Should We Flip the Social Studies Classrooms? The Opinions of Social Studies Teacher Candidates on Flipped Classroom

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Abstract

The technology revolution continues to profoundly influence the educational process. Thus, the traditional teaching process is changing and education which is individualized with technology supported teaching processes comes to the forefront. One of the concrete indicators is the flipped classroom model. The purpose of this study is to determine the opinions of the teacher candidates who continue the undergraduate program of social studies education towards the flipped classroom model and its usability in social studies course. Phenomenology which is one of patterns of the qualitative research approach was used as the individual perceptions of the students were examined in the study. Purposeful sampling method was used in the determining the study group of the research and nine teacher candidates were included in the study with criteria sampling. The data were collected with a semi-structured interview form. Content analysis method was used in the analysis of research data. As a result, teacher candidates have a positive attitude towards technology-supported teaching processes and stated that the use of flipped classroom model in social studies course would solve many problems like time management and absence of in-class practices. Moreover, it has been stated that prospective teachers are not equipped enough to implement this model, and problems may arise due to supervision during the application phase. Finally, teacher candidates stated they wanted to use the flipped classroom model in the teaching process, but that a certain experience has to be provided first.

Keywords: flipped classroom model, technology, qualitative research, social studies education

1. Introduction

Today, the understanding of traditional education is criticized in many ways. Its distance from individuality is only one of these reasons. However, today is a period where the individual teaching process is accelerating and in this context, individual learning methods and techniques are frequently used. From this point of view, different theories and understandings have begun to enter the field of education with the question of traditional education understanding (Ersanlı, 2011). Particularly, since the constructivism emerged as a new theory, active learning processes centered on students have begun to be preferred. Thus, it has come into prominence for the students to participate in the learning process and to increase their activity in the classroom (Prince, 2004). In this case, there is a need for a teaching process that is individualized and will include the student in a way that student will contribute to learning process. Individualized teaching, which defines individuals' needs and capacities, makes learning meaningful and provides flexibility in planning, giving homework, and adjusting the learning speed, is intensively accepted by educators (Davies, Dean, & Ball, 2013). At the point of providing this flexibility, technology is put into action. Beginning to use technology in education has deeply shaken the traditional teaching process and has enabled the teacher to assume the identity of a promoter by changing his transmitter role as a center in the educational process (Asan, 2003; Hwang, Lai, & Wang, 2015). When we look at this from a relational perspective, it seems that the main supporter of the constructivist approach is the use of technology in education.

With the use of the internet and technology in education, many limitations continue to be removed. This makes the essence of the education process more flexible. With this process, the physical limitations of the classroom come to an end, student experiences get rich and students become more open to questioning and different thinking skills (Vanfossen, 2001; Acikalin & Duru, 2005). In this respect, the technologies used also have

important reflections for the social studies course. Effective use of various software, digital cameras and the Internet, which are nowadays frequently used, brings students to the point of independent learners by saving them from the dependence on the context of social studies course content (Debele & Plevyak, 2012). Vanfossen (2001) also notes about that link of social studies and technology that social studies courses can have a good link with the interdisciplinary media with rich content. In addition, Shriner, Clark, Nail, Schlee and Libler (2010) and Hilton (2016) emphasize that social studies teachers have a wealth of opportunities in terms of using technology in their classroom. From this point of view, the flipped classroom model attracts attention to also one of the important applications of current technology-assisted education and inspires interest in its application in the field of social studies education.

1.1 Background

Although the flipped classroom model has become popular in education today its first trials, in fact, was applied in the field of economics with the name of "inverted classroom" (Lage, Platt, & Treglia, 2000; Serçemeli, 2016). A group of professors at the University of Miami have made an important contribution to the way that this model has become in today's education. However, two chemistry educators, Jonathan Bergmann and Aaron Sams, have emerged as pioneers in this area of education who considered firstly it as flipped classes. These two educators stated that the flipped classroom model was born from a necessity. Bergmann and Sams first thought of the situation that the students who missed the course were disadvantaged and pointed out that it was then difficult for the students to repeat the courses they had missed.

The fact that they encounter with this problem is one of the reasons for the emergence of the flipped classroom model. Bergmann and Sams point out the question that revealed the flipped classroom model: "What if we prerecorded *all* of our lectures, students viewed the video as 'homework', and then we used the entire class period to help students with the concepts they don't understand?" (Bergmann & Sams, 2012, p. 5). As an answer to this question, Jonathan Bergmann and Aaron Sams purchased software that will allow them to record a video and to send it to students later (Findlay-Thompson & Mombourquette, 2014). Then, they started pre-course records before 2007-2008 academic years (Bergmann & Sams, 2012, p. 5). Afterwards, they gave the videos they had recorded to their students and they spared the classroom time to fix the deficiencies of the students and for active learning techniques. Thus, the basic application process of the flipped class model is born.

Considered the traditional teaching process, the teacher transfers the content of the course to the students in the classroom and the students are obliged to fulfill the responsibility or to do homework given by the teacher in the course when they are home. On the other hand, in the flipped classroom model, the students meet with the concepts and the necessary content before the course, and when they come to the class, they solve the problems related to the content they already watch and reinforce their knowledge with various activities (Love, Hodge, Corritore, & Ernst, 2015; Lage et al., 2000; Hwang et al., 2015). Within the classroom, a process involving problem-based learning and active learning is being conducted (Lo & Hew, 2017). The point to be understood from the word "flipped" here is changing the place of the responsibilities that the student must perform at home with the responsibilities that must be fulfilled during the course. Thus, instead of being a passive learner in the school, become a student who acquires the theoretical knowledge and necessary concepts within the individual responsibility of the home, solves the problems encountered in class and constructs knowledge through active learning techniques.

In the flipped classroom model, many advantages are mentioned. Particularly, it is at the top of the list that it gives flexibility to the classroom environment, gives students the chance to reach the information at any time, and brings the time top which is spared for the classroom applications. These advantages can be listed in detail as follows (Fulton, 2012; Herreid & Schiller, 2013);

　　1) Each student can act properly to their own learning speed.

　　2) Doing homework in class provides a better perspective in determining the situations in which students are experiencing problems and understanding their learning styles.

　　3) The teacher can arrange the content more easily and transmit it to the students 7/24.

　　4) It increases the levels of success, interest and participation of the students.

　　5) Teachers can spend more time with students on original research.

　　6) Students may be given the opportunity to work with more scientific equipment only in their class.

　　7) Students who miss the course due to various reasons can reach the course videos anywhere they want.

　　8) The student is referred to thinking about the subject both inside and outside the classroom.

9) Students participate more actively in the learning process.

Considering the possibilities provided by the flipped classroom model, it can be concluded that it provides students to use the time efficiently, students can progress proper to own speed in acquiring the knowledge of the subjects and concepts that are not understood or missed due to various reasons, brings the flexibility to the classroom environment, focuses on the essence of constructivist understanding by sparing the classroom time only for application dimension. From this perspective, it is possible to solve the problems of the social studies course in the teaching process with the flipped class model. It is because the social studies course is considered as a very difficult course in the teaching process in Turkey. Especially, containing many disciplines, the density of contents to be transferred, the inability to act according to the student's speed, the inadequate use of student-centered methods and techniques, the superficial teaching process due to the content intensity and the insufficient weekly class time are the notable problematic situations. In addition to this, the demand for teaching social skills with constructivist understanding has created a great deadlock on teachers in the context of content and time. Regarding these problems mentioned, studies were done by Çelikkaya and Kuş (2009); Taşkaya and Bal (2009); Yeşil (2009); Çalışkan (2010); Yılmaz and Tepebaş (2011) and Eski (2014).

The starting point of this research is the problems listed above. From this point of view, the aim of this study is to determine the opinions of social studies teacher candidates on the flipped classroom model and to specify its usability in social studies course.

2. Method

2.1 Research Design

The study was carried out with qualitative research approach. Qualitative research is often a type of approach commonly used in social sciences, where words are used as data rather than numerical representations (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Qualitative research takes the text and imaginary data to the center and enables a detailed analysis of a situation, a case, a subject and an event through original analyzes (Creswell, 2013). The approach in qualitative research is usually about obtaining detailed information on fewer people and the situation (Patton, 2014). Phenomenology, which is one of the qualitative research designs, was benefitted in the research. Phenomenology aims to understand individual experiences (Husserl, 2012). In this design, focus is on individual perceptions and experiences and it is asked to reveal how they occur (Ersoy, 2016, p. 55). In this research, it was aimed to reveal the experience of the teacher candidates who have experience in this subject by taking the flipped classroom model as the center.

2.2 Study Group

The study group of the research consisted of 9 social studies teacher candidates who continue their education at Kırıkkale University in the spring term of 2016-2017 academic years. The purposeful sampling method was used in the selection of the study group. On this subject, Patton (2014) stated that sampling methods were appropriate to identify the study group in qualitative research. In this context, criterion sampling, which is one of the purposeful sampling methods, was used in this study. In the selection of the participants, criteria such as having completed the teaching method course successfully, observing problems in teaching social studies during the internship and being voluntary to participate in the research were sought. 9 students who met these criteria, six females and three males, were included in the study.

2.3 Data Collection Tool

Semi-structured interview form was used for the collection of research data. A semi-structured interview is a data collection tool (Patton, 2014) that allows the orientation of a predetermined interview process for the aim of research. During the development of the interview form, the studies in the literature were scanned and candidate questions were created in accordance with the purpose of the study. The created questions were arranged on the basis of the opinions of field experts, language and expression experts, and assessment and evaluation experts. Afterwards, the pilot application of the interview questions was done with 3 students. After the corrections, the finalized form was used in the implementation. Within the scope of the research, 270 minute interview was obtained. The research was conducted in the psychological counseling and guidance room in Kırıkkale University Faculty of Education. The research environment was insulated from sound and light, and physical elements that reduce participants' motivation for data collection were avoided. In addition to this, in the data collection process, tape recorder was used by the researchers to prevent the data loss.

2.4 Reliability and Validity

The following steps were followed in order to ensure the validity and reliability in the research.

To provide internal validity in the investigation; steps such as taking the expert opinion for the data collection tool used in the scope of the research, ensuring objectivity by confirming the collected data by the participants, supporting the findings with direct quotations were followed. In the case of providing external validity in the research; measures were taken such as the use of a qualitative research design appropriate for the purpose of the research, the selection of a data collection tool suitable for the research design, the selection of the study group for the purpose of the research, the detailed specification of the characteristics of the study group, and the detailed description of the data collection and analysis process.

In ensuring the internal reliability of the research; in addition to the researcher's notes, the processes of preventing data loss by using a voice recorder, analyzing and presenting the findings objectively in accordance with the purpose of the research findings, and providing the consistency by analyzing it by different researchers were followed. At the point of external reliability; a detailed specification of the research environment, the steps of a detailed description of the data collection and analysis process, and a specification of the role of the research in the data collection process were followed.

2.5 Analysis of Data

The data analysis process of research began by transcribing the data. The transcripts were then sent to the participants involved in the interview process to confirm the data. The data validated by the participants were included in the content analysis process. Content analysis is a type of qualitative analysis that helps to reveal the hidden codes in data (Lichtman, 2010). It is stated that content analysis, which has a certain function, consists of five basic stages: acquiring data, generating initial codes, determining the themes, creating thematic networks, integrating and interpreting (Robson, 2015). This process was also followed in our work. Thus, the codes were first reached, then the categories were created and afterwards, the data were integrated and interpreted. As a result of these operations, eight categories emerged.

3. Findings

3.1 The Problems of Social Studies That Requires the Use of the Flipped Classroom Model

When the opinions of the teacher candidates are examined, their emphasis on the problems in the social studies course are as follows; individual differences, time inadequacy, inability to compensate students who missed the course, the inability to effectively implement an active learning-based teaching process, and intensive theoretical knowledge transfer. Problems of teaching social studies as stated by teacher candidates show consistency.

> *"Lack of time and inhomogeneous classroom structure are some of the reasons. Time is already not enough, and also the classroom structures are different, accordingly some students fall behind. Students don't learn by carrying out or experiencing the things. We give just theoretical knowledge. Students seem like they understand, but they forget fast. K1".*

> *"There are so many course subjects, teacher try to give all the information in 3 hours course. In such a case, a teaching process in accordance with the constructivist understanding doesn't occur, and without any activity the teacher remains in the position of transmitting only information. K4".*

> *"There is a lot of objective in the social studies course and the number of courses is few, so the time doesn't suffice for the course, which causes the lack of time. Also, there is no compensation for the student who cannot come to class. The student is trying to learn from friends, but the teacher is not in any compensation work. K6".*

> *"The length of the course time is rather short, so we cannot spare time for class activities. Different teaching methods cannot be benefited. In addition, the teacher cannot provide the necessary compensation when the student misses the course. Because of this reason, some students are not on the same level as their peers, so they can be disconnected from the course. K9".*

3.2 The Functioning of the Flipped Classroom Model

When the opinions of teacher candidates on the functioning of the flipped classroom model are examined, they pointed out that they had high awareness, there was a functioning based on homework and activity in the school, which enable students to get theoretical knowledge at home. Participants' opinions show that they are aware of the functioning of the flipped class model.

"The children learn theoretically in school and do homework at home, but in this model the opposite of that is conducted, they study at home and they do homework in school. It is understood how the children make inferences from their individual work at home. K2".

"In this model, the teacher will prepare a material such as a video that the student will learn at home. Students will do homework and activity during the course. K5".

"It is a model that enables the student to carry out the teaching process on his own, both as a subject and as a system, through internet and educational tools. The students understand that they are doing it by themselves, and when they get into the school, an activity-based approach is being implemented by the teacher. K7".

"In a flipped classroom model, the opposite process of traditional teaching takes place. The students are doing the homework in the school. So they can ask the points that they cannot understand to the teacher. At home, they can learn the theoretical knowledge that must be taken in the school according to their own learning speed. K9".

3.3 Advantages of the Flipped Classroom Model

Another category that emerged within the scope of the research is the "Advantages of the Flipped Classroom Model". Teacher candidates stated that the flipped classroom model will allow students to be prepared for the courses, increase their motivation, remove the lack of time, provide compensation for the students who miss the course, provide the teacher the opportunity to observe the learning of the student, and enrich the time spent for the activity.

"When students come to class, they will come as being informed about the subject to be processed and accordingly they will attend the course, which will be reflected in the positive aspect of time. They will overcome the time problem. Students will be more motivated and more confident because they will be more loaded with knowledge. In addition, the students who cannot attend the course can complete the deficiencies at home because they will have a chance at home, at least they will have got basic theoretical knowledge even if they do not participate in the activity within the class. K1".

"With this approach, students will come up with certain knowledge. Instead of listening to course in vain, they will reinforce themselves by applying what they know and doing activities accordingly the confidence and communication skills of the student will increase, and most importantly the teacher will be able to observe the student easily. K2".

"Another of the advantages of this approach is that it supports individual study at home. The student is working individually at home, doing group study in class. For this reason, there will not be a case like the student will miss the subject. K6".

3.4 Disadvantages of the Flipped Classroom Model

Social studies teacher candidates indicated the disadvantages of the model that students might not fulfill their responsibility at home, the inequality of technological opportunity, the family reaction and the problem of inability to give immediate feedback.

"There are still people who do not have internet, computers and tablets; reaching the video can be hard for these people. Apart from that, students who are not interested in course and are irresponsible may not want to prepare for the course. Family might react to this. Previously, the families also opposed giving homework to students. K8".

"The student may not want to watch the course video, everybody may not be prepared for the course, the teacher will have more work to do this time and again the time will not be enough. It can be a danger of turning into traditional education. Cooperation should be done with both the student and the parents or online control should be provided. There may be students who do not have internet access. K3".

"There are concepts that the children do not know when they study at home alone. If there is no external help and feedback about these, their interest in the course may be broken and their motivation may decrease. K1".

"Not every child has the same possibilities, and there may not be computer or tablet at every home. First, this infrastructure work should be done. K5".

3.5 The Effect of the Flipped Classroom Model on Student

As a result of the opinions of the participants, the use of the flipped classroom model will change the students' perception on social studies course, will make the student more active in the course process, develop their self-consciousness, develop their motivation, and improve their skills of working in cooperation and communication.

> *"Every child activates if they studies at home. They start calling the course not boring. Since they will come to school as motivated, their desire to go to school will increase. Communication skill also develops because they will interact not only individually but also with friends. K2".*

> *"They become more active in the classroom, cooperate with their friends. Children are always silenced. There will be an environment where they can express themselves more easily. They can be more motivated to believe that they will succeed. K8".*

> *"In traditional teaching, the students sit on desks, listen to the teacher, take note and do homework when they are at home, but in this model the student will be active in the classroom instead of being passive since they will come to school after completing the preliminary knowledge at home. K5".*

> *"Students become aware of their self-sufficiency. They recognize what they are good at and what they are bad at. K4".*

3.6 Being a Teacher in a Classroom Where the Flipped Classroom Model Is Used

Teacher candidates stated that the model would increase the workload of the teacher, make it easier to give feedback to the student, lead the teacher to research and plan, and that the teacher would recognize the students better.

> *"It gives opportunities to observe the student better. You will also be able to see how much the student gets the prior knowledge and where they have problems. When a common problem is found, you can diagnose better and intervene, it is very positive in this respect. K2".*

> *"They will see the deficiencies better and give more meaningful feedback. The workload will increase because the course is now focused on activity. The students will come with preliminary information, so the teacher will only think about the activity and how to do a variety of activities. K1".*

> *"Since the teacher will have to do various activities, it promotes teacher to research. K6".*

> *"In fact, it seems to make things easier, but the workload of teacher increases, but the teacher conducts a more efficient course. Teacher will shoot videos, conduct activity research, follow students constantly; these are more difficult than traditional teaching. K8".*

3.7 Self-Efficacy of Teacher Candidates Regarding the Use of Flipped Classroom Model

Teacher candidates do not see themselves adequately able to use the flipped classroom model. Participants specified that technology-focused course should be given to them in the undergraduate process and they will need technology-oriented in-service training in the future.

> *"I do not have enough technological equipment now; the undergraduate education did not provide it to me. I may face difficulties. These are the things that need experience, and some unplanned issues can occur at the moment. We also need to receive in-service training. K2".*

> *"I do not think that I have enough knowledge to use this model in terms of technology. I can implement activities, but I think I am deficient in technology like shooting and sharing video. In undergraduate education, I also wanted to learn all the software I could use and I wanted to know what kind of application I could create. K3".*

> *"In terms of technology, I do not even know how to use a smart board, I am having difficulty in my internship, students are helping me, and I feel bad in front of students. K5".*

3.8 Its Preferability to Be Used in Teaching Period

Teacher candidates are positive about using the flipped classroom model. However, the participants stated that they wanted to try the model after a little experience. They also stated that being assigned to a rural region would create problems in terms of using this model.

"I do not think it to use at first, I have to get accustomed to the students and the environment. I have to make myself well informed. The place that I will be assigned is very important. If I work in college, it will be very convenient, but if I'm assigned in the countryside, it will be difficult to apply it. It is because technological possibilities may not be appropriate. I can use it after I get some experience in my first years. K8".

"When I start teaching, after I recognize the students, I choose a class as a pilot. I will apply this model on them. If it is helpful, I will apply it on all the students, but I cannot apply it on all the students shortly after I go to the school. K1".

"Since number of our course is few, I can think to implement it; both students will have a better quality of learning, and I will be able to identify students better. K4".

4. Results, Discussions and Suggestions

In this study, which aims to determine the opinions of social studies teacher candidates on the flipped classroom model, many results were obtained for the use of this model in social studies classes. Social studies teacher candidates are aware of the functioning of the flipped classroom model. Teacher candidates stated that by reversing the process of the traditional classroom, the students structured knowledge, which they obtained from online materials at home rather than theoretical knowledge within the classroom, with activity-based processes in the classroom.

Participants see the flipped classroom model as an advantage in increasing classroom time and providing a student-centered teaching process. A study that supports this result was also made by Roach (2014). The researcher said that using the flipped classroom model would reduce the time wasted in traditional teaching, thus providing more time for active learning techniques. In addition, Uzunboylu and Karagozlu (2015) stated that using the model would positively affect the students with different learning styles. Teacher candidates think that the model can cause problems for the students in terms of fulfilling their responsibility at home, giving feedback and technology infrastructure. A different research supporting these results was carried out by Kocabatmaz (2016). The researcher found that in the case of using the model, in terms of the disadvantages of the flipped classroom model, students may have problems at the point of technological inequality and obtaining theoretical knowledge at home. Roehl, Reddy and Shannon (2013) also emphasized the importance of giving feedback and stated that the correct functioning of this process is of vital importance in determining the learning level of the student.

As a result of the opinions of the participants, it was concluded that the students would be able to improve their skills, such as participation in the courses and cooperative work as the use of the model enabled the student to become active. This is supported by Zainuddin and Attaran (2016). The researchers noted that in the flipped classroom model, the attendance of the students in the course increased, even the shy students felt more comfortable. In the dimension of the teacher, it was revealed that it would increase the work load of teachers. Considered the social studies teacher candidates' self-efficacy of the ability to use the flipped class model, it is found that the teacher candidates are not able to use the model. In this context, it is often stated in the literature that there is the problem of social studies teacher candidates in terms of transferring the technology into classroom and using it. A study supporting this was done by Menzi, Çalışkan and Çetin (2012). The researchers concluded from the study in which they examined the technology competences of students from different departments that social studies teacher candidates were the most inadequate department in terms of technology use. One of the reasons for this is the deficiencies in the process of undergraduate education. A study supporting this argument was carried out by Ünlü, Kaşkaya and Çoşkun (2017). Researchers indicated that the problem of technology sufficiency arose from undergraduate education as a result of the opinions of social studies teacher candidates. Another result of this study is the preference of teacher candidates to use the flipped classroom model. It turned out that participants are abstaining from using the model. Experience is the main reason for this. Participants are willing to use the model once they have a certain experience after technological equipment is provided.

4.1 Suggestions

It was aimed to contribute to the literature with this research carried out in the phenomenology design in accordance with qualitative approach. However, apart from this study, there is also a need for researches to be carried out with different approaches and designs that contribute to the literature. For the concretization of the theoretical predictions stated in this study, experimental design studies based on quantitative approach can be carried out. In terms of qualitative approach, it can be benefited from the design of action research that will

contribute to the functioning of the flipped classroom model and to find solutions to social problems. Furthermore, the application of the flipped classroom model can be evaluated from different aspects by designing case studies. Apart from this, the study group can be differentiated and the relationship between the teaching process and the flipped classroom model can be examined in the light of the opinions of various stakeholders.

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