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## FIELD TRIPS IN PRE - SCHOOL EDUCATION

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### Abstract

The aim of the study is to investigate the effect of field trips on recognition and learning of social and cultural features of the environment where the preschool children live. 4 female and 7 male children who attend a public school, one preschool teacher and three parents were included in the study. Within the scope of the study, case study which is one of the qualitative research methods was used and a Turkish delight factory in Afyonkarahisar province was visited. In the context of the study, a field trip which consists of pre-trip, during trip and post-trip activities was planned and carried out with the study group. Semi - structured interview forms, the pictures of Turkish delight the children draw before and after the trip were used as data collection tools. The data collected in the study was evaluated using content analysis. At the result of findings of the interview forms applied before and after the trip and the pictures the children drew; it was observed that the children attained new information on Turkish delight, the production stages of Turkish delight has attracted their interests and they felt excited and happy during the experience. Besides, when compared with the pictures before the trip, the pictures they drew after the trip were more detailed. It was observed that the children asked many questions, seemed very happy and watched the activities in the factory very carefully. The parents who took part in the trip expressed their enjoyment upon participating in the trip and the contributions of such trips in terms of social and cultural development of children. At the result of the interview with the teacher, she emphasized that field trips give students opportunity to live and learn, enable retention in learning through concrete experiences and supports social life experiences.

**Keywords:** Preschool Education, Children in Preschool Period, Field Trip(s).

### INTRODUCTION

The main institution which enables the child to get familiar with the world and redounds various habits to the child beginning from the birth is its family. The family tries to teach the child the necessary experiences for basic life activities and in pre-school education institution, the child find opportunity to reinforce and enrich these experiences (Oktay and Polat Unutkan, 2003). The activities in the educational institutions should be easy, understandable and enjoyable for students and formal education need to be supported by informal education environments. By making use of the informal education environments, the students who have started their educational progress take advantage of life-long learning and associating the information they learn at school with their real lives (Bozdoğan and Yalçın, 2006).

Informal education which enables children's connection with authentic objects individually helps children obtain new information by gaining positive attitudes and values and new perspectives (Pedretti, 2004). In the education system and literature review, it is seen that informal education refers to the study tours and field trips. Field trips can be thought as a very important teaching method as they provide the students with new experiences and various activities throughout the trip (Flexer and Borun, 1984). Field trips are generally organized by the schools and are carried out within the scope of certain educational aims and interactive planning. It is expressed that field trip is an effective teaching method for supporting learning (as cited in Tal, 2000). Books, pictures, visual materials aren't as effective as first hand experiences in children's learning (Saul, 1993). Because field trips have the aim of meeting making research, problem solving and observing the event in the original context and first hand and meaningful learning needs of students. On the one hand, these trips pave the way for both getting used the environment the students live. On the other hand they help the students obtain the attainments in the curriculum and learn concepts (MEB, 2013). Field trips aren't limited to only science activities, they involve a wide range of places such as patisseries, fire departments, dentists, sport centres, science centres, science and technology museums, natural history museums, zoos, botanic gardens, forestlands, libraries, aquariums, open air laboratories, natural places, camps.

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Field trips contribute to children's getting first hand experiences, remembering the information learnt before more easily, creating the concepts of geography which they will use for perceiving and interpreting their environment in their lives. Before going to field trip, the teachers have to make plans for where and how they will go, whether there are dangerous points in the place to be visited (for which precautions may be taken), procurement of necessary equipments and getting permission from the parents. Warnings about the course of the trip should be made for the parents who will assist teachers during the trip. Besides, before the trip, the students should be informed about where they will go, what they will see and do, the rules of the place to be visited and what they should observe during the trip. In this process, the teacher should observe the children; ask them questions and helps students keep focused by using activities like drawing pictures and drama. After the trip, the teacher should help the children speak about the trip by asking them questions on what they saw, what they were impressed by and what draw their attention most during the trip. To make the activities and attainments of the trip permanent, drama activities can be organized; students can draw pictures and create stories on the field trip. If the trip is organized to a museum or a patisserie, a museum can be set up in the classroom with the materials or students can make a cake with dough in the classroom. After the activities, the teacher should make an evaluation on the aim of the trip and what they did and where they can go for the next field trip with the students (Kandır et al., 2012). According to cognitive development taxonomy of Bloom, learning is comprised of knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation steps. As the field trips are very useful for students, with pre-trip, during trip and post-trip activities students can climb up to highest step, evaluation within the scope of field trips. The children can climb up knowledge, comprehension and application steps with pre-trip activities; during the trip they can climb up comprehension, application and analysis and with post-trip activities they can reach application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation steps (Hurley, 2006). Also field trips raise cultural awareness of children and give insight them about diversity (Carroll, 2008). Children can enhance not only concepts about social studies, but also language and literacy development through field trips (Taylor et al., 1997).

Dillon et al. (2006) analyzed 150 studies which were carried out between 1993 and 2003 to find out the effectiveness of the field trips. At the result of this large scale study, it was found that field trips should be done with a good plan and controlled effectively. Besides the researchers found that field trips are important activities to enhance the information, experience and skills of the children and the teachers should include field trips in their plans very frequently. Orion and Hofstein (1994), based on the thought that field trips enhance the effectiveness of education activities, analyzed learning abilities of children during a field trip and planned a one-day field trip for 296 children (high school students). At the result of the study, it was found that field trip effected the information and attitude level of students positively and student's first hand interaction with their environment procured permanent learning. Knapp (2000) analyzed the effect of long-lasting field trips on children's minds by carrying out a program lasting for nearly 18 months. It was found that 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grade students obtained plenty of experience with the practices and achieved permanent learning on subjects of the activities and exhibitions carried out during the trip. In addition to this, the students' interest in the subjects of the activities and exhibitions carried out before, during and after the trip also increased. It was expressed that long-lasting field trips are beneficial to the development of children's memory (cognitive and affective development) and to develop children's memories such field trips should be organized for longer periods of time. Morell (2003) examined the development of information level of 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grade students on forests and forestry products with a 3-hour field trip in his study. At the result of the study, it was found that the students developed their current level of information and new information learnt was more persistent. Zoldosova and Prokop (2006) found that field trips affect the attitudes and opinions of students on science positively and expressed that field trips should be included in education. Tortop (2012) studied with gifted students and found that appropriate field trip practices contributed to their information level and attitudes on a certain subject (renewable energy).

When the related literature is reviewed, it is seen that field trips are appropriate for all age-group levels and teachers and such trips can be organized to any place within a certain schedule/plan (Saul, 1993). However, upon analyzing the studies on field trips, it is seen that the field trip studies are generally carried out with primary and high school students and there is a lack of field trip studies on pre-school period children. For this reason, it is obvious that field trip studies on pre-school period should be increased. From this fact, it was aimed to analyze the effect of field trips on pre-school children's learning social and cultural properties of the environment they live in and give suggestions to institutions, educators and parents on this subject.

## **MATERIAL AND METHOD**

In the study, it was aimed to find out the effect of field trips on pre-school children's learning social and cultural properties of the environment they live in.

### **The Model of the Research**

Within the context of the research, case study, a qualitative research method, was used. In a case study, factors related to a case, individuals, events and processes are analyzed with a holistic approach (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2008).

### **The Study Group**

Pre-school children who study at a nursery class of a public primary school in the province of Afyonkarahisar in the educational year of 2013-2014 were included in the study. The study group consisted of 11 pre-school children, one kindergarten teacher and 3 parents. 4 of the children in the sample were girls and 7 of them were boys and they were 5-6 years old. All 3 of the parents in the sample were female, house wives and their ages were between 32-39 age levels. The kindergarten teacher had bachelor's degree and 6 years of experience and she was 27 years old.

### **Data Collection Tool**

Interview forms carried out before and after the trip with children, parents and the teacher and the pictures the students draw were used as data collection tools in the study. Within the context of the study, by planning the pre-trip, during the trip and post-trip activities, a structured trip plan was created. The trip plan and interview questions to be used before and after the trip were submitted to two experts in the area to constitute internal validity. After the experts' analysis of the plan and questions, the final form of the plan and questions was reached.

### **The Analysis of the Data**

The data gathered from the interviews and the pictures the children drew was evaluated with content analysis method. Content analysis expresses the analysis implemented systematically, objectively and numerically to measure the variables in a text (Wimmer ve Dominick, 2000, p.135-136). It is aimed to present the findings obtained from this analysis in an organized and interpreted form.

All the interview forms and pictures were analyzed and coded by three independent researchers. After combining the common codes, general categories were created. After reaching consensus on the categories, they were added to the findings.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

### **The Findings Obtained from the Interviews Carried Out Before the Trip**

The findings obtained from the interviews carried out before the trip were classified into three categories; the opinions of children on the properties of Turkish delight, the production of Turkish delight and ingredients of Turkish delight.

#### **The Opinions of Children on the Properties of Turkish Delight**

Upon the analysis of the opinions of children on Turkish delight, it is seen that they have the most information on the taste of Turkish delight (n=6) and the ingredients (n=3) and the least on the shape (n=1) and tactile property (n=1) of Turkish delight. Besides, three children expressed that they don't have any information on any property of it.

#### **The Opinions of Children on the Production of Turkish Delight**

Upon analyzing the opinions of children on the production of Turkish delight, it is seen that the students have the most information on the ingredients of Turkish delight (n=11). Besides it is seen that 3 students doesn't have any information about how Turkish delight is produced and 2 of the students express that the shape of it is like a cube. For example, C4 explains the production of Turkish delight saying "They put some water and then add sugar. They are mixed. Later, Turkish delight is produced".

#### **The Opinions of Children on the Ingredients of Turkish Delight**

Upon analyzing the opinions of children on the ingredients of Turkish delight, it is seen that most of the children have information about the ingredients used in the dough of Turkish delight (n=11) and the dried fruits (nut, walnut, pistachio, etc.) (n=8) used in it. It is defined that one of the children have information about the tools used in making Turkish delight and one of the children didn't have any information on the ingredients of Turkish delight.

In addition, at the result of the interviews carried out with children before the trip, 10 of the students expressed that they participated in a field trip before and one of the children expressed that he didn't participate in a field trip before. 7 of the children expressed that they don't know where Turkish delight is produced and four of them expressed they know that Turkish delight is produced at factories.

### **The Findings Gathered from the Interviews Carried Out after the Trip**

The findings obtained from the interviews carried out after the trip were classified into two categories; how Turkish delight is produced and which points are paid attention to during production.

Upon analyzing the opinions of children on how Turkish delight is produced, it is seen that they have the most information on production steps (n=13) of it. One of the children pointed out the production place of the delight which is a cooker. Another child pointed out how the delight is shaped during

production. One of the children who expressed their views on production of Turkish delight, C6 says "First, the dough of the delight is boiled until 200°C. Later it is cooled down. Nut and coconut are added. Also food colouring is added to colourize it. Lastly, they roll up and chop it." Another student, C11 says "They add sugar, flour and milk and mix them. There is a machine; these operations are carried out in this machine".

#### **Opinions of Children on Important Points during the Production of Turkish Delight**

When the opinions of children on important points during the production of Turkish delight is analyzed, it is seen that students express being cautious against the dangers (n=5) and the ingredients (n=3) as the most important points. 3 of the children expressed that they don't remember the important points and one of the students expressed the sequence of the production steps as another point which is paid attention to during production. For example, C6 expresses his/her opinions saying "In case they get burnt, they pay attention to boiling cookers and they don't touch them. They pay attention to delight chopping machine not to cut their fingers or hands."

Moreover, at the end of the interviews carried out with children after the trip, 9 of the children expressed that workers in the Turkish delight factory produce it and two of the students expressed they don't know who produces Turkish delight. 7 of the children stated that they didn't talk about the trip with their families after the trip, 2 of them stated they explained how the delight is produced and 2 of them stated they got excited upon mentioning their feelings on the trip.

4 students reflected they got excited during the trip, 6 students reflected that they felt themselves good, one student expressed the production of delight drew his/her attention and one student stated that participating in this trip made him/her feel as if s/he was a grown up. For example C7 says "I got really excited".

When pictures about Turkish delight drawn by children before and after the trip are analyzed, it is seen that they didn't have information on the production process of delight before the trip. The production steps of delight are clearly seen in the pictures drawn after the trip. Krakowski (2012) found that the children expressed the experiences they got during a trip from kindergarten to a museum effectively after the trip. In her study to examine the views of children on field trips, DeMarie (2001) found that students learnt new information on animal species and characteristics of animals during the trip and linked the new information they learnt at the trip with their prior knowledge after the trip. Yalçın and Tekbıyık (2013) stated that integrated GEMS and project approach activities and field trips enhanced children's conceptual development about sea, marine organisms and the watercrafts. Also a recent study (Bozdoğan, Okur and Kasap, 2015) concluded that a good planned field trip to the factory enhanced children's experiences and knowledge.

Examples of pictures drawn by children before and after the trip are given below:



Figure 1. The picture drawn by C1 about Turkish delight before the trip



Figure 2. The picture drawn by C1 about Turkish delight after the trip

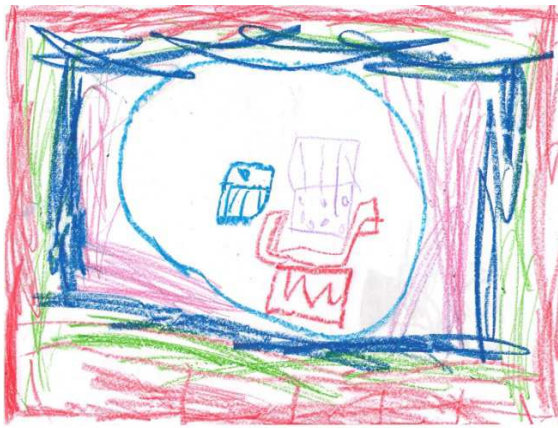


Figure 3. The picture drawn by C2 about Turkish delight before the trip



Figure 4. The picture drawn by C2 about Turkish delight after the trip

### Findings Gathered from the Interviews Carried Out with Mothers Before the Trip

Upon analyzing the findings gathered from the interviews carried out with mothers before the trip, it is remarkable that all three parents (mothers) attended field trips before and they express such trips should be organized for children.

When mothers were asked what kind of benefits field trips would bring to children, they stated they increase children's learning abilities and add to their prior knowledge and contribute to their socialization. Upon analyzing the opinions of mothers on advantages of field trips, they expressed their opinions saying:

M1: "They learn new things which they don't know. They see, experience different things. Field trips are also important in terms of socialization."

M2: "Fields trips are important in terms of children's socialization. They learn different things in these trips. They will add to their information and experience repertoire."

M3: "Children's visual memory get stronger and I believe they share many things with their friends. At least, I think, they learn our culture."

Wilby (1984) stated field trips affect social development of children positively along with personality and cognitive development and emphasized that such field trips can be organized for all age levels (as cited in Rickinson et al., 2004).

### Findings Gathered from the Interviews Carried Out with Mothers after the Trip

Upon analyzing the findings gathered from the interviews carried out with mothers after the trip, all three mothers stated that they talked to their children after the trip and they were satisfied with the trip and organization. In their study which touches upon the important points in organizing a field trip for kindergarten students, Martin and Sewes (2003) indicated that parents should have a chat with their children after the trip and should have knowledge about what attracted their children's attention during the trip.

When mothers were asked what kind of benefits field trips brought to them and their children, they stated field trips developed the children's observation skills, contributed to their socialization and helped them learn new things in the field. Below are some opinions of the mothers:

M1: "Seeing the production steps of a delight special to Afyon, how it is made, through which phases it goes through... The trip helped him learn new things."

M2: "First of all, she learns new things. For permanent learning, learning by seeing (visual learning) is more effective than explaining something. She learnt the culture and an important property of the city she lives. She learnt many new things."

M3: "At least he learnt what kind of processes a delight go through during production. He learnt how much effort is spent or he has to spend even on a cake. We sometimes make a cake with them at home. I mean, they watch the steps. When they take part in it from the beginning until the end, they feel as if the cake was more delicious. They like the things they do themselves more."

Meyers (2012) expressed families supported the idea that helping children try new foods in their neighbourhoods is effective in raising cultural awareness in children. Dillion et al (2006) stated fields trips are important and effective factors in children's learning ethnic and cultural values of their neighbourhoods based on the studies they analyzed.

When mothers were asked about their observations on their children during and after the trip, they expressed their opinions saying:

M1: "We bought delight after the trip. He explained how the delight is made, how they mix it in the cooker to everyone and he said that he saw everything. These remained in his mind. The trip was effective and enjoyable."

M2: "I realized that my child is a good observer."

M3: "She wants to take part in such activities more. Because of that, I think these activities are beneficial to their social skills."

Besides, when the mothers were asked whether they want to attend such activities again, they all stated they wanted to attend and their children were eager to attend such trips more, too.

#### **The Findings Gathered from the Interview Carried Out with the Teacher Before the Trip**

According to the findings obtained from the interviews carried out with the teacher before the trip, when the teacher was asked whether she organized a trip before, she expressed she organized many trips to the fire department, museums and meteorology department before. She also stated such trips should be planned regularly. Behrendt and Franklin (2014) expressed in the study that formal and informal field trips attract children's interest and increase their knowledge and motivation; and in order to bring about these effects to life, the teachers should make concrete plans for pre-trip, during trip and post-trip activities. Moreover they stated the students get into contact with each other and their teachers more and thus they learn more and develop advanced thinking strategies.

When the teacher was asked about the benefits of the trips for children, she expressed her opinions saying "Trips are authentic activities. They draw the student's attention more and the students visit the original context, they can make observations better." Burnett, Lucas and Dooley (1996) found the children were able to listen more effectively in different, new contexts out of the classroom in their study. In their study which examined the opinions of teachers on field trips, Nabors, Edwards and Murray (2009) stated the children obtained concrete experiences during field trips and as the students joined the learning process actively, students achieved permanent learning during and after field trips. Athman and Monroe (2015) states that field trips are component parts of the curriculum and teachers should integrate field trips into their practices.

#### **The Findings Obtained from the Interview with the Teacher After the Trip**

According to the findings obtained from the interview with the teacher after the trip, the teacher was asked whether she had a chat with her students after the trip, she stated she had a chat with her children after the trip. During the chat, she found out students enjoyed at the trip and learnt how Turkish delight was made. Besides she remarked the context was different and interesting for students and students watched the production process of delight curiously.

Upon evaluation of all the research results generally, it was found that field trips had important effects and contributions to children's learning social and cultural characteristics of their neighbourhoods. From this point of view, Purdie, Neill and Richards (2002) emphasized the importance of field trips for children's learning their cultural identities and they remarked the educators should include field trips in their teaching processes and develop new strategies to make the field more effective. Michie (1998) found in his study that well-planned and successfully practised field trips increased eagerness of both children and teachers to organize and attend field trips. In Rebar's (2012) study carried out with teachers, teachers realized that their students learnt the subject more effectively with field trips and when the teachers made the field trip organization better, the students benefitted from that field trip even more. Wolf and Wood (2012) found in their study that field trips to museum with families helped the students gain concrete experiences and these trips fulfilled various learning needs of students. Besides the researchers expressed such trips helped families develop different viewpoints on learning processes of their children.

At the result of this research, it can be said that participation of mothers to field trips organized by teachers is important in terms of providing permanent learning and carrying on learning at home as well. Leipzig (1982) stated that field trips made with the care-giver of the child is of great importance in order to enable children learn their neighbourhood and socialize in this environment. This way, with field trips organized by their mothers children learn by doing, adjust themselves to the environment they live and put the knowledge belonging to their environment into practice more effectively and permanently. In the study they examined the effects of field trips and family participation on mental models of children developed about their environment, Eugene (2011) found that field trips and the interaction between the children and families during the trip are effective on children's developing various different mental models.

#### **RESULTS AND SUGGESTIONS**

At the result of the study aimed to investigate the effect of field trips on pre-school period children's learning process of social and cultural characteristics of the neighbourhood they live in;

- Upon the analysis of the opinions of children on Turkish delight before the trip, it is seen that they have the most information on the taste of Turkish delight and the least on the shape and tactile property of Turkish delight. Besides, it was found that the students had knowledge on the production process of the delight.
- When children's opinions on Turkish delight was analyzed after the trip, it was deduced they had knowledge of production steps of delight and important points in the production steps. The children stated they were really excited during the trip and enjoyed it.
- Upon analysis of children's pictures before and after the trip, it was seen that they didn't have any idea on how delight is produced before the trip. As for the students' pictures after the trip, the production steps of Turkish delight were reflected clearly.
- Upon the analysis of opinions of mothers on field trips before the trip, they stated field trips developed their learning skills and teach them new things and contributed to their socialization.
- When the opinions of mothers on field trips after the trip was analyzed, they stated that they had a chat with their children after the trip, they enjoyed the trip; field trips developed observation skills of their children, contributed to their socialization and field trips were effective in children's learning new things.
- Upon the analysis of pre-trip opinions of the teacher on field trips, she expressed such trips should be planned and made regularly and students were able to focus their attention better in unusual activities like field trips.
- When the post-trip opinions of the teacher on field trips was analyzed, she remarked field trips give children opportunity to learn by doing, procured permanent learning with concrete experiences and supported social lives positively.

In the light of the results obtained from the study carried out, these suggestions can be made:

- Generalizing field trips as they help children achieve more permanent and effective learning
- Encouraging the teachers to organize field trips more effectively by using various methods and techniques in the planning step.
- Encouraging active participation of parents to field trips by informing them about the trip.
- Increasing the number of studies on pre-school field trips in Turkey.

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