

## Teacher! Please Light My Way: Effect of Providing Individual Feedback on Achievement in Social Studies Education

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### ABSTRACT

Feedback in education is messages that contain information about how close the student's current behavior in the learning process is to the expected behavior, what deficiencies and mistakes exist, and how they can be eliminated, and messages that contain information about the last level reached. Feedback guides students' learning and is an important component of assessment. In this study, the type of individual feedback was discussed. The research aims to determine the effect of the individual feedback provided to the students from the social studies course on their exam success. The research was conducted with three different social studies teachers and their six different students at three different socio-economic levels. After the teachers were given effective feedback training, two students in their classes were asked to give individual feedback on their lessons. At the end of the process, the exam scores of the students before receiving feedback and the exam scores after receiving feedback were compared according to the class averages. In addition, the opinions of the teachers in this process were also taken in the research. As a result of the research, it was determined that the exam scores of the students who received individual feedback increased and there was a higher change in their scores compared to the class average. According to the teachers, individual feedback increased the students' interest in the lesson. Finally, teachers suggested to their colleagues that they should receive training on feedback and emphasized that every teacher should be good feedback literacy. Based on these results of the study, it is suggested that teachers should be trained about feedback and that their feedback literacy levels should be increased.

**Key words:** Social Studies, Formative Assessment, Feedback, Individual Feedback, Feedback Literacy

### INTRODUCTION

Education is a process aimed at realizing the goals determined in advance or the process. One of the important elements in the success of this process is feedback. Feedback guides students' learning and is an important component of assessment (Brookfield, 2004; Ramsden, 2003). Feedback is a communication element that indicates the correctness and falsity of a person's behaviors and statements and directs their subsequent behavior and discourse. Feedback in education is messages containing information about how close the current behavior of the student in the learning process is to the expected behavior, if the behavior is not close to the expected behavior, what the deficiencies and mistakes are, and how they can be eliminated and messages containing information about the last level reached at the end of learning (Ramaprasad, 1983; Mory, 2004; Gibbs et al., 2006; Hattie, 2012). Sadler (1989) focused on the gap between the student's current success and the desired level of success and expressed feedback as an auxiliary element that tries to

reduce this gap. Ramsden (1998) identified feedback as a key strategy in learning and teaching. Hattie and Timperley (2007) defined feedback as "information provided by a resource (teacher, peer, book, parent, self, computer application) regarding aspects of one's performance or understanding". Feedback guides students' learning by pointing out where students are and where they should be. Learning is made more valuable, meaningful, and permanent through feedback (Özalp & Kaymakçı, 2022).

The main role of feedback is communication, which provides a critical function in acquiring information (Mory, 2004). Therefore, feedback should be regarded as an opportunity to encourage learning and a direction toward learning goals. The feedback should point out how the student can improve in terms of their future studies (Falchikov, 1995; Knight & Yorke, 2003). There are many studies in the literature regarding the increase in performance and learning when effective feedback is provided, or the negative effects of erroneous feedback (Kulhavy, 1977; Kulhavy & Wager,

1993; Kluger & DeNisi, 1996; Orsmond et al., 2005; Crisp, 2007; Hattie, 2009; Le & Vásquez, 2011; Hattie, 2016). Kulhavy (1977) concludes that feedback in written instruction enhances learning. The researcher states that the feedback “acknowledges correct answers by telling the student how well the content is understood and identifying and correcting errors or allowing the student to correct them. In a meta-analysis of feedback studies, Kluger and DeNisi (1996) concluded that providing feedback improves performance on average. However, they also determined that more than a third of the feedback resulted in performance degradation. Their research results found that feedback interventions were less successful as the feedback moved closer to the individual’s personality and further away from the task. Similarly, Hattie and Timperley (2007) stated that feedback focused on self-regulation can increase learners’ commitment to the task, students’ belief in their ability to accomplish the task, and their willingness to continue working on the task. On the contrary, they stated that the feedback provided for the learner’s personality is not effective. Feedback literacy refers to the ability to give, receive and effectively use feedback in a variety of contexts. However, feedback literacy studies are more focused on student feedback literacy (Sutton, 2012; Carless & Boud, 2018; Han & Xu 2020). However, providing effective feedback is as important as making sense of the feedback. For this reason, feedback literacy must be sufficient for trainers to provide effective feedback.

These studies, which are presented as an example, have shown that feedback increases performance and learning, while erroneous feedback can have the opposite effect. Thus, some premises have emerged for feedback to be effective. Hattie and Timperley (2007) proposed a model for effective feedback. They stated that for feedback to be effective, it must answer three questions: “Where am I going?”, “How am I going?”, and “Where next?”. The first question concerns the objectives of the learning experience or task. What is the student supposed to achieve? The second question provides information about the student’s performance compared to the goals. The third is guidance for further learning and performance improvement. Sadler (1989) identified three key factors for effective feedback: the learner needs the concept of the learning goal, should compare actual performance with the goal, and take action to reduce any difference between actual performance and goal. It emphasizes that for students to improve, they must develop their capacity to monitor the quality of their work during actual production. Shute (2008) recommends the following guidelines for effective feedback: Focus on the task, not the student, provide detailed feedback, feedback should be clear and unambiguous, keep it as simple as possible but not simpler, reduce the uncertainty between performance and goals, and give objective and objective feedback. Effective feedback should encourage a learning goal orientation. Effective feedback should encourage a learning goal orientation.

Research on the effect of feedback has shown that not every feedback can be effective all the time (Çimen, 2017). For this reason, researchers classify feedback according to its types. There are many classifications of feedback types in

the literature. In general, feedback is classified according to its content, source, mode of delivery, timing, and recipient. Based on these classifications, it can be said that since there are many types of feedback and each type has some advantages and disadvantages, it is not always the most useful type of feedback in every situation. Different types of feedback may become advantageous depending on the student’s level, perception ability, type and number of errors (Adalberon, 2021; Coşkun & Tamer, 2015; Falchikov, 2004; Hattie, 2016; Köğçe, 2012). Teachers need to learn where and where to use these types of feedback more effectively, that is, they need to be good feedback literates (Carless & Winstone, 2020). The focus of this research is individual feedback according to the receiver of the feedback. According to the receiver, the types of feedback are divided into two “group-oriented” and “individual” (Brookhard, 2008). Group feedback refers to feedback provided to an aggregated group of students rather than individual students. Individual feedback is personalized feedback provided to students about their academic performance, progress, or work. Individual feedback is given based on the unique needs and characteristics of each student, taking into account their learning styles, abilities, and goals. As with any communication, feedback works best when it has a strong and appropriate feeling about its recipient. Feedback on an individual study should be given to the student doing the study individually so that the individual can understand it. Because the individual feedback conveys a feeling that you take into account the individual’s development, in addition to the information provided. Knight and Yorke (2003) state that there should be equality in feedback, that is, different feedback should be provided for students at different levels. They argue that in theory, every student should receive the feedback that is most appropriate for their learning. Although individual feedback can be time-consuming, it facilitates communication between students and educators (Blair et al., 2014; Mulliner & Tucker, 2017). Although the use of feedback in education is important for every lesson, it has special importance in lecture-based and verbal lessons such as social studies lessons. Because to increase students’ interest in the lesson and to create an active classroom environment in these lessons, the teacher must be in constant interaction with the students and establish a mutual dialogue with them (Pianta, Lipscomb & Ruzek, 2022).

This situation necessitates the use of feedback (Gamson, 1991; Bangert, 2004; Özalp, 2022). Social studies is an interdisciplinary course that aims to raise good and effective citizens. It focuses on social issues through different disciplines. Thus, it helps the socialization of the individual by establishing a link between the past and the future (Topçu, 2017). For this reason, it is important to use feedback in social studies lessons (Simsek et al., 2017). Using feedback, teachers can direct students to areas that need research and study by revealing students’ misconceptions and knowledge deficiencies in social studies courses. Skill education and value education have a very important place in social studies education. Teachers can support their students in the process of gaining values and skills with feedback. In particular, they can create a classroom environment with active participation

with effective feedback to gain skills such as critical thinking and historical empathy (Akpınar, 2018; Simsek, Turan, & Simsek, 2017; Oğuz Hacı & Demir, 2020; Özalp & Kaymakçı, 2022). When the literature is examined, there are studies on the effects of different types of feedback on different points or feedback preferences at different levels of education (Çimen, 2017; Adalberon, 2021; Coşkun & Tamer, 2015; Falchikov, 2004; Köğce, 2012; Akpınar, 2018; Simsek, Turan & Simsek, 2017; Özalp & Kaymakçı, 2022). However, these studies are studies on oral, written, and on-line feedback types that focus more on the way the feedback is given. Studies on the subject of individual feedback generally emphasize that contemporary views on individual behavior in organizations emphasize that feedback is necessary for effective role performance (Blair et al., 2004; Mulliner & Tucker, 2017; Ilgen & Moore, 1987). However, there is no study on the effect of individual feedback on success in education and social studies education. At this point, this study will fill an important gap in the literature. Unlike other studies, this research focuses on the effect of individual feedback, which is one of the types of feedback according to the recipient, on the achievement of social studies. It will both make a modest contribution to the literature and open a new research door for researchers.

This research aims to determine the effect of the individual feedback provided to the students from the social studies course on their exam success. For this purpose, students' exam scores before individual feedback was provided and exam scores after individual feedback was provided were compared according to the grade averages of the class. In addition, the opinions of teachers who provided individual feedback on the process were also taken.

## METHOD

### Research Design

This research is quasi-experimental in design. Quasi-experimental design in academic research refers to a form of study that mimics an experimental design but lacks complete control over the random selection and manipulation of variables often present in actual experiments (Creswell, 2009). When randomly assigning individuals to various situations is not feasible or acceptable, quasi-experimental designs are frequently utilized. The word "semi" denotes a design that is somewhat akin to an experimental design but does not fully satisfy the requirements for a true experiment. The use of quasi-experimental designs is common in the social sciences, education, and psychology (Shadish et al., 2002; Thyer, 2012).

In the study, a course on the use of feedback in education and individual feedback was given to teachers working in three different secondary schools in Trabzon province in Türkiye. After the first exams, teachers were asked to give individual feedback to their students. The teachers were observed for four weeks until the second exam. The first and second exam results of the students who were given individual feedback were compared. At the end of the implementation process, separate interviews were held with the teachers.

### Data Collection Tools

In this research, academic achievement exams administered by teachers to their students were used as data collection tools (Phelps, 2008; Creswell, 2009). These exams are prepared by teachers. The content validity of these exams was checked and confirmed by the researchers. No intervention was provided by the researchers.

Another data collection tool was a semi-structured interview, one of the qualitative data collection tools. Büyüköztürk et al. (2013) stated that qualitative data collection tools can also be used to support quantitative data in experimental studies. The focus of the semi-structured interview was to uncover participants' perspectives, experiences, and subjective interpretations. Semi-structured interviews allowed the data collection process to be flexible: The researchers were able to change the order of questions and ask probes and in-depth questions about the subject during the interview. Due to such advantages, semi-structured interview is widely used in social science research (Charmaz, 2014; Merriam, 2009; Patton, 2014). In this study, interviews were conducted with three social studies teachers. Interview forms were prepared by the researchers and the forms were finalized by taking the opinions of the experts. These experts are a social studies education specialist and an assessment and evaluation specialist in the area of qualitative research. The interview form consists of five open-ended questions. The questions included teachers' thoughts on individual feedback and the implementation process of the research and their suggestions for feedback to colleagues.

### Research Group

This research was carried out with 3 social studies teachers working in official state institutions in Trabzon, Türkiye, and their 6 students studying at the 5th-grade level. While determining the teachers, the easily accessible sampling technique was used as it saves the researcher time and money (Merriam, 2009; Patton, 2014). The students were determined by using the random sampling technique of the nature of the experimental research (Creswell, 2009). Table 1 summarizes the research group information.

### Data Collection

The data of the research were collected in the spring semester of 2022-2023 education. First of all, the teachers who will participate in the research were determined. Teachers were given a course on feedback, individual feedback, and the place and importance of feedback in education. In addition to this training, academic resources were offered to teachers to increase their feedback literacy levels.

After the training, two students were selected from the teachers' classrooms for the experiment with the random sampling technique. It was determined as a criterion in the selection of these students that they got a score below the class average according to the results of the first exam. A male and female student was selected from each class. After the first exam, the teachers gave oral and written

individual feedback to these selected students. They used the information they learned in the course in their feedback. During this period until the second exam, the teachers were observed by the researchers in the classroom environment for four weeks. Sometimes, warnings and suggestions about feedback strategies were given to teachers by researchers. The process ended with the students taking the second exam.

Finally, interviews were held with the teachers about the implementation process. The interviews were conducted face-to-face in the teachers' natural environments (school). Each interview lasted approximately 15-20 minutes. The interviews were audio-recorded based on the consent of the teachers. The processing process applied in the research is presented in Figure 1.

**Analysis of Data**

The quantitative data obtained from the research were analyzed with simple statistical calculations. Basic statistics like mean calculations and comparisons are commonly utilized in educational experimentation. Experimental research in education usually involves the collection and analysis of quantitative data to examine the effects of interventions or instructional practices on student outcomes (Gay et al., 2018; Fraenkel et al., 2021). Firstly, the difference between the pre-experiment and post-experiment scores of the students was calculated. Then, the ratios of the students' score difference rates between the exams to the difference in the class average were calculated. The changes in the exam scores and class averages of the students are presented with graphics in the findings section.

In the second stage of the research, semi-structured interviews with the teachers were analyzed with the descriptive analysis technique (Miles et al., 2020). Descriptive analysis is a qualitative data analysis technique that involves summarizing and interpreting qualitative data. It aims to provide a rich and comprehensive description of the data. It enables researchers to provide a detailed and rich description of the data. It includes using quotes, examples, or narratives to illustrate and support findings (Merriam, 2009; Patton, 2014).

**RESULTS**

The research has been prepared in two parts the comparison of student exam results and teacher opinions. Accordingly, the results of the research are presented in fewer than two sub-titles.

**Comparison of Student Exam Results**

Within the scope of the research, the exam scores of the students in three different schools were followed by comparing them with the class averages. These scores and the percentage differences between the scores are presented in Table 2. When Table 2 is examined, it is seen that the first exam scores of the students who are given individual feedback are below the class average. When the class averages of the first and second exams are compared, it is seen that the class average of Group 1 decreased by 10.22%, the class average of Group 2 increased by 12.5% and the class average of Group 3 increased by 3.33%. Considering the exam scores of the students who were given individual feedback, it is understood that all students increased their exam scores more or less compared to the class average. S1, S2, S4, S5, and S6 students achieved a higher increase in exams compared to their class averages. Only student S3 achieved a lower increase than the class average. Findings related to the comparison of student scores are examined in Figures 2-4.

Information on the comparison of the exam scores of the students in Group 1 is presented in Figure 2.

When Graph 1 is examined; it is seen that the exam average of this group decreased by 9 points in the second exam. It is seen that the second exam score of student S1 in this group, who was given individual feedback, increased by 4 points compared to the first exam. While the difference between the two exam scores of Group 1 is -10.22%, the difference between the two exam scores of S1 is 13.35%. The other student who was given individual feedback in this group is S2. The second exam score of S2, decreased by 7 points compared to the first exam. Despite this decrease, the second exam score of S2 increased by 0.98% compared to

**Table 1.** Research Group

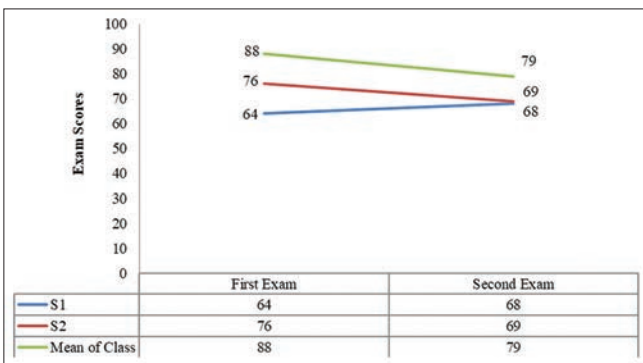
Group	Teacher	Gender	Professional Seniority	Student	Gender
1	T1	Male	5	S1	Female
				S2	Male
2	T2	Male	9	S3	Female
				S4	Male
3	T3	Female	12	S5	Female
				S6	Male



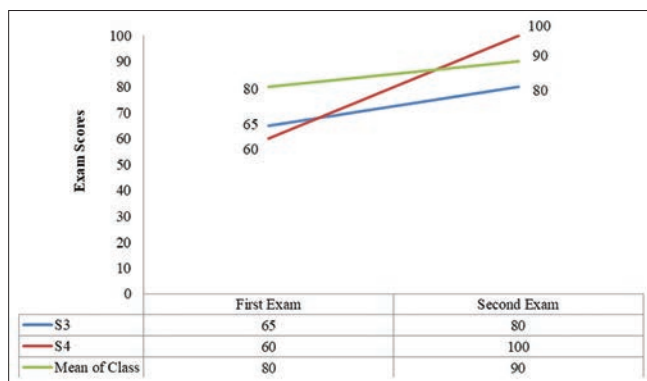
**Figure 1.** The processing process applied in the research

**Table 2.** Participants' exam results

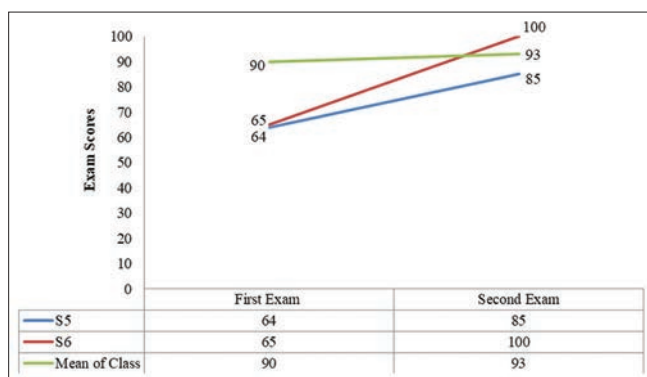
Group	Student	First Exam	Second Exam	Difference (%)
1	S1	64	68	13.35
	S2	76	69	0.98
	Mean of Class	88	79	-10.22
2	S3	65	80	7.63
	S4	60	100	36
	Mean of Class	80	90	12.5
3	S5	64	85	20.28
	S6	65	100	35.30
	Mean of Class	90	93	3.33



**Figure 2.** Comparison of Group 1 exam results



**Figure 3.** Comparison of Group 2 exam results



**Figure 4.** Comparison of Group 3 exam results

the class average. According to these findings, it is understood that although the exam scores of the students who were

given individual feedback after the first exam were below the class average, the other students who were not given individual feedback increased their scores slightly compared to the exam averages.

Information on the comparison of the exam scores of the students in Group 2 is presented in Figure 3.

Considering the exam result information of Group 2, it is seen that the average scores of Group 2 increased by 12.25% in the second exam, increasing from 80 points to 90 points. S3, who was given individual feedback in this group, increased the exam score by 15 points and achieved success with an increase of 7.63% compared to the average of the first exam. Considering the exam scores of S4, he/she showed an increase of 40 points in the second exam and received a full score (100) in the second exam. S4 achieved significant success by providing a 36% increase in the exam score compared to the class average.

Information on the comparison of the exam scores of the students in Group 3 is presented in Figure 4.

When the exam result information of Group 3 is examined, it is seen that the average scores of the exam of Group 3 increased by 3.3% in the second exam, increasing from 90 points to 93 points. Among the students who were given individual feedback in this group, S5 increased the exam score by 21 points in the second exam and achieved success with an increase of 20.28% compared to the first exam score. Even though student S5 scored below the class average in the second exam, S5 significantly increased his/her score in the second exam. Looking at the exam scores of the other student S6, who was given individual feedback, his/her second exam score increased by 35 points and he/she got a full score (100) in the second exam. Compared to the S6 class average, he/she achieved significant success by showing an increase of 35.30% in the second exam. S6 scored higher than the class average in the second exam.

**Teacher Opinions**

In the other dimension of the research, the opinions of the teachers on the individual feedback process were consulted.

Teachers were asked how giving feedback to their students affected their workload. Two teachers stated that there was no increase in the workload and that they already used the feedback in the lessons, although unconsciously. Teacher

T1 who stated that the feedback did not affect the workload said, "It is a practice we have already done in the classroom. There has been no change in my workload." expressed as. The other teacher T3 explained his/her thoughts on this subject as follows: "There was no change in my workload. However, it causes us to bear more responsibility as it brings the obligation to follow the student."

Teacher T2, on the other hand, explained that he had difficulty in giving feedback at first, so his workload increased, but later he got used to it with the following sentences: "My course load has increased a little more. I felt the difference because I wasn't doing the work I was supposed to do. However, over time I got used to this process. No additional burden on me."

Secondly, the opinions of the students, to whom the teachers gave feedback, were taken about their attitudes towards the lesson. According to the teachers, the feedback increased the students' interest in the lesson. On this subject, T1 stated that the students to whom he gave feedback increased their interest in the lesson, and even during breaks, students began to ask him/her questions about the lesson. Teacher T2's thoughts on this subject were: "The student I gave feedback to started to participate in the lesson more. His/Her interest in the lesson increased. He/She started asking more questions. I noticed that he was more curious about social studies topics. The motivation to learn in the lesson is plus. There was no change in other students." explained. Teacher T3 stated that the students to whom he gave feedback participated in the lesson more than the other students.

In the interviews, the opinions of the teachers about the success of the students, to whom they gave feedback, were also elicited. Teachers stated that the success of the students to whom they gave feedback increased significantly. T1 stated that the feedback on this subject increased the motivation of the students and this had an impact on their success. Expressing that feedbacks have an important effect on keeping the interest alive in the lesson, teacher T2 explained his/her thoughts as follows: I know how hard my students work. Although the students I gave feedback to did not study extra for the second exam, their success increased more than other students. In my opinion, this is because the formative feedback I give keeps their interest in the lesson alive. Teacher T3 explained his/her thoughts as follows: "The academic success of the students to whom I gave feedback increased significantly both in the course and the assessment-evaluation phase."

Finally, the suggestions of the teachers to their colleagues were received. The prominent thoughts of the teachers on this subject; It is important to give importance to individual feedback because the feedback given to the group is often ineffective. Teachers emphasized that students who gave individual feedback took more responsibility and stated that they observed the effect of individual feedback on students. Teacher T1 explained his thoughts on this subject as follows: "As far as possible, the student should be dealt with individually and feedback should be given. Sometimes the collective feedback given to the class does not reach its purpose. Our universities do not provide detailed training on giving

feedback, so we need to improve ourselves by participating in feedback-related courses. We need to know which type of feedback will be effective and when." Teacher T2 explained his thoughts as follows: "Giving feedback to the student individually led to the student's understanding of the subject and making it more permanent. I had the opportunity to observe this better in the process. Classroom conversations are not very effective. Giving individual feedback motivates the student who is less interested in the lesson. It increases academic success and improves the student's attitude toward the course. It made the success permanent. Individual feedback should be given to students who are less interested in the course. I recommend that all my colleagues receive training in feedback". Teacher T3 talked about his thoughts as follows: "The feedback given to the class collectively may not reach the goal. In the process, I had the opportunity to observe this better. When you give individual feedback to the student, he or she feels valued. The student begins to take responsibility. This was reflected in academic success." Teacher T3 advises her colleagues to be feedback literate with the following sentences: "...Therefore, my advice to my colleagues is to do research on feedback and become feedback literate."

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The use of feedback in education plays an important role in increasing student success. In narrative-based verbal lessons such as social studies lessons, feedback increases students' interest in the lesson and ensures their active participation in the lesson. Thus, it both increases outcome-based success and improves process-based learning interest. When accurate and effective feedback is provided, the learning and teaching process becomes more active and attractive for teachers and students. In this context, the current research aimed to determine the effect of providing individual feedback in social studies courses on student success. In addition, the views of social studies teachers on the process of providing individual feedback were also determined.

As a result of the research, it was determined that the second exam scores of the students who were given individual feedback were higher than the first exam scores before the feedback was provided. It was determined that the change in the exam averages of the students in the experimental group was higher than the change in the exam scores of the other students. As a result, it was determined that providing accurate and effective individual feedback positively affects the success of the students in the social studies course. Many studies in the related literature support this result of the research (Sadler, 1989; Brinko, 1993; Piccinin, 2003; Orrell, 2006; Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Wisniewski et al., 2020). Similarly, Voerman et al. (2012) state that providing feedback on students' knowledge, performance, and level on a particular subject will increase student success. The individual feedback provided by the teachers within the scope of the research may have increased the students' self-control and self-efficacy. This situation may have affected the success of the students. Hattie and Timperley (2007) emphasize that feedback is an important element in increasing self-control

and self-efficacy. As a result of the research regarding this claim of theirs, it was determined that individual feedback increased students' interest in the lesson.

As a consequence of this study, it was established that providing feedback to teachers does not add to their burden. Teachers generally find the workload of evaluating crowded classrooms and providing feedback to students burdensome (Tuck, 2012; Winstone & Carless, 2019). Although teachers thought that providing feedback increased the workload, supporting the claims of Tuck (2012) and Winstone and Carless (2019), they argued that it did not affect the workload at the end of the process.

The study revealed that teachers need feedback training to be feedback literate, and they advise their colleagues to take this course. Nash and Winstone (2017) argue that teachers are responsible for equipping students with strategies for effective action on feedback information. They report that feedback processes require student and teacher feedback literacy to be effective. Similarly, in many studies, it is emphasized that instructors should be taught how to provide feedback to give effective feedback (Bing-You, et al., 1998; Stone et al., 2003; Menachery et al., 2006; Schartel, 2012). Otherwise, unconsciously giving erroneous feedback may disappoint students. It may harm their self-efficacy and motivation while reducing their academic success (Price et al., 2011).

When the results of the research are examined in general, individual feedback increased the academic success of the student in the social studies course. In addition, individual feedback improved the students' working self and increased their interest in the lesson. Although the teachers initially thought that feedback increased the workload, they stated that providing feedback at the end of the process did not affect the workload. Therefore, it was decided that teachers should be trained on providing effective feedback. In this study, only the type of individual feedback according to the receiver of the feedback is discussed. In addition, using different types of feedback in a balanced way will help improve learning. Schelfhout et al. (2004) state that every student has the opportunity to learn when enough opportunities are given to them. They argue that using feedback types in a balanced way facilitates learning. Based on the results of the research, it is suggested in this study that teachers receive training to increase their feedback literacy levels and encourage them to use feedback more effectively in the classroom by authorized institutions.

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