SOCIAL STUDIES TEACHERS' BELIEFS ABOUT SOCIAL STUDIES INSTRUCTION

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to examine middle school social studies teachers' beliefs about social studies teaching. To understand these beliefs, 14 social studies teachers with varying levels of experience were asked to discuss their primary purposes as social studies teachers and the classroom practices that they thought were best in social studies teaching. The study data were collected using interview method based on open-ended questions. The data were analyzed using the coding analysis method. Results showed that the majority of teachers have purposes that reflect the development of active citizenship understanding for all students. Some teachers stated that students should learn academic subjects that comprise social sciences to promote civic competence in a democratic society; some pointed out that students should be taught the value of learning for the rest of their lives. Additionally, it was discovered that classroom practices used to achieve the goals of social studies education as defined by the majority of teachers included adopting active and participatory learning, encouraging students to conduct research, critical thinking, and problem-solving, and allowing students to have technology experiences. It seems teachers are making an effort to achieve their purposes through their teaching practices. All these results contribute to the relevant literature to better understand the teaching beliefs and practices of social studies teachers.

Keywords: Social studies, teacher beliefs, social studies education

SOSYAL BİLGİLER ÖĞRETMENLERİNİN SOSYAL BİLGİLER ÖĞRETİMİ HAKKINDAKİ İNANÇLARI

ÖZ

Bu çalışma sosyal bilgiler öğretmenlerinin sosyal bilgiler öğretimi hakkındaki inançlarını belirlemeyi amaçlamıştır. Bu inançları belirlemek için farklı mesleki deneyim sürelerine sahip 14 sosyal bilgiler öğretmeninden sosyal bilgiler eğitimi konusundaki birincil hedeflerini ve sosyal bilgiler öğretiminde en iyi olduğunu düşündükleri sınıf uygulamalarını açıklamaları istenmiştir. Araştırma verileri açık uçlu sorular aracılığıyla görüşme tekniği kullanılarak toplanmıştır. Elde edilen veriler içerik analizi tekniği ile analiz edilmiştir. Araştırma sonuçlarına göre, öğretmenler benzer veya farklı hedefler tanımlamıştır. Öğretmenlerin çoğunluğu tarafından ifade edilen hedeflerin öğrencilerde aktif vatandaşlık anlayışını geliştirme ile ilişkili olduğu bulunmuştur. Öğretmenlerin bir kısmı öğrencilerin sosyal bilimleri oluşturan akademik disiplinleri öğrenmesi gerektiğine; bir kısmı da öğrencilere hayat boyu öğrenme için öğrenmenin değerinin aşılanması gerektiğine dikkat çekmiştir. Öte yandan, etkin ve katılımcı öğrenmeyi benimseme, öğrencileri keşfedici, eleştirel sorgulayıcı ve problem çözücü süreçlere yönlendirme, içeriği bilgi teknolojileri ile bütünleştirerek öğrencilerin teknoloji deneyimlerini kazanmalarını amaçlama öğretmenlerin çoğunluğu tarafından benimsenen hedeflerin kazanılmasında kullanılan sınıf uygulamaları olarak ortaya çıkmıştır. Araştırma sonuçlarına göre öğretmenler sosyal bilgiler eğitimi için belirledikleri amaçları öğretim uygulamalarına uyumlu hale getirme çabası içerisindedir. Bu da, öğretmenlerin sosyal bilgiler eğitimi hakkındaki hedeflerinin öğretim anlayışları ile ilişkili olduğu sonucunu vermektedir. Araştırma sonuçlarının sosyal bilgiler öğretmenlerinin öğretim inançları ve uygulamalarının daha iyi anlaşılmasında ilgili alan yazına katkı sağlayacağı düşünülmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Sosyal bilgiler, öğretmen inançları, sosyal bilgiler eğitimi

INTRODUCTION

Children can begin to learn related to their own social environment and real world when they are born. The messages they receive in their early years are vivid and enduring when they come to school with a

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high degree of natural energy, curious emotions, and imagination. Schools have a socialization function that allows children to learn to get along with others and grow and mature. Schools are potentially rich spaces for purposeful democratic citizenship education (Mindes, 2006; Parker, 2003). Social studies are a subject area within the school curriculum that best addresses this overarching goal and provides an ideal environment for children to use their innate urge to investigate, explore, and inquiry. This is due to the fact that social studies classes are important learning spaces where children learn about people, places, cultures, systems, policies, disasters, and historical events (Parker, 2015, p.3).

Social studies is a unique subject to contribute significantly to the expansion of national service movements and the promotion of democracy. Social studies are one of the most exciting subjects in school because no other subject helps children navigate the mysterious world around them with such tenacity and determination (Maxim, 2010; Wade, 2008, p.109). Researchers have argued that social studies is not on the border of the school curriculum; on the contrary, it is central to the school curriculum because it encompasses a wide range of subjects and academic disciplines that are important in both personal and public life (Skott & Herriot, 2015, p. 398).

Children experience the world and attempt to take their place in society by attempting to understand it, making decisions, and learning the values needed for youth growing up in our twenty-first-century world. They can learn the content and skills to be critical, thoughtful, and knowledgeable citizens who value society by taking social studies courses. Additionally, they can learn how to think through and decide on important developments, events, and challenges (Bousalis, 2021; Öztürk, 2009). Through social studies education, children learn the skills they need to deal with the present and make plans for the future. They are also equipped with citizenship skills in a democratic society (Sunal & Haas, 2015, p.6).

Social studies embrace an understanding that is more diverse and richer in arousal and challenge than any other subject or field that children can explore. This understanding recognizes the importance of literacy for children in the present day and in the future in order for them to synthesize information, make informed decisions, communicate effectively, and be successful and enterprising individuals in an ever-changing global society. Children, in particular, learn to develop the knowledge, skills, and values they need to become informed, active, and caring citizens in their own country and around the world with the help of good teachers who serve as examples of effective teachers (Boyle-Baise & Zevin, 2009; Mindes, 2005, p.17).

Social Studies: Definition and Goals
The leading American Social Studies organization, the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS, 1994), defined social studies as "the integrated study of the social sciences and humanities to promote civic competence. The NCSS has issued a formal definition of social studies as "a field of human study." This definition has two distinct characteristics. (1) The field of social studies is intended to promote civic competence; and (2) social studies collaborate with other humanities and social science disciplines.

Social studies provides a coordinated and systematic study within the school program by utilizing the appropriate content of various disciplines such as anthropology, archaeology, economics, geography, history, law, philosophy, political science, religion, psychology, sociology, humanities, and even mathematics and natural sciences (NCSS, 1994). In addition, social studies teaches students how to deal with real-life problems by applying the methods and findings of social sciences to find solutions and learn from life and social rights and responsibilities (Clark, 1990; Lewis, 2009; Merryfield & Subedi, 2001). This is because we live in a global age; social studies is a distinct field designed to meet the educational needs of societies and nations. Therefore, social studies are an essential subject for primary and secondary school students for a variety of reasons. These are the following. a) assisting students in developing critical and high-level thinking skills through the examination of historical content and the research of primary sources; b) assisting students in becoming active, informed, and responsible citizens participating in a democratic society; c) multiple points of view

held by students from various groups of people; and d) preparing all students to actively participate in a pluralistic democratic society (Urban, 2013).

The primary goal of social studies is to assist young people in developing the ability to make informed and reasoned decisions for the public good as citizens of a culturally diverse, democratic society in a globalized world (NCSS, 2021). This is based on the conviction that social studies education is critical to developing informed, rational, and culturally sensitive citizens (Maxim, 2010). Social studies education develops students' civic responsibilities and transmits a nation's cultural heritage to the next generation. Students in social studies lessons can use an interdisciplinary approach to investigate various ideas, concepts, and problems, providing students with an integrated learning experience and leading to a deeper understanding of the connections between social, political, economic, and environmental ideas and inclusive issues. Rather than simply repeating information they have heard or read, social studies teaching encourages students to reflect profoundly, and research ideas, concepts, people, places, controversial issues, and even facts (Yell, 2009). Combining content and skills that reflect this orientation (Baglieri et al., 2011), Social studies promotes a community of students in meaningful social studies education, both in and out of the classroom, by allowing student participation, decision-making, and action; and embracing difference and diversity as key elements of democracy.

Teacher Beliefs in Social Studies

There is a growing need in social studies to examine teachers' beliefs to understand the factors that influence teachers' classroom practices (Khader, 2012). The way the Social Studies curriculum is implemented in schools and handled by teachers varies greatly. Because teachers have different ideas and instructional perspectives about what social studies is, what it should be, what it should accomplish, and how it should be taught for young pupils (Peck & Herriot, 2015, p.387). Studies emphasizing teacher beliefs in social studies have been discovered to focus on teachers' decisions, content knowledge, student perceptions, personal theories (Fickel, 2000), reasons for teaching social studies, instructional understanding, and attitudes toward the lesson (Bisland et al., 2009; Peck & Herriot, 2015). Researchers have found that teachers' beliefs about social studies influence the pedagogy they bring to their classrooms, as well as their personal interests, classroom practices, and passion for learning (Harcarik, 2009; Thornton, 2005). Phillips (2009) investigated a new social studies teacher's teaching beliefs and classroom practices. The study's findings revealed that the teacher adapted classroom practices to the school climate and the students' varying needs. In addition, it was determined that this teacher's classroom practices, and teaching beliefs have a consistent relationship.

Beliefs are conceptual representations of the structure of mental states that are thought to direct one's actions (Richardson, 1996). Beliefs are regarded as components of a functionally integrated cognitive system that also includes attitudes and values (Rokeach, 1969). Beliefs are also an "individual's judgments about the truth or falsity of a proposition" (Pajares, 1992), "a set of related concepts" (Crago, 1996), and "general knowledge about objects, people, and events and their characteristic relationships." This can be defined as a collection of conceptual representations that store information (Keer, 2008). Bandura (1997) asserts that beliefs drive our goals, emotions, decisions, actions, and reactions. In educational settings, beliefs are defined as the teacher's beliefs, educational philosophy, or ideas about teaching and learning. Beliefs are important concepts to understand to comprehend teachers' thought processes, educator decisions, the change process, and classroom practices (Niederhauser & Stoddart, 2001; Richardson, 1996, 2003).

Teachers' beliefs are essential in the educational setting, and they can stem from a teacher's personal life, school, teacher education programs, career processes, and collaboration with colleagues. Furthermore, beliefs influence teachers' expectations of students as well as student success (Pajares, 1992). Teacher beliefs are the primary determinants of teaching roles, whether they are about content, students, or what they do in the classroom (Borko & Putnam, 1996; Pajares (1992, p.307) argued that teachers' beliefs influence their curriculum goals and judgments, which in turn influence their

classroom behavior. Teachers' beliefs are interrelated, emotive, intellectual, and evaluative viewpoints on themselves, their own students, student learning, teaching methods, curriculum, and schools (Kagan, 1992). To meet the demands of curriculum implementation or student needs, teachers rely heavily on the beliefs that underpin their intuition and habits (Fives & Gill, 2015).

Teacher beliefs are concerned with teachers' thoughts and reflections on meta-issues such as what knowledge is in a certain field, how students become proficient in that field, and what teachers may do to help students gain such competence. Teacher beliefs are also linked to how these lines of thought emerge and their role in classroom practice (Skott, 2015; Watt & Richardson, 2015). Previous research in the literature showed that teachers' beliefs could influence teachers' actions in the classroom and the change process (Adler, 2008; Doppen, 2007; Fives & Buehl, 2012; Skott, 2009; Van-Hover & Yeager, 2004; Wilson & Cooney, 2002; Wilkins, 2008). In this regard, teacher beliefs are thought to influence teaching preferences, pedagogical ideas and classroom practices, use of in-class materials, and student outcomes (Heibert et al., 2002; Kunter et al., 2013; Nespor, 1987; Pajares, 1992; Richardson, 1996), and determine when, why, and how they interact with students (Hoffman & Seidel, 2015). Clark and Peterson (1986) found that teacher behavior is influenced by a set of personal beliefs, values, and principles. While Grossman et al. (1989) assert that teachers' beliefs "strongly influence their teaching," Pajares (1993) contends that teachers' beliefs are "the best predictor of their individual behavior." As a result, teachers' beliefs can be accepted as an explanatory and predictive factor for pedagogical purposes, instructional choices, decisions, and classroom practices.

The Current Study

Little research in the literature has focused on the investigation of social studies teachers' beliefs in social studies and related fields such as history, geography, and citizenship education (Al-Nofli, 2010; Collay, 2010; Chin & Barber, 2010; Ross & Marker, 2005; Stoddard, 2010; Salinas & Castro, 2010). In addition, a few researchers have focused on the connections between teachers' purposes for social studies education and their practices (Knowles, 2018). Therefore, there is a need to explore the connections between teachers' purposes in teaching social studies and their classroom practices. This is because a teacher's beliefs strongly influence teaching behaviors (Pajares, 1992). Therefore, it is critical to explore the nature of such beliefs and try to identify relationships between teachers' purposes and classroom practices.

Teachers' beliefs about social studies teaching will provide essential data for a quality and practical social studies education and provide important clues for providing feedback to teacher educators on teaching effectiveness. Based on this requirement, the purpose of this study is to better understand the teaching beliefs of social studies teachers as social studies teachers by investigating their primary purposes and current teaching status in social studies education. Examining teachers' beliefs about social studies reflects an attempt to comprehend their instructional goals, teaching decisions, and students' perceptions. This provides insight into how teachers define their roles, perceive, and implement their own teaching (Ponte, 1999). Fenstermacher (1978) states that "if our aim and intention is to change teachers' practices, we should first grasp teachers' subjective beliefs about teaching," indicating that teacher beliefs are a filter, interpretive tool, or transformative of the purposes developed by the curriculum (Bryan, 2012; Pajares, 1992). In light of the literature on teacher beliefs, teacher beliefs can provide a perspective for understanding instructional practices (Chi-Kin Lee et al., 2013).

Finally, identifying teachers' beliefs about social studies has the potential to shape their instructional practices and solve or at least alleviate practice issues. This could have a significant impact on students' social studies learning. Understanding teachers' beliefs about social studies teaching is important both in terms of understanding how social studies is taught and how it shapes students' development of an awareness and understanding of main social studies concepts and processes. In order to increase the quality of social studies education, the discovery of social studies teachers' aims and current instructional choices and decisions can also be used as needs analysis data in future program development studies. It is thought that this study, which will be based on the gap in the

literature on the search for quality, effective social studies education, will help social studies teachers to understand the purposes and classroom practices related to social studies from their beliefs.

METHOD

Research Model and Participants
A qualitative, interpretivist research design employing interviews to examine social studies teachers' beliefs about social studies teaching by investigating their primary purposes for social studies education and their classroom practices was used (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2011). The study was conducted with social studies teachers working in public-middle schools in an urban city in Turkey during the 2019-2020 academic year. For the study, 12 middle schools were chosen randomly from a total of 30 in the city district for the study. For the selection of participants, the author firstly contacted with 20 social studies teachers who were working in these schools. In total, 14 social studies teachers agreed to participate voluntarily in this study. The criterion sampling technique, one of the purposive sampling methods, was used to select participants. In this study, social studies teachers with at least 3-years of experience in the teaching profession were preferred in order to draw a comprehensive picture of teachers' beliefs about social studies teaching and their classroom practices. In order to serve the purpose of this study, it was decided to include teachers from various schools. Of the 14 teachers, eight were females and six were males. The participants' teaching profession experience ranged from 4 to 20 years. Teachers ranged in age from 28 to 46 years old. Table 1 shows the distribution of teachers by gender, age, and years of experience.

Table 1. Demographic information of the participants

Teacher	Gender	Age	Experience (years)
T1	Male	30	7
T2	Female	35	9
T3	Male	34	8
T4	Female	40	15
T5	Male	28	4
T6	Female	45	17
T7	Male	37	6
T8	Female	38	10
T9	Female	42	18
T10	Female	34	9
T11	Male	31	7
T12	Female	46	20
T13	Male	30	5
T14	Female	37	11

Data Collection Tools
In order to collect study data in this study, the interview technique was used. Interviews are conducted to ascertain the reason for an individual's observed or unobserved behaviors, perceptions, and how events affect them (Patton, 2014), and to ascertain their attitudes, knowledge, and perspectives on a phenomenon (Creswell, 2016). In this study, the author developed a semi-structured interview form that consisted of demographic questions and open-ended questions in order to collect data about participants' primary purposes and current teaching status. The interview form included the following open-ended questions: 1) "As a social studies teacher, what are your primary purposes for social studies education?", 2) "Can you describe one of your lessons that you thought was the best in social studies teaching?" The teachers who agreed to participate in this study voluntarily were contacted, and the appropriate day and time for the interviews were determined.

Data Collection
The data was analyzed using the coding analysis technique after transcripts of the records taken during the interviews were created. The goal of coding analysis is to group collected data into concepts, give a holistic perspective, expose relationships, and interpret them in a way that the reader can understand.

Coding analysis is, therefore, an inductive way to understand people's attitudes and behaviors, as well as their nature (Creswell, 2016; Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2011). Within the scope of this study, the answers supplied by participants to interview questions during the coding analysis process were read by two independent experts. As a result, all participants' responses were examined, and data for the whole dataset was acquired. Following this, the data-derived codes were compared to one another, redundant or unneeded coding was eliminated, and new coding was introduced as needed. Finally, based on the codes acquired, relevant categories were constructed and interpreted so that the reader could understand. While the categories were being presented, samples of quotations from the teachers' answers to the interview questions were added. The reliability of the qualitative analysis was thus attempted to be supported (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2011).

Validity and Reliability of Data
Explanatory information regarding all stages of the study and the participants was provided to strengthen the credibility of this study. Creswell (2016) asserts that offering extensive information in a research study increases its trustworthiness. Direct quotations from the participants' perspectives were provided in the findings section, and each stage of the study (sample selection, information about the participants, data collection, and analysis) was presented to the reader in full to ensure the transferability of this study (Creswell, 2016; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 2013). The internal validity of the study is increased by this credible practice (Lincoln & Guba, 2013). Consistency in qualitative research is the similarity of study data and findings (Merriam, 2013; Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2011). To ensure dependability in qualitative research, Creswell (2016) suggested using several researcher codes and testing the compatibility of these codes and categories. The opinions of the participants were coded independently by two experts in the field to assure consistency in this study, and the agreement between the coders was calculated. The reliability of coder agreement was determined using the formula dependability = Agreements/ Agreements + Disagreement x 100 (Miles & Huberman, 1994) and found to be. 91. To verify the validity of this study, the data, coding, and other studies were made auditable when appropriate by filing with the name of the research in the computer environment (Creswell, 2016). The researcher must retain all data gathering instruments and study elements on hand during the confirmation review in order to review the relevant parties as needed (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2011). The names of the participants were not used in the presentation of the study's findings due to ethical concerns. Instead, each teacher was given a code such as "T1."

RESULTS

Teachers' Purposes about Social Studies Education
Participants were asked to describe their goals for social studies education as social studies teachers based on their experiences in the classroom. The coding analysis showed four categories connected to the purposes of teachers. These are the following: 1) education for active citizenship understanding, 2) acquisition of social sciences content, 3) teaching the value of learning, and 4) developing thinking skills.

Education for active citizenship understanding. The majority of participants defined their purposes as a focus on becoming active citizens in a democratic society for all students. These teachers considered social studies education as bringing in active or responsible citizens to participate in society in ways that support democracy. For instance, one of the teachers [T14] described her purpose of becoming a citizen in the following sentence:

> "Help all students become active citizens in a democratic nation. And to raise
> students who are tolerant, aware of their rights and responsibilities, and sensitive
> to social realities."

Two teachers explained the purposes of social studies education, emphasizing active citizenship.

"The development of personal competencies is what propels students into active citizenship. In my opinion, only responsible and sensitive citizens with a sense of national identity, in my opinion, can sustain a country (T5)".

"My primary purpose is to raise hard-working citizens who will be able to build a better future on solid foundations and values in social life. To ensure our country's continued existence throughout the world, we must educate our youth to be better and more visionary citizens (T1)."

Acquisition of social sciences content: Some participants (n=3) believed that academic disciplines that comprise the social sciences are important and that students should acquire the necessary content and skills. They believed that social science content as a branch of knowledge could contribute to educating students to engage in the social world, to become informed and active citizens. For example, T4's statement about her role is as follows.

"To teach students about the geography we live in, our national history, our own geographical culture, cultural heritage, and the cultures of other nations, experiences, and historical places. Because I want to raise future generations of cultured, knowledgeable, and responsible citizens who understand their rights..."

As stated below, T8 defined that teaching and learning in several social sciences elements promote civic competence.

"I generally aim to teach the rules of our society, our basic values and civic duties as human beings, our national history, the geography we live in, and our rich culture. As a social studies teacher, my goal is to teach children by combining all of these elements with a scientific mindset and national values."

T11 stated her purpose as follows: "First and foremost, I want students to have a wealth of information on subjects like history, geography, and political science. Because social sciences contribute to the larger goals of social studies."

Developing thinking skills: Three participants agreed that students should learn high-level thinking skills to think about and make decisions about people, social events, and global problems. Critical thinking, problem-solving, decision-making, and questioning are examples of these skills. For instance, T9 explained her purpose under the umbrella of social studies, aiming to bring students to their thinking processes through the use of different content, with the following sentences:

"In this course, my primary goal is to teach students how to solve real-world problems and how to employ various problem-solving strategies. I generally design student-centered activities that include problem-solving-based learning for this."

T3 stated her opinion with the following sentences.
"My purpose for social studies courses is to teach students high-level thinking skills that will allow them to approach national and global issues from a variety of perspectives. This is due to the fact that students find it beneficial to discuss their thoughts, ask questions, and explore ideas. For example, when students learn to think critically, they develop into thinkers who can ask more in-depth questions, establish cause-and-effect relationships, and make decisions."

T1 defines the purpose of social studies education as follows.
"In contrast to memorizing information, social studies education necessitates making sense of and interpreting this information on a personal level through the use of various modes of thought. My purpose is to help students develop critical

thinking and decision-making skills, as well as to train them to be problem solvers in dealing with social issues.

Teaching the value of learning: Two participants defined themselves as they aimed to teach their students the value of learning in order to inspire them to become lifelong learners. These teachers believed that teaching students the value of learning would likely result in lifelong development. For instance, T6's perspective on the subject:

> "We need to teach students the value of learning in school for the future of both their individual and community lives. One of the main goals of social studies is to learn, to adopt lifelong learning, and to apply it in real life. What we need to do first is learn for our students, learn about our students, and learn how to help our students develop and act in a way that capitalizes on their strengths."

The other teacher described as follows [T2]:

> "Many of my students have severe deficiencies in their ability to learn independently. If this is a concern, my primary role is to help students understand the value of learning. We also need to teach students how to learn and think better, as well as encourage them to engage in continuous learning."

Perceptions of Teachers' Current Teaching Situations about Social Studies

In order to learn about the instructional understanding of the participants towards social studies education, teachers were asked to describe the instructional lessons that they thought were their best. Four categories were found as a result of coding analysis. The following categories were identified: 1) research and discovery, 2) active learning, 3) integrating ICT with social studies curricula, and 4) the traditional transmission of knowledge approach.

Research and discovery: When describing their best lessons, four participants mentioned research and exploration activities that encourage students' inquiry. For example, a teacher [T9] explained a lesson that let students engage in active physical engagement (e.g., giving research homework, presentations). The teacher's descriptions are as follows:

> "In one of our lessons, we collected information from encyclopedias and reliable online sources and prepared a history strip covering topics such as political and social events, revolutions, and educational reforms in the Republican Era. The project ended with the students explaining and showing the concepts they learned by making presentations in class, using the date strip."

A similar experience was shared by T10. The teacher explained that he had his students prepare biographies of personalities identified with some values. Teachers stated that they used biographies, especially to emphasize the importance of citizenship values. The teacher's lesson example is as follows:
"…In the classroom, I did extensive work with students on biographies. I helped students develop their personal understanding and ideas about that person by reading a biography that left its mark on history or living in the present, preparing a timeline showing important events in the person's life, and making a short animation about what the person did by designing their costumes. As a result, my students were greatly influenced by the lives of the biographers."

T3 shared the following lesson activity to develop students' high-level thinking skills such as accessing, processing, and synthesizing information in order to become democratic citizens:

> "To give a message to students in a branch about urban sprawl, I asked students to obtain information to research this end in their environment or on the web, and then design various models such as high-rise buildings, houses, gardens,

apartments, park areas, factories, using samples and materials. A week later, we randomly placed these structures they prepared in a corner of the classroom. I asked the students to interpret the resulting image with their own concepts and to discuss what this situation might lead to.

T7 reported that she tried to develop problem-solving strategies to help students think about a learning experience. Using various resources, this teacher explained how she involved students in finding solutions to a global problem. The teacher's lesson example is as follows.

"I invite students to think about the problem first, to discuss the causes of the problem, and to produce solutions by including them in a newspaper article on the greenhouse gas problem. Problem-solving activities strengthen their self-management."

Active learning When describing their best lessons, three teachers emphasized both cognitive and physical components that engage students in active learning about the content and skills to be taught. These teachers stated the importance of relevance and emphasized that teaching resources and learning strategies suitable for active learning could play a crucial role in social studies. These include group projects, problem-solving experiences, and collaborative activities. As stated earlier in the study, some of the teachers stated they carried out instructional lessons that included problem-based learning to achieve their social studies teaching goals. These teachers plan lessons based on students' research and problem-solving skills.

For example, although T1 did not define a specific lesson activity, she guided students to learn important social studies concepts in her lessons. This teacher did not describe any physical actions or hands-on activities. However, she explained that it still helps students connect with the taught content by including collaboration, questioning, and speaking activities to construct the concepts. The teacher's opinion is as follows:

"Students need important skills to be active citizens: gathering information, analyzing statements, identifying problems, summarizing perspectives, and drawing conclusions." I teach these skills by having students study current events and using inquiry tools. For this, I enable students to cooperate in small groups, take responsibility, think critically, and express their opinions. I generally prefer activities that encourage the learning of basic concepts related to social studies."

T8 pointed out that students should build on what they learned by connecting them to their real lives in order to motivate them to work. The teacher stated that social studies education should cover the processes of discovering, creating, and applying knowledge. The teacher explained an example of an activity she did in the lesson as follows:

"How can we save our world from the waste that threatens it? I got them to think about a problem like this: I asked the students to talk about the problems related to waste and what needs to be done. In this process, I enabled them to focus on providing practical solutions…"

Integrating ICT with Social studies curricula: When describing their best lessons, 3 of the participants were found to be making an effort to integrate information and communication technologies (ICT) into their classrooms with social studies content in order to meet the various learning needs of the students and improve their understanding of technology. It has been seen that these teachers have a desire to include technology in the curriculum in order to encourage meaningful learning in the teaching process. Their aim is not only to use technology but also to have solid technological experiences that facilitate students' social studies learning. Furthermore, teachers see the use of technology in their classrooms as a motivating factor for students. As an example, T7 emphasized that technology should be integrated into teaching in order to facilitate students' learning

about technology through their experiences. It was seen that the teacher aimed to use technology both to encourage students to learn social studies and to familiarize them with the technology needed to prepare them for the real world. Below is the teacher's description:

> "In my lessons, I used the smart board to share the elements that students could not see or access in our classrooms. From time to time, I make students use programs such as Educational Information Network (EIN) to improve their skills in using technological learning environments."

Another participant who referred to the use of updated technology to make teaching in the classroom more student-centered is T12. He stated that the technology-based learning process has substantial effects on children's research and learning, and the use of technology motivates students to learn social studies. In addition, she gave examples of using technology to increase students' awareness of web-based resources:

> "I feel that children get excited when I use information technology. I make them happy by including more technology in the classroom. I try out meaningful and appropriate ways to help students experience knowledge. For example, in one of our lessons, I asked students to discover their own locations on Google Maps using a tablet computer, to learn about cultural heritage items and museums in their immediate surroundings."

T13, on the other hand, talked about a lesson based on the use of interactive whiteboards to expand students' technology experiences. The teacher's share is as follows:

> "In lessons, I aim to incorporate ICT into lessons to differentiate teaching as much as possible. For example, the smart board greatly facilitates the teaching of the lesson. I do not think that only textbooks are sufficient for students. In this respect, I believe that when teachers plan the content around technological tools and online resources, it will help students improve their knowledge of social studies content and important concepts. We must use materials or technology that appeal to multiple senses so that learning can take place permanently."

Traditional transmission of knowledge approach: Two teachers were found to have a traditional knowledge transfer approach that emphasized lecturing knowledge or facts to students in classroom practices that they thought were the best. When the lessons of these teachers are examined, the transmission of content topics traditionally, teacher-centered instruction, lecture-based presentations, a lack of exploratory activities, and a lack of challenging learning experiences. For instance, T4 described a lesson in which he transmitted the knowledge in the textbook to his students through a presentation, used the wall map on geographical subjects, and gave tests to evaluate students' understanding. In the descriptions of this teacher, it was found that he used in-class materials in the lesson, but there were no constructivist components such as confronting, resolving, connecting, and applying and transferring new social studies ideas. When T11 described the lesson, she thought was best, it was found she relied primarily on the lectures, recitation, and presentation to give instructions, but underlined a traditional teacher-centered social studies education rather than student-centered approaches. In her descriptions, it was found that she used the lecture method to teach the content of the curriculum to the students by using PowerPoint presentations in class.

DISCUSSION

This study explored middle school social studies teachers' beliefs about social studies education by examining their primary purposes and current classroom practices. Results showed that the teachers defined similar or different purposes. As social studies educators, most teachers have strong implicit ideas about purposes that reflect an understanding of active citizenship. It was concluded that the same underlying purposes drive both citizenship and citizenship education. Teachers considered that social

studies education should, first, include modeling of democratic citizenship in order to encourage all students' active participation in social life. This finding is consistent with the general goals of the social studies curriculum as stated in the literature (NCSS, 1994; Ministry of National Education [MoNE], 2018). Both as content and as a process, social studies is a living and vital component of citizenship education. One of the most important goals of social studies education is to provide young people with the knowledge, skills, and values they need to be lifelong learners and active citizens at all levels of society (Öztürk, 2009).

In the study, some teachers defined social studies education as a purpose for which, along with citizenship development, students should learn the academic disciplines that comprise the social sciences. Teachers believe that history and social science content should be taught to promote citizenship development. This finding supports the idea that history and social science disciplines are rich resources for the purpose of citizenship education (Parker, 2015). As it is known, the goal of social studies education is twofold. The first is to assist students in developing social understanding and public awareness based on their own experiences and knowledge from social science disciplines. The second is to assist students in developing the skills necessary to think and act as democratic citizens in a multicultural society (Parker, 2012). Therefore, the goals of social studies are realized when students learn about the society in which they live and apply social science methodologies in their daily lives by researching social issues and various ideas and questioning them using an interdisciplinary approach.

When the teachers defined their goals for social studies education, they also mentioned roles that were unique to them. Some teachers aimed to teach students how to learn and to encourage students to make continuous learning a passion. They see themselves as facilitators of targeted learning whose goal is to prepare students to be lifelong learners. As a Social studies teacher, the teachers considered that one of the main goals of social studies education is teaching students to have a passion for learning. Devine et al. (2013) noted that one of the key characteristics of a good teacher is having a passion for teaching and learning. A passion-based approach to teaching and learning fosters teacher professionalism and a broad-based approach that focuses on the social, democratic, moral, and personal goals of education (Alexander, 2010). Westhaver (2003) believes that developing a passion for learning is the key to long-term personal development, whereas Gu (2011) believes that maintaining a passion for learning is the key to effective capacity building and school success. Researchers emphasized that social studies should aim to help young children build understandings and learning dispositions that will guide them throughout their lives in order to support lifelong learning (Mindes, 2006). This approach emphasizes learning pedagogy, which includes teaching students facts and content and developing students' learning abilities, inquiring minds, adapting to different learning conditions, and developing insights into the nature of learning (Malone & Pederson, 2008; Letina, 2020). In this regard, the purposes defined by the teachers who took part in this study demonstrate that their beliefs about learning pedagogy influence the goals they set for social studies education.

Another important finding of this study was that some teachers make an effort to provide many opportunities for students to improve their thinking skills in order to construct an understanding of their social world. These teachers consider that teaching students how to inquire and make decisions about social issues and content is essential for students to be accepted into advanced classrooms, community life, and further education opportunities. This finding is consistent with the explanations provided in the relevant literature. Students must develop high-level thinking skills as a means to understand and solve social events and global problems as part of their preparation for lifelong learning and active citizenship roles. Students must be able to think critically in order to participate in society, and their mistakes must be guided in order for them to learn from them. However, to develop their democratic citizenship roles, students must be able to cope with change (NCSS 1989, p.16). Furthermore, for students to be influential citizens of the twenty-first century, the teacher must model this process for them. Research has shown that teaching students' thinking skills through experience and assisting them in mastering these skills in practice contributes to the achievement of social studies goals and objectives (Beyer, 2008). Thus, the development of high-level skills and/or processes will motivate students in broader contexts, both within the curriculum and outside of the school.

The purposes defined by the teachers in this study are compatible with educationally and developmentally sensitive social studies education (Buaraphan, 2012; DiCicco et al., 2016, Zevin, 2015). In the "Foundational Principles of the National Middle School Association" [NMSA], 2010), the goals of the responsive middle school model include the need for social studies education to address not only students' cognitive needs but also their physical, social, emotional, and cultural needs (Jackson & Davis, 2000; NMSA, 2010). In this model, teachers are called to be inclusive teachers and to involve students in healthy living content and vibrant activities, to provide opportunities for active learning and socialization for responsible, active citizenship, and to provide opportunities for students to learn more about themselves, their role as citizens, and who they are (DeMink-Carthew & Bishop, 2017). As understood from the results of this study, the purposes of the teachers as social studies educators are influenced by a variety of contextual factors. Also, the roles defined by the teachers are appropriate for the overall goals of the social studies curriculum implemented in Turkey, and they are in line with specific goals and objectives reflecting personal and civic life that take into account the social, cultural, and intellectual development of students (MoNE, 2018). Furthermore, as echoed in the NCSS definition, teachers' concepts of their purpose as social studies educators are clearly associated with the social sciences, citizenship transfer, and critical thinking approach of social studies (Barr et al., 2013).

Results showed that the teachers were asked to describe their instructional lessons that they believed were best for their students as a means to understand how they achieved the purposes they set for social studies education. This way, it was determined whether there was a causal relationship between the teachers' beliefs about the purposes they set and the teaching activities they carried out in their classrooms (Schoenfeld, 1992). Results demonstrated that many teachers cited discovery-based active learning, ensuring student physical engagement and making the content interesting for students, interdisciplinary teaching that supports students' learning, and student-centered use of information technologies as important aspects of best courses. In addition, the teachers provided examples of why and how they used their apps to encourage meaningful learning in their students. For example, some teachers stated that they participated in group projects to encourage their students to be active participants; others stated that they engage students in learning experiences that require them to make meaningful connections and broaden their perspectives. These activities included real-life scenarios based on research and inquiry, which serve as the foundation for critical thinking skills. In addition, some of those teachers attempted to compare students to real-life problems by utilizing events both inside and outside of the school, and they attempted to reflect reflectively on the social problems that students face on a daily basis. On the other hand, some teachers stated that by providing problem-based experiences, they assist students in solving problems, evaluating results, and making decisions on their own through reasoning, which is an essential component for students' active participation in the taught content.

Constructivist educators such as John Dewey (1929) noted that teachers should encourage children to use social studies as the foundation for interest-based, activity-based learning and to draw on a wide range of teaching resources and democratic life experiences beyond the textbook. In fact, social studies education based on real-life experiences enhances students' understanding of the social world and influences their ability to function socially and emotionally in the classroom and in the world at large. Therefore, it is understood that the majority of the teachers involved in this study could provide purposeful and personal social studies education in their classrooms, which encourages students to have more internal control over their ability to inquire, solve problems, and apply and transfer the new social studies ideas in situations. According to the literature, these findings reflect the pedagogical ideas that characterize good teaching (Biggs, 2011; Buaraphan, 2012). From this perspective, the results suggest that the majority of teachers in this study have strong beliefs about what students should do and how to understand social studies ideas and concepts, and thus these beliefs are in the form of constructivist beliefs in teaching. While some studies on teachers' beliefs toward teaching social studies have concentrated on the use of interdisciplinary and inquiry-based methods (Alberta Learning, 2004), some of them are based on research-based and activity-based teaching in order to relieve the pressure of the content of the social studies curriculum (Van-Hover & Yeager, 2004).

In addition, when describing their instructional lessons, some teachers stated that they incorporated ICT into teaching to achieve their purposes. Teachers stated that technology meets students' learning needs in social studies and think that using technology for various tasks and in different ways may have a higher perceived value for learning social studies content. For example, one teacher described how she used newer technologies to integrate, acquire, process, and report information for students to make teaching more student-centered. The teacher stated that by encouraging students to use technological tools and digital software, they aim to increase their enthusiasm and interest in the lesson's content and gain digital competencies. In response to this finding, some teachers considered using technology as a creative, engaging, and effective tool to support social studies teaching and help students expand on their more developed technological abilities. This implies that teachers' beliefs on employing classroom technology are linked to their understanding of teaching (Honey & Moeller, 1990). Existing literature indicates that technological beliefs affect teachers' decisions about the curriculum and their instructional practices (Bryan, 2003; Pajares, 1992). Like all instructional resources, the technology used to support the teaching of social studies reflects social studies goals and learning outcomes (Sunal & Haas, 2014).

Previous research has shown that teachers with strong technological beliefs tend to use technology in a more student-centered and highly compelling, and inclusive way (Becker, 2000; Hermans et al., 2008). Teachers who have strong technical belfries can create environments in which students can enhance their learning by investigating how and when ideas are applied to new contexts through the use of diverse instructional resources and technology (Becker, 2000). However, there is also widespread optimism among technology educators and program designers that classroom technologies can act as a catalyst for engaging students, meeting their learning needs, and making existing practices more efficient (Collins, 1991; Newman, 1992). This is because ICT provides a set of tools that can significantly expand and enrich teachers' teaching strategies and support student learning in social studies. ICT is also very useful for teachers in their teaching practices, both for whole-class instruction and for curriculum objectives that include a variety of approaches to learning to meet the needs of a variety of students. To fully understand teachers' technology integration practices, it is essential to understand what resources they have and why and how they choose to use those resources (Speer, 2008). Technology opportunities provide many vital advancements for teachers to move away from using only textbooks as teaching resources. This assists students in effectively discovering and accessing information, media, and technology, evaluating information critically, and generating new ideas by using it accurately and creatively (Ertmer et al., 2015; Partnership for 21st Century Learning, 2011). Indeed, using ICT in a learner-centered manner by integrating information and communication technologies into teaching in the 21st century is accepted as the best technological pedagogical practice (National Research Council, 2012). In this regard, as students gain proficiency in using current technologies and communication tools, they become more functional and productive in their school careers, society, and economy. Researchers argue that when teachers effectively integrate content, pedagogy, and technology into the learning environment, it helps students learn and think better by allowing them to reflect on their own learning (Lawless & Pellegrino, 2007).

When their instructional lessons were examined, it was found that some teachers had teacher-oriented traditional beliefs. These beliefs were found to be guided by their social studies lessons. They have beliefs that emphasize the traditional transmission of knowledge approach used to recall facts or acquire knowledge by sticking to the textbook presentation rather than providing models to guide students' engagement in the lessons in order to strengthen students' understanding of key social studies concepts and processes. Researchers define this type of social studies teaching as the traditional whole-class approach, which includes listening only to the teacher and learning only from the teacher or textbooks (Biggs, 2011; Borich, 2014). This is because influential social studies does not mean memorizing and recalling a list of facts. Instead, it requires students to engage in critical thinking and problem solving, generating inferences, analyzing statements, drawing conclusions, applying new ideas to global problems in society and the world (Boyle-Baise & Zevin, 2009). However, achieving desired goals in social studies, such as democratic ideals, cultural diversity, global understanding, and participatory citizenship, requires the use of practical, interesting, exciting, and reflective strategies

that will enable students to achieve the lesson's objectives rather than traditional social studies teaching (Parker, 2015; Sunal & Haas, 2015, p.54). Effective social studies teaching requires that the teacher or textbook transmit knowledge and skills but that the students reconstruct their prior knowledge and skills into these new patterns. This is because traditional social studies teaching centered on memorizing facts does not encourage students to find meaning in what they are learning, nor does it help them make and test their decisions (Sunal & Haas, 2015, p.31). According to researchers, considering the increasing diversity and open access to information in today's student populations, traditional social studies education cannot adequately prepare students to acquire the necessary knowledge and skills for active participation in a democratic society (Ukpokodu, 2006, p.6). Therefore, to ensure that all children feel connected to their learning experiences in social studies, teachers should approach the content with a tripartite perspective that divides the content into didactic, reflective (analytical), and affective (judgmental) components and seek new ways in their teaching (Zevin, 2013).

CONCLUSION

The results showed that the purposes defined by participants for social studies education were consistent with their instructional practices. Teachers seem to be making an effort to reflect the purposes they have set for social studies education into classroom practices. Teachers' specific decisions about what to teach, how to teach, and what to learn in social studies education seem to be based on their beliefs. This is because classroom practices described by teachers appear to be driven by their purpose orientations about social studies education. This suggests that teachers' educational goals are linked to their instructional beliefs (Nespor, 1987; Pajares, 1992). Each teacher believes that they have a professional responsibility to help their students learn social studies content. However, it was found that some instructional lessons described by some teachers do not reflect a commitment based on the philosophical foundations of powerful and meaningful social studies education that involve students in active participation in social studies. Instead, their classroom practices reflect traditional beliefs in teaching. This has revealed important issues that teachers should consider when developing their beliefs about social studies. First of all, social studies education is a challenging field with a multidisciplinary structure in which abstract and complex new information is constantly added.

In present-day and future, social studies teachers should put more effort into creating a unique, developmentally appropriate learning environment for students. First, teachers with traditional beliefs can meaningfully collaborate with colleagues to provide their students with content and skills through a learning experience in which they actively, per the criteria of the original and sensitive social studies education model. Teachers should design purposeful, interactive activities that promote conceptual change and meaningful learning of important social studies objectives. If students are to be influential citizens, they must be taught social studies developmentally appropriate throughout their school years. At this point, teachers can provide students with important social studies ideas and skills by using and modeling classroom practices that encourage greater student control of learning. Indeed, effective social studies education places a strong emphasis on a reflective and integrative framework, cultivating insight, imagination, and critical thinking in regular classroom settings, and encouraging inclusive attitudes and actions. Second, social studies teachers need to assist students in finding connections between social studies content and its importance to their lives and the world in which they live, and to stimulate the generation of ideas. Middle-school social studies teachers should work within the concept of a middle school social studies teacher. However, they should have a vision of creating challenging, culturally sensitive, and democratic citizenship experiences that encourage exploration, creativity, and multi-literacy skills for their students and acquire the necessary professionalism indicators to be good models for their school and future careers.

The findings of this study are based on social studies teachers' beliefs about social studies education. The data was collected from participants' self-reports. Future research may examine further deepening teachers' beliefs about social studies education. To deepen the findings, it is recommended that the data collected through the interviews be addressed together with the data collected through the classroom sessions observed over a long period of time at schools. Observing directly how the classroom climate and lessons affect the relationship between teachers' views and current classroom

practices may be more beneficial in understanding the relationship between teachers' beliefs and current classroom practices. In order to confirm teachers' ideas, future study should incorporate student interviews and classroom observations. In addition, the data of this study is limited to 14 social studies teachers who were selected from middle schools in a city in Turkey and had at least three years of experience. Further research should examine the beliefs of more significant numbers of social studies teachers in different city areas and across multiple contexts to provide a clearer, more detailed picture of teachers' beliefs about social studies.

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Uzun Öz

Çocuklar sosyal dünyalarını doğumlarından itibaren öğrenmeye başlarlar. İlk yıllarında aldıkları mesajlar hem canlı hem de kalıcıdır, okula ise yüksek derecede doğal enerji, meraklı duygular ve hayal gücü ile gelirler. Okulların çocukların başkalarıyla iyi geçinmeyi öğrenmelerini, büyümelerini ve olgunlaşmalarını sağlayan bir sosyalleşme işlevi vardır. Skott ve Herriot (2015) sosyal bilgilerin okul müfredatının sınırında olmadığını aksine hem kişisel hem de kamusal yaşam için kritik öneme sahip çok çeşitli konuları, akademik disiplinleri içermesi sebebiyle de okul programının merkezinde yer aldığını savunmuştur (s. 398). Öğrenciler bu derste topluma değer veren eleştirel, düşünceli ve bilgili vatandaşlar olmanın yanı sıra, sorunları çözmek ve önemli gelişmeler, olaylar ve konular hakkında fikir ve mantıklı karar vermek için ihtiyaç duydukları yaşamsal becerileri öğrenebilmektedir. Sosyal bilgiler eğitimi aracılığıyla çocuklar hem yaşadıkları zamanla başa çıkmak hem de geleceği planlamak için gereken bilgi ve anlayışla ayrıca demokratik bir toplumda etkin vatandaşlık becerileri ile donatılmaktadır (Bousalis, 2021; Sunal ve Haas, 2015, s.6). Sosyal bilgiler bu nedenle herhangi bir ders veya alana kıyasla çocukların keşfedebileceklerinden daha çeşitli, uyarılma ve zorluk açısından daha zengin bir anlayışı benimsemektedir. Bu anlayış bilgiyi sentezlemek, bilinçli kararlar almak, etkili bir şekilde iletişim kurmak ve sürekli değişen küresel bir ortamda yenilikçi, araştırmacı ve girişimci bireyler olmak için çocukların bugün ve gelecekte eleştirel okuryazar olmaları gerektiğini kabul etmektedir. Özellikle etkili sosyal bilgiler öğretmenlerinin yardımıyla çocuklar sadece vatandaşlık eğitimine odaklanan içeriği özümsemekle kalmamakta aynı zamanda kendi ülkelerinde ve dünyada bilgili, aktif ve duyarlı vatandaşlar olmak için ihtiyaç duydukları bilgi, beceri ve temel insani değerleri geliştirmeyi de öğrenebilmektedir (Boyle-Baise ve Zevin, 2009; Mindes, 2005, s. 17). Sosyal bilgiler antropoloji, arkeoloji, ekonomi, coğrafya, tarih, hukuk, felsefe, siyaset bilimi, din, psikoloji ve sosyoloji gibi çeşitli disiplinler, beşerî bilimler, hatta matematik ve doğa bilimlerinin uygun içeriklerinden yararlanarak koordineli ve sistematik bir çalışma sağlamaktadır (NCSS, 1994). Sosyal bilgiler bu disiplinlerin yöntem ve bulgularını kullanarak öğrencilerin gerçek yaşamında karşılaşacağı sorunlarla mücadeleyi, bu sorunlara çözümler getirmeyi, hayattan nasıl ders alınması gerektiğini ve toplumsal hak ve sorumlulukları öğrenmeyi hatırlatır (Clark, 1990; Lewis, 2009; Merryfield ve Subedi, 2001). Küresel bir çağda yaşadığımız için bugün sosyal bilgiler toplumların, ulusların eğitim ihtiyaçlarını karşılamak için tasarlanmış eşsiz bir alandır. Sosyal bilgilerin ilkokul ve ortaokul öğrencileri için önemli bir ders olmasının birçok nedeni vardır. Bunlar a) öğrencilerin tarihsel içeriği inceleyerek ve birincil kaynakları araştırarak eleştirel ve üst düzey düşünme becerilerini uygulamalarına yardımcı olmak, b) öğrencilerin demokratik topluma katılan aktif, bilgili ve sorumlu vatandaşlar olmalarına yardımcı olmak, c) öğrencilerin farklı insan grupları tarafından sahip olunan çoklu bakış açılarını tanımalarına yardımcı olmak ve d) tüm öğrencileri çoğulcu demokratik bir topluma katılım için hazırlamaktır. Sosyal bilgilerin temel hedefi gençlerin birbirine bağımlı bir

dünyada kültürel farkındalığa sahip, demokratik bilgi, beceri ve değerlerle bütünleşmiş toplumun sorumlu bireyleri olarak kamu yararına mantıklı karar verme yeteneğini geliştirmelerine izi vermektir (Socialstudies.org, 2021; Urban, 2013). Bu sosyal bilgilerin bilgili, rasyonel ve kültüre duyarlı vatandaşların gelişimi için kritik olduğu inancına dayanmaktadır (Maxim, 2010). Okullar sosyal bilgiler eğitimi aracılığıyla öğrencilerin vatandaşlık hak ve sorumluluklarını geliştirmek ve bir ulusun kültürel mirasını sonraki nesillere aktarmaktadır. Sosyal bilgiler öğrencilerin disiplinlerarası bir yaklaşım kullanarak çeşitli fikirleri, kavramları ve sorunları araştırmasına, öğrencilere entegre bir öğrenme deneyimi sunmasına ve sosyal, politik, ekonomik ve çevresel fikirler ve kapsayıcı konular arasındaki bağlantıların daha derin bir anlayışına yol açmasına olanak tanır. Sosyal bilgiler öğretimi sadece öğrencilerin duydukları veya okudukları bilgileri tekrar etmelerinden daha ziyade, onları fikirler, kavramlar, insanlar, yerler, tartışmalı konular, hatta gerçekler hakkında derinlemesine düşünmeye ve araştırmaya sevk etmektedir (Yell, 2009). Anlamlı Sosyal bilgiler eğitimi, sınıf ve okul içinde bir öğrenci topluluğunu teşvik etmek; öğrenci katılımına, karar vermeye ve eyleme izin vermek ve bu yönelimi yansıtan içerik ve becerileri birleştirerek demokrasinin temel unsurları olarak farklılık ve çeşitliliği kucaklamaktır (Baglieri ve diğ., 2011). Öğretmenlerin sosyal bilgiler hakkındaki inançları üzerine çeşitli uluslararası araştırmalar olsa da (Al-Nofli, 2010; Collay, 2010; Chin ve Barber, 2010; Ross ve Marker, 2005; Stoddard, 2010; Salinas ve Castro, 2010), Türkiye'de sosyal bilgiler ve bu eğitimle ilgili alanlarda öğretmenlerin sosyal bilgiler alanında inançlarına odaklanan çalışmaların olmadığı görülmüştür. Araştırmacılar tarafından öğretmenlerin sosyal bilgiler eğitimi ile ilgili hedefler ile öğretim uygulamaları arasındaki bağlantılara henüz odaklanılmamıştır. Bu nedenle, öğretmenlerin sosyal bilgiler öğretme konusundaki hedefleri ile öğretimde yer verdikleri gerçek sınıf uygulamaları arasındaki ilişkinin keşfedilmesine gereksinim duyulmaktadır. Öğretmenin inançlarının öğretme davranışları üzerindeki büyük etkisi nedeniyle (Pajares, 1992) bu tür inançların doğasını belirlemek ve öğretmenlerin amaçları ve uygulamaları hakkındaki ilişkileri anlamaya çalışmak önemlidir. Öğretmenlerin sosyal bilgiler öğretimi ile ilgili inançları etkili sosyal bilgiler eğitimi için önemli veriler sağlayacağı gibi öğretimin etkililiği noktasında öğretmen eğitimcilerine geri bildirim vermesi açısından da önemli ipuçları verecektir. Söz konusu bu gereklilikten hareketle mevcut araştırmanın amacı sosyal bilgiler öğretmenlerinin bir sosyal bilgiler öğretmeni olarak sosyal bilgiler eğitimiyle ilgili hedeflerini ve sınıf uygulamalarını keşfederek onların öğretim ile ilgili inançlarını belirlemeyi ve bunları anlamayı hedeflemiştir. Araştırmanın sonuçları sosyal bilgiler öğretmenlerinin sosyal bilgiler eğitimiyle ilgili ifade ettikleri hedeflerin sınıf uygulamaları ile tutarlı olduğunu göstermiştir. Öğretmenlerin çoğunluğu sosyal bilgiler eğitimi hakkında tanımladıkları hedefleri öğretim uygulamalarına yansıtma çabası içerisinde görünmektedir. Öğretmenlerin sosyal bilgilerde neyi öğretecekleri, nasıl öğretecekleri ve öğrenme hakkındaki belirli kararları genel olarak öğretim ile ilgili inançlarına dayanıyor gibi görünmektedir. Çünkü öğretmenlerin ifade ettikleri sınıf uygulamaları sosyal bilgiler dersi ile ilgili amaç yönelimleri tarafından yönlendiriliyor gibi görünmektedir. Bu da, öğretmenlerin eğitimsel hedeflerinin öğretim inançları ile ilişki olduğu sonucunu vermektedir (Nespor, 1987; Pajares, 1992). Araştırmada öğretmenlerin her biri öğrencilerinin sosyal bilgileri anlamlı bir şekilde öğrenmesine yardımcı olmak için mesleki bir sorumluluğu olduğuna inanmaktadır. Ancak paylaşılan bazı sınıf uygulamalarının yapılandırmacı felsefe bağlamında öğrencileri merkeze alan bir anlayışı yansıtmadığı ve daha çok öğretimde geleneksel yaklaşımları yansıttığı görülmüştür. Bu, öğretmenlerin sosyal bilgiler öğretimi hakkındaki inançları üzerinde düşünmeleri gereken önemli bir durum olarak karşımıza çıkmaktadır. Öğretmenler önemli sosyal bilgiler kavram, fikir ve beceriler için anlamlı ve üretken öğrenmeyi teşvik eden kapsayıcı etkinlikler planlamalıdır.