



Teachers' Opinions on the Teaching Processes of Basic Life Skills¹

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Abstract

Life Sciences course is important for students to be aware of the problems they will encounter in life and to develop effective solutions, along with academic learning such as reading, writing and basic mathematics. Students are given the opportunity to establish relationships between school and life through activities focused on achievements in the Life Sciences course. In order for students to be equipped with basic life skills, elementary school teachers teach different skills in the curriculum through different studies in their teaching processes. The purpose of this study is to explore the opinions of elementary school teachers regarding the teaching situations of basic life skills in the Life Sciences course. The study was based on the case study design, one of the qualitative research methods. 26 elementary school teachers were interviewed in the study, which was determined according to the criterion sampling method (being a classroom teacher, being a classroom teacher in the first three classes of Life Sciences teaching). The interview form used included three demographic questions and three open-ended questions. Descriptive analysis technique was used to analyze the collected data. As a result of the research, elementary school teachers; It is seen that they prioritize personal care, obeying the rules and health protection skills to ensure that their students are physically and spiritually healthy.

Keywords: *skill, basic life, primary school*

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Introduction

The rapid increase in knowledge and the increase in the subjects to be learned have forced individuals to seek new searches in the learning process. It is emphasized that students should have skills that involve using information rather than learning endless information. In addition to the importance of the skill in the education process, its conceptual content is also discussed (Boutin, 2004; Dionnet, 2002). According to the Turkish Language Association, the concept of skill is defined as "a person's ability to accomplish a task, to complete a process in accordance with its purpose, dexterity, depending on predisposition and education." According to Bronckart (2009), the concept of skill is explained as the set of mental processes required to reveal and solve a problem. According to Güneş (2015), skill is the individual's power to perform a job, task or activity. Accordingly, skill consists of elements such as knowing, taking action and applying. Güneş (2015) emphasized that the skill can only be done consciously, that it is used to transfer knowledge to other situations, that the skill has a developable and applicable structure, and that learning the skill by considering it as a whole requires a process.

In primary schools, which have an important place in students' learning, it is aimed to provide students with different skills as well as knowledge. One of the courses where skills are taught is the Life Science Program. The Life Sciences course, taught in the first, second and third grades of primary school, aims to provide students with knowledge, skills and values based on the concepts of "individual, society and nature" (Altun & Güler, 2020). According to Güneş and Demir (2007), in basic education, where individual identity begins to form, the Life Sciences course is of great importance in helping students find solutions to daily life problems, reflect what they have learned into daily life, adapt to their country and the world, and become a conscious consumer and especially a producer. Within the framework of the Life Science Course Curriculum (2018), students should be able to recognize their living space, be aware of their individual potential, have accepted values and judgments, be compatible with universal human criteria as well as national and spiritual values, apply the principles that are important for a healthy and safe life in their lives, and develop biotechnology skills. There are different achievements such as being an entrepreneur and participant by accepting that one is a social being, developing perception skills (time, space, content), using material and human resources efficiently, developing independent learning skills, using technology consciously and correctly, loving and protecting nature. Basic life skills included in the life sciences course curriculum regarding these achievements; research, observation, communication, collaboration, career awareness development, self-management, time management, etc. 23 of them are listed.

In addition to academic learning such as reading, writing and basic mathematics, Life Sciences course is important for students to be aware of the problems they will encounter in life and to develop effective solutions. In the Life Sciences course, students are given the opportunity to establish relationships between school and life through activities focused on achievements. In order to equip students with basic life skills, elementary school teachers teach different skills in the curriculum through different studies in their teaching processes. The aim of this study is to investigate the opinions of elementary school teachers regarding the teaching of basic life skills in the Life Sciences course. The data of the research are important in terms of reflecting the views of elementary school teachers working in institutions where students' first learning takes place, regarding basic life skills, and determining the priorities of teachers in the learning processes offered to students. The results of this study are remarkable in that they present the importance of basic skills that should be addressed in the Life Sciences course at primary school level and the reasons for prioritizing these skills.

Method

Research Design

This study is a descriptive research among qualitative research methods. Descriptive research is a qualitative research method used to classify data and summarize and interpret the findings (Baltacı, 2019). In this context, the teaching process of basic life skills in the Life Sciences curriculum was examined in the research. Permission was received from Harran University Social and Human Sciences Ethics Committee to conduct the research.

Participants

The study group was determined according to the criterion sampling method, one of the purposeful sampling methods frequently used in qualitative research methods. While determining the criteria, criteria such as being a 1st, 2nd and 3rd grade teacher teaching Life Sciences and teaching Life Sciences in a school were taken into consideration. The research was conducted with 26 elementary school teachers working actively in Malatya in the 2022-2023 academic year. Table 1 includes the demographic characteristics of the participants.

Table 1

Demographic Characteristics of Participants

Demographic Characteristics	f	
Gender	Female	17
	Male	9
Professional experience	6-10 years	8
	11-15 years	11
	16-20 years	5
	21 years and above	2
The class they teach	1st level	6
	2 nd level	8
	3rd level	12

According to the data in Table 1, 17 of the research participants was women and 9 are men. 8 of the participants have 6-10 years of professional experience, 11 of them have 11-15 years, 5 of them have 16-20 years of professional experience and 2 of them have 21 years or more of professional experience. 6 of the teachers teach 1st grade, 8 teach 2nd grade and 12 teach 3rd grade. According to the table 1 data, it can be said that the participants were mostly women, they mostly have 11-15 years of professional experience, and they were mostly 3rd grade teachers.

Research Instrument and Procedures

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the participants using the interview form prepared by the researcher. There are three demographic questions in the interview form (gender, professional experience and the level the teachers teach). The following questions were asked regarding the primary school structure within the scope of the research:

- Are there any skills that you prioritize in the process of teaching basic life skills in the Life Sciences course? If so, what are these skills?
- What is/are your reason for giving priority to certain skills in the teaching process of basic life skills in the Life Sciences course?
- What teaching methods do you use in the process of teaching basic life skills in the Life Sciences course?

Validity and Reliability

To ensure the validity and reliability of the research, the following points were taken into consideration:

- During the data analysis process, two researchers coded the same data separately. In addition to the researcher, an expert who completed his master's degree in Measurement and Evaluation also participated in the study.
- The definitions of the codes and the scope of the research questions were made clearly among the researchers, and the situation or characteristics to be determined in the research were explained.
- After the data analysis, the participants' opinions were conveyed to the participants via e-mail and their confirmations were received.
- After the questions asked, participants were given enough time to express their opinions.
- Within the scope of the research, real people who experienced the situation were reached based on criterion sampling and the characteristics of the participants are given in a table.

The Role of Researchers

The researcher assumed different roles in the study. While carrying out the study, he first made a literature review and examined the research done in the field. The needs in the field were determined depending on the purpose, method and results of the studies. The researcher determined the study questions and applied them to the participants after expert opinion. He collaborated with an expert during the data analysis process. He worked on creating the findings and writing the results and discussion sections.

Data Analysis and Process

The obtained data were evaluated with descriptive analysis. According to Yıldırım and Şimşek (2008), descriptive analysis is used to process data that does not require detailed analysis. Descriptive analysis was used to determine the demographic characteristics of the teachers interviewed within the scope of this study, to determine which of the basic life skills they prioritize in the Life Sciences program, to reveal the reasons for prioritizing, and to determine the teaching methods used in teaching basic life skills. The opinions of the participants were transferred to the word page. The answers given by the participants to the same question were brought together. Frequently repeated opinions from the answers were determined as codes and presented in tables.

Findings

The findings obtained within the scope of the research are presented in tables. First of all, elementary school teachers were asked, "Are there any skills you prioritize in the process of teaching basic life skills in the Life Sciences course?" If so, what are these skills?" Teachers' opinions regarding the basic life skills they prioritize in the teaching process are given in Table 2.

Table 2

Opinions on Basic Life Skills Prioritized in the Teaching Process

Opinions	f
Personal care	17
Don't follow the rules	15
Protecting your health	13
Recognizing national and cultural values	11
Partnership	10
Communication	9
Self-protection and recognition	9
Using resources correctly	6

Table 2 includes views on basic life skills that are prioritized in the teaching process. According to the data in Table 2, during the teaching process of elementary school teachers' Life Sciences course; personal care (f=17), following the rules (f=15), protecting health (f=13), protecting national and cultural values (f=11), cooperation (f=10), communication (f=9), self-care etc. They use their skills in lessons. They give priority to the skills of protection and recognition (f=9) and correct use of resources (f=6). The participants' opinions on the subject are as follows:

K7: "Life Sciences courses are one of the main learning areas of students. We teach all knowledge except reading, writing and mathematics skills through this course. I think this lesson is most important for children to be aware of their own characteristics. In other words, students' learning the rules of cleanliness and protecting the health of their bodies are important skill areas of this course. "I often emphasize this."

K11: "This course seems designed to teach national and spiritual values. We prepare students for secondary school or other levels of education, but we hope that they will be more compatible with society as a social being. In this sense, I think it is important for them to recognize national and cultural values."

Secondly, elementary school teachers were asked, "What is/are your reason for giving priority to certain skills in the process of teaching basic life skills in the Life Sciences course?" Teachers' views on the reasons why they prioritize basic life skills in the teaching process are given in Table 3.

Table 3

Teachers' Views on the Reasons for Prioritizing Basic Life Skills

Opinions	f
Ensuring that students are physically and mentally healthy	14
Creating an environment for people to live happily together	13
To prepare students for the subject areas they encounter/will encounter most frequently in life	11
Using limited resources effectively	10
Preparing students for independent living	9
To raise qualified individuals who love their country	8
To ensure that students become individuals suitable for the new century	8
To provide students with the opportunity to know themselves and their environment more accurately	14

Table 3 includes opinions about the reasons why basic life skills are given priority in the teaching process. According to the data in Table 3, teachers in the Life Science teaching process; ensuring that students are physically and spiritually healthy (f=14), preparing an environment for people to live happily together (f=13), preparing students for the subject areas they encounter/will encounter most frequently in life (f=11), using limited resources effectively (f=10).), preparing students for independent life (f=9), raising qualified individuals who love their country (f=8), ensuring that students are individuals suitable for the new century (f=8) and providing students with the opportunity to know themselves and their environment better (f=5). They give priority to some skills for their purposes. The participants' opinions on the subject are as follows:

K14: "I saw the ability to protect one's health as important because health is everything. Children sometimes learn here what they did not learn from their parents. We must teach children everything from hand hygiene to toilet use habits. Maybe not all of these children will be engineers or doctors, but they will all know or should know how to protect their health. (...)"

K22: "21. They call it 21st century skills, but are the children we raise suitable for this? This is the question I'm really thinking about. We need to raise our students in accordance with this age. "I would like my students to be young people who communicate with everyone, know themselves and are at peace with society."

Finally, the elementary school teachers were asked, "Which teaching methods do you use in the process of teaching basic life skills in the Life Sciences course?" The question was asked. Teachers' opinions on the ways of teaching basic life skills are given in Table 4.

Table 4
Opinions on Ways of Teaching Basic Life Skills

Opinions	f
Telling case studies	19
Don't be a model	17
do not observe	15
show off	13
peer learning	11
Going on trips inside and outside of school	9
Simulation or simulation	8
Don't do drama	7
Experimentation	5

Table 4 includes teachers' opinions on the ways of teaching basic life skills in the Life Sciences teaching process. According to the data in Table 4, teachers regarding the teaching of basic life skills in Life Sciences teaching; telling case studies (f=19), being a model (f=17), observing (f=15), demonstrating (f=13), peer learning (f=11), taking trips inside and outside the school (f= 9) use different teaching methods such as simulation (f=8), drama (f=7) and experimentation (f=5). The participants' opinions on the subject are as follows:

K1: "I tell a lot of case studies when teaching basic life skills. For example, I recently created a short event explaining to students the importance of following school rules. In essence of the text; There was a child who was comfortable asking for the right to speak because he obeyed the school rules, who did not fall and get injured because he did not run in the corridors, who did not disturb anyone because he did not talk loudly, and who was not disturbed himself. We discussed with the children what that child did wrong and right, the consequences of his actions, and how we should act. "I think it was very enjoyable."

K23: "It is very important for the future of our country that students use the existing natural resources correctly. In this context, I took him to the Municipal Catchment Department so that he could get to know the water resources we have and develop awareness of using them correctly. We couldn't go inside the skip because it was forbidden, but an officer there showed us around and gave information about the capacity of the ski. The children were very impressed. During the trip, one of my students said, "I didn't know the water might run out one day, so I should use it more sparingly from now on." he said.

Discussion, Conclusion and Recommendations

During the teaching process of Life Sciences course, elementary school teachers ; They give priority to the skills of personal care, obeying the rules, protecting their health, recognizing national and cultural values, cooperation, communication, self-protection and recognition, and using resources correctly. According to Aladağ (2016), the Life Sciences course ensures that students are mentally, physically and spiritually healthy; aims to raise individuals who have democratic values, care about their homeland and nation, and are committed to national and universal values. According to Baysal (2006), the Life Sciences course prepares the ground for students to live as more active individuals and citizens and is a teaching program suitable for child development. In this context, the skills that the course aims to provide will not only support children to continue their lives as individuals, but also provide appropriate content for children's psychological, sociological and biological development.

In the Life Sciences teaching process; to ensure that students are physically and spiritually healthy, to prepare an environment for people to live happily together, to prepare students for the subject areas that they encounter/will encounter most frequently in life, to use limited resources effectively, to prepare students for independent life, to raise qualified individuals who love their country, to ensure that students are individuals suitable for the new century. and they prioritize some skills in order to enable students to know themselves and their environment more accurately. According to Binbaşoğlu (2003), the Life Sciences course aims for the child to examine the social and cultural environment, obtain accurate information about environmental problems, and live a life in peace with nature. In this context, it is compatible with the scope of the course that elementary school

teachers want to equip students with basic life skills in order to prepare them for the subject areas that they encounter most frequently in life and to teach students to use limited resources effectively.

Regarding the teaching of basic life skills in Life Sciences teaching; different teaching methods such as case study, modelling, observation, demonstration, peer learning, in-school and out-of-school trips, simulation, drama and experiment are used by teachers. In their study, Altun and Güler (2020) pointed out that the activities offered within the scope of Life Science teaching are similar to daily life, that some of the gains in the program do not remain at an abstract level, and that it is important to transfer these gains to real life. According to Aykaç (2011), it is important for the methods, techniques and tools used in the Life Science course to be from real life in order to ensure effective and efficient learning. In this context, it is important for the participating teachers to express methods such as telling case studies, being a model, and making observations in terms of presenting life situations.

Depending on the research findings, in-school and out-of-school learning activities that will enable students to get to know their entire environment, starting from themselves, and their social, sport and cultural development should be carried out more intensively in basic education institutions. In relation to the purpose and scope of the course, applied projects should be prepared for the development of health knowledge in order to ensure that students are physically and spiritually healthy. In order to prepare an environment for people to live happily together, social studies strengthened with universal principles, equipped with the concepts of human rights, peace and democracy should be expanded.

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