

## Ways of Effective Teaching and Learning in Social Studies in Context of Learning Climate

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### 1. Introduction

The Social Studies subject has been on the agenda in Turkey in the 1960s. In early 1960s, the content of this course was given through history, geography, and citizenship lessons. These lessons were combined in 1962 with an interdisciplinary approach under the title 'Community and country studies'. In 1968 the same course was named 'Social Studies' (Aktepe, Tahiroğlu & Meydan, 2014).

Social Studies, Social Studies, and humanities are offered by an integrative approach designed to improve citizenship competences. Social Studies in the school program consisted of findings of like anthropology, archeology, economics, geography, philosophy, law, psychology, political science, history, religion and sociology.

Social Studies lesson is taught at elementary and middle school level. The aim of the current Social Studies program is to educate effective individuals who have problem solving and decision making skills, who think critically and creatively, who can understand what they have learned, questioning instead of memorizing the information transferred to them, reaching information when necessary, researching them, looking at events from different perspectives (MEB, 1998).

Active participation by pupils in lectures affects learning positively. Individual differences of students should be taken into account during the course. In order to provide effective learning in current Social Studies curriculum in Turkey, students are required to take

part in the learning-teaching process, which is to be possible in learning environments where individual differences are taken into account and active participation is provided (Özbek, 2005).

Social events that occur in daily life; current issues are dealt with within the scope of Social Studies course which aims to train responsible, active, thinking citizens who have gained democratic values (Deveci & Çengelci, 2008).

It is expected that the Social Studies course will use some teaching methods and strategies of the teachers in the learning-teaching process so that the students can have certain qualifications within the defined goals and show the permanent behavioral changes. The most appropriate strategies and methods should be determined taking into consideration the purpose, subject, learning environment and student characteristics.

**Learning Environment:** Active learning can be carried out in a safe environment supported by the teacher, where clear expectations and positive relationships are encouraged at the highest level (Characteristics of Highly Effective Teaching and Learning in Social Studies, 2017).

### **Teacher Characteristics:**

#### **A. The teacher creates learning environments where students are active participants as individuals and as members of collaborative groups. Teacher:**

1. Creation, interrogation, sharing, discussion, justification and analysis of processes of engaging in civil participation, social research and historical thinking
2. Developing various perspectives, respect for well-supported positions and developing sensitivity towards cultural differences and similarities

Teachers must be aware of and meet the needs of students in order to make Social Studies instruction (NCSS, 2009). Teachers should make use of the differences and natural consequences of the students in their environment. Provided that they build on the skills and experiences of the students, teachers can design learning environments where students struggle to build meaningful connections and develop their knowledge and perspective. In Social Studies, as in any discipline, students can benefit from many ways in which they can understand a given concept. Increasingly, middle school teachers have students with different abilities and different experiences. For this reason, the teacher has to apply different teaching methods to the students with individual differences. Successful middle school teachers employ a variety of teaching methods to engage both the subject domain knowledge and the learning process (NCSS, 2009:253). Şeker and Oruç (2013) Social Studies instructors are studying their views on education according to learning styles and individual differences; it is suggested that

the use of current learning and teaching methods and techniques for success in Social Studies lessons, shaping of lessons with real events, stories and real life patterns, placement of education technology and materials as much as possible and education and training period should be arranged according to student needs.

Middle school students need to have access to basic democratic values, equality of opportunity, justice and diversity in learning experiences, including freedom of speech and thought. Middle school Social Studies teachers should create opportunities for their students to discuss values, engage in solving real-world problems, and make informed decisions (NCSS, 2009:253). Deveci and Çengelci (2008) Social Studies teacher candidates argue that they do research on current topics in lectures, discuss current events, and distinguish the first minutes of lectures to current.

Challenging middle school Social Studies education supports lifelong learning and active citizenship. Rather than examining many superficial aspects to students, opportunities for in-depth research of several important concepts should be given. Challenging Social Studies projects include projects and simulations that require the application of discussion, negotiation and critical thinking skills. Middle school Social Studies students should question, evaluate and justify the sources of information instead of simply reading and answering questions. The teacher should ask questions in a kind that encourage students to make decisions, problem solving and problem analysis (NCSS, 2009:253). İzci and Koç (2012) Social Studies teachers claimed that they need to know English well to be able to perform the skills needed for lifelong learning. They also stated that teachers should lead collective learning through lifelong learning.

According to the Social Studies literature, student attitudes towards Social Studies course and related factors are significantly affected by two factors: (a) active participation and willingness of the teacher; (b) the perceived value of the subject field (Tanner, 2009: 141). Demirkaya and Arıbaş (2004) argue that the attitudes and performances of the teacher in the classroom, the use of technology and materials in the lessons and the active participation of the students in the class are effective on the attitudes of the students towards the Social Studies lesson.

Providing students with authentic learning activities is an important factor in ensuring student participation. Marks (2000) defined a scale consisting of 4 items related to the frequency of engaging meaningful academic students in the Social Studies class in the context of authentic instructional work: (a) students are asked to ask interesting questions and solve new problems; (b) focus only on one sense of meaning; (c) they apply the conditions and problems of life outside the school; (d) discuss with teachers and students about their ideas about the subject (Tanner, 2009:141).

By taking advantage of forward-looking ideas and arguments, researchers have made some recommendations for best practices in teaching Social Studies (PELP, 2009):

When students choose their own subjects for research, they need opportunities for exercise selection and responsibility. Particularly in Social Studies class, active participation is needed to prepare students for democratic citizenship. Good teachers prepare a list of important topics that will help their students make brilliant choices. It not only ensures student participation, it also teaches how to select topics in a logical way to prepare reports and articles (Zemelman, Daniels & Hyde, 1998:140).

Teaching Social Studies should include exploration of explicit questions that challenge students' thinking. This means going beyond a learner with some difficulty in mind through meaningful questions. In order to mobilize this principle, teachers need to learn how to prepare questions that will attract students to discuss. Another teaching skill needed for this research is the open approach to the conduct of the constructive group discussions (Zemelman, Daniels & Hyde, 1998:140-141). Kılınç and Çalışkan (2015) Social Studies teachers are studying the behavior of students to ask questions during course processing teachers often ask questions that are intriguing to their students, and that these questions are in a manner that is easy to understand, but that it is encouraging to think of students. While teaching concepts related to real life in Social Studies class, active participation of students in Social Studies class and wider communities is required (Zemelman, Daniels & Hyde, 1998:141).

Students are actively involved in both independent and collaborative learning environments without building the skills and habits needed for life-long responsible learning in teaching Social Studies (Zemelman, Daniels & Hyde, 1998:142).

The learning of Social Studies should be based on the assumption of knowing nothing about the subject and the preliminary information that students have gained in their life and community (Zemelman, Daniels & Hyde, 1998:143). In the vast majority of students, the use of primary resources in Social Studies classes has been found to revive in the minds of the history. They are especially pleased with the hide-and-seek game shown in digital photos (Torrez & Waring, 2009:84). Doğan (2008) claimed that evidence-based Social Studies classes are performing at a high level of learning in the students, and that the students are more motivated in the classes. In addition, Social Studies have stated that teachers should conduct activities that will reveal the differences between primary and secondary sources.

Multiple perspectives and historical prejudice concepts emerged in these students. Finally, all students have learned to distinguish between primary and secondary resources (Torrez & Waring, 2009:84).

Teachers of both classes stated that they were more attentive to the lessons of the students than before. One of the teachers stated that they did not believe that middle school students could use the primary sources and authentic research method before this application. Both teachers alleged that allowing the use of digital resources in lesson allowed them to connect with resources outside the classroom and engage in disciplined research (Torrez & Waring, 2009:85).

**B. Teacher motivates learning desires in a safe, healthy and supportive environment where students develop love and mutual respect. Teacher:**

1. The teacher cultivates and motivates learning desires in a safe, healthy and supportive environment in which students develop love, mutual respect, uncertainty tolerance and courage.
2. Develop and promote civic characteristics such as individual responsibility, self-discipline, self-government, courtesy, respect for others' rights, honesty, respect for law, open-mindedness, critical thinking, negotiation and reconciliation, stability, public affairs, compassion and homeland love.

**C. The teacher develops the value of intercultural understanding and difference.**

Five principles have been identified by NCSS for social information defined as “essential characteristics of powerful Social Studies” (NCSS, 2002):

- First Principle: Social knowledge teaching and learning are powerful when they are meaningful. Significance is stimulated when learners are linked to knowledge, skills, beliefs and attitude networks. So when they are emphasized that their content is meaningful and important to the students, they will find it useful both inside and outside the school when they are developed through activities (NCSS, 2002:12).
- Second Principle: Social knowledge teaching and learning are strong when complementary. When technology is used effectively in teaching, integration is encouraged when teaching is linked to knowledge, skills, value and attitudes with effective social/political action (NCSS, 2002:12). With the implementation of the Fatih Project in Turkey, the use of smart boards has become widespread in the classroom. However, teachers and students should be educated about the effective use of smart board in order to be able to obtain the expected benefit from smart board use (Bulut & Koçoğlu, 2012).

- **Third Principle:** Social knowledge is strong when teaching and learning is value-based. Social information content consistently includes exams and provides an understanding of values - the person's own and others' perspectives, beliefs, principles, actions and inactions are expressed as values. Value-based education is suitable for education in a democratic society where individual rights and the public interest are guaranteed. These are: 1- Social Studies guide students in taking into account the ethical dimensions of the issues and explaining the contradictory issues by providing an environment of the application of social values and reflective development towards the public interest; 2- students make value-based decisions about the relevant social issues and think through critical thinking and become aware of potential social policy implications; 3- without expressing personal, religious or political views, teachers want to make sure that their students are: (a) aware of the values, difficulties and dilemmas in a subject they are dealing with; (b) taking into account the costs and interests of various individuals and groups of potential behavior; (c) to develop well-thought-out jobs that are consistent with fundamental democratic social and political values; (4) teachers encourage their students to be respectful of opposing views, to respect well-supported work, to be sensitive to cultural similarities and differences, and to assume a responsibility.
- **Fourth Principle:** Social Studies teaching and learning are stronger when faced with an intriguing environment. Social Studies become interesting when your teacher shows interest in and interest in well thought-out discussion requests and student mentions. However, when ideas or responsibilities are undertaken, ideas are far from interesting (NCSS, 2002:13).
- D. **Fifth Principle:** Social Studies teaching and learning are stronger when the learning environment is active. Social Studies becomes productive in the active learning environment: (1) teachers and students engage in reflective thinking and decision making when events are clearly considered during teaching; (2) through interactive negotiation, students learn new perceptions through active structuring; (3) facilitates the meaning structures necessary to develop important social perceptions; (4) teachers provide progressive guidance through the provision of information, modeling, and explanation, while building lesson guidance, encouraging students to become independent, self-directed learners, and less guiding. Teachers emphasize authentic activities that evoke real-life practices using skills and the content of the field. Çepni, Aydın and Şahin (2015) have touched on the importance of teacher guidance in teaching practice studies in their study of teacher candidates' views on teaching practice. In the same study they emphasized that teachers did not provide sufficient guidance during teaching practice in Turkey.

- E. **The teacher encourages students to accept their responsibilities to make their own learning and to meet the different learning needs of all.**
- F. **Teacher demonstrates effective and sufficient classroom management, including classroom habits that support comfort, order and appropriate learning behaviors.**
  - 1. Allow collaborative groups, project-based tasks, original work, dialogue/discussion, service learning and student presentations
  - 2. Encourage students to act as members of the learning community

Yerlisu Lapa and Ardahan (2009) stated that in Turkey many events are organized under the name of spring festivals in universities. In general, it is recommended that these festivals, where the individual prefers passive participation, should be designed to be realized with active participation. In the same study, the authors emphasized the importance of ensuring student associations participate in the spring festivals in.

- G. **The teacher gives his/her students fair access to technology, space, tools and time.**
- H. **Teachers allocate their most productive time to their students in order to ensure that they are engaged in learning, discussing and providing meaningful connections with process content by living. Teacher:**
  - 1. Supports social interaction, historical thought and civic participation
  - 2. Encourage lifelong learning, inquiry, civic participation, democratic principles and processes
- I. **The teacher designs lessons that allow learners to participate in the authority activities they learn that a process is a natural part of a learning process.**
  - 1. The teacher creates an environment where student work is valued, appreciated and used as a learning tool.
- J. **Every student knows each other, is intuitive to each, and builds a constructive relationship with each student.**

#### **Student Characteristics:**

- A. The student accepts his own learning responsibilities.
- B. The student collaborates with other students. Student:

1. In the group there is a need to take individual responsibility, self-discipline/self-management, courtesy, respect for the rights of other individuals, honesty, respect for the law, openness, critical thinking, show and support public behavior such as compassion, public affairs, patriotism, negotiation and reconciliation
- C. Expect mutual respect for different perspectives
- D. In an interdependent world, a democratic society, as culturally different citizens, makes informed and justified decisions for the public good.
- E. Demonstrates a sense of achievement and confidence. Student:
1. Explain and defend the personal perspective and position within the school or community.
  2. Take critical thinking and value-based decisions.
- F. The student takes educational risks in the class. Student:
1. Evidences, defends and supports the belief that their own beliefs and ideas are wrong in controversial matters.
- G. The student uses the technology in a manner that is safe, responsible, and ethical.

NCSS believes that the main mission of Social Studies education is to help students develop knowledge, skills and values and to use them effectively to become effective citizens. An effective citizen: (1) accepts basic democratic values and tries to keep them alive; (2) accepts his or her responsibilities for the well-being of his/her family and of the community; (3) local communities have enough knowledge about people, history and traditions shaping Turkey and the world; (4) to have knowledge about the establishment documents, community organizations and political processes of our country; (5) be aware of the problems and events affecting people at the local, country, regional and world level; (6) explore knowledge from various sources and perspectives to develop conscious ideas and creative solutions; (7) meaningful questions can analyze and evaluate questions and information and ideas; (8) use effective decision making and problem solving skills in public and private life; (9) has the ability to cooperate effectively as a member of a group; (10) participates actively in individual and community life (NCSS, 2001).

To be a responsible citizen, students should not only have content knowledge and core democratic values, but at the same time have the opportunity to learn and practice citizenship skills related to the needs and problems of the community outside the classroom. Learning through in-service not only improves citizen participation skills, values and attitudes, but also catches the opportunity to learn by doing what they are doing in the curriculum (NCSS, 2003).

Social information, which has an important place in the acquisition of life knowledge, values and skills of the individual, is based on the individual acquiring social skills in social life and using these skills to overcome the problems of orientation (Koçoğlu, 2014). The process by which the individual acquires these social skills requires interaction with the family, society, educational environment and friend environment in which the individual lives.

Integration of learning by community service local history interrogation intention to participate in community services from students from class 3 to class 12; there is individual opinion that citizens' knowledge, skills and attitudes are significantly increased. Consistent with literature-based learning literature, researchers believe in learning, debating, and reflecting on social litigation and citizen problems in a citizen-linked program that contributes to positive outcomes for students. In addition, in most cases, students can choose what they want to work with and they can create community service activities themselves. The collective service learning literature emphasizes the importance of student views and ownership. These elements are presented in many citizen-linked project work. Such programs increase the collecting influence and participation of the students and also contribute to the increase of the students' social knowledge significantly (Wade & Yarbrough, 2007:380-382).

Public discussions on student literary interpretations deepen their writers' perceptions of perspectives and implications for their interpretation. These findings support studies in the existing literature that demonstrate that group discussions strengthen students' perceptions of complex social issues and events. By sharing their comments with classmates who do not usually participate in their own ideas, they create the opportunity to represent a richer and more complex historical event more than they can individually create (Kohlmeier, 2006:52).

A three-tiered approach is needed to adequately integrate technology into the classrooms: First, teachers must acquire the ability to use technology comfortably; second, teachers must integrate these technologies skillfully and explicitly into the class of Social Studies courses; third, teachers should expand teaching repertoire including both teacher-centered and student-centered approaches (Keeler & Langhorst, 2008:167).

As a citizen of today's digital world, children and young people need instruction in the application of skills for critical analysis and ethical decision-making. Cyber-citizenship education is a natural extension of the role of citizenship education within the discipline of Social Studies, which is always included in the school curriculum. Cyber-citizenship lessons can, for example, explain the problematic aspects of the internet and strengthen critical skills for coping with these difficulties (VanFossen & Berson, 2008).

Wagner has proposed 7 skills for the 21st century based on a conversation with business and industry leaders. The first is critical thinking and problem solving: "the habit of asking

qualified questions is the most frequently mentioned feature of critical thinking and problem solving. Critical thinking and problem solving by asking qualified questions take place very close to each other in the minds of many employer and business consultants. Thus they represent the new global 'information economy's First Survival Ability' together. These two skills that our children need to participate effectively in today's democracy are equally (Wagner, 2008: 14-15).

All the people I talked with them emphasized the importance of working on teams as core competencies. This developed the Second Survival Skill: Leading with the cooperation and influence (Wagner, 2008:22).

Individual skills from different cultures, a key prerequisite for multinational corporations increasing in number of people working across networks across borders... Core competence is the ability to think strategically: to decide where to work best from both talent and perspective costs. But it follows a bigger struggle: to work with people from very different cultures and to know how to organize effective collaboration teams (Wagner, 2008:24).

Today, leaders want to see that individuals are taking more initiative and are entrepreneurial in their search for opportunities, ideas and strategies for progress... It is often mentioned that individuals have the ability to take the initiative in solving the problem and a problem in the team or finding a better solution (Wagner, 2008:32).

Fifth Survival is effective verbal and written communication. There are many studies focusing on communication skills, college and workplace focus on the fact that the learner is unprepared. These skills are becoming more important in teams of individuals from different cultures. The ability to articulate an individual's ideas in a democracy and to communicate effectively between cultures is also an important civic skill (Wagner, 2008:34).

Students with multicultural literacy are aware of how their cultural beliefs, values and sensitivities affect the thoughts and behavior of others. These students; they recognize and appreciate the similarities and differences in their beliefs, appearance and lifestyles; know the historical process of the main thought structure of Turkish culture; empathize with other cultural groups' (North Central Regional Educational Laboratory, 2003).

## Results

The basis of Social Studies teaching constitutes constructive learning environments. In these environments, students attach importance to collaboration, use different learning environments and materials, access enriched and primary resources, take their own learning responsibilities, pre-program inquiry, research, problem solving, critical and creative thinking.

In the course of teaching successful Social Studies in profession; do not distinguish between students, prepare them for higher education and life, attach importance to school-family relations, plan teaching activities, use time effectively, work in cooperation with other teachers and administrators (Çelikten & Can, 2003).

Current educational technologies should be used effectively in Social Studies courses. In the use of educational technologies, active participation of students in the course must be ensured. Course-specific instructional materials and the course material that students make must be actively used. The materials used in the lessons, the questions asked by the teacher, should inspire the students, lead them to individual research and always enthusiastically seek a higher learning.

Students should be directed to do project work in Social Studies courses in cooperation with students. Thus, students will gain knowledge sharing and individual research skills, working together, task and responsibility awareness.

Social Studies is one of the basic aims of the course to educate active citizens who are aware of their citizenship responsibility. For this reason, attitudes, behaviors and activities should be supported to improve citizens' awareness in the lectures.

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