



## Use of in-class variables in Social Studies courses

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### Abstract

This research aims to determine the use of classroom variables in social studies teaching based on the observations of social studies teacher candidates. In the study Phenomenological research design, and qualitative method were utilized. Criterion sampling and snowball sampling techniques, which are among purposive sampling methods, were used to determine the study group. The data were collected using the focus group interview technique via a semi-structured interview form developed by researchers. After the necessary permissions were obtained, the interviews with the participants were recorded and transcribed in written. Content analysis was conducted on the data obtained from the participants. The results revealed that social studies teachers' preferences of strategies, methods, and techniques were presentation, lecture, question-answer, and brainstorming in the teaching of social studies courses. Looking at the roles of teachers and students in the classroom, the teacher had an active role for distributing information, asking questions, classroom management, encouraging participation, and drawing attention to important points. Students, on the other hand, seemed to have passive roles, listening to what the teacher says, answering questions, and taking notes. Considering the use of materials in the Social Studies course, it was revealed that teachers generally used easily accessible materials such as books and maps, some teachers did not make use of computers, projectors, and interactive boards although they had the opportunity to use them, and even though some teachers wanted to use various materials in the lesson, it appeared that they could not make use of the necessary materials for the lesson due to the limited facilities of the school and the classroom. Another conclusion obtained from the research was that various strategies, methods, and techniques could not be used in the course due to the crowded classes, classroom management problems.

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**Keywords:** Social studies courses; in-class variables; roles of teachers, classroom management

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## **1. Introduction**

### *1.1. Introduce the problem*

Although it is not known exactly where and when social studies education started (Sönmez, 2010), the teaching of social sciences, which is within the scope of today's social studies education, dates back to the Roman period (Safran, 2014). The first course on social studies was delivered in the United States (Sönmez, 2010). Social studies emerged in order to bring together people from different ethnic groups living in America in the 19th century and develop an ideal of living together among these people (Barr, Barth & Shermis, 2013). In the Ottoman period, the courses on history and geography, which are considered within the scope of social studies education, were taught formally for the first time in the Tanzimat period (Öztürk and Otluoğlu, 2005; Akyüz, 2005; cited in Safran, 2014: 12). In this period, the power of education was utilized in order to keep people of different ethnicities together around the ideal of “Ottomanness” (Akyüz, 2008). During the Republic period, the social studies courses were included in the primary school education programs in 1926, 1936, 1948 and 1962 with various changes within the framework of the single discipline understanding inherited from the Ottoman Empire. This understanding continued until 1962 when the social studies courses were delivered under the title “society and country” which covered the topics on history, geography and citizenship (Sönmez, 2010). In 1968 the primary school education program was modified and the “society and country” course was renamed as “social studies” course (Öztürk, 2012).

The course is defined by the ministry of national education (MONE) as follows: “the social studies courses are basic education courses that reflect the topics of social sciences and citizenship such as history, geography, economics, sociology, anthropology, psychology, philosophy, political science and law in order to help individuals realize their social existence. These courses combine learning domains under units or themes and analyse the interaction of people with their social and physical environment in the context of the past, present and future.” (MONE, 2005: 46). The definition of the MONE indicates that instead of single discipline understanding the social studies courses are an interdisciplinary framework in which findings from different disciplines are employed.

Over time the definition, the vision and mission, philosophy and education program of the social studies courses have varied (Çelikkaya, Karakuş and Öztürk-Demirbaş, 2010; Gömleksiz and Bulut, 2006; MONE, 2005; İbrahimoglu, 2010). Such changes are clearly results of the changes in educational sciences, educational philosophy, technological advances and new understandings about citizenship. Another change occurred in 2004. More specifically, in order to produce individuals who can easily adapt to the changing world conditions, the education program of the social studies courses was again changed by MONE in 2004.

Until 2004 the education program of the social studies courses were developed based on the behaviorist principles. However, since 2004 the education program of the course has been developed based on the constructive education approach (İbrahimoglu, 2010; Örs, 2007). This change in the education program of the social studies courses has led to significant modifications in content, teaching-learning process and assessment process. In the traditional behavioral approach, students are passive receivers of the knowledge and of their learning process, and teachers are active and disseminate information to the students. Based on Friere (1990: 26-27) Demir (2006: 3) states that it creates one-way communication pattern between teachers and students and reflects and understanding of students as empty containers that should be filled by teachers. “The better the teacher fills the containers, the better the teacher. The more docile students submitting to be filled, the better they are.” However, in the constructivist approach, unlike the traditional approach, students are the active participants of their learning process and are actively included in the process of constructing knowledge. Doğanay (2008) argues that the education program which is delivered through a student-centered constructivist approach is activity-based and aims to achieve desired outcomes through activities that will ensure the active participation of the student, rather than the direct transfer of knowledge and skills by the teacher.

In the education program of the social studies courses which was initiated from the school year 2005-2006 significant changes based on constructivist approach were made in the teaching-learning processes and, consequently, in the teacher and student roles. As stated above in the tradition approach teachers are active, but students are passive and are required to listen to the lecture quietly. However, with the changes made in the teaching-learning processes in the new education program, the teacher guides the learning by ensuring the active participation of the learners through the activities to be carried out in the teaching process. Students, on the other hand, are assigned roles in which they are responsible for their own learning in order to ensure the permanence of learning, to develop high-level thinking skills and to ensure their participation in the formation of knowledge. In a report on the education program of the social studies courses that was redesigned in 2004-2005 it is stated that instead of teaching or transmitting knowledge to students teachers are assigned new roles such as the organizer of the learning setting, guide and facilitator, and the new roles for students include the following: those who ask questions, problem-solvers and those who construct cognitive structures through activities (ERG, 2005). The same report also indicates that in teaching-learning process of the social studies courses, materials such as maps, atlas, mute maps, earth spheres, videotapes, films, filmstrips and slides should be used.

As in the other components of the social studies education program, measurement and assessment techniques were included in process in accordance with the basic principles of the constructivist approach. In the behavioral approach, traditional assessment and evaluation techniques such as short-answer tests, multiple choice tests, written and oral

exams are used to evaluate student achievement, rather than the assessment of the learning process (Gelbal and Kelecioğlu, 2007). In the constructivist approach, it is stated that besides student achievement, process evaluation, which is not included in the behaviorist approach, should be included through the alternative measurement and evaluation techniques that reveal the developmental changes experienced by the student in the process of learning. In the education program of the social studies courses redesigned in 2005, the use of alternative measurement and assessment devices along with traditional measurement and assessment tools was made priority (Çelikkaya, Karakuş and Öztürk-Demirbaş, 2010; Gelbal and Kelecioğlu, 2007).

### *1.2. Research aim and questions*

The aim of the study is to reveal the use of in-classroom variables in the social studies education based on the views of the pre-service teachers. In line with this aim the study attempts to answer the following research questions:

- ✓ Which teaching strategies, methods and teachers are employed in the social studies courses?
- ✓ Which materials are employed in the social studies courses?
- ✓ What are the roles of teachers and students in the social studies courses?
- ✓ Which measurement and assessment techniques are employed in the social studies courses?
- ✓ What are major classroom management problems during the social studies courses?

## **2. Method**

### *2.1. Design of the study*

The phenomenological design, one of the qualitative research methods, was used in this study. The phenomenological design is used about the events, experiences, perceptions, concepts and situations that we are aware, but do not have an in-depth and detailed understanding about them (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2013). The phenomenon addressed in this study is the in-classroom variables involved in the learning-teaching process of the social studies courses.

### *2.2. Participants and sampling procedures*

The data required for phenomenological studies are collected from individuals or groups who experience the phenomenon being studied and who can express or reflect this phenomenon (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2013: 80). Therefore, the participants of the study

were selected using the criterion sampling and snowball sampling techniques which are part of the purposive sampling. In the criterion sampling technique some pre-established criteria are used to choose the participants (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2013). In the snowball sampling technique participants are chosen based on the reference of the other participants (Ekiz, 2013). The criterion used in the selection of the participants was those pre-service teachers who had an opportunity to observe the social studies courses. Following the selection of some participants who met this criterion the others were identified based on their suggestions who also met the same criterion. In short, a total of thirteen participants was chosen. Of them nine are male and four are female.

### *2.3. Data collection and data analysis*

The data of the study were collected using the focus interviews which are one of the qualitative data collection techniques. The focus group interviews are defined as discussion series which are carefully planned in order to gain perceptions of the participants about a pre-determined topic in a moderate and non-threatening environment (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2013: 180). During the process structured interviews were made with the participants. In the interviews an interview form was used. In order to develop it first the related studies were reviewed and then, the items were developed. Alternative questions and probe questions that would provide in-depth information were included in the interview form in order to make sure that the items would be understood by the participants. Four experts examined the draft items in order to check the suitability of the items in the interview form in terms of the purpose of the study and the internal validity of the questions. In line with the expert opinions, necessary corrections were made on the interview form.

The items in the interview form aim to reveal the use of variables in the classroom within the scope of the Social Studies course based on the observations of pre-service teachers who were studying at internship schools. The first question in the form is about the teaching strategy, methods and techniques used within the scope of the social studies course. The second question is concerned with the materials used in the course. The third one deals with the roles of the teacher and the students in the teaching-learning process during the social studies courses. The fourth question is about the measurement and assessment techniques used in the social studies courses, and the last question is related to the classroom management courses during the social studies courses. The items included in the interview form used in the study are given in Table 1.

Table 1. Items in the interview form

1	What are your observations about the teaching strategies, methods and techniques used in the social studies courses? Please explain your views with examples.
2	What are your observations about the use of materials in the social studies courses? Please explain your views with examples.
3	What are your observations about the roles of the teacher and the students in the teaching-learning process of the social studies courses?
4	What are your observations about the measurement and assessment techniques used in the social studies courses?
5	What are the classroom management problems experienced by the teachers in social studies courses?

As stated earlier focus group interviews were carried out in order to collect the data. After the consent of the participants, the face-to-face focus group interviews were recorded with a tape recorder. The recorded interviews were transferred into the computer and necessary analyses were made.

The data collected were examined using the content analysis. Content analysis was performed in four stages: the coding of data, the development of themes, the presentation of codes and themes, and the interpretation of findings (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2013). Before the coding of data the data were read several times. Then the data were coded. In the coding of the data either some common terms from the related studies or the terms of the participants were employed. Some code-based themes were developed to classify similar or different views of the participants. In the organization of the codes a decision was made over which codes would be placed under which heading (Glesne, 2012). At the third phase the findings are presented using tables. The use of figures, tables and graphics in the data presentation makes easier to understand the findings (Glesne, 2012). At the final phase the findings are interpreted.

In order to establish the validity of data analysis the data coded were also reviewed by another person. Those codes about which this independent reviewer had the same view are mutually agreed codes. The others are not mutually agreed codes. Interrater agreement was calculated using the Miles & Huberman's coefficient, namely  $[\text{mutual agreement} / (\text{mutual agreement} + \text{disagreement}) \times 100]$  (Miles & Huberman, 1994 cited in Yapıcıoğlu, 2016: 76). The interrater reliability coefficient is found to be 90,6%.

### 3. Findings

The findings regarding the observations made by thirteen pre-service teachers in the social studies courses for about a semester and the interpretation of these findings are given referring to research questions as follows.

RQ1) What are your observations about the teaching strategies, methods and techniques used in the social studies courses?

Table 2. Teaching strategies, methods and techniques used in the social studies courses

Themes	Codes	f
Strategies	Presentation-related strategies	13
	Discovery strategies	4
Methods	Lecturing method	12
	Question-answer method	11
	Discussion method	2
	Cooperation method	1
Techniques	Group work method	1
	Concept map technique	2
	Brainstorming Technique	5
	Demonstration technique	3
	Socratic Argumentation Technique	1
	Drama Technique	1
Total	Analogy Technique	1
		57

As can be seen in Table 2 the answers of the participants to the first question produced three themes, namely strategies, methods and techniques. Of them the theme of strategies has two codes: presentation and discovery. In regard to the methods used by the teachers in the social studies courses it was reported by the participants that the teachers mostly used the methods of lecture and question-answer sessions, and they less used the methods of discussion, cooperation and group work. Under the theme of techniques, it is found that they mostly used brainstorming which is followed by

demonstration technique. Some of the direct quotations from the statements of the participants in this regard are as follows:

*K: “The teacher mostly uses presentations. He asks questions to measure readiness of the students. He tells the topic first. He gives some information about the topic and then asks questions to the students in a question-answer fashion. It continues after receiving the answers. Generally, the teacher is active, but sometimes the students can become active depending on the subject. But mostly the teacher conveys information. Because some subjects may seem abstract to students. For example, the topic of democracy is an abstract topic to the student.”*

*K2 “Now the teacher uses the presentation strategy at the beginning of the lesson. First, he tells the students what they will study in the course to give general details of the subject. Then he tries to make students find the answers by using the question-answer technique through discovery.”*

*K3: During the semester, I pay great attention to this. The teacher delivers the lesson by presentation. He uses straight narration, apart from that he uses question-answer technique. He does not use any other techniques and methods, he used them as a standard. He mostly makes students read the subject. He is reading the subjects in initial paragraphs, then he asks them to write down the topics in their notebook. He has been teacher for thirteen years, but he does not make much use of (different) methods and techniques.*

Based on the findings above it can be stated that the most frequently used teaching strategies are lecturing and teaching through discovery. Concerning teaching methods and techniques lecturing, question-answer sessions and brainstorming are the mostly frequently used ones whereas the others are used less or not at all. In addition, the reports by the participants indicate that social studies teachers mostly employ traditional methods in the teaching and learning process.

RQ2) What are your observations about the roles of the teacher and the students in the teaching-learning process of the social studies courses?

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Table 3. Roles of the teacher and the students in the teaching-learning process of the social studies COURSES

Themes	Codes	f
Teacher roles	Transmitting information	11
	Asking questions	7
	Establishing discipline	3
	Establishing participation	2
	Guiding students	2
	Making students to take notes	2
Student roles	Listening to the courses	11
	Answering the questions	6
	Taking notes	2
Total		46

Table 3 indicates the roles of teachers and students in the process of teaching and learning during the social studies courses. The reports by the participants are categorized into two as those of teachers and those of students. The roles of social studies teachers are generally reported as follows: transmitting information, asking questions, establishing discipline in the classroom and student participation, guiding the students and making students to take notes during the courses. The roles of students in social studies courses are reported by the participants as follows: listening to the course, answering the questions by the teachers and taking notes during the courses. The direct quotations from the participants' reports on these topics are given as follows:

*K: During the lesson, the teacher delivers the information about the topics and the students listen to him. However, the students should be more active, constantly asking questions that lead to research and investigation. In the current system, the teacher just comes and lectures in order not to get tired or to do something extra, he keeps the order in the classroom, he tells the students what to do and what not to do. He has been teaching nearly for 30 years and when he shows his toughness, the students naturally become silent. Whether they are listening to the lesson or not is a separate issue, but there is no problem in the lesson. At the end of the lesson, the teacher asks a question to one or two students, who are usually the same.*

*K: My observation is as follows: You know, they say the teacher is the king of the class, the situation in the classroom is just like that. While he was teaching the lesson, he did not involve any students in the process, and I observed that after a while the students get bored and misbehave. But when I made the preparation and explained the subject the day before, there was no break, the students were trying to participate in the lesson.*

*K: The teacher is more like a narrator. Here the authority that conveys the information is the teacher. The teacher transmits the information, and the students are in a position to listen. Students become more active when the teacher asks questions to them. Here, sometimes the students can ask questions, and the teacher answers these question through short answers. Normally the students are not very active.*

As the quotations above indicate in the social studies education, the teachers are usually in an active position in that they explain the subject and then ask questions to the students. The students are mostly in a passive position and listen to what the teacher tells and try to answer the questions posed to them on the subject. However, apart from these, it can be said that a few teachers try to make students active based the learning atmosphere of the classroom. The latter situation is explained by one of the participants as follows:

*K: The teacher usually assumes the role of the narrator. He is a guide when he is not in the role of narrator. Our teacher is smart. He can make connections between topics very well. His approach also varies from one class to another class. In some classes you can use the discussion very comfortably, in some you cannot. The teacher is in the role of narrator in some classes and is harsh; but in some classes he is more directive. This is somewhat related to the readiness of the students.*

RQ3) What are your observations about the use of materials in the social studies courses? Please explain your views with examples.

Table 4. Materials that are used in the social studies courses

Codes	f
Textbook	13
Maps	11
Interactive board	5
Blackboard	5
Projector	4
Atlas	3
Globe	3
Study sheets	2
Total	46

Table 4 shows the materials used by the social studies teachers in the courses. In the all courses observed by the participants' textbooks are the common material used. The others include maps, atlas, globe and study sheets which are not frequently employed in the courses. Finally, it was stated by the participants that some teachers did not make enough use of the projectors and interactive boards, although they had an opportunity to use them. the related direct quotations are given as follows:

*K: "Generally, the world globe and maps are used in subjects related to geography in the social studies courses. While the teacher was discussing the lakes, he distributed a map that he prepared himself to the students and asked the students to find the lakes using this map. There is a projector and an interactive whiteboard at the school. However, I did not see any teacher using them in lessons. Teachers do not seem to have necessary background in using technology for educational purposes. They try to make students active in the process of teaching and learning, but they do not attempt to achieve it by making use of technology."*

*K: "A wide variety of materials can be used if the teacher is creative.. For example, he can explain the subject to the student by likening an orange to a world. However, if you ask whether or not it is done, answer is "no". As far as I have seen, textbooks and maps are used in the courses. He hangs the map on the board and tells the subject. Sometimes he distributes mute maps to students and reinforce the subject. In general, the courses are delivered through the use of the maps, I have not seen any other materials used. In my opinion, the biggest deficiency in terms of materials is that although computers, projectors and interactive boards exist at the school, these tools are not used in any way."*

*K: "The teacher often used the globe and world map in the lessons so far. I have not seen any other material use. Although there are projectors and computers in the classroom, the teacher does not use them. The teacher has no desire to use them. The teacher does not use the board much either although it is necessary. Instead, he has students underline the text in the textbooks and says this is important. The teacher asks sample questions at the end of the lesson. I came across it twice that the teacher prepared worksheets and gave them to the students. He did not use any other material. We even wanted to give the materials we prepared at the university. The teacher said that there is no need. But we wanted to give these to the school administrator who welcomed these materials. The teacher did not show that enthusiasm, he said that it would be fine if you did not bring it, these are not something we use too much."*

Based on the quotations above it can be stated that in the social studies education the most frequently used materials include textbooks and maps. There are some social studies teachers who employed interactive boards, computers and projectors during the process of teaching and learning, but these are not much commonly used although such materials exist in the classroom. Although very few, it turns out that some teachers cannot benefit from technology-based teaching materials due to the lack of technical

equipment at the school or in the classroom. Based on the opinions obtained from the pre-service teachers, it is revealed that the teachers who delivered the social studies courses do not developed course materials themselves (except a few worksheets and maps).

RQ4) What are your observations about the measurement and assessment techniques used in the social studies courses?

Table 5. Measurement and assessment techniques used in the social studies courses

Codes	F
Multiple-choice tests	10
Yes/no tests	7
Fill in the Blank questions	6
Oral examinations	5
Written examinations	2
Total	30

Table 5 shows that there are several types of measurement and assessment techniques used in the social studies courses. Of them the most frequently used one is multiple-choice tests which are followed by yes/no questions, fill in the blank questions and oral examinations. Written examinations which require open-ended answers are found to be used less. Related quotations are given as follows:

*K: “The teacher asks questions about the points he considers important in the lesson. There are exams at the end of the term. There are different types of questions in these exams: test items, fill in the blank items and also true-false questions.”*

*K: “There is no dominant technique of measurement and assessment in the courses. The teacher does not ask so much questions to the students. It caught our attention, too. At the end of the lesson, if he had time, he asked the questions from the textbook to the students. He prefers written examinations.”*

Based on these findings it is seen that social studies teachers mostly prefer traditional forms of measurement and assessment techniques.

RQ5) What are the classroom management problems experienced by the teachers in social studies courses?

Table 6. Classroom management problems experienced by the teachers in social studies courses

Themes	Codes	f
Student-related problems	Noise	9
	Indifference to Courses	7
	Annoying Classmates	5
	Moving around the classroom during the course	4
Teacher-related problems	Failure to Perform	4
	Effective Teaching	4
	Lack of managerial skills	4
Total		33

Table 6 shows the classroom management problems observed by the participants in the social studies courses. As can be seen in Table 6 the responses of the participants were categorized into two: student-related problems and teacher-related problems. Concerning the student-related problems in classroom management the participants stated that there might be noise in the classroom due to talking of the students and students' indifference towards the courses which are cited by them as the most frequent ones. Other problems include annoying classmates and moving around room during the course. In regard to the classroom management problems based on teacher behaviors there are two major concerns: being unable to provide efficient teaching and the lack of managerial skills. The following are the related quotations from the reports by the participants:

*K: "The teacher mostly makes verbal interventions. Since the classrooms are crowded, the slightest distraction causes noise. The teacher tries to solve these mostly by addressing the students by name through verbal warning or by making eye contact. Behaviors that disrupt the order of the classroom are mostly experienced due to the fact that students are bored with the lesson because the lessons are usually verbal, after a while the students get bored and start talking to their friends, even talking to us. The most common problem in the classroom is noise."*

*K: "There was noise in the classroom as the teacher did not involve the student in the teaching and learning process. When you make the lesson fun, all students participate in the lesson. But when he says in a traditional way that I wrote this on the board and you*

*put it in your notebook, there are students who do this or not. Meanwhile, there are students walking around the classroom. For example, the students are always walking around the classroom as if the teacher is not in the classroom. I am very uncomfortable with this situation. This happens because of the way the teacher delivers the lesson, the teacher has no class control.”*

*K: “Classes are crowded in social studies courses. If the number of students is more than 20, it is very difficult to establish class order. Therefore, it is not strange that the teacher has an authoritarian approach. In such crowded classrooms and as the students are in the adolescence period, the order of the classroom can be easily disturbed by the students teasing each other.”*

*K: “The teacher delivers courses at the fifth and sixth grades. Due to his age he cannot easily understand the students. The teacher says that he has difficulty since students are very active. It is difficult for him to control the class. Although some students are knowledgeable, they are also active, but some students are both uninformed and active.”*

#### **4. Discussion and Conclusions**

In this study, which was conducted to examine the use of certain classroom variables in social studies education, it is found that the lecturing strategy is generally used in the teaching-learning process, and a few teachers sometimes use the discovery strategy in the process. The presentation strategy used by teachers to convey information to students in which they have an active role has some advantages and disadvantages. Some of the advantages of it are given by Tok (2009) as follows: being easy to use, being effective to teach events, facts and concepts and being useful in time management. In addition, it is stated that using this strategy is more effective in cases where students' prior knowledge about subjects and concepts is not sufficient (Senemoğlu, 2013). The unconscious use of this strategy causes some disadvantages. Şahin (2007) argues that as students are in a passive receptive position in the presentation strategy, their participation in the lesson may be negatively affected. Rather than higher level outcomes, the lower level cognitive, affective and psychomotor outcomes can be achieved through this strategy. It was also stated that when this strategy is employed students can get bored quickly during the teaching process due to the fact that individual differences are ignored. Based on the results obtained in terms of teaching methods and techniques it is possible to argue that while lecture method, question-answer method and brainstorming technique are frequently used, other teaching methods and techniques are almost never included. This finding is consistent with the previous findings. Yürüdü and Çoşkun-Çımbız (2017) conclude that most of the social studies teachers use the narrative method and question-answer technique in their classroom practices. It is reported that student-centered methods and techniques such as six thinking hats technique, problem solving, discussion,

drama, educational games, and travel-observation are less frequently used by the teachers. Atbaşı (2007) found that not using student-centered methods, not using methods and techniques appropriate to the subjects and the of direct instruction method in a continuous fshion are the major reasons that make social studies teaching difficult. Other studies also indicate that teacher-centered methods and techniques are mostly used in social studies teaching (Akşit, 2011; Yener, 2014). Akmehmetoğlu (2014) concludes that due to limited time, teachers have difficulties in using various methods and techniques in social studies courses.

In regard to the roles of teachers and students in the teaching and learning process it is found that teachers are mostly in a position to transfer information to the students, to have the authority and to ask questions to the students at the end of the courses. Students, on the other hand, are usually in a passive position, listening to what the teacher says, taking notes or highlighting important points and answering questions asked by teachers. Based on the reports by the participants it can be stated that traditional methods and techniques are mostly used in the teaching process suggesting that teachers are active and students are passive. The findings of the study also indicate that there are different reasons why social studies teaching is handled as teacher-centered. One of these is that teachers do not make enough effort to apply the constructivist understanding of education and insist on traditional methods. In the study by Yener (2014) the problems caused by the teachers in the social studies education were investigated. It is found that undergraduate teacher training education is insufficient, teachers cannot update their knowledge base, do not follow developments related to their profession (books, magazines, etc.) and are insufficient in practice. In the study by Gönenç and Açıkalın (2016) social studies teachers reported that they cannot not do activities that would increase student interest in the lesson and that undergraduate and in-service trainings do not assist them in acquiring the competence to make students more active. In the study by Yılmaz and Tepebaş (2011) social studies teachers stated that they experience difficulties in applying the theoretical knowledge and adapting to the school environment while performing their teaching profession due to the fact that the courses they took in undergraduate education were given at the theoretical level and not enough practice was done. It is reported that that teachers have difficulties in practices related to constructivist education understanding due to the lack of good infrastructure of undergraduate education and insufficient teaching staff in terms of quality and quantity (Yılmaz, 2010). In addition, it is thought that the fact that pre-service social studies teachers do not have sufficient background is partially due to the structure of the teacher training education program. The hours allocated to the field courses in the social studies undergraduate program are more than those allocated to courses on educational sciences, which is extremely important for the teaching profession. This situation causes social studies teachers not to know modern methods sufficiently and to be inexperienced in applying them (Tonga, 2017).

Another reason why social studies education is teacher-centered is that the class sizes are high. Class sizes above 30 are considered as undesirable (Karaçalı, 2006). In classrooms where the number of students is high, teachers try to explain the subject in a monotonous way, leaving aside the interests and needs of the students due to the anxiety of explaining the subject within the specified time. This situation causes teachers to take a more active role rather than students in the teaching-learning process. This finding of the study is consistent with previous findings. In the study by Gönenç and Açıkalın (2016) the social studies teachers participated in the study reported that they cannot give enough opportunity to students to explain their views about the topic due to the crowded classrooms and they employ traditional ways of teaching and cannot manage to cover so many activity in the courses although they would like to do. One of the problems in social studies education is the crowded class size (Atbaşı, 2007). It is reported that due to the crowded classes, not every student could be given an opportunity to speak and that students could not actively participate in the courses. Research also indicates that when social studies teachers deliver the courses using the student-centered methods, they cannot manage to cover the educational program within the specified period (Akşit, 2011; Çoban, Temir and Karaca, 2017; Karaca, 2017; Yılmaz and Tepebaş, 2011). In order for the constructivist approach to be employed in classrooms, the most frequently repeated suggestion by teachers is that the class size should be reduced (Gönenç and Açıkalın, 2016).

Concerning the materials used in social studies courses it is found that teachers mostly employ textbooks and maps which are easy to access. Some teachers do not use the interactive boards, although they have an opportunity to use them in the courses. Very few teachers are found to use projectors, atlas, worksheets and spheres in the teaching and learning process. Based on the opinions of the pre-service teachers it is seen that the most of the teachers do not develop materials themselves and use such materials in the classroom. Generally, apart from easily accessible printed materials (i.e., books and maps), technology-based materials such as animations, videos, simulations, documentary, history strips and educational games that can improve student interest are not often included in the teaching and learning process. One of the previous findings which support this finding is reported in the study by Çelikkaya (2013). More specifically, it is reported that social studies teachers mostly employ boards, maps and written materials in the teaching process. A very small portion of the teachers who participated in the study stated that they use movies, pictures, presentations and projections in the teaching process. Based on the findings it can be stated that teachers who do not use a variety of materials in social studies courses are divided into two groups. In the first group, there are teachers who do not use these materials although there are some materials that can be used for the lesson at the school or in the classroom. Since these teachers do not have sufficient knowledge and skills to develop the necessary teaching and learning materials and they are unwilling to develop and use such materials, they do



not make use of these materials in the teaching process. Developing tools and materials is a process that requires a certain level of knowledge and experience. The lack of knowledge and skills related to the development of teaching materials which may be gained during the undergraduate education and in-service teaching period makes it difficult for teachers to develop or use materials that will enrich the courses. For instance, it is reported that the undergraduate courses taken by some social studies teachers on instructional technologies were not efficient for them to develop a capacity to develop materials, whereas some teachers did not take any courses about instructional technologies (Yılmaz and Ayaydın, 2015). In another study it is reported that 89.3% of social studies teachers did not attend any in-service training related to instructional technologies and material use (Çoban and İleri, 2013). On the other hand, it is understood that the teachers in the second group could not use the materials adequately due to the fact that the school or the classroom was insufficient in terms of tools and equipment or the classes were crowded or the time allocated to the subjects was insufficient, although they wanted to use materials in the teaching process. There are numerous previous findings that support this finding of the current study (Akşit, 2011; Atbaşı, 2007; Çalışkan, 2010; Kabapınar and Karakurt, 2015; Akdeniz, 2008). For instance, in the study by Çoban, Temir and Karaca (2017) the social studies teachers reported that they could not carry out the activities effectively and efficiently due to the lack of sufficient equipment in the school. Similarly, Yılmaz and Tepebaş (2011) the social studies teachers argued that the materials required for the course were not sufficient and therefore, the courses could not be taught in accordance with the constructivist education approach. As these findings suggest some social studies teachers cannot use materials in a sufficient manner since the schools do not have sufficient equipment which prevents the teaching of the course from being effective and efficient.

Concerning the measurement and assessment techniques used in the social studies courses it is found that teachers use multiple choice testing, true-false questions, fill in the blank items, oral exams and written exams. Therefore, it is safe to argue that the social studies teachers frequently make use of traditional ways of measurement and assessment. Çelikkaya, Karakuş and Öztürk-Demirbaş (2010) found that social studies teachers have not yet been able to switch to alternative assessment and evaluation approaches and predominantly use traditional measurement and evaluation techniques. In a different study it is concluded that social studies teachers use tests that require written probe, oral probe and short answer as measurement and evaluation techniques (Koçoğlu and Ekici, 2013). It is argued that there are various reasons why social studies teachers cannot use alternative measurement and evaluation techniques sufficiently. Akdeniz (2008) found that one of the main problems teachers experience in measurement and evaluation is the time limitations. Çalışkan (2010) found that teachers have difficulties in developing alternative assessment and evaluation techniques which require longer time periods in the implementation phase, which students cannot be able to adapt

and which are not cost effective. In the same study, it is also reported that teachers have difficulties in this regard due to the lack of information on how to evaluate students through these techniques and on the scoring of them. When the results of the studies are taken into consideration in general, it can be said that teachers in social studies courses focus on evaluating the product rather than the process.

While the classroom management problems arising from students in the social studies courses are noise, indifference towards the lesson, disturbing friends and walking around the classroom during the course, the problems arising from teachers are their inability to perform effective teaching and the lack of effective classroom management skills. The reports by the participants suggest that the problems originating from students and teachers are closely related to each other. Excessive class size, in other words, crowded classes are one of the important reasons underlying these problems. It is difficult to maintain classroom control and to use different strategies, methods and techniques in such classes. In these classrooms where a traditional type of teaching is carried out, student interest towards courses decreases and problem behaviors that disrupt the course may occur. In the study by Gönenç and Açıklın (2016), it is reported that the most important problems arising from teachers in the social studies courses are that teachers do not do activities that will increase student interest towards courses and that they do not use the teaching materials required for the course. In the same study, it is also found that those activities which are based on the constructivist approach could not be done due to the crowded classes. It can be said that teachers' inability to perform effective teaching, inadequate classroom control skills, and insistence on using traditional methods also cause undesirable behaviors in the classroom.

Based on the findings of the study the following suggestions are developed for the social studies course to be taught more efficiently:

- ✓ Class size should be reduced to an acceptable level. Because the large class size makes classroom management difficult, facilitates the emergence of undesirable behaviours, limits the effect of teaching strategies, methods and techniques, makes it difficult to use different strategies, methods and techniques, makes it difficult to improve student interest towards courses, and makes active student participation difficult. Reducing the classroom size will facilitate the use of different teaching strategies, methods, techniques and tools in lessons instead of direct instruction. Thus, teachers will be able to attract student attention to the lesson, provide much more proper classroom management with active participation, and provide feedback to students.
- ✓ Schools should be equipped with sufficient equipment. Although many teachers want to use teaching materials in courses, they either use little or not at all due to limited opportunities. In the study it is found that some teachers have an opportunity to use tools and equipment, but they do not use these tools. Providing

in-service trainings on the importance of using tools and equipment and how to use them may positively affect the use of equipment.

- ✓ It is thought that the establishment of special classes (branch classes) for the social studies courses at schools will facilitate the teaching of social studies.
- ✓ Another finding of the study is that teachers do not use alternative measurement and evaluation techniques. One of the possible reasons for this may be that sufficient time cannot be allocated to each student due to the large class size. Another reason may be that teachers do not know how to develop, score and employ alternative assessment and evaluation techniques. For this reason, pre-service teachers should be provided with sufficient theoretical knowledge and practical opportunities about alternative assessment and evaluation techniques during the teacher training period, and teachers should be given in-service training courses on such techniques.

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