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Article

Teachers' Views on the Effect of Museum Use in Social Studies Lessons in Turkish Schools on Class Efficiency: A Case Study Model

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Abstract

This study aims to reveal the experiences and opinions of social studies teachers about the effect of museum use on the efficiency of the lesson. The case study model, which is one of the qualitative research methods, was used in the research. The study group of the research consisted of 20 (Female=12, Male=8) social studies teachers. During the data collection phase, a semi-structured interview was conducted to collect data. The content analysis was made to extract thematic codes from the obtained data by applying the coding method. The responses given by the participants to the questions in the interview form were first collected in 42 codes, then these codes were associated with each other and reduced to 29. Some of the codes included: exhibition, bridge, permanent learning, concretizing the subject, motivating the students to the lesson, increasing the visibility of the lesson, etc. According to the reliability formula of Miles and Huberman (1994), the reliability of the study was calculated as 93%. As a result of the research, it was concluded that museums have an important place in the social studies lesson, provide permanent learning, increase the visibility of the lesson, and make the lesson enjoyable and increase the efficiency of the lesson.

Keywords

Museum, education, teacher's opinions, social studies, student

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It is important and necessary for everyone, especially teachers, to respect history, to understand and make sense of the past, and to attach importance to lost values. One of the important places that ensure the fulfillment of this reality is museums (Utku, 2008). Until recent years, museums, which were considered independent of education, were only considered and used as exhibition areas. This situation narrowed the usage area of museums and caused the importance of museums to be understood late. With the constructivist approach to education, museums have been included in educational activities and the importance of museums has begun to be understood.

Generally, when the museum is mentioned, we think of places where documents and findings from the past are exhibited in a building. Actually, the museum should be considered as institutions that reflect the past or present cultural structures, thought systems and values of the societies, regions and countries in which they live (Arikan, 2002). Salbacak (2011) defined the museum as a place where works of art, cultural assets and natural objects are exhibited. Su (2022), on the other hand, expressed the museum as the name given to the areas that collect, research, preserve and exhibit objects. The museum also acts as an educational institution because it not only preserves and exhibits the works and values from the past, but also ensures that these works and values are learned from an artistic point of view and evaluated from a historical and social point of view (Arikan, 2002).

Museums should not only offer opportunities within existing possibilities, but also create opportunities for active participation. Education with a museum is also seen as an application area that brings students face to face with documents, findings and artifacts and enables students to learn through their own experiences (Okay, 2013). In addition, education with a museum should not only create a sense of unity in the society, that is, among individuals, but also spread the existing negative situation. Thus, civic awareness and sense of belonging can be developed thanks to museum and education (Karademir Uysal, 2005).

It is observed that the trainings made with the museum are more permanent because the museum, which has a free environment, provides comfortable and effective teaching and enables students to use their five senses together (by researching, discovering, feeling, observing and putting them into practice (Arikan, 2002). Museums, which are also included in the field of social studies in terms of helping the development and progress of society, are not only buildings, libraries and schools where valuable documents, findings and works are exhibited, as we have mentioned before. Museums are educational institutions that contain various disciplines, make learning enjoyable, exciting and entertaining, and undertake social responsibilities (Cerkez, 2011).

Museum, like social studies in education, aims to understand people who are part of society in space and time, to relate the past, present and future, to preserve and maintain the culture considered as a heritage. In this respect, museums are a concept that is intertwined with social studies (Emeksizoglu, 2007). This study aimed to reveal the experiences and opinions of social studies teachers about the effect of using museums in the social studies lessons to explain their efficiency and utility. This study differs from other studies in terms of the questions asked to the participants, as its aim was to reveal the experiences and opinions of social studies teachers about the importance of museums in teaching social studies course. In this context, answers to the following questions were sought:

1. What are your views and thoughts on the concept of museum within the scope of social studies course? (The definition of the museum, what comes to mind when the museum is mentioned, etc.)
2. Do you make use of museums in teaching social studies lessons?
3. What are the benefits of museum visits in teaching social studies lessons?
4. What are the limitations of museum visits in teaching social studies course?
5. What are your suggestions for museum visits in teaching the social studies lesson more effectively?

Literature Review

Museums make learning permanent because they activate more than one sense of the students; they have an undeniable importance within the scope of out-of-school education (Arikan, 2002). Museums, which have an important place in all disciplines, are also very important for the social studies course, which includes many disciplines. For this reason, it is important to focus on museum-related studies in the field of social studies. Yildirim and Tahiroğlu (2012) article entitled "The effects of virtual museum visits on elementary studies' attitudes towards social studies courses" determined the effect of virtual museum visits in primary school 5th grade social studies course on students' attitudes towards the course. The study concluded that activities

performed with virtual museum visits in social studies course positively affected students' attitudes towards the course. In another study entitled "Virtual museum experiences of social studies teacher candidates" by [Ilhan et al. \(2021\)](#), the authors revealed the virtual museum experiences of social studies teacher candidates. The study showed that a majority of the participants had not visited a virtual museum before, but they had developed positive opinions about virtual museums after their visit.

Likewise, [Uztemur et al. \(2021\)](#), in their study titled "Museums and historical places in social studies textbooks: A document analysis", focused on social studies and subject of history. They examined the History of Revolution and Kemalism textbooks in terms of museums and historical places. At the end of the study, it was determined that as the grade level increased, museums found more place in the textbooks. In addition, the potential of textbooks was emphasized in order to encourage students to be informed and interested in museums.

In the studies mentioned above, researchers emphasize the inclusion of museums in education in the context of pedagogy. It is stated that with the inclusion of museums in education, a unique educational environment will be created for students and they will enrich their learning in various fields. Thus, we can say that museums have evolved from a visitor-centered approach to a pedagogical approach. The changes made in the curriculum in recent years also prove that museums have become a part of learning.

When we look at the studies on the use of museums within the scope of the social studies course, it is seen that the studies in this field are not sufficient and the researches are mostly focused on virtual museums. For this reason, in order to examine the importance of using museums in the field of social studies, this subject has been emphasized in our research.

Research Methodology

Research Design

This study used the case study research model, adopting the qualitative research techniques. In a qualitative case study, data on the subject is systematically collected through content analysis and thematic constructs ([Aytaçlı, 2012](#)).

Sampling

The participants of the study consisted of 20 social studies teachers. When we look at the hometowns of the teachers, they belonged to 11 different cities: Usak, Izmir, Adana, Manisa, Mersin, Trabzon, Adiyaman, Afyonkarahisar, Aydin, Istanbul and Diyarbakir. Twelve (60%) of the teachers included in the study were female and 8 (40%) were male. It is seen that the participants participating in the research were between the ages of 27-40. In terms of professional experience, it is seen that the participants have been in this profession for at least 2 and at most 15 years. [Table 1](#) sums up all this information.

Table 1: *Personal Information of Social Studies Teachers Participating in the Research*

Participants	Gender	Age	Professional Experience	Hometown
1	Male	27	2 years	Usak
2	Male	28	3 years	Adana
3	Male	34	11 years	Afyonkarahisar
4	Female	28	4 years	Mersin
5	Female	37	12 years	Mersin
6	Male	40	15 years	Adana
7	Female	36	10 years	Adiyaman
8	Female	32	7 years	Aydin
9	Male	34	8 years	Manisa
10	Male	29	2 years	Izmir
11	Female	36	9 years	Istanbul
12	Female	35	8 years	Izmir
13	Female	36	7 years	Usak
14	Female	32	9 years	Usak
15	Female	32	3 years	Trabzon
16	Female	32	3 years	Trabzon
17	Female	37	10 years	Izmir
18	Female	37	10 years	Manisa
19	Male	37	13 years	Usak
20	Male	33	6 years	Diyarbakir

The purposive sampling method was used to select the participants as this method provides rich information (Buyukozturk et al., 2008). In addition, another reason for preferring this sampling method was the accessibility of the teachers included in the study and a greater possibility of getting complete responses to the research questions.

Research Instruments

In-depth semi-structured interviews were used as research instruments to collect data. The interview questions were validated by three experts for their accessibility of meaning and understanding. The purpose of taking the opinions of academicians was to increase the reliability of the interview questions.

Data Analysis

The literature review formed the basis of the data analysis as it provided all the missing information on a subject from various sources (Timmins & McCabe, 2005). The data collected from the semi-structured interviews was first transcribed with the help of MS-word. A content analysis was performed over the transcripts by applying the coding method. In content analysis, the given data is analyzed in detail by coding and retrieving thematic constructs (Tedmem et al., 2014). In addition, ideas were exchanged on the codes with an academician who shared his expertise in the field of social studies education. The reliability of the study was calculated as 93% according to the reliability formula of Miles and Huberman (1994).

The participants in the study were coded as P1, P2, P3, The responses given by the participants in the interview form were collected in 42 codes at first, then these codes were associated with each other and this number was reduced to 29 codes. Some of the codes included exhibition, bridge, permanent learning, concretizing the subject, motivating the students to the lesson, increasing the visuality of the lesson, etc.

Results and Discussion

Concept of Museum in the Scope of Social Studies Course

In order to find answer to the first research question: “What are your views and thoughts on the concept of museum within the scope of the social studies course?” the responses of all the participants were collected in three different codes. There were 12 teachers who viewed a museum as exhibition, 5 teachers considered it as a bridge, while 3 teachers counted it as exhibition + bridge. Table 2 sums up these findings.

Table 2: Codes Regarding how Museums are viewed in Social Studies Classes

Codes	Participants
Exhibition	1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 8, 10, 11, 16, 17, 18, 19
Bridge	5, 13, 14, 15, 20
Exhibition + bridge	7, 9, 12

Most frequently used code to the first research question was exhibition. For instance, P2 commented: “Museums are places where artifacts from the past are preserved and exhibited in the present time.” The participant P8 believed: “Museums can be briefly defined as places where objects or things with traces of the past belonging to humanity are exhibited and preserved.” P17 on the other hand said: “We can briefly define the buildings where artistic works are exhibited and preserved as museums.” The views expressed by the participants who viewed museums as bridge included: P14 said, “Museums are a bridge between the past and the present. They convey to us the customs, traditions, social orders, lifestyles and worldviews of our ancestors.” P20, on the other hand, opined: “museums are places that carry the lives of people from the past to the present and serve as bridges.” A few participants believed that museums were a blend of exhibition and bridge. For example, P9 said: “When I think of a museum, the first thing that comes to my mind is the place where customs and traditions of a society are exhibited. Museums are not only places where historical artifacts are exhibited, but also institutions that establish the connection between societies' past and present and transfer social values to future generations.”

Hence, the participants responded in mixed manner, considering museums as places where documents and historical artifacts are exhibited as well as places which act as a bridge between the past and the present.

Using Museums in Social Studies Class as a pedagogical tool

To the second research question, “Do you make use of museums in teaching social studies course?” the responses of the social studies teachers participating in the research were collected in four different codes. There were 11 teachers who said they visited museums, 3 teachers believed that they visited both real museums and virtual museums, 2 teachers said they had visited only virtual museums, and 4 teachers said that they had never visited any museums. [Table 3](#) sums up these findings.

Table 3: Codes Regarding Whether Museums are used in Social Studies Classes

Codes	Participant
Those visited the museum	1, 2, 4, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 17, 20
Those visited both real museum and virtual museum	5, 6, 19
Those visited only the virtual museum	3, 18
Those never visited a museum	7, 8, 15, 16

The response to the second research question included: P2: “I try to benefit from museums as much as possible in the social studies course. This gives me the opportunity to explain the curricular topics.” P9 regarded proximity to museums as time saving and related to the course content.”. P4 confessed: “After studying the subjects in the curriculum in social studies education, we make museum visits as a class on related subjects.” P11: “I definitely make use of museums in teaching social studies lessons. In any case, the subjects in our curriculum also necessitate benefiting from museums.” P17, on the other hand, expressed: “I use museum visits to make learning more effective.”

Among those who visited both museums and virtual museums, included P5, who said: “We organize a museum visit with our students at least once a year, within the conditions of our school. Apart from that, we try to create museum awareness by visiting virtual museums by making use of the digital platform, which makes teaching and learning the lesson more effective.”

A few respondents expressed that they had visited only virtual museums: P18 said: “It is not always possible to take students to a real museum. That's why we take a virtual museum tour through mind boards. We align visits to virtual museums with our teaching and learning achievements.” However, a few respondents admitted that they had never visited any museum. P7 said: “We could not visit any museum for the social studies lesson because its location is very far from the school.” P16 had a different reason to share: “we cannot benefit from museums due to financial impossibilities of students.” Although the responses differed, but almost all participants stated that museums were important in social studies course and they wanted to benefit from museums. However, some teachers stated that they could not visit museums within the possibilities of the school they work in.

Benefits of Museum Visits in Social Studies Lesson Teaching

The responses of the participants to the third research question, "What are the benefits of museum visits in teaching social studies lesson" were collected in seven different codes. There were 10 teachers who said that museums provided permanent learning, 6 teachers each said that museums made the subject matter concrete and motivated the students to the lesson. There were 4 teachers each who believed that visits to museums increased the efficiency of the lesson, increased the visuality of the lesson, and made lessons enjoyable. There were 3 teachers who gave the answer that it provided learning by doing experience. [Table 4](#) sums up these findings.

Table 4: Codes Regarding the Benefits of Museum Visits in Social Studies Lesson Teaching

Codes	Participant
Provides permanent learning	2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, 13, 17
Makes the subject matter concrete	1, 5, 10, 16, 18, 19
Motivates students to the lesson	3, 5, 7, 12, 15, 18
Increases the efficiency of the lesson	4, 11, 19, 20
Increases the visuality of the lesson	6, 8, 13, 16
Makes the lesson enjoyable	6, 9, 12, 14
Allows learning by doing-experiencing	2, 9, 11

The most emphasized answer to the third research question was that it provided permanent learning. P11 argued: “The lessons given in the museum are applied lessons but retention and permanence are higher in applied courses as well.” P13, on the other hand, expressed: “by showing students the tools and materials related to the subject taught within the scope of the social studies course, it was very effective and it ensured permanence of knowledge.” A few respondents considered visit to museums made the learning of the subject concrete: P5 said: "Museums help students understand the lessons by allowing them to combine some cognitive processes and imaginations in the same pot through concrete objects." P10 said: “I think that museums are very important in teaching Social Studies course. Museums should be visited so that the topics covered in the course can be more concrete in students’ minds.”

Respondents who believed that visit to museums increased students' interest in the lesson included P3, who said: "Visiting museums increases students' interest and motivation in the lesson." P12 said: “The most important condition of learning is motivation. In a museum, my students can be motivated very easily.” Regarding the response, that museum visits increased the efficiency of teaching the social studies course, P4 said: “I think museum visits are necessary and important to teaching the subject of social studies. Museum visits make topics more memorable, teaching the lessons more efficiently, and helping students understand the topics better.” Regarding the response that it increased the visuality of the lesson, P6 said: "Objects in museums offer visuality and leave a mark on students' memories." To the response that museum visits increased the efficiency of the lesson due to its enjoyable quality, P9 said: "I observe that the students enjoy their museum visits a lot. This, in turn, makes that day's lesson more enjoyable.” Finally, 3 respondents also felt that museums enabled learning by doing-experience: P2: “I think that museum visits are like practicing support learning by doing-experience in presenting the subjects to students.”

Thus, the respondents had different opinions regarding the benefits of museum visits in teaching social studies lesson, which included allowing teachers focus more on permanent learning, concretizing the subject and motivating the students to the lesson. Other responses included increasing the efficiency of the lesson, increasing the visuality of the lesson, making the lesson enjoyable, and enabling learning by doing and experiencing.

Limitations of Museum Visits in Social Studies Lesson Teaching

The responses of the participants to the fourth research question, "What are the limitations of museum visits in teaching social studies lesson" were collected in eight different codes. There were 8 teachers who emphasized the permission issues, 7 expressed transportation problem, 5 expressed financial problem, and 4 stated that the guides (teachers) were not knowledgeable enough. In addition, there were 3 teachers each stating that the subject was not suitable, they faced time constraints, it was difficult to control students and negative student-administrative attitude. Table 5 sums up these findings.

Table 5: Codes Regarding the Limitations of Museum Visits in Social Studies Lesson Teaching

Codes	Participant
Permission shortage	2, 4, 6, 9, 11, 13, 15, 19
Transportation shortage	3, 6, 9, 15, 17, 18, 19
Financial shortage	6, 12, 16, 17, 20
Insufficient knowledge of the guides (teachers)	1, 3, 14, 17
Not appropriate topic	2, 4, 5
Time shortage	4, 6, 10
Difficulty of student control	8, 9, 10
Negative student-administrative attitude	6, 13, 20

When asked about the limitations of museum visits to teach social studies course, the most frequently mentioned response was permission related issue. For instance, P9 commented: “First of all, I can say that it is the permission procedure. For a trip, the permission of each student's parents is required.” P19: “If we talk about the limitations of real museum visits, transportation and permits come first.” Regarding the transportation problem, the second most frequently cited answer, P3 said: “We can say that there is no shuttle to take students to museums.” P15 too agreed: “There are problems in arranging the necessary permits and transportation possibilities for the museum visit.” Related to financial shortage as a limitation, P12 said: “Schools are not able to provide sufficient budget (vehicle and food expenses).” P16 argued: “I can express the limitations of museum visits as financial impossibilities in teaching social studies course.”

Regarding the lack of knowledge of guides (teachers), P1 said: “The fact that teachers (guides) do not have the necessary information for museum visits reduces the efficiency of museum visits.” That the subject of social studies is not suitable for museum visit was the least mentioned answer, P2 claimed: “I think that learning outcomes are among the most important limitations of museum visits. The fact that the subject is related to the museum to be visited will make the visit meaningful. But most of the subjects are not related to museum visits.” Likewise, regarding the time constraint, P10: "For example, a student studying in Van will go to Gobeklitepe in Sanliurfa, which will be a problem in terms of time."

Another least expressed response was regarding the difficulty of student control, P8 claimed: “Student control can be difficult if museum visits are made with large groups of students. Therefore, a visit to the museum goes beyond its purpose.” The response regarding the negative student-administrator attitude response, was expressed thus: P13 said: "The students' indifference to the exhibited works and the negative attitudes of some school administrations are among the limitations of museum visits."

Thus, the limitations faced in managing museum visits included permission issues, transportation and financial issues, lack of knowledge about museums or absence of guides, inadequacy of the subject for museum visits, lack of time, difficulty of student control, and the negative student-administrative attitudes.

Suggestions Regarding Museum Visits in Teaching Social Studies Lessons More Effectively

The responses of the participants to the fifth research question, "What are your suggestions for museum visits in teaching the social studies lesson more effectively" were collected in seven different codes. There were 7 teachers who suggested that museum visits could be carried out on a regular basis on a compulsory basis; there were 6 teachers who suggested that museum-related trainings could be given to students and teachers-guides. There were 3 teachers each who suggested that educational activities could be organized in museums, the number of virtual museums can be increased and financial support can be provided to schools for museum visits. There was one teacher for each suggesting that necessary facilities can be provided for permission for museum tours and traveling museums can be established. Table 6 sums up these findings.

Table 6: Codes Regarding Suggestions Regarding Museum Visits in Teaching Social Studies Lesson More Effectively

Codes	Participant
Museum visits can be carried out on a compulsory regular basis	4, 5, 8, 9, 11, 18, 20
Museum-related trainings can be given to students and teachers-guiders	6, 12, 13, 14, 15, 17
Educational events can be organized in museums	1, 7, 9
The number of virtual museums can be increased	1, 2, 19
Financial support can be provided to schools for museum visits	7, 10, 16
Necessary facilities can be provided for permission for museum visits	3
Traveling museums can be created	18

The respondents were asked suggestions for making museum visits as a more effective teaching mode for the social studies course. The most popular answer was that museum visits could be carried out on a compulsory basis and more frequently. P4 suggested: “My suggestions on this subject are-- museum visits can be made more frequently at regular intervals.” P20 said: “My suggestion is to find a suitable museum right after the topic we have covered, and take the students there and make a general repetition there. We must repeat this regularly, like a necessity.” A few others recommended to provide training about museums to students and teachers-guides. P6 commented: “Training should be given to students and teachers about museum visits.” P17, too, said: “Trainings should be given to guides or teachers for museum education. I think this will increase the efficiency of museum visits.”

A few suggested that educational activities can be organized in museums. P9 said: “When we look at the curriculum of the social studies course, it is seen that most of the subjects are suitable for activities. For this reason, educational activities can be organized in museums by increasing the interaction between the National Education and schools.” Others suggested that the number of virtual museums should be increased: P2 argued: “I think that disseminating the use of virtual museums within the scope of the course will eliminate the physical negativities in museum visits.” A few respondents felt the need for financial assistance for schools: P10 asserted: “financial support should be requested from municipalities and district governorships to cover transportation,

accommodation and food expenses of students.” One of the least suggested response was providing necessary facilities and permissions for museum tours: P3 said: “Schools and teachers should be facilitated in obtaining the necessary permits for museum visits.” Likewise, suggestions were given to create travelling museums: P18 believed: “Schools can be visited by mobile museums and mobile libraries, in order to benefit students.”

To the fifth question, it was seen that a large number of participants emphasized that museum visits should be made compulsory and regular in order to make teaching more effective. This suggestion was followed by the suggestion that students and teachers (guides) should be given training on museums. Suggestions were also made that educational activities should be organized in museums, the number of virtual museums should be increased, and schools should be provided with financial support for museum visits. Necessary facilities can be provided in terms of permission for museum visits and mobile museums can be created were the least expressed suggestions.

The interview method used in the current study enabled to know the views and opinions of the participants. When we look at the studies on the museum, they show similarity in terms of the results obtained. All of the studies carried out emphasized that the use of museums in the field of education increases the efficiency in education. [Nuzzaci \(2006\)](#), for instance, stated that museums are an indicator of the cultural level of a country and increase the quality of learning. In this article, it is concluded that museums increase the quality of education. In terms of the result obtained, our results are consistent with [Nuzzaci's \(2006\)](#) study. In another study, [Yilmaz and Eguz \(2015\)](#), stated that museums increase students' interest in the lesson and provide permanent learning. In terms of the result obtained, this study is also in line with the findings of the current study. Likewise, [Cinar et al. \(2021\)](#) emphasized that virtual museum tours contribute to learning in social studies lessons; [Er and Yilmaz \(2020\)](#) reached the same conclusion that the use of museums in social studies lessons would greatly benefit students; and [Jahangeer et al. \(2021\)](#) who also agreed that that museums not only protect cultural values, but also contribute to students' learning through concrete experiences by exhibiting cultural values.

Conclusion

The study enabled to examine the views and opinions of participants in a most natural way. The participants generally agreed that museum is a place where documents and historical artifacts from the past are exhibited. They also emphasized that museums act as a bridge between the past and the present. The participants also stated that museums are important in social studies courses and they want to benefit from museums. However, some teachers stated that they could not visit museums within their schools. It was also agreed that museums provided permanent learning, embodied the subject, motivated students to the lesson, increased the efficiency of the lesson, increased the visuality of the lesson, made the lesson enjoyable, and provided learning by doing and living.

Social studies teachers who participated in the research expressed a few constraints and limitations such as lack of permission, lack of transportation, insufficient finances, lack of guides (teachers), inappropriateness of the subject, time constraints, difficulty of student control and negative student-administrative attitude. Various suggestions were given such as museum visits should be more frequent and made compulsory, students and teacher-guides should be trained about museums, educational activities can be organized in museums, the number of virtual museums should be increased, financial support should be provided to schools for museum visits, necessary transportation should be provided for museum visits, and traveling museums may also be established.

In the light of these findings, the study made a few suggestions: First, with the encouragement and supervision of the Ministry of National Education, various educational activities can be carried out in museums by increasing communication and interaction between museums and schools. Within the scope of education with the museum, trainings about the museum can be given to teachers, administrators and experts, especially students. Financial support should also be provided to schools for museum visits. Traveling museums, such as mobile libraries, can also be created and included in education. The number of virtual museums can be increased. Necessary facilities can be provided to teachers and schools regarding permission to visit museums. Social studies course hours can be increased. Lastly, more detailed and comprehensive studies can be carried out on this and similar issues in order to increase student success in the field of education and training.

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