

Perceptions and Expectations of Primary School Third Grade Pupils on General Studies* (Sachunterricht) Course: Case of Germany

Z. Nurdan BAYSAL**
Zeynep DILBER-OZER***

To cite this article:

Baysal, Z. N., & Dilber-Ozer, Z. (2021). Perceptions and expectations of primary school third grade pupils on general studies (sachunterricht) course: Case of Germany. *Journal of Qualitative Research in Education*, 26, 340-360. doi: 10.14689/enad.26.15

Abstract. The present study attempts to reveal the perceptions of 3rd-grade pupils toward the general studies (Sachunterricht) course. In this regard, the subjects liked or disliked by the pupils, materials and pupils' perceptions on the general studies course were determined. The study employed phenomenology which is one of qualitative research methods. This study was conducted with 41 pupils enrolled in two different primary schools in Stuttgart, the capital city of the German state of Baden- Württemberg. The data were collected through an open-ended questionnaire called "General Studies Perception Scale", the drawings by the pupils and their explanations on the drawings. The research data were analyzed via descriptive and content analysis methods. In the study, it was found that the pupils liked all the subjects in this course. In addition, the most frequently- used materials by the pupils during the course were pencil, glue, paper, and scissors. It was ascertained that most of the pupils wanted the subjects in the general studies course to be integrated with art. Besides, pupils are conducting a lot of experiments and would like to continue doing experiments. Based on the study outcomes, it was suggested that certain precautions must be taken for the subjects included in the content of social sciences to be liked by the pupils in general studies course and exam and worksheet applications must be limited.

Keywords: General studies, subjects, materials, perception

Article Info

Received: 21 Apr. 2020
Revised: 10 Jan. 2021
Accepted: 21 Apr. 2021

© 2021 ANI Publishing. All rights reserved.

* The name of the interdisciplinary course consisting of social and science subjects in the primary school curriculum in Germany is "Sachunterricht". The English name of the course is translated as "General Studies" on the official website of the association "Gesellschaft für Didactic des Sachunterrichts [GDSU]", which prepares the curriculum for all states. This expression is also used in researches published in English about the course. English for this course widely in Turkey "Life Studies", "Life Knowledge" as used in this study, though, "General Studies" phrase was preferred.

** Correspondence: Marmara University, Turkey, znbaysal@marmara.edu.tr

*** Istanbul Provincial Directorate of National Education, Turkey, zeynepdilber@yahoo.com

Declaration of Conflicts of Interests: None

Introduction

There are six learning domains in primary education in Germany, two of which are included in general studies courses and associated with other four learning domains. These domains are divided as follows: aesthetical, language, social, science and technical, mathematical, and religious and philosophical education. Of all those domains, the social, scientific, and technical domains comprise the subjects of the general studies course and are related to other domains (Kohnlein, 2011). As it consists of subjects of social studies and science, the general studies course is similar to Life Science course in Turkey.

When looking at other countries' primary education systems, it may be alleged that there is no such course equivalent to Life Science in the United States of America. Social Studies course has been taught at the first stages and continues onwards; however, science courses are carried out separately. In England, as well, the same situation may be viewed; the courses there have been taught separately based on their fields as of the very first stages of primary education. In Turkey, however, the subjects of social studies and science courses have been integrated and constructed with a holistic approach since the Republic period. As a result, Turkey's education system is equivalent to the general studies course included in the German system, which is remarkable for its holistic approach (Ozturk & Dilek, 2004). When looking at the French curriculum, it is found that there have been two different courses which are; discovering the world and live together (Sahenk, 2009). The main intention to gather the research data based on Germany is the similarities between general studies and life science courses.

General studies course takes place in the curricula from the first to the fourth grade of primary schools in Germany. It is one of the three main courses together with German and Maths (Ministerium für Kultus, Jugend und Sport Baden-Württemberg, 2004). The word 'general studies' is difficult to put forward a direct translation; however, it refers to environmental, social, and science education (Kuhn, 2002). It is an interdisciplinary course in which the contents of social studies and science courses are taught simultaneously. This interdisciplinary approach has been seen in further stages. For instance, in Gymnasiums, this course's name is called 'World and Environmental Studies' in the fifth and sixth grades. Nevertheless, in the seventh and eighth grades, the science course is divided into biology, chemistry, and physics due to the abandonment of the interdisciplinary approach. On the other hand, this varies in the states (Barke et al., 2012). Regarding being interdisciplinary, the courses of life science in Turkey and general studies in Germany have shown considerable similarities. In the contents of both courses, the subjects of social studies and science are integrated following the pupils' developmental characteristics. In Turkey, as well, life science has been constructed through a holistic approach and it is one of the main courses taught in the first, second, and third grades in primary schools.

The name of the general studies course varies in the states. For example, it is called 'Heimat und General Studies (heimat: homeland)' in Bayern; 'Heimat und Sachkunde (sachkunde: speciality)' in Thüringen; 'Sachunterricht' in Berlin, Bremen and Hessen; 'Human, Nature and Culture (mensch, natur und kultur)' in Baden- Württemberg (Knörzer, 2006). Mensch, Natur und Kultur (MNK) is equivalent to Sachunterricht course in Baden-Württemberg during 2004-2015. After the program was renewed in this state in 2016, the name changed again as Sachunterricht. Music and Art were included in the program as separate courses (Lohrmann, 2017). Although there are differences in the name of the course according to the states, there is a national unity in the competences included in the teaching programs followed in the teaching of the courses. Although the name of course varies in the states in Germany, the curricula have been maintained based on national unity.

In Turkey, the Life Science course has been taught under this name since the beginning of the Republic period and has maintained its occurrence in first, second, and third grades in the curriculum. With its interdisciplinary structure in which social and environmental studies are integrated, Life Science is taught in primary education to enable the pupils to be good individuals and citizens. Accordingly, it has been seen that the subjects of social and environmental studies have been integrated in line with the pupils' developmental characteristics. The subjects related to the pupils' life has been holistically presented to them with pupil-centered approach (Gultekin, 2015). Therefore, the Life Science course has a unique structure where pupils' developmental characteristics are valued.

In first and second grades during primary education in Turkey, the Life Science course is given four hours a week and 3 hours a week in third grade. As unit-based understanding has been adopted, the curriculum includes six units with similar names in third grade. The unit names of the curriculum are as follows: "Life in Our School", "Life in Our House", "Healthy Life", "Safe Life", "Life in Our Country" and "Life in Nature" (Ministry of National Education [MoNE], 2018). Education for Citizenship does not exist as a separate subject during the first stages of primary education. Instead, the citizenship values are initially built upon the Life Science course. The course aims to make pupils be active citizens by giving real-life examples.

In Germany, primary schools are regarded as the places where different pupils are gathered. Regardless of their ethnicity and skills, each pupil learns with others. Cultural diversity is considered a resource for cultural and social learning processes and, besides, an opportunity for primary education processes. The pupils' requirements are considered while determining content, teaching methods, and task types. In addition, their learning speed and other ways of teaching are considered based on pupils' development stages. Moreover, cooperative learning is of great value in primary education (Ministerium für Kultus, Jugend und Sport Baden-Württemberg, 2016). With the latest curricula updates in Turkey, attempts to design a Life Science course where active learning environments are created to make the pupils happy have been made. Yet, studies have indicated failures to put the curricula into practice (Erdogan et al., 2015). Investigating this course from pupils' perceptions in Germany as a similar

system and determining the problems of implementation is noteworthy to resolve the problems in Turkey.

Primary education pedagogically balances between children's constructive processes and controlled educational processes. This offers individually-directed and communicative learning opportunities and, thus, pupils are supported to socialize. The quality of vocational support depends on children's achievement to acquire competencies. Learning must be individually adapted and therefore differentiated in one sense; on the other hand, all children with different levels of learning must be included in a common course and scope (Ministerium für Kultus, Jugend und Sport Baden-Württemberg, 2004). This study is designed to elucidate pupils' perceptions and expectations from the general studies course in the German system where it is taught through different methods, techniques, and experiences by considering individual differences. In the current research, the answers to the questions on pupils' expectations from the general studies course, such as teaching processes of the course, the subjects liked and disliked by them, unforgettable memories, the materials, and the way they wanted to learn this course, have been sought. Revealing pupils' perceptions and expectations in general studies course in Germany hold implications for benefitting from the course with greater extent, determining and eliminating the requirements and fostering the teaching process. In this regard, it is thought that the findings of this study will shed light on practices.

The Aim of the Study

The main objective of this study is to examine third-grade pupils' perceptions of the general studies course in primary education. Their attitudes towards the subjects (liked/disliked), the materials, pictures drawn by the pupils, their explanation on those pictures were investigated. The answers to the following questions were sought:

- What are the most liked/disliked/found boring subjects of general studies course by the pupils?
- What are the unforgettable experiences during the general studies course?
- What are the frequently-used materials in the general studies course?
- What are the pupils' expectations from the general studies course?

Method

This section covers research design, study group, data collection instruments, and data analysis.

The Research Design

This study is designed as phenomenological research. The purpose of phenomenology is to understand and describe a phenomenon in-depth by bracketing taken-for-

granted assumptions. Phenomena are concerned with incidents, experiences, concepts, and situations (Yildirim & Simsek, 2013). Phenomenology focuses on the meaning of a phenomenon studied and illuminates the individuals' experiences concerning the topic. For this reason, phenomenology attempts to gain a profound insight into the individuals' experiences (Johnson, 2000; Smith & Eatough, 2007, cited in Onat-Kocabişik, 2016). The purpose of the phenomenological approach is to identify the individuals' perceptions of a phenomenon (an object or aspect known through the senses), to elucidate the interpretations attributed to it by them, and to explain their feelings (Patton, 2014). Although phenomenology has many applications, subjective experience is prioritized in each of them (Onat-Kocabişik, 2016). This study attempts to elucidate the pupils' perceptions of the general studies course, their interpretations, feelings, and expectations from course subjects. The findings of the study are thought to hold implications for Life Science course in Turkey.

Study Group

The current research was conducted for the 2016-2017 academic year in two state schools that were easy- accessible for one of the researchers in Stuttgart, the capital of Baden Württemberg state in Germany. Accidental or convenience sampling is a type of sampling which aims to prevent time, financial, and labor waste. The researcher in this sampling method attempts to study the most easy-accessible and affordable case (Cohen and Mannion, 1989; Ravid, 1994, cited in Büyüköztürk et al., 2017). The participants from those schools were drawn through typical case sampling, a type of purposive sampling. Typical cases are situations consisting of sufficient information about the incident or phenomenon studied amongst the similar ones in the universe. They include usual situations that are considered typical or average (Patton, 2005, cited in Baltacı, 2018). The fact that a researcher employs typical cases is important to explain a culture or social phenomenon to the individuals who are not familiar with it (Miles & Huberman, 1994, cited in Baltacı, 2018). The study group of this research was obtained by conferring with teachers working in third grades in the abovementioned schools. The pupils, not being extreme but considered as average, who attended the general studies course participated in the study. Table 1 shows the characteristics of the participants.

Table 1.

Characteristics of Participants

School*	Girl	Boy
PLUTOSCHULE	11	13
URANUSSCHULE	13	4
Total	24	17

*The names of the schools are anonymous.

As seen in Table 1, 11 girls and 13 boys enrolled in PLUTOSCHULE; 13 girls and 4 boys from URANUSSCHULE participated in the study. There was a total of 41 pupils in the study.

Data Collection

The pupils were requested to fill in the form with five open-ended questions developed by the researchers and constructed by two experts, one of whom was specialized in classroom teaching and the other in measurement and evaluation. The form was modified from the one used by Baysal et al. (2018). The open-ended questions were as follows: 1) What are the subjects you like most in the general studies course? 2) What are the subjects you dislike or find boring in the general studies course? 3) What is your special, unforgettable experience in the general studies course? 4) Which materials do you use in the general studies course? 5) What are your expectations from the teaching of the general studies course? Could you draw it? The pupils were asked to draw how they imagined the teaching of the course and to explain their drawings. Audio recordings were also conducted. The administration of the form, drawing, and audio recording was done by one of the researchers between 10-20 July 2016 (The summer holiday begins after 25th June in Baden Württemberg every year).

Data Analysis

The research data were analyzed through content and descriptive analyses. The subjects liked or disliked by the pupils and the materials used in the general studies course were analyzed through content analysis. Using content analysis, researchers can identify concepts and relationships. However, the pupils' unforgettable experiences and their drawings were investigated through both content and descriptive analyses. A Descriptive analysis enables the researcher to explain a given data set under the themes in the research, to summarize, to probe causal relationships, and to draw conclusions. Besides, this technique allows data presentation based on research questions (Yildirim & Simsek, 2013). The forms gathered from the pupils were enumerated first, then the answers to each question were translated from German into Turkish and read by the researchers. The answers given by the pupils were separated depending on common descriptions. The descriptions obtained from the forms were coded and the categories determined. The researchers separately identified the categories and ensured consistency during coding and categorization. After that, the disagreements upon entitlement of cluster of categories were eliminated and a consensus was achieved. Four main categories were identified as follows: the subjects and fields in general studies course liked and found boring by the pupils, their unforgettable experiences during the course, the materials used in the course, and their expectations from the teaching of the course. The findings of the study were presented based on categories.

The analyses showed that pupils used the term MNK instead of general studies. The reason for this was, grouped with art and music courses, the general studies course

was included in the curriculum under the title of MNK. The group of the courses, integrated into the curriculum between 2004-2016, were divided as of 2016-2017. Thus, three separate courses were independently included in the curriculum. General studies was centralized in the grouped course; however, other courses had the characteristics of supporting it with a thematic approach.

Validity and Reliability Analyses

The issues agreed and disagreed by the researchers were determined. For this paper, the reliability of the research was calculated by the formula described by Miles & Huberman (1994) (reliability= consensus/ consensus+ dissidence x 100) (Tavsancil & Aslan, 2001). As a result, the reliability of the coder was 90% and %95 for interviews. Thus, the categories were concluded to be consistent. To provide comprehensibility, direct citations like *"The experiments in MNK were, I think, great"* were included in this paper. The participants' identities were disguised by naming them. For example, 8G.P. refers to the girl pupil with the code of 8. The pupils' parents were informed about the research and they participated voluntarily.

Findings

This section covers four themes based on the research questions. The themes are as follows: *the fields and subjects liked and found boring by the pupils (Question 1 and 2), the unforgettable experiences during the course (Question 3), the materials used in the course (Question 4), and the pupils' expectations from the teaching of the course (Question 5)*. Each theme is presented as tables and, in the tables, descriptions on categories, frequencies, second and fourth categories were included. Moreover, the tables were interpreted.

The Pupils' Perceptions on the Fields and Subjects Liked and Found Boring in General Studies Course

The answers given to the first question of the research (*"Which subjects do you like in the general studies course?"*) are shown in Table 2.

Table 2.

The Pupils' Perceptions on the Fields and Subjects Liked and Found Boring in General Studies Course

Theme	Sub Theme
Subjects	Animals (duck, butterfly, frog)
	Plants (potato, cereal, forest)
	Water/Water cycle
	Weather

	Inventions
	Nature
	Human beings
	Sun
	Wind
	Autumn
	Food pyramid
Activity Field	Art/Handicrafts
	Experiments
	Music

Looking at the pupils' perceptions on the fields and subjects liked and found boring in the course, the assessment was done in terms of two different categories: subjects and activity/ activity field. The subjects liked by the pupils were mostly found to be such scientific contents as animals (duck, butterfly, frog), plants (potato, cereal, forest), water/water cycle, and weather. Although the subject of Human Beings in Social Studies was among the ones liked by a few of the pupils, one of the subjects of Sun, Wind, Autumn, and Food Pyramid were reportedly liked by each pupil. Most pupils uttered that they liked art/ handicrafts as an activity field, some of them articulated that they liked experiments and a few of them stated that they liked music in the course. Table 3 reveals the answers given to the second question of the research which is "What are the subjects you dislike/ find boring in general studies course?"

Table 3.

The Pupils' Perceptions on the Subjects Disliked/Found Boring in General Studies Course

Theme	Sub Theme
The Subject Disliked	None
	Animals (duck, butterfly, frog)
	Plants (potato, cereal)
	Weather
The Subjects Found Boring	Nature
	Human beings
	Nutrition
	Inventions
	Water
The Activity Fields Found Boring	Art
	Music

As for the pupils' perceptions of the subjects disliked/ found boring in the course, the evaluation was made in terms of three categories: the subjects disliked, the subjects found boring, and the activity fields found boring. One point worth highlighting is that the pupils did not emphasize a subject which they disliked. The subjects that the participants got bored of were mostly animals, plants, and air, but less of nature, people, and nutrition. Few of them were bored with inventions and water. Also, few of them reported that they found the subjects of inventions and water boring. The

participants were observed to be equally bored of art and music as an activity field in the course.

The Pupils' Perceptions on Their Unforgettable Experiences in General Studies Course

Table 4 covers the answers given to the third question of the research which is "What is your unforgettable and special experience in general studies course?"

Table 4.

The Pupils' Perceptions on Their Unforgettable Experiences in General Studies Course

Theme	Sub Theme
Positive experiences on subjects	Animals (duck/frog/butterfly)
	Plants (potato/forest/cereal)
	Weather
	Human beings
	Nature
	Inventions
	Thermometer
Positive experiences on activity/Activity field	Experiments
	Art/Handicrafts (coloring)
	Culture
	Games
Negative experiences	The exam about weather
	Worksheets about potato

As seen in Table 4, the pupils' perceptions of their unforgettable experiences in the general studies course were divided into two categories: positive and negative experiences. Furthermore, positive ones were presented as two sub-categories that were subjects and activity/activity field. The pupils said that their unforgettable experiences in the general studies course were mostly positive whereas a few said theirs were negative. Most of the pupils remembered their experiences about the subjects of animals, plants, and weather; some of them recalled the ones about the subject of human beings and few bethought their experiences and experiments about inventions and the thermometer.

Concerning their experiences about animals, the pupils affirmed that "We also have a duck." (14G.S.), "Ducks swim well as they have webbed feet." (11G.S.). Regarding their experiences about plants, they stated that "We have learnt a lot from the potato." (14B.S.), "The plants die of thirst." (11B.S.) and "The week in the forest house was amazing, everything was exciting, and we have learnt some things." (12G.S.). By saying "I loved the subjects of animals and plants in general studies course." (9B.S.), a pupil pointed out that he would not forget about both subjects. In addition, one of the pupils emphasized that he would not forget about his experience upon the making of a thermometer by uttering that "The thermometer we have made on our own is the most special to me." (13B.S.).

A great number of pupils were observed to regard their experiences in general studies course as unforgettable. The pupils expressed their opinions with different statements: "I liked the experiments we did." (2B.S.), "I liked doing experiments." (4B.S.), "I liked experiments." (1G.S.), "I found the experiments about the subject of weather interesting." (4G.S.) and "I think the experiments we did in MNK course are great." (8G.S.). Nevertheless, a pupil answered this question by saying "experiments" (6G.S.). In addition, few pupils emphasized that culture and games were their unforgettable experiences during the course; some of them, however, pointed out that the exams about the weather were their negative experiences. Furthermore, a certain number of them mentioned potato as a negative experience in their worksheet.

The Pupils' Perceptions on the Materials Used in the General Studies Course

The answers given to the fourth question of the research ("Which materials do you use in general studies course?") are presented in Table 5.

Table 5.

The Pupils' Perceptions on the Materials Used in the General Studies Course

Theme	Sub Theme
Stationery Materials	Pen (pencil/fountain pen/crayon)
	Glue (adhesive)
	Paper (notebook/worksheet/carton)
	Scissors
	Eraser (ink eraser)
	Chalk
	Watercolor
	Folder
	Brush
	Ruler
	Xylophone
Realia	Water
	Candle
	Saucepan
	Potato
	Peeler
	Cloth
	Thermometer
	Paper bag
	Soil
	Wax
	Duck
	Seed
	Bag
Oil	
Bowl	
Cereal	

Other	Computer Instruments Poster
--------------	-----------------------------------

As shown in Table 5, three main categories regarding the pupils' perceptions of the materials used in the general studies course were constituted as stationery materials, realia, and others. The pupils mostly used pens (pencil, fountain pen/crayon), glue (adhesive), paper (notebook, worksheet, and carton), and scissors; in addition, they used erasers (ink eraser), chalk, watercolor, and folder to a lesser extent. A few of them stated that they used brush, ruler, and xylophone. On the other hand, for realia, the pupils mentioned that they frequently used water, candle, and saucepan. Some of them remarked that they used potato, peeler, cloth, thermometer, and paper bag. A few of them highlighted that they used soil, wax, duck, seed, bag, oil, bowl, and cereals least. Additionally, computers, instruments, and posters were included in the 'other' category. As seen in the table, there were 30 materials used in the general studies course. It is worth highlighting that realia were used more than technological materials.

The Pupils' Expectations from the Teaching of General Studies Course

By asking "How do you learn general studies course better? Could you draw it?", the pupils were requested to draw a picture and explain it. In this section, the pupils' drawings were examined, and the findings obtained from the interviews about those pictures were presented. Regarding the research data, the pupils' expectations from the teaching of general studies course were divided into sub-themes based on discipline field, subjects, method, and materials. The pupils' expectations are shown in Table 6.

Table 6.

The Pupils' Expectations from the Teaching of General Studies Course

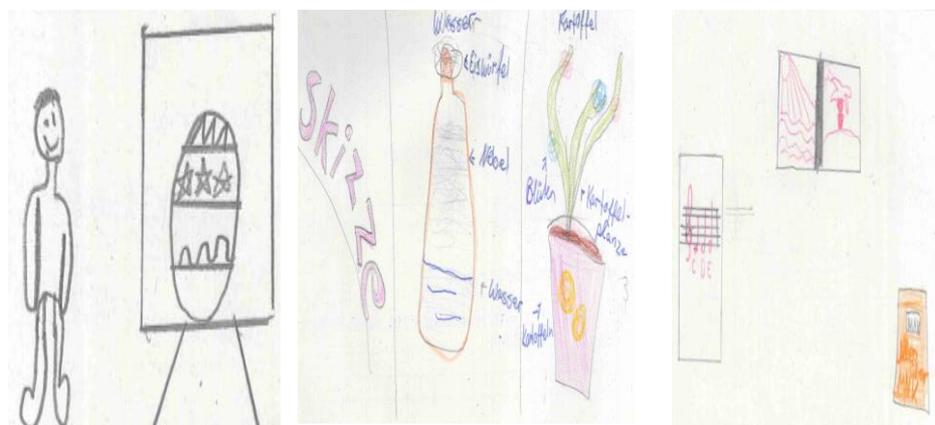
Theme	Sub Theme
Expectations from discipline fields	Art
	Science
	Music
Expectations from subjects	Plants/potato/tees/bushes
	Animals/frogs/ducks
	Human beings
	Weather
	Inventions
Expectations from method	Doing experiments
	Painting on the board
	Writing on the board
	Writing on the notebook
	Individually
	Painting
Expectations from materials	Lecturing
	Creating a weather map

On the board
Writing on the notebook
Examining the books on plants

As seen in Table 6, the pupils' expectations from the teaching of general studies course were assessed based on the four main categories: discipline fields, subjects, method, and materials. When looking at the discipline fields, it could be deduced that the pupils want to learn the course through art, science, and music, respectively. Besides, the pupils were learning the subjects: plants/ potato/ trees/ bushes, animals, human beings, weather, and inventions, respectively. As for the method, the pupils reported that they mostly preferred doing experiments while learning the course. However, some of them opted for painting on the board and few chose the methods of writing on the board or the notebook, learning individually, painting, and lecturing. When looking at the materials, the pupils preferred having this course by creating a weather map, writing on the board, notebook-to a lesser extent-and examining books about plants. The drawings by the pupils concerning the teaching of general studies course through various discipline fields were presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1.

The Pupils' Expectations from the Teaching of General Studies Course Based on Discipline Fields



(3B.S.)
"It's better to do art; we have time for correction and free time..."

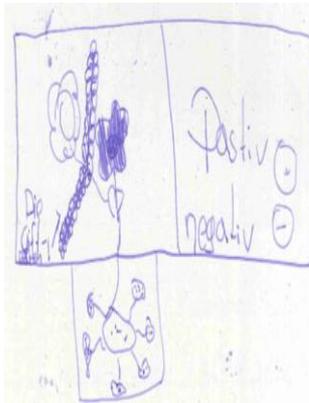
(2G.S.)
"I want to learn plants, art, and experiments in MNK. There are probably other things, for example, about human beings but I don't still know what it is."

(5G.S.)
"You can learn everything in music on papers. Someone can study MNK on the notebook and everything is colored on the board in art."

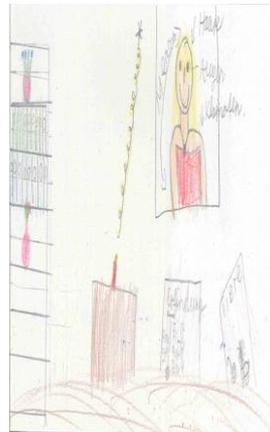
Most of the pupils reported that they wanted to learn plants/potato/trees/bushes in the general studies course; however, few stated that they wanted to learn inventions in the course. The pupils' drawings about their expectations from the subjects in the general studies course were presented in Figure 2.

Figure 2.

The Pupils' Expectations from the Subjects in General Studies Course



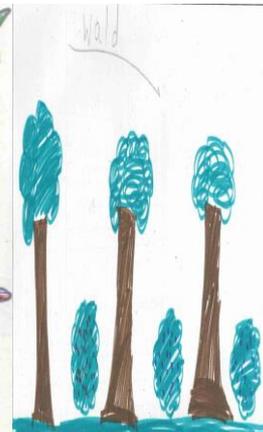
(5B.S.)
 "The mother lump appears off to one side. I look for the plant on the Earth to paint (with a poisonous bear!) The circles on it are like a plant with two stems. Positive (+) refers to affirmative, the perfect marks (+). (+) means better: A2 is good, A2+ is better. This is positive and negative. I would like to use them."



(6B.S.)
 "I want to learn human beings, nature, animals, experiments, and inventions in MNK."



(10B.S.)
 "My drawing is a quite large potato. We have to wait long for it to grow."



(19G.S.)
 "Trees, bushes, animals."

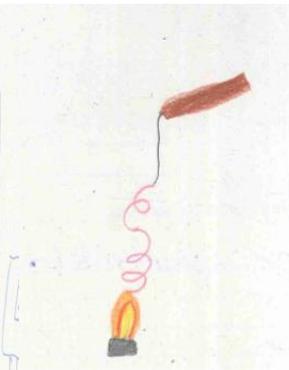
Most of the pupils expected to learn general studies course by doing experiments; however, a certain number of them want to learn by writing on in their notebook others preferred the lecturing method. Figure 3 shows the pupils' drawings about their expectations from the teaching of the general studies course.

Figure 3.

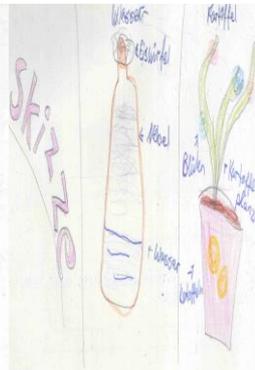
The Methods Expected by the Pupils in General Studies Course



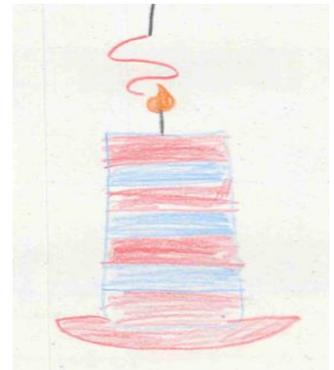
(7B.S.)
"My favorite field is Mathematics and German. I am good at Mathematics; I can read in German. Music is difficult for me; it is not for me. Arithmetic that I am good at is nonsense and hard. These do not make everything funny, so I want experiments."



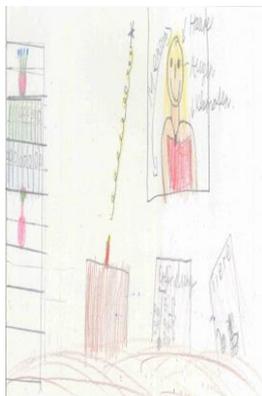
(7G.S.)
"You can see spirals in the drawing and that it is the best experience."



(8G.S.)
"I liked the water experiment. Let me explain the water experiment briefly: first, there is a need for a bottle, ice cubes, and warm water. Pour the water into the bottle; put the ice cubes in the rest. You can see fog but there is no cloud. The best experiment we did was water experiment and I want to do it again."



(13B.S.)
"This is an experiment. There is a candle and spiral. The spiral turns around when you pull it over to the candle. Then, it turns fast. Finally, you can learn that warm air rises."



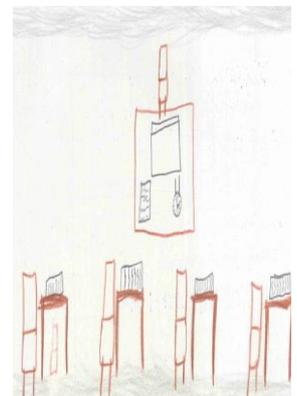
(9G.S.)
"We have done lots of experiments together, but we did not understand some of them. For example, the thermometer has a bottle full of water, then we put some ink in it, but we did not understand. However, the best experiment was the one explaining what a potato plant is. The children's plants grew, it was long, and you can see it. These are our experiments and I want to do again."



(10G.S.)
"I want to do the experiment by which we have learned warm air rises."



(16B.S.)
"Everybody writes in their notebook at the same time."



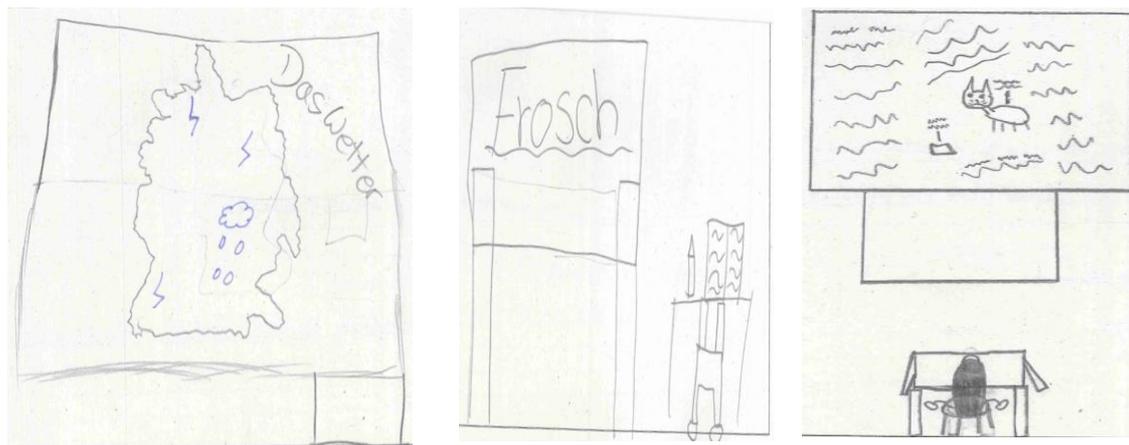
(6G.S.)
"I can learn better when everybody sits alone."

Most of the participating pupils dreamed of using the weather map in life studies lessons, and few pupils dreamed of using books about plants. The examples of

pictures they drew regarding which materials they want to use in the general studies lesson are presented in Figure 4.

Figure 4.

The Materials Expected by the Pupils to be Used in General Studies Course



(3G.S.)
"I want to paint the weather map."

(22G.S.)
"There is a board in the background. The frog on it and 9-year-old L. (name) is sitting next to it."

(1G.S.)
"The child is looking at the board and learning. The topic is animals. Now, the child is writing from the board."

Most of the pupils reported that they wanted to learn general studies course with a weather map, paints, and board; however, few stated that they expected to learn the course with notebooks and books.

Results and Discussion

The pupils' expectations from the teaching of general studies course based on their responses and drawings are as follows:

- According to the findings of the research, it has been revealed that the pupils' favorite subjects in the general studies course are those with scientific contents such as animals (duck, butterfly, frog), plants (potato, cereal, forest), water/water cycle and weather. Besides, was observed that few pupils liked the subject of human beings included in social studies. However, their least favorite subjects in the course have been indicated as sun, wind, autumn, and food pyramid. Most of the pupils reported that they liked art/handicrafts as an activity/activity field; some stated experiments and a few emphasized that they liked music during the course.

According to the results of the study conducted by Hummel et al. (2012), zoological subjects are more interesting than botanical subjects among fourth, fifth, and sixth-grade pupils. In the current study, it is understood that the pupils preferred the subject

of animals to other subjects. In the related study, it is emphasized that one of the main purposes of science teaching in Germany is to ensure that pupils are environmentally sensitive; being sensitive to the environment also requires an interest in nature. In this direction, living objects should be actively considered in the lessons. In the current study, it can be interpreted that both animals and plants are included as subjects in general studies, potato plants are discussed in lessons, and students like the pupils like these subjects; thus, general studies arouse interest in nature and contributes to the raising of individuals as environmentally sensitive.

Oker & Tay (2019) conducted a qualitative study entitled "Life Science Course from the Eyes of Primary School pupils and What They Want to Learn." According to the study, 2nd and 3rd-grade pupils reported that they wanted to learn about the subjects of health, animals, natural disasters, technology, and hygiene in science. They observed that pupils wanted to learn about the subjects of traffic, sports, our rights, history, Atatürk's life, family, traditions, basic needs, and communication in social studies. In thoughts and values, it was understood that they wanted to learn about the subjects of people's lives and feasts. Finally, the pupils wanted to learn about the subjects related to daily life and wars as well. Nevertheless, subjects that pupils were curious about in the Art and Life Science course were not found in their descriptions. One common finding of both studies is that pupils liked and wanted to study animals' subject and wanted to be learned. Although the pupils reported that the subject of health was their least favorite in the current study, it was among their most favorite in science in the abovementioned study. This is a noteworthy observation. One point worth highlighting is that pupils' favorite activities were defined as art in the present study even though the pupils did not mention art in the study carried out in Turkey.

In their study where they examined the integrity and necessity of the life studies course based on teachers' views, Baysal et al. (2017) concluded that the interviewed teachers touched upon some problems regarding the unequal distribution of the contents of science and social studies in Life Studies course, mentioning that more of social studies were included whereas experiments in science were not given enough importance. They also added that science subjects were taught to a lesser extent and superficially; however, the subjects of social studies were mostly addressed in 2nd and 3rd grades. Indeed, it is worth noting that, in terms of Life Science course in Turkey, the pupils stated they were quite interested in science subjects and those were their favorite including the activities (experiments) in this field.

According to the study by Taneri & Engin-Demir (2013) in Turkey, it was found that pupils preferred animation and group work rather than typing in the Life Science course. Also, the most frequently used teaching methods were lecturing and question-answer. The comparison between the above-mentioned study findings and the current study shows that an examination of the general studies course in terms of methods and techniques is required.

- The participants highlighted that they liked all the subjects in the general studies course. Few pupils found animals and plants, as subjects, and art and music, as activity fields, boring.

Oker & Tay (2019) indicated in their study that 2nd and 3rd-grade pupils defined the Life science course as “a nice lesson”, “a lesson I like” and “a funny lesson”. Oker (2019) concluded in her study entitled “Developing an Attitude Scale for the Life Science Lesson and Pupils” attitudes’ that the attitudes of 2nd and 3rd-grade primary school pupils towards life science were found to be high. Likewise, Tiryaki (2018) inferred in her study entitled “Relationship between Attitudes towards Life Studies Lesson of 3rd Grade Elementary Pupils and Democratic Attitudes” that 3rd-grade pupils had a positive attitude towards life studies lessons and their level of democratic attitudes was high. According to the findings of the abovementioned and present study, it has been shown that the pupils liked the subjects of the course both in Turkey and Germany.

- The pupils’ positive experiences in general studies course were related to the ones about the subjects of animals and plants. On the other hand, few pupils stated the negative experiences in the course as the exam about the weather and the worksheets about the subject of potato.

As pupils described these as negative experiences, it indicates that they do not prefer such activities based on writing. Furthermore, the findings imply that the pupils’ age in this period is not suitable for taking exams.

- The pupils reported that they used such materials as stationery materials, realia, and others in the general studies course. According to the findings of the study, it was found that pen, glue, paper, and scissors were the most frequently used materials in the course.

Wegner et al. (2014), pupils generally find regular school lessons boring. They state that projectors, smart boards, and interactive learning software can be used as a solution to this problem. Thus, science subjects will be more exciting. In the current study, such tools were not used in the general studies lesson in Germany. From the results of various studies in Turkey, it can be inferred that these tools are used in the Life science course (Baysal et al., 2018; Üstündağ et al., 2008).

In the present study, it is concluded that the life studies textbook is not used at all. However, studies in Turkey show that the most used teaching material is the textbook (Baysal et al., 2018; Taneri & Engin-Demir, 2013; Ustundag et al., 2008). It is worth emphasizing that most of this course materials in Germany are from real life and easily available vital materials and instruments.

- Most pupils expected learning by art from the teaching of the general studies course. However, some of them wanted to learn by music. Most pupils also wanted to learn about plants; few wanted to learn about inventions. Some wanted to learn by experiments; few wanted to learn by the lecturing method.

Some of the pupils emphasized that they preferred learning by making a weather map. Again, few uttered that they wanted to learn by writing in their notebook and by studying the books about plants.

The findings of the present study hold implications for the fact that experiments are widely included in the general studies course since the experiments are among the pupils' favorite activities and the pupils want to learn by doing experiments in the course. Furthermore, it has been deduced from the materials used in the course that the activities regarding art, music, and handicrafts are carried out during the course. Taneri & Engin-Demir (2013) articulated in their study how Life Science courses are taught; the teacher gives the lecture in front of the board and the pupils listen based on deductions from pupil dramas. Therefore, the researchers emphasized that the pupils' key role is to listen to the teachers' explanations. Again, the dramas by the pupils in the abovementioned study showed that the common characteristics of the pupils assuming the role of teachers were the use of the question-answer method. Similarly, Ustundag et al. (2008) mentioned that teachers in 2nd grades mostly use question-answer methods during learning- teaching process.

Sahin & Güven (2016) conducted a study in Turkey entitled "The Opinions of Primary School Teachers on Teaching Methods and Techniques in Science and Technology, Science of Life Courses and Social Studies". The results obtained from the study showed that primary school teachers prefer lecturing, case study, question-answer, brain-storming and demonstration experiment methods in science and technology, social studies, and science of life courses. Regarding the reasons why participants do not use different methods and techniques in the cited courses, the teacher mentioned problems concerning the dearth of laboratories, shortage of materials, crowded classrooms, and double-shift schooling.

Also, this study indicated teachers' excessive usage of technology during the courses. Accordingly, it was interpreted that perpetual usage of technology in classrooms hinders the applications of different methods and techniques. Utkur (2016) probed into different methods and techniques used in the Life Studies course by two teachers and the observations showed that one of the teachers used direct instruction and generally made the pupils watch videos. Similarly, Demir & Ozden (2013) determined in their study that the most used method by classroom teachers in this course was lecturing.

Günes & Demir (2007) conducted a study entitled "Effect of Life and Science Courses Presented in Primary School Curriculum on Preparation of Pupils for Science Learning" proposing that life science and Science courses are quite effective but insufficient for preparation of pupils to science learning. This may be due to the scope of science subjects in the Life science course, the teaching of the course as well as teachers' teaching strategies. Life science courses considered important for science teaching were observed to be ineffective to a great extent and different applications were required. The classroom teachers require performing such pupil-centered activities as experiments, observations, drama, brain-storming, and projects to enhance their pupils' perspectives in science subjects in life science courses.

In the light of the findings, it has been observed that their favorite subjects in the general studies course are those with science content and the pupils' expectations from the teaching of the course are for art, science, and music fields. Based on this, certain steps may be taken for social studies content to be liked by the pupils. Besides, it is suggested that exams and worksheets described as negative experiences by the pupils, be reduced in life science courses.

References

- Baltacı, A. (2018). Nitel araştırmalarda örnekleme yöntemleri ve örnek hacmi sorunsalı üzerine kavramsal bir inceleme. *Bitlis Eren Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi*, 7(1), 231-274.
- Barke, H.-D., Harsch, G., & Schmid, S. (2012). Teaching aims. In *Essentials of Chemical Education* (pp. 61-92). Springer.
- Baysal, Z. N., Apak-Tezcan, O., & Arac, K. E. (2018). Perceptions of elementary school students: Experiences and dreams about the life studies course. *Universal Journal of Educational Research*, 6(3), 440-454. <https://doi.org/10.13189/ujer.2018.060311>
- Baysal, Z. N., Tezcan, O., & Demirbas-Nemli, B. (2017). Hayat bilgisi ders btunlugunun ve gerekliliginin öğretmen görüşlerine göre incelenmesi. *Dicle Üniversitesi Ziya Gökalp Eğitim Fakültesi Dergisi*, (30), 476-492. <https://doi.org/10.14582/DUZGEF.759>
- Buyukozturk, S., Kilic-Cakmak, E., Akgun, O. E., Karadeniz, S., & Demirel, F. (2017). *Bilimsel araştırma yöntemleri* (23. baskı). Pegem Yayınları.
- Demir, S., & Özden, S. (2013). Sınıf öğretmenlerinin öğretimsel stratejilere yöntemlere ve tekniklere ilişkin görüşleri: Hayat bilgisi dersine yönelik tanılayıcı bir çalışma. *Pamukkale Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi*, 14, 59-75.
- Erdogan, M., Kayir, C. G., Kaplan, H., Asik-Unal, U. O., & Akbunar, S. (2015). 2005 yılı ve sonrasında geliştirilen öğretim programları ile ilgili öğretmen görüşleri: 2005-2011 yılları arasında yapılan araştırmaların içerik analizi. *Kastamonu Eğitim Dergisi*, 23(1), 171-196.
- Gultekin, M. (Ed.). (2015). *Hayat bilgisi öğretimi*. Nobel Yayınları.
- Güneş, T., & Demir, S. (2007). İlköğretim müfredatındaki hayat bilgisi derslerinin, öğrencileri fen öğrenmeye hazırlamadaki etkileri. *Hacettepe Üniversitesi Eğitim Fakültesi Dergisi*, 33(33), 169-180.
- Hummel, E., Glück, M., Jürgens, R., Weisshaar, J., & Randler, C. (2012). Interesse, wohlfinden und langeweile im naturwissenschaftlichen unterricht mit lebenden organismen. *Zeitschrift für Didaktik der Naturwissenschaften*, 18, 99-116.
- Knörzer, M. (2006). Analyse der Bildungspläne für die Grundschule: Baden Württemberg Mensch, Natur und Kultur. In *Bestandsaufnahme zum Sachunterricht an Grundschulen hinsichtlich Zugängen zu nachhaltiger Entwicklung, Umwelt, Globalisierung und interkulturellem Lernen* (pp. 4-10).
- Köhnlein, W. (2011). *Die Bildungsaufgaben des Sachunterrichts und der genetische Zugriff auf die Welt*. http://www.gdsu.de/gdsu/wp-content/uploads/2011/02/koehnlein_1_11_a.pdf
- Kuhn, H. W. (2002). *Sachunterricht*. https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=2ahUKEwip3djVnfPuAhWE_qQKHVE_Cj0QFjAAegQIAxAD&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.ph-freiburg.de%2Ffileadmin%2Fdateien%2Ffakultaet%2Fsozialwissenschaft%2Fsachunterricht%2Falte%2520daten%2FPublikationen%2FSachunterricht_engl.doc&usq=AOvVaw3u5mkJZubGhXWC_3YsfsOy
- Lohrmann, K. (2017). *Zur Situation des Sachunterrichts in Baden-Württemberg*. http://www.gdsu.de/wb/pages/landesbeauftragte/baden-wuerttemberg.php?searchresult=1&sstring=lohrman#wb_7
- MoNE (Ministry of National Education) (2018). *Hayat bilgisi dersi öğretim programı (1, 2 ve 3. sınıflar)*. Ankara: MEB Yayınları.
- Ministerium für Kultus, Jugend und Sport Baden-Württemberg. (2004). *Bildungsplan 2004*.
- Ministerium für Kultus, Jugend und Sport Baden-Württemberg. (2016). *Bildungsplan 2016*.
- Oker, D. (2019). *Hayat Bilgisi dersi tutum ölceğinin geliştirilmesi ve öğrencilerin hayat bilgisi dersine yönelik tutumları ve görüşleri* (Yayınlanmamış Yüksek Lisans Tezi). Kırşehir Ahi Evran Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü.
- Oker, D., & Tay, B. (2019). İlkokul öğrencilerinin gözünden hayat bilgisi dersi ve öğrenmek istedikleri konular. *Eğitim Kuram ve Uygulama Araştırmaları Dergisi*, 5(3), 409-425.
- Onat-Kocabiyik, O. (2016). Olgubilim ve gömülü kuram: Bazı özellikler açısından karşılaştırma. *Trakya Üniversitesi Eğitim Fakültesi Dergisi*, 6(1), 55-66.

- Ozturk, C., & Dilek, D. (2004). Hayat bilgisi ve sosyal bilgiler ogretim programları. Ozturk, C. & Dilek, D. (Eds.), *Hayat Bilgisi ve Sosyal Bilgiler Ogretimi* (ss. 47-81). Pegem Yayinlari.
- Patton, M. Q. (2014). *Nitel arastirma ve degerlendirme yontemleri*. Butun, M., & Demir, S. B. (Translation Eds.). Pegem Yayinlari.
- Sahenk, S. S. (2009). Fransa egitim sistemi. Ada, S. & Baysal, Z. N. (Eds.) *Egitim Yapilari ve Yonetimleri Acisindan Cesitli Ulkelere Bir Bakis* (ss. 197-214). Pegem Yayinlari.
- Sahin, D., & Guven, S. (2016). Sinif ogretmenlerinin fen bilimleri hayat bilgisi ve sosyal bilgiler derslerindeki yontem ve teknik kullanimina iliskin gorusleri. *Online Fen Egitimi Dergisi*, 1(1), 42-59.
- Taneri, P. O., & Engin-Demir, C. (2013). Ogrenci gozuyle hayat bilgisi dersinin islenisi: bir nitel arastirma yontemi olarak yaratıcı drama. *Ilkogretim Online*, 12(1), 267-282.
- Tavsancil, E., & Aslan, E. A. (2001). *Sozel, yazili ve diger materyaller icin icerik analizi ve uygulama ornekleri*. Istanbul: Epsilon.
- Tiryaki, B. (2018). Ilkokul 3. sinif ogrencilerinin hayat bilgisi dersine yönelik tutumlarıyla demokratik tutumları arasındaki iliski (Yayımlanmamis Yuksek Lisans Tezi). Fırat Üniversitesi Eğitim Bilimleri Enstitüsü.
- Ustundag, T., Ayvaz-Tuncel, I., & Cobanoglu, F. (2008). Ilkogretim 2. siniflarda ogrenme-ogretme surecinin betimlenmesine iliskin bir durum çalisması. *Ilkogretim Online*, 7(2), 349-360.
- Utkur, N. (2016). Ogretmenlerin kullandıkları yontem ve teknik farklılıkları: Hayat bilgisi dersi ornegi. *Abant İzzet Baysal Üniversitesi Eğitim Fakültesi Dergisi*, 16(2), 1631-1651.
- Wegner, C., Strehlke, F., & Weber, P. (2014). Investigating the differences between girls and boys regarding the factors of frustration, boredom and insecurity they experience during science lessons. *Themes in Science and Technology Education*, 7(1), 35-45.
- Yildirim, A., & Simsek, H. (2013). *Sosyal bilimlerde nitel arastirma yontemleri* (9. baskı). Seckin Yayıncılık.

Authors

Z. Nurdan BAYSAL works as a professor at the Primary Teacher Education program of Atatürk Faculty of Education, Marmara University. Her interest areas include primary school, life studies, thinking skills, and teacher training.

Zeynep DILBER-OZER is a primary school teacher at the Istanbul Provincial Directorate of National Education. Her interest areas include primary school, and the general studies course.

Contact

Prof. Dr. Z. Nurdan BAYSAL, Marmara University.
Atatürk Faculty of Education, Kadıköy, Istanbul,
Turkey.
e-mail: znbaysal@marmara.edu.tr

Zeynep DILBER-OZER
Istanbul Provincial Directorate of National
Education, Istanbul, Turkey.
e-mail: zeynepdilber@yahoo.com