjoy lesson, cooperative learning, student-centered education, supports curiosity, instructive, creativity, embodying, teacher’s guidance, easy to apply at universities, holistic, learning by doing and experiencing, suitable for primary education, develops abilities, develops thinking skills. In Yiğit’s thesis (2007), titled as “The Effect Of Storyline Method On Student Achievement About The Sources Of Our Country Unit In 6th Grade Social Studies Curriculum” objectives of the unit were presented to the students in the experimental group by using storyline method. At the beginning and the end of the learning process, achievement test developed by the researcher was applied to the students to determine their achievement levels related to the unit. In the light of research results, a significant difference at a level of 0.05 was found between the achievement levels of the students in the experimental group taught by using storyline method before and after the application. In other words, the teaching application by using storyline method had a significant effect on students’ achievement of the unit. In this study too, pre-service teachers emphasized that storyline method made the lesson more entertaining and more instructive.

About the problems in the process of application of the method, pre-service teachers emphasized on those categories; difficult to apply in crowded classrooms, time problem in application, classroom management, prejudgement, can't be applied for every unit, working in groups, depends on teacher, the method should be applied fondly, primary school curriculum isn't suitable for the application of this method, manual skills, the theory of the method should be known, depends on student willingness. Ersoy and Kaya (2009) mention in their study titled as "Students' Perceptions of the Application Process of the Elementary School Studies Curriculum" (2004) that activities in social studies lesson are too many and time for the lesson is inadequate. In this study too, pre-service teachers mentioned that time was a problem and primary school curriculum was not suitable for the application of this method. In the same study it was suggested that the subjects of social studies should be examined and some activities should be reviewed. In this study too, pre-service teachers emphasize that storyline method can not be applied for every subject.

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