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Determination of the relationship between the samples of instructional methods and techniques prepared for 4th and 5th grade primary school science and technology curriculum and the principles of situated learning in Turkey

Hikmet Sürmeli^{a*}, Metin Aşçı^a, Pınar Kızıllıhan^b

^aMarmara University The Faculty of Atatürk Education

^aAnkara University The Faculty of Educational Sciences

^bAnkara University The Faculty of Educational Sciences

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Abstract

Lauillard (1993) indicated the importance of association between object or fact and situation they included in the process of learning and teaching for educational quality. He supported that knowledge has an environmental nature and it can not be thought separately from its environment. Besides this, he mentioned that students can not learn the concepts if they do not use. Lave (1996) specified that learning is influenced from the culture it arised, context and application. However at present, it was observed that knowledge presented in classrooms transferred to students abstracting its context and culture. This circumstance is caused usually students' failure solving problems in their real life. According to Young (1993), to prepare appropriate environment for situated learning, teachers should provide to students complex, real and problem-based activities to make their students achieve knowledge. In the process of situated learning, teachers should direct their students until they recognize this process and also they should provide their students necessary advanced information. In recent years, it is true that major changes are experienced in paradigm based on learning/teaching. From point of this view, it important to know that if the approach of situated learning has an in consistency with the sample of instructional methods and techniques presented for the teachers in primary education curriculum which based on constructivist approach and prepared for 4 and 5 grade Science and Technology Curricula.

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Keywords: S ituated learnig; science and technology curriculum; instructional methods and techniques.

1. Introduction

The theory behind situated learning or situated cognition arises from the fields of psychology, anthropology, sociology, and cognitive science (Vincini, 2003). Situated learning was first expounded in the *Educational*

E-mail address: hikmet93@yahoo.com

Researcher in 1989 and has made a significant impact on educational thinking (Brown, Collins and Duguid, 1989). According to the researchers meaningful learning will only take place if it is embedded in the social and physical context within which it will be used. To achieve this, they proposed the model of *cognitive apprenticeships*, a method designed to ‘enculturate students into authentic practices through activity and social interaction’, and based on the successful and traditional apprenticeship model (Brown, Collins and Duguid, 1989).

Jacnick (2008) stated that the concept of situated learning clearly belongs under the umbrella of sociocultural theory, a theoretical perspective where context is believed to deeply affect learning processes. Central of this theory is the importance of learning in the construction of subjectively relevant knowledge and individual learning skills. This learning perspectives posit the primacy of participation in authentic social interaction in order for learning to occur, in this way this learning is situated in social circumstances which are authentic, in terms of the application of that knowledge (Billett, 1994).

Herrington and Oliver (2003) mentioned, the critical characteristics of situated learning. They indicated that the critical characteristics of this theory can be examined within a framework of the roles and responsibilities of three mutually constitutive elements of the learning process: *the learner, the implementation and the interactive multimedia program*. With respect to their contention, situated learning requires the complete integration of the three elements and it is only when these elements are considered together in the instructional design process that the full value of this evolving instructional model can be gained. They stressed that it is important when designing interactive multimedia to consider all three interacting and overlapping elements and it is not enough to produce a program without thought for how it will be used by the students or how it will be implemented to support the learning process. From this point of view they described the critical characteristics of situated learning theory and they believed that useable knowledge is best gained in learning environments which feature the following characteristics. Therefore the learning environments will: provide authentic context that reflect the way the knowledge will be used in real-life, authentic activities; access to expert performances and the modelling of processes; multiple roles and perspectives; coaching and scaffolding at critical times; for integrated assessment of learning within the tasks; promote reflection to enable abstractions to be formed; articulation to enable tacit knowledge to be made explicit and support collaborative construction of knowledge.

Proponents of situated theory approach mentoring in two different ways, either through direct guidance from an expert or through the legitimate peripheral participation model proposed by Lave & Wenger (1991). The first, the method used by Griffin (1995), employs an expert to model and then coach students while they learn the techniques. The expert is not employing the techniques for his/her own benefit, but is using skills to show novices how to apply them. In contrast, within the legitimate peripheral participation model, the entire community of practice is working on the product, and novices learn as much or more from observation of other, somewhat more advanced participants as by direct guidance from an expert.

Situated learning theory based on the assumptions of constructivist approach which can be clarified as “learning is structured through real life context, real tasks and social experiences”. In respect of this theory, knowledge is situated and it belongs to part of the context, the cultures it is used and developed. With the development of new curricula at the primary education level in Turkey, the Science and Technology Education curriculum was renewed based on constructivist approach. The major goal of the Science and Technology curriculum makes students scientifically literate persons which means that students should understand the interrelationships among the natural world, technology, and science and apply scientific knowledge and skills to personal decision-making and the analysis of societal issues.

In this study it was tried to display how extent of relationship between principles of situated learning and the sample of methods and techniques presented for the teachers in primary education programme which based on constructivist approach and prepared for 4 and 5 grade science and Technology curricula

2. Methods

In this study, the technique of document analysis was used which is existent in qualitative research methods. The sample were obtained from primary school science education programme employed in 2008-2009 academic year and the literature related with educational field. The methods and techniques suggested to teachers for related activities in science programme and the principles of situated learning are the major data for this study.

Problem Solving			
Concept Mapping			

Table 1 shows that fourth and fifth grades “*Science and Technology*” curriculum include contexts suitable for situated learning theory. The activities presented in the new fourth and fifth grade Science and Technology curriculum were found relevant to the authentic activities. Attending these activities students find and solve the problems they given, in other words, solutions of the problems are discovered by the learners. The most important thing in this principle is that activities should be authentic which means that they should be related with the real world.

From the analysis of the fourth grade Science and Technology Education curriculum, it can be understand that students access to expert performances and modeling of process by doing experiments and project, modelling, and also observing the teachers performing skills before the task. This performances showed the appropriateness of the activities with the principle of expert performances and the modelling of process. However this principle was not sufficiently considered in fifth grade Science and Technology Education curriculum.

Many activities presented in the fourth and fifth grades Science and Technology curriculum contained discussion sessions to get the students perceptions related with the context and some of these activities give the students multiple roles and oppurtunities to explore the context from a number of perspectives. This means that the new fourth grade Science and Technology curriculum gave place to provide multiple roles and perspectives of the learners. On the other hand in the activities of fifth grade Science and Technology Education, students were not given oppurtunities to reveal their perceptions.

A lot of activities presented in the fourth “*Science and Technology*” curriculum included activities to provide students discussing the issues, reporting back, presenting the findings, debating the issue and thus they have the oppurtunity to articulate, negotiate and defend their knowledge. Whilst the activities presented in the new fifth grade Science and Technology curriculum were including sufficient colaborative studies, the activities presented in the new fourth grade Science and Technology curriculum were including insufficient colaborative studies.

However the results of this study showed that the teachers’ role in coaching and scaffolding to the students were not enough. Analysis showed that the teachers’ role as a coach should be increased. Results of the analysis of the fifth grade “*Science and Technology*” curriculum showed the consistency of the reflection principle and the activities. However in the currirulum of fourth grade the principle of promoting reflection to enable abstractions to be formed was considered insufficiently.

4. Discussion

It can be concluded that many activities seen in the fourth and fifth grades Science and Technology curricula included the principles of situated learning theory. Moreover, as it is said before it was found some differences between these two grades levels. Here it was tried to discussed that why such differences could be stemmed from. The reason why accomodating insufficiently the principle of *collaboration*, *coaching* and *scaffolding* and *promote reflection* compared with other principles in the new fourth grade Science and Technology curriculum may be arised from students’ or teachers’ attitudes. Hence, teachers ought to give priority collaboration and scaffolding. Also, in order to promote reflection of the students teachers must give much more importance the activities included modeling, analyzing graphs during the situated learning process. The reason why performing insufficiently the principle of *expert performances*, *multiple roles and perspectives* in fifth grade Science and Technology Education curriculum may be arised from diffulties of such activities. Therefore, teachers should encourage to students’ multiple roles and and expert performances in the classroom. To that end, teachers also can give much more responsibilities for the students outside the classroom. Because situated learning activities are in need of moving beyond the classroom. Dramatization serves to activate students’ creating thinking abilities and it also contains many activities; such as collaboration, discussion, questioning-answering. It is crucial that using the dramatization techniques in both forth grade and fifth grades curricula. Due to dramatization covers many instructional methods and tehniques in situated learning, it should be given importance as instruction period.

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